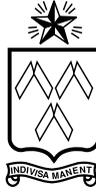


**Bethlehem
University**



جامعة بيت لحم

DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES

“VIOLENCE, NON-VIOLENCE AND RELIGION”

Third International Conference on

Christian-Muslim Relations

Conference Proceedings

edited by

Fr. Jamal Khader, D.D.

and

Angela Hawash – Abu Eita, M.A.

9-11th February 2011

Bethlehem University

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**Note: This volume contains a variety of writings, whose authors vary, according to their disciplines and traditions. Inherent in this fact is that writing styles will differ, depending upon the document type, writing style of the author and the discipline. Although every effort was made to ensure consistency, the editor considered it important to preserve, as much as possible, each individual writing style and ensure the intended meaning was kept intact. Some works are edited translations and every effort was made to ensure the final result reflected the original meaning. Every effort was made to include as much conference materials as possible.*

***Translations done by Mr. Imad Abu Dayyeh.*

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Dr. Masalha is a Palestinian academic, specializing in religion and history. He is also Director of the Centre for Religion and History and the Holy Land Research Project at St. Mary's University College. He is also a professional research associate in the Department of History at SOAS-University of London. Originally from Jerusalem, he conducts such activities as teaching at Bir Zeit University in the mid-1990s, the organization of conferences with Sabeel and workshops in memory of Michael Prior. In 2007 he co-organized two workshops – one in London and the other at Bir Zeit University, in Palestine, entitled 'The Politics of Elections and the Struggle for Democracy in the Middle East: Perspectives from Within and Below.'

Dr. Masalha is also the editor of *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal*. Some of his publications include 'The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions,' 'Archaeology and Post-Colonialism in Palestine-Israel' (2007), 'Catastrophe Remembered: Essays in Memory of Edward Said' (2005), and 'The Politics of Denial: Israel and the Palestinian Refugee Problem' (2003). Dr. Masalha is also the commentator in the award winning, documentary film 'La Terre Parle Arabe' ('The Land Speaks Arabic,' 2007).

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Rev. Mitri Raheb is the General Director of the International Center of Bethlehem and the founder of Dar Al-Kalima School and Academy in Bethlehem, Palestine. He received his undergraduate degree in Protestant Theology from the Hermannsburg Mission Seminary-Germany in 1984. He later attended the Philipps University-Marburg, also in Germany, where he earned his M.S. and Ph.D. in Theology.

As Pastor of the Lutheran congregation in Bethlehem, Rev. Mitri is one of few Palestinian theologians known for developing a contextual Christian theology in the Arab-Palestinian context, as well as in the context of interfaith relations. In an attempt to create and promote change and awareness in the Palestinian civil society, Rev. Mitri founded the International Center of Bethlehem, which provides a space for Palestinians to become active in developing lasting civil society institutions. Some of his publications, which concentrate on inter-religious dialogue, contextual theology, church history, biblical interpretation, and issues related to the civil society are 'Bethlehem Besieged' (2004), 'I am a Palestinian Christian' (1995) and 'Bethlehem 2000, Past and Present' (1988).

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Dr. Chatrath is currently completing his doctorate in Oriental studies at Oxford University, to be complete in 2012. He earned three M.A.'s; completing them at the University of Cambridge (1994) University of Nottingham (1996), and the University of Oxford (2007). He was awarded, in 2009, a position as a senior scholar at Wadham College-University of Oxford. He is an outspoken advocate of facing intolerance and extremism head-on, and promotes the understanding of different viewpoints within and between the Islam and other religions. Dr. Chatrath is also responsible for organizing a graduate seminar in Islamic studies at the Oriental Institute at the University of Oxford. Some of his publications include 'Fighting the unbeliever: Anjem Choudary, Musharraf Hussain and Pre-modern Sources On Sūra 9.29, Abrogation And Jihad' (2010), and 'Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations' (2010).

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Ms. Grung is a researcher and lecturer at the Faculty of Theology - University of Oslo, where she earned her Master’s degree/*Candidata theologiae*. Former positions include being a Ph.D. fellow at CULCOM (the University program was entitled ‘*Cultural complexity in the New Norway*’ at the University of Oslo) and the minister and in and director of Emmaus Dialogue Center, Oslo. Ms. Grung also served as a minister in the City Church Mission-Oslo and as Chaplain in the Student Christian Movement-Oslo. As a participant in Christian-Muslim dialogue, she is a member of the national Norwegian Contact Group for the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway and a member of the Board of Directors of the Oslo Center for Peace and Human Rights.

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SOCIAL SCIENTIST AND INDEPENDENT RESEARCHER

Dr. Kassem is an independent social scientist. She holds a Ph.D. from the Department of Behavioral Science at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. Her research stemmed from profound interest in how structural and hegemonic power relations work within and between societies, and how they influence women and marginal groups. She is currently working on her book, ‘*Palestinian Women, Narrated Histories and Gendered Memory*.’ Dr. Kassem has both academic and practical training in conflict resolution, with practical experience of facilitating ‘dialogue’ groups of Jews and Palestinians in Israel.

MS. NORA KARMI

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A staff member of the Center since 1993, Ms. Karmi has held different administrative positions and is currently coordinator of Community Development and Women’s Programs. Besides her involvement with Sabeel, Ms. Karmi represents the Armenian Church in the World Day of Prayer Movement and was one of the writers for the 1994 service, “Go, See and Act.” She was the key note speaker at the General Assembly of the World Day of Prayer in Swanwick in the U.K.

Before joining Sabeel, Ms. Karmi served the Jerusalem YWCA for 15 years. She has traversed the globe through her work for justice and peace. A committed community-builder within the Palestinian society, she holds positions on several boards including the International Parenthood and Family Planning, the National Association for the Visually Impaired and the Coalition for Women in Jerusalem. In March 2008, she was honored with a Community and Women’s Development Award for continued services rendered during the Israeli Occupation. Nora Karmi holds a leadership position with the US-Canadian based Christian Peacemaker Teams, lending insight to their work in Hebron, West Bank as well as their witness in other parts of the oppressed world.

SUPPORTERS AND SPONSORS

-THE PONTIFICAL MISSION FOR PALESTINE is an agency of the Holy See, established by Pope Pius XII in 1949, following the war in and partition of Palestine. It was founded as the Holy See's agency for humanitarian and charitable assistance to the people of the Holy Land, without distinction of nationality or religion. In the name of the Holy Father, the Pontifical Mission-Jerusalem continues to support church and community institutions and programs in areas where the Church is present, especially those assisting youth and providing employment.

-THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY (IFCU) was recognized by Pope Pius XII in 1942, the IFCU was formed to connect Catholic universities around the world in order to exchange ideas and experiences, and to address specific issues of common concern. When it was recognized by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 1967, it became an associate non-governmental organization with consultative status. The IFCU works with people and groups of all religions and beliefs to carry out joint research, partnership and exchange projects. It is currently made up of some 200 Catholic universities and institutions of higher education. Bethlehem University became an IFCU member in February of 1982.

-THE FRIENDS OF BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY IN ENGLAND AND WALES (FoBU) is a registered charity, which exists to help the development of Bethlehem University and, in particular, to fund and support its Cardinal Basil Hume Chair for Religious Studies. It was founded in 1999 in remembrance of former Archbishop of Westminster, Cardinal Basil Hume, O.S.B., O.M. (1923-1999).

- THE LIVING STONES OF THE HOLY LAND TRUST (LSHLT) is an ecumenical trust seeking to promote contacts between Christian communities in Britain and those in the Holy Land and neighboring countries. Founded in 1986, the LSHLT brings pilgrims and Middle Eastern Christians together in worship and understanding. The LSHLT encourages visitors to the Holy Land to not merely gaze upon the stones that make up the physical churches and ruins but to meet and know the "living stones," the members of the community which make up the churches.

PLANNING COMMITTEE:

- Fr. Dr. Jamal Khader, Dean - Faculty of Arts & Chairperson - Department of Religious Studies
- Fr. Peter DuBrul, SJ, Assistant Professor - Department of Religious Studies
- Br. Peter Iorlano, Lecturer and Coordinator of Institutional Values
- Ms. Hanadi Younan, Lecturer - Faculty of English
- Mr. Elias Hazen, Instructor - Faculty of Education.
- Ms. Nelly Naimeh, Secretary - Department of Religious Studies
- Mr. Michel Rock, Coordinator - Department of Religious Studies

MODERATORS

- Dr. Adnan Musallam, Associate Professor - Department of Humanities, Bethlehem University
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- Dr. Lina Khamis, Assistant Professor - Department of Humanities, Bethlehem University
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- Ms. Hanadi Younan, Lecturer - Faculty of English, Bethlehem University

PROGRAM

Wednesday, February 9, 2011

9.00 – 10.00 REGISTRATION

10:00 – 10:30 OPENING SESSION

- ❖ Br. Peter Bray, Vice-Chancellor of Bethlehem University
- ❖ H.B. Msgr. Fuad Twal, Latin Patriarch of Jerusalem
- ❖ H.E. Dr. Mahmoud El-Habash, Minister of Religious Affairs, Palestinian Authority
- ❖ H.E. Bishop Munib Younan, Evangelical Lutheran Church, Jerusalem
- ❖ Fr. Jamal Khader, Chairperson of the Department of Religious Studies, Bethlehem University

10:30 – 11:30 FIRST SESSION

Moderator: Dr. Adnan Musalam, Bethlehem University

- ❖ “*Globalization, Religion and Terrorism*”
Dr. Jamal Nassar

11:30 – 12:00 DISCUSSION

12:00 – 13:30 LUNCH BREAK

13:45 – 15:30 SECOND SESSION: *Reading and Interpreting Holy Texts*

Moderator: Fr. Jamal Khader

- ❖ “The Qur’anic Text: Between Violence and Non-violence”
Sheikh Abdel Majid Ata Muhammad Al-Amarnah Ata
- ❖ “Christian Responses to Islam: Violence and the Interpretation of Biblical Texts”
Dr. Leo D. Lefebure,
- ❖ Respondent: Dr. Barakat Fawzi Kasrawi

15:30 – 16:00 DISCUSSION

Thursday, February 10, 2011

9:00 – 10:30 THIRD SESSION: *Violence and Religion*

Moderator: Dr. Hazem Najjar

- ❖ “Conceptualizing a Christian–Muslim Understanding of Spiritual Democracy as the Foundation for a Holistic Democracy”
Dr. Larry Hufford
- ❖ “Knowledge of the ‘Other’ in Plural Societies”
Dr. Rusmir Mahmutehji
- ❖ Respondent: Dr. Duncan Macpherson

10:30 – 11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 – 12:30 FOURTH SESSION: *Religious Movements*

Moderator: Dr. Lina Khamis

- ❖ “*Islamic Political Movements and the Use of Violence*”
Dr. Iyad Barghouthi
- ❖ “*Blessed be the Lord, Who Trains My Hands for War*”
(Ps. 144:1) *The Use of the Bible To Justify Violence*
Fr. David Neuhaus
- ❖ *Respondent:* Rev. Younah Katanacho, Ph.D.

12:30 – 14:30 LUNCH BREAK

4:30 – 15:30 FIFTH SESSION: Michael Prior Memorial Lecture

Moderator: Br. Peter DuBrul

- ❖ “*Liberation Theologies in Palestine: Contextual, Secular Humanist and Decolonizing Perspectives*”
Dr. Nur Masalha,
- ❖ *Respondent:* Rev. Mitri Raheb, Ph.D.

15:30 – 16:00 DISCUSSION

Friday, February 11, 2011

9:00 – 11:00 SIXTH SESSION: *Non-violence: Theory and Practice*

Moderator: Ms. Nabila Daqaq

- ❖ *Violence and Religious Innovation in Islamic History*”
Dr. Nick Chatrah
- ❖ *Religion, Violence/War, Non-violence/Peace*”
Luis N. Rivera Pagán
- ❖ “*Islam: The Text and the Historicity of Violence*”
Dr. Abdel Karim Barghouthi
- ❖ *Respondent:* Mr. Walid Atallah

11:00 – 11:30 DISCUSSION

11:50 – 14:00 PRAYER HOUR AND LUNCH BREAK

14:00 – 16:00 FINAL PANEL: *Promoting Non-violence*

Moderator: Ms. Hanadi Younan

- ❖ “*How Christians and Muslims in Norway Have Jointly Approached the Problem of Violence in Close Relationships (With Reference to a Joint Christian-Muslim Statement in 2009)*.”
Ms. Anne Hege Grung
- ❖ *From Investment to Divestment: Non-violent Religious Protest and the United Methodist Church in a Historical Context*”
Dr. Cheryl Riggs
- ❖ “*Violence, Ideology and Religion*”
Dr. Fatmeh Kassem, Social Scientist and an independent researcher
- ❖ “*Kairos Palestine, a Non-violent Strategy*”
Mrs. Nora Karmi, Jerusalem.

INTRODUCTION

Religion is an increasingly influential determinant in the relationships amongst individuals, nations, states, cultures, and other groups — each of which perceive religion according to the role religion plays. Individuals and groups are inundated with statements regarding religion, which reflect the impact and varying roles these proclamations have upon individuals or groups and their relationships. These statements also reflect a variety of attitudes, ranging from the extremely personal and collective attachment/detachment to or from religion. Included here are some of these statements as examples:

“Religion is a cause of violence —religious conflicts are proof.”

“Religion is abused by some followers — theirs is not true religion.”

“Religion is divine and calls for peace; extremists make it a cause for war.”

“Religion is a result of God’s fidelity towards human beings and human infidelity towards Him.”

“Religion is a private matter and should be kept away from the public sphere.”

These attitudes, and many others, lead us to reflect upon the impact of religion in our own societies and cause us to ask a number of questions such as the following: *What is the truth about religion and its relationship with the use of violence? How do we interpret the “difficult” texts calling for violence? Is there such a thing as a “just war”? How is religion used by extremists? How is it used by social justice activists? How can religion be supportive of peaceful co-existence, based on justice and respect?*

Bethlehem University, according to its values as a Lasallian and Palestinian university, has a strong tradition of building better relations between Christians and Muslims and styled this conference on the theme of violence/non-violence and religion; as an opportunity to tackle and discuss the difficult relationship between the two. Although the breadth of topics may seem rather complex, this approach allows for a better understanding of the theme and a beneficial exchange of expertise amongst scholars and interested people of all faiths. It is also fitting that the conference is held in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, where the Palestinian–Israeli conflict is an appropriate context for the exploration of the relationship between religion and violence, where the former is used to justify the latter, in achieving political aims.

So in order to tackle the aforementioned questions and reflect upon them in an objective and professional manner, the conference is entitled *“Violence, Non-violence and Religion.”*

*Fr. Jamal Khader D.D.
Bethlehem University
February 2011, Bethlehem*

OBJECTIVES

The conference aims to explore the relationship between religion and violence/non-violence, through applying theories of several disciplines — theology, textual interpretation and criticism, history, sociology of religion, philosophy, and the theology and practice of non-violence. Below are explanations of how each discipline approaches the relationship between religion and violence/non-violence.

- *Theology*: How does theology deal with the matters of war, violence, self-defense, peace and justice? What is the theological basis for the employment of violence or non-violence? How can religion become a force of peaceful co-existence and cooperation within the context of religious diversity, in a globalized world? How do Christian fundamentalists in democratic countries justify an ideology which supports religious confrontation?
- *Textual interpretation*: If the tendency in interreligious dialogue is to use texts which advocate peaceful relations with the other, what about the “difficult” texts? How do we interpret them and how do adherents understand and relate to them? Are they to be used only in the context in which they were written or are they valid in all contexts? By what authority is the valid interpretation determined?
- *History*: Can “holy wars” be holy? How do we understand and read war history today? What are the enduring consequences of the Crusades? Is it time to re-read the history of “the clash of religions”? Is this alleged clash over or are we witnessing a new cycle of this clash? New Crusades? Jihad?
- *Sociology of religion*: How should we understand the phenomena of fundamentalism and extremism? What are the social conditions of such phenomena and the use (or abuse) of religion? How do our societies deal with the religious factor in shaping relationships? How does religion shape our identities, individually and collectively?
- *Philosophy*: What role does religion have in an increasingly interdependent world? Does (new) secularism present an answer? Can a state be characterized as Christian or Muslim? Is religion personal (a relationship between the individual and his/her God) or a collective identity that shapes an individual’s relationship with others? What is violence? Are there different kinds of violence?
- *Theology and practice of non-violence*: How is religion used by the many non-violent movements and organizations working in conflict resolution? How do these organizations find in religion(s) the support and theology they need? Concrete examples of such movements and organizations may help in finding a positive approach to the relationship between religion and society; interreligious dialogue and conflict resolution.

OPENING REMARKS

BR. PETER BRAY, FSC
VICE CHANCELLOR, BETHLEHEM UNIVERSITY

Distinguished guest, presenters, ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning. It is my privilege this morning to formally welcome you to Bethlehem University for the Third International Conference on Christian-Muslim Relations, during which you will focus on violence, non-violence and religion. It is a great blessing for Bethlehem University to be able to host such an important gathering and I welcome you to it.

At a time when there is considerable unrest in Egypt and other parts of the world, and there is the threat of violence, it is fitting that this group gathers to reflect on the topics I previously mentioned.

You have a full program ahead of you and you are confronting many interesting issues. I would suggest to you that there are three areas that underpin the work you are attempting during these days.

I think if we are really going to deal adequately with the questions surrounding violence, non-violence and religion, there needs to be a commitment to truth, a willingness to be honest with one another and face the truth of the different situations in which we find ourselves. This means honestly acknowledging our differences and being truthful in our engagement with one another.

To do this we need to have a commitment to a deep respect for one another. This requires that we honor one another and hold each person as precious – no matter what their race, what they believe, what their gender is, what they do, where they are from, etc. Because they are a human being we respect them. So because of the respect they deserve, individuals have the right to be free of any form of violence from thought, word or deed. There needs to be a commitment to non-violence. This is not something strange. It has been adopted by many respected people.

I come from New Zealand and grew up a few miles from Parihaka on the slopes of Mount Taranaki. In Parihaka, between about 1866 and 1907, a Maori chief by the name of Te Whiti o Rongomai led a movement of non-violence in opposing the taking of Maori land by the British army. He gathered people from around the country and created the largest Maori village in New Zealand – to resist, with respect and non-violence, the taking of Maori land. Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King are other, more recent, examples of people who are

committed to non-violence. Here in Palestine, there are many Palestinians who are committed to the non-violent resistance of their land being taken.

If we are committed to the truth and to non-violence then the next call is to serve one another. This service of one another is a central part of moving towards a more just society where people are respected, loved and are free.

It is difficult to hold to these three principles and we will all sometimes fail, but Gandhi argued that just because we cannot do something perfectly does not mean we should not commit ourselves to trying – and in that lies the challenge.

You have come together here at Bethlehem University – in this Catholic University – which was founded in 1973, as a direct intervention, by the Vatican but which welcomes and respects Muslims, who make up 70% of its student population. It is here that through honest engagement, found is respect for all of God's people, as well as the chance to build an understanding and acceptance that can have far-reaching impact. I think having students engage with one another in a discussion of religion – as they do when taking one of our required courses – is one of the significant contributions Bethlehem University makes to interreligious dialogue and I am proud of what we are able to do. My desire is – I hope not too naively – that these students will return to their communities and help to undermine some of the prejudices that exist and which can lead to violence in its various forms.

Over the next few days you will explore violence, non-violence and religion. This is an area of great importance and I thank Fr. Jamal, the Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and the group which has worked with him to bring this conference together. There has been a great deal of work done and, on your behalf, I thank them for that.

I hope these days together provide you with the opportunity to honestly explore this important topic and I encourage you to explore the implications of a commitment to truth, to respect and to non-violence and then to service of one another.

I welcome you and wish you well as you engage with one another.

Shukran.

H.B. MSGR. FUAD TWAL
LATIN PATRIARCH OF JERUSALEM

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

We applaud the Department of Religious Studies at Bethlehem University for holding its third international conference on the theme of “Violence, Non-violence and Religion.”

All religions are distinguished, for their principles and divine messages, which call for non-violence, love, and tolerance. Over the centuries, however, these religions have not been free of episodes of violence, wars, invasions, and victories that could not have taken place without the use of violence and engines of aggression. Take for example, the courts of Inquisition in Spain (in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries); the Invasions of Spain and North Africa (between the seventh and tenth centuries); and the civil war in Algeria during the nineteen nineties, where Moslems killed 200,000 Moslems, under the pretense of the victims having reneged their faith.

In the Gospel of Mathew, when Jesus delivered his central sermon to his disciples, he said: “Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.”

In the Gospel of John, we read where Jesus stood in front of the high priest, prior to his crucifixion, and how he responded to the priest Caiaphas question in an indirect way, angering an officer standing by, who struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying: “Answerest thou the high priest so?” Jesus answered him, “if I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil: but if well, why smitest thou me?”

Also, quoting the Holy Quran we read: “Then if they should be inclined to make peace, do thou incline towards it.” We also can read a hadith of Islam, which says: “None of you would be deemed a believer until he wishes for his brother that which he desires for himself,” (*Sahih El-Bukhary*, The Book of Faith). The reader of religious texts must differentiate between religion and its declared mission and the religious advocates with their human zeal to propagate religion and their command of temporal hegemony.

I would like to point out that the absence of war does not mean peace, as the absence of violence does not mean non-violence. There are no clear ways to peace and to non-violence in our land, yet, peace is the desired path. Violence can be found in a number of forms:

- Political Violence: It presupposes the use of force in the pursuit of absolute power; whereas neither national dignity nor any socially prominent figure can put a stop to it; nor would it be deterred by conscience or by the fear of God.

- Economic Violence: It is a common underlying justification for waging wars and ultimately determines the fate of so many nations. It is no less ugly than political violence.

- Inherited Ideas of Violence: It is manifested in the overall behavior in an individual, their treatment of others and their reactions to challenging situations such as resorting to using vulgar words and behavior towards others.

It is also possible for a person to act violently towards himself while pursuing towards their goals, as was the case when the young Tunisian man, Mohammad Bu'ezzi, on December 17th, set himself on fire. This act was non-violent towards others but was self-inflicted violence – one which brought about a change and the fall of the Tunisian government.

Changing course to talk about non-violence, we know that some regard non-violence as civilized behavior, carried out by strong willpower and as a means to an end. I say that non-violence is a choice and an attitude; it is a plan of action far-flung from all violent reactions; it assumes a positive attitude in facing unexpected and difficult conditions.

A direct outcome of non-violence is the ability to turn weakness into power; faith into an incentive and a means to awaken both conscience and self-esteem; to tip the scales of justice far away from subservience and surrender. A large number of martyrs, who bravely and calmly faced their deaths can assuredly attest to this. People in Palestine who wish to practice non-violence can respond to oppression by holding sit-ins, occupying quarters and declaring hunger strikes – organizing on-going demonstrations or praying the rosary at the foot of the separation wall; with the witness of the media and human rights organizations. Such actions lend legitimacy to the claims of those who perform them.

In general, we face violent and rough conditions in the Holy Land. Violence has become as the air that we breathe, affecting the way we walk our respective paths, do our work and develop. It is so alarming that generations, in our country, were born under the occupation and grew up under occupation and violence and yet are not familiar with the roads that lead to their physical places of worship. Even if they have known it, they are not given access to it, simply because those who aren't yet in their fifties or forties are not permitted to visit them.

Parents and educators often ask the question 'What do we expect of this generation?' My personal answer is in part, an appeal to them sow the real meaning of peace within the hearts of this generation and instill in them a firm conviction in our holy and just cause. Teach them the power of argument and – to consider carefully – religious statements. Help them expurgate our history and religious books of any call to hatred and disbelief. A young child, whether he is a Moslem or a Christian, is like a young plant that needs to be shielded from parasites, so that it can flourish. It is our responsibility to provide these seedlings with the water and fertilizer – in the forms of faith and principles – so they can grow strong and healthy.

Parents, as well as all those who are in charge of educational and cultural institutions, must live up to their responsibilities and not relegate the education of their children to the streets and the mass media, lest they become the primary victims of the violence their children and students will learn.

I sincerely thank you for being so attentive.

H.E. SHEIKH MAHMOUD EL-HABBASH
MINISTER OF ENDOWMENTS AND RELIGIOUS AFFAIRS

In the Name of Allah, Most Gracious, Most Beneficent,
Praise be to God and Peace and Prayer upon all Prophets.

His Beatitude Patriarch Fuad Twal,
Dear Brethren,

Peace be upon you all!

I greet you with the non-violence inspired greeting of: *Salam Allaiykum* or Peace be upon you all. His Beatitude Patriarch Fuad Twal spoke on behalf of both Muslims and Christians; he spoke about Islam and Christianity and about what was revealed in Qur'an and also about what was revealed in the Bible. He spoke about what was revealed in the sermons the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), as he spoke of was revealed in the sermons of Jesus Christ (PBUH). This is the true model, which we always hoped and are stilling hoping for. This is the model we, Palestinians, were raised on. It is the Moslem Christian brotherhood in Palestine.

It is the model that represents that a Palestinian is a Palestinian, regardless of whether he or she is a Muslim or a Christian and is the model that our parents and grandparents raised us on. In spite of the fact that our elders were perhaps illiterate and in many cases could not read or write, they raised us on great morals and the values passed down to us by the prophets.

We were taught, at an early age, the tradition of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) and part of this tradition is to protect the *dhimmi*. The Prophet said, "Whoever harms a *dhimmi* has harmed me." *Dhimmi* are Christians and Jews, who are non-Muslims. These are the values that we were raised on and we insist on raising our children the same.

There is no religion that calls and advocates for violence. Investigate all sacred books and you will never find any call for violence, hatred or killing. The Qur'an has described the mission of Muhammad (PBUH) as a mercy to the entire world. Is it possible that mercy and violence go together? Is it possible that mercy and hatred go together? Is it possible that the humanity of prophets, the prophecy of messengers and the greatness of the Prophets can ever be united with force, violence and injustice? Have you ever heard of a tyrant 'messenger of God?' Is there an unjust saint? Is God Himself a tyrant? It is impossible that this is the case.

We, Palestinians were brought up on those values. It is the grace of God, on Palestine and its people, that they do not have, as such, Muslim-Christian 'dialogue,' due to the simple fact that a human cannot have dialogue with himself but with the 'other.' We do not have amongst us the 'other.' A Muslim is a

Palestinian and a Christian is a Palestinian; they are one in their belongingness to their land and their national feelings. Our social values, eating and drinking habits and our daily interactions, thanks and praise to God, are the same. We are the sons of one mother: Palestine. For these reasons, we simply do not talk about Muslim–Christian dialogue in Palestine. In fact, what we *do* talk about is one Palestinian people, living with and inside itself, with all the values it has inherited from its sacred texts; the Bible and the Qur’an from Jesus and Muhammad (PBUH).

We would like, today, to lay the foundations for those values in our society. We have a constitution and a code of honor, which distinguishes Christian–Muslim Palestinian relations. This constitution is more than one thousand years old and it was not relinquished by any person. This constitution and code of honor is the Covenant of Omar.

We, the offspring of this holy and bountiful land, live in accordance, as Palestinians, to the Covenant of Omar, which embodied and consolidated Muslim–Christian relations in Palestine. It has made, out of the Christians and Muslims in Palestine, one entity, governed by one covenant that harmonizes their relationships, under consensus agreement. The family that is the caretaker and maintainer of the Holy Sepulcher keys is not Christian, but in fact, a Muslim one. What else could demonstrate Muslim–Christian coexistence and harmony more than this?

At a personal level and at the formal level, as a Palestinian Authority and Palestinian people, both Muslims and Christians, we feel uneasy about the diminishing number of Palestinian Christians living in Palestine and emigrating abroad. I want for all Palestinian Christians, who emigrated to all corners of the world, to return here to this country. This is their land and it is not only for Muslims. Our Christian predecessors, who existed on this land before us, accepted that we become the kinsfolk and inhabitants of this land. I do not imagine that there has been anyone who laid the foundations for feelings of love and brotherhood, more than this example. They have offered half of their house to me; this land is a *waqf* (an endowment); it is an Islamic *waqf* and Christian *waqf*; it is not a *waqf* for me or you; indeed, it is a *waqf* from the God of Muslims and Christians.

We never want violence; in fact, we reiterate what Jesus Christ (PBUH) taught us in his sermon of a well known commandment that we, as Muslims and Christians, memorize by heart, “If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also.” There are differences between Christians and Muslims, the same as there are differences between Muslims, internal to themselves and Christians, internal to themselves. Having differences is a natural thing. I have learnt from studies about Jesus as a great prophet, that my belief as a Muslim cannot be perfected unless I believe in him. A Muslim can only be a Muslim if he

believes in Christ, Moses and other Prophets, as he believes in Muhammad, may God’s peace and prayer be upon them all. If having differences is natural, then we have more comprehensive agreement.

Why do we forget what we agree upon and stick to points of differences, which we maximize and then turn into the foundations upon which our relationships are formed? This applies to both Muslims and Christians outwardly and inwardly; it also applies to relationships between Christians, Muslims and Jews. We as Palestinians are not enemies to Jews because they are Jews. When the Palestinian state is established, we will sponsor the arrival of the Jews to Palestine, to all what is sacred to them, whether true or untrue. This does not concern us as those are their beliefs. We do not argue with them about their beliefs.

We, as a Palestinian Authority and Palestinian people, do give care and protect Jewish visitors who arrive at Joseph’s Tomb in Nablus and who come to the holy synagogue in Jericho. Under the sovereignty of the Palestinian state, when they want to visit what they call the Wailing Wall and what we call the *Buraq* Wall, I would not argue with them about the naming of the wall. They claim that it is holy for them, so I welcome them, since they have the right to visit and pray there, the same as the Christians have the right to visit their holy sites and the Muslims right to their holy places, too. It is no one’s prerogative to prevent anyone from visiting his or her own holy place.

The occupation today prevents Christians from following the footsteps of Jesus Christ (PBUH) from Bethlehem to Jerusalem, which is a holy ritual for Christians. Muslims are also prevented from visiting the Aqsa Mosque, an integral part of their rituals. Nevertheless, the occupation is not an example to follow; it exercises injustice but we do not; it is an aggressor but we are not; it practices intellectual, physical and political and media violence, but we do not practice violence against others. Nevertheless, it is our right to remove the hand that is suffocating us; it is your right to scream against the hand that suppresses you. It is your right to be in pain if someone injures you. It is your right to remove someone’s hand away from you if this hand does evil to you.

Palestinian peaceful popular resistance is not violence, but it is against violence and resists it; these are our principles; this is our policy; this is our constitution that we both Muslims and Christians follow. We shall always be God willing on this track to follow suit the prophets, saints and holy figures and raise the banner of peace and love.

I end my talk with a quotation of one of the prophet’s sayings, “You will not enter Paradise until you have faith, and you will not have faith until you love each other. You will not be faithful unless you love one another. Shall I direct you to something which if you fulfill you will love one another? They said, “Yes.” He

said, “Spread the salutation of peace amongst yourselves, Spread the salutation of peace amongst yourselves. Make peace your way of life” It is not only salutation; it means you shall make peace spread in every cell of your body, every particle in your life and the life of others around you, in your family, society and country, Spread the salutation of peace amongst yourselves

H.G. BISHOP DR. MUNIB A. YOUNAN, ELCJHL
BISHOP OF THE EVANGELICAL LUTHERAN CHURCH, JERUSALEM

There is no country where religion is used and misused as much as here in Palestine and Israel. People use their holy writings to justify occupation; to justify home demolitions; to justify detentions of honest, hardworking people; in short, the writings are used to justify violence. Martin Luther once said that the Bible is like a forest, where one can find all kinds of interesting things if one wanders aimlessly, without a compass. But with a good compass, which you find in Christ, you will find peace, justice, and reconciliation. In particular, if we follow Christ’s Sermon on the Mount, we will find our way through the forest. With a compass of “love your enemies,” “turn the other cheek,” and “see in the other the image of God,” one can find the peace for which we all quest.

While Alexander the Great was on his quest to conquer the world, with his army and all the might and power of Greece, he was travelling through the forest in ancient India when he came upon a Jain monk, sitting and meditating peacefully, unperturbed by the mighty army. Why did this monk not move out of the way? Did he not know who Alexander was? Did he not see the mighty army coming? Alexander was so impressed with this man, who exuded non-violence, that he dismounted his horse, observed the monk for a long time and then ordered his army to turn around and begin its journey back to Greece. No army could stand in the way of Alexander but this man of peace was able to turn him back.

This ancient Jain philosophy guided Mahatma Gandhi in his quest for freedom and independence against the mighty British Empire. Through Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr. learned about non-violent methods, which could be used in a segregated American society and Desmond Tutu used similar methods to fight against apartheid in South Africa.

The Jains of India have a beautiful concept, called *ahimsa*, which is usually translated as ‘non-violence.’ Yet, ‘non-violence’ may not be the best translation of *ahimsa*. Jains themselves suggest that more accurately we might use the term ‘non-harming.’ ‘Violence’ suggests the idea of intentionality, while Jains believe that much harm is done to other humans and to our planet, even unknowingly.

“Violence may suggest primarily physically harm. Dijambra monks remind us by their wearing of white masks that many of us harm others through our words and attitudes without even touching the other.

“Violence” suggests a direct connection with persons while Jains would suggest that harm is caused to many victims without us ever seeing them. Take, for example, the whole issue of global warming, where our dependence on fossil fuels, and my own driving habits, leads to major changes in weather patterns,

causing the plight of thousands of victims of hurricanes, cyclones, and flooding; whom we will never see or meet face to face. [The same can be said for taking political sides – how when we choose too quickly or without delving deeply into the issues – how it can indirectly cause harm too many people.]

As the Gospel of John reminds us, God created the world so that all people could have life and have it abundantly. Every action of ours which prevents that happening, causes harm to them and in a sense could be called violence. Every failure of action could likewise be described as acts of violence. Every failure of action could likewise be described as acts of violence. All humans share the same Creator so all must equally be given those basic rights of food, shelter, health care, education, and general well-being.

According to the unanimous resolution of the United Nations General Assembly, this first week of February, we are to recognize a “Week of Interfaith Harmony,” an initiative by H.M. King Abdullah II of Jordan. This week of harmony is based on the simple premise that all religions share the basic core values; namely 1) love of God and 2) love of the neighbor as the self. How can anyone, in the name of religion - anyone who claims to love God - turn to violence against their neighbor; against any human created in the image of God?

The first Epistle of John says, “Those who say, ‘I love God,’ and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars; for those who do not love a brother or sister whom they have seen, cannot love God, whom they have not seen“(I John 4:20).

In his book, *When Religion Becomes Evil*, professor Charles Kimball writes, “Whatever religious people may say about their love of God or the mandates of their religion, when their behavior towards others is violent and destructive, when it causes suffering among their neighbors, you can be sure the religion has been corrupted and reform is desperately needed...”¹

We are called to dismantle these corruptions, these misuses of religious texts which use violence to achieve selfish ends. Misusing a religious text is itself a form of violence.

All religions agree that killing is evil, as we are told by one of the Ten Commandments. Yet Jesus announces in the Sermon on the Mount that, “Thou shall not kill,” goes much further than simply murder. What about injuring someone else? About beating with stick? What about torture? What about holding up a hospital patient at the check point? Jesus goes much further. Anyone who is angry against brother or sister is guilty of murder. It is not simply the act of physical harm. It goes back all the way to our attitudes. Jesus goes on to say that anyone who insults another is guilty of murder. Anyone who humiliates another, who despises another, this is violence. Perhaps the violence of the tongue is the worst kind of violence of all, as the letter of James declares.

¹ Charles Kimball, *When Religion Becomes Evil: Five Warning Signs*. (San Francisco: Harper One, 2008).

Religion must always take a stand with non-violence. There is no returning evil for evil (Romans 12:17). Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. reminds us how violence can be a downward spiral: “Returning hate for hate multiplies hate, adding deeper darkness to a night devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that. Hate multiplies hate, violence multiplies violence, and toughness multiplies toughness in a descending spiral of destruction.”²

Yet we must not confuse pacifism (non-violent response) with passivism (mere compliance). If we allow the latter to be the case, then evil triumphs, hate triumphs, darkness triumphs. We are called to resist evil but resist evil with good. Resist violence with nonviolence. This is the message of the *Kairos* document. For 62 years, Palestinians have been struggling to live in their own land. At times, Palestinians have turned to violence. The Church is called to support the struggle for this abundant life. The way is always, only, non-violence.

Who remembers the names of the armed policemen confronting civil rights marchers in Selma, Alabama? But we remember Dr. King, marching with arms linked with his brothers. Who remembers the driver of the tank in Tiananmen Square in Beijing in 1989? The young man who stood defiantly will be remembered forever. Who remembers the generals of war? But people remember those politicians who dared to make peace.

For me, nonviolent struggle is an integral part of spirituality that teaches us to see the image of God in the other. This nonviolent ways is the only way for justice, peace, reconciliation, forgiveness, and acceptance of the other.

May God guide us to continue in our nonviolent struggle, for the sake of humanity.

May God bless you.

² Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., *Strength to Love*. (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 37.

FR. JAMAL KHADER
CHAIRPERSON OF DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES-BETHLEHEM
UNIVERSITY

The Department of Religious Studies and the Organizing Committee of the Third International Conference welcome you, as we set forth together to study and discuss the relationship between religion, violence and non-violence.

When we planned for this conference, we found we had many questions that needed to be tackled, and answered, so that we may approach a point where we feel that we have found some of the answers. Allow me to clarify those questions, with the hope that the following three days of interaction and discussion will help us to achieve greater understanding.

What forces permit this religious violence to exist? While many religious people affirm that religion is not violent, we nonetheless witness violence, in the name of God, as humankind has, for centuries. We have not seen any change in this trend and in the last decade, many murderous and violent acts were committed in the name of God; the same just and merciful God we all believe in. If we decide to speak conservatively and not consider those acts “religious violence,” it is infeasible to deny that religion has played a major role in those bloody conflicts.

Is there something in religion that compels us to define our identity against “the other,” who does not share the same religious beliefs, instead of defining it in relationship to the others? Does religion essentially and necessarily separate the believers from the non-believers, becoming a force of separation and opposition?

Violence is not expressed only through violent acts, but can also be exhibited through hatred and intimidation. “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults his brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire” (Matthew 5:21-22). Hatred, anti-Semitism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, anti-religious secularism, these are all forms of violence.

Many say that the real issue is not religion itself but that it is the followers of those religions, who use holy texts to justify violence. But we must then ask the question of where and how these followers find their justifications? Does the problem lie in the texts themselves? To what magnitude do we find variances in interpretations of religious texts in different contexts? And which, and to what extent, do social, political and economic conditions affect those interpretations?

Finally, what makes some adherents promote violence and others, non-violence? How does globalization and daily interaction among adherents of

different faiths influence our vision of ourselves and of “the other?”

Religions and religious leaders face many challenges. Religion has an increasing influence on everyday life and in our vision of the world and of “the other,” who is the other because “the other” is different. Do religious leaders have options other than leaving religion in the hands of those who abuse it? How should they, and we, respond to all this violence, allegedly committed in the name of God?

Egypt stands as a thought-provoking example of the relationship between religion and violence. We are currently witnessing the events in that lovely country, which started a few weeks ago with the bombing of a church in Alexandria. Now we are witnessing Muslim and Christian Egyptians, joined as one, protesting in Tahrir Square. What dynamics control the use of religion in that country? The example of Egypt may be able to tell us a lot about the use and abuse of religion.

We are looking forward to hearing from a group of the finest scholars, from all over the world, who are today gathered to tackle these questions – and others – in order to find answers; answers that will lead us to new ways of understanding and doing.

I wish you three fruitful days. May God bless us all.

GLOBALIZATION, RELIGION AND TERRORISM*

Dr. Jamal R. Nassar

INTRODUCTION

We entered the twenty-first century through the gates of globalization. Since then, globalization has become a powerful concept in almost all aspects of our lives. Governments so often blame their troubled economies on globalization. Corporations downsize in order to “compete” in the new global market place. Scholars debate globalization and its merits. Books and magazine articles carry the banner of globalization as their avenue to a broader market. But globalization is not just a recent phenomenon. The process of interdependence was also a process of globalization. What is new is the unprecedented pace of growth of globalization in the past two decades. Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, globalization was checked by the competition between East and West. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the challenge was left to a few weak, helpless nongovernmental organizations that have no chance to stop or even slow the momentum.

Four forces have been major engines behind globalization over the years. Religion, technology, economy, and empire are forces that have reinforced the process of globalization.. Take, for example, the globalizing impact of the rise of empires in relation to the spread of religion. Christianity developed in Palestine and spread to other continents, and it globalized value systems across many regions of the world. Of course, religion and empire coincided as Emperor Constantine I of Rome decided to tolerate Christianity in A.D. 313 as it did with explorations and colonialism. Religion and empire also coincided with the rise and growth of Islam. Islam grew as a result not of converting a ready-made empire but of building a new one. The rise of Buddhism from Hindu culture was also a globalizing phenomenon. Buddhism spread outside of India and became a dominant belief system throughout East and Southeast Asia.

Many people see globalization and terrorism as recent phenomenon. The fact is that neither globalization nor terrorism is new. Globalization did not start with the fall of the Soviet Union, and terrorism did not begin with the September 11, 2001, events. Both have deep roots that reach far into history. Both are important and retain multiple meanings, causes, and consequences. This paper provides the conceptual and historical background of both. While recent trends in economic, cultural, and political globalization have contributed to greater

deprivation and violence, both globalization and terrorism have been ongoing long before recent days.

It is imperative to identify the root causes of terrorism, whether individuals, organizations, or nation-states commit the acts. What is clear after hundreds of years is that terrorism is not a genetic disease but a societal one. Terrorist acts are not merely the acts of fanatics but are committed for clear purposes and by people with clear agendas. Terrorism may be traced back to two fundamental, underlying motivations: the struggle for power and domination and acts of desperation in response to this power struggle. The migration of dreams and nightmares that are enhanced by globalization, bear a special relationship to the proliferation of terrorism. Both globalization and religion have profound implications on violence born out of terrorism. While religion in general, breaches peace and non-violence, adherents of both Christianity and Islam, as well as other religions, have committed acts of violence that others find hard to forgive or forget. We entered the twenty-first century through the gates of globalization. Since then, globalization has become a powerful concept in almost all aspects of our lives. Governments so often blame their troubled economies on globalization. Corporations downsize in order to “compete” in the new global market place while scholars debate globalization and its merits. Books and magazine articles carry the banner of globalization as their avenue to a broader market. Globalization, however, is not a recent phenomenon. The process of interdependence was also a process of globalization.

What is new is the unprecedented pace of increase of globalization in the past two decades. Prior to the fall of the Soviet Union, globalization was checked by the competition between East and West. After the demise of the Soviet Union, the challenge was left to a few weak, helpless non-governmental organizations that have no chance to stop or even slow the momentum.

Four forces have been major engines behind globalization over the years. Religion, technology, economy, and political empires are forces that have reinforced the process of globalization. Take, for example, the globalizing impact that the rise of empires had on the spread of religion. Christianity developed in Palestine and spread to other continents, globalizing values systems across many regions of the world. In A.D. 313, Emperor Constantine I of Rome’s decision to tolerate Christianity coincided with exploration and colonialism to spread Christianity. Religion and empire also coincided to enable the rise and growth of Islam but Islam grew as a result not of converting a ready-made empire but of building a new one. The rise of Buddhism from Hindu culture was also a globalizing phenomenon. Buddhism spread outside of India and became a dominant belief system throughout East and Southeast Asia.

Many people see globalization and terrorism as a recent phenomenon. The

fact is that neither globalization nor terrorism is new. Globalization did not start with the fall of the Soviet Union and terrorism did not begin with the events of September 11th, 2001. Both have deep roots that reach far into history. Both are significant and contain multiple meanings, causes, and consequences. This paper provides the conceptual and historical background of both. While recent trends in economic, cultural, and political globalization have contributed to greater poverty and violence, both globalization and terrorism have been ongoing long before recent days.

It is imperative to identify the root causes of terrorism, whether individuals, organizations, or nation-states commit the acts. What is clear after hundreds of years is that terrorism is not a genetic disease but a societal one. Terrorist acts are not merely the acts of fanatics but are committed for clear purposes and by people with clear agendas. Terrorism may be traced back to two fundamental, underlying motivations: the struggle for power and domination and acts of desperation in response to a perceived power struggle. The migration of dreams and nightmares, which are enhanced by globalization, bear a special relationship to the proliferation of terrorism. Both globalization and religion have profound implications on violence born out of terrorism. While religions in general, espouse peace and non-violence, adherents of Christianity, Islam, as well as other religions, have committed acts of violence that others find hard to forgive or forget.

GLOBALIZATION AND VIOLENCE

Any time the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), or the leaders of the major economic powers meet, demonstrations break out. Some of these protests have turned violent but the potential for violence related to globalization is much

more serious and long lasting than these occasional outbursts of some crowd. Violence against multinational corporate domination of markets is serious and has taken many shapes over the years. Corporate executives have been kidnapped and even murdered. Corporate outlets, such as McDonald’s restaurants, have been attacked. Local police have arrested and killed many opponents of sweatshops or plantation work conditions. Guerrilla groups have also attacked multi-national oil pipelines and disrupted the flow of oil to the market. Law enforcement agencies have aggressively repressed non-violent protests against such organizations as the WTO. Such open and visible violence does occur, but other forms of violence may be taking place without much notice.]

It is clear today that information crosses borders without consideration of territorial boundaries. Satellite transmissions need no visa. Governments are helpless here. If they try to stop the spread of information, they put their

societies in danger of falling farther behind. If they allow it, they risk unwanted consequences. Take, for example, a remote village in Chad where people there still live a traditional way of life, with no electricity, running water, or even a school in the village. Most adults are still illiterate. Imagine if one day the village elder returns from the city with a battery-operated television set, along with a satellite dish. Now picture the villagers gathering in the evening to socialize and discuss their crops and livestock and then, the village elder turns on the television set. Watching in amazement, the villagers may see an American, French, or Italian movie or some show produced in California, New York, London, or Paris. At that time, a new and strange world begins to unfold in front of the villagers' eyes. They see kitchens with faucets that bring water indoors; switches that turn darkness into light, cars, streets, indoor plumbing, and a way of life they never imagined could exist.

A couple of hours later, the village elder turns the set off, and villagers depart to their mud or clay homes to sleep on their dirt floors. As they sleep, they are now likely to have new kinds of dreams. No more are they dreaming about rain, milking the cows, or harvesting the crops. Instead, they are likely to dream of having an amazing faucet that brings water inside a home or of having a car or electricity. Thus begins the process of the "migration of dreams." The dissemination of information contributes to new dreams among the poor. The wealthy and advanced countries are, in essence, encroaching on the dreams of the poor.

The process of migration of dreams is a common occurrence. It takes place all the time and in all places. In rich countries, when people see a television program in a beautiful setting, they too may dream about going to that place someday. An old television show called *The Love Boat*, set on a cruise ship, contributed to a huge growth in the cruise industry. The idea of a commercial is often an attempt at creating the intentional migration of dreams. If we now go back to the village in Chad, we find that as the villagers begin to have greater dreams for themselves and their families, their level of expectation grows. Consequently, the villagers may now expect running water, roads, and even cars. The government is so poor that it cannot afford to provide running water or electricity or roads to every small village. It may have greater priorities of providing such infrastructures to major cities where large numbers of people reside. Or, possibly, the government may prefer to put its limited resources into health care and education rather than building roads to such a remote place with very few occupants.

Social scientists have identified the gap between expectations and achievement as a major contributor to violence. This theory is known as "relative deprivation." Ted Robert Gurr defines relative deprivation as the gap between

what one gets and what one believes he or she should get. Gurr tells us that the larger the gap between the two, the more likely an individual is to turn to violence.³ If this respected and popular theory is accurate, then it is fair to say that the rising expectations of the poor in the Chadian village, or elsewhere, could contribute to increasing violence. That violence may be directed against children, a spouse, neighbors, or even the authority, as represented by government. If some rebel group comes to the village to recruit rebels against the government, one could argue that more villagers are now likely to join because of the increased gap between expectations and achievement. The globalization of information dissemination, therefore, may contribute to violence.

The increasing pace of change with globalization, in itself, may also contribute to violence. When societies go through a fast pace of change, they often experience polarization. Some people support the change, while others oppose it. At times, the division between the two groups is so great that they clash, and a civil war erupts. In the United States, when the country underwent a major transformation from an agricultural economy based on plantations and slavery as its major means of production into an industrial society dependent on coal and labor, the country slipped into a civil war. A similar phenomenon took place in England during the Cromwell Revolution, in France in 1789, and in Russia in the early part of the twentieth century. Today, with the rapid pace of global change, one could argue that our global community could be entering into a phase of global civil war. Those who oppose the change may have already begun their struggle to secede from the globalized union. Terror may be their weapon. After all, the concept of terrorism was coined during the French Revolution's Reign of Terror.

THE RISE AND DEVELOPMENT OF TERRORISM

The word *terrorism* dates back to the French Revolution and was first used in 1794 to refer to the use of terror by governments against their own people. The "Reign of Terror" was a stage in the French Revolution but the use of violence against innocents, for political purposes, can be traced back to the earliest days of "civilization." The Bible itself is full of references to the use of violence in an unjust manner. The pharaohs of Egypt are said to have used such forms of violence against the old Hebrews. Samson brought down the temple on himself and his enemies, many of whom were innocent spectators, long before modern suicide bombers tried. Pirates took over ships for gain in wealth and power long before hijackers of planes were conceived. Stories of troops or rebels burning villages and killing its innocent inhabitants are as old as human history itself. Most prevalent throughout history, though, has been terrorism committed in the imperial efforts toward world domination. For the purposes of this book, however,

³ Ted Robert Gurr, *Why Men Rebel*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1970.

we divide the history of terrorism into three phases: pre-modern, early modern and current.

The pre-modern phase includes all recorded history up to the end of the eighteenth century. While this is a broad categorization, it refers essentially to the times before guns, explosives, and hijackings. During such times, terrorism revolved around assassinations and murders. The Zealots of the Holy Land, the Hashashin of the Middle East and even citizens of ancient Rome and Greece practiced assassination at different times. This practice continued in subsequent eras and in a variety of societies, including in many parts of our world today. The uniqueness of this stage is that the victim of murder or assassination was normally alleged to be guilty of some wrongdoing. In other words, there existed a moral justification for assassination. Statues were even erected to honor assassins, such as in Ancient Greece, where they built statues to honor such assassins as Harmodias and Aristogeiton, however, modern-day assassinations seem to lack such justification.

To speak accurately of terrorism during this period, it is necessary to include early imperialism. An accurate starting point could include the acts of the Greeks, including their sieges on foreign cities such as Herodotus and Troy. The aggression and oppression committed by Alexander the Great, in his conquests of what is today the Middle East, also served as an important early model for future empires. The Punic Wars between Rome and Carthage saw the laying of siege to and the sacking of cities as a main imperial strategy. The fall of the Western Roman Empire in A.D. 476, as well as the Ottoman Turks' sacking of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantium) at Constantinople in A.D. 1456, demonstrated the early savagery of terrorist attacks against civilian populations.

The early modern phase includes the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries – up to just before World War I. This phase included violence by nationalists and other extremists accompanied by spectacular assassinations. The Paris Commune, the Haymarket bombing of 1886 in Chicago (although it was never determined who was responsible), and men such as Ravachol setting off explosions are examples of anarchist terror during this phase. Irish and Armenian nationalists exemplified terrorism during that era. The two most memorable assassinations were those of Czar Alexander II in 1881 and Archduke Ferdinand of Austro-Hungary in 1914, the latter assassination being what precipitated World War I.

Despite the harshness of these individual terrorist acts, they pale in comparison to acts of state terror which took place during this period. The brutality of the mass murder and displacement of Native American tribes by European colonialists, while clearly terrorist in nature, was carried out under the justification of Manifest Destiny. Also extremely brutal was the genocide committed against more than a million Armenians by the Ottomans – during the

late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The early modern period was marked predominantly by the conflict of European empires, including the French, British, Spanish, and German. The British Empire expanded its reach as far as China, which it forcibly opened up to the Western drug trade – after the end of the Opium Wars and China's signing of the Treaty of Nanking in 1842. The full extent of Britain's globalization of terror emerged during this conflict. As a major drug trafficker, Great Britain produced much of its opium in its colony of India, forcing opium shipments into China through the East India Company. The Opium Wars resulted in the deaths of thousands of Chinese, as the British systematically destroyed houses, towns, and communities along the Chinese coast. The conflict also left the Chinese with the problems accompanying the explosion in drug use and addiction.

The European colonization of Africa and exploitation of its resources stands as one of the largest globalized terrorist acts in history. Belgian King Leopold II seized the territory – now known as the Congo (then the Belgian Congo) – in the late nineteenth century. His forces committed massacres, burned villages, and enslaved the region's inhabitants. Historian Adam Hochschild called Leopold's acts mass murder "of genocidal proportions."⁴ Mass murder committed by the European powers was accompanied by the rape of African natural resources and the persistence of the global slave trade. German atrocities in southwestern Africa in the early twentieth century consisted of the attempted extermination of the Herero and Nama peoples. The Boer War of 1899 was fought between the British and the South African Republic (Transvaal) and the Orange Free State. Farms were burned, crops were destroyed and thousands of Boer women and children were forced into concentration camps, resulting in the deaths of thousands.

The modern phase, which is most relevant to our lives today, accordingly deserves the most study. This period stretches from World War I to the present and includes two phases: group struggles for national independence and the waging of warfare against dominant powers (often insurgency movements). The Zionist movement in Palestine waged just such a struggle against the British and the local Palestinian population in order to create their own independent Jewish state. In Algeria, Kenya, Cyprus, South Yemen, and many other places, similar struggles were carried out in order to achieve independence. In some instances, the struggle was waged beyond the borders of the subject territory.

Forms of terrorism, such as the hijacking of planes and bombings of specific targets, became more common during the modern phase. This phase also included ideological and religious groups that engaged in the destruction and

⁴ Adam Hochschild, *King Leopold's Ghost: A Story of Greed, Terror and Colonialism in Africa*. (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1998), p.225.

murder of innocent civilians for political objectives. Groups such as the Weathermen in the United States, the Red Brigades in Italy, and the Japanese Red Army carried out such attacks in wealthy capitalist states. Religion-based groups such as al-Qaeda carried out even more outrageous attacks and continue to exist and even flourish. Other Islamist groups are becoming more active all the time. The recent attacks in Mumbai, India represent a case in point. Similarly, Jewish extremist groups are becoming bolder as are Buddhist and Hindu groups. Christians in Nigeria and other places are also carrying out violent attacks more regularly. Somali pirates in the Gulf of Aden are indiscriminate as they attack ships belonging to corporations and states of all faiths.

Government sanctioned terrorism in the modern period merits significant discussion. World War I provided one of the ugliest examples of the horrors of twentieth-century warfare. It is estimated that as many as nine million people died from the war; one and a half million in the First Battle of Marne alone. The period of World War I saw the rise of the machine gun as well as chemical weapons,— both of which would play important roles in terrorist acts during the following decades. Despite the enormous casualties of World War I, it took until World War II for the full extent of terrorist warfare to materialize. The Holocaust, followed by the Allied firebombing of Dresden and Tokyo and the nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, represented some of the most severe effects of terrorism directed at civilian populations.

The Holocaust resulted in the deaths of over six million Jews and five million Poles, gypsies, homosexuals and other “undesirables.” This act symbolized the ultimate horror of which humankind is capable. Probably equally vicious were the crimes of Stalin, whose reign of terror ended only after the murder of an estimated seven to ten million Ukrainians, who died under his forced starvation. This doesn’t include the roughly twenty to twenty-five million which perished throughout the entire Soviet Empire. What is most disturbing about Stalin’s atrocities is the fact that 50 percent of Russians today look at Stalin as a positive historical figure. Such fanciful conceptions reinforce the extraordinary influence and power of state propaganda. Most often ignored in the history of terrorism during World War II are the American nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. The bombing of Hiroshima resulted in the deaths of around 140,000 people and in Nagasaki alone, around 70,000. Eyewitness accounts of the Hiroshima bombing are as depressing as they are disturbing. John Hersey, author of *Hiroshima*, describes the despair evident during the first night after the bombing: “By nightfall, ten thousand victims of the explosion had invaded the Red Cross Hospital.”⁵ Describing the scene within the hospital, Hersey explains, “Ceilings and partitions had fallen; plaster, dust, blood, and vomit were

everywhere. Patients were dying by the hundreds, but there was nobody to carry away the corpses. Some of the hospital staff distributed biscuits and rice balls, but the charred-house smell was so strong that few were hungry . . . thousands of patients and hundreds of dead were in the yard and on the driveway.”⁶

The Cold War represented the extreme measures that Soviet and American leaders were willing to take in order to achieve global power. The American attack on Indochina resulted in the deaths of millions of Vietnamese, Laotian, and Cambodian peasants. Spraying of chemical defoliants over rural areas resulted in serious health complications for many Vietnamese – at the same time causing substantial environmental damage. Possibly the most disturbing acts were massacres such as My Lai, during which American soldiers executed Vietnamese women and children. The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979 also resulted in numerous atrocities.

Cold War bombing campaigns destroyed entire towns, leaving thousands dead or homeless. One of the most disturbing genocides in the Cold War period occurred in Cambodia. The Communist Khmer Rouge regime, led by Pol Pot, sought to remove any foreign influence from his country, no matter how slight. Pol Pot’s campaign led to the internal displacement of millions of Cambodians and the eventual murder of over a million people. Equally appalling was the Indonesian genocide committed against the residents of the small island of East Timor, made possible by American military and economic support for the corrupt Suharto dictatorship and by support by the CIA of Suharto’s overthrow of former President Ahmed Sukarno. Some estimates indicate that the Indonesian government murdered as many as 200,000 people, or up to a third of the pre-invasion population.

Genocide, or the mass killing of innocent people, has been going on for a long time. The 1994 genocide in Rwanda took the lives of 800,000 innocent people and was carried out by ethnic gangs and extremists. The Hutu extremists, without opposition from the global community, carried out horrific acts of violence against a helpless Tutsi population. Similar acts of violence against innocent people are still going on in the Darfur region of Sudan. Terrorizing innocent people, therefore, can take many shapes and can be carried out not only by few fanatics making their plans in caves or hideouts, but also by leaders issuing orders from the presidential or royal compounds.

SEPTEMBER 11TH AND THE GROWTH OF GLOBAL TERRORISM

It is possible that future historians may point to the attacks of September 11th, as the start of a new phase in terrorism. If Al-Qaeda and other similar groups survive and continue their deadly attacks, some future historian may argue that a new phase of more deadly and mostly theologically based terror began, during our lifetime. Religious zealotry has been a major source of terrorism for a long

⁵ John Hersey, *Hiroshima*. (New York: Bantam Books, 1986), p. 46.

⁶ *Ibid*, 46, 47.

time and it is global – not limited to a specific religion – even though emphasis in the United States has been placed on Islamic groups. Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Buddhist, and Sikh terrorism has taken place in many parts of the world. When a Jewish settler shoots worshippers in a mosque in Hebron, a Hindu burns down a mosque in India, a Sikh assassinates a prime minister, or a Christian brings down a building in Oklahoma City, killing scores of innocents, terror occurs. Yet attention in the United States is unifocal, focusing on the Islamic sector. This is what the late Iqbal Ahmed called a parcelized approach to terror.⁷⁵

Recent terrorist attacks have taken a toll on old theories of international relations; no more can we only speak of nation-states as the main actors in the global arena. Attacks like those of September 11th, 2001 in the U.S. and December 2008 in Mumbai, India have clearly shown the instant impact of non-state actors on international relations. In fact, the state has not always been the predominant actor in global politics nor has it ever been the sole one. After all, the state-centric model of international politics dates back only to the Peace of Westphalia of 1648. The past few decades have witnessed a rapid increase in the number and significance of non-state actors. Multi-national corporations have grown in power as to be able to put the brakes on the power and authority of national leaders. The 2008-2009 financial crises have proven the power of private corporations. Similarly, independent groups such as Al-Qaeda, Somali pirates, Kashmiri Islamists or Basque separatists have a marked effect on domestic and international political behavior.

*This paper is extracted from Jamal R. Nassar, *Globalization and Terrorism: the Migration of Dreams and Nightmares*. (Lanham, MA), 2010

⁷ David Barsamian, Iqbal Ahmad: *Confronting Empire*. (Cambridge, Mass: South End Press), 2000, pp. 96.

A STUDY: VIOLENCE AND NON-VIOLENCE IN MODELS FROM RELIGIOUS TEXTS: QUR'AN AND PROPHET'S *SUNNAH*

Sheikh Abdel Majid Ata Muhammad Al-Amarneh Ata

ABSTRACT: The *Qur'an* is the Word of God, who called himself "peace." He is God, of whom there is no other God, the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One, Peace, the Keeper of Faith, the Guardian, the Majestic, the Compeller, the Superb. Glorified be God from all that they ascribe as partner unto Him" (*al Hasher*, 23). He shows the name of Islam that derives from the word "*Salam*" (peace) to indicate His religion: "The religion before Allah is Islam; submission to His will (*al Imran*, 19). "I... have chosen for you Islam as your religion" (*al-Maeda*, 3). On this basis, we understand the Qur'anic texts, which are His words. The command to kill came later on, due to human necessities; otherwise how did peoples invaded by Islamic armies come to Islam? The nature of human beings resists violence and rejects occupation. My paper explores the Qur'anic texts, in such a way as to show how the Qur'an dealt with violence and non-violence, explaining the divine purposes for giving the Qur'an, in which He calls himself "peace" yet orders jihad and killing. Then I will explore the practical applications of verses from the prophet Mohammad (PBUH). May God guide us.

INTRODUCTION*⁸

God, the Almighty, created man and bestowed upon him the ability to do good, as well as evil. The Almighty says “And shown him the two ways,” [(*al-Balad* [The City]) 90:10. He also says “Verily, We showed him the way, whether he be grateful or ungrateful,” [(*al-Insan* (The Man)) 76:3. The well-known psychologist Freud referred to this in his illustration of the formation of the human self (Id, Ego, Super-ego). Freud can be considered a genius in depicting the evil and violence incited by contemporary man, during the past centuries.

Violence cannot be brought to an end by sermons and positive speech alone, especially when it is recalled that evil is not only triggered by individuals but also by organized groups and superpowers, which have weapons of mass destruction, such as atomic and nuclear bombs, intercontinental missiles, warships and land, sea and air fleets. This has caused worldwide panic, as it is believed that the world is on the constant edge of destruction; all it takes is the press of a button or the decision of a reckless political leader.

It is clear that Islam is realistic and logical in tackling this human problem. Through its many passages, the Qur’an and *Sunnah* have made calls for peace, while offering methods for doing so. At the same time, the Qur’an has also called for jihad (holy war); fighting whenever the need arises, in order to deter criminals and offenders who do not listen to for calls for peace.

In this short study, the author will show these two parallel lines in the Qur’anic verses as much as is possible, in the course of this research.

THE HOLY QUR’AN AND THE CALL FOR PEACE

The Qur’an, the miracle that was revealed to the last of all prophets, Muhammad, (PBUH) was intended by God to lead the world from darkness into light. “Alif. Lam. Ra. (This is) a Book which We have revealed unto you (O Muhammad) in order that you might lead mankind out of darkness into light by their Lord’s Leave to the Path of the All-Mighty, the Owner of all Praise.”⁹ Indeed and in record time, twenty three years, the Prophet (PBUH) was able to relieve and help the people in the Arabian Peninsula, through the Qur’an, to exit from the Jahelite (ignorance) era of pre-Islam and disbelief, into the light of belief in one God.

If Islam followed the way of war and fighting, in the Arab world, where there was a strong tendency towards retaliation, people would not have listened to the Prophet’s call but would have done the opposite and become his enemies. The peaceful and sound Qur’anic approach, however, turned rivals and opponents into supporters and lovers.

⁸ Certain Arabic words and phrases are transliterated into English, from their original Arabic, where suitable equivalents are unavailable.

⁹ The Qur’an, Sura Abraham, 14:1

The Jahelite leaders considered the influence of the Holy Qur’an on the hearts of the people as witchcraft. “Then he said: ‘This is nothing but magic from that of old,’”¹⁰ since it had a strong impact on the souls of the people in giving guidance and changing them from an anti-Islamic camp to a camp of believers, who love their religion and nation; it is the camp of faithful, who are ready to make sacrifices for the rise and defense of Islam.

The direct call of Islam to peace is very lucid in the Holy Qur’an, evidenced by the frequent recurrence of the word *peace* and its derivatives, in the glorified verses. The researcher counted more than 140 locations in the Qur’an where the word *peace* and its derivatives were mentioned, while the inclusion of the word *war* only was counted six times.¹¹

THE WISDOM BEHIND IMPOSITION OF FIGHTING IS THE FULFILLMENT OF PEACE FOR MUSLIMS AND NON-MUSLIMS

God, the Almighty, who named Himself ‘*al-Salam*’, has not imposed fighting in vain; in fact, he recruited it in the service of peace. (If we identify the goals and purposes of Islam in legitimizing fighting, we would understand that it is for the sake of God; jihad for the sake of God is in fact a jihad to achieve good, peace, sublimation and justice in societies. The only path to God is the path of goodness, love and cooperation in goodness and piety, rather than in sin and aggression.)¹²

THE FIRST QUR’ANIC VERSE IN WHICH GOD PERMITS FIGHTING

God, the Almighty, justifies the wisdom of imposing this hard worship on the Muslim souls, who were accustomed to patience in distress and love of guidance, by saying, “Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory. [They are] those who have been evicted from their homes without right, only because they say, ‘Our Lord is Allah.’ And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues and mosques, in which the name of Allah is much mentioned. And Allah will surely support those who support Him. Indeed, Allah is Powerful and Exalted in Might. [And they are] those who, if We give them authority in the land, establish prayer and give *zakah* and enjoin what is right and

¹⁰ * Note: The word *peace* and *peacefulness* are used to indicate non-violence as exhibited in Qur’anic verses.

ibid., Sura Mudathir, verse 24

¹¹ *At-Tayar, Muqawimat as silm wa qadyia al asr bain an nathariya wa attatbiq (Elements of Peace and Age Issues between Theory and Application) /1/63/edition 1/1419 AH (Riyadh: International Publication Center)*

¹² *Mustafa Husni, As-sibai, As sira an nabawiya durus was abar, (Prophet’s Biography: Lessons and Examples), pp. 71*

forbid what is wrong. And to Allah belongs the outcome of [all] matters.”

DR. MUSTAFA SIBAI¹³ INDICATES VIEW ABOUT THE WISDOM IN THE LEGITIMIZATION OF FIGHTING:

(This is the first verse revealed regarding fighting and its legitimization; it is worthwhile to stop and consider the purpose, benefit and objectives of legitimizing fighting:

1. It is mentioned at the start of the verse that the faithful were granted permission to fight; it is noticed that the faithful were referred to by the utterance, “*al lathin yuqatalun*” (those who fight). It is well known in Arabic grammar that this is an indication of supremacy, as expressed by derivation of the language; thus, “*yuqatalun*” is derived from “*muqatala*” i.e. those faithful who were allowed to fight, were persecuted and tortured and subject to fighting. This expressly indicates that the reason for allowing fighting is the fact that they were persecuted earlier. This constitutes, therefore, a response to defy aggression and thwart it, the same idea as “an eye for an eye.” God says, “So whoever has assaulted you, then assault him in the same way that he has assaulted you¹⁴ and “The recompense for an injury is an injury equal thereto.”¹⁵
2. The declaration in this verse indicates that this fighting was in response to the fighting they had to bear; it was an intolerable injustice and aggression, as evidenced in the verse, “*inahum thulium.*” Those who are being fought, because they were wronged; the faithful in Mecca were not unjust or tyrant. They were, in fact, defending their creed and they called upon their folks to free themselves from illusions, superstitions and misdemeanor.
3. The verse is a documentation of the historical facts in which persecution took place. Those who were licensed to fight were previously expelled from their lands. Nothing is more unjust and despotic than to uproot man from his own homeland and force him to live in exile.
4. The same verse is an indication of the original reason these believers were dismissed from their lands; because they opposed their own people and refused to remain pagans, who worshiped idols. Instead they worshiped

¹³ Dr. Mustafa as Sibai, born in Hims, in 1915, received his Ph.D. from Azhar University and became co-founder and dean of the Faculty of Sharia–Damascus University. He spent his life as a daiya, mujahid and scholar and died in 1964, after writing several books.

¹⁴ *ibid.*, Sura Baqara, verse 194

¹⁵ *ibid.*, Sura Shura, verse 40

God, the Almighty. They were persecuted for their religion, so Quraish did not wish to allow them to practice whatever religion they wanted.

5. As long as the faithful were not free to worship their God, the permitted fighting was aimed at preserving freedom of worship, which was the most precious of all life values.
6. God also indicates that this fighting is not only intended to provide religious freedom for them only but for all followers of other heavenly religions, namely Judaism and Christianity. If the believers became stronger, it would mean protection for the churches and synagogues, as well as for mosques so as not to allow the pagans to be in power and fight monotheistic religions and shut down their temples. This is clear in the verse, which says “And were it not that Allah checks the people, some by means of others, there would have been demolished monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques in which the name of Allah is much mentioned.” Hermitages, or convents, are places of retreat for monks while ‘*biya*’ are Christians churches and finally, “*salawat*” are Jewish synagogues. It is clear that fighting, in Islam, was not intended to erase heavenly religions and destroy their temples but to protect those heavenly religions against the haughtiness and conceit of the atheists and idolaters who, wanted to demolish and shut down their temples.
7. In the third verse, there is a revelation of the outcome of the victory of this condoned fighting, whose intended outcome was not colonization of the people, exploitation of their expertise, plunder and looting of its wealth or humiliation of its dignity but rather was in the interest of humanity and benefit of the relevant societies namely in terms of the following:
 - a. It was for the sake of dissemination of the spiritual supremacy in the whole world through worship and to establish prayer.
 - b. Social justice among peoples of the world through *zakat* or alms.
 - c. Achievement of cooperation towards the goodness, dignity and advancement of society to direct in what is right.
 - d. Cooperation to fight evil, crime and corruption and to draw lines between right and wrong; forbidding what is wrong.

These are the desired outcomes of the defeat of the enemy, by means of establishment of an Islamic state, which seeks to promote the soul, unify the

society and advance humanity, through goodness, and prevent its disintegration through evil. Is there any human value which is nobler than the one God has legitimized fighting, for its sake? Is there any fighting among other ancient and modern nations that is equal to this purpose which is in the interest of all people and building of civilizations, towards fulfillment of a truly constructive progress and development? There is no place for dissipation, corruption, atheism, atrocity and bloodshed, of the variety common in the pre-Islamic era, just as the kind of development that is being witnessed in the materialistic western civilizations nowadays.

“If we identify the goals and purposes of Islam in legitimizing fighting, we would understand that it is for the sake of God; [j]ihad for the sake of God is in fact a [j]ihad (holy war) to achieve goodness, peace, sublimation and justice in societies. The only path to God is the path of goodness, love and cooperation in goodness and piety rather than in sin and aggression.”¹⁶

The consent to resort to fighting came fifteen years after the call to Islam, in order to precipitate the notion that Islam was revealed, by God, so as to guide them in their worship of God, rather than making them His enemy. God’s words reveal, “Permission [to fight] has been given to those who are being fought, because they were wronged. And indeed, Allah is competent to give them victory.”¹⁷ God, the Almighty, exhibits in this verse the justification for legitimizing fighting by saying, “*Ina hum thulium*” (Those who are being fought, because they were wronged) when the disbelievers were despotic and expelled the Prophet (PBUH) out of their midst and had intentions to kill him, his followers were scattered in all directions; some went to Habasha while others went to Al-Madinah; when they settled in Al-Madinah, the Prophet followed them; they gathered around him and gave him allegiance. Then they built their cornerstone in it; later God legitimized the [j]ihad against the enemies so this was the first verse to this effect.¹⁸

Fighting was not an end, by itself, but it was a call, which lasted peacefully, for fifteen years while this peaceful call took part, during eight remaining years of the revelation of the Qur’an; quite a long time.

I will show Qur’anic models in which God imposed fighting; however, in these same verses He mentions peace and keeping of pledges, vows, human rights and non-exploitation of this obligation for the sake of aggression.

The following are Qur’anic verses:

16 Mustafa Husni, *As sira an nabawiya durus was abar (Prophet’s Biography: Lessons and Examples)* pp. 68-71

17 *The Qur’an, Sura al-Hajj, verse 39*

18 Ibn Kathir Ismail Ibn Kathir, *al qurashi ad dimashqi- tafsir al quran al athim (Interpretation of the Glorified Qur’an), Ed. 1, Vol, 5, 1425 A.H. – 2004 A.C. (Safa Bookstore: Cairo) pp. 252*

1. “Fight in the way of Allah those who fight you but do not transgress. Indeed. Allah does not like transgressors.”¹⁹ This is what distinguishes fighting in Islam; it is not a bloody religion for corporal aspirations; in fact, it is a divine religion, meant to spread justice and maintain humanity. When God legitimized fighting, He determined its objectives and motives so that it would not contradict and oppose the notion that Islam seeks to proliferate. “It is fighting for the sake of God not for any other reason known for humanity in its extended wars...it is not for the sake of glory and hegemony on earth; it is not for the sake of gains and spoils; it is not for the sake of raw materials; it is not for the sake of class or race hierarchy; it is fighting for those specific objectives to which Jihad was legitimized in Islam; fighting for the sake of promoting God’s word on Earth, acknowledgment of His life approach and shielding of the believers not to be seduced to be converted; any other thing makes it an illegitimate war in the eyes of Islam; there is no reward or rank for those who wage it.”²⁰ It bans aggression even during fighting. This is a far cry from what we are currently witnessing in our times; the mass destruction caused by wars, compared to the divine and prophetic commands banning aggression, even during war time on the other. God commands the faithful not to launch aggression. “In fighting fight those who fight you. Do not fight those who do not fight you like women, boys, old men and the ill or those who greeted you and refrained from fighting you. You should refrain from doing any kind of aggression like destruction and cutting of trees.” It was noted that the negative verbs signify generalization.²¹
2. “O you, who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.”²² This is the third model I selected in which God, the Almighty, calls upon his faithful worshipers to engage into peace. “He wanted to guide us to what gathers the entire humanity which is reform, peace and agreement decided upon by Islam and required by belief in God and Judgment Day.”²³ Peacefulness harmonizes with faith and Islam; that is why some scholars interpreted it with Islam; it is not foreign or

19 *The Qur’an, Sura Baqara, verse 190*

20 *Qutub Ayyed Ibrahim, Fi thilal al quran (In the Shade of Quran), Volu. 1, pp. 187*

21 *Mohammad Rashid Rida, tafsir al manar, al Manar Interpretation, Ed. 2, 1350 A.H. (Manar Press: Egypt) and see also Ibn Kathir Ismail Ibn Kathir, al qurashi ad dimashqi- tafsir al quran al athim (Interpretation of The Glorified Quran), Ed. 1, Vol, 5, 1425 A.H. – 2004 A.C. (Safa Bookstore: Cairo) pp. 252*

22 *The Qur’an, Sura al Baqara, verse 208*

23 *Mohammad Rashid Rida, tafsir al manar, al Manar Interpretation, Ed. 2, 1350 A.H. (Manar Press: Egypt), pp. 256*

paradoxical since the religion of Islam is the religion of peace with God, the soul and others.

3. "Fighting has been enjoined upon you while it is hateful to you. But perhaps you hate a thing and it is good for you; and perhaps you love a thing and it is bad for you. And Allah knows, while you know not."²⁴ The nature of the believer does not correspond with fighting, which involves bloodshed; he hates fighting and does not favor it. In light of God's knowledge of this, He mentions this in the verse where he imposed fighting. "Their hatred of fighting was not out of fear for themselves to be eliminated nor was it out fear that the right they hold might be wasted but in fact it was out of the love of peace and mercy upon the people which the Holy Qur'an bestowed upon them and precipitated it in their hearts. He also opted for perseverance in dealing with the disbelievers through proof and evidence rather than using the sword and spear hoping that they all would embrace Islam."²⁵
4. "Indeed, the worst of living creatures in the sight of Allah are those who have disbelieved, and they will not [ever] believe. The ones with whom you made a treaty but then they break their pledge every time, and they do not fear Allah.

So if you, [O Muhammad], gain dominance over them in war, disperse by [means of] them those behind them that perhaps they will be reminded. If you [have reason to] fear from a people betrayal, throw [their treaty] back to them, [putting you] on equal terms. Indeed, Allah does not like traitors. And let not those who disbelieve think they will escape. Indeed, they will not cause failure [to Allah]. And prepare against them whatever you are able of power and of steeds of war by which you may terrify the enemy of Allah and your enemy and others besides them whom you do not know [but] whom Allah knows. And whatever you spend in the cause of Allah will be fully repaid to you, and you will not be wronged. And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. But if they intend to deceive you - then sufficient for you is Allah. It is He who supported you with His help and with the believers."²⁶

We find here that the verse, calling for peace, came after the verses calling for preparation for war since fighting is not the origin. It is also

²⁴ *ibid.*, Sura al Baqara, verse 216

²⁵ Mohammad Rashid Rida, *Tafsir al manar, al Manar Interpretation, Ed. 2, 1350 A.H. (Manar Press: Egypt), pp. 314*

²⁶ *Anfal Sura, verse 55-62*

justified by specific reasons and circumstances, namely disbelievers' breach of their covenants. The tendency towards peace is always there whenever the disbelievers wanted it, in spite of the fact that they were known for their deception and betrayal. This, however, this does not deter the Muslim from opting for peace since as he relies constantly on God²⁷ and is not subject to the incitement and maneuvering of the disbelievers.

5. "This is a declaration of disassociation, from Allah and His Messenger, to those with whom you had made a treaty among the polytheists. So travel freely, [O disbelievers], throughout the land [during] four months but know that you cannot cause failure to Allah and that Allah will disgrace the disbelievers. And [it is] an announcement from Allah and His Messenger to the people on the day of the greater pilgrimage that Allah is disassociated from the disbelievers, and [so is] His Messenger. So if you repent, that is best for you; but if you turn away - then know that you will not cause failure to Allah. And give tidings to those who disbelieve of a painful punishment. Excepted are those with whom you made a treaty among the polytheists and then they have not been deficient toward you in anything or supported anyone against you; so complete for them their treaty until their term [has ended]. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him]. And when the sacred months have passed, then kill the polytheists wherever you find them and capture them and besiege them and sit in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they should repent, establish prayer, and give *zakat*, let them [go] on their way. Indeed, Allah is Forgiving and Merciful. And if any one of the polytheists seeks your protection, then grant him protection so that he may hear the words of Allah. Then deliver him to his place of safety. That is because they are a people who do not know. How can there be for the polytheists a treaty in the sight of Allah and with His Messenger, except for those with whom you made a treaty at al-Masjid al-Haram? So as long as they are upright toward you, be upright toward them. Indeed, Allah loves the righteous [who fear Him]. How [can there be a treaty] while, if they gain dominance over you, they do not observe concerning you any pact of kinship or covenant of protection? They satisfy you with their mouths, but their hearts refuse [compliance], and most of them are defiantly disobedient. They have exchanged the signs of Allah for a small price and averted [people] from His way. Indeed, it was evil that they were doing. They do not observe toward a believer any pact of kinship or covenant of

²⁷ Abu Saud Ibn Muhammad Al Imadi Al Hanafi Shokany, *Irshad al aqil as salim ila mazaya al kitab al karim (Guidance of the sound mind to the precious Book), trans. Abu Saud, pp. 372*

protection. And it is they who are the transgressors.”²⁸

This is a peaceful way to justify fighting and determine its objectives. It opened the hearts of the people, conquered by the Muslim armies, for the sake of God’s religion before the conquest of their lands and as a result, they embraced Islam in great numbers. We find that the Qur’an, even in its declaration of war against the unbelievers, reminds the believers of the covenants and insists that they abide by them, since this is a part of being pious. It also shows that God, the Almighty, loves the pious, who are so, in part, because they are loyal to covenants.²⁹ We also see that the Qur’an justifies certain reasons for fighting and provides a way for unbelievers to repent, before a war begins. He in fact commands that the unbelievers, who seek their protection and shelter, shall not be harmed. Sheikh Sayyed Qutub³⁰(PBUH) blamed interpreters³¹ who understand from these texts the keenness of Islam to have peace with its enemies. Qutub felt that when an author, interpreting the text, failed or refused to recognize certain aspects of Islam, such as its central truth and nature, the flexibility in its approach, it was a serious shortcoming. Some interpreters failed to explain the nature of this religion and the radical change between God’s approach and that of the slaves; two approaches which differ, from the core, and suggested that a long period of coexistence, between the two camps. One of the reasons being that authors were preoccupied, like any other modern writers, with the desperate reality of the majority of Muslims and the apparent power of the disbelievers, atheists and the people of the Book, during that time. Qutub sought a testimony for Islam, demonstrating that it is a religion of peace and non-violence, whose only concern is to live within its own boundaries in peace. Whenever there are truces, treaties and covenants, Islam seeks to uphold them and not reconsider a second choice.³²

Those two intellectual lines of thought, namely the one which states that peace is the basis of Islam, and the other, which states that jihad is the basis in Islam, lead to a disagreement in the interpretation of scripture; the Prophets’ traditions, the events of the prophetic history, which call for peace and reconciliation, and the other, which calls for jihad

28 *Bara Sura, verse 1-10*

29 *Abu Saud Interpretation) – part 2 , p. 382*

30 *Sayyed Qutub Ibrahim Husain Shathily, born in Egypt on 9/10/1906, was martyred on 29/08/1966. He wrote several book: Tafsir fi thilal al quran , Salam alami fi islam adalah ijtimayia fi islam and others*

31 *One of the interpreters who consider peace as the basis for Islam is Muhammad Rashid Rida in Tafsir al manar and Muhammad Izzat Darwaza in Tafsir al hadith ; also see Fi thilal al quran, vol. 3, pp. 1589*

32 *Qutub Sayyed Ibrahim Qutub, Fi thilal al quran , Vol. 3, pp. 1589*

and fighting. Each is firmly evidenced in expressly stated verses. In fact, full Islam unites the two thoughts; it is the religion of jihad and fighting, when the situation calls for it. At the same time, it is the religion of peace and covenants, whenever the situation calls for it.

6. “What is [the matter] with you [that you are] two groups concerning the hypocrites, while Allah has made them fall back [into error and disbelief] for what they earned. Do you wish to guide those whom Allah has sent astray? And he whom Allah sends astray, never will you find for him a way [of guidance]. They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper. They wish you would disbelieve as they disbelieved so you would be alike. So do not take from among them allies until they emigrate for the cause of Allah. But if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them and take not from among them any ally or helper. Except for those who take refuge with a people between yourselves and whom is a treaty or those who come to you, their hearts strained at [the prospect of] fighting you or fighting their own people. And if Allah had willed, He could have given them power over you, and they would have fought you. So if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them. You will find others who wish to obtain security from you and [to] obtain security from their people. Every time they are returned to [the influence of] disbelief, they fall back into it. So if they do not withdraw from you or offer you peace or restrain their hands, then seize them and kill them wherever you overtake them. And those - We have made for you against them a clear authorization).³³ The call for peace is quite lucid in these verses; even those who adopt the approach of Jihad cannot but submit and agree that peace is the basis in the Qur’anic approach. Sayyed Qutub has the following to say in this regard, (It seems in this ruling that Islam opted for peace when it was feasible to opt for peace; that does not contradict with its basic approach in freedom of call and freedom of choice, not to oppose *dawa* by force along with a guarantee of peace for all Muslims, not to expose them to deception or not to expose the *dawa* itself to freezing and danger... Thus it makes all those who resort, call and live among full pledges people – (*Thima* or Truce) covenant – shall be dealt with as the full pledged people; this is a clearly featured peaceful spirit in such rulings)³⁴

33 *The Qur’an, Sura Nisa Sura, verses 88-90*

34 *Fi Thilal al quran – vol. 2 – pp. 733*

7. “So do not weaken and call for peace while you are superior; and Allah is with you and will never deprive you of [the reward of] your deeds.”³⁵ Those who believe that jihad and fighting are the basis of Islam refer to this verse, thinking that the call for peace is not allowed in the case of Muslim supremacy. This verse is similar to the verse which says, “And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing.”³⁶ Anyone who investigates the interpretations and books on *al-fiqh* (jurisprudence), find that the Muslim nation, with its scholars and interpreters, used this verse, as reconciliation is an option. “The prophet’s companions (PBUH) had reconciled, at the time, with Omar Ibn Al-Khattab and other scholars. Several of the non-Muslim countries on what they took from them and left them on what they are and they are capable of eradicating them. The prophet – may God’s peace and prayer be upon him – did make a reconciliation with several kinsfolk on the sums of money they pay³⁷)³⁸ Interpreters interpreted this verse as banning the call for reconciliation.³⁹ An observer of these models of Qur’anic verses and others shall discover the reason that baffled the scholars, jurists and researchers in acknowledging that peace in Islam is the origin or war and fighting since the peace advocating verses came in the midst of the fight advocating verses or follow them. The Holy Qur’an, God’s eternal book, considers peace as a goal, in both this world and on Judgment Day; this is completely true when we know that “*As Salam*” is one of the holy names of God. The Holy Qur’an acknowledges the principle of world peace by saying: “O you, who have believed, enter into Islam completely [and perfectly] and do not follow the footsteps of Satan. Indeed, he is to you a clear enemy.”⁴⁰ It also gives direction to the Muslim commitment to peace and security, even when enemies give up fighting; thus, the Muslims have to follow the path of peace. He says, “So if they remove themselves from you and do not fight you and offer you peace, then Allah has not made for you a cause [for fighting] against them.”⁴¹ Also when he says, “Allah does not forbid you from those who do not fight you because of religion and do not expel you from your homes; from being righteous

35 *The Qur’an, Sura Muhammad – verse 35*

36 *ibid., Sura Anfal, verse 61*

37 *God’s prophet made a stipulated reconciliation with the people of Khaybar; he reconciled between Al Damiri, Akidr Doma and Ahl Najran. He made a truce with Quraish for ten years until they broke their pledge; look : Al Qurtubi: Abi Abdallah Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ansari Al Qurtubi – al jami li ahkam al quran - vol.8 p. 40.*

38 *Ibid p.40*

39 *– irshad al aqil as salim ila mazaya al kitab al karim (Guidance of the sound mind to the precious Book) (Abu Saud Interpretation) – part 2 , p. 152*

40 *The Qur’an, Sura al Baqara, verse 208*

41 *Al Nisa Sura, verse 90*

toward them and acting justly toward them. Indeed, Allah loves those who act justly.”⁴² These verses encourage Muslims to abide by peace, if war breaks out, inadvertently, since peace is the basis for “*dawa*.” If it were the opposite, the Holy Qur’an would not call on Muslims to stick to peace whenever the other non-Muslims opt for it; as long as they show their good intentions. Muslims are required to accept peace in all its shapes and forms.⁴³ The scholar Sheikh Hasan al-Bana,⁴⁴ may he rest in peace, was brilliant in tracing peace themed verses and did extensive research on the subject. In light of the significance of this research, it was published as a book.

Taking into account that the renewed sheikh founded and deeply rooted ‘*jama Islamia*,’ in modern times, it is considered an inspiration for other contemporary Muslim groups, all over the world, especially in the Palestinian context. The author quoted this wonderful review of the peace inspired ideas in the Holy Qur’an from his book: “The name “Islam” itself is derived from this substance the substance of peace. The believers in this religion did not find for themselves a name better than to be, Muslims. [It is] the religion of your father, Abraham. Allah named you ‘Muslims’ before [in former scriptures] and in this [revelation] that the Messenger may be a witness over you and you may be witnesses over the people.”⁴⁵

The fact that Islam is the truth and essence of this religion, for the sake of God, “Yes [on the contrary], whoever submits his face in Islam to Allah while being a doer of good will have his reward with his Lord. And no fear, will there be, concerning them, nor will they grieve.”⁴⁶ “When his Lord said to him, ‘Submit’, he said ‘I have submitted [in Islam] to the Lord of the worlds.’”⁴⁷ Muslims greet each other by saying “*as-salam alaiyikum wa rahmat allah wa barakatuhu*” (may God’s peace and mercy be upon you) and they conclude their prayers by saying, ‘*salam*’ to the right, ‘*salam*’ to the left and ‘*salam*’ to the imam, if they were praying behind an imam. One gets the feeling that they peacefully greet all of earth’s inhabitants. The Holy Qur’an was revealed in a night overwhelmed by peace and celebrated by the angels of peace. “Indeed, We sent the Qur’an down during the Night

42 *Al Mumtahina Sura, verse 8*

43 *At tayar – muqamimat as silm wa qadaiya al asir – 1 – 64-63*

44 *Hasan Bana was born in al-Mahmodiah, Bahira district in Egypt in the year 1906 A.C. he founded the Muslim Brotherhood ; he was a student of Jamal ad Din Afghani, Mohammad Abdo and Muhammad Rashid Rida. Therefore the call of Bana Imam for the return of Islam to contain all life aspects is considered a pioneering renewal in the sphere of Islamic thought; he gave a special attention to the Palestinian question. He was assassinated in Cairo on 14 Rabi Awal 1368 corresponding to 12 February 1949 A.C.*

45 *Qur’an, Sura al-Hajj, verse 78*

46 *ibid., Sura al-Baqara, verse 112*

47 *ibid., Sura al-Baqara, verse 131*

of Decree... Peace it is until the emergence of dawn.”⁴⁸ The best greeting between God and His worshippers is ‘peace.’ Muslims believe that on Judgement Day, they will greet God by saying, ‘peace.’ And He has prepared for them a noble reward ⁴⁹. The angels will also say the same thing, to those who go to Paradise “And the angels will enter upon them from every gate, [saying], ‘Peace be upon you for what you patiently endured. And excellent is the final home.’”⁵⁰. Heaven itself is called the home of peace: “For them will be the Home of Peace with their Lord. And He will be their protecting friend because of what they used to do;”⁵¹ “And Allah invites to the Home of Peace and guides whom He wills to a straight path.”⁵². The name of God the Almighty is *Salam*”

“He is Allah, other than whom there is no deity, the Sovereign, the Pure, the Perfection, the Bestower of Faith, the Overseer, the Exalted in Might, the Compeller, the Superior. Exalted is Allah above whatever they associate with Him.”⁵³ A Muslim would never falter in responding to the call of peace, “And if they incline to peace, then incline to it [also] and rely upon Allah. Indeed, it is He who is the Hearing, the Knowing. But if they intend to deceive you - then sufficient for you is Allah. It is He who supported you with His help and with the believers.”⁵⁴ “...and do not say to one who gives you [a greeting of] peace ‘You are not a believer,’ aspiring for the goods of worldly life; for with Allah are many acquisitions.”⁵⁵.

There is not in this world a religious *Sharia* or a social system that has imposed the greeting of peace as a practice and considered it a ritual and a pillar, as Islam has. Islam also given souls discipline in peace training, through performing ‘*ihram*’ in pilgrimage. The moment a Muslim makes his intention to perform pilgrimage, he is forbidden to cut his nails, his hair, a plant, a tree, kill an animal, hunt, or harm anyone with his hand or tongue. These rules stand, even if a Muslim were to meet his father’s killer, face to face. “There is [to be for him] no sexual relations and no disobedience and no disputing during Hajj.”⁵⁶. Through this *ihram*, the Muslim makes peace between himself and other living creatures.⁵⁷ Thus we find that *salam* is a common goal of all actions, in Islam, in doctrine, worship and jurisprudence.

48 *Qur’an Sura al-Qadr, verses 1, 4, 5*

49 *ibid., Sura Ahzab, verse 44*

50 *ibid., Sura Ra’d, verse 24*

51 *ibid., Sura Anam, verse 127*

52 *ibid., Sura Yunis, verse 25*

53 *ibid., Sura Hashr, verse 23*

54 *ibid., Sura Anfal, verse 62*

55 *ibid., Sura Nisa, verse 62*

56 *The Qur’an, Sura al-Baqara, verse 197*

57 *Bana, Hasan, Salam fi islam, Peace in Islam, modern age publications, ed.2, 1971*

A researcher does not have to exert great effort to prove this; the word *salam* and the actions in *salam* are spread in verses, traditions and jurisprudence. Imam Hasan Bana was eager to conduct research, based on his letters and lessons, for this purpose during a time when the Muslim world was under the yoke of modern colonization, between the First and Second World Wars.

MODELS FROM THE PROPHETIC BIOGRAPHY: A BENCHMARK FOR PEACEFUL ACTION

The Prophetic biography is the practical application of the texts of the Holy Qur’an. Therefore, Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) wanted peace and nonviolence to be salient in his speeches and actions. The Prophet is quoted as saying to his wife “Oh Aisha! God is tender; he loves tenderness; he gives to tenderness what he does not give to violence; in fact what He gives it, He did not give to any other.”⁵⁸

Examples of this interest in exhibiting God’s call to peace are:

❖ *The Covenant of al-Madinah al-Munawarah:*

- When, God the Almighty, conquered *al-Madinah al-Munawarah* Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emigrated there, and found that Jews inhabited it. God, the Almighty, spoke to them, saying “You will surely find the most intense of the people in animosity toward the believers [to be] the Jews and those who associate others with Allah.”⁵⁹ We see, however, the Prophet signed a covenant, in which he considers the Jews and Muslim as one nation. This is considered as one of the most sublime meanings of peaceful coexistence, especially in a society that is still primitive and abides by Bedouin customs and traditions.

❖ *The Ghatfan Reconciliation:*

When the siege on the Muslims was tightened, on the Day of Trench, God’s prophet sent for the *al-Madinah* leaders and made an offer to them to give up one third of *al-Madinah*’s crops, to Ghatfan, provided that they refrain from fighting Muslims. The Madinan’s, however, refused to make this concession. This part constituted a part of the Prophet’s peaceful mentality, considering that he thought of a way of averting war with his enemies, through financial sacrifice, even in the middle of the battlefield.

58 *Rawiy: Aisha: Muslim- source – sahih muslim – page or number 2593*

59 *Al Maida Sura, verse 82*

❖ *The Hudaibiyya Treaty*

The Prophet (PBUH) signed the Hudaibiyya treaty with Quraish, Islam's fiercest enemy, following the fiercest battle the Muslims had fought. Habi Ibn Akhtab, the Jew, was able to persuade Arab tribes to wage a war on Muslims. He formed a coalition. God called this coalition, '*Ahzab*' and the aim of this coalition was to eradicate Islam from *al-Madinah al-Munawarah*; however, the Prophet was not deterred and signed a reconciliation treaty, with them, which is considered a benchmark of a politician.⁶⁰ Thus we notice that the Prophet (PBUH) signed a treaty, which was not approved by his companions. In fact, the majority had protested this treaty, with the one exception of Omar Ibn Khattab, may God be pleased with him. He supported this unmerited and asymmetrical treaty due to old and modern political norms. God approved it and named it a '*fathan mubinan*' (vast opening).

Sahil Ibn Hanif⁶¹ said, on the Day of Safiyn, "Oh people accuse yourselves; we were with the Prophet (PBUH) on the Day of Hudaibiyyah; if we saw fighting we would have fought. Omar Ibn Khattab replied, "Oh Messenger of God; aren't we right and they are wrong? He replied 'certainly.' He said, 'Isn't our fighting in heavens and theirs in fire?' He replied 'yes.' He said, 'Why do we take the fall in our religion. Why don't we return and let God rule between them and us?' He said, 'Oh, Ibn Khattab, I am God's prophet and He would never abandon me.' Omar went to Abu Bakir and told him what he told the Prophet (PBUH). He said, 'He is God's prophet and He would never abandon him.' Accordingly, the al-Faith chapter was revealed to the Prophet (PBUH) so he recited it to Omar and others. Omar then said, 'Oh God's messenger is it a conquest?' He said, 'Yes it is.'⁶²

This treaty gave the prophet (PBUH) and his companions more time to dedicate for '*dawa*' to Islam; therefore, people embraced Islam in great numbers and at record time. The treaty was considered a chance to fortify and reinforce the pillars of Islam, in the state of the *al-Madinah*, and around the world. The moment the treaty was made, the Prophet (PBUH) began his correspondence with the monarchs and

⁶⁰ Sayyed Qutub – *fi thilal al quran* – vol. 5 – pp.2832-2835

⁶¹ Sahl Ibn hanif: he is the father off Abu Imama Ibn Sahl and the brother of Uthman Ibn Hanif; he was contemporary to badir; he died in Kufa in 38 A.H. He is described in the six books by Imam Shams addin Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Thahabi – *siyar alam al nubala (Biographies of Nobles)* vol. 4 p. 6 ed. 1 , 1997 – *dar fikr – Beirut.*

⁶² Rawiy: Aisha: Muslim- source – *sahih muslim – page or number 3182 khulasat al daraja* : (sahih).

princes of the world.

○ *Some of the wisdoms of this reconciliation are:*

- ❖ It set the stage for conquest of Meccah "*Ina fatahna laka fathan mubina*" (Indeed, We have given you, [O Muhammad], a clear conquest.) Ibn Qaiym says, "It was a door and key."
- ❖ God, the Almighty, wanted to show the difference between divine inspiration which views things in a supra-worldly way as well as dealing with those earthly matters. That is why He gave the unbelievers all what they wanted, regarding their conditions and He was lenient with them in matters that even the Prophet's (PBUH) companions did not approve.
- ❖ Moreover, God the Almighty, wanted his Prophet to conquer Mecca in a merciful and peaceful manner rather than using violence and death. This peaceful conquest encourages people to embrace Islam in great numbers. It also allows for those who harmed and banished him, earlier, to embrace Islam and become subject to it as monotheistic believers.⁶³
- ❖ *The Khaibar Treaty*
 - When the Muslims conquered the fort of Khaibar,, some Jewish tribes offered a truce to the Muslims, so as to be under their protection, in return for giving Muslims a portion of Khaiybar's harvest. The Prophet (PBUH) accepted by saying, "We keep them as long as God keeps them."⁶⁴
- ❖ *Desire for the Embrace Of the Islam by the Opponent*
 - This is what characteristically differentiates Muslims from others. The polarization of others, if they were enemies, to Islam is one of the most important objectives of Islam. This can only take place in peaceful ways. Prophet (PBUH) supplicates even in the direst circumstances, for the clemency of adversaries, regardless of whether they were Arabs, Jews, Christians or anything else, hoping that this would entice them to embrace Islam.
- ❖ *His Supplication on the Day of Taif:*

It is only natural that one who suffered to use *dua* ' against his kinsfolk, as in

⁶³ Al Boti, Muhammad Said Ramadan – *Fiqh al siyrah- The Jurisprudence of Biography,* pp.233-236) vol. 4– *dar fikr muasir– Beirut- Lebanon- dar al fikr- Damascus -.* ed. 1991

the case of Noah (PBUH): “And Noah said, ‘My Lord, do not leave upon the earth from among the disbelievers an inhabitant.’”⁶⁵ Or as it was shown in Moses (PBUH) *dua*’ as recited in the following verse, “[Moses] said, ‘My Lord, indeed I do not possess except myself and my brother, so part us from the defiantly disobedient people.’”⁶⁶. The Prophet Muhammad, however, (PBUH) blamed all what had happened to him on himself and beseeched God not to be angry with him and not to torture his people by *dua*’: “O Allah, to you do I complain of the weakening of my strength, of my few options, of the way people humiliate me, O the Most Merciful of the merciful ones. You are the Lord of the weak ones, and You are my Lord. To whom will You entrust me? To a distant (stranger) who will show me an unwelcoming face, or to an enemy, whom You have given control over my situation? If You are not angry with me, then I do not mind, though safety from You is easier for me. I seek refuge with the Light of Your Face, which brings light to darkness, and upon which the affairs of the world and the Hereafter become right – from Your anger descending upon me, or Your displeasure befalling me. I will continue to seek Your Pleasure, until You become pleased (with me). And there is neither might nor power except with You.”⁶⁷

The Islamic mentality is shown in this patient and persevering prophet, as when he replied to the angel Gabriel (PBUH), when he came to him and said, “God has commanded me to obey you with regards to your people, because of what they did to you. The prophet replied, ‘Oh Lord, guide my kinsfolk for they do not understand.’ Gabriel said, ‘He is right, who called you lenient and merciful.’ It was cited in the two *sahih*s that God the Almighty dispatched the angel of the mountains with Gabriel and said to the Prophet (PBUH) ‘God has sent me to you so that you may give me your orders. (I will carry out your orders).

If you wish I will bring together the two mountains⁶⁸ that stand opposite to each other at the extremities of Makkah to crush them in between.’ But the Messenger of Allah (PBUH) said, ‘I prefer to hope that Allah will raise, from among their descendants, people that will worship Allah, the One, and will not worship others’”⁶⁹

❖ *Custody over Egypt’s people*

Abu Thar al Ghafari narrated to have said that God’s prophet (PBUH) said, “You are going to conquer Egypt. It is the land where the “*qirat*” is being named. If you conquer it treat its people very well. They are trustworthy and merciful or said : “thima and sihran” (relatives and next of kin); if you see two men fighting in it in then it is a reason for doubt, so depart from it.”⁷⁰

This is evidence to the Islamic thought which the prophet - May God’s peace and prayer be upon Him – wanted to teach to the Muslims. He urges them to treat the people of Egypt very well before it was conquered by Muslims. He leaves this will for the coming generations that come after him since the goal is not the gain or control of this country by power as other empires and great powers do at all times but there is a higher goal which is to open the minds and hearts for God’s religion and control of souls through wisdom and lenience, with the power of the thought rather than the might of weapons.

❖ *His Will to Ali on Kheiber Day*

Sahl Ibn Sad A Saidi narrated to have said that prophet Mohammed (PBUH) said, “Tomorrow I will give the banner to one who loves God and the prophet, and whom they love.” This kept awake at night, hoping that he would give it to one of them. The prophet said, “Where is Ali Ibn Abu Talib?” It was said, “Oh God prophet, Ali suffers from his eyes. He said, “Send for him.” Ali was brought to the Prophet, who rubbed saliva from his blessed mouth, on Ali’s eyes and prayed for his cure. Ali was then instantly cured, and Prophet Mohammed gave him the banner. Ali said, “Oh messenger

65 *The Qur’an, Sura Noah, verse 26-27*

66 *ibid., Sura al-Ma’da, verse 25*

67 *Tabarani – Narrator – Abdallah Ibn Abu Ja’far Ibn Abu Talib : Al Albani – source al silsila al daifa – page or number 2933 khulasat al darja – weak <http://www.dorar.net/enc/hadith>*

68 *The two mountains surrounding Mecca*

69 *Narrator Aisha - khulasat al darja: sahih – Muslim – source- musnad sahih – page or number 1795*

70 *Narrator- Muslim – source – musnad sahih – page or number 2543 khulasat al darja - sahih*

of Allah shall I fight them until they become like us. He said, “Advance deliberately, and, before joining battle, summon them to embrace Islam. Then he briefed them on their duties towards Allah. Verily, if God should give religious guidance to a single individual of them through your instrumentality, it will be a more glorious conquest than if you should capture all the red camels of Muhemah.”⁷¹

It is crystal clear that the prophet- may God’s peace and prayer be upon him – wanted to teach Muslims in the peak of their might that winning hearts into Islam is the supreme goal even in the battlefield. Therefore, he chooses a wise leader for the army Ali Ibn Abu Talib and gives him this advice, “Verily if God should give religious guidance to a single individual of them through your instrumentality, it will be a more glorious conquest than if you should capture all the red camels of Muhemah” Is there any peaceful dawa greater than this one?

❖ *His Orders to the Soldiers Taking Part in the Fighting*

When the Prophet (PBUH) was giving orders to his soldiers, he said, “Fight in the name of Allah and in the way of Allah. Fight against those who disbelieve in Allah. Make a holy war, do not embezzle the spoils; do not break your pledge; and do not mutilate (the dead) bodies; do not kill the children. When you meet your enemies who are polytheists, invite them to three courses of action. If they respond to any one of these, you also accept it and withhold yourself from doing them any harm.”⁷²

The Islamic thought which the prophet (PBUH) wants the fighter to adopt appears clearly here. He tells them that fighting is not the goal but it is for the sake of God the Almighty. When war takes place, it has a code of ethics that the soldiers have to abide by; children and civilians must not be exposed to any of its calamities; moreover, the fighters should not prolong the war, if some of its goals are fulfilled. One of the commandments of the Prophet (PBUH) to the Muslim army in the Battle of *Mu'tah* touches the human mercy in Islamic fighting. A Muslim only kills the one who fights him; he does not destroy what faces his way unless he found it necessary to do so. The Prophet’s companions and the Muslims following the prophet and in different times were committed to those commandments. Their

71 Narrator: Bukhari – source : *jami' sahih* – page or number 4210 *Khulasat al daraja: sahih*

72 Narrator : *Mulim 3/1357 and Ibn Majah 2/953-954*

wars were the most lenient wars witnessed by history. They were warriors who were distinguished for their high morals and conduct. Their mercy preceded their fighting only because they are peaceful. History bears witness to this the same as it recorded the black pages for others. Nowadays, we are still living at an age of international hypocrisy in claiming civilization, human mercy and beneficence to others. Today, we see a lot destruction and bloodshed of unarmed children, women and the elderly, during the conflicts of the past century and the beginning of the present century (20th-21st). Unfortunately, we have lived and experienced the age of the negative rise of Israel on the Palestinian land. The entire world bears witness to the savage and brutal atrocities of the Jews in Deir Yasin, Qibya, Haifa, Jaffa, Acre, Safad and other cities and villages. Nevertheless, they claim to be humane and humanitarian and act quite the opposite.

We act humanely and we are not being arrogant about it; we are the kind of people who hold in ourselves the most beautiful principles of morals at peace and war; we implement them at ease without any repentance or remorse. On the other hand, they are completely detached from those ethics and all what they can do is to claim them out of hypocrisy and deception. We are a people who believe in the mighty and merciful God; our strength is mercy while they are the kind of people who are so hypocritical that they deny describing God as powerful and violent and allege that he is loving and merciful.

What is the influence of this love and mercy, if really found in them, in relation to their treatment of other people; wars with Muslims and opponents from their own religion. The wars of our people were for the good of humanity and we were the most lenient. For their part, their wars were only intended for invasion, looting, plunder, tyranny, and colonization making them humanity’s fiercest enemy)⁷³

WARRIOR LEADERS WHO EMBRACED ISLAM:

❖ *Khalid Ibn Walid:*

It was natural that the heart of the Prophet (PBUH), and those of the Muslim community, to be filled with hatred for Khalid Ibn Walid, when he defeated them in the Battle of Uhud and severely defeated them. However, the Prophet (PBUH) prayed for him in the presence of his brother and said, “He is a man with a sound mind and all that I hope is that this same mind guides him only to what is good.”⁷⁴. This made his brother send

73 *Mustafa Husni Sibai, Siyra nabawiya durus wa ibar (Prophetic Biography: Lessons and Examples)*

74 *Barirah Ibn al Husaib: Ibn abdallah ibn al harith ibn al araj ibn sad abu abdallah And it was said abu sahl , abu sasan, abu hasib al islami (It was said : he embraced Islam in the year of hijra; the Prophet hired him upon the word of his people. He was holding the banner of Prince*

him a letter in kind and eventually lead to Islam spreading. This story was recounted by Khalid Ibn Walid, may God be content with him, by saying: “Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) entered *Umrat al-Qadiya*; I was absent and did not see this. My brother, Walid Ibn Walid, entered with him. The Prophet asked about me but I was not there, so he wrote a letter that read as follows: “In the name of God, the Merciful, the Beneficent. I am infinitely amazed at the fact that you continue to turn away from Islam when you are as intelligent as I know you to be. No one can be so blind to the truth of Islam. God’s Messenger asked me about you, and said: ‘Where is Khalid?’ I said to him: ‘God will bring him to us.’ He said: ‘A man of his caliber cannot remain ignorant of Islam. If he would use his intelligence and his experience for the Muslims against the idolaters, he would benefit from it a great deal. We would certainly give him precedence over others. It is high time, brother, for you to make amends for the great benefits you have missed.’ When I read my brother’s letter, I was pleased at the fact that the Prophet himself inquired about me. I felt a strong desire to become a Muslim.”⁷⁵

MALIK IBN AUF AL NASRI

One of the manifestations of the peaceful notions, which the Prophet (PBUH) followed, was related to his interest in the leaders of the unbelievers’ nations, who defeated Muslim armies. He chose not to bear grudges against them but prepared for them the right opportunities, and seduced them with money, until they join the religion of Islam. When Malik Ibn Auf defeated the Muslims, at the beginning of the Battle of Hunain, the messenger of Allah continued tempting him, even during the siege of Tai’f, with gifts, until he embraced Islam.

Ibn Ishaq narrated that the messenger of God asked a delegation from Huzan about something Malik Ibn Auf did. They told him that he was in Ta’f with Thaqif. He said: Tell him that I come in peace. I will give him back his people, money and one hundred camels. When Malik heard this, he secretly left Thaqif and came to the Prophet in Ja’rana or Mecca. He declared his choice of Islam and became a good Muslim. His captured people and money were given back to him and the Prophet appointed him to deal with the affairs of those kinsfolk who embraced Islam.

Usama Ibn Zaid, when he invaded al-Balqa. His two sons Suliman and Abdallah, Abu Nadra Al Abdiyy, Abdalla Ibn Maulah, Abu Malih Al Hathli and others told about him to . Ibn Sa’ad and Abu Ubaid said that Barirah died in sixty three. Another said: he died in sixty two probably this is more reliable. Baridah narrated more than one hundred and fifty hadiths (biographies) alam alnubala, shams Ad Din Muhammad Ibn Ahmad Ibn Uthman Al Thahabi/ 2/470-471

75 Al Waqidi – Al Mghazi nd Ibn Hisham 2/747 www.al-islam.com

NOBLE PROPHETIC SUNNAH

The observer of the life of the Prophet; his speeches and actions, will find out that he is an example of a peace activist who values human rights regardless of ethnicity, religion or color. His opponents attested to this; an Israeli writer took interest in this and translated a book about the life of the Prophet. She said, “It is not acceptable to call the Prophet a terrorist!”⁷⁶ Such statements are a testimony to the Prophets fastidiousness about peace.

PROPHET’S DIRECT CALL FOR PEACE:

The Messenger of God (PBUH) called for peace, through word and deed. There are several hadiths (sayings) in which he called for peace, between Muslims, as well as other sayings that reflect what is on the mind, thought and behavior of the Muslim person. Some of those hadiths are:

- ❖ Aisha, may God be pleased with her, was said to have stated, “Whenever the Prophet completed his prayers, he would say ‘Oh God you are peace; peace is from you. You are blessed for your majesty and dignity.’”⁷⁷ There is a particular *sunnah*, said right after every prayer, and is a kind of training method for Muslims, so they do not forget that peace is part of his essential thoughts and doctrines. It is also connected to his objectives and goals and it is also linked with his prayer when he worships God in prayer.
 - “Especially when the greeting of Islam is *salam*, showing the practical mechanism leading to him; the Prophet (PBUH) has called for giving everything its due including humans, spirit, animal, plant or even inanimate things. Even the road has its own right. All of this comes following the fulfillment of God’s right.”⁷⁸ The call to peace is not a matter of convenience
- ❖ “Abdullah Ibn as-Salam wrote that: ‘When the Prophet (PBUH) came to al-Madinah, people gathered around him and I was one of them. I looked at his face and understood that it was not the face of a liar. The first words I heard him say were: ‘O people, spread the salutations, feed the people, keep the ties of kinship, and pray during the night while the others sleep and you will enter paradise in peace.’”⁷⁹

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia – Ministry of Muslim Affairs, Waqf, Dawa and Guidance.

76 Mikhail Sila – a Jewish researcher translated the book – Biography of the Prophet Muhammad (Biographiya shil hanabi muhmad) by an American writer Karen Armstrong- she was interviewed by israeli television in Fall 2005.

77 Narrator Abu Dawud number: 1512 and Muslim on behalf of Thuban number 591 (Modern Encyclopedia- al durar al sanitiya site)

78 Hasan Bana – salam fi al islam (Peace in Islam) /47-49

79 Narrator Abdullah ibn as-Salam : Al Baghawi – source – Sharhu al sunna – [age or number 2/463 Khulasat al daraja : hasan sahih al durar al sunniya

- ❖ “Oh people do not wish to meet the enemy pray to God for your safety and health.”⁸⁰
- ❖ God’s messenger (PBUH) used to say whenever he sent a delegation, “ Be gentle with the people and be patient ; do not attack them before you call them to Islam, do not leave any kinsfolk of a house built from mud or fur on this earth but to bring them to me as Muslims; this is more preferable to me than to capture their children and women and kill their men”⁸¹

CONCLUSION:

It is clear that the Qur’anic verses and the prophetic sayings are keen on showing peace and non-violence in speech and action. The models the author has mentioned are considered modest compared to the people’s embrace of Islam, from all corners of the world. Several scholars and scientists, moreover, are still embracing Islam, in high numbers, from all around the world. The main reason for this strong impact of Islam is the non-violent humanity exhibited in the Qur’an and *sunnah*. The texts calling for violence and fighting are justified in light of dominance exerted by the corrupted and misguided humans, against humanity throughout the ages. They can only be deterred by an equal force; God, the Almighty, says, in the Nahil Sura, verse 126 “And if you punish [an enemy, O believers], punish with an equivalent of that with which you were harmed. But if you are patient - it is better for those who are patient.”

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Contemporary studies did not dedicate for the Moslem peaceful thought its due right in research. Therefore, I recommend that postgraduate students and researchers address this topic “Violence and Non violence in Islam” in their dissertations and theses to obtain their Master’s and Doctoral degrees in order to clarify this idea and make it available for researchers to benefit from it in our complicated contemporary reality.

All due praise is to you God. I testify that you are the only God , I seek your forgiveness and to you I do repent.

CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE IN RELATION TO MUSLIMS

Dr. Leo D. Lefebure

ABSTRACT: This paper will examine the ambiguous heritage of the Christian Bible, especially in relation to Islam. Christians have historically cited biblical passages to justify violent assaults, inquisitions, and persecutions; but they have also invoked the Bible to place limits on violence or to end violence altogether. This paper will begin by examining the biblical apocalyptic tradition as it has been interpreted in ways that justify violence, especially in relation to Muslims. The paper will critically discuss the theories of René Girard regarding the surrogate victim mechanism in relation to the Bible and the history of Christian violence towards Muslims. The paper will conclude with a proposal for a hermeneutic of generosity in relation to Muslims.

⁸⁰ Bukhari and Muslim

⁸¹ *Explanation of the As Siyar Al Kabir – vol. 1 p.59*

BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES ON VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE

The Christian Bible contains a number of contrasting perspectives on violence and nonviolence. According to the theology of the holy war of early Israel, God was a warrior who actively intervened in historical events to give the Israelites victory (Ex 15:3).⁸² In one of the most decisive moments of the Bible, immediately after the deliverance of the Israelites at the Sea of Reeds in Exodus, the Song of the Sea proclaims: "The Lord is a warrior; the Lord is his name. Pharaoh's chariots and his army he cast into the sea" (Exodus 15:3). God reveals the divine power of God in the deliverance of the Israelites, the destruction of the Egyptians and the terror of other nations. According to this tradition, when ancient Israelites marched out to fight their earthly opponents, God went to war on their behalf (cf. Judg. 5:19-20; Isa. 24:21).⁸³ Biblical hymns repeatedly celebrate the power of God in war (Deut. 33:2-3; Num. 10:35-36; Ps. 24; Isa. 35; Hab. 3:3-60).

The Bible, however, does not portray God as always fighting for the people of ancient Israel. The biblical prophets used the theology of the holy war in a dramatically different way; to rebuke Israel. Amos, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel sharply condemned the ancient Israelites and interpreted their defeats in war as God using the foes of ancient Israel to punish them for their sins (Amos 2:4-8; Jer. 4:5-31; Ezek. 39:22-24). In contrast to Israelite hopes that God would lead them to victory on the Day of the Lord, Amos predicted that the Day of the Lord would be a day of darkness and not of light, a day of disaster and judgment because of the sinfulness of the people (5:18).

The apocalyptic book of Daniel interpreted and applied the mythological imagery of the holy war to the situation of persecution under Antiochus IV Epiphanes, in the early second century B.C.E. Daniel portrays Israel's earthly enemies in symbolic form as fearsome beasts emerging from the sea and challenging the heavenly powers (Dan. 7:2-27). Daniel expected God to interrupt the course of history and send heavenly assistance in the form of one like a Son of Man, a figure resembling a human being, who would destroy the powers of evil and establish God's kingdom (7:9-27).

Alongside the theology of holy war, there also emerged from ancient

⁸² Throughout this discussion, when I discuss "Israel" and the "Israelites," I am referring to the ancient, biblical nation and people of Israel, not to the modern state of Israel or the modern Israelis. When I use the term "violence," I am accepting Craig L. Nessan's definition of violence as "the attempt of an individual or group to impose its will on others through any nonverbal, verbal, or physical means that inflict psychological or physical injury." "Sex, Aggression, and Pain: Sociobiological Implications for Theological Anthropology," *Zygon* 22 (1998): 451.

⁸³ See Gerhard von Rad, *Holy War in Ancient Israel*, trans. Marva J. Dawn (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1991); Susan Niditch, *War in the Hebrew Bible: A Study in the Ethics of Violence* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); John J. Collins, *Does the Bible Justify Violence?* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004).

Israel a prophetic vision of a more peaceful community of nations. The prophet Isaiah proposed a moving call for peace, for beating swords into ploughshares and transforming spears into pruning hooks (Isa. 2:4). Isaiah presented the hope that the wolf shall live with the lamb, that nations will live in peace, and that the poor and oppressed will find justice (Isa. 11:1-9).

In the New Testament, Jesus of Nazareth issued a startling command to love one's enemies (Matt. 5:22).⁸⁴ The perfection of righteousness manifests itself in love of one's enemy. This is not merely a matter of an inner feeling toward an enemy; it involves creative action, non-violent ("meek") peacemaking in the pursuit of justice, which seeks reconciliation. While Jesus commands his followers to love their enemies (Matt. 5:44) and respond nonviolently to evil (Matt. 5:38-42), he also engages in fierce controversies: "Do not think that I have come to bring peace to the earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword" (Matt. 10:34).⁸⁵ However, on the night of his arrest, Jesus forbade his followers to use violence (Matthew 26:52-53). Nonetheless, there is no indication that Jesus rejected military service in principle. He praised the Roman centurion in Capernaum for his faith in Jesus' authority and power to heal (Luke 7:1-10), with no criticism of his military role.

Several New Testament writings use harsh language to characterize the opponents of the early followers of Jesus; these texts would later be interpreted in relation to Muslims. The First Letter of John provides the first explicit mention of antichrists, a name which is originally used in the plural:

"Children, it is the last hour! As you have heard that antichrist is coming, so now many antichrists have come. From this we know that it is the last hour. . . . who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the Antichrist, the one who denies the Father and the Son." (1 Jn. 2:18, 22).

In the context of 1st John, antichrists are those human beings who oppose the belief that Jesus is the Christ, who has come in the flesh (1 John 4:2-3; 2 John 7).⁸⁶ The term is not necessarily a title for a particular individual or a dreaded apocalyptic figure; it can simply mean "an anti-Christ" in the sense of an opponent

⁸⁴ Willard M. Swartley, ed., *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992).

⁸⁵ Unless otherwise noted, all scriptural quotations will be taken from the New Revised Standard Version. Used by permission. For a range of interpretations of the teaching of Jesus on peace and violence, see Willard M. Swartley, ed. *The Love of Enemy and Nonretaliation in the New Testament* (Louisville, KY: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1992); and Michel Desjardins, *Peace, Violence, and the New Testament* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997).

⁸⁶ Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997) 383.

of Christ.⁸⁷

The Second Letter to the Thessalonians warns of a coming “lawless one,” described as “the son of destruction” (2:3; NRSV: “the one destined for destruction;” KJV: “son of perdition”), who will play an important role in the events of the end-time.⁸⁸ The letter predicted that the son of destruction will come and defile the temple in Jerusalem: “He opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, declaring himself to be God” (2:4). In this context, “the son of destruction” refers to a human being, possibly a false teacher in the threatened situation of Christians of the first century CE, or perhaps a historical figure such as Antiochus IV, Pompey, or Caligula, the Roman Emperor who ordered the desecration of the Temple in Jerusalem.⁸⁹

Using violent apocalyptic imagery, the Book of Revelation renewed, in Christian context the vision of a holy war fought by God and the angels, against the forces of evil in the world.⁹⁰ At the climax of the battle, the leaders of the evil armies are thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur (Rev.19:20). Like earlier apocalyptic writings, such as the Book of Daniel and the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Book of Revelation promises Christians that their enemy, a mighty evil empire, will be destroyed and justice will at last be established, with Christians exulting triumphantly in heaven.

HERMENEUTICS OF HOSTILITY AND OF GENEROSITY

In each generation, Christians read the scriptures in light of the events impacting their lives. Since the Christian Bible is complex and multi-voiced, every community of Christians must decide which biblical passages to place in the foreground and which in the background of its interpretation. From the beginning of their encounters with Muslims, Christians have interpreted their experiences of Muslims in light of the Bible, and they have searched the Bible to inform and guide their relations with Muslims.

When Muslim-Christian relations have historically been marked by

⁸⁷ Kenneth Grayston, *The Johannine Epistles, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans and London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1984), 76.*

⁸⁸ Scholars disagree on whether Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians or whether it was written by a later follower after his death. See Brown, *Introduction, 590-94. For a survey of views and a defense of Pauline authorship, see I. Howard Marshall, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, New Century Bible Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans and London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1983), 25-45. For an interpretation of the work as written by a later author, see Bonnie Thurston, Reading Colossians, Ephesians, and 2 Thessalonians: A Literary and Theological Commentary (New York: Crossroad, 1995), 157-63.*

⁸⁹ Thurston, 178.

⁹⁰ Adela Yarbro Collins, *Crisis and Catharsis: The Power of Apocalyptic (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).*

conflict, Christians have frequently employed what may be called a hermeneutics of hostility, interpreting passages of the Bible regarding violence in ways that cast Muslims as enemies. In more amicable situations, including in recent decades, there have been numerous efforts to move from hostility to hospitality and generosity, and to shape a new climate of relations between Muslims and Christians. In this climate Christians have looked to aspects of the biblical heritage that they share with Muslims as a basis for more harmonious relations and mutual respect. This approach can be called a hermeneutics of generosity.

Each of these approaches is an all-encompassing style of interpretation that shapes the understanding of each individual verse of the Bible, in relation to the present. Hermeneutics of hostility judges opponents harshly and places primary emphasis on biblical texts that justify violent attacks on enemies in the name of God; this hermeneutic looks to God for final victory over the foes. Hermeneutics of generosity places primary emphasis on biblical texts that propose common values and that urge cooperation and in contexts of conflict, hermeneutics of generosity look to biblical texts that promote reconciliation and forgiveness. The quality of Christian relations to other religious communities both influences and is influenced by the choice of hermeneutics.

Hermeneutics of hostility can inspire a negative cycle of hostile perceptions of the other community, together with adversarial interpretations of scripture; a hermeneutics of generosity can inspire a more positive cycle of munificent perceptions of the other community, informing and being informed by more charitable interpretations of scripture. In interpreting the scriptures in relation to Muslims, Christians at least implicitly make a choice what type of hermeneutics to employ, whether of hostility or of generosity.

CHRISTIAN INTERPRETATIONS OF SCRIPTURE IN RELATION TO MUSLIMS IN THE MIDDLE AGES

Throughout the Middle Ages, Christians regularly interpreted passages from the Bible without regard for their original historical context. Historian Christopher Tyerman describes the usual practice of biblical interpretation during the eleventh century: “As it had developed by the beginning of its second millennium in western Christendom, Christianity was only indirectly a scriptural faith. The foundation texts of the Old and New Testaments were mediated, even to the educated, through the prism of commentaries by the so-called Church Fathers.”⁹¹ Individual sayings were often taken out of their original context and applied to situations undreamed of by the biblical authors.

From the beginning, relations between Christians and Muslims involved

⁹¹ Christopher Tyerman, *God's War: A New History of the Crusades (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006), 29.*

military conflict.⁹² The Arab Muslim armies won early victories against the forces of the Christian Byzantine Empire. In December 634 C.E., Muslims were encamped between Jerusalem and Bethlehem, preventing Christians from journeying from Jerusalem to Bethlehem for Christmas Eve celebrations. Confronted with this situation, Patriarch Sophronius of Jerusalem applied the perspective of the prophets of ancient Israel to his community's experience and interpreted this event as God's punishment for the sins of Christians: "Because of countless sins and very serious faults, we have become unworthy of the sight of these things [the Holy Places of Bethlehem]."⁹³ In line with the ancient prophets, Sophronius urged his Christian congregation to repent so that God would once again grant them victory:

*"I call on and I command and I beg you for the love of Christ the Lord, in so far as it is in our power, let us correct ourselves, let us shine forth with repentance, let us be purified with conversion and let us curb our performance of acts which are hateful to God. If we constrain ourselves, as friendly and beloved of God, we would laugh at the fall of our Saracen adversaries and we would view their not distant death and we would see their final destruction."*⁹⁴

After Muslims had entered Jerusalem, Patriarch Sophronius reportedly used apocalyptic imagery to interpret the construction of the Al-Aqsa mosque. According to Theophanes, a ninth-century Byzantine historian, Sophronius interpreted the Al-Aqsa mosque as the Abomination of Desolation described in the Book of Daniel, but it is unclear how accurate Theophanes' sources were.⁹⁵ This interpretation was part of a much broader pattern of apocalyptic reflection that shaped Christian perceptions of Muslims.

The swift Muslim victories came as a major shock to Christian consciousness, and soon many Christians turned to an apocalyptic eschatology inspired by the Bible to make sense of them. For centuries, Byzantine Christians, following the lead of Eusebius of Caesarea, had seen the Christian Roman Empire, centered in Constantinople, as part of God's providential plan for history. The rise of Islam, especially Muslim victories in war, posed a sharp challenge and had to be incorporated into the overall vision. Historian Bernard McGinn comments on the role of apocalyptic eschatology in making sense of unexpected historical

92 Hugh Goddard, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago: New Amsterdam Books, 2000).

93 Quoted in F.E. Peters, *Jerusalem: the Holy City in the Eyes of Chroniclers, Visitors, Pilgrims, and Prophets from the Days of Abraham to the Beginnings of Modern Times* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1985), 175.

94 *Ibid.*

95 Bernard McGinn, *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 305, n. 40.

developments:

*"One of the characteristics of apocalyptic eschatology is its drive to find meaning in current events by seeing them in light of the scenario of the end. Such a posteriori, or after-the-fact, uses of apocalyptic [imagery] are often reactions to major historical changes (like the conversion of the Empire or the rise of Islam) that do not fit into the received view of providential history. By making a place for such events in the story of the end, the final point that gives all history meaning, apocalyptic eschatology incorporates the unexpected into the divinely foreordained and gives it permanent significance."*⁹⁶

For centuries, Christians interpreted Muslims and their actions in apocalyptic terms. By the end of the seventh century, an anonymous writer known as Pseudo-Methodius had produced an apocalyptic interpretation of Muslims that would shape Christian attitudes for a millennium.⁹⁷ Pseudo-Methodius wrote in Syriac in the mid-to-late seventh century CE under the pseudonym of the revered fourth-century martyr Methodius, who was bishop of Olympus in Lycia and who was killed in the Roman persecutions in 312 C.E. *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* recounts an angel's supposed revelation to Methodius on Mount Singara, in present-day northwest Iraq, interpreting the Arab Muslim triumphs as part of the ongoing drama of the four kingdoms described by Daniel, giving hope to Christians that in the end they will share in Christ's final triumph over their enemies.

Pseudo-Methodius sees the "Ishmaelites," i.e., the Arab Muslims, as preparing the way for the Son of Perdition. Pseudo-Methodius identifies the "Children of Ishmael" with "the people whom Daniel 11:5 calls 'the arm of the South,'" i.e., the king of the south whom Daniel predicts will destroy the empire of the Persians (10:6; p. 230). Pseudo-Methodius interprets the victory of the Muslim army against Byzantine forces at the River Yarmouk in 636 CE as the fulfillment of the prophecy of Ezekiel 39:17-18, which invited the wild animals and birds to come and eat the flesh of fattened men and drink the blood of warriors in an apocalyptic feast (11:1-2; p. 230).

Continuing the method of interpretation of ancient biblical prophets, Pseudo-Methodius sees the Muslim victories as not due to their righteousness or

96 McGinn, *Antichrist*, 88.

97 Andrew Palmer and Sebastian Brock, trans., *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius, in The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993), 222-42; Paul Julius Alexander, *The Byzantine Apocalyptic Tradition*, ed. Dorothy de F. Abrahamse (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985); F.J. Martinez, *Eastern Christian Apocalyptic in the Early Muslim Period: Pseudo-Methodius and Pseudo-Athanasius* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America, unpublished dissertation, 1985), 58-246.

to God's favor for them but rather as God's punishment on the sinfulness of Christians. Pseudo-Methodius quotes Moses' warning to the Israelites in the book of Deuteronomy as analogous to the situation of the Muslims. Moses pointedly told the Israelites that God was not bringing them to the Promised Land because of their virtue but rather because of the sinfulness of the inhabitants of the land. Pseudo-Methodius comments: "Similarly with these children of Ishmael: it was not because God loves them that he allowed them to enter the kingdom of the Christians, but because of the wickedness and sin which is performed at the hands of the Christians, the like of which has not been performed in any of the former generations" (11:5; p. 231).

Pseudo-Methodius also interpreted the mention of the son of destruction in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, in the context of the Muslim victories: "This is the chastisement of which the Apostle spoke: 'The chastisement must come first, only then will that Man of Sin, the Son of Destruction, be revealed'" (11:17; p. 233).⁹⁸ Pseudo-Methodius understands Jesus' parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:24-30) to explain that the sufferings of Christians under Muslim rule must increase so that the faithful may be tested and known (13:4; p. 236). He recalls Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, "Blessed are you when people revile and persecute you, saying all sorts of bad things about you falsely for my Name's sake: rejoice then and exult, for your reward is great in heaven" (Matt. 5:11-12; Ps-Methodius 13:5; p. 237). He also holds out the hope of Jesus promise: "He who endures to the end shall have life" (Mt. 10:22; 24:13; Ps-Methodius 13:5; p. 237).

After this suffering, Pseudo-Methodius prophesies that a future Byzantine emperor will fight the Muslims; "the king of the Greeks shall go out against them in great wrath," bringing destruction to the Ishmaelites and peace to Christians, a peace unprecedented in the history of the world (13:11; p. 237). There will, however, be more suffering when the king of the Greeks dies and the Son of Destruction appears and works the signs of deception foretold by Jesus (Matt. 24:24). The Son of Destruction will then take his seat in Jerusalem until the return of Jesus Christ. "But at the Advent of our Lord from heaven he will be delivered over to 'the Gehenna of Fire' (Matt. 5:22) and to 'outer darkness', where he will be amidst 'weeping and gnashing of teeth'" (Matt. 8:12; Ps-Methodius 14:13; p. 242).

Pseudo-Methodius interprets the prophet Muhammad as a forerunner of the Antichrist and the Son of Destruction; he holds out the expectation of the coming king of the Greeks, the Last Emperor, i.e., the final Byzantine Christian Emperor, as hope for faithful Christians in difficult times. Pseudo-Methodius believes that the ultimate victory of Christ is assured through the last Emperor.

Thus he urges Christians to resist the Muslims and continue the struggle against them through all hardships. Inspired by these hopes, Pseudo-Methodius opposes any form of collaboration or acceptance of Muslim rule.⁹⁹ *The Apocalypse of Pseudo-Methodius* was translated into Greek and circulated widely for centuries, becoming the third most important apocalyptic text for medieval Christians, after the biblical books of Daniel and Revelation.¹⁰⁰ It was still being reprinted and distributed a millennium later in 1683, when the Ottoman army was besieging Vienna.¹⁰¹ The style of biblical interpretation modeled by Pseudo-Methodius is a classic example of the hermeneutics of hostility; tragically, it was widely influential in shaping Christian perceptions of Muslims for a millennium and more.

Medieval Christians repeatedly interpreted Muhammad either as the Antichrist or as a forerunner of the Antichrist.¹⁰² A long tradition in Latin Christianity reflected on the meaning of the Antichrist in relation to the Son of Destruction (or Perdition) of 2 Thessalonians.¹⁰³ In calling for a new Crusade in 1213, Pope Innocent III condemned Muhammad as the Son of Perdition (2 Thess. 2:3); Innocent expected him to have a reign of 666 years, almost all of which had already passed.¹⁰⁴ Medieval Christians applied the term from the book of Revelation, "synagogues of Satan" to Muslims.¹⁰⁵ Apocalyptic literature inspired Christians to fight against their Muslim adversaries for centuries, offering hope of eschatological vindication even in the most hopeless of earthly situations.

In the long struggle against Muslims in the Iberian Peninsula, James the Apostle, the son of Zebedee, became the heavenly patron in battle. Jesus had nicknamed James the "son of thunder" (Mark 3:17), apparently because he and his brother John wanted Jesus to call down thunder on those Samaritans who rejected him (Luke 9:54). Even though Jesus sharply rebuked his fiery disciple for his temper (Luke 9:55), medieval Christians honored James for his ferocity, and he became the patron of Spain. According to legend, he miraculously intervened in the battle of Clavijo in 844, when Ramiro I of Asturias was leading Christians in battle against Muslims, who by the Emir of Cordoba.

James' heavenly assistance in battle earned him the new sobriquet

⁹⁹ Bernard McGinn, *Visions of the End: Apocalyptic Traditions in the Middle Ages* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979), 70.

¹⁰⁰ On the relation of the Greek translation to the Syriac original, see Alexander, 31-60.

¹⁰¹ McGinn, *Visions of the End*, 72.

¹⁰² McGinn, *Antichrist*, 85-86; Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: the Making of an Image* (1960; reprint, Oxford: Oneworld, 2000), 210-12.

¹⁰³ Kevin L. Hughes, *Constructing Antichrist: Paul, Biblical Commentary, and the Development of Doctrine in the Early Middle Ages* (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2005).

¹⁰⁴ McGinn, *Antichrist*, 150.

¹⁰⁵ Daniel, 133-34.

⁹⁸ See also Alexander, 20-21.

Matamoros – the “Moor-slayer who kills the enemies of Christ.” The church built in his honor in Compostela, Spain allegedly contains his remains and has long been one of the most important pilgrimage places of Europe.¹⁰⁶

Medieval Christians frequently imagined Jesus as a warrior in conflict with his adversaries and interpreted his harsh words as justification for their own attacks on opponents. The Christian imagination transformed the “Prince of Peace” into the “Heroic Warrior of Sacred Combat.” Christians believed that their wars were, after all, waged in order to establish a just peace. An early English poem, *The Dream of the Rood*, calls Jesus “...the Warrior . . . the Mighty King, Lord of Heavens” and “the Wielder of Triumphs.”¹⁰⁷ Charlemagne appeared as the ideal Christian warrior and asked the Pope to pray that he might defeat his enemies by “...the arms of Faith.”¹⁰⁸ Ideals of chivalry combined monastic-style devotion to Christ with the warrior’s courage in fighting for justice.¹⁰⁹

At the center of the imagery of the First Crusade was Jesus’ command to take up one’s cross and follow him (Matt. 16:24). In the gospel of Matthew, this command comes after Jesus’ teaching in the Sermon on the Mount concerning love of enemy and non-violent responses to evil. In the late eleventh century, however, the original context was neglected, and taking up the cross was interpreted as violent combat on behalf of Christ. Tyerman comments, “[The] holy war [against Muslims] was perceived and possibly designed to revolve around Matthew 16:24.”¹¹⁰ For centuries the Crusades took shape as a concrete way to accept this challenge.

Medieval Christians repeatedly interpreted their earthly enemies, especially Muslims, as the accomplices of the Son of Destruction and the Antichrist. The sacred combat of the Book of Revelation was of particular importance in this process. The bloody images of battle of the Book of Revelation shape the accounts of the sack of Jerusalem by the First Crusade in 1099. Raymond of Aguilers described the scene on the Temple Mount after the crusaders’ victory: “...it is sufficient to relate that in the Temple of Solomon and the portico, crusaders rode in blood to the knees and bridles of their horses.”¹¹¹ Tyerman notes the biblical reference: “Raymond was quoting Revelation 14:20: ‘And the winepress was trodden without the city, and blood

came out of the winepress, even unto the horse bridles.’ It is hard to exaggerate the dependence of Raymond’s contemporaries on the Scripture for imagery and language.”¹¹²

Brett Edward Whalen notes that when medieval Christians were triumphant, as in the capture of Jerusalem by the First Crusade in 1099, they could apply the biblical theology of holy war directly and see their victories as guided by God’s providence. When, however, they suffered reversals, they followed the model of ancient Israelite prophets in interpreting their defeats as God’s punishment of them for their sins.¹¹³

For centuries after the Middle Ages, a hermeneutic of hostility continued to dominate Christian interpretations of the Bible in relation to Muslims. Protestants continued the medieval Catholic association of Muslims with the Antichrist. Martin Luther associated Muhammad and Muslims with the Antichrist, whom he identified more properly as the Pope; and later Lutherans would develop a theology of the dual Antichrist of pope and Turk.¹¹⁴

Medieval Christians were aware of the teachings of Jesus regarding love of enemies, forgiveness, and non-violent response to evil. Medieval Christians honored the pacific ideals of Jesus as noble principles but they generally applied them to private, personal relations while looking to the theology of war in the battles of the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Revelation for guidance in their public affairs.¹¹⁵

Despite the vilification, violence, and repeated military campaigns – in many regions during the Middle Ages – Christians and Muslims did live peacefully together. In these situations a hermeneutic of generosity appeared. In or around 781, there were peaceful theological discussions between Patriarch Timothy I of the Church of the East and the Caliph Mahdi.¹¹⁶ Each partner maintained his own beliefs. The Patriarch Timothy looked to aspects of the biblical heritage that Christians share with Muslims, as he generously praised Muhammad for teaching monotheism and for following in the path of the biblical prophets. Even though the debate was held, as regards Muslim territory, there was no clear winner and no threat of violence.

In 1076 Pope Gregory VII wrote to al-Nasir, the Muslim ruler of Bijaya, in present-day Algeria:

“Almighty God, who wishes that all should be saved and none lost,

112 Tyerman, 31.

113 Brett Edward Whalen, *Dominion of God: Christendom and Apocalypse in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009), 56-70.

114 McGinn, *Antichrist*, 206.

115 Tyerman, 30.

116 Samuel Hugh Moffett, *A History of Christianity in Asia. Vol. 1, Beginnings to 1500* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 351.

106 Maryjane Dunn and Linda Kay Davidson, ed., *The Pilgrimage to Compostela in the Middle Ages* (New York: Routledge, 1996). Javier Garcia Turza, *El Camino de Santiago y la Sociedad Medieval* (Logroño: Ediciones Instituto de Estudios Riojanos, 2000).

107 *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, ed. M.H. Abrams (5th ed.; New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 1: 23, 24.

108 Tyerman, 36.

109 Alan Baker, *The Knight* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2003), 158-90.

110 Tyerman, 32.

111 Quoted by Tyerman, 31.

approves nothing in us so much as that after loving him one should love his fellow man, and that one should not do to others, what one does not want done to oneself. You and we owe this charity to ourselves especially because we believe in and confess one God, admittedly in a different way, and daily praise and venerate him, the Creator of the world and ruler of this world.”¹¹⁷

In a situation of potential conflict, Pope Gregory invoked Jesus' teaching of universal love and of treating others as we wish to be treated as the norms for interaction with Muslims. He placed the differences between Christians and Muslims in the context of God's universal salvific will (1 Tim. 2:4). This letter was cited by the Second Vatican Council (*Nostra Aetate*) and by Pope John Paul II.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS TOWARD A HERMENEUTICS OF GENEROSITY

For Catholics, the Second Vatican Council marked the decisive turning point in attitudes toward followers of other religious paths, including Muslims. Aware of the history of hostility between Catholics and other religious traditions, the Council invited Catholics to attitudes of cooperation and reconciliation with all people of good will. The Council looked for shared values and concerns as a basis for mutual respect and collaboration.

In discussing the Catholic Church's relations with Muslims, the Second Vatican Council placed aspects of the biblical heritage – shared by Muslims and Catholics – in the foreground of attention. After referring positively to the Jewish people, as ever dear to God, *Lumen Gentium* (*The Dogmatic Constitution on the Church*), issued in 1964, declared: “[The] plan of salvation also embraces those who acknowledge the Creator, and among these the Muslims are first; they profess to hold the faith of Abraham and along with us they worship the one merciful God, who will judge humanity on the last day.”¹¹⁸ *Lumen Gentium* quietly drops the hermeneutic of hostility and adopts a hermeneutic of generosity. Instead of associating Muslims with the Antichrist and the Son of Destruction, the Council instead dramatically includes Muslims in the salvific plan of God, interpreting them as worshippers of the one God, in continuity with the faith of Abraham and as anticipating the final judgment. One year later, the Council issued *Nostra Aetate* (*The Declaration on the Church's Relation to Non-Christian Religions*),

¹¹⁷ Quoted by Pope John Paul II in his “Message to the Faithful of Islam at the End of the Month of Ramadan, April 3, 1991, in *John Paul II and Interreligious Dialogue*, ed. Gyron L. Sherwin and Harold Kasimow (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1999), 66.

¹¹⁸ *Lumen Gentium* 16; in *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils, Volume Two: Trent to Vatican II*, ed. Norman P. Tanner (London: Sheed & Ward and Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 1990), 861.

which developed further the perspective of *Lumen Gentium*, again rejecting the hermeneutic of hostility of the earlier tradition and adopting instead a hermeneutic of generosity:

“The church also looks upon Muslims with respect. They worship the one God living and subsistent, merciful and almighty, creator of heaven and earth, who has spoken to humanity and to whose decrees, even the hidden ones, they seek to submit themselves whole-heartedly, just as Abraham, to whom the Islamic faith readily relates itself, submitted to God. They venerate Jesus as a prophet, even though they do not acknowledge him as God, and they honour his virgin mother Mary and even sometimes devoutly call upon her. Furthermore they await the Day of Judgment when God will requite all people brought back to life. Hence they have regard for the moral life and worship God especially in prayer, almsgiving and fasting. Although considerable dissensions and enmities between Christians and Muslims may have arisen in the course of the centuries, this synod urges all parties that, forgetting past things, they train themselves towards sincere mutual understanding and together maintain and promote social justice and moral values as well as peace and freedom for all people.” (NA 3; Tanner, 969-970)

The council made no mention of the Qur'an or Muhammad. Vatican II proposed a new framework for reading the Bible in relation to Muslims, emphasizing aspects of the biblical heritage that Catholics share with Muslims, such as worship of the one God, veneration for Abraham, Jesus, and Mary, the expectation of a final resurrection and judgment, as well as the virtues of prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, all of which are central to the practice of Islam. In what may seem a surprising move, the council also proposed that Catholics and Muslims pursue reconciliation through the act of forgetting so that they can together collaborate in realizing values that are important to both traditions.

EFFORTS TOWARD RECONCILIATION

After the Second Vatican Council briefly noted the history of hostility between the two traditions, it challenged Catholics and Muslims alike to forget past conflicts. Memories of violence risk calling for more violence in retaliation, locking believers into an unending cycle of blaming and scapegoating. Memories of past suffering can establish an identity based upon victimization and can imprison both parties in mutual hostility. Indeed, this pattern can constitute the core of a hermeneutics of hostility.

The Croatian Protestant theologian Miroslav Volf, familiar with the bitter conflicts in the Balkans, warns: “In my memory of the other’s transgression, the other is locked in ‘unredemption’ and we are bound together in a relationship of ‘nonreconciliation.’ The memory of the wrong suffered is also a source of my own ‘nonredemption. “A remembered wound is an experienced wound.”¹¹⁹ As a way to move beyond this dilemma, Volf notes the promise of God through Jeremiah: “I will forgive their iniquity and remember their sin no more” (Jer. 31:34).¹²⁰ For Volf, this is an eschatological hope that challenges history.

The biblical heritage regarding conflict includes the teaching of Jesus on how to reflect on evil.

“Why do you see the speck in your neighbor’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye? Or how can you say to your neighbor, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye’, while the log is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your neighbor’s eye” (Matt. 7:3-4)

Jesus warns that it is so easy to note what is wrong with someone else’s behavior and so difficult to be honest about one’s own failings. Jesus also instructed his disciples: “When you are offering your gift at the altar, if you remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother or sister, and then come and offer your gift” (Matt. 5:23-24). In recent decades, Christians have increasingly realized that in order to approach God in worship, they need to acknowledge their own failings and be reconciled to brothers and sisters with whom they have been in conflict.

Pope John Paul II reflected eloquently on the challenge of forgiveness. On May 6, 2001, he became the first pope ever recorded to visit a mosque—the Umayyad Mosque in Damascus, which was built on an earlier Byzantine Christian church honoring the grave of St. John the Baptist. John Paul II said:

¹¹⁹ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1996), 133.

¹²⁰ Volf, 136.

“It is my ardent hope that Muslim and Christian religious leaders and teachers will present our two great religious communities as communities in respectful dialogue, never more as communities in conflict. It is crucial for the young to be taught the ways of respect and understanding, so that they will not be led to misuse religion itself to promote or justify hatred and violence. . . . In Syria, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side for centuries, and a rich dialogue of life has gone on unceasingly. . . . For all the times that Muslims and Christians have offended one another, we need to seek forgiveness from the Almighty and offer each other forgiveness.”¹²¹

Pope John Paul II compared the understanding of the holiness of God in the Bible and in the Qur’an. He quoted the Qur’an, saying: ‘He is God, beside whom there is no other, the Sovereign, the Holy, the (source of) Peace’ (Qur’an 59:23). Then he noted the similarity to the prophet Hosea: “I am God, not man; I am the Holy One in your midst and have no wish to destroy” (Hosea 11:9). Finally, Pope John Paul II cited the challenge of Jesus: ‘Be holy, even as your heavenly Father is holy’ (Matt. 5:48).¹²² Pope John Paul II also noted that the Qur’an calls Muslims “to uprightness (*al-salah*), to conscientious devotion (*al-taqwa*), to goodness (*al-husn*), and to virtue (*al-birr*)” (Qur’an 2:177). John Paul compared these virtues to St. Paul’s call to love others and lead a blameless life before God: “May the Lord be generous in increasing your love and make you love one another and the whole human race as much as we love you. And may he so confirm your hearts in holiness that you may be blameless in the sight of our God and Father when our Lord Jesus Christ comes with all his saints” (1 Thess. 3:12-13).¹²³

In line with Pope John Paul II’s perspective, Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald and John Borelli have reflected on forgiveness in Christianity and Islam and a point of contact and dialogue.¹²⁴ In a similar vein, Thomas Michel, S.J., has reflected on “the ethics of pardon and peace” in the thought of John Paul II and Said Nursi.¹²⁵ Michel notes John Paul II’s insight that justice by itself does not lead to reconciliation, and Michel compares the command of Jesus to love one’s enemies and pray for one’s persecutors (Matt. 5:43-44) to the holy Qur’an: “But it

¹²¹ John Paul II, “Address of the Holy Father,” *Meeting with the Muslim Leaders Omayyad Great Mosque, Damascus*, http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/2001/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_20010506_omay.

¹²² John Paul II, 60.

¹²³ John Paul II, 60.

¹²⁴ Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2006), 212-19.

¹²⁵ Thomas Michel, *A Christian View of Islam: Essays on Dialogue*, ed. Irfan A. Omar (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010).

is better to forgive” (42:40).¹²⁶ For Fitzgerald, Borelli, and Michel, the common value placed on forgiveness and pardon unites Muslims and Christians in relating to God and to each other, moving beyond the history of hostility.

A hermeneutic of generosity can look beyond the tragic conflicts that had divided Muslims and Christians and seek out common spiritual values. Greek Orthodox Bishop Kallistos Ware notes the importance of the “deep heart” mentioned in Psalm 63:7 [64:6], for reflecting on Muslim-Christian relations. Ware relates the deep heart in Greek Orthodox spirituality to what Thomas Merton referred to as *le point vierge*, a term that Merton learned from Sufi sources through the scholarship of Louis Massignon, a Catholic scholar who devoted decades to studying Islam.¹²⁷ Both Ware and Merton found considerable convergence between the spiritual path of Sufi Muslims and the hesychast tradition of Byzantine Orthodox spirituality, cultivating remembrance of God and stillness of the heart.¹²⁸ Merton compared the Sufi experience of extinction to the teaching of Jesus about losing one’s life for His sake and finding it again.¹²⁹ Merton also found a deep similarity between St. Benedict’s practice of cultivating awareness and the Sufi “awareness that one is totally penetrated by God’s knowledge of us.”¹³⁰

In a hermeneutic of generosity, Christians can hope that Muslims and Christians together can enjoy the presence and mercy of God. I would like to close with the words that Pope John Paul II addressed to Muslims at the end of Ramadan, 1991: “May the Most High God fill us all with His merciful love and peace!”¹³¹

¹²⁶ Michel, 110.

¹²⁷ Kallistos Ware, “How Do We Enter the Heart?” in *Paths to the Heart: Sufism and the Christian East*, ed. James S. Cutsinger (Bloomington, Indiana: World Wisdom, 2002), 2-23; Thomas Merton, *Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander* (New York: Doubleday, 1966), 142; Sidney H. Griffith, “Merton, Massignon, and the Challenge of Islam,” in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium*, ed. Rob Baker and Gray Henry (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 51-78.

¹²⁸ Bonnie Thurston, “Thomas Merton’s Interest in Islam: The Example of Dhikr,” in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium*, ed. Rob Baker and Gray Henry (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 40-50.

¹²⁹ Bernadette Dieker, “Merton’s Sufi Lectures to Cistercian Novices, 1966-68,” in *Merton and Sufism: The Untold Story: A Complete Compendium*, ed. Rob Baker and Gray Henry (Louisville, KY: Fons Vitae, 1999), 154.

¹³⁰ Quoted by Dieker, 160.

¹³¹ John Paul II and *Interreligious Dialogue*, 66.

Dr. Barakat Fawzi Al Qasrawi

INTRODUCTION

Non-violence occupies a prominent place in heavenly religions, expressly indicated in several sacred texts. The Holy Quran stresses that God created people differently, to serve a specific purpose: “He it is Who created you, but one of you is a disbeliever and one of you is a believer. And Allah is Seer of what you do” (*al-Taghabun - The Manifestation of Losses* 64:2). He also is going to judge humankind on Doomsday; that is why we should not judge humans based on their belief or disbelief in worldly life. Judgment is only carried out by God and no one else, as the holy verse says: “Those who believe and those who are Jews and the Sabians and the Christians and the Magians and the polytheists – surely Allah will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection. Surely Allah is witness over all things” (*Haj* 22:17).

The Holy Quran also emphasizes in roughly one hundred verses (found in thirty six suras) the need to respect others and their religions. It calls on Muslims to deal with others in a friendly, gracious, pleasant and affable manner and the holy verse reads as follows: “Allah forbids you not respecting those, who fight you not, for religion, nor drive you forth from your homes; that you show them kindness and deal with them justly. Surely Allah loves the doers of justice” (*al Mumtaniha/The Woman Who is Examined* 60:8-9).

We also read in the Holy Bible that Jesus Christ says, “Thou shalt love thy God with all thy heart. Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself; on these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets (Matt. 22:39-40). “Forbearing one another and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you so also do ye” (Colossians 3:13).

In the Old Testament, revered by Jews, it is stated that “All what you hate that others do to you beware that you shall not to do to others.” “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil” (Isa. 1:16). “Stop harm and learn charity, mercy and seek fairness.” “They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks” (Mic. 4:3). This is only a small portion of a large collection of holy texts regarding the call of religions to non-violence. In contrast, there is no doubt that we also find several instances of texts in these holy scriptures which call for the use of violence and cruelty, to the extent that makes them a source of instigation for violence. These texts constitute basic references for terrorists and for the ability to mobilize

millions of people to favor and practice violence. We also find in our past and recent history that there are several testimonials which attest that many of the numerous wars and massacres that happened between the nations were originally instigated by religions.

It is not difficult to find such verses in the three holy books and other books that followed them – if we are not to limit ourselves to the historical and situational contexts of these texts – which can be exploited for provocation in the name of religion, as takes place in discourse and debates between the followers of the three [monotheistic] religions. Usually, adherents of the three religions accuse the others of being the cause for the violence taking place in the world.

Undoubtedly, a new reading of those texts, within their situational and linguistic contexts, along with a distinction between what is relatively historical and linked with the different political, social, cultural and ideological human life spheres, versus what is absolutely divine and connected to the basic principles and higher values to which prophets and scriptures were sent to preach, is capable to equip us with the ability to “give to Caesar what is Caesar’s, and to God what is God’s.” It follows that what is divine shall not be mixed with what is human, so people shall not be dragged into the reciprocal violence previously mentioned.

The Christian Zionist movement, which is preparing its world colonial scheme, tends towards incorrect readings of the holy texts and such tendencies allow for religious persons or groups to commit terrorist acts and appalling crimes against humanity.

It is imperative to distinguish between several concepts related to the reading and comprehension of religious text. We have what is called the explicit and implicit text, interpretation and explanation and others. Religious scholars are accustomed to utilizing two kinds of text reading styles: one deals with the explicit or clear meaning of the text while the second kind is interpretation, which is taking the implicit meaning of the text as agreed upon by more modern scholars.

Adopting the explicit does not necessarily mean interpretation; moreover interpretation does not require adopting the explicit since there is explicit without interpretation and interpretation without explicitness; this means that the relationship between them is not obligatory; this entails taking the historical contexts into consideration upon interpretation.

The existence of different *ijtihad* (religious laws), jurisprudence, views and interpretations of clear authentic religious texts cannot be denied. We also see diversity in the views of scholars, interpreters, orators and others, whose plurality in understanding is not only confined to religious texts but it is also noticed in the understanding and interpretation of literary genres; for example, prose and poetry. Diversity of views and interpretations is essential for the development of sciences

and knowledge and they should not be viewed sensitively, even when dealing with religious texts, and must not be confronted with criticism, rejection and strong opposition by other religious scholars and thinkers.

What is certainly required to be emphasized is that the different readings, or interpretations of religious texts, must be limited to specific texts and areas away from rigid and essential texts which do not allow for numerous readings and interpretations. They are the absolutely evidenced texts. Even the absolute texts may be studied and considered, sometimes, since their legitimacy and absoluteness were gained spontaneously, based on the circumstances they were revealed in. The change in time and place may remove their sacred legitimacy and immunity against any interpretation and explanation. What is meant here is that the interest in the historicity of the text, which does not mean the date of emergence of the text but rather in the reference to history in the text which makes it linked to a historical setting – without which it cannot be fully and independently understood – an analysis of the text may not take place through a contemporary reading to reach contemporary significances without elimination of the historical links to this text.

Based on this, it is understood how the sacred texts, including the conclusively evidenced ones, are being distorted and falsified. It will not be freed from contradicting interpretations, fluctuations and modifications by means of religious jurisprudence. This is what makes the holy books tolerate numerous interpretations; first, linguistic; second, jurisprudence; third, scientific; fourth intellectual and fifth, political.

THE INTELLECTUAL ROOTS FOR EXTREMIST READING OF RELIGIOUS TEXTS

One of the roots of religious terrorism lies in the way religions introduce themselves; almost all of them stress their sacred texts as written by God, making them immune, at the offset, to any criticism or opposition. Furthermore, such beliefs expose anyone who opposes them to persecution. This is accompanied by inimitability, which distinguishes each religion from other religions. For example, Jews were classified by the Old Testament as “God’s chosen people”; a classification which places adherents of other religions in a lower rank. In Christianity, Jesus is God and Christians are “the salt of the land;” this characteristic indicates its followers enjoy distinction and supremacy. As for Islam, the Qur’an is God’s own words. He says: “Religion, to God, is Islam” and describes Muslims by saying, “You were the best nation among all people.”

In order to solve this dilemma, we need to have a rational interpretation and an understanding of the text, within its historical context, and the circumstances in which it was originated. This approach broadens our horizons

and increases the prospects of understanding religions and eliminating what is false and illusionary, in order to stop the world from falling into a cyclical religious struggle.

One of the intellectual, radical readings of the religious texts is what may be called “pretext mentality” since what often happens is that the complex mentality of the reader is already formed, before ever approaching the religious text, in question. This pretext mentality or prejudgment can be based upon the readings of other religious texts or the predominant culture and beliefs.

Another of the intellectual, radical readings of the religious texts can be called “textual reading,” an explicit reading meaning that the reading is influenced by interest groups, political parties or religious groups, according to their desired ends. If it there happens to be strong influence by an extremist ideology, their influence will play an accordingly strong role in the reading of the particular text. Such groups will make use of the texts or verses that, on a superficial level and without background or context, seemingly offer support to their ideology. Other texts, which oppose their understanding of a favored text, will be deemed a misunderstanding or as misrepresentative of the superficial meaning and the intended divine purpose. Surprisingly, such groups strongly support and back implicit reading of religious texts and consider interpretation a useful tool, when they refer to texts that support their extremist ideologies and practices.

In the case of political and religious trends, which are informed by religious texts, proponents are unable to achieve a balance between what is implicit and explicit, within these texts. Taking into consideration the fact that they believe that they are inspired by the words of God, they tend to be single minded in their perception of truth. This perception is a personal estimation of what proponents consider “a firm right” or “absolute wrong,” based on their interpretation of the texts, alongside learned heritage of the religions’ history. This understanding is often perpetuated through transfer of the sagas of historical religious leaders, who themselves may not have interpreted religious texts according to their intended meaning and thus, developed their own interpretations. Consequently, the problem does not lie in the religious texts but in the way they are interpreted.

Violence in sacred texts is often a symbolic image or act to cast out the corrupted and dissipated from a faithful community, in order to preserve a community based on pure love. The author thinks that many cannot comprehend the sacred, as the intention of religious teachings is not to cause disparity or division but rather to encourage brotherhood, equality, empathy, respect and love for freedom and justice.

Some of the violent acts mentioned in the holy books are acts committed by humans, against their fellow humans or monarchs, against other monarchs;

however, this was against the will of God, so God would punish the aggressor.

Another kind of violence, encountered in holy texts, came in the form of God’s punishment of evil nations; He wanted to punish and annihilate them in order to contain evil so as not to spread into upright society and corrupt them indefinitely. We see such a case in the story of the Noah and Great Flood and the experience of Lot and the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it is of benefit to reflect upon a verse from the Holy Quran, which says “O you who believe, when you go forth (to fight) in Allah’s way, make investigation, and say not to anyone who offers you salutation, Thou art not a believer, seeking the good of this world’s life” This indicates that we must always be ready to join our hands with the hands of those who believe in peace and not in the hands of those who believe in killing, terrorism and aggression. It is not safe to be with them. There is no fear from those who believe in peace; they do not harm others, regardless of their belief or tho132ught. Such is a shocking thought to those who hold extremist beliefs, as unbeknownst to them, peace is the goal of religion.

CREATING A NON-VIOLENT FRAMEWORK FOR GRASSROOTS
HOLISTIC DEMOCRACY

Larry Hufford Ph.D.

ABSTRACT: This paper will critique the narrow Western definition of democracy as simply political. Alternatively, the author will present the idea that grassroots participatory democracy can be promoted globally through the non-violent themes found in major religions and in cultures throughout the world. The non-violent interfaith approach to holistic democracy will be placed within a context of the theory of cosmopolitanism to emphasize the theology of non-violence, respect and hospitality. This approach is presented as conflict prevention through the building of relationships and is designed as action research.

INTRODUCTION

I write this as a person with a philosophy and theology of non-violence. My philosophy of non-violence is rooted in Gandhian terms such as *ahimsa* and *satyagraha*, as well as my understanding of the life and message of Jesus Christ, to be one of non-violence. In researching other major religions of the world I have found a similar message of non-violence in each of them. I have been an activist in the civil rights and peace movements in the United States and since 1986 have regularly traveled to countries at war, coming out of war, extreme poverty and/or transitioning from authoritarianism to more participatory forms of government. My experiences as an activist have led me to reject pacifism while adopting non-violence as a way of life. Having visited countries where human rights abuses were common and interviewing child soldiers, who were forcibly recruited into combat, caused me to look within myself to understand that each one of us has the potential to commit heinous acts of cruelty. Certainly I do.

For this reason, as an academic and activist I have moved away from focusing on conflict resolution to establishing healthy relationships, on the grassroots level, through non-violent participatory methods. I have come to agree with the peace researcher, John Paul Lederach, that peacemaking is an art rather than a science. I have come to believe that grassroots sustainable holistic human development is the foundation for empowering members of a community to create just relationships, enabling them/us to value commonalities, differences, dialogue, participatory decision making and non-violent means of resolving conflict that is the foundation for democracy.

Holistic human development is the only firm foundation for the establishment of democratic communities/societies in the East and West; North and South. Democracy has been defined by the United States in a narrow political sense as elections, civil liberties and rights, an independent judiciary and separation of church and state. Of course, this narrow definition makes the United States hypocritical in her messianic desire to export this limited form of democracy. I have been an official election observer (representing non-governmental organizations) in Guatemala, Nicaragua and El Salvador. Staging “democratic” elections in countries transitioning from authoritarianism, while exporting neo-liberal economic programs to be implemented within an economic globalization is a recipe for failure. Additionally, these elections often occur prior to reconciliation needed to transcend anger and hatred due to internal conflict or oppression. There is, I submit, a need to redefine and live democracy at the grassroots community level if the world is to become more just, non-violent and democratic. The narrow political definition must be replaced with a “holistic” understanding of democracy.

Holistic democracy has five component parts: political, economic, cultural,

ecological, and spiritual. All are equally important parts of the whole, although, depending on the particular historical reality of a community or society, the “pieces of the democratic puzzle” may vary in size from time to time. The values promoted in holistic democracy seek balance:

- ❖ Individualism balanced by shared relationships
- ❖ Competition balanced by the common good
- ❖ Technology/consumerism/materialism balanced by ecological spiritualism
- ❖ Subsidiarity balanced by solidarity
- ❖ Shared vision balanced by respecting the dignity of difference
- ❖ Freedom “from” balanced by freedom “for”

Holistic democracy visualizes an engaged, empowered citizenry, participating in political, economic, cultural and ecological decision-making rooted in the compassionate values found in each individual’s faith tradition. It is my contention that if the human race is to survive, humankind needs to construct a new paradigm; one that has a spiritual foundation upon which communities can create and sustain political, economic, cultural and ecological democracy. To avoid violent conflict, new definitions of power are needed; the Westphalian construct of nation-states needs to be altered; racism and sexism need to be overcome; militarism needs to be rendered unnecessary; science and technology should be framed within an understanding of inter-generational equity; conflict on all levels needs to be resolved with reconciliation as the goal; and, faith traditions ought to be a source of community, that is, strong, healthy relationships which are a source of authentic trust and a base for solving conflict peaceably. DEFINING HOLISTIC DEMOCRACY

Political Democracy is realized through an empowered, engaged, informed, active citizenry that respects civil, political and human rights. Civic engagement consists of constructing consensual social relationships among citizens. Local structures/institutions are created to promote dialogue, respect and trust needed to resolve conflict peaceably and to promote the common good.

Economic Democracy is realized by promoting participatory economic self-management, which occurs when citizens have input into the economic decisions proportional to the degree they are affected by these decisions.

Cultural Democracy is realized by recognizing peoples’ rights to public space and public sector as arenas for democratic expressions. There is a respect for diversity and difference; globalization recognizing inclusion; and, the celebration difference.

Ecological Democracy is realized through sustainable human development

FAITH BASED UNDERSTANDING OF AN ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY



Diagram 3

FAITH BASED ECONOMIC DEMOCRACY

- ❖ A faith based understanding of the *common good*. Economic growth is not synonymous with economic development. In other words, how economic wealth is distributed is critical. All major faith traditions speak to the plight of the poor. Economic democracy empowers the poor to be equal participants in deciding economic/wealth distribution for the common good. This is not promoting sameness. It is promoting a voice for those who are currently voiceless.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *economic justice*. Just economic relations ought to be rooted in the many faith traditions where religion serves as the basis for economic and social connections. Economic development must remain under people's control; it is not to be left to the judgment of a few individuals or groups (CST). And, economic justice is not simply about the distribution of wealth, but also in regards to the conditions under which men and women engage in productive activity (CST).
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *humankind's relationship to the earth*. A responsible economic system/structure would have humankind safeguarding the global commons. The economic spirit must serve humanity.
- ❖ A faith based *understanding of vocation*. Properly understood, vocation involves work that serves the welfare of others. A vocation assumes work *is good that does good* (Berry 267-8).
 - ❖ A faith based understanding of *participatory decision making*. Participation constitutes a right which is to be applied in the economic

field as well as the political, cultural and ecological fields. The right to development means people should not be hindered from attaining development in accordance with their own culture. Through mutual cooperation, all people should be able to become the principle architects of economic democracy (The Church in the Modern World, #65).

- ❖ A faith based understanding of an *economy of communion*. Unlike the consumer economy, based on a culture of having, an economy of communion is based on a culture of giving. Giving is based on an anthropological concept which is neither individualistic nor collective. An economy of communion is about positive interpersonal relationships, it is not about philanthropy.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *social justice* almost always has an economic component, concerned primarily with the poor, including working poor, who cannot afford food, housing, and health care. Social justice aims to improve the lives of the least among us. Social charity is the soul of social justice and is sometimes called compassionate solidarity. Social justice is hollow if it is not constantly in touch with real people's experiences.

FAITH BASED UNDERSTANDING OF A CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

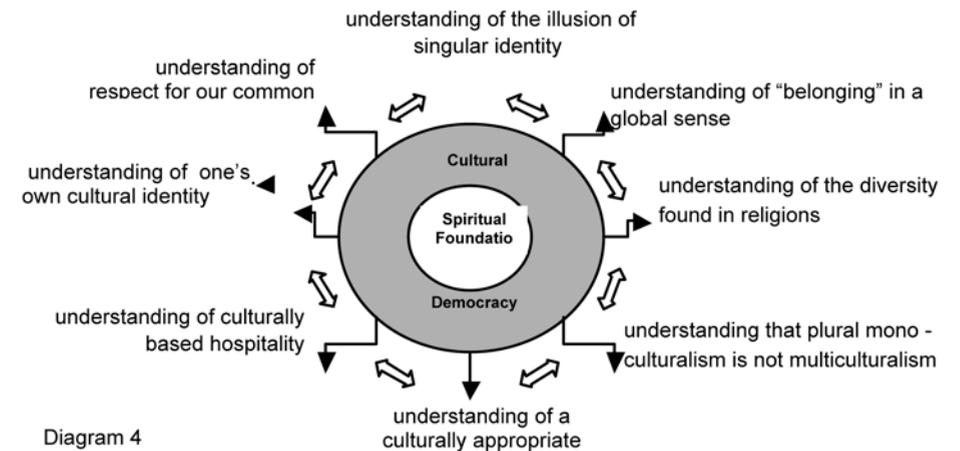


Diagram 4
Larry Hufford, 2008

FAITH BASED CULTURAL DEMOCRACY

- A faith based understanding of *the illusion of singular identity*. Each one of us has multiple identities through family, associations and alliances. Our identity may be primarily rooted in one of our identities, for example, race, culture, gender, profession, and family; but, singular identity is an illusion.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *belonging in a global sense*. Universalism without a respect for the dignity of difference turns easily to violence.

Belonging requires a concept of the intolerable; it is not cultural relativism. Nevertheless, belonging in a global sense is not a search for uniformity. Globalization can produce homogeneity, but globalization can also be a threat to homogeneity. Belonging in a global sense must be a choice given to each individual. There is no place for “enforced diversity,” that is, trapping people within a kind of difference they wish to escape.

- ❖ A faith based understanding of the *diversity found in religions*. It is critical to recognize our diverse diversities within faith traditions. There is a plurality of understanding within each faith tradition. A faith based understanding that *plural monoculturalism is not multiculturalism*. An existence of a diversity of cultures is not synonymous with multiculturalism. Having two or more traditions existing side by side without interaction is plural monoculturalism (Sen).
- ❖ A faith based understanding of a *culturally based economy*. Sustainable human development ought to be culturally rooted. People should not be hardened from developing in accordance with their own culture (The Church in the Modern Word #65).
- ❖ A faith based understanding of a *theology of hospitality*. Self-criticism of one’s own faith tradition is key to the practice of hospitality. A theology of hospitality means inviting the stranger into one’s home, with respect and a willingness to listen to understand the other’s faith story (Marty).
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *values worth living by*. This includes a commitment to a culture of nonviolence and respect for all life; a culture of solidarity and a just economic order; a culture of tolerance and life of truthfulness; and, a culture of equal rights and partnership between men and women (Kung)
- ❖ A faith based understanding of respect for our *common identities*. Cultures are made of continuities and changes. Cultural democracy is about engagement, finding unity in diversity. The challenge is to accept the real diversity of all faiths. Then one can search for commonalities found in all faiths that enable a community to live cultural democracy.

FAITH BASED ECOLOGICAL DEMOCRACY

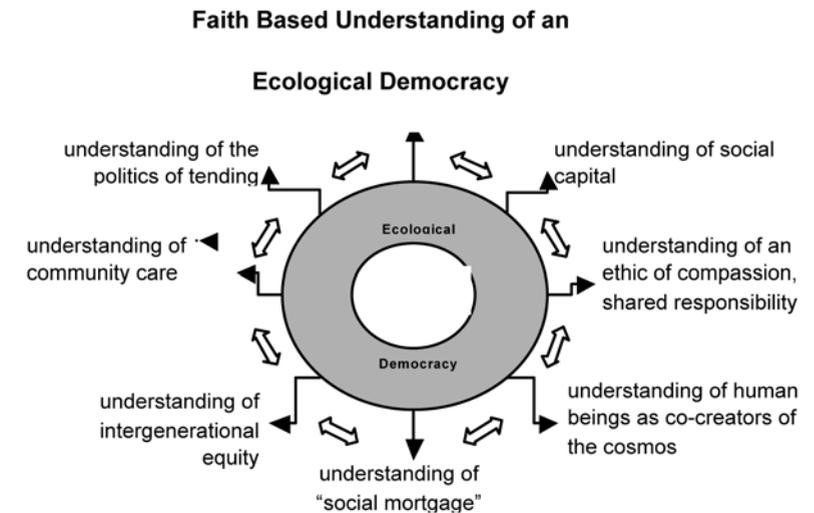


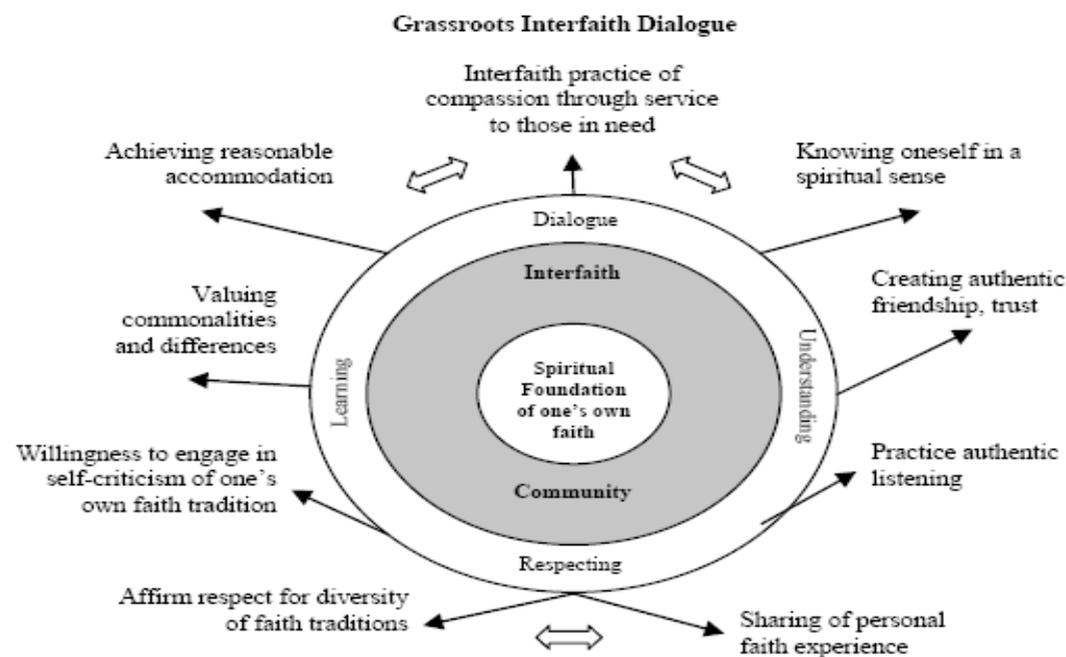
Diagram 5

- ❖ A faith based understanding of an *economy of gratitude* begins by acknowledging that we live through the kindness and sacrifices of others; that our embodiment ties us to ecological cycles. A faith based understanding of *social capital* emphasizes the value of social networks, bonding similar and diverse people, with norms of reciprocity.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *social capital* emphasizes the value of social networks, bonding similar and diverse people, within norms of reciprocity.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of an ethic of *compassion and shared responsibility*. Progress is defined within ecological democracy as people improving themselves by becoming better members of families, communities and becoming better stewards of the environment.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of human beings as *co-creators of the cosmos*. If ecology is not holistic, it is not ecology. Each human being is a conscious and unconscious bearer of the wealth of nature and culture. Each person can make his/her experience and knowledge apparent in an act of love, of acceptance and affirmation of the universe.
- ❖ A faith based understanding of *social mortgage* is where social entrepreneurs borrow insights from ecology; where social economy organizations pursue social objectives intended to meet the needs of all

members of a community.

- ❖ A faith based understanding of *intergenerational equity*. All spiritual traditions and religions of humankind hold that the last word is connection, that is, connectedness. A new covenant with the earthy requires a connectedness; reclaiming of the dimension of the sacred.
 - ❖ A faith based understanding of *a community of care*, where people are turned toward one another. Relationships are governed by conviviality rather than suspicion, by praise rather than blame (Berry 152).
 - ❖ A faith based understanding of the *politics of tending* is identified with what we do when we look after one another; the active care of those around us as well as the earth.

GRASSROOTS INTERFAITH DIALOGUE



Larry Hufford, 2008

Diagram 6

- ❖ Interfaith practice of compassion through *service to those in need*. All major faith traditions teach that service to others is the highest form of prayer. The first stage of interfaith dialogue is to reach consensus on a service project thus enabling relationships to develop based on friendship, trust and a shared experience of service to those in need or to the environment.

- ❖ *Knowing oneself in a spiritual sense*. Deep and meaningful interfaith dialogue requires participants to have a thorough understanding of their own faith tradition and their personal spirituality.
- ❖ Creating *authentic friendship and trust*, which is a prerequisite to entering interfaith dialogue to learn and to understand other faith traditions. Friendship and trust enable participants to engage in dialogue with humanness, gratitude and a sense of humor.
- ❖ Practice *authentic listening*. We cannot learn from other faith traditions unless we practice authentic listening. This is actively living a culture of respect.
- ❖ Sharing of *personal faith experience*. Each participant must attempt to experience other faith traditions, from within, that is, the deep spiritual story- the spirit, the heart, the whole being of those from other faiths.
- ❖ Affirm *respect for the diversity of faith traditions*. Each participant in interfaith dialogue must come to the conversation with complete honesty and sincerity. Each participant must define him/herself. Respect of other faith traditions means that we compare our faith ideals with the ideals of other faiths and our practice with our partner's practice.
- ❖ Willingness to engage in *self-criticism of one's own faith tradition*. Each participant must be self-critical of him/herself, and his/her faith tradition. A lack of self-criticism implies that one's own faith tradition has all the "correct" answers. This attitude would bring failure to the interfaith dialogue process.
- ❖ *Valuing commonalities and differences*. Dialogue about common themes is only a beginning to understanding. Only after friendship, trust and positive shared experiences is a reality should differences become part of the dialogue.
- ❖ Achieving *reasonable accommodation*. In acknowledging irreconcilable differences in faith traditions the goal is to understand, accept and respect other faith traditions. Once the accommodation state is reached, residents can work cooperatively to create a community that lives to create, maintain and strengthen just relationships.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology (action-research) for constructing a framework for non-violent grassroots holistic democracy is participatory dialogical relationship building rooted in a deep understanding of one's own faith and willingness to understand the other's faith. Dialogue means that one speaks to be understood and listens to understand. The participatory aspect of the methodology is rooted

in the pedagogy of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian liberation educator. Emphasis is on informal education which is rooted in dialogue rather than a constructed curriculum. Not only does the Freire model involve understanding the other it involves action with the other. The challenge is to create an environment where diversity leads to positive shared experiences. The emphasis then is on praxis, that is, local action that is informed and leads to making a positive difference in the local community. Emphasis is on what Freire calls “conscientization” that is understood to have the power to transform reality. Emphasis is on situating educational activity in the lived experience of participants.

This leads one to the idea of sustainable human development rooted in one’s spirituality. Faith confers identity and self worth to an individual which is an important part of conscientization. With regard to an Islamic and Christian effort to work towards holistic democracy one begins with small groups of individuals within their particular faith. In test cases I have the community identify leaders who are persons of faith and present my diagrams of holistic democracy. After identifying and explaining my understanding of the component parts of political, cultural, economic, ecological and spiritual democracy I ask participants to discuss the extent to which they agree or disagree with my model and how they would design a new conceptual framework. After they have agreed upon a set of component parts to each area of democracy I ask them to find within the Muslim or Christian faith, stories and/or scripture that relates directly to the part being discussed.

While this is in progress, relationships are being strengthened. This is also a way for participants to deepen their understanding of their own faith. Then, the community leaders are asked to go into the neighborhoods to organize small groups of citizens to replicate this process. This framework is rooted in Freire’s praxis and the base community model of liberation theology. Community leaders decide how the groups will be constructed, for example, should men and women initially meet separately. After this process has been completed in a neighborhood, Christian and Muslim groups are asked to begin the process anew in an interfaith setting. The focus is ultimately on local participatory decision making over issues of concern that have been identified by local citizens.

It is my belief that this methodology will create a solid foundation for healthy relationships within a community where citizens of different faiths can participate in decision making with a deep respect for one another regardless of one’s faith. Where religion is seen as part of the problem it must become part of the solution. Religion can only become part of the solution if people practice non-violence in their daily lives and find themes of social justice and peace in their own religion while realizing those same themes can be found in the other’s religion. This is constructing a healthy holistic participatory democracy beginning at the community level.

CONCLUSION

A grassroots conceptual framework for the design and practice of a faith based civic engagement will lead to a more just and non-violent community. The path is a difficult one. Community is relational and all relationships require commitment along with unconditional love (agape) to resolve conflict nonviolently. This process empowers and enables citizens to participate meaningfully in community decision making. This is a faith based democratic model for constructing a healthy, whole community. It is the opposite of intolerant fundamentalist processes that promote a model of conversion, conformity and authoritarian anti-democratic decision making by stating that “my religion is *THE* truth.”

Where religion is a source of conflict, it must become part of the resolution and reconciliation process. People in non-Western countries transitioning to a more participatory system would be well advised to reject Western efforts to create political and economic systems that do not take into consideration or accept local cultures, religions, alternative models of development and grassroots community assets and capacity. Efforts to create political democracies with a top-down model are predestined to failure. Democracy needs to be understood holistically and constructed from the grassroots up. Citizens throughout the globe must own the liberation process required to realize holistic development.

Amartya Sen, in *Development as Freedom*, concludes that political, economic and cultural transformation must occur simultaneously. I have added the ecological and spiritual dimensions to Sen’s thesis. The construction of holistic democracy on the community level proposes that the political, economic, cultural, ecological and spiritual component parts are so interconnected and interrelated that all must be promoted simultaneously. Perhaps the term should be ecological democracy. The theologian Leonardo Boff wrote that:

“The peculiar feature of ecological knowledge is its transversality, the fact that it relates laterally, frontward, backward and inwardly (complexity) all experiences and all forms of comprehension as complementary and useful in our knowledge of the universe, our role within it, and in the cosmic solidarity that unites us to all.”

This model of holistic democracy can be practiced/lived by all communities, regardless of the educational level of citizens, the economic well-being of citizens or a history of conflict (violent or non-violent). It is a model founded on the faith tradition/s of the community. Communities throughout the globe, whatever the level of development, ought to begin community level dialogue on constructing holistic democracy.

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Dr. Rusmir Mahmutć ehajić

ABSTRACT: This paper presents an overview of some of the ways in which the methods and approaches, known as *scriptural* and *liturgical reasoning*, in the Jewish and Christian traditions, are commonly applied within the Muslim tradition. These approaches differ from modern secular approaches, not least because they accept the fact that, as the custodians of the sacred texts and liturgies themselves believe, God speaks through those texts and liturgies in the forms of human language, ritual, myth, and the self. Particular attention is given to the question of the integrity of worship and the possibility of understanding it from within, which is when the subject of thought and its object become one. The integrity of worship is considered in terms of humanity’s cosmic role as refracted through sacred text and ritual. In the case of worship, this means the word or text, ritual as symbolic recital and their mythic interpretations. The paper is divided into two halves; the first half examining *scriptural collegiality* and the second deals with *worshipful understanding*. The first half was written as an introduction to the second, which was originally conceived as part of a much larger work on questions of religious plurality in the post-modern age. Though these considerations are articulated within a post-modern theoretical framework, they are in full agreement with the tenets of perennial philosophy as the common content of all the religious traditions, a sort of philosophical return of the repressed.

INTRODUCTION

Saying that there must be an end, once and for all, to the persecution and killing of Bosnian Muslims and the destruction of what is theirs leads to the conclusion that we must integrate the language, meanings and symbols of the Qur'an, its myths and rituals and awareness of their presence in a community-for-salvation into life as a whole, as part of every memory of death or thought of the future, in such a way that bearing witness to the oneness of God, the apostolate of the Praised and the return to God acquires meaning for each of us in our present; a meaning that is there to be discovered in the individual self and expressed in a clear universal discourse as hostility to all servility in favor of faithful service of God.

A change of this nature can occur as a gift of a still, small voice, if we trust in it. Had the Bosnian Muslims survived on the basis of some power that was not preceded by this still, small voice as thought of their leader, their existence would take the form of desperate stalling, indulging fears and gratifying passions. God's sending down His revelation to the Praised and its transmission into the selves of his listeners is that still, small voice – which attests to the power of the Spirit. No subjugation of the people of that still, small voice to the might of their persecutors shall divert them from the expectation of what is so utterly close to them in their ritual prayers. When they had power in addition to the still, small voice, it merely meant to them a still greater burden, more complicated trials and temptations, and longer absences in oblivion, for the Spirit and its still, small voice require nothing more than what they have.

Both the individual and society are a boon to the treasure-house of language as its two indistinguishable, yet always separate, facets. The individual self remains, in the bosom of the family, clan, society and humanity; as a whole, alone, though always with everyone else. If it does not have itself, it can have no other; if it is not its own, it is no-one's. Its healing from oblivion and suffering thus lies in the discovery of its own individuality. It is only in finding itself that the self can be a reliable witness to the oneness of God and the apostolate of the Praised and can join in prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage.

The self is reflected through these rituals, ascending to its center or sublime heights. Several revelations speak of the mutuality of the self and all things as signs that connect it to the Self as the Signified:

- ❖ Your creation and your upraising are as but a single soul. God is All-hearing, All-seeing.¹³³

¹³³ Qur'an, 31:28. Quotations are from Arthur J. Arberry, *The Koran Interpreted*, London: George Allen & Unwin, 1980 and *The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible: King James Version*, Indianapolis: B. B. Kirkbride Bible Company, 1988. The Qur'anic quotations have been modified to reflect the author's preferred translation of key terms and preserve semantic links otherwise lost.

- ❖ God created the heavens and the earth in truth, and that every soul may be recompensed for what it has earned; they shall not be wronged.¹³⁴
- ❖ Your Lord knows very well what is in your hearts if you are righteous, for He is All-forgiving to those who are penitent.¹³⁵
- ❖ Every soul earns only to its own account; no soul laden bears the load of another.¹³⁶
- ❖ We charge not any soul save to its capacity, and with us is a book speaking truth, and they shall not be wronged.¹³⁷
- ❖ Say: "O men, the truth has come to you from your Lord. Whosoever is guided is guided only to his own gain, and whosoever goes astray, it is only to his own loss. I am not a guardian over you."¹³⁸
- ❖ But as for him who feared the Station of his Lord and forbade the soul its caprice, surely Paradise shall be the refuge.¹³⁹
- ❖ God wronged them not, but themselves they wronged.¹⁴⁰
- ❖ When heaven is split open, when the stars are scattered, when the seas swarm over, when the tombs are overthrown, then a soul shall know its works, the former and the latter.¹⁴¹

ON SCRIPTURAL COLLEGIALLY

While Jews, Christians, and Muslims are all peoples of their own books, they are so in ways at once similar and different. Their collective forms of subjectivity cannot be understood without the Torah, Psalms, Gospels or Qur'an, as well as certain other books linked more or less closely to the timeline of tradition, whose wellspring the sacred books represent. Each of these peoples realizes their overall identity and distinctiveness, both individually and collectively, in relation to the books. This overall identity and this distinctiveness are both internal; related to the book, and external; related to the other peoples. In the modern period, however, these differences have begun to appear in ways previously unknown.

The sacred books of the Jews, Christians and Muslims have become the objects of investigation by the "scientific method," according to which the observing and analyzing subject is depersonalized and limited by the supposed

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 45:22.

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*, 17:25.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*, 6:164.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*, 23:62.

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*, 10:108.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 79:40–41.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 3:117.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 82:1–5.

power of autonomous reason, with the concomitant exclusion of any framework that transcends the world of quantity. From this point of view, objective knowledge of the holy books is assumed to be possible; knowledge, that is, which exists independently of any individual self.

Equated with other mere phenomena of the quantifiable world, the sacred books of the Jews, Christians and Muslims are more or less reduced to mere objects of propositional logic, education and science, in the modern sense of these terms.¹⁴² Their position on the axis linking human being (considered in the abstract), the world and God, which allows both ascent and descent, is simply ignored: the knowing subject is amputated from the object of knowledge and is consequently of absolutely no importance in the process of objective science.

This is why God, as the revealer of the sacred books, must also be excluded, since He cannot be reduced to something in the world of quantity. This leads to the denial of the inextricable relationship, incomprehensible to mere reason, that exists between the sacred books and both individual and collective sacred rituals of prayer and worship, which are in their turn indistinguishable from the expectation of and search for God's mercy and blessing.

It is clear from the experience of the post-Cartesian centuries that the historical investigation and archaeology of the sacred texts, the philological and palimpsest-like study of their layers, and their reduction to more primitive levels of development provide, at best, partial answers which generally tend to displace the question of humanity and the reason and purpose of our temporal and spatial existence. They displace the ideological images of the world and the social movements based on them over the past century.

No matter how interesting or attractive they may be to the believing Jew, Christian or Muslim, such studies and their results represent only one level of what the sacred books can and should mean for our lives. When their higher meanings are excluded or separated from the expectation of God's blessing in and through them and one single level of their vision is absolutized, we experience this from within emotionalizing and collectivist extensions of identity as discomfort and, not infrequently, even as insult.

Perhaps it has never been so clear as it is today that the sacred texts of the Jews, Christians and Muslims are not to blame for the misfortunes and the sufferings that humankind has endured in recent centuries. Blame belongs,

¹⁴² *Discussing the preconditions for an authentic reading and so reception of a sacred text into a discourse susceptible of rational reception and response, Randi Rashkover stresses the unacceptability of objectification, writing: "To permit the objectification of culture is to stifle the cultivation and moral transformation of any reader. Texts must not languish in the clarity of their set interpretations but must be stimuli for conversation. It is the conversation that arises around texts that challenges readers to review their prior positions and readies them to hear alternative positions." (Randi Rashkover, "Cultivating Theology: Overcoming America's Skepticism about Religious Rationality", Cross Currents, 55/2 (2005): 241-251, 247)*

if at all, to the interpretations put upon them which are, in the end, only human. Consequently, we are fully justified in investigating the neglect and marginalization of the sacred texts within the cultural mainstream of the modern age.

An ethical vision does not exist for which these texts cannot serve as a source and supportive pillar. Their presence, whether as an external object or as an internalized discourse, is only partial, given the limitations on the individual self and so on any collectivity. It is not given to anyone at any time to comprehend all the possibilities of the sacred texts within a single self. It is not given, because only God comprehends all things with His knowledge.¹⁴³

According to the traditional perspective, life with the sacred text takes place across the anthropological-cosmological levels. The Muslims, as the people of the Qur'an, the Christians, as the people of the Gospels, and the Jews, as the people of the Torah, all form their collective and individual sense-of-self after their highest possibilities in relation to interpretations of these books. Discussions on experience of these interpretations constitute the most intimate of relations within any of these communities. One may add that no participant in these conversations can doubt that his or her integration within the anthropological-cosmological perspective is determined by how well they understand the sacred text or book.

Once a Muslim, Christian, or Jew is convinced of the ethical rightness of an understanding of the book in which they share, his or her attention, discourse, and reading will reflect and bear the measure of that conviction. Listening and remembering, discoursing and writing and reading the sacred books entail the integration of the individual sense of self with them. It is on this basis that the reception or gathering together and giving or distinguishing of all things that exist within the self, the horizons of the world, and even beyond takes place. It is also on this basis that it can do so in a language governed by analytical reason, though the source transcends the merely rational. This is the continuous and ever-changing flux of the self.

There is no reason why listening, discoursing, and reading should not take place in front of everybody in a given community, and in particular of those who derive their knowledge, way and virtue from relations with other and different books. One's conviction of the ethical nature of a given understanding of the Book is measured by one's willingness to talk about it in front of others who are willing to listen, as well as willingness to hear the testimony of those others about their different convictions. The other and the different is needed as friend, for only in relation with the other and different can we come to terms with the irreducible differences in and between interpretations of the books.

¹⁴³ See Qur'an, 4:176.

The individual self brings together everything that lies within the horizons of the external world. The external world and the self are in constant exchange, such that the order of each is reflected in the other. Language and discourse reflect the consciousness the self has of itself and of existence as a whole. This reflection in constant change can be perfected, purified and illuminated only in dialogue with the other and different, as one and the same reality is reflected in each. Once it is accepted that this reality reveals the self, and does so in human language; which is to say in a variety of languages and books, then discussion of humanity, the world, and God only makes sense so long as it undergoes rational shaping by both speaker and listener. Only such a form of dialogue can contribute to the ascent of the self towards a higher level.

This is why the sacred texts are open to the harmonization of many different interpretations both in each individual and in society. Each self receives, takes and gives of the book in accordance with its own measure, which is variable. The sacred texts attain fullness of presence, however, only within individual and collective ritual and so both in solitude and in sociability. When deployed within a ritual without worshipful understanding of its contents, the book serves only as an emotional prop.¹⁴⁴ On the other hand, the modern expansion of rational perspectives has, it would appear, unfolded almost entirely without regard for this individual emotional attachment to the sacred texts.

There are thus two currents in relations towards the sacred texts – one emotional and worshipful; the other rational and scientific, in the modern meaning of those terms. One consequence of their parallel existence is that most worshippers know very little about theology as an academic discipline, while most experts in theology, comparative religion and the history and sociology of religion know very little about the inseparability of the sacred text from individual and collective acts of worship and its incorporation in the lives of the faithful followers of the ancient traditional teachings.

Placing these claims within the framework of contemporary interpersonal relations, we may draw at least three important conclusions from them; conclusions in which a number of key issues come together regarding the relationship between modernity and post-modernity on the one hand and traditional intellect on the other, as well as secularism in all its variants. Perennialism is the synthesis in which quality transcends all quantity.

Our first conclusion is that new comparative understandings of the sacred texts are necessary as well as possible, so that their custodians and students will be able to bring, present and study them in communal endeavors which accept, *a priori*, that the differences between people are irreducible and fruitful. The current world reality in which various peoples of the Book live, imposes upon us a need

144 In the Muslim tradition, the “Book” refers to both oral and written forms and their mutual relations, which include listening, remembering, speaking, writing, and reading.

to meet on boundaries; boundaries which are less physical and increasingly to be found in the virtual world or the world of the individual *per se*.

The second conclusion is that these differences are crucial for the dignity and rights of every Jew, Christian, and Muslim. We can understand them, however, only in an enlightened relationship towards the other and the different; to the individual who gives a sense or meaning to those differences.¹⁴⁵ They normally form an indivisible pair: the inviolate and unchangeable holy text and the inviolable but changeable self. These two, the text and the self that recites it, offer an infinite variety of interpretations of each sacred text. No closed human self will succeed to ascend towards the better and more beautiful, the more honest and true, and the more just and more merciful. The other and the different assist our realization of this through their differences and their inviolate dignity. This is why placing the various holy texts on one table so that their various witnesses can demonstrate how the self is altered by relationship with their sacred text, is a banquet consecrated by those books and the expectations of the company.

The third conclusion is that the European universities, which represent one of the supreme achievements of humanity, can escape their captivity by the premise that the secular, rational and de-anthropologized science of the world of quantity is sufficient to preserve their integrity, so long as it retains its separation from perennial wisdom and the illumination, intuition and subjectivity proper to the holy traditions. Liberation from such exclusionism, which denies the free encounter of custodians and witnesses to the various holy traditions, is more than a requirement in an age that has fostered great wars, the Holocaust, the Gulag and other horrors of technologized autonomous reason. This, along with an ideologized identity, confines the teleology of humanity to the level of the social and the natural. The effects of the ideologized centralization of power are evident in the contemporary fragmentation of individual consciousness, as no principle of finite ontology can bring together the differences of individual knowledge or resolve the contradictions between them. That this is the case may clearly be seen from the current condition of the universities which have proved, and will continue to prove, unable to meet our expectations of them, regarding the formation of a whole and rounded humanity.¹⁴⁶

From these conclusions, we may derive the premise that Jewish, Christian

145 This is also the opinion of Arif Ali Nayed who has written the following of the need for communal reading and discussion of the sacred texts: “Reading together is a most fascinating kind of reading, and today, in our cruel and torn-apart world, it becomes a divine imperative for all of us.” (Arif Ali Nayed, “Reading Scripture Together: Towards a Sacred Hermeneutics of Togetherness”, *Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 26/1 (2005): 48–54, 49)

146 For certain responses on the theme of “Whither the contemporary university?” see: Desmond Maurer, “Ten Theses on the Post-university”, *Forum Bosnae*, 51 (2010): 68–82; and David F. Ford, *Shaping Theology: Engagements in a Religious and Secular World*, Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishing, 2007.

and Muslim thought; to mention only these, though this triad may stand in for all the other traditions, which draw upon metaphysically grounded worldviews, are simply not possible as forms closed off and cut off from each other. This impossibility is conditioned by the reality of a world in which the assumption that the independence of each book from the others denies God's disposition of His self-revelation in creation, which is to say in a variety of different books. However important the earth, the heavens, and all that lies between them, are to each individual self, regardless of which language or which belief system it may have been formed within, the sacred texts are equally important as signs within the world and the self, independently of whether they are or will be realized within the human frame. It is, therefore, understandable that Steven Kepnes, referring to the thoughts of Franz Rosenzweig, stresses that:

"...Rosenzweig provides us, today, with a resource to argue that Jewish thought in the contemporary period cannot be done in isolation but must be done in concert with Christian and Islamic thought.

*For this expanded project to be enacted, I believe it requires two stages. The first is an inner religious move to express the cultural-linguistic systems of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam in their modern philosophy and translate them into the terms of modernity. The second stage involves an interpretive process that requires much of the courage and creativity of the Ethical Monotheists but is attuned to the contemporary postmodern twenty-first-century realities and the current world situation."*¹⁴⁷

One may see in this proposal a hope for the integration of approaches to the sacred texts that require they be subjected to rational criticism or critical reason which ignores or has lost touch with the thesis of the inextricability of the knowing subject and the known. This neglect is largely determined by the modern experience of science of religion, an experience which contains undeniable achievements, but whose shortcomings are also evident. It is, moreover, clear that the hermeneutical interpretations of the sacred text within each community, which cannot be separated from individual, group, and ritual relations with the text, offer "something" that transcends the possibilities of critical reason.

In our post-modern age, post-critical reasoning is put forward as an achievement that has been reached in the modern age on the basis of critical reason as the means for relating to the holy books. While it may have appeared in the post-modern age, what is being offered is neither moderate nor post-modern, but the perennial content of the tradition of every people of the Book. That this is the case is evident from the way it has become available or been put forward

¹⁴⁷ Steven Kepnes, *Jewish Liturgical Reasoning*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, 128–29.

within each and every community of the Book, amongst the Jews, Christians and Muslims.¹⁴⁸

It is important to add that the goal for the traditional Muslim approach to the Recitation is to integrate the self with it. The Recitation is divine discourse, and it includes in itself all of His beautiful attributes. In this way, authentic human nature receives the content of revealed discourse which, through the study of the appropriate text, opens up and reveals itself as the perfection of beauty of character,¹⁴⁹ which is the following of the Prophet the Praised, whose name simply means the Praised, as the most beautiful example¹⁵⁰ and becoming itself of mighty character.¹⁵¹ This entails the expectation that growth in knowledge is inextricably linked to the blessing, which the revealed book introduces into the self.

As the revealer of the Book [Qur'an], God is blessed, while the Book is the transmission or sending down of this blessing to the human self and the way to find redemption in the self, as God said through the Praised: "Blessed be He who has sent down the Salvation upon His servant, that he may be a warner to all beings."¹⁵² Our relationship with the Book is the expectation and active search for blessing, in line with His words to the Prophet Abraham through the angel: "The mercy of God and His blessing be upon you, O people of the House! Surely He is All-praised, All-glorious."¹⁵³

Relations between the sacred text and its custodians range from simple denial to witness of its crucial role in forming the self. At times, the mere presence of the text is the determining influence on a given place and the people within it. Listening to it as an oral and sacred discourse, remembering and reciting it, writing and reading it, and participation in ritual and in being as a whole with all its aspects, actualized or merely potential; none of these exist apart from the self as a whole. The sacred text is already in the self but in such a way that it is always coming into the self and always arising out of itself towards the world.

It may be that the perennial teaching of the Word, which descends to become flesh and the flesh which ascends to become the Word; so that both ascent and descent are open but never exceed their principle, which is one and the same, is the only way to bridge the division of the self into mortal dust, on the one hand and spirit, on the other. This act of bridging is a path to which two things bear witness; virtue as humility and generosity and sacred art in which infinity and

¹⁴⁸ A similar suggestion is made by Peter Ochs in "An Introduction to Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation", in Peter Ochs, ed., *The Return to Scripture in Judaism and Christianity: Essays in Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation*, Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1993: 3–51.

¹⁴⁹ See: Imam Malik, *Al-Muwatta*, trans. 'Ai'sha 'Abdarahman at-Tarjumana and Ya'qub Johnson, London: Diwan Press, 1982, 438.

¹⁵⁰ See *Qur'an*, 33:21.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 68:4.

¹⁵² *Qur'an*, 25:1.

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*, 11:73.

eternity are revealed through beauty in finitude and time. Worship is an act of bridging both sides of the abyss; thought and action, discourse and physicality. Only by setting forth from the edge of the abyss over the bridge, which is worship, can one talk of a perspective in which we discover the meaning of being in the world, not merely in terms of eschatological deferral but here and now.

Muslims live both diachronically and synchronically with Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Taoists, Confucians and all the other collective forms of subjectivity. These synchronic and diachronic relations both are and are not interruptions of perennial persistence. They are, insofar as the form of their revealed Book, as of any other, are original, particular, and unrepeatable; as is the history of the Prophet through whom the Book was sent down in the world. They are not, insofar as perfect humanity, as revealed by the Prophet and the Book finds unity within the core of the self, which is beyond any temporal or spatial finitude.

Although the Muslim confession of the unity of God accepts that His different revelations have been delivered through a variety of prophets; of whom there are 124,000, belonging to the various nations and speaking different languages, the unique nature of each individual human self, including the prophetic self, is reflected in the unique nature of the forms each individual revelation takes and so in those of each particular interpretation. This is why the different revelations are nonetheless inextricably linked, not just with the forms they have taken, but also with perennial wisdom and illumination.

On the other hand, within individualism, universalism, and materialism, as the premises of modernity, we are offered a framework for the human self that is entirely within the categories of quantity. The books that have been revealed or sent down come originally from the One, which means that they are links to Him, so that no limitation of them or of the self has any place within the traditional point of view. To receive news of sacred books from outside the self, from other human experience, itself symbolizes the original reception from the One.

This is why Muslims are determined in what they are both individually and collectively by the different and the other and so by the other peoples of the Books. They are determined by dialogue with all people, near and far, similar and different. According to their belief system, their revealed book was sent down to them by God, who is simultaneously in and outside of time. In claiming to confess that their book is from God and is sacred, they take on a debt to allow a similar right of witness to others with regard to their sacred books.

Once revelation has been sent down in a given language, what has been received may be transmitted horizontally to any and every given individual self, and so into all other languages. There are here two forms of translation; the first being from one self to another in the same language, the second being from one self to another in different languages. For both forms of translation between

selves, reason acts as the guarantee of possibility.

This transfer takes place at the level of reason; consequently, it may be received and passed on in every rational inter-personal relation. Receiving and passing on do not do away with the difference between selves, but enable a turn on the various paths towards the supra-individual principle of all existence. In this turn, the path calls to the self.¹⁵⁴ Wherever we may be in the depths and in dispersion, our supreme possibility lies in turning towards the One and in focus upon the One.

There seems hardly to be a language in the world in which Muslims do not receive or express their testimony of the oneness of God, the apostolate of the Praised, and return of all things to Him. From this, it follows that all the aspects of the world constitute alterity for them. It would never have been possible to recognize, maintain, and strengthen being-in-peace (*islam*) as the relationship of the person-of-peace (*muslim*) with God as Peace (*al-salam*), without acceptance of the presence of that other in all its variety. If unknown, the other is constituted within the self of the person-of-peace as ignorance or the dark side, in which various formations or incarnations of fear and associated hatreds are imagined. To be free of them, we must first accept the command of the Prophet, the Praised: “Be in this world as if you were a stranger or a traveler.”¹⁵⁵

Liberation from ignorance, which is to say from fears and hatreds, requires that we approach the other and the different and accept that a certain mutual relationship of listening and discoursing must be established in dialogue. Today, this task is twofold; relationship with the other who bears witness of his own Book as sacred and with the other who sees in autonomous reason the highest level of humanity.¹⁵⁶ Amongst contemporary attempts to remove or heal the damage we have seen come about as a result of modern dichotomies between human being and the world, autonomous reason and nature and sensible and supra-sensible knowledge is one for dialogue between witnesses of various revelations through the joint study of their sacred texts.¹⁵⁷

154 God tells us through the Praised in the Recitation (11:56): “Truly, I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord; there is no creature that crawls, but He takes it by forelock. Surely my Lord is on a upright path.”

155 Imam al-Bukhārī, *Sahīh al-Bukhārī*, 1–9, trans. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, Beirut: Dar al-Arabia, 1985, 8:284.

156 On issues related to these dichotomies in the Muslim, Christian, and Jewish perspectives see: Basit Bilal Koshul and Steven Kepnes, eds., *Scripture, Reason, and the Contemporary Islam-West Encounter: Studying the “Other”, Understanding the “Self”*, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007.

157 See: David F. Ford, “An Interfaith Wisdom: Scriptural Reasoning between Jews, Christians and Muslims”, *Modern Theology*, 22/3 (2006): 345–366. In this text (p. 5) the author sets out eight preconditions for successful dialogue between Jews, Christians, and Muslims on their books and mutual understanding. It is possible to find rationales and support for them all in the Qur’an, as may be seen from this text.

The expectation that the right to speak will be recognized entails acceptance by the speaker of an obligation, after speaking, to fall silent and become the listener of his listener's discourse. In this nexus of right and debt, new possibilities open up for understanding of the sacred books and strengthening our humanity in our ascent towards a higher and thusly, more beautiful and better possibility. Thus, understanding of the sacred texts, in an encounter with their custodians and interpreters, is put forward as a new possibility for the post-ideological, post-revolutionary, post-scientistic age. For Muslims, this is not only a possibility but an explicit injunction, repeated in various ways throughout their holy book. Given that every holy book exists primarily in the discourse of those who bear witness to it, listening to the other is a way of knowing the self.

It is with the sacred text, which remains always the same but which receives new meanings within the transformed self, once it is liberated of some of its ignorance, that each individual enters upon the act of worship, which is a way of adopting the text in the flesh and of lifting the self up towards its high levels. Even if considered as an entirely determined series of movements and positions, worship, at least within the self and the experience of the worshipper, is transformed in each of its new occurrences. It is transformed because the self is different from moment to moment, in the ever present possibility that it may bring itself higher on the upright path.

The understanding of those parts of the holy book included within the act of worship, is what is most subject to change: the more sublime the interpretation, the more sublime the act of worship, in accordance with the saying of the Prophet, the Praised: "Worship is an ascent of a believer."¹⁵⁸ In this way the individual, who has ascended comes to the aforementioned banquet with the knowledge of his or her book as something that he or she may offer to the other guests at the feast, and thus contribute to their liberation from ignorance and the violence which is its consequence.

No matter to whom one imparts an interpretation of the text, and that is all we have, one first shapes it as narrator in spoken form, a form whose intelligibility depends on the degree to which the auditor is capable of receiving and understanding it and of restating it in turn, after translation into his or her own tradition and discourse. In this way, the self of the speaker is translated into the self of the listener, which means that two images of existence may be compared

¹⁵⁸ Cited from: *Fakhr al-Dīn Muhammad bin 'Umar al-Tamīmī al-Rāzī, al-Tafsīr al-Kubrā wa Maḥāṭīh al-Ghayb, 1–32, Bayrūt: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 2000, 1:213. The most sublime experience of the prophet the Praised, the Praised, was his elevation from the lowest depth to the One, symbolized by the journey from the Sacred to the Further Mosque. He then received of the One the form of worship and with it he descended to the world amongst human beings, to give it to them as their way of ascending themselves. On this upward path, one can see the realization of their flesh in the Word, while during their descent it was the Word that was realized in the flesh.*

with each other in the language of the pair of participants in the dialogue but that difference nonetheless always remains as a guarantee of the authenticity and dignity of both sides. The difference between them is a gain, which contributes to the participants learning more about their own selves and so acquiring new interpretations of their texts. Given these new interpretation, their acts of worship lead them to a higher level on the path towards human perfection and so towards God.

While the number of groups in different parts of the world involved in the endeavor of joint study and understanding of the sacred texts may be small, the implications penetrate to the very core questions of political, cultural and economic life, which continue to be strongly influenced by the ideological, revolutionary, and traumatic legacy of a world that acts as both stimulus and framework for unenlightened enmities between the members of the various religious communities. For those who bear witness that there is no god but God and that the Praised is His servant and His messenger such encounters are not merely desirable, but an integral part of their acceptance of the Book sent down to them by God in human language, which is to say through the Praised, in temporal and spatial existence.

A large number of verses in the Recitation provide evident rationale for joint studying and exploration of the sacred doctrines, ways and virtues. In fact, the Recitation is in its entirety a call to recognize, accept and protect the dignity and irreducibility of difference, as the revelation of the One in creation entails multiplicity both in the whole and in each individual, so that all things together and individually have meaning for the self of each individual human being. Here we may cite three verses on the basis of which we may see the need for difference, its dignity, and the call to discover our own higher potential in and through it, particularly through confession of the inseparability of what comes later from what came before. This is the necessity that every condition of the self makes the attempt to overtake its better and more beautiful potential on the open path of ascent, from the many towards the One:

- ❖ Alif, Lam, Mim. That is the Book, wherein is no doubt, a guidance to the conscious who believe in the Unseen, and perform the prayer, and expand of that what We have provided them; who believe in what has been sent down to thee, and what has been sent down before thee, and have faith in the Hereafter; those are upon guidance from their Lord, those are the ones who prosper.¹⁵⁹
- ❖ Every man has his direction to which he turns; so be you forward in good works. Wherever you may be, God will bring you all together; surely God is powerful over everything.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁹ *Qur'an, 2:1–5.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid., 2:148.*

- ❖ To every one of you We have appointed a right way and an open road. If God had willed, He would have made you one nation; but that He may try you in what has come to you. So be you forward in good works; unto God shall you return, all together; and He will tell you of that whereon you were at variance.¹⁶¹

From the perspective of the individual, the Book was sent down from God through first intellect. It was received into the created world through individualized self; first the prophetic and then those of the disciples, writers and interpreters in the living stream of tradition. The Book has no presence outside of human individuals. Whatever the differences in reception, transmission and preservation of certain holy books, they exist, in principle, in relation to individual selves. Each self is unique and cannot be repeated. None is ever the same as another or the same at two points in time. This is why the relationship of the self to the Book that is listened to, remembered, written and read is one of constant change.

The Book does not speak to itself. It has life in the self of the individual, which is to say in the countless multitudes of unique individuals. The individual selves can be more or less in agreement with regard to their relationships towards the sacred book but they can never entirely exclude a personal element in the acts of reception, commission to memory, speech, writing and reading. This means that each individual has his or her own experience and knowledge of being related to the holy book, an experience no other has or can have. This is why, in principle, each individual is a treasure house from which and through which some knowledge may be gained.

But the sacred Book is in a human tongue, which means that it belongs to all people and linguistic communities. We cannot talk of language in isolation from the community of those who use it. The formation of experience and knowledge in language presupposes rational exchange between all those who participate in a given language community. From this it follows that dialogue between individuals is a way of finding, discovering and realizing the individual self. The greater the difference between individuals, the greater the opportunity to be gained.

When we say that the sacred Book was sent down by God through first intellect or the Holy Spirit into a human heart, our relationship to it is more or less our relationship with first intellect or the Holy Spirit. But we can bear witness in this relationship or approach to other people only through virtue, which means humility and generosity and beauty of speech and action.

Humility is witness to our willingness to accept the possibility that the other and the different may be related to God and so be a possible source of knowledge and to listen to them accordingly. Generosity means readiness to

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 5:48.

present one's own knowledge and experience to others and to measure oneself in terms of their understanding or lack of understanding. Only in such a relationship is it possible to become a stranger or a wayfarer in relation to others, because one may posit and realize, in the Other, a reason for responsibility towards his or her dignity only by expressing generosity and humility and respecting him or her as foreign. This is so because we are never entirely denied the possibility of being host to a guest, refuge to a wayfarer.

None of this is an appropriate response, however, to God's command to people to contest in beauty, unless it be via the persistent attempt to find oneself before God as though He, Who is, were watching us, for even if we do not see God, He sees us.¹⁶² Just as the individual Jew or Christian, who has the divine word or the scripture of the Torah or the Gospels in his or her self, is a treasure house for the Muslim; who is called upon never to separate his confession of the unity of God and the apostolate of the Praised from his faith. In the Book sent down to the Praised and the books sent down before that, Muslims find a treasure house where they may find answers to questions regarding self-realization in knowledge, which is ascent from the depths towards the higher levels of the self in and through the witness that there is no self but the Self. This is so, because only the 'other' can provide an objective image of the self as a self-knowing subject.

Were this relationship of the Jew, Christian and Muslim to be presented in graphic form, their gathering might appear as on a circle, as the center of which are the sacred books, which may be equated in their different ways with the sense of self of those who originally received them. The Muslim and the Christian and the Jew must all accept that for each of them, their Book is the undisputed truth. For each of them, there lies in the center the self of the prophet through whom that truth was revealed or sent down into the world.¹⁶³

In the Muslim tradition, that self is the Prophet, the Praised, as the most beautiful example, as a character equivalent to the Book, which corresponds to the book as equivalent to his perfect human nature.¹⁶⁴ According to Muslim witness, he is the maternal principle of each prophet.¹⁶⁵ The prophetic self and the Book lie, in the first act of reception, on the axis between God and the original or first

¹⁶² *When the Archangel Gabriel asked the prophet, the Praised: "Now tell me about doing what is beautiful (ihsan)?" – he told him: "Doing what is beautiful means that you should worship God as if you see Him, for even if you not see Him, He sees you." (Imam Muslim, Sahih Muslim, 1–4, trans. 'Abdul Hamid Siddiqi, Riyadh: International Islamic Publishing House, s.a., 1:2)*

¹⁶³ *For a range of interpretations of the prophets Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and the Praised, as well as the grounds for faith and the sources of the modern world in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim points of view, see: Norman Solomon, Richard Harries and Tim Winter, eds., Abraham's Children: Jews, Christians and Muslims in Conversations, London: T&T Clark, 2005.*

¹⁶⁴ *Aisha, the prophet's wife, said of him: "The character of the Apostle of God was the Recitation." (Imam Muslim, 1:359)*

¹⁶⁵ *See Qur'an, 7:156–57.*

recipient of the Book.

Every individual relates to God on the basis of his or her book, so that this relationship includes the self, the Book and the Prophet. The individual self can never lay claim in this relationship to absolute knowledge. This is because the self is constantly changing in a way that refuses completion by anything except the One. This is why dialogue with others who are also connected to the center but through different books and prophets is at the same time a means of ascending or leading the self up towards a higher possibility of knowledge.

If Jews, Christians and Muslims, present on the circle and turned towards their own books, desire to know themselves through the other and the different, it is expected of them that, at best, they admit that each group has its own holy book in the center and that the others must admit the same. It is also expected that the self of each of these individuals gathered around the center be recognized as inviolate: each individual is host to the other, as well as guest of the other; the host has rights in relation to the guest, as the guest has towards the host; for both host and guest, the Lord is the Third,¹⁶⁶ for they are always before Him,¹⁶⁷ as He is always with them.¹⁶⁸

However many there may be on that circle, they are gathered before God. Their relations are on the horizontal plane: speaking and listening are horizontal, which is to say they take place in the world of comparison and quantification. It is only with the presence of God and human perfection at every level, in such a way that they correspond to the upright path, that the books and the prophets allow individuals to be open to ascent on that path towards the One. Ascent is the path which corresponds to descent. Such too are distinction and composition within the human bosom. Their relationship to the One removes tension within the bosom, as God said through the Praised: “And We send down, of the Recitation, that which is a healing and a mercy to the believers; and the wrong doers it increases not, except in loss.”¹⁶⁹

The confession that Jews, Christians and Muslims all have their own books entails the confession of differences between them. They serve each

166 *Ibid.*, 58:7. *Once upon a time the Prophet said to one of his companions, “What thinkest thou of two when God is their Third?” (Imam al-Bukhārī, 5:5) According to a well-known tradition, which the Praised confirmed as true, it was said: “Your soul has a right against you, your Lord has a right against you, and your guest has a right against you. So, give to each that has a right its right.” This tradition appears in many forms, as may be seen in: Arent J. Wensinck, J. P. Mensing and J. Brugman, Concordance et indices de la tradition musulmane, 1–8, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1936–1969, 1:486. The form given here is cited from: William C. Chittick, The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-‘Arabi’s Metaphysics of Imagination, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, 400n12.*

167 See *Qur’an*, 2:115.

168 *Ibid.*, 57:4.

169 *Qur’an*, 17:82.

other as an objective image of their own subjective possibilities. When God said through the Praised: “We gave them clear signs of the Command; so they differed not, except after the knowledge had come to them, being insolent one to another. Surely thy Lord will decide between them on the Day of Resurrection touching their differences.”¹⁷⁰ This may refer equally to any of the peoples of the Book. This is why the Muslim’s relationship with the Jew and/or the Christian is a relationship with him or her own self, in an attempt to emerge from ignorance and doubt towards knowledge and certainty; from enmity towards friendship.

It is impossible that, before a just God, any of the peoples should have an *a priori* advantage and others a disadvantage, with regard to what all have received from Him. This is why we are required to requite with good the differences which cannot be overcome: “Not equal are the good deed and the evil deed. Repel with that which is fairer and behold, he between whom and thee there is enmity shall be as if he were a loyal friend.”¹⁷¹ Requiting in this fashion affirms our consciousness of God, who said through the Praised: “O mankind, We have created you male and female, and appointed you races and tribes, that you may know one another. Surely the noblest among you in the sight of God is the most conscious of you. God is All-knowing, All-aware.”¹⁷²

Evil or violence is action without knowledge, which is to say on the basis of ignorance, regarding difference and similarity. The requirement that we requite with good presupposes our admission of inexpungible difference. We can attain such knowledge only through discourse in the finest fashion, which God enjoined through the Praised: “Dispute not with the People of the Book save in the fairer manner, except for those of them that do wrong; and say, ‘We believe in what has been sent down to us, and what has been sent down to you; our God and your God is One, and in Him we have found peace.’”¹⁷³ Difference cannot be resolved. Enmity, however, can be removed. The condition of this is dialogue, which means listening and speaking, as determined by the participants of the exchange.

According to traditional ontology, existence has many levels, which are signified by the seven heavens and the seven earths.¹⁷⁴ These levels are arranged in descending order. The upright path or axis connects them with the One. As they are in perfect order, they may be represented symbolically by a circle, one arc ascending, the next descending. There is nothing in the whole or even in its smallest element to which the One is not at once both external and internal. The Recitation descended as the Word, given distinct form in human tongue, into this great whole of existence, as epitomized within perfected humanity. Taking the

170 *Ibid.*, 45:17.

171 *Ibid.*, 41:34.

172 *Ibid.*, 49:13.

173 *Ibid.*, 29:46.

174 See *Qur’an*, 65:12 and 17:44.

Recitation into our heart, which is the essence of our humanity, is what allows all existence to become focused and to return to the One. God spoke of this through the Praised:

“This is a Book We have sent down, blessed and confirming that which was before it, and for thee to warn the Mother of Cities and those about her; and those who believe in the world to come to believe in it, and watch over their prayers.”¹⁷⁵ And Book We have sent down to thee, Blessed, that men possessed of minds may ponder its signs and so remember.”¹⁷⁶

The first of these two quotations mentions the Mother of Cities. If we allow that this refers to the holy Valley of Bekka, then it will bear mentioning that the Ka’ba is its central and defining symbol. It signifies the ritual and the constructive project whereby we heal and rid ourselves of our alienation from our original condition, so that we may set out on the axis of the upright path. This axis corresponds to both the descent and the ascent of the Word, which takes on a variety of linguistic forms in the visible world.

The revealed books represent, in all their differences, our connection with the maternal principle, at the highest level, as well as its symbolization in the maternal principle that unites construction and cities, which corresponds to the sacred ritual and two our turning towards and return to the One, from the very lowest level of existence. (Nor is it without significance that the Slavic word for city, “grad,” shares the same Indo-European roots [*gharto] as the French form *jardin* and the English words *garden* and *yard*, in their meaning of “an enclosure” or “enclosed garden”.)

The revealed Book can be approached only by the individual self. Since it was originally received into a perfected kernel of human existence and passed on, thence, in human language, it is only on the basis of this reception, through language, that we can turn towards the essence of perfected humanity and consequently the blessedness which accompanies it. The Book belongs, in principle, to all people. No individual can possess it in such a way as to remove or do away with its connection to the heart in the fullness of its perfection or the perfect individual, as both principle and goal of all creation.

Only one form of perfection is possible and consequently, only one perfect human heart, manifest in all its unique and constantly changing images, within the individual human selves. Of this, the Prophet, the Praised, said: “The hearts of all the children of Adam are like a single heart between two of the fingers of the All-merciful. He turns it wherever He desires. O God, O Turner of Hearts, turn our

¹⁷⁵ *Qur’an*, 6:92.

¹⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 38:29.

hearts toward obeying Thee!”¹⁷⁷

A given people’s language comprehends all its individuals. Each of them receives the Book according to the measure of his or her own self. This is why one may say that every human self reveals the Book in its own way. The inexhaustible treasury of knowledge of the Book lies in this difference from self to self for all the generations. To listen to the discourses of all those who have shared in possession of the Book and to place each individual discourse within the whole leads to liberation from the danger that the individual may misrecognize his or her own passion for God or his or her own self as independent and self-sufficient.¹⁷⁸ This is one way of understanding the warning given by the Praised to his followers: “If anyone interprets the Book of God in the light of his opinion even if he is right, he has erred.”¹⁷⁹

No individual can take the measure of his or her own understanding of the revealed book as sufficient to grow in knowledge of it. Universal dialogue, which entails participation in alternative viewpoints, is what facilitates growth in knowledge and so, ascent towards the union of body and spirit. This is to search for human nature as such, in and through our most sublime potential, which is represented by the Prophet, the Praised, as a mercy to the worlds¹⁸⁰ and the most beautiful example.¹⁸¹ While we say “represents,” it is important to stress that human beings and humanity, and so our perfectibility, transcend mere historicity. Human perfection is present in equal measure of all times as yardstick, challenge, and goal for each individual instance of humanity.

The interpretation of the Recitation, which was sent down by the Self to the self, through a particular condition of the self, while the fact that the Recitation was in principle sent down into every self and that it cannot be confined within any limited network of inter-subjective relations is ignored or discounted, entails that the self of the interpreter must bear witness of itself as a sojourner and a stranger in an infinite world of multiple selves. It must, because the Recitation persists as a ceaseless downward emanation in order that the individual self that receives it may ascend to its original point of origin and its refuge, which is none other than the Self who is revealed throughout existence.

No interpretation of the Recitation, in which the self ignores or denies its interconnection with other selves, is in the end anything more than arrogance and the conviction of independence and self-sufficiency, of which God spoke to the Prophet, the Praised, as follows: “No indeed; surely Man waxes insolent, for he

¹⁷⁷ *Muslim*, 4:1397.

¹⁷⁸ *See Qur’an*, 25:43.

¹⁷⁹ *Abū Dāwūd, Sulayman ibn Ash’ath al-Azadi al-Sijistani, Sunan*, 1–4, *al-Qāhira: Dar al-Hadīth*, 1988, 3644.

¹⁸⁰ *See Qur’an*, 21:107.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid*, 33:21.

thinks himself self-sufficient. Surely unto thy Lord is the Returning.”¹⁸² According to this quotation, it is not possible to form an ethical relationship towards the self, others and the world, unless the self recognize God as the reason and purpose of its own being in the world.

The supposition that the practical life can ground ethics in morally autonomous and rational volition, for which God is nothing more than the guarantor of a theoretical ground for the practical act being carried out by the individual, neither addresses nor resolves the issue of the self as contingent, which is to say split between the vilest depths and the most beautiful sublimity and consequently as sinful. The self’s capacity to rise up towards its higher possibilities cannot be realized except on the basis of love for God as the ever present source of all perfectibility and to whom all the most beautiful names belong.

God reveals Himself through the most beautiful names. He is thus fully present in the finitude of the world. The immediacy of our experience of beauty appears in the form of attraction towards its source, so the self reveals its nature in love for Him. This realization takes the form of following these higher aspects as represented by the Prophet, who is human being as such and not in the form of an insufficiency or falling short. Consequently, the self senses and pursues its higher aspect, which is love of God— the conviction that what is partially known nonetheless reveals the fullness that exercises an irresistible attraction upon the self. Only in this way can consciousness be revealed in its original integrity.

On the basis of this orientation and embarkation on this path, as we bear witness to the ever present higher potential within us, we become strangers to ourselves, whom we wish to leave behind, that we might rise above them. God’s command that we love the stranger as ourselves¹⁸³ serves to turn the self towards its higher aspect, as something both present and unknown. This is the case, because our knowledge is always little.¹⁸⁴ This little knowledge, however, relates to the fullness towards which the self is attempting to rise and so free itself from mere semblance and under-realization. Fullness is both the goal and the guide in this upward movement. The orientation of the self and its attraction for the Self is simply the love which only union can satisfy. Consequently, God as the Self, is not simply the guarantor of rational acceptance of the beautiful and the good. In this regard too, He is both the first and the last.

In such a relationship of self to Self, we recognize and affirm our own sinfulness, relying on our love for God and our expectation of divine love for absolution of our every vileness. Our ascent takes the form of following the exemplary human being, the possibility of perfection, which embraces all things

182 *Qur’an*, 96:6–8.

183 *See Leviticus 19:34.*

184 *See Qur’an 17:85.*

in its mercy and knowledge. Are not the holy books, which were sent down and came into particularity and language from that which is beyond anything particular or experience of the particular, within the horizons of reason; are they not a type of map of how to ascend through the various levels of understanding? Whatever answer we may give to this question, the first perspective, within which it must be measured, is our inevitable encounter with our neighbor. It is only through the neighbor, as the closest manifestation of the real, that we may find answers to the question of love for God. The inextricability of our relationships with our neighbors and our relationships with God is expressed consummately by the Prophet, the Praised, when he says: “None amongst you believes till one likes for his brother or for his neighbor that which he loves for himself.”¹⁸⁵

ON WORSHIPFUL UNDERSTANDING

From the perspective of every sacred tradition, the world was created as a perfect entity. This means that the world, as a whole and everything in it, is connected to its principle through absolute or perfect being-in-peace. Motion and change, dismantling and reassembly, are none other than the manifestation of the principle in its constant presence. According to the Recitation, which is to say according to the Word sent down by God into the heart of the Praised, He created everything with the truth.¹⁸⁶ This creation by, in and with the truth, has the Word as principle. “When he decrees a thing, He does but say to it ‘Be,’ and it is.”¹⁸⁷

Multiplicity manifests the One, where manifestation is never independent of its principle as One and thus never in any way not One. We alone are the exception. It is only of us human beings that one can speak of a phenomenon that is connected to God through faith: God as the All-faithful enables us to believe as the faithful. We are thus a created being, but with free will. If this is so, then where does the evil in the world and us come from? Is there a response to the question external to our thinking and the illusions we hold?

Everything is reflected in the human self, consciousness and knowledge. Since our mind and our knowledge are finite, thinking offers us the illusion of the beautiful and the good, which places us in opposition to our perfect principle. If we want to be free of illusion, we have to see what appears to us as stillness in movement, and vice versa. The beauties of the world are merely a reminder of what transcends all things. All sensate experiences are thus but signs of the supra-experiential world.

Since we are unable to discover any defect, either in ourselves or in the totality of existence, we try to imagine or dream it up, for it is only in a

185 *Muslim*, 1:31.

186 *See Qur’an*, 46:3.

187 *Qur’an*, 3:47.

hypothetical defect that our free will may rationally motivate our available powers, in our intention to put the world and ourselves to rights. The quest for our imperfections is the shadow image of our free will, the state in which it seems sufficient unto itself, when reason appears to be a reliable guide and the material world an inexhaustible source of everything we need.

This is a view of perfect openness from the human path of discovery of natural wholeness. This path, like everything that we do on it, in a constant state of confusion and fatigue, can never be the same as the view from the absolute. God draws attention to the difference between these two perspectives in His speech:

“Blessed be He in whose hand is the Kingdom – He is powerful over everything – who created death and life, that He might try you which of you is fairest in works; and He is the All-mighty, the All-forgiving – who created seven heavens one upon another. Thou seest not in the creation of the All-merciful any imperfection. Return thy gaze; seest thou any fissure? Then return thy gaze again, and again, and thy gaze comes back to thee, dazzled, weary. And We adorned the lower heaven with lamps, and made them things to stone Satans; and We have prepared for them the chastisement of the Blaze.”¹⁸⁸

The kingdom is in His hand, for He is its reason and its purpose, having absolute free will and absolute power. Placing everything between life and death, in which life is His and death a manner of His manifestation, is the duality that reveals the One. There is no potential for the duality to act with free will, beyond the opposites of beauty and ugliness. The totality of existence is the manifestation of the Beautiful as the possessor of all the names, which are beautiful in their reality. When we realize them from our duality, in the will to do everything in compliance with His will, the act cannot but be beautiful.

The perfection in which there is no flaw is reflected in human language. Everything in the outer horizons and everything in sensate cognition that becomes part of human experience has its reflection or image in language. The re-creation or reflection of everything occurs there, so that the totality of existence may become concentrated in every human individuality. Our beginnings seem insignificant, for it is hard to see in a drop of semen the full openness and concentration of all names; yet it is in that very droplet that the whole world is reflected.

There is nothing in the horizons that is not discovered in its name as already present in the human self. There is a name or word corresponding to

every known thing. But these, all the names and all the words, cannot be without universal connectedness, just as nothing in existence can have either place or time without mutuality in the whole; for the one word of the Creator’s will links the totality of existence and everything in it.

The created world manifests the will of its creator, and the will of the One is made manifest through the most beautiful names. Our free will is also the result of the Creator’s will. These two, the Creator’s and the human will, may be in harmony or in opposition. God’s will is expressed at every instant as perfect, and thus in the finest deeds. When our human will is identical to the will of God, it manifests itself as the finest deeds, for in it nothing occurs that is contrary to the perfect of creation. In the perfect harmony of those two wills, we discover ourselves in the reason for our creation, which is to say in all the most beautiful names as the One made manifest. We find ourselves in this way in every “now,” but always in a different manner.

When our human will is opposed to the will of God, it directly or indirectly includes the point of view that there is some defect in creation, and hence in the will of the Creator, which human action could eliminate. Defects become the goal of our actions. The self acting on an imperfection, as the principal object of human knowledge, thus defines itself by what makes it incomplete. And everything in the relationship between the self that acts and that which it acts upon becomes obscured by the imperfection, for that is the nature of imperfections. This obscuration may be eliminated only by action; otherwise, the world is horrifyingly, intolerably empty.

In our original creation, we are in a state of submission, at peace with absolute Peace. We can never go beyond the bounds imposed on us by the order of being submissive and at peace in our relationship with the One as Peace, for our will is limited. Time and space are ordained for it, and hence too the powers in and with which it manifests itself. It is with this limited will that we are fated to reach the limits of our lowest and our highest potential, to sink from the heights to the uttermost depths, and to return along the same path in the discovery or realization of ourselves. In our uttermost depths, we mourn the lost sublime heights and yearn to return. In this, we differ from our first forebear, who experienced the bliss of the Garden. Grief for what we have lost and the desire to find it, define our firstness and our lastness.

To say that our power is limited is to say that our actions, being always based on little knowledge, carry the risk of transgression and violence. The world was created in the full knowledge and perfect mercy of the Creator, as He says in the Recitation.¹⁸⁹ There are no imperfections in the world, if its absolute submission to the Creator, as the All-aware, All-knowing and All-merciful, is

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 67:1–5.

¹⁸⁹ *See Qur’an*, 6:80 and 7:156.

acknowledged. This creation is summed up in us, but not as our absolute power or unlimited will. We always know too little, but we may bear infinite love for what we know as real. Loving the known constantly draws us nearer to what we love, so we grow in knowledge; we increasingly know what we love and increasing love what we know.

We know the names of all things, which makes us different from the angels. Our will to carry the trust as our relationship with God, even though we were given only limited knowledge and limited power, thus becomes our potential to be the perfect manifestation of the Creator. With and through these names, the whole of existence is revealed in us from our beginnings or the reception of the Word of the creative command to our return or convergence in that same Word.

Both the world, as the outer horizon of human presence, and the self in constant flux, are signs of the One and are thus complete and inexhaustible speech that is never the same at any two instants. The incessant nature of this speech has no existence apart from the speaker, though it may seem so to the listener. Speech, and the particles of which it is composed, may appear to the listener as a self-sufficient, closed system. When one adopts this view, the signs in the horizons and the self become gods, and knowledge of them seems to be a manifestation of them.

When one says that with the perfection of His creation, God is testing people in their potential to act in the best way, and that we then persist in our quest for the imperfections in the horizons of creation, knowledge and change are thereby linked. There is nothing in existence that is beyond motion and change, and this also holds good for human knowledge. It may detach itself from the flux of the world, and thus take on the semblance of an independent world in the world.

There cannot be two absolute independences, so that which seems to be independent on the human side must be in conflict with reality. This is suggested in God's command to us: "And walk not in the earth exultantly; certainly thou wilt never tear the earth open, nor attain the mountains in height."¹⁹⁰ The opposite of those who walk exultantly on earth are the humble, of whom God says: "The servants of the All-merciful are those who walk in the earth modestly and who, when the ignorant address them, say, 'Peace;' who pass the night prostrate to their Lord and standing."¹⁹¹

One could see in this the crucial difference, between our presence in the world, posited as independent of its principle, and that in which the principle is ever-present with its life, will, power, knowledge, speech, listening and seeing. In the former, our will is incomplete, for it is positioned in an incomplete world. In

190 *Qur'an*, 17:37.

191 *Ibid.*, 25:63-64.

the latter, both the will of God and our human will are perfect, for God's will is the principle of our will.

The first postulate necessarily entails our acting in an incomplete world. However incomplete it may be, its shortcomings cannot be overcome and eliminated. Completing the world includes the assumption of three possibilities: first, that the world around us, the whole of nature, is incomplete, whereas we who aim to complete or put it to rights are completed; second, that the world is complete and perfect, but that we are not; and the third is that neither the world nor we are complete.

Do not all the revolutionary movements of the modern age prove as their starting-point the hypothesis that neither the world nor we are perfect? The assumption of incompleteness forms part of every modern world view. Its essential postulate is that we, as independent knowers and reformers of the world, have everything we need to overcome the resistance of incompleteness and, at some future time, in a reality beyond our "now," to attain the perfect goal in which, since we are irrevocably mortal, we shall never be. This simply passes over in silence the necessity for those who are building a perfect future to remain, at all times, with a void within them.

In the traditional world view, the world is both complete and perfect, and so are we; there are no defects or imperfections in either. Everything to do with ignorance and suffering, evil and violence; remains within the framework of faith as the relationship between God and ourselves. We accepted this offer, though nothing else in existence was willing to do so. With it, we are not alone, for at all times we as faithful have God as the All-faithful before us, in the full meaning of the term: before us not only in the outside world, but also at the center of our inner self. Nothing in existence has reality but the All-faithful. Wherever we turn, the face of the All-faithful is before us; He is as close to us as our jugular vein. There is no moment, no place at which He is absent; absence is merely the state of the self of limited will, in its incessant freedom; which is to say, in the perpetual possibility of turning to itself or from itself.

As the final creation, we are the sum of all things, and are thus all things, and yet more; we manifest ourselves in rectitude and standing. In this lies our dignity, our being in the image of God. But He never ceases to be God and hence, our positions of willingly bowing and prostration are ways of affirming the gift of standing erect before God as the Self-subsistent. With these potentials of the will, we form part of the universal order in which everything has surrendered its will to the will of God.

The whole of existence is in full submission to God, as He says through the Praised: "None is there in the heavens and earth but he comes to the All-

merciful as a servant.”¹⁹² Though nothing remains the same at any new moment, motion and change are but the confirmation of submission as the relationship to God as Peace, as He says: “To Him has surrendered whoso is in the heavens and the earth.”¹⁹³

The heavens and the earth, and all that lies between them, manifest themselves in this servitude, submission and prostration. This means that they testify to and acknowledge their utter baseness in relation to their principle, and their utter poverty in relation to Him. With this testimony and acknowledgement, phenomena return to the One, and stand before Him, so as simultaneously to nullify themselves, thus testifying that in the death of their death is the acknowledgement of the Living. The simultaneity of the abasement and standing erect, of the death and the life of all things manifests itself as descent and ascent, departure and return, dying and returning to life. Existence thus testifies to its manifesting the One Who is always “upon some labor.”¹⁹⁴

God to Whom belong the most beautiful names is incessantly upon some labor by showing His signs in the horizons and ourselves until His truth is fully clear to us.¹⁹⁵ Our knowledge of what manifests itself to the Creator cannot be dependent on our unreal world. If it seems so to us, the signs of all things in the horizons, including the books sent down, become obscured on the horizon, deflected from the clarity of perfect creation out of the absolute will of the Creator. Wherever and whenever we may be, we are also between the lowest of the low and the ultimate heights, the gloomy depths and the illumined heights, ignorance and knowledge, suffering and mercy. To become aware of this is to stand erect, whereby we stand before the Self-subsistent.

But as soon as we become aware that we are standing erect, we confirm it by prostration, acknowledging that we have nothing of our own, and that only as servants may we receive the will of our Lord. Our inner self is thus shown in the differentiation between “inciting to evil” and “being at peace.” In each of its states, the self is between these two extremes, one tending towards nullity or the uttermost depths, and the other towards plenitude or the fairest rectitude.

The symbol that corresponds to the most extreme baseness is the Holy Mosque on the barren desert valley floor; and the symbol that corresponds to the fairest rectitude is the Further Mosque on the mount and around the Rock in the land of milk and honey. The first mosque corresponds to our earthly state, the second to the distant heavens, as our original and ultimate abode.

Just as the expectation and coming of the Praised as a light-giving lamp, as the finest exemplar, corresponds to the floor of the desert valley, where he was

192 *Ibid.*, 19:93.

193 *Ibid.*, 3:83.

194 *Ibid.*, 55:29.

195 *See Qur'an*, 41:53.

sent down to lead our return and ascent, so to in the heavens his correspondence is the original essence of his self and the Essence of the Book that symbolizes the House inhabited of which God says in the Recitation: “By the Mount and a Book inscribed in a parchment unrolled, by the House inhabited and the roof uplifted and the sea swarming, surely thy Lord’s chastisement is about to fall; there is none to avert it.”¹⁹⁶

The two Houses, the Holy and the Further, as signs of the earthly and the heavenly abodes, denote the axis mundi or path of rectitude. Our standing erect denotes our being arrayed from the lowest of the low to the sublime heights, from poverty to wealth, and from ignorance to knowledge. We stand before God the Self-subsistent, confirmed by memory and worship, alms-giving and fasting, hailing and interconnecting, and the pilgrimage to the House and standing firm. Feeling and thought acquire their living embodiment in these rituals, and the descending God-world-Word order manifests itself to the worshipper as an ascending world-Word-God order.

Differentiation is in constant flux, but invariably being measured. There is nothing in the self or the outer horizons that is not in motion. Peace thus manifests its presence at every moment. The realization of the self means attuning the centre to these changes. This is suggested by the requirement to change the illusion of repose in the motion of all things, as God reminds us with His sign in the Recitation: “Thou shalt see the mountains, that thou supposest fixed, passing by like clouds – God’s handiwork, Who has created everything very well.”¹⁹⁷

Multiplicity confirms the One, yet does so in incessant motion. The One is the ever-present source and confluence of all that is in motion. There is nothing of which He is not the outwardness and the inwardness. One could say, therefore, that the whole world is a mosque, for there is nothing in it that does not bow down to Him. When we recognize the focus of all existence and everything in it, our will may turn us towards that perfect motion as Peace made manifest. We discover in this our original nature as submissive and at peace, and submission is thus our connection with the One.

The free will that expresses and confirms God’s offer and our acceptance of the trust gives rise to two worlds – the real world as God’s revelation of the unknown, and the unreal, in which we feel and believe ourselves to be independent and self-sufficient, in which evil deeds may seem good to us, so that our thinking diverts us from the good.¹⁹⁸ If we wish to return from the imaginary world to the real, we need wisdom and knowledge, the way and ritual, humility and generosity to discover the real world concealed by illusion; and we need them as our relation to ourselves as perfect in regard to God as the All-perfect. We

196 *Qur'an*, 52:1–8.

197 *Ibid.*, 27:88.

198 *See Qur'an*, 35:8.

cannot extrapolate a response to this need from any of our imaginary constructs. Ritual may be given to us from where we ourselves were sent down into the world.

The way and ritual are the connection between the self and its wisdom and knowledge on the one hand, and humility and generosity on the other. Wisdom and knowledge are discovered on the way and in ritual. Humility and generosity are the expressions and confirmation of wisdom and knowledge transformed into a way of life and deed. The expression of this is philosophical thought as the amalgamation of instruction and life, wisdom and action, calculation and sociability framed by ritual incorporation into the real world or in the prostration of all things in the heavens and on earth and all that lies between them.

Wherever we may be, the motion of all things in the perfect order of the world will give us clear signs of the prescribed ritual prayers. We are expected to turn towards the Holy Mosque, to pause, and to equate our corporeal being with the Recitation. We shall stand, bow, prostrate ourselves and stand up, then repeat these movements again in this union of body and Word, until the final sitting and turning the head to right and left as we wish peace upon everyone, thus confirming that the circle in which we are placed is the perfect manifestation of the centre on which we are focused and towards which we have embarked.

If the enlightenment blueprint for putting the world to rights, or healing the rifts in the world order, is re-examined from the perspective of its impact over the last two centuries of the second Christian millennium, the ritual context of thought acquires a meaning that is offered as liberation from the fabricated, destructive schism between ourselves and the world, experienced as insurmountable hostility of which the outcome is plain to see: the great venture against suffering and death will end up on the opposite side of all its promises, on which we laid a bet with ourselves.

God manifests Himself with the Word, of which the world is the means. All this is summed up in us as individuals. In the universal entity of God-word-world, ontologically sent down, we are at the end or in the depths, from which we may rise. However far we sink, we are never wholly lost, nor can we be, for mercy and knowledge are the reasons for all things. The light of the Praised, the redemptive ray of light that links us to the reason and purpose of creation, remains present in every state of obscurity of the self.

The path of ascent is marked by that indestructible ray of light. No one else can travel that path but ourselves. The beginning, the journey and the destination are in our “now,” in the moment which is the sum of the reversal of the order. The illusion in the self cannot be reversed without understanding that the starting point, the journey and the destination are in the real “now,” in the moment that is the sum, not in some imagined yesterday or tomorrow. The point

of departure is the world, focused on the self that turns towards the outer horizons and itself. That which we find in the disrupted world order and ourselves cannot be discovered in its reality without turning to the Word. Ritual thus places us in a word-world-God order; the Word is sent down to us and the ritual is the ascent through the word and the world to God.

The ascent is from the signs in the self and the horizons to the Signified. If the Signified is concealed from the ascender, the journey is impossible. It may seem to be this or that, but its focus is destructive and it manifests itself as movement in the opposite direction, away from the Signified or as going astray. When the Signified is concealed from view, the signs are deprived of their reality, which is the state of the self: the Signified concealed is the human self concealed, and when God is forgotten, we are forgotten. When a sign is taken for the Signified, it may be said in regard those in whom this occurs that they are separated from Him by the signs in themselves and the horizons, and that signs have been taken for Him. The testimony that there is no god but God is then transformed into the testimony that there are gods other than God, or that there is no God, but that there are gods.

This possibility cannot be reduced to a given language, meaning or symbol; it is human and thus possible in every language, meaning and symbol, invariably as obscurity, distortion or denial. No one individual, from all the peoples of the Book, can escape it as a constant possibility or threat. Every sign in the horizons and ourselves, which is to say in speaking and writing, reciting and reading, may be taken for the signified. No wonder God commands us never to associate anything or anyone with Him; no wonder this is the one sin that cannot be forgiven us – for the order of the heavens and earth reveals in its signs none but Him and the Signified, as He says:

“Say: ‘Have you considered your associates on whom you call, apart from God? Show me what they have created in the earth; or have they a partnership in the heavens?’ Or have We given them a Book, so that they are upon a clear sign from it? Nay, but the evildoers promise one another naught but delusion.”¹⁹⁹

Realizing the plenitude of our inner self is possible only in relation to God as the Self. In summing the whole of existence as multiplicity by which God reveals Himself as the One, we are focused on union. Everything will manifest itself to us as a duality; motion and rest, matter and spirit, earth and heaven, creation and the Creator.

As we bear witness that there is no god but God and that the Praised is His servant and messenger, we seek our realization in that relation between the

¹⁹⁹ *Qur'an, 35:40.*

oneness of God and the apostolate of the Praised. As we follow the Praised on the path of rectitude, in our return to God, we seek to identify with him, and thus to be in love with God, which is to see ourselves through Him and Him through ourselves, to be a face before the Face. Our testimony to the oneness of God and the apostolate of the Praised is love of ourselves: loving God and His messenger, we love ourselves and vice versa. This love is a prerequisite for the discovery or realization of our original nature. Nothing can be dearer than this, and everything makes sense with it. God says of this:

*“Thou shalt not find any people who believe in God and the Last Day who are loving to anyone who opposes God and His Messenger, not though they were their fathers, or their sons, or their brothers, or their clan. Those – He has written faith upon their hearts, and He has confirmed them with the Spirit from Himself.”*²⁰⁰

The paradigm for this is the relationship between God and the Praised, to which He commends people in the Recitation. Though it exteriorizes most of its finest internal potential, equating it with some or something external to itself, there can be no discovery and realization of the self without it. Both the oneness of God and the apostolate of the Praised concern our innermost human self above all. Our relationship to the Praised is a relationship with ourselves in our supreme potential and thus with God, as principle, whose mystery none can ever exhaust. The point of our attitude towards the signs in the world around us is to remind us of the potential of the self, as we are reminded by God’s words in the Recitation concerning the relationship between Him and the Messenger:

*“God and His angels bless the Prophet. O believers, do you also bless him, and pray him peace. Those who hurt God and His Messenger – them God has cursed in the present world and the world to come, and has prepared for them a humbling chastisement. And those who hurt believing men and believing women, without that they have earned it, have laid upon themselves calumny and manifest sin.”*²⁰¹

The word translated as “bless” derives from the same root as that for the ritual prayer and could be rendered as “worship,” which may seem strange, if seen in the light of that aspect of our testimony to God’s oneness, in which His being, utterly unlike anything else, remotely and severely prevails. But when one considers that in all His manifestations, He both is and is not, in being absolutely unlike anything else He is always also absolutely like, His utter remoteness is also His utter nearness, and His absolute severity is also His absolute mercy. Both are manifested in perfect measure, so that the One is never annulled by duality.

200 *Ibid.*, 58:22.

201 *Ibid.*, 33:56–58.

We originally know all the names, for God gave them to us by way of instruction to His creation. The realization of this gift, which is not unconditional, means our standing before God as Creator, where we as creatures have nothing but what we were given by the Creator. Worship is the manifestation of our thus standing before Him. In it we are constantly between the two extremes of testimony; there is not and there is. When we say “there is not,” we are testifying that Creation has no reality other than the manifestation of God: this is our prostration. When we say “there is,” we are testifying that we have nothing within us but what the Self-subsistent has given us. When we are in prostration, God manifests Himself to us as “not,” for the signs in the horizons and our inner self are the same as the Self-subsistent. When we stand up, God manifests himself to us as “is,” for both we and the world are the manifestation of nothing but the Self-subsistent. In fact, both in standing and in bowing and in prostration, both manifest themselves to us, both “is” and “is not,” for death and life are His works, but death does not encompass Him.

In this narrative, the Praised is pure and perfect potential – the first to surrender, the essence and seal of the prophets, the fairest stature, a mercy to the worlds, a mighty morality, the perfect servant and orphan. As such, he is the supreme potential of every human self, its beginning and openness to the path of rectitude on which he is always close to every individual self and also above and ahead of each self. In bearing witness to the apostolate of the Praised, we turn towards our supreme potential, which is nowhere but at the centre of the self, wholly encompassed by the heart.

Blessing the Praised is manifested in his supreme potential, in his full return to God. The full return is the same as a full beginning; blessing and its meaning are thus with both the beginning and the end. After his ascent to God and his return to the uttermost depths, he brought the ritual prayers down to the people. He ascended from the Holy Mosque to the Further Mosque, to his Lord, in a single night, symbolizing the ascent from earth through the seven heavens. In the sixth heaven, the Praised met the prophet Moses. Here is how he described it:

“He welcomed me and prayed for my well-being. Then I was taken up to the seventh heaven. Gabriel asked the (gate) to be opened. It was said: Who is he? He said: Gabriel. It was said: Who is with thee? He replied: The Praised. It was said: Has he been sent for? He replied: He has indeed been sent for. (The gate) was opened for us and there I found Abraham reclining against the House of God and there enter into it seventy thousand angels every day, never to visit again. Then I was taken to the Lote tree of the furthest boundary whose leaves were like elephant ears and its fruit like big earthenware vessels. And when it was covered by the Command of God, it underwent such a change that none amongst the

creation has the power to praise its beauty. Then God revealed to me a revelation and He made obligatory for me fifty prayers every day and night. Then I went down to Moses and he said: What has your Lord enjoined upon your followers? I said: Fifty prayers. He said: Return to thy Lord and beg for reduction, for your community shall not be able to bear this burden, as I have put to test the children of Israel and tried them. He (the Praised) said: I went back to my Lord and said: My Lord, make things lighter for my followers. (The Lord) reduced five prayers for me. I went down to Moses and said. (The Lord) reduced five (prayers) for me. He said: Verily thy community shall not be able to bear this burden; return to thy Lord and ask Him to make things lighter. I then kept going back and forth between my Lord Blessed and Exalted and Moses, till He said: There are five prayers every day and night. O Praised, each being credited as ten, so that makes fifty prayers. He who intends to do a good deed and does not do it will have a good deed recorded for him; and if he does it, it will be recorded for him as ten; whereas he who intends to do an evil deed and does not do, it will not be recorded for him; and if he does it, only one evil deed will be recorded. I then came down and when I came to Moses and informed him, he said: Go back to thy Lord and ask Him to make things lighter. Upon this the Messenger remarked: I returned to my Lord until I felt ashamed before Him.”²⁰²

Several important conclusions may be drawn from this rapturous account. First, the ritual prayers were given to the Praised, beyond and above the whole of existence, and he brought them down to the uttermost depths as a gift. Second, the prophet Abraham, whom the Praised passed first in his descent, says nothing about has been given as a gift to the people. Third, the prophet Moses protects the people of this world whom he has met in their willingness to bear the burden of the covenant with God. Fourth, prayer is incumbent on the individual, though the commandment is to everyone. And fifth, the Messenger felt ashamed to ask more of the Beloved.

These conclusions point to God’s intention that the different prayers mark the paths and ways of different communities. It is only when worship is willingly shaped in God’s will to be our relationship with Him that members of a community can know their responsibility to another: for their “others” are those who are different, not only in responding or not responding to God’s call, but also in responding to a call conveyed in another language, with other meanings

²⁰² Imam Muslim, 1:102–103. When Moses’ advice to seek an easing of the burden for the Praised’s followers is linked with Abraham’s pleading for the inhabitants of Sodom, the similarity is clear. The plea to ease the burden in the case of the Praised begins with the fifty prescribed prayers, while in Abraham’s case, the corresponding plea is for the fifty righteous inhabitants of Sodom. The final outcome of the plea is five daily prayers and ten righteous people from Sodom. See Genesis, 18:19–33.

and symbols of worship. Equating people in terms of the language, meanings and symbols of their worship obscures and threatens the oneness of God, which is made manifest in multiplicity as His will.

The call to the self to rise and go to prayer is non-negotiable. The conversation in the sixth heaven between the two prophets whom God says are “like unto to each other”²⁰³ and from the two branches of the descendants of the prophet Abraham, and the consequent request to lighten the burden, complete the ritual prayer in a whole of which God is First and Last, Inwardness and Outwardness. To respond to the call to prayer means to enter into an order that was entirely established from beyond, in the full meaning of the term, and thus from within, at the centre of humanity.

The individual self that responds to the call and enters into the prayerful order acknowledges that every place in which the call finds it, which is to say the cosmic order, is so arrayed as to receive it as a participant in that order in the heavens and on earth, and in all that lies beyond them. To enter into the prayerful order is to return the self to its original position of the gatherer of all things and discoverer of God as Creator in all. It is voluntary, but in such a way that participating in it; in movement and speech, in stillness and murmuring, in orientation and time, leads us into the union of all things, with the truth of our createdness and the Creator’s Word.

The truth of the createdness of all things and the Creator’s word manifest themselves differently at every moment. All the signs of that manifestation are in constant flux, for the One manifests Himself thus in Flux, and Flux in the One, the First in the Last and the Inward in the Outward. Our worship concentrates the totality of the horizons and the self into the oneness of God, while seeing and finding oneness in all of multiplicity.

The call to prayer is made out loud and aimed at everyone. It begins by praising and magnifying God, for our earthbound nature, which is reshaped into the illusion of magnitude and power in relation to its passivity, obscures our awareness of our true position and its potential for both ascent and descent. It is only in recalling that magnitude that perpetually transcends us and in so doing opens for us the path of ascent, that we are oriented towards our center in which is the testimony to servitude and lordship; servitude as our relationship to the Lord. The words that speak of the oneness of God, which means both absolute nearness and absolute remoteness, absolute similarity and absolute incomparability, summed up in the words “There is no god but God,” remind us of the testimony that is obscured by the view of the contingency of us all, great and small.

The reminder of the testimony to illusion and reality, and to our human capacity to differentiate between them and to choose reality, culminates in human

²⁰³ See Deuteronomy, 18:18.

perfection, which is offered to us in every state as an apostolate, as mercy and essence. We are reminded of the utmost sublimity, and hence of the first and last potential of humankind, by the words “I testify that the Praised is the messenger of God.”

Both praising God and testifying to His oneness and the apostolate of the Praised, is knowledge that is at the centre of every self. It is not given to us from without but is our most profound nature, the center around which everything is peripheral manifestation. The words of praise and the two testimonies, one about God and the other about the Praised as His messenger, are followed by the call to prayer, to the affirmation of what is known by inclusion in the universal order of all things, both seen and unseen. The call to join the universal order, or to self-realization in standing before the Face before which everything vanishes, is followed by a call to redemption. Redemption means to sacrifice everything before that Face. The reasons for that are His magnitude and oneness, from which and to which everything incessantly comes and returns.

To enter into the ritual prayer is to emerge from the disorder of individuality, which is necessarily unfocused, and to join everyone else who bears witness to that order and accepts it as their recognition and discovery of those who are other and different. In so doing, we commit ourselves to recognizing the other and different as participants in the universal discussion in different languages, signs and symbols of the One.

God created the world and us human beings in His love to be known. He did it for His own pleasure, and the world and we, are thus of Him and for His sake. God’s pleasure is absolute and we discover it in ourselves as our reason and purpose. Our most potent, greatest and clearest success is the ultimate purpose of life, which is to discover or find God’s pleasure. God says of this in the Recitation:

- ❖ Prosperous is he who has cleansed himself, and mentions the Name of his Lord, and prays.²⁰⁴
- ❖ This is the day the truthful shall be profited by their truthfulness. For them await gardens underneath which rivers flow, therein dwelling forever and ever, God being well-pleased with them and they well-pleased with Him; that is the mighty triumph.²⁰⁵
 - ❖ But as for him who repents, and believes, and works righteousness, haply he shall be among the prosperers.²⁰⁶
 - ❖ Alif, Lam, Mim. Those are the signs of the Wise Book for a guidance and a mercy to the good-doers who perform the prayer, and pay the alms, and have sure faith in the Hereafter. Those are

204 *Qur’an*, 87:14–15.

205 *Ibid.*, 5:119.

206 *Ibid.*, 28:67.

upon guidance from their Lord; those are the prosperers.²⁰⁷

- ❖ All that the believers say, when they are called to God and His Messenger, that he may judge between them, is that they say, “We hear, and we obey;” those – they are the prosperers.²⁰⁸
- ❖ And give the kinsman his right, and the needy, and the traveller; that is better for those who desire God’s Face; those – they are the prosperers.²⁰⁹

The five mandatory prayers: the first, just after sunset; the second, when night has fully fallen; the third, before sunrise; the fourth, just after noon and the fifth, between noon and sunset, place or return us on the spiral staircase of ascent along the seventh ray, or the axis mundi, towards the sublime heights or the uncreated and uncreatable center of all things. This return includes the Recitation, in such a way that body becomes word, and word body.

The Recitation is speech that received form in the mind and breath of the Praised. The potentials of that breath; from the depths to the heights, from stillness to trembling, are made manifest in the recitation; and the Lord too is present in it, speaking and falling silent in the heart. The Self conceals Itself, but is present in the moment. And so on incessantly, from one breath to the next, in everyone, as the manifestation of the center, in which is the Spirit. From that center, from light and spirit, peace and mercy, the Recitation descends into speech.

Repetition is in sound and silence, in conformity with the comings and returns of all things; from firstness to lastness, and from inwardness to outwardness. The human self at prayer becomes motion, which receives and embodies music. The repeated standing, bowing, prostration and sitting unite everything in the heavens, on the earth and that which lies between them. There is nothing with which the worshipper does not join in the will of existence to serve God and thus to discover itself in peace. In the ebb and flow of consciousness, the Recitation becomes both riverbed and water. The moment receives both descent and ascent, and both the source and the confluence of our finding or discovering the Face.

During prayer, we address God as “Our,” but God also addresses us as “My” and “His.”²¹⁰ Our love of God and God’s love of us are in the manifestation of the one in the two. If God and we are Face to face, as His speech tells us,

207 *Ibid.*, 31:1–5.

208 *Ibid.*, 24:51.

209 *Ibid.*, 30:38.

210 See *Qur’an*, 39:10, 16, 17; 43:68; 29:56; 14:35–41. In the sacred traditions, God addresses man as “My faithful servant” (William A. Graham, *Divine Word and Prophetic Word in Early Islam: A Reconsideration of the Sources, with Special Reference to the Divine Saying on Hadith Qudsi*, The Hague: Mouton, 1977, 117), “My upright servant” (*ibid.*), “My servant” (*ibid.*, 119), “My friend” (*ibid.*, 121) and so on.

for wherever we turn, there is the Face of God,²¹¹ bearing witness to the One is the same as testifying that there is no face but the Face. The Face of God is the realization of those who love God and whom God loves, for God sees His Face in those who love Him, and those who love God see their face in His.

God always sees us as a whole, while what we see in the horizons and ourselves, denotes God and is invariably both His veil and His unveiling. As soon as one says “is not,” one should also add “is.” Though the moment is omnipresent in its full meaning, though we are entirely encompassed by it, it can never be captured by anything created, for the Face is there with it. The “is not” and “is;” “past” and “future” are simultaneous in the plenitude of the moment, but they manifest themselves to us as distinct from one another and are thus a duality that reveals and confirms the One, wholly and eternally present, first and last, inward and outward.

In these two: God’s love, to be known, and our will to accept and love Him, Who manifests Himself through us, are the I-you and the You-I relationship. When we say “you,” to the signs as a veil, God is He and when we say “Thou,” to Him, everything else is not to our “I.” Duality manifests the One, and we, who are in His image, testify to the One in our complete servitude. When we are connected to the world, we are an image facing an image and bearing witness to the One entails recognizing that the psyche of the witness, that image which is facing an image, is the same of the totality of manifestation before the One, Who is manifesting Himself.

Seeing face to Face, we find ourselves on Horeb, the mountain on which God revealed Himself to Moses and said to him: “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.”²¹² And he also said to him: “And look that thou make them after their pattern, which was shewed thee in the mount.”²¹³ This injunction on Horeb corresponds to being with the Praised, in the cave on Mount Hira, and to his receiving the command: “Recite: In the Name of thy Lord who created, created Man of a blood-clot. Recite: And thy Lord is the Most Generous who taught by the Pen, taught Man that he knew not.”²¹⁴

Wherever we are, we are in the depths. To recognize this, to become fully aware of it and to turn away from the depths to ourselves in our supreme potential, means to enter the *mihrab*. As we enter the *mihrab*, that is our human potential everywhere and at all times, Mount Horeb and the cave on Mount Hira, as signs of ascent, discovery and return, determine our being placed and setting off on the path of rectitude, which is a movement from the periphery to the center, from the

211 See *Qur’an*, 2:115.

212 *Exodus*, 4:12. Mt. Horeb and Mt. Sinai are often seen as different names for the same place and God’s associated revelation to the Prophet Moses.

213 *Exodus*, 25:40.

214 *Qur’an*, 96:1–5.

depths to the heights and from duality to the One.

The knowledge of all the names is at the center of humanity.²¹⁵ If it is read as the knowledge of all the Divine names, in the sense of the most beautiful, for “to Him belong the Names Most Beautiful,”²¹⁶ the Revelation confirms two possible understandings of the connection between us and God: He is omnipresent, with us everywhere and at all times, but we are with Him in the knowledge of His most beautiful names. We find or discover our Lord, in ourselves, in the knowledge of the most beautiful names, thus becoming doers of good and prospering, in accordance with his injunction:

*“And vie with one another, hastening to forgiveness from your Lord, and to a garden whose breadth is as the heavens and earth, prepared for the God-fearing who expend in prosperity and adversity in almsgiving, and restrain their rage, and pardon the offences of their fellowmen; and God loves the good-doers.”*²¹⁷

And give the kinsman his right, and the needy, and the traveller; that is better for those who desire God’s face; those – they are the prosperers.²¹⁸

Love, as the relationship between the one who loves and the one who is beloved, is an invincible force in which differentiation, which is to say time and space, is effaced. Everything is between the perfect order and that destructive slippage. Loving manifests itself in an order governed by will but as the union of human and divine will: in worship, fasting, the cleansing of almsgiving, and the pilgrimage to the Center. We thus introduce ourselves into the perfect order of existence and the most beautiful names in the heavens and on earth, and in all that lies between them, are the same as in our inner self.

Redemption, in and with the most beautiful names, is in the hour but also in the expectation that it takes place in worship, almsgiving, fasting and the pilgrimage to the Center, for it is thus that we turn from unreality to the Real. The expectation and its fulfillment, which is the return to the sublime heights, passes through the full gamut from the self that incites to evil²¹⁹ towards the uttermost remoteness from the One and the self that aspires to the nearest of the near or to pleasing God and being pleased with God.²²⁰

The fulfillment of the expectation is for the patient, whom God loves. Their patience is recognition that they have what they receive and that misfortune is brought upon them by desire, in which the self renounces its waiting. God says,

215 See *Qur’an*, 2:31.

216 See, e.g., *Qur’an*, 59:22–24.

217 *Qur’an*, 3:133–34.

218 *Ibid.*, 30:38.

219 See *Qur’an*, 12:53.

220 *Ibid.*, 89:27–30.

through the Praised, of the patient and their connection with the prophets: “Many a Prophet there has been, with whom thousands manifold have fought, and they fainted not for what smote them in God’s way, neither weakened, nor did they humble themselves; and God loves the patient.”²²¹

The expectation that is actualized in patience acquires its redemptive outcome in the equating of the signs in the horizons, with the signs in the self. The duality of the world and the self is in constant flux. The signs of the horizons elude the signs in the self as a shadow eludes that which casts it. God’s loving the patient is a reminder that what is signified by both the signs in the horizons and the signs in the self is the same, for in them God manifests His love to be known. His books, by which He manifests the totality of the created worlds in human language, are thus a response to the disconnection in the horizons and the self.

With the Book, the self encompasses all outward horizons. Its articulate and beautiful recitation, at worship and at other times, sums up the totality of existence, in time and space, in the reciter’s “now.” The future is thus framed by the Creator’s speech, which nothing else eludes, however large or small. To discover the Word in the self means to see the signs in their original command by the Creator to be, which is also their ultimate sanctuary.

The opening words “in the name of God,” the beginning with the two names, the Merciful, the Compassionate, are a constant in the Recitation and its presence in the self, for these two names are a perpetual reason for praising Him. Praise has its purpose in those two names, for He is Lord of the Day of Reckoning. The Recitation in the self that recites it thus unites the oneness of God, the apostolate of the Praised and the return to God; oneness, for all the names manifest Him; apostolate, for it is from our uttermost depths that we ascend by praising Him; and the return, for it is only in the Praised, as the perfect exemplar of the realization of humanity, that the connection between ourselves as laudable and God as the All-laudable can be made.

As laudable, we “capture” different horizons of the outside world at every moment and are thus in constant flux. With the Recitation within us, the flux is internal and the world and the self are thus exchanged and reversed; we are in the world but the world is also in us; the Recitation is in us, but we are also in the Recitation. The universal flow is concentrated in the individual self, which is spread out into the worlds. The correspondence to this is the ascent from the uttermost depths to the sublime heights: the return. Principally speaking, therefore, every moment encompasses those two extremes.

At ritual prayer, as the voluntary reception of everything into the self, of everything that desires no will but God’s, the worshipper enables the Word to grow and manifest eternity through all the worlds in their praise of God as the

221 *Qur’an*, 3:146.

All-laudable. The Word, which grows into a good tree, is in the worshipper’s inner self, as God says: “A good word is as a good tree: its roots are firm, and its branches are in heaven. It gives its produce every season by the leave of the Lord. So God strikes similitudes for men; haply they will remember.”²²²

One could say that “every season” corresponds to the prescribed times for prayer, of which God says in the Recitation: “When you are secure, perform the prayer; surely the prayer is a timed prescription for the believers.”²²³ Prayer is performed at a specific time. When we enter into it, we renew and reinforce our rootedness and branching out in the time and space of the world. Our standing, bowing, prostration, sitting and standing up are thus the sum of the motions of the world, and together with the recited Word, are degrees of motion in the various movements.

Every day of worship ordered in this way is set in the lunar year, week by week from the first to the sixth day, or the sum of all things within us so that on that day we may join everyone in congregational prayer at midday, as the sun passes the zenith, before the beginning of the seventh day, or the return of all things to their original and ultimate Peace. Movement in the lunar year is set in the solar year, so that the one sails in the other, the one gaining on and overtaking the other, but never pausing, for “it behooves not the sun to overtake the moon, neither does the night outstrip the day, each swimming in a sky.”²²⁴

In this sacred calendar, which goes back to the first human breath and forward to the last, every individual thing and the whole of existence are at peace, in submission, for there is nothing that is not connected through submission with God as Peace. When we as faithful, patient and fine include ourselves in that universal order of submission, we transcend all things. In every nation, everywhere and at all times, there are such people who, though they belong to different nations and languages, are a single community. As they pass through their sacred calendar, the people of the essential Prophet and the essence of the Book actualize eternity in their prescribed times of prayer, fasting, almsgiving and pilgrimage to the House.

A house, built in the sacred Bekka valley, was built by the first man and prophet Adam, as a sign of awareness of the depths and the expectation of regaining his original, most sublime heights. The expectation of finding and returning to what was lost was marked by building a house on Mount Zion, the holy mountain, around the rock on its summit. In this entire mythical narrative of Adam in the garden of Eden, the fall to earth and the establishment of rituals around the two houses, one in the valley and the other on the mount, corresponding to the differentiation within the self, between thickened darkness

222 *Ibid.*, 14:24–25.

223 *Ibid.*, 4:103.

224 *Ibid.*, 36:40.

and the luminous center or sublime height, the greatest light is the Light of the Praised. It is the first manifestation of God as the All-laudable and is thus the essence of His entire manifestation and all His prophets.

The entire human drama unfolds around those two signs, which denote the extreme ends of the path of rectitude. The prophet Abraham came southwards from the north, found the foundation of the house on the desert valley floor, cleared it and rebuilt the first house, for our sake. He revives the rituals of the pilgrimage and of worship and prayer, in the awareness of the presence of eternity in finitude. He presages the coming of the Prophet, the Praised, from among his descendants through Hagar's son Ismail: the Praised who will unite the extremes of the path of rectitude, from the uttermost depths to the most sublime heights, from the barren valley floor to the rock, which lies at the center of the land of milk and honey.

The Praised's journey northwards from the south, from the valley floor to the summit of the mount, denotes the ever present potential in each of us: to transform the sense of regret for the lost garden into the great journey, through which every stage or state of being, we shall be the host of the Praised as our dearest guest, and shall answer his call, leaving everything to set off with him, following him to the abode of peace, in the expectation of God's invitation: "O soul at peace, return unto thy Lord, well-pleased, well-pleasing! Enter thou among My servants! Enter thou My Paradise!"²²⁵

This ultimate achievement, the return to God in which both we and God are well-pleased and well-pleasing, as those who love one another and realize their love, is the fulfillment of the worshipper's expectation. The worshipper is thus in a time that denotes eternity. All the rituals of worship confirm our being on the boundary between this world and the next; death and resurrection, judgment and reckoning. There is no ritual in which the participant does not anticipate passing from the lower to the higher and entering into mercy.

This transition, taking us before God as Judge, is concentrated in ritual prayer, both individual and congregational. Standing and bowing, prostration and sitting, all are accompanied by words spoken, murmured and heard, is being before God, face to Face. There can be no individual, in this ritual prayer, who is not facing a single center. The Praised himself, as the servant and messenger of God, faces the same way as everyone else when at prayer. None of that has been conceived by the human mind; everything that constitutes it was received from God as the perfect order in a perfect world.

There is only one ritual human condition in which one person faces the rest of the congregation. At noon on the sixth day of the week, the time of congregational prayer, the speaker climbs half way up the steps of the mosque

225 *Ibid.*, 89:27-30.

pulpit, and addresses the seated congregation. He never climbs higher than half way, for the top half of the stairs denotes all the prophets, concentrated in the Praised, the essence and seal of the prophets, and of the good and the wise, who are remembered by the congregation. There is only one response to what the speaker says: "We have heard and we obey."²²⁶ Those present do not utter it, for their silence is a sacred boundary to every speaker who ascends the steps towards the top, which denotes the inviolability of witnessing to the One, the apostolate of the Praised and the return of all things to God. This presence is absolute; only we can be absent.

This means that in this position, the speaker is part of the order of creation and revelation and of its manifestation, through the Praised, as the finest exemplar, as well as of those who follow him because they love God, so He loves them. Whenever the speaker says something that transgresses those bounds, the listeners reject it with their silence, for nothing can be accepted except the truth of which God and the prophets are witnesses. Only the good is binding.

The ritual prayer is a perfect whole in which everyone is involved. In it, individuality is set in a unity of listening, speaking and movements, in which the oneness of God, the apostolate of the Praised and the return to God are instantiated. If on the sixth day the speaker departs from the order of which the Messenger and his followers are the warrant, and begins to express the closed state of his being, the silence of the listeners becomes a barrier rejecting the attempt to disrupt harmony.

The language and meanings of modern politics are shaped by speculative logic, which is to say that knowledge can be derived only from those postulates in relation to which everything else has or has not its own order. Everything beyond speculative logic is impotent. Impotence in the face of the domain of the intellect, which is beyond any potential of speculative logic, is expressed in a variety of ways: by silence, denial or rejection. The world of the Book, in which God is said to be its original speaker, and the language, meanings and symbols of rituals such as prayer, fasting, almsgiving and the pilgrimage to the House, all that and everything like it remains intact, outside the ideological framework of modern life. It is preserved within and by us; despite being beyond the horizons of mainstream life, it is still within us.

226 *Ibid.*, 5:7.

CONTROVERSY OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE AGAINST STATE AND
SOCIETY: THE CASE OF PALESTINE

Dr. Iyad al-Bargouthi

ABSTRACT: Religious political movements, including the Islamic political movement, resorts to the use of violence in facing the 'other.' This 'other' was represented at times by the state and at other times by the society. This paper will try to study the ideological and objective justifications of this violence, in light of the history of Islamic political movements in Palestine.

INTRODUCTION

A public opinion poll, conducted by the studies and surveys unit at the Ramallah Center for Human Rights Studies in August 2010 entitled “Religion in The Palestinian Culture,” revealed the extent of religious hegemony on Palestinian life, in general, and especially on their cultural life.

The percentage of the population claiming to be secular or nominal, is only 6%, hence, it is deduced that the remaining 94% is actively religious, observing religion in their daily lives, in varying degrees. This indicates that any study of a phenomenon related to religious thought will take into account, directly or indirectly, the overwhelming majority of Palestinians. The poll results also indicate that the phenomenon of Islamisation, or “Islamic awakening,” which started in the late seventies, is at its zenith. Political Islam has become, in Palestine, as in most Arab world countries, the only voice of political opposition, while leftist and national parties, which historically played an influential role in the region over the past hundred years, has almost vanished.

Violence, and its use as a tool of political exploitation, is not confined to Islamic forces in Palestine. It is a worldwide phenomenon, not limited to a certain religion, sect, sociocultural group or geographical region. It is not also limited to clergy and clerics. It is a phenomenon which is associated with and emerges from the comprehensive, radical thought which many Islamic religious movements, the subject of this study, abide by. It is also adopted by several religious movements, for example Jewish, Christian and even Hindu. The enormity and severity of this radicalism increases when it becomes a state approach, as is the case in Israel.

The magnitude, however, of religious extremism found in the region, stems from the fact that it is based on a special interpretation of sacred texts, which gives it the maximum level of legitimacy as well as tremendous power in mobilizing wide scale support of adherents. It is difficult to refute the beliefs of the “other,” intellectually, as well as the legitimacy of the beliefs of a public which is largely religious.

Moreover, the gravity of contemporary extremism is very alarming, compared to the past, and is occurring in a political atmosphere that is charged with sectarian divisions. In Israel, the expectation is that that the establishment of the Israeli state is being paved by this division; at the same time Israel demands it be recognized as a Jewish state. The religious extremist forces have tremendous power to mobilize people, through the available contemporary media via satellite channels and the internet. Modern weaponry and its capabilities for destruction also help to ensure more influence.

FORMS OF RELIGIOUS VIOLENCE

Before addressing the forms of religious violence, found in the Palestinian case, the kind of violence which is the consequence of the use of force against the community, it is imperative to refer to the fact that the concept of extremism is used in different contexts and can be used in contradictory ways, depending on the interests of those who define it.

Islamists were not historically considered extremists, within the context of the Arab people, nor in the Western world, but were considered leftist forces; thusly defined until the collapse of the Soviet Union. During the war against the Soviet Union, in Afghanistan, Islamists were called *Mujahidin*.

The campaigns, which were exporting *Mujahidin* to Afghanistan, used to receive support and approval of the Arab governments, as well as the support of foreign governments, external to the region. At a later stage, when the Soviet Union pulled out of Afghanistan and after the American forces occupied that country, the *Mujahidin* became known as terrorists. Eventually, the extremism which was considered characteristic of leftist forces instead became characteristic of Islamic extremism. Even so, Islamists characterization in Afghanistan as *Mujahidin*, during at the times of the Soviets, did not necessarily distance them from extremism. Moreover, characterizing them as terrorists, at the times of the Americans action in Afghanistan, does not necessarily confirm their extremism. Extremism is subject to certain characteristics and criteria, which are meant to be objective and distanced from contemporary interests of these forces or others. This extremism is also manifested in different forms, the most important of which are the ideological and political forms.

The extremist discourse usually expresses an ideology which represents a group of thoughts held by an individual, organization or state, through which polarization is used in order to eliminate the “other” or parts of it. It is accompanied with condescension, based on a religious foundation, in the case of the religious movements or on ethnic basis, in the case of ethnic movements. This comprehensive ideology holds that it owns the absolute truth; truth that applies to every place, time and all humanity. Therefore, it divides the world into two parts: the world of truth versus “world of ignorance,” the “world of Islam” versus the “world of no-Islam” or pre-Islam (in the case of Islamic extremism), the “world of Jews” versus the “world of non-Jews” (in the case of Jewish extremism) and “world of faith” versus “world of disbelief.” Accordingly, polarization of the world will be based on religious basis.

Based on this comprehensive ideology, which divides the world in this manner, the idea of “disbelief of the other” emerges. It is not enough that an individual is associated with disbelief but the disbelief of an individual is viewed as representative of the disbelief of the entire society, to which he or she belongs and is extended to, as Sayyed Qutub said, any space beyond the domain of the extremist ideology.

In the case of Islamic extremism, the “other” is primarily characterized by *jahliya* or ignorance. This characteristic of non-Muslims is no longer what it was; a historical period that preceded the emergence of Islam, but now describes every non-Muslim society. Contemporary discourse on societies and *jahliya* now denotes those individuals, societies, organizations and thoughts or even every space or time period considered to be in contradiction with God’s law or a law resultant of human legislation.

The belief that the ideology, Islamist in this case, spontaneously leads to the belief in the sacredness of the Islamic movement, thus leads also to the belief that the “other” is worldly or a group of infidels and any opposition of the thought held by the Islamist movement shall be considered as an affront to the beliefs of the movement. In many cases, the opposing view, which might be characterized also as secular or reminiscent of Crusader thought, will be immediately branded as interference of an external agent, collaborator or apostate.

The concept of the nation, in the religious ideological case, is entirely different from the concept of the nation in its contemporary sociological meaning. It is a nation for the faithful while the non-faithful are outside this nation. Apostasy is not only a violation of the held principles but it is also a departure from the nation. That is why the punishment for such a violation is by killing since it is considered treason of the religion and betrayal of the nation.

One thing which distinguishes extreme, religious ideology is that it is usually grounded on the principle of preference, as in the Jewish and Muslim cases, the general statement being that God has chosen this “nation” or this religious group in order to convey a message to the rest of humanity. This selection creates a sense of discrimination and superiority as the group charged with being the teacher who delivers the “letter,” in the story of a collective prophecy.

Extremist ideology, in the absence of recourse to accepted democratic tools, allows for the use of physical violence, in order to cast out or rid extremists of a perceived “evil.” The concept of extremism or evil becomes relative; what is considered evil or extreme in international discourse may not be considered evil or

extremism in particular communities. Extremism, according to the other, Israel for example, is most likely considered a mixture of religious ideology blended with a specific national feeling directed against occupation. Internal extremism, for its part, seems to be a reflection of the extreme ideology, often reflected in situations whereby modernists or religious reformers, attempt to adapt to the requirements of modernization and secular life by rejecting those the teachings and foundations, as stated, and instead following the example of predecessors whose positions are considered to be acceptable.

ISLAMIC DISCOURSE

Islamic discourse, in general and radical discourse, in particular, is an ideological discourse which considers itself representative of a heavenly project, as opposed to man made plans. That discourse most probably involves judgment by divine powers, since humans are incapable of comprehending the sacred. It believes that Islam alone offers the knowledge and the truth while all other ideologies and theories only offer opinions and views.

In Islamic discourse, texts which offer multiple interpretations are often referred to and are sometimes used and at other times ignored. The general purpose of Islamic discourse is to introduce the Islamic project to the world through which it can transfer humanity from “ignorance” to “enlightenment.” The main duties of this discourse are represented in the ongoing defense of the Islamic identity against the onslaught of Westernization, which is basically characterized as secular; and a consistent offensive of what it deems the uninterrupted flow of imported thoughts.

Due to the Islamists belief of the totality of Islam and its universality, Islamic discourse touches on all social, political, cultural and economic spheres of life. The case of the Palestinians is often touched upon, but not only as an issue that is essential to the doctrine but also as a means of conveying Islamist ideas to a wider Muslim public.

Introduction of the Islamic discourse in this manner does not necessarily guarantee a single, homogenous discourse. We find instead a range of shades of belief, depending on the state or living conditions of the public in question or the current political or economic situation in which the Islamists live. There is political Islamic discourse and there is the Islamic discourse of the pulpit; there is the discourse of “ordeal” and discourse of “well-being,” while there is the discourse of “hit and run” versus the discourse of “retreat and empowerment,” “confrontation” versus “reconciliation or tolerance,” and finally the discourse of “power” versus “weakness.”

To choose one of these discourses, we focus on the one of weakness, which expresses any stage in which the Islamic movement is weak due to the presence of a more powerful force than itself; whether it is a ruling local or occupying external force. It tends to focus on the intellectual side, debating topics which exhibit views which are contrary to the current, predominant ideas. It also focuses on the moral and value aspects, which call for the purification of the soul, piety and return to religion. It utilizes a vocabulary that is more reminiscent of popular religious jargon rather than to that of political religion; it talks about preaching, sacrifice, awareness and finally, offers warnings of the consequences of adopting another line of thought.

Radical religious discourse tends to have distinctive characteristics, whether it concerns the subject matter or form of discourse; in terms of form it is one directional and does approach a stage of dialogue nor does it presuppose that it is possible for the other side to possess even any part of the truth.

In light of the fact that the said discourse is based on religious ideology, whose characteristics are mainly a mastery of that ideology, it is a discourse of orders; the most recurrent phrases in religious discourse are imperative statements such as “do this,” or “don’t do this.” In such a case, dialogue has no place and if dialogue does happen, it is an opportunity for repentance and not for discussion. Preachers usually preach in a loud, angry voice, regardless of the nature of the subject and whether it really calls for that level of expression. Also notable, during a sermon, the importance of time periods are lost and the sermon may include discussion of two different events, the time which has elapsed between the two events is ignored, even if they took place hundreds of years apart.

Radical religious discourse has a tremendous ability for mobilization, by the use of religious texts and Islamic slogans. Most effectively, these slogans are particularly powerful when the struggle is perceived to be an external enemy; outside the confines of the religious ideology. Whether they are local or foreign, governmental or civilians, the sum total of that said community is considered at fault, namely when the enemy is of Western origin.

Radical religious discourse is absolute and does not advocate relativity of incidents. It is a discourse in which borders are almost nonexistent; the same rules apply to all areas of life, be it ethics, politics or cultural life. It regards itself as the core and model and the measure of correctness lies in how close or far one is from that core or model.

One of the most important tools of religious discourse employed against the “other” is to deem any turn towards it as defection and betrayal. For discourse

to include movements towards pluralism, even within the same religion, are vastly difficult. Further compounding the problem, is that this discourse is not only used by political movements, clergy men and formal religious institutions, but it is also used by authorities and who resort to it to fulfill their political goals especially considering their opponents are utilizing the same methods.

Political violence

Ideology is often used by some political Islamists against social elites and intellectuals, in order to impose a specific social behavioral, which is both conservative and religious. When religious parties struggle with other religious or political parties in order to attain power and authority, it is clear that religious ideology and logic are used primarily to mask that struggle.

In the Palestinian case, active Islamic forces are Hamas, which is an extension of the Islamic blocs and the Muslim Brotherhood, established as a movement in the late 80’s, as well as Islamic Jihad and the Tahrir party. If we assume that these three movements are radical, based on the comprehensive ideology they adopt, then the radical level of these three movements differs according to the western categorization, as well as the local categorization, especially in light of the fact that the terms of reference adopted by each categorization are different from one another.

As for the Western countries, the reference by which they judge the level of extremism of the ideologies and behaviors of the Islamic movements, tend to be their positions regarding Israel and the extent of their support of the armed resistance against the occupation of the Palestinian Territories. In contrast, the criteria for the Palestinian people and the elites, who are interested in studying Islamic movements, are the extent of how radical are the ideas of these movements in confronting the other parties of the Palestinian political spectrum, including the Palestinian Authority. Also considered is the extent to which they use violence against these parties and social institutions, which are not under the umbrella of the intellectual hegemony of the Islamic movements. Therefore, the Islamic Jihad movement in Palestine, which is considered most extreme by Israel and the West, is not viewed as such on the Palestinian level.

It is also possible to talk about the association between the ideological extremism of the Islamic movements and the extent of their practices of the ideological and physical hegemony over the society. Undoubtedly, the Tahrir party has the most radical discourse, in relation to its rejection of the present form of government in Palestine as well as the Arab and Muslim regions. It has not, however, interfered in the present political and social action due to its belief

that any transformations may only take place through a Caliph who embodies the Islamisation of the state. On the other hand, Muslim Brothers continuously interfere with state affairs and with the social issues and daily lives of citizens, in an attempt to impose the different forms of ideological and political hegemony. Having said that, the discourse of the Muslim Brotherhood is found to be the most moderate of all discourses of active Islamic movements.

It is worth mentioning that upon a review of the history of the Muslim Brotherhood's use of violence and ideological hegemony, in Palestine, we find that this is inversely proportional with the extent of their involvement in resistance acts against Israel. Prior to the establishment of the Hamas movement in 1987, the forces of the Muslim Brotherhood, blocs of which were active in Palestinian universities frequently used violence against other leftist and national forces, similar to what happened at An-Najah and Bir Zeit, as well as Gazan universities. There was interference in the administrative and academic processes of the universities, reaching so far as to affect how lectures were delivered. These practices, however, were greatly minimized following the foundation of Hamas while a large number of members of the Muslim Brotherhood focused their activities on resistance against the Israeli occupation of Palestinian Territories. Interestingly, the active participation of the Muslim Brotherhood in the resistance provided more freedom to intellectual seculars

THE USE OF THE BIBLE TO JUSTIFY VIOLENCE

David Neuhaus SJ

ABSTRACT: Formulators of political ideologies find a rich resource in the Biblical text. God and God's Word become a mainstay in the justification of ideological formulations that attribute a divine origin to expressions of human interests. In the Middle East today, Biblical fundamentalists, Christian and Jewish, find in the Biblical texts expressions that support their world view. What is 'wrong' with these reading and how might these same texts be read 'rightly'?

“Blessed be the Lord, who trains my hands for war” (Ps. 144:1)

There is a problem in our sacred texts and one that we need to admit to. The problem might even offer a possibility for dialogue among religions that have not always promoted dialogue and coexistence. For Muslims, Christians and Jews, our texts are sacred, canonical and thus in a certain sense untouchable. We approach them without being able to change them. This places enormous challenges before the essential acts of reading and interpretation. Reading and interpretation are then not only an art that the religious community must become proficient in, but are an essential skill that ensures that the sacred text does not betray the message that the religious community must promote.

One of the foremost problems, in the sacred text, is the problem of the violence and coercion used in order to promote the supposed rightness of the position of the text in question. This is not the problem of one particular religious tradition but would clearly seem to be the problem of many, perhaps most, if not all our religious traditions. In the sacred texts of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in particular, God is sometimes presented as a warrior who trains His righteous followers for war, a war to win the world for God. What is written in the text has too often spilt over into the world and the disastrous effects for humanity are written on the stones of this country perhaps more than most others.

In this paper, the author will propose a number of interpretive methods that have been used in the Christian tradition to deal with the issue of the use of violence in the Bible. Finally, the author will attempt to critique the position of those Biblical readers who continue to use the Bible to justify violence.

THE PROBLEM OF LANGUAGE AND IMAGE

With the history of the Christian reading of the biblical text, the first to note his revulsion at the language and imagery of the biblical text, with regard to the use of violence, was a second century intellectual by the name of Marcion. Marcion, a close reader of the biblical text, came to the conclusion that the God of the Old Testament was indeed a vengeful and violent God who sought to ensnare the human person in a world of flesh, passion and sin. His solution was to pose the God of Jesus Christ as a counter-God, who sent Jesus to liberate us from the clutches of this violent creator God and set our spirits free. Marcion, in this way, liberated the text of his making from all that was impossible to accept for his refined and sophisticated mind. He wrote his own sacred text, purifying it of everything that opposed what he thought.

However, in liberating us from the embarrassing parts of the text, he also

created a religion in his own image and likeness that was disconnected from a real world, in which God had struggled to prepare the human person for the salvation He sought to offer. This real world was a world of incredible violence, and His son would pay the ultimate price. Those who opposed Marcion, the Fathers of the Church, realized that Marcion, despite the nobility of his intention, had made a profound error in accepting language and image at face value (a type of fundamentalism) and not wrestling with them in order to emerge with a more profound, more relevant and truer image of God and the human person formed in His image.

ALLEGORY AND SIMILITUDE

The Church Fathers were profoundly aware that the Jesus narrative cut off from its roots in the Old Testament was incomprehensible. Moreover they recognized that the problem of violence was not extraneous to the New Testament but rather intrinsic to it. Their response of defending the integrality of the sacred text (that would subsequently become the canon as we know it today) was based upon the development of a sophisticated hermeneutic that makes the act of reading and interpretation an art not easy to attain.

In taking the text serious they also insisted that it be read through theological spectacles – the text must be submitted to the God who is revealed in it. This God is first and foremost known through Jesus Christ, who reveals to us a loving Father, who seeks for all his children the spirit of life. Life, love and light contrast dramatically with the violence that is part and parcel of the biblical text, particularly where the text recounts how God defeats his foes in history or in eschatology. What to do then about this violence that seems to profoundly contradict what we know about God? The Fathers insisted that we seek a spiritual meaning that is not limited to the letter. The letter must be understood within the full story – a story of love and not hate, a story of peace and not war. The letter cannot stand alone but must be illuminated by the spirit. In other words, the text must be understood within its widest context, each story within the history of salvation, a history that leads to the coming of salvation, initiated by a loving God who seeks salvation for all.

The specific method used most widely by the Fathers was allegory, learnt from the Greeks, and applied with genius by Origen of Alexandria to the entire Old Testament. The story of blood curdling destruction of Jericho by Joshua and the people of Israel becomes a prefiguration of the second Joshua (Jesus)’s driving out of demons from the possessed, setting them free for a life of love and dignity. War is a human reality when we are profoundly divided between sin and the will

of God. This war is not predominantly a physical war of death and destruction, but rather, the spiritual war of purification that alone can lead us to God. For the Christian, the image of the suffering Christ, victorious in his Resurrection, must reign supreme over any earthly king clad in armor and armed with a sword. Needless to say, this was rarely understood and even more rarely put into practice.

BACK TO THE LETTER

Allegory has a profound weakness despite its genius. It slowly reduces the complexity of the sacred text to one particular principle, in the case of Christianity all became Christ. Christians were soon seeing Christ everywhere in the Biblical text that made the diversity of the text and its narrative almost superfluous. Why preserve a diversified text when in fact it was only telling one particular story? And so, predictably, the letter began to reimpose itself in the Middle Ages with a return to the literal sense of the text. The political consequences were predictable too as kings and emperors rediscovered the biblical narratives that justified wars and violence in the name of a God who needed to be justified. The Crusades were part of the scene.

However the slow rediscovery of the letter was also accompanied by a rise in interest in the text as a product of the human author. Whereas the Fathers had insisted on a theological reading of the text, those who were fascinated by the letter of the text and not just its spirit, discovered the rich variety of the letter that revealed a plurality of human authors. This would lead to a new method with which to read the text, the method that has been promoted over the past four hundred years in universities and has slowly been adopted by sectors among many enlightened religious readers too, the historical-critical method.

It was in fact Benedict Spinoza who formulated the questions that must be asked in order to understand any given text, the Biblical one included. Who wrote the text? For whom? When? Why? These questions throw light on the text, enabling the reader to understand language, image and intention from an anthropological perspective. Slowly this method, hand in hand with archaeology and text analysis, revealed that much of what had been understood as historical description was less history and more meditation, parable, reformulation and even ideology. The blood curdling story of destruction of Jericho, for example, could not have happened as described because Jericho did not exist at the time (1200 BCE).

The historical-critical approach to sacred text marks the entry of religion into a period of modernity where questioning is not only permitted but is seen as healthy participation in the life of the community. The text has not lost its

authority but has become an arena for wrestling as the community of readers of the text seeks to understand how to apply the teaching of text in a world that is vastly different from the world that produced the text. The Bible seemed less Word of God than word of men and yet the educated religious person continues to insist that in these words of men, the Word of God is indeed revealed in a privileged way.

The historical critical method underlines the vast abyss that separates the world in which the text was produced and the world in which we now read the text. Unless we appreciate this difference, the difference between two worlds, we will not be able to liberate ourselves from a letter that can indeed kill and has done so in the past and even in the present.

LETTER AS LITERATURE

The historical, critical method provoked a crisis for many religious people who felt threatened by the reduction of the sacred text to a humanly composed word. If the human person had composed the word, then where was God? Must we choose between a human word and a divine Word? And even if God had revealed a word to a human author in a particular context (usually thousands of years ago when we speak about our sacred texts), could it have meaning for the community of readers today?

Contemporary readings of sacred texts are dealing with these questions as they begin to take more seriously sacred texts as literature. Literature, which communicates truth, demands careful reading, precise interpretation and clear distinctions between the world of text and the world in which the reader lives. Whereas we are called to understand why the characters in the text act as they do, we do not necessarily blindly imitate their actions until we have understood what connections we are called to make and what actions we are called to take. Interpretation is an art and a struggle and there is no simple way out. Who said it would be easy?

THE LETTER IS OUR LORD

In the contemporary world, a persistent community of readers promotes an obsessive fixation on the letter of the text. In a real sense, they pose a threat not only to our religious traditions but also to the coherency of our religious message. This community has penetrated the three religious traditions of Islam, Christianity and Judaism, making inroads among all three and particularly in this part of the world. Despite belonging to three different religious communities, their basic hermeneutic is a shared one: they proclaim the lordship of the letter. They are

often called fundamentalists.

Rather than engage in the struggle of interpretation of the word in the sacred text, out of which emerges the understanding of the Word of God for our times, this community of readers simply prostrates itself before the letter of the text and proclaims its lordship over the world. I hasten to add that in my experience the letter before which they prostrate themselves is usually chosen from a narrow and ideologically selected collection, ignoring most of the text. Here the letter is supreme and both God and man must submit to what is written. There is no God, no world and no literature that can stand against the letter. It is there to vanquish not only an insubordinate world but even a God who might seek to surprise us with something new, and the ensuing violence is horrifying in its dimensions. No wonder then that the parts of the text these readers seem to love best are those eschatological sections that glory in military imagery and language.

This idolatry of the letter represents a serious and dangerous challenge to all other communities of readers and betrays the intention of the text. What is certainly even more troubling is that politicized groups that emerge from this kind of community of readers are wreaking havoc in our world and leaving a trail of destruction that will be difficult to repair. Our responsibility as communities of readers who continue to insist on the sacredness of the text is great in the face of the challenge and we must seek to educate our faithful. More than ever before, the salvation of our world passes through the acts of reading and interpretation.

LIBERATION THEOLOGIES IN PALESTINE: CONTEXTUAL, SECULAR
HUMANIST AND DECOLONIZING PERSPECTIVES: A MICHAEL PRIOR
MEMORIAL LECTURE

Dr. Nur Masalha

ABSTRACT: Here I want to bring into the debate on theologies of liberation and the future of Palestine (and I mean “historic Palestine”) decolonising methodologies ... and how history can be decolonised and how indigenous memory can be reclaimed. The lecture will refer to contextual theologies of liberation and the religio-moral critique Michael Prior was interested in. But it will also bring into the debate secular-humanist and progressive perspectives on which people like Edward Said, Naji Al-Ali and Mahmoud Darwish insisted. In a nutshell it is about creating a discourse of indigenous theologies of liberation which can be relevant to; Muslims, Jews, Christians, secular-humanists, in historic Palestine.

Al Salam Alaikum w barakato and good afternoon.

I am from the Galilee, of historic Palestine. I lived most of my life in the Galilee and studied in Jerusalem in the seventies and eighties before earning my B.A. and M.A. in Jerusalem, which took seven years living, during which I lived in Jerusalem. During this time, I visited Bethlehem, especially for the New Year celebrations. In the eighties, I went to London to earn my Ph.D. at S.O.A.S [School of Oriental and African Studies – University of London], finishing it in 1988, at the height of the Palestinian Intifada. Because of the situation I chose to collect material here and return to the U.K. to write a book I had been planning.

In the mid-nineties, I returned to Palestine for one year to teach at Bir Zeit University. In 1994, a year before Arafat returned, I lived next to what came to be known as the *Muqata*, the headquarters of Arafat but which was then the headquarters of the Israeli Army. During the second Intifada, I came back and went to have a look at my flat, which had been shelled during the second Intifada. The whole *Muqata* was demolished, apart from the flat of Arafat, who was still there and refusing to leave. You could still actually see some Palestinian policemen there, who were not wearing uniforms.

Through these experiences and the stages I went through, starting with the first Intifada and then the second, which had a huge impact on my work and resulted in insights and ideas. The argument can be made that that reality and experience do actually produce theologies, histories, and memories. Academics tend to think they are creating realities but actually, we are simply the product of those realities, histories and experiences. It can also be argued that theologies are actually the product of realities, not the other way around.

Theologians think they can influence the reality, and sometimes they do, but I think theology is a product of reality, both in Palestine and in Latin America. I think this is phenomenon affects people, such as Michael Prior, who came to Palestine in the mid-eighties and was influenced by what he experienced. Before that visit, he was slightly pro-Zionist but became anti-Zionist. It is the reality that changed him. It is reality that makes us interpret the Bible and the Qur'an differently. It's not the other way around – which is the key argument that I want to make.

I come from a very devout Muslim family. My mother named me *Nur al-Deen*, which means “light of religion.” She also named my brother *Khair al-Deen*, which means “goodness of religion” and our third brother; she named *Eiz al-Deen*, which means “glory of religion.” During my upbringing, religion was with me all of the time, making me a believer, which I still am. I think, however, that the *kind* of Islam or the *kind* of religious experience I had, instinctively, from my parents was slightly different from the official Islam, if you like, which is Islam

of the *Sharia* or Islam of the *Olamahs*. It was an Islam which saw religion and spirituality as a distinct space or sphere.

There was another distinct sphere which I call today, secular, although at the time, my mother did not use this particular word. She thought that people have a space for praying but there is this spiritual side as well as a non-spiritual side, which today we do call worldly or secular, which is in Arabic ‘*Elmany* or ‘*Elmy*. The spheres do not necessarily contradict but complement each other.

Being a theorist, I do not view secularism and faith as contradictory. Secularism is not atheism or a state of non-belief. This conference is secular! Going to pray at the mosque is a spiritual activity while perhaps, working towards a Ph.D. can be considered a secular activity.

I was brought up to think that secular and earthly things and ideas are deeply rooted in our psyche, which does recognize the two spaces or spheres. These two spaces live together; a phenomenon you can actually witness in the marketplace. The marketplace is a symbol of trade and secular activities, deeply rooted in our psyche; in Islam. Some people are confused as to whether or not Islam recognizes these two spaces or spheres. Islam *does* recognize it; does live with it; does legitimize it. The Prophet, long before he was a preacher, was a trader.

Earthquakes are a natural phenomenon that make people question whether or not we can blame God for them. They ask, is God a killer? Of course God is not a killer. I think that earthquakes have nothing to do with God but are a natural phenomenon, which occur naturally and have a scientific explanation. The same with tsunamis. There is no call for asking if God was behind it or not; there is no need for a religious explanation. As for Islam's ability to grapple with the earthly, long before Europeans had scientific explanations for these phenomena, Islamic scientists in the Middle East had scientific explanations for the phenomena around us, exhibiting secularism, which is in fact, a term developed in the West in the 19th century. Arabs did not borrow it from the West; in fact they had a word for worldly, again ‘*Elmany* or ‘*Elmy*. There was no struggle with use reason and science to explain phenomena.

Edward Said, who was a secular humanist; deeply secular, which I had learned through our time together during conferences. Even though I deduced this, I was still very curious about him. Did he really not believe in anything beyond; anything supernatural? After Edward died, I met his widow, Miriam asked her, in Arabic, whether he really did not believe in the supernatural? She replied “*WALL-a HAB-ba!*” (Not a bit!). I was astonished, as even though I am a believer, Edward was a great hero of mine and many others.

Having said that, I really think that he was incredibly prophetic and an incredibly spiritual man, whom I learned a lot from. His secular approach to

scriptures, texts and the world in general offered much to be learned. We can learn a lot from the secular way of looking at texts and how they developed, for example the Bible, which was developed over time, by many authors and over centuries.

I find it surprising that thus far, we referred to Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and even Tiananmen Square. But not one person mentioned Tahrir Square, Liberation Square in spite of the events that took place there having such an impact upon us and on the minds of everyone. But for some reason, we in the Middle East have found it easier to look from further away, at figures such as Martin Luther King and his struggle there. It is difficult for us to deal with things which are affecting us immediately or directly. I was in Tahrir Square last year and could not have, at the time, imagined what has happened, which was actually a kind of earthquake and has its own impact. The word Tahrir has even entered English discourse, the same way that *intifada* has sunk into the Hebrew and English discourse.

There is a connection between the word *tahrir* and the word *hurria* (freedom), which I am talking about. There is a connection between liberation and theology which I think affects us. To touch on Tahrir square again, Christians, Jews and Muslims; they all talk about multiculturalism, pluralism, dialogue, debate but what is really important about Tahrir Square, which is wonderful, is the presence of a seemingly instinctive solidarity, exhibited by the English, Serbians, etc. There was a natural and university reaction because humans sympathize with those are asking for their dignity and freedom. It is a natural reaction, which worries the British, Israeli and American regimes.

Tahrir Square began as a movement of a range of people; young people, people from all walks of life. We did not, however, see the Muslim Brotherhood or religious groups leading it, not because they would not like to see this regime go but they have been essentially crushed by the regime; some of their members imprisoned and tortured. Actually, some of the key figures of the so-called 'Islamic jihadism,' such as Sayyed Qutub, were actually inspired by their time in prisons, unfortunately, under a progressive leader, such as Nasser. Fundamentalism is born in prisons, where inmates suffer the humiliation, oppression and torture implemented by dictatorial regimes. If we want to cause a new age or earthquake, this is the recipe and medicine for extremism and fundamentalism. This is the way we can move forward in the question of religion and violence.

Moving on to the two themes of my talk this afternoon, I want to say something about the discourse of the liberation in Palestine and then I'd like to talk about the same but in Latin America and Latin American.

Palestine, liberation begins with memory. Yesterday, Leo posited that

we should begin with talking about forgetfulness and forgiveness. I think, in Palestine, we cannot forget. If we forget, we will stop being a nation. Memory is what keeps us together. Memory is what makes us. I don't just mean just the last sixty years of the *Nakba*, the destruction of historic Palestine. I mean memory which goes back for hundreds, thousands of years. I want to refer to something, said yesterday, about us Palestinian Muslims, said by the mufti of Bethlehem. He said in fourteen centuries ago, we came here with Omar and we asked for half of the country, from the Christians and what not. We did not 'come here!' We did not come from Arabia! We were here for thousands and thousands of years. We are not outsiders and most us Palestinian Muslims, who are the majority of the country, could not have become a majority by coming from another country. Omar came with only a few people. Most of us are Arabized, indigenous people. Most of us converted from Christianity and Judaism and we can find one example of evidence in that is Jamal Khader. Khader actually means George, which is a traditional Christian name, shared by both Christians and Muslims. Khader is a shared memory, preserved in villages and by the peasants. Another popular memory or tradition is *nabi* (prophet) Mousa (Moses). That is another conversion from Judaism, if you like, and another incorporation. This is the way the Palestinian memory and identity is, which is multi-layered; formed over thousands of years; very deep into history.

Let me give you another memory and how our memory works with history. This particular memory relates to Bethlehem (Beit Lahem), Beit Sahour and Beit Jala. You know the word, *beit*, an 'Arabic' word. What does it mean? It means house and is a Phoenician word; a Canaanite word and we see it '*beit*' in the Greek alphabet; the Greeks having borrowed it from the Phoenicians. Contemporary historians on Palestine do not distinguish between the Canaanites and the Phoenicians, who are more or less the same people with the same language. The Palestinian '*beit*' is actually thousands of years old; the letters *alif baa*, found in both Arabic and Hebrew, is also a Canaanite word. The names of our cities and towns preserve, also, that Canaanite tradition, which was passed on to the Palestinians, the Arabs and the Jews. The Phoenicians gave the alphabet to the Europeans; to the Greeks, who gave it to the Latin, who gave it to the English. And now, the English also use the *alif baa* or alphabet! The actual shape of the Phoenician *baa* was in the shape of a house, a form and relationship preserved until today. In Palestine, village names originated from Polis, which we know is a Greek name. Other names, or Canaanite origin are Aqqa, Haifa.

People do not know our history; think it only began with the Muslim conquests but no. Our roots in this land go back thousands of years and we can see them alive, in our culture; in the way our villagers celebrate different seasons. That tradition, we should claim; that multi-layered, ancient identity, as

a people, which unites us, Muslim and Christian and perhaps some Palestinian Jews are part of it. Yes, this tradition is part of our evolution and we need to recover that tradition. So, I think that memory is important, not just in terms of commemorating the *Nakba* or 1948. I know why we are so fixated upon this year; because it unites an otherwise fragmented people. We are physically isolated from each other; we cannot meet each other. Lebanon, Gaza, Galilee...they cannot just come, say to Bethlehem, to meet each other now. Memory actually unites us; links us together; keeps us as a people. Without memory and history, we are not a people. Memory and history are both essential to liberation and self-empowerment.

I think our experience, here in Palestine, for the last few decades, has been top-down: top down approach in state building; a top down approach in regime building. I do not think this has worked and will not work towards liberation. I think we need to go back to the different ways that Palestinians are developing, in recent years and this is what I call, 'memory from down below' and 'history from down below.' And the way that grassroots communities in Lebanon or the West Bank are writing their own history. The way that we commemorate the *Nakba*, from below, not from above; grassroots. We don't have a government; we don't actually have a state. We do it from below; instinctively. We do it through and by communities, which is essential to our liberation. What I mean by liberation is unity.

I want to talk about liberation, from within. Again, liberation, democracy, freedom, from within. Almost the opposite of the Iraqi case or Afghanistan, where there is this idea of the West bringing democracy to them. We don't need the West to bring us liberation and history. We have it from within, along with traditions that are democratic and popular 'from down below,' or grassroots, ideas.

In the Latin America, in the 1970's, there was a struggle against the dictatorships there. The focus of the solidarity was on the poor; the basis for Latin American liberation theology was the poor. The Latin Americans did not want the Church to lead the revolution, from above. They did not think using the hierarchy was the proper way to go about it. They did not count on academics, like me, to come and tell them what their liberation theology should be, but rather, that it should originate from the grassroots and slums.

Latin Americans also thought that the practice was much more important than the theory, it should begin with practice and that theology is about practice. They think, you should not read the Gospel of Jesus and then go to the slum but rather, the other way around, which allows us to see Jesus as a liberator. That kind of approach towards the reality, the worldly, real situation, the social economics. This is the way to understand theology and to interpret it morally; ethically; relevantly. I think that the Latin Americans are trying to turn the pyramid upside

down; anti to the hierarchy style of the Church. We need to turn things upside down. Marx says "theory and practice," but they said, "no, first practice, then theory. We will come up with a theory, the right theory and ideas about liberation. But we need to look at the practice; the practicalities; the experience.

This is what Michael Prior was about. He came to the Holy Land, he experienced and saw that Bethlehemites are living in a large prison. It is easy to deduce how visiting Bethlehem or the Gaza Strip can actually transform a human. We understand what the peace process has meant; a sort of negotiation of the terms of our imprisonment here. The transformation, by experience of the worldly and earthly, such as has been done here in Palestine, demonstrates how I think ideas are developed and how such people as Michael Prior, Edward Said and Naji al-Ali are produced.

Naji al-Ali was from a village, in the Galilee, which was destroyed in 1948, making him a refugee who fled to Lebanon and settled in a refugee camp. He had a background similar to my own, being of peasant origin, ending up working in the Gulf and educating himself, as his way forward. He worked for different newspapers and eventually became a very famous cartoonist, known for creating the character Handala, which every Palestinian person knew. He was an icon of Palestine alongside Arafat, who is another national icon. He was the conscience of Palestine, as was Edward Said. Handala defines the resistance, the martyr, the witness and witnessed decades of Palestinian dispossession and resistance.

Civil liberation theology in Palestine involves different directions. Some of it goes in the way which the Sabeel organization might suggest while Rev. Mitri has his own ideas as does of Na'im Ateek, who wrote about them in his 1989 book, *Justice and Only Justice* and even Michael Prior chipped in and interacted. But there is something that has been neglected, which is what Edward Said did to liberation theology, in Palestine, as well as to pedagogy in education in Palestine. What about what Naji al-Ali did and what all the mentioned, can do. These men all come from different backgrounds, for example Michael Prior was a Catholic priest while Na'im was an Anglican and Edward Said was robustly secular humanist and finally, Naji al-Ali also was rather secular so, you have these people of all these different traditions, who united to become a moral voice for Palestine. Michael Prior, for his part, was an outsider yet, it was in his blood and it was his passion to do what he did and it outraged him to see what was going on here.

When one reads the Bible, it is important to consider, at some point, how it should be read. I think the Latin American liberation theologians read the Bible with the eyes of the Israelites, as their focus on class struggle seemed parallel to the Israelite escape from oppression. This was key to the Latin Americans but I do not think this can also work in Palestine. It is the opposite here. If we read with

the eyes of the Israelites, we see, as Michael Prior called them, the genocidal parts of the Old Testament. I know about different stories of the Old Testament; Amos, Ruth, Old Testament justice, as well as other parts of the entire Bible, which is made up of various traditions, some of them conflicting and contradictory and includes feminist narratives and counter narratives.

Perhaps reading Exodus, with the eyes of Joshua, suited the Latin Americans. But they were not even aware of Zionism. For them, the struggle was only a movement from slavery to freedom where the Pharaoh is the symbol of oppression for the Israelites fleeing Egypt. Again, that theme does not work for Palestine as we are in an opposite situation. In Palestine, liberation theologians can only read with the eyes of the Canaanites, where they, as we, do not need a promise. We do not need God as a real estate agent. We do not require a tribal God or one that exterminates the people of Jericho. We are indigenous and as such, we can look at the Bible with the eyes of the indigenous, such as the Canaanites. Michael Prior focused on the fact that the Bible was used as a thesis of colonialism. Zionism, for example, without the Bible would be just another colonial enterprise. Lots of people in the West support Zionism because of the Bible. This is a terrible thing! Without the Bible, which justifies their actions, in their eyes, would be an apartheid state.

So again, how should we, as the indigenous, read the Bible? If you are the Native Americans in America, where is the Promised Land? How could the Indians read the Bible with the eyes of Israelites, who suffered the violence of the Europeans who came over and tried to exterminate them? They also suffered from the colonialism inspired by the Bible. Robert Allen Warrior is a Native American and the one who actually drew attention to this theme. Warrior was amazed at Martin Luther King's famous speech, where he spoke of going up into the mountain to see the Promised Land. But for the Native Americans, where was this Promised Land? They were already living in it. Martin Luther King was leading a civil rights movement but one that was not sensitive to Native Americans. He was sensitive to white liberals; he was fighting racism but he was neglected the fact that the indigenous people were exterminated by white, Christian settlers, many of them devout Christians, who landed in New England. It is from here that Warrior gave us the idea of the Promised Land belonging to the people who are already promised it, and indigenous to it. This idea does not work in Palestine.

In the mid-eighties, Edward Said, who had picked up Warrior's idea, had an argument with an American Jewish professor from Harvard, named Michael Woltzer. Woltzer took the original Exodus narrative and claimed it to be progressive and revolutionary, saying it matched the spirit of the sixties. Said pointed out what Woltzer ignored, the rest of the text. What about the indigenous inhabitants of Jericho and the commandment to exterminate the natives? It was

conveniently, as is the case in mainstream churches in America and Britain, ignored. And this is what Michael Prior was all about and said that the biblical academics are actually complicit in the colonization of Palestine, through the very selective use of biblical text, which seemingly support the colonialist enterprise. For the Palestinians, Said was the first to pick up the Exodus narrative and point out that, according to it, the liberation of one people meant the annihilation of another. I think this theme was picked up by Michael Prior and more and more Palestinians are following suit.

Interestingly, the story of the alleged extermination of the Canaanites has no historical basis and we have no proof that the Canaanites were exterminated. You cannot read the Bible historically and we have no archaeological evidence that they were destroyed. You have to read the Bible morally and use moral critique and decide. Michael Prior moved from viewing the Bible as a historical text and interpreted it morally, as well as how it is relevant to Palestine. The moral issue is critical to the way we understand the issue. The moral narrative, critique, voice and empowerment; this is the strength of the Palestinians. We do not have weapons and our small police force is useless against a nuclear apartheid state, however, we have moral strength, empowerment and a legitimate theology, which keeps us going.

Can religion and violence go together? Yes, they can and Augustine addressed this idea through his 'just war' theory. In some cases, resistance is necessary. Of course, religion tries to regulate and limit violence. There is no single law in the world that says if you are slapped on one side of your face, turn the other cheek. I would give anyone; however much money, if they were able to locate such a law. There are some cases where violence is legitimate, for example, self-defense, a condition even recognized by international law. If I were to slap, say, Fr. Jamal, he would run to the authorities and have me sacked, not turn his other cheek, as idealistic religion might say. There is a need for correcting an injustice and that may involve some kind of struggle and in South Africa, we had Nelson Mandela, the A.N.C. and armed struggle.

Mandela spent 27 years fighting a vicious apartheid system and he, even having used armed struggle, became a hero. Arafat tried the same thing and he was branded a terrorist. One was against apartheid in South Africa and the other fought against Israeli apartheid. They did exactly the same thing but the consequences were totally different, as per reputations in the West. That one is called hero and the other, terrorist, does not touch on the legitimacy or the rightness or the principle or the legitimacy. Is it legitimate to bomb civilians, we ask. No, it is not. Is it legitimate to fight occupation? It is and for people who are desperate, there are a range of options. I am not suggesting that violence is the way forward. Non-violence is the preferred way forward, a banner taken up by

many Palestinians, who are working with non-violence, especially with regards to the Wall. Palestinians in Israel have been using non-violent methods for decades and we have better chances using such means, especially considering we are confronting such a powerful state. We do have a better chance when we confront with non-violent methods.

Al-Ali produced 40,000 cartoons, which critiqued corruption, the occupation and even the P.L.O. and some people think he lost his life due to that. He was assassinated in 1986, in London, shortly after I met him and also after he held an exhibition at S.O.A. No one knows who was behind his death but surely there were people who wanted to silence him. Surely they wanted to silence Handala, who tends to turn his back to us, so we cannot silence him. He was a witness to what we call martyrdom and is a symbol of defiance. Here we find a secular discourse but which has a religious element, a bit like the 'right of return,' which has become a sacred issue, to the Palestinians and we cannot give it up easily, as a sacred duty. Secular discourse becomes a religious, civil theology discourse and Handala does represent that martyrdom, which is a secular martyrdom. Thousands and thousands of Palestinians have died for this country. In the thirties, thousands of people died and you can look at historical figures to see how many people gave their lives for this country. Handala represents these martyrs but also martyrs as witnesses to the struggle; as witnesses of the suffering; as witnesses of the refugees; as witnesses of the refusal to give up and be defeated. That indomitable spirit is something seen in Handala, present in the Palestinian people.

Civil theology in Palestine can, as a universal system, unite Palestinians of all walks of life. The issue is about dignity, truth and justice. It is also about the basic things which everyone can identify with, simply. We can find a lot to unite us in the search for justice and it is only justice, which was again, the title of Na'im's book.

In the mid-nineties and in the middle of the Oslo peace process, Edward Said wrote an article criticizing those who say, 'equality or nothing,' which also happened to be a feminist, suffragist slogan, or if you will, 'equality or death.' I have a quote from this article: "The only way to overcome the current Palestinian crisis, for those who cry 'equality or nothing,' for Arabs and Jews. For if one people has the right of return, the other must also for as Franz Ferdinand said, 'It cannot be the aim of liberation to replace a white policeman with a non-white policeman. Liberation must go much further.'"

Thank you so much.

MARTYRDOM AND RELIGIOUS INNOVATION IN ISLAMIC HISTORY: MODERN AND MAMLUK PERSPECTIVES

Dr. Nick Chatrah

ABSTRACT: Nuanced understanding of the past aids peaceful co-existence today. This historical and theological paper explores violence and religious innovation in the Mamluk period, which saw diverse expressions of Islam. The particular focus is on texts on religious innovation by Ibn Taymiya (d. 728/1328), Ibn al-Hajj (CE/AH. 737/1336) and Ibn al-Nawwās (CE/AH 814/1411). Religious innovation provides a fresh lens to consider: How did the "clash of religions" express itself? How did definition of the enemy relate to contemporaneous political realities? How was the narrative of religion and violence/non-violence (greater/lesser jihad) responsive to the environment? With direct reference to historical texts under consideration, this facilitates exploration of pressing questions today: Are various expressions of violence part of "true religion?" Should discussions of religion "be kept away from the public sphere?" I will show that religious attitudes to violence/non-violence cannot be separated from socio-political and historical circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege to be invited to address this conference. My father, an Indian, was born in Sialkot, in present day Pakistan. My family members found themselves trying to escape the hostilities of Partition in 1947 and fled south. During the fifties and sixties, my father and many of his siblings emigrated to the U.K. These were unspeakably difficult times for those on both sides. For many in our world, the present day reality of struggles caused by decades old (and in some cases centuries old) differences, is difficult and despair inducing. My own heritage helps me empathize with those here in the Palestinian Territories, for whom; understandably, the challenge of daily struggle frequently dominates thinking. The relevance, however, of my heritage to this topic does not stop in Sialkot and the U.K. My mother is Greek and my parents-in-law are Finnish and English. The idea and reality of people, who come from varied ethnic, religious, cultural and other backgrounds, and live together, is one that fills me with gladness and hope, not just despair of the difficulty of the struggle.

This talk has been introduced under the rubric of religious violence in Islamic history. This is a broad area and I will focus my remarks on martyrdom, for several reasons. Firstly, sadly, martyrdom is a topic that is relevant today, not just historically. Following the announcement on 1 May 2011 that Osama bin Laden had been killed, a variety of groups around the world called him a *shahīd* or martyr.²²⁷ David Cook has noted that, through martyrdom, an individual is able to “control the uncontrollable” by “seeking out situations where martyrdom might be achieved.”²²⁸ It may also be that martyrdom is also closely associated with power, for example the power to influence the course of events on a large scale.²²⁹ Martyrdom narratives seem to play a part in the exercise of this power.²³⁰ Thirdly, there are many texts written in the pre-modern period, which relate to martyrdom, but have not yet been studied in depth and are important to current claims. Among those are two texts from the Mamluk period written by the Egyptian Mālikī Ibn al-Hājj (CE/AH737/1336) and the Syrian Shāfi‘ī Ibn al-Nawwās (CE/AH 814/1411). Both authors favoured martyrdom and railed against innovation, by appealing to

227 The above sentence and this footnote were added subsequent to the talk. The groups included the Pakistani organization Lashkar-e-Taiba in Karachi, Sudanese Muslims in Khartoum and Afghan members of the Taliban in Kandahar (www.reuters.com and www.google.com/hostednews/afp/, 2 May 2011, accessed 4 May). The following report by al-Quds al-‘Arabī provided further examples, <http://alquds.co.uk/index.asp?fname=today%5C02z496.htm&arc=data%5C2011%5C05%5C05-02%5C02z496.htm>, 2 May 2011, accessed 30 May.

228 Cook, D., 2005, 26 and 2007, 11.

229 David Cook observed that the close identification with power is one thing that sets martyrdom in Islam apart from martyrdom in Judaism and Christianity (2007, 5-11).

230 For examples of such narratives from Pakistani Kashmir, Afghanistan, Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere, citing premodern sources, see Cook, D., 2007, 178ff.

the Qur’ān, hadith and other traditional sources of Islamic authority.²³¹ Indeed, the topic of martyrdom is closely related to the topic of religious innovation, a fertile area for discussion among Muslims. Despite the difficulty of some of the texts we shall examine, it is my intention that my engagement with the sources will be even-handed and that this talk will suggest directions for research that will assist fruitful dialogue.

By way of introduction it is worth noting one important instance of writing on martyrdom, in the Mamlūk period, that took a different line from the two authors on which my pre-modern research focuses. Jalāl al-Dīn al-Suyūṭī (CE/AH 911/1505) wrote a short tract entirely composed of hadiths about martyrdom, called *Abwāb al-sa‘ada*.²³² Like Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās, al-Suyūṭī positioned his material as traditional but unlike, those two authors, al-Suyūṭī included, within the meaning of martyrdom, a wide range of activities not limited to violence. This broader definition of martyrdom had its roots at least as early as Ibn Mubārak (CE/AH 181/797) and was in line with a large and well developed body of pre-modern Islamic Arabic writing.²³³

To those who are nervous about embarking on such an enquiry as described above, I can only repeat the insightful words of the Vice Chancellor of this university, Brother Peter Bray. In his opening remarks to this conference, Br. Peter stated, “Face in honesty the truth ... [with] deep respect and honour.” It is in this spirit that I proceed. Other panels at this conference have approached topics of peace, religious violence and reconciliation, by exploring political grievances and issues of relative deprivation. This is important work. I would add that such work should be done in conjunction with connecting present day claims, by ‘extremists’ and others, with the content and context of historical texts. The Mamluk period is appropriate for such a study, given the range of major events that occurred during it, where the relevance of martyrdom ranged from theoretical to actual.

This talk proceeds by giving some background to Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās. Next, I examine one example of these authors’ usage of apparently similar passages from the Qur’ān and hadith. We will see that this analysis suggests some subtly different emphases that are explicable with some knowledge of the social and historical context of the authors. This nuanced historical understanding will also shed light on the significance of such passages in discussions today.

A word on terminology. By pre-modern I am referring to the period between

231 A website aiming to offer “Method for Building the Personality of a Terrorist Mujahid” cites the work by Ibn al-Nawwās on which this talk partly relies as core to its reading list, which it styles a “jihadist curriculum.” See <http://www.jihadica.com/jihadi-curriculum-part-1-ideology/>, accessed 5 January 2011.

232 *Abwāb al-sa‘ada fī asbāb al-shahāda*, Lahore: Matba‘a Muhammad Wāqī’, 1891.

233 Cook, D., 2005, 33-5.

the inception of Islam and the end of the Mamluk period in CE/AH922/1517. Also, terms such as ‘extremist’ and ‘moderate’ are unsatisfactory, but I use them here. Both ‘extremist Muslims’ and ‘moderate Muslims,’ whom I have met prefer the self-designation ‘Muslim.’ Not being a Muslim, I do not see it as my task to define for Muslims who is and who is not a Muslim. For the purposes of this talk I require a marker for those that generally favour violent engagement (including martyrdom) and another for those that generally favour non-violent engagement. The terms ‘extremist’ and ‘moderate’ are good enough for this purpose, even if I would welcome a better alternative.

WHO WERE IBN AL-HĀJJ AND IBN AL-NAWWĀS

The Mālikī jurist, Ibn al-Hājj al-Fāsī Muhammad b. Muhammad b. Muhammad al-‘Abdarī al-Qayrawānī, died in CE/AH737/1336. Given that he settled in Egypt, it is perhaps understandable that most modern scholars focus on his Egyptian years. Sources, however, including Ibn Hajar’s (CE/AH773/1372–852/1449) *al-Durar al-kāmina*, Ibn Farhūn’s (CE/AH760/1358–799/1397) *al-Dībāj al-mudhahhab* and Ibn al-Mulaqqin’s (CE/AH723/1323–804/1401) *abaqāt al-awliyā’* reveal that during his life, Ibn al-Hājj spent time West, probably North Africa, before arriving in Egypt. Based on a reconstruction of the probable timings and route of his travel from West to East (via Fās, Qayrawān and possibly Tilimsān), we have no evidence to suggest that Ibn al-Hājj was involved in or near any significant fighting. My prosopographical analysis of students and teachers, with whom Ibn al-Hājj was associated, lends credence to the various biographical reports we find about him, namely that he was a faqīh, imam, exemplar, giver of ijāzas, practiser of renunciation (*zuhd*), doing good (*khayr*), piety (*salāh*) and devotion.²³⁴ Ibn Hajar states that he became known as a *shaykh* in Egypt.²³⁵ Ibn al-Hājj wrote at least two works, including the *Madkhal al-shar’ al-sharīf*, his anti-*bid’a* tract, finished in 732 CE/AH.²³⁶ This tract included passages on martyrdom at the climax of his section on jihād, the only instance in any anti-*bid’a* tract I have seen that addresses the topic of martyrdom.²³⁷

234 Ibn Farhūn, *Dībāj*, 2:322; Ibn Hajar, *Durar*, 5:507; Ibn al-Mulaqqin, *Tabaqāt*, 311. The teachers, associates and students mentioned all have links with Cairo.

235 *Durar*, 5:507.

236 The longer title for this work is variously *Madkhal al-shar’ al-sharīf ‘alā al-madhāhib al-arba’a* and K. *al-Madkhalilātānmiyat al-a’māl bi-tahsīn al-niyāt wa-al-tanbīh ‘alāba’ al-bida’ wa-al-‘awā’idallātīuntuhilatwa-bayānshānā’ihā*. Brockelmann 1938, SII:95 and 1949, II:101 and HājjiKhalifa, *Kashf*, 2:1643. The authorship of a second work, *Shumūs al-anwār wakunūz al-asrār*, a work on grammar, is uncertain.

237 The section on jihād is the joint fifteenth-largest section out of twenty-six sections in the *Madkhal*. The passages on martyrdom are at *Madkhal* 2(1):23–6, possibly extending to page 27. Ambiguity over the number of pages in the martyrdom section arises because page 27, simply

Ibn al-Nawwās (CE/AH 814/1411), more fully Ahmad b. Ibrāhīm b. Muhammad b. al-Nawwās, was a Hanafī who became a Shāfi‘ī and was known as a scholar and a mujāhid.²³⁸ Apart from the last eleven years of his life, the place with which Ibn al-Nawwās came to have been associated was Damascus. His formative years (which included his adherence to the Hanafīmadhhab) as well as possibly his change of allegiance to the Shāfi‘īmadhhab, occurred there. That is, further investigation of Ibn al-Nawwās and his networks should rightly focus on Damascus, or perhaps more broadly Syria. Following Timūr’s invasion in CE/AH 803/1400, Ibn al-Nawwās left Damascus to go to Manzila (in Egypt) during the campaigns of Timūr and later died in Damietta.²³⁹

Among Ibn al-Nawwās’ works are the *Tanbīh al-ghāfilin*, an anti-*bid’a* tract framed within the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong and the *Mashārī’ al-ashwāqilāmaāri’ al-‘ushshāq*, over a fifth of which is about martyrdom and which has been called “the most detailed jihad book available from the classical period.”²⁴⁰

Several important issues and questions arise. In their writings, Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās both cite evidence from the Qur’ān and hadīth (prophetic and other), and advocate following *sunna* over *bid’a*.²⁴¹ Also, Ibn al-Hājj had little opportunity to witness warfare and the effects of warfare on the scale that Ibn al-Nawwās did, nearly a century later. Thirdly, Ibn al-Nawwās’ possible family background in Aleppo and strong connections to Damascus, together with the origins of his student Ibn Amīr Hājj (not the same person as Ibn al-Hājj) in Aleppo, provide examples of scholarly connection between those two cities. Whatever insights arise from Ibn al-Nawwās’ and Ibn al-Hājj’s treatments of martyrdom may shed light on the Syrian intellectual scene in the late eighth hijrī century, not just the Egyptian intellectual scene in the early eighth hijrī century. Related to this, it is worth considering this analysis in context of the possibility of a Damascus

headed *fasl*, could be a conclusion to the section on martyrdom or to the chapter on jihād of which it forms a part. From the context the latter option seems likely. Inspection of manuscripts of the *Madkhal* may assist a decision on Ibn al-Hājj’s intended structure.

238 *al-Sakhāwī, Daw’*, 1:203. See also Ibn Hajar, *Inbā’*, 7:24–25 and 31. Some differences in the name for Ibn al-Nahhās occur on one manuscript of *Mashārī’ al-ashwāq* held at the Dār al-Kutub al-Qawmiya library in Cairo (catalogue no. 3486) as well as in some later sources, such as the seventeenth-century biographical dictionary by Ibn al-‘Imād.

239 *Al-Sakhāwī, Daw’*, 1:203.

240 D. Cook, 2007, 40. The three biggest sections on martyrdom in Ibn al-Nahhās’ *Mashārī’* occur within the page ranges 522–592 and 661–796. The work contains numerous additional references to martyrdom elsewhere, including some of considerable length.

241 For example, see Ibn al-Hājj’s use of the terms *ahdatha* (*Madkhal*, 2(1):24) and *sunna* (*ibid.*, 2(1):25) and his references to *hikmat al-awwal* (*ibid.*, 2(1):26) and to the importance of imitating the *salaf* who did not subscribe to *bid’a* (*ibid.*, 2(1):27). References in Ibn al-Nahhās to the practice of the messenger of God and the *salaf* occur frequently in his *Mashārī’*, as well as in his *Tanbīh al-ghāfilin*, which contains an anti-*bid’a* tract.

tradition of anti-*bid'a* works, given that Ibn Taymīya and Abū Shāma each produced works of significant length that have come down to us, on this topic. Did Ibn al-Nawwās' work on *bid'a* develop out of this tradition? (I shall reserve this question for later investigation.) Finally, why did Ibn al-Nawwās not put his passages on martyrdom in his anti-*bid'a* tract, as Ibn al-Hājj did?

MARTYRDOM, PARADISE AND GOD'S WILL

Ibn al-Hājj discusses the merit of martyrdom (*fadl al-shahāda*) with reference to six Qur'ānic verses and twenty prophetic and other traditions. Ibn al-Nawwās deals with the topic using stories, Qur'ānic material, hadīths and *āthār* reports and poems, none of which is entirely unprecedented in the context of martyrdom.²⁴² Ibn al-Nawwās generally cited a greater variety of (often divergent) views than Ibn al-Hājj and gave his own views more often. This is not purely a function of the greater length of Ibn al-Nawwās' writing on this topic. Based on my readings, Ibn al-Nawwās appears more nuanced and reflective than Ibn al-Hājj in his use of sources.

Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās agree on many aspects of martyrdom. Although reflecting the full range of meaning of *shuhadā'* and cognates, in context of *jihād* they took it to mean martyrs.²⁴³ They also affirmed its meritorious nature,²⁴⁴ its belligerent context, its not being automatic when someone dies in battle, its not being dependent on any good deeds and that one should not grieve for martyrs because they are alive with God. Both writers also cited al-Tirmidhī's (CE/AH 209/824–279/892) six characteristics of the martyr: God pardons him upon the shedding of his first drop of blood and he sees (or takes) his seat in paradise; he is protected from the pain of the tomb; he is safe from the great terror; he has a dignified crown put on his head, a crown whose jewels are greater than all in the world; he is married to seventy-two virgins; he is joined by seventy relatives.²⁴⁵ Among the topics that Ibn al-Nawwās covers that Ibn al-Hājj does not

242 *Mashāri'*, 212, 215-8, 579 and 669. See David Cook's comments on probably related Bedouin war-poem traditions, as well as patterns established by Ibn al-Mubarak and others (2007, 40 and 122).

243 *Madkhal*, 2(1):1-22 and 2(2):20; *Mashāri'*, 441-64.

244 Neither followed the *Mu'tazilī* opinion that no-one is allowed to wish for martyrdom. See Kohlberg, 1997, 206.

245 *Madkhal*, 2(1):23; *Mashāri'*, 739-740 (nos. 1149-1150). Ibn al-Nawwās also gives 'Abd al-Razzāq and Ibn Māja as sources and cites the Andalusian *Mālikī al-Qurtūbī's* (d. 1272-3) five qualities of the martyr, which al-Qurtūbī says are by contrast with the prophets: their spirits taken by God, not by angels of death; they will not be washed after death; they are buried in their clothes; they are not referred to as dead; they have the ability to intercede not just on the Day of Resurrection but on every day there is intercession. David Cook notes that this tradition is "completely unknown from other sources" than from al-Qurtūbī himself and from Ibn al-Nawwās' *Mashāri'* (2007, 42).

are suicide, the non-decaying nature of martyrs' bodies and the greater importance of dying as a martyr than winning a battle.²⁴⁶ Two themes that Ibn al-Hājj covers that Ibn al-Nawwās does not are the miracles of Muhammad and the aim of martyrdom (to enable the Word of God to be elevated).²⁴⁷

The apparent similarity I will examine here is where both Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās advocate martyrdom by citing Qur'an 47:4 and a well-known prophetic hadīth. The tradition, according to Abū Hurayra and cited by al-Tirmidhī in his *Sahīh*, lists three people who enter Paradise: a martyr, an extremely upright person,²⁴⁸ and a servant of the best worship of God²⁴⁹ Ibn al-Hājj cited the middle part of Qur'an 47:4, the part including the phrase "if it had been Allah's Will."²⁵⁰ Introducing this verse, Ibn al-Hājj wrote that everything is from God and returns to him and that if God wanted the *kuffār* to perish by other means than being killed, then he could have brought that about.²⁵¹ The tradition about the three people entering paradise appears in a separate place to Qur'an 47:4, within a section of traditions compiled by al-Tirmidhī.²⁵² In the *Mashāri'*, Ibn al-Nawwās refers to the same tradition and Qur'an 47:4, in his chapter entitled "On the Virtue of Martyrs Killed in God's Cause." His section about the certainty of martyrs going to paradise starts with Qur'an 9:111, which is well known in other genres of pre-modern Islamic Arabic writing which discuss martyrdom. Ibn al-Nawwās continues by citing from the last part of Q47:4 ("But those who are slain in the Way of Allah- He will never let their deeds be lost")²⁵³ to the end of Qur'an 47:6. In another place, Ibn al-Nawwās cites the opening words of Qur'an 47:4: "Therefore, when ye meet the Unbelievers (in fight), smite at their necks ...")²⁵⁴ The only part of Qur'an 47:4 that he excludes is the middle part. That is, Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās do not refer to the same parts of the Qur'anic verse.

Ibn al-Nawwās cites the three people entering paradise tradition with the same wording as Ibn al-Hājj uses, but surrounds it with traditions emphasising man's responsibility to make right choices, namely (for Ibn al-Nawwās) those leading

246 *Mashāri'*, 747.

247 *Madkhal*, 2(1):26.

248 'afīf muta'ffif. In this context this probably does not refer to a chaste person. See Renate Jacobi's discussion of 'iffa in the context of 'Udhri love poetry (2004, 140).

249 Al-Tirmidhī was not of the view that such hadīths implied a doctrine of non-violent, or 'greater', *jihād*. See David Cook's comparison of al-Tirmidhī's views on this with contemporaneous *Sūfīs* (2005, 36).

250 *Madkhal*, 2(1):26; 'Alī, Y., 2004, 745.

251 *Madkhal*, 2(1):26. Ibn al-Hājj may have intended "and [everything] returns to him" to have been allusive of Q2:156. The latter contains the phrase *ilayhirāji'ūna* which is similar to the phrase Ibn al-Hājj uses.

252 *Madkhal*, 2(1):24.

253 Y. 'Alī, 2004, 745.

254 *Ibid.*, 744.

to martyrdom.²⁵⁵ For example, Ibn al-Nawwās includes a prophetic hadīth related by Abū Hurayra and cited by Bukhārī, wherein a non-Muslim kills a Muslim and both go to Paradise, because the Muslim is a martyr and the killer subsequently embraces Islam, fights and is killed (so enters Paradise by virtue of also being a martyr). That is, Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās both cite this āya and this tradition in their martyrdom passages, but Ibn al-Hājj emphasises God's determination of events and Ibn al-Nawwās emphasises man's responsibility in choosing.

Given this, it is worth dwelling briefly on Ibn al-Nawwās' finely balanced discussion of suicide, which he views (in keeping with legal texts pre-dating him) as distinct from martyrdom, with only martyrdom (seen as distinct from suicide) meritorious.²⁵⁶ Ultimately, one's intention, when choosing the act, is critical. According to al-Ghazālī, if a fighter committed martyrdom "with the intention of creating terror (nikāya) in the hearts of the enemy, then it [was] acceptable."²⁵⁷ This general point is in common with Ibn al-Hājj in respect of jihād, although he did not discuss suicide and did not discuss intention in this context. Ibn al-Nahhās emphasised the role of intention and choice more than Ibn al-Hājj diCE/AH²⁵⁸ By contrast, Ibn al-Hājj emphasised a fatalistic position that martyrdom happens only if God wills it.²⁵⁹

Although there is no hint in Ibn al-Nawwās' writings that he denies the fundamental Islamic belief in the all-encompassing nature of God's will, it is not something he emphasizeCE/AH Here, as elsewhere, Ibn al-Nawwās' emphasis was on exhorting believers to right deeds. Using similar material, Ibn al-Hājj emphasised (to a greater degree than Ibn al-Nawwās) the all-encompassing nature of the will of God.

To the extent that there is a gap in emphasis between Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās on human responsibility and God's will? Two comments are worth making here. Firstly, Ibn al-Nawwās seems to have consciously emphasised man's choice in his martyrdom passages. The Risāla (message) ascribed to al-Hasan al-Barī (CE/AH 21/624–110/728), who may have been one of the earliest Qadarites, contains the teaching that God does not determine except by commanding and forbidding.²⁶⁰ Al-Hasan's concern was with man's tendency to use predestination

255 Ibn al-Nahhās adds the comment that al-Tirmidhī rated the hadīth fair (hasan) (Mashāri ; 723, no. 1127).

256 See Mashāri' pp. 535,6, 557-60 and more generally 522-565; also, 739-40.

257 D. Cook.2007, 42. See also David Cook's comment on Ibn al-Nawwās' discussion of this (ibid., 149).

258 See also Michael. Cook. 2000, 538 on modern developments and al-abarī (martyrdom not equalling suicide).

259 See earlier citations, e.g. Madkhal, 2(1):26.

260 Following Josef van Ess and Michael Cook, I am using the term Qadarite to refer to a believer in approximately the first two Islamic centuries who believed in some form or other of

as an excuse for inactivity and drift. Seven centuries later, these were the concerns of Ibn al-Nawwās whose anti-*bid'a* tract was framed by the duty of commanding right and forbidding wrong and who chose not to include his martyrdom passages in that tract. Not that I would wish to call Ibn al-Nawwās a later Qadarite (the term had long ceased to be used) or a later al-Hasanī. The factors mentioned above would point to Ibn al-Nawwās putting his passages on martyrdom in his anti-*bid'a* tract, yet he did not. My inference is that his decisions, including his different emphasis on Qur'an 47:4 and the tradition given, were quite deliberate.

Secondly, among Arabic Islamic pre-modern writings, the varying emphases, in respect of free will and predestination, had always been bound up with bigger concerns than just text. Whether the posited Qadarite undermining of the Umayyads' claims that whatever they did was decreed by God, or the way the later, related, Mu'tazilites, expounded doctrines of free will, as part of a concern for justice in the community, theological arguments were never isolated from political and social concerns. We should not suppose that those writing five and six centuries later, or indeed extremists today, be any different.

CONCLUSIONS

Ibn al-Hājj and Ibn al-Nawwās used different genres and literary styles for their material. They lived 75 years apart and hailed from different countries and scholarly traditions. For all these reasons, apparent similarities in usage of material are especially interesting. Part of their subject matter was martyrdom, something very relevant today. What have we learned and how might this help in our engagement with those who seek to take extreme violent measures, or who might be persuadable to such approaches?

My approach warns us against mining historical texts in a simplistic way. A coherent picture has emerged of two Mamluk scholars with subtly different views of martyrdom, expressed in subtly different ways. Ibn al-Hājj was a well-travelled Mālikī, with some uncompromising views and who had wide influence in scholarly circles, including involvement in at least one person changing *madhhab*. He authored an anti-*bid'a* tract including the issue of martyrdom not previously covered in that genre. He urged martyrdom without the urgency of one who had been involved in much fighting himself.

Ibn al-Nawwās had fled south following Tīmūr's incursions into Syria in 803/1400 and died in defending a raid in Alexandria. Author of a significant work on jihād and also of some scholarly influence, (perhaps only locally) he organized traditions relating to martyrdom as a major part of this jihād work. Having closely

the principle of free will (van Ess, J., 1978, 368; Michael Cook. 1981, 117). Whether or not al-Hasan al-Basrī was a Qadarite has been debated for centuries (see references and a presentation of his own views, S. Mourad. 2006, 1-2 and 164-72).

experienced two *madhhab*, from within, we find him nuanced in his treatment of varied sources and reflective in his conclusions. Rather than feeling bound by the traditional genre of anti-*bid'a* tracts to include material based explicitly on innovations seen in his day, he put it in his long *jihād* work. There, he could exhort Muslims to performance of an obligation currently neglected. We have seen that these authors also put subtly different emphases on God's determination of events, as it applied to the topic of martyrdom.

The need for social, historical and textual analysis to support these points shows that such differences are not necessarily evident on the surface of things. Add to this the above mentioned writing by al-Suyūṭī on hadith relating to non-violent martyrdom and we know that the range of views was wide.

But if our arguments are to be persuasive against extremists today, we must firstly recognise how nuanced their arguments sometimes are, drawing on centuries of precedent, in respect to Qur'an 47:4, other Qur'anic verses cited by such writers and the many traditions they also cite. We should beware writing off extremists as those who do not engage in a hermeneutical struggle. Of course, some do not engage in this way. But I have spoken to Islamic extremists in the UK who are educated, thoughtful Muslims who have become radicalize/AH They also draw on surrounding exegetical genres (which I have not had time to discuss) such as occasions of revelation. Effective rebuttal should engage with these realities, not avoid them.

From a theological point of view, Jeffrey Halverson offers some potentially helpful lines of enquiry in this regard.²⁶¹ The task of facing (as above) and responding to (as I hope others will do in future) the reality of such texts is therefore critical. The content of the texts may be difficult to hear for some. Given our shared aim, however, of resolving conflict and promoting effective dialogue among religions, it is not enough simply to present lists of texts that argue in favour of peace. We must also build awareness of other texts, including those that assume a more belligerent position.

Some will claim that text is not the whole story, and they would be right. But it is part of the story and should be included as such. Some influential pre-modern Arabic texts present martyrdom as meritorious and rooted in the Qur'an and hadith and demonstrate awareness of debates over meanings of martyrdom. In conclusion, we must come to grips with some of the more troublesome texts that exist, not isolating history from theology and connecting the modern and pre-modern, in our analysis. This historical perspective must reach back further than merely the three or four decades that precede us. The absence of any aspect of this will impoverish our attempts at building peace. In this endeavour, I am convinced that there is hope. History teaches us that interpretive methods grow

and develop. Though superficially nuanced, the extremists' analysis may be found to be shallow, their use of tradition and Qur'an, without context. As stated above, this is a task for the future.

261 2010, 144-57.

RELIGION, WAR AND PEACE:
TOWARDS AN EMANCIPATORY PALESTINIAN THEOLOGY

*Luis N. Rivera-Pagán**

ABSTRACT: This paper will deal with the geometric growth of the magnitude of destruction of modern warfare while discussing the images and symbols of violence and peace in the Abrahamic monotheistic religions, as well as the need to take critical distance from the first and to elaborate holistically the second. It will also explore the use of the sacred scriptures in the conflicts plaguing modern Palestine, with regards to concepts and ideas such as “the chosen people,” “holy land holy war” and “the city and temple of God.” The dialectical relationship between justice and reconciliation will also be investigated.

*“You who come
from beyond the sea, bent on war,
don’t cut down the tree of our names . . .
Don’t bury your God,
in books that back up your claim of,
your land over our land,
don’t appoint your God to be a mere,
courtier in the palace of the King . . .
You have your God and we have ours,
You have your past and we have ours.
Time is a river,
blurred by the tears we gaze through.”*

EXCERPT FROM SPEECH OF THE RED INDIAN

Mahmoud Darwish

A VIOLENT CENTURY

On the occasion of the first centennial of the Nobel Peace Prize in December 2001 in Oslo, Norway, the British historian, Eric Hobsbawm, gave a lecture entitled “War and Peace in the 20th Century.”²⁶² From the observations made during the lecture, we can draw the following conclusions:

The wars of the 20th century have been the deadliest and most devastating in human history. Directly or indirectly, they caused approximately 187 million deaths. The 20th century will be remembered for its wars: which include roughly 140 conflicts, including two global wars and 15 other conflicts, each of which claimed over one million lives.²⁶³ Impressive advances in military technology multiplied geometrically the lethal consequences of the many military conflicts that bloodstained that violent historical period.

The distinction between combatants and civilians, fundamental for the classic doctrines of just war, was substantially eroded. War ceased to be a conflict between armies and became a confrontation among nations. From Guernica to Hiroshima there is a fatal and tragic logical continuity that persisted in the bombardments of Belgrade and Baghdad. Civilian casualties, calculated at five percent of total deaths during the First World War, rose to approximately sixty-

²⁶² Eric Hobsbawm. “War and Peace in the 20th Century,” *London Review of Books*, Vol. 24, No. 4, 21 February 2002, 16-18. See, also, his book *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century, 1914-1991* (London: Michael Joseph, 1994).

²⁶³ Jean-Paul Hébert and Philippe Rekacewicz. “War without end,” *Le Monde diplomatique* (online), November 2010 (<http://mondediplo.com/2010/11/13war>).

six percent in the Second World War. Today, it is estimated that eighty to ninety percent of those grievously affected by military conflicts are civilians. The city, the urban core of social life, becomes a privileged target, a labyrinth of bellicose terror, a metaphor of hell. Guernica, Dresden, Tokyo, Hiroshima and Nagasaki are horrendous parables of Dante’s Hades.

Despite intense diplomatic efforts to establish a system of international structures capable of resolving political conflicts through multilateral processes of negotiation, at the end of the 20th century war persisted as a privileged instrument to effect politics by other – more aggressive – means, as Clausewitz would say.²⁶⁴ The 1928 Kellogg-Briand “Treaty for the Renunciation of War,” signed by most powerful nations of the time, formally enacted the renunciation of war as an instrument of national policy. That treaty would shortly thereafter be worthless than the paper it was printed on. As the second millennium culminated, the somber dilemma emerged as a choice between: either an inadequate multilateral system of consensus or a unilateral super power, both prosecutor and judge of world conflicts.

The tragedy of September 11, 2001 was used as a catapult to proclaim, as a doctrine of national security, preventive war of the powerful against the weak. It was not too difficult for the U. S. government, under the Bush administration, to dismantle the fragile international structures of conciliation and to assume the role of self-designated arbiter of weighty affairs belonging to all humanity. It is a posture that on occasions egregiously disregards international law, as in the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Public pronouncements of peace too easily mutate into deceptive Orwellian doublespeak to legitimize military aggression.

Hobsbawm does not emphasize, however, three crucial elements of the 20th century’s bellicose obsession: the concentration of wars in the most socially afflicted geopolitical areas of humanity, the insensibility to the pain of the “other,” and the intense ideological passion that frequently undergirds military action:

1) There was, in the 20th century, a tragic succession of national and regional wars, often classified as “low intensity,” but meant enormous human and social cost for the populations involved. The so-called “Cold War,” was accompanied by innumerable military conflicts that darkened extensive sections of the planet: Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos, Angola, Mozambique, Sudan, Jordan, Lebanon, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia, Rwanda, Sierra Leon, Algiers, Liberia, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Somalia, Iraq, Iran, Afghanistan, India-Pakistan, Bangladesh, Israel and Palestine, among other countries, were scenes of armed confrontations that caused grave harm to their population. The chilling

²⁶⁴ Cf. Karl von Clausewitz. *On War*, edited and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984); Raymond Aron, *Clausewitz: Philosopher of War* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1983).

nuclear shield seemed to preserve peace only for the Euro-Atlantic nations, which were incorporated into two big political-military powers which, that at that time, shared world domination.

The rest of humanity, already suffering the scourge of social and economic misery, remained susceptible to countless wars, incited by exogenous and endogenous causes and fed by a fierce and profitable competition in weapons trade. After the dissolution of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Treaty, peace did not prevail. War assumed other profiles: national, ethnic, cultural, and religious conflicts. In Rwanda, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Sudan and Palestine, the ethnic and cultural differences revived ancestral grudges. The hatreds did not subside; they only mutated their shades and disguises.

2) Upon examining the image of the “enemy,” an image designed to incite hatred and mass slaughter, one can discover, veiled by the discourse of vital interests and national security, a profound contempt towards the pain and affliction of those human beings particularized and disdained, due to their race, ethnicity, language, or culture. The undervaluing of the visible marks of their being facilitates their subjugation or extermination. Only thus can be explained the atrocious cruelty that ordinary human beings perpetrate against those who they recognize not as fellow beings, but as enemies, because of their different skin pigmentation, manners of praying, religious beliefs, language, national memory or cultural traditions. Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians, Hutus and Tutsis, Armenians and Azerbaijanis, Jews and Palestinians, Ladinis and Mayans, Irish Catholics and Calvinists, Sudanese Christians and Islamists, Turks and Kurds, Russians and Chechens; the list is endless, the participants submerged in an abyss of hostility that seemed to sequester and captivate their hearts and minds. Dehumanization of the adversary, who happens oftentimes to be also a neighbor, fatally poisoned human relations.

3) Ideological passion in that tragic century was a carnival of homicidal convictions. In the name of racial purity, social equality and the abolition of classes, party or proletariat control, national liberation, the global hegemony of the free market, democracy and human rights and, finally, in the name of jealous and irate gods, peoples and nations launched themselves with deadly fervor and passion into the dismal enterprise of violent destruction. This century of immense scientific and technological advances was also an epoch of intense homicidal pathos. Two centuries after the European Enlightenment proclaimed the triumph of serene rationality and Immanuel Kant foretold cosmopolitan peace and the conversion of religiosity in ethical solidarity,²⁶⁵ passions of blood and soil, irate gods and violent religious devotions, tragically bloodstained the face of humanity.

That sanguinary 20th century, marked by the memory of Auschwitz,
²⁶⁵ Immanuel Kant. *Perpetual Peace, and Other Essays on Politics, History, and Morals* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1983).

Hiroshima, the Gulag, two global wars, the cruel displacement of the Palestinian people, and hundreds of tragic conflicts, can be summarized in the famous poem of W. B. Yeats, with its plethora of religious and apocalyptic resonances, “The Second Coming.”

*“Things fall apart; the center cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere,
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all convictions, while the worst,
Are full of passionate intensity.”²⁶⁶*

TERROR IN THE MIND OF GOD

War was waged countless times in the 20th century with the paradoxical pretension of concluding the fateful legacy of endless aggressions. Declarations and actions of war were accompanied, unfailingly, by devout proclamations of universal harmony. From the Russian-Japanese war of 1904 to the recent invasion of Iraq, human massacre has sacrilegiously invoked the ideal of global peace. Indeed, it seemed to evoke Sisyphus’s fate: making war for the sake of peace.

Each scientific and technological military advance was justified, like a new sacrament of world peace, culminating in the horrifying system of nuclear destruction of human civilization, paradoxically erected to protect it. The threat of universal destruction, it was alleged, would be the perpetual guarantee of global security. M.A.D. (mutually assured destruction) was the peculiar emblem of its weird irrationality. This approach constituted a frightening bipolar strategy that curiously parodied the religious myth according to which the horror of hell leads to the threshold of heaven.²⁶⁷ The technical possibility of absolute war masqueraded as a baptismal rite of universal peace.

It began initially as a century of secular war, in which profane ideological passions announced the dawn of secular deities: the supremacy of the nation, the egalitarian society, the apocalyptical class war, movements of national liberation, globalization of the free market, the reign of universal and secret suffrage. It was the irreligious devotion to irreverent and heterodoxical altars of secularization. Religious tribulations seemed to be restricted to the intimate corners of the devout soul and the tranquility of the temples.

But the jealous and implacable gods of olden times were preparing
²⁶⁶ William Butler Yeats. “The Second Coming” (1919/1920), in *The New Oxford Book of English Verse, 1250-1950, chosen and edited by Helen Gardner* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), 820.

²⁶⁷ Luis N. Rivera-Pagán. “Nuclear Apocalypse and Metánoia: Christian Theology in the Light of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.” In *Images of the End & Christian Theology*, ed. by Roger Williamson (Uppsala, Sweden: Life and Peace Institute, 1990) 41-52.

their return in spectacular sacred confrontations. At the end of the century, pious adorers of Yahweh, Jesus Christ and Allah again raised their voices to proclaim divine wrath and evoke holy wars. The volcano of religious passions was explosively revived. Those who thought that with the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, we had freed ourselves of religious wars, having already faced, with perplexity and horror, the resurgence of sacred bellicosity.

Many theoreticians of secularism and modernity are surprised by this renewal of belligerent religious passion, what one French scholar has aptly called the “revenge of God.”²⁶⁸ Those who studied the growth, in the middle of the last century, of Arab nationalism, secular and socialist, are perplexed by the strong challenge that Islamic nativism presents in the battle for the Muslim soul; Jihad recovered. Something similar happened to Zionism. Many Zionists abandoned their socialist, democratic, and pluralistic heritage and adhered to dogmatic postures about the alleged divine promise, inscribed in the *Tanakh*, of a Greater Israel (*Eretz Yisrael*).

On the Indian subcontinent, violence among Hindus and Muslims has revived, threatening the national paradigm of a tolerant and pluralist society, once sponsored by Gandhi and Nehru. In Sri Lanka, the matrix of the violent civil war, that lasted more than two decades between Sinhalese and Tamils, is to be found not only in their ethnic and cultural differences, but also in the fact that the Sinhalese are mainly Buddhist and the Tamils, Hindus.

Even peaceful Buddhism can be a source of inspiration for sacred terror, as shown in the attack with chemical substances against the Tokyo subway system, perpetrated by the Japanese sect AumShinrikyo, in 1995. In splintered Yugoslavia, the religiosity of Orthodox Serbs and Macedonians, Catholic Croats and Muslim Bosnians and Albanians has functioned as criterion for exclusion and antagonism. Idolatry of the sacred letter, archaic millenarianisms, and the national tradition of “Manifest Destiny” converge in militant North American fundamentalism. Despite the economic opulence and military might of its nation, U.S. fundamentalist right-wing groups conjure, with devout terror, satanic axes of cosmic evil. This is the paradox of religious violence: the simultaneity of piety and cruelty, of intimate communion among the elected faithful and intense hostility against the infidels.²⁶⁹

In this postmodern epoch, for which one of its pillars seemed to be Nietzsche’s proclamation of the “death of God,” irate and devout religious passion sprung up, anew, in many latitudes and cultures. Simply put, religion matters and matters sometimes in such a perverse and passionate way that too many adherents

268 Gilles Kepel. *La Revanche de Dieu: Chrétiens, juifsetmusulmans à la reconquête du monde* (Paris: Seuil, 1991).

269 David G. Bromley and J. Gordon Melton. *Cults, Religion, and Violence* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

are willing to kill and die for their faith.²⁷⁰ As José Saramago wrote on the occasion of the September 11, 2001 attacks: “Memory has been lost of so many human beings killed the worst ways that we have been capable of inventing. Of these, the most criminal, the most absurd, the one that offends most simple reason, is that which, from the beginning of history and civilization, commands to kill in the name of God.”²⁷¹

Terrorizing and killing in the name of God is a topic that has been examined by scholars. Let us review some of the more outstanding studies.

José Casanova, in his *Public Religions in the Modern World*,²⁷² has skillfully radiographed this vigorous irruption of religious mentality in the public arena. He calls it the “deprivatization” of religion, the rejection of the secular claim to restrict religious piety and creed to the intimacy of souls and temples. In the name of God, religious institutions enter with vigor into the public arena to shape the profiles of social morality and legality, defying the secular paradigm of modernity. Radical theologies of liberation, reactionary nativism, conservative fundamentalism, or public reformist theologies, despite their profound differences, join in their common pretension of political and social protagonism.

The author recognizes the risks of that incursion in the political debate, but he also perceives in it a prophetic critique of the efforts to structure society by prioritizing calculations of economic benefit established by a financial market that excludes ethical considerations from its conceptual horizon. Casanova limits his analysis, however, to countries with relative social stability. Moreover, his study is restricted to Christian churches and organizations within Western societies, leaving out the rejuvenated versions of the crusades against the so-called “infidels”. The global conflicts that provoke the “warriors of God” remain outside his critical look.

Regina Schwartz published, in 1997, a sharp and finely written critique of the possessive and excluding dimensions of the monotheism of the three historically dominant religions of the Near East: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. Her book, *The Curse of Cain: tThe Violent Legacy of Monotheism*,²⁷³ unveils the sinister side of the affirmation “my God is the only true God.” Schwartz’s ironic perception, charged with ethical density, analyzes the risks that a metaphysics of unity and totality within Semite monotheism represent for those who adhere to different religious perspectives from the one outlined in the biblical confession of faith

270 Oliver McTernan. *Violence in God’s Name: Religion in an Age of Conflict* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2003).

271 José Saramago. “O fator Deus”, *Folha de São Paulo*, 19 de setembro de 2001, E8.

272 José Casanova. *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1994).

273 Regina M. Schwartz, *The Curse of Cain: The Violent Legacy of Monotheism* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1997).

such as in Deuteronomy 6:4, which says “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.” It is a persuasive heterodox critique of the potentially totalitarian and homicidal dimensions of the Semite monotheism to which the majority of the inhabitants of the planet belong.

In *The Battle for God*, by Karen Armstrong, presents a very suggestive analysis of the nativisms and fundamentalisms recently generated and propagated within the three great monotheistic world religions born in the Near East.²⁷⁴ The belligerence of fundamentalist Christians, Jews and Muslims, according to Armstrong, proceeds from their apocalyptic perception of finding themselves in a decisive moment of history: the final confrontation between the hosts of light and the forces of darkness. It is a reaction against a complex array of adversaries: the secularists who believe that social laws depend on collective consensus and not on sacred texts: the coreligionists who promote some type of reformist arrangement that might confine religious piety to the private sphere, and, finally, the infidels or devotees of other religions and deities. It becomes a dramatic and cosmic battle for God, on the verge, constantly, of passing from verbal offense to holy aggression. Invoking the Sharia, the Torah or the New Testament Epistles, this belligerence also furthers the repression of women and of all men and women who opt for alternate styles of sexual orientation, as the Egyptian writer Nawal El Saadawi has so finely perceived.²⁷⁵ There is a discursive continuity between dogmatic fundamentalisms, the patriarchal cloistering of women, and homophobia.

In *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence*, by the North American professor Mark Juergensmeyer²⁷⁶ studies the mental and ideological mechanisms of the transition to holy war and its conversion into religious terrorism. His exposition illuminates three key areas:

a. The retrieval, within contexts of profound social crisis and community humiliation, of images and symbols of sacred violence found in many religious traditions: divine rage, cosmic confrontation among children of light and darkness, extermination of the transgressors of divine law, exclusion of infidels, idolaters, heretics and gentiles. Devout piety, nourished by sacred “texts of terror,”²⁷⁷ generates implacable cruelty against the enemies of the faith. It is the resurrection of gloomy religious exclusivity. The “warriors of God” militarize religiosity. The enemy is now a satanic agent, who should not only be defeated but

²⁷⁴ Karen Armstrong, *The Battle for God* (New York: Knopf, 2000).

²⁷⁵ Nawal El Saadawi, *Walking Through Fire: A Life of Nawal El Saadawi* (London: Zed Books, 2002), *The Innocence of the Devil* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1994), *The Fall of the Imam* (London: Saqi Books, 2002).

²⁷⁶ *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2000).

²⁷⁷ Phyllis Trible, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).

also exterminated.

b. Action against the enemies of faith is transmuted into a “theater of terror.” It becomes a dramatic performance symbolic of a cosmic transcendent war. Divine violence produces theatrical rituals perceived as preludes of the dreadful final conflagration. The mythical apocalyptic images in many sacred texts are revived and applied to concrete historic conflicts. The events of September 11, 2001 are symbols of such a ‘theater of terror:’ an intensely dramatic attack, in the name of divine wrath, of the economic, military and political icons/idols of Western infidelity.

c. These religious fundamentalists reactivate the tradition of “redeeming martyrdom.” The struggle against secularism, infidelity, and heresy demands disposition towards the supreme sacrifice: one’s own life. The blood of martyrs is the source for eschatological renovation of creation. Timothy McVeigh in the U. S., the ultra-orthodox Zionists in Israel, the Sikh bodyguards who assassinated Indira Gandhi in India, the young men who flew the airplanes into New York’s twin towers and the insurgents who today exact a costly payment for the invasion of Iraq, assume their death as a ritual of sacrifice, a sublime consecration of divine ire against those who contaminate creation. It is the resurgence of sanguinary rituals of human sacrifice that, invested with the prestige of martyrdom and linked with images of holy war, mutates into atrocious and homicidal acts of terror. It is not, however, the traditional sacrifice that, according to René Girard’s theory of sacred violence²⁷⁸ seeks to restore social order and cosmic harmony. It is rather a sacrifice/martyrdom that seeks to unleash the hoped for universal eschatological cataclysm, a testimony of blood that pretends to purify the cosmic scene for the ultimate holocaust.

When the nation to which we offer our patriotic loyalty goes to war, too often the superficial secular facade dissolves and in many altars and pulpits pious entreaties of victory to the “God of armies” are recited, as with brilliant irony Mark Twain satirized in his poignant *Oration of War*.²⁷⁹ Praying to different and conflicting deities, variations of the dismal hymn of death and eschatological desolation are intoned, the gloomy liturgical chant of the office of darkness:

“*Dies irae, dies illa
solvetsaeclum in favilla...
Quantus tremor estfuturus,
quandojudexestventurus,
cunctastrictediscussurus.*”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ René Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, 1977).

²⁷⁹ Mark Twain, *The War Prayer* (1923) (New York: Perennial, 2002).

²⁸⁰ *The day of wrath, that day
which will reduce the world to ashes. . .
What terror there will be,*

BETWEEN TERROR AND HOPE

Yet, images of holy terror are peripheral to the great traditional religions. Central to them are rather, the reverence towards the sacred, the affirmation of human life in all its plural manifestations and the preservation of nature as divine creation and the human heart. Genuine religiosity tends to reconnect humans with God and their fellow beings, seeking lasting dignity that overcomes the anxious awareness of our ineludible transience.

This explains the strong empathy, despite their enormous doctrinal and cultural differences, that resonates so naturally among profoundly spiritual souls as Isaiah, Jesus, Muhammad, Thomas Merton, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu, the Dalai Lama, Rigoberta Menchú and Teresa of Calcutta. They concur in their delicate tenderness and prophetic passion. We face here a surprising tension: these deeply spiritual human beings incarnate compassionate sensitivity and reconciling love for humanity, yet, nevertheless, on occasions they are seized by uncontainable prophetic indignation against oppression and injustice and raise their voices to exclaim:

*“Woe to those who make unjust laws,
to those who issue oppressive decrees,
to deprive the poor of their rights
and withhold justice from the oppressed of my people,
making widows their prey
and robbing the fatherless of reckoning,
What will you do on the day
when disaster comes from afar?
To whom will you run for help?
Where will you leave your riches?”
(Isaiah 10:1-3)*

Certainly, one can find, in many sacred canonical scriptures, dark images of divine exclusion and holy violence against those who allegedly contaminate the integrity and authenticity of religious identity. Israeli punitive wars, Christian crusades, Islamic jihad, oppressive servitudes, despotic hierarchies and, intolerances of all dispositions, have claimed legitimacy through allusion to sacred texts. The “Word of God,” too often, has been used to devastate solidarity, consciences, hopes and human lives.

But, those “texts of terror” are neither the decisive nor the predominant
*when the Lord will come
to judge all rigorously!*

ones in most religious myths and symbols, forged by human imagination. Genuine religious thought, reflecting on the destiny of human history, does not emphasize the sinister symbols of Armageddon and their horsemen of terror but the hopes for human liberation and universal reconciliation.²⁸¹ Doubtless, writers of somber apocalyptic mentality, like Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins, have mined the vein of eternal terror in a series of very popular novels among fundamentalist evangelicals.²⁸² The literary and theological mediocrity of these texts does not compare with the exquisite manner in which James Joyce describes pious terror inspired by the traditional images of eternal hell in his classic, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1916).²⁸³ What is sublime tragedy in the great Irish text is reduced, by American apocalypticists, to superficial farce.

Central to most sacred writings are neither the images of terror nor the violence of a jealous and excluding God. It is rather, the essential vision of “a new heaven and a new earth” (Isaiah 65 and Apocalypse 21), where human beings can harvest wheat and eat bread in peace, reap grapes and drink wine in communal joy, build houses and sleep with tranquility. That aspiration of universal peace and solidarity reflects the deepest levels of creative religious imagination. It is an expression of the perpetual dialogue between the human mind and heart, determined to forge earthly analogies of the genesic myth of paradise and the apocalyptic aspiration of the New Jerusalem.

The thesis of an alleged “clash of civilizations,” of an unavoidable hostility between Western Christianity and Eastern Islamic cultures, so in vogue in certain north Atlantic circles²⁸⁴, is nothing but another variant of an obsolete hostility against Islam. It is ironic that the U. S. political leadership, with its allusions to total war against those who it stigmatizes as incarnations of absolute evil, reproduces the Manichean cosmic rhetoric of its enemy. Such confrontation resembles rather a “conflict of fundamentalism,” as Tariq Ali has sagaciously suggested.²⁸⁵

Those who today make “preventive war” a fundamental principle of
281 Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness, and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996).

282 The titles of those novels are *Left Behind*, *Tribulation Force*, *Nicolae*, *Soul Harvest*, *Apollyon*, *Assassins*, *The Indwelling*, *The Mark*, *Desecration*, *The Remnant*, *Armageddon*, *Glorious Appearing*, and *Kingdom Come*, published between 1995 and 2007 by Tyndale House, in Wheaton, Illinois.

283 James Joyce, *A portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (New York: The Viking Press, 1962).

284 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997). See the careful critique to Huntington's thesis by Errol A. Henderson & Richard Tucker, “Clear and Present Strangers: The Clash of Civilizations and International Conflict,” *International Studies Quarterly*, June 2001, Vol. 45, No. 2, 317-338.

285 Tariq Ali, *The Clash of Fundamentalisms. Crusades, Jihads and Modernity* (London: Verso, 2002).

the foreign policy of the world's most powerful nation utilize in their public declarations a discourse that demeans the alleged enemies of their nation as adversaries of God. Thus, worldly conflicts acquire cosmic dimensions, dressed up as the mythical perpetual confrontation between the children of light and those of darkness. Epochs vary, but the greed for profit and the ambition of power and prestige perpetuates its strategic camouflage as religious devotion.

The complex internal diversity of Islam contradicts the distorted image of the Islamic enemy that some apologists of a new crusade project. Moreover, in its central canonic traditions, Islam shares ethical perspectives not very different to those of the followers of the Gospels or the Talmud.²⁸⁶ A misleading thesis, outlined recently by some Christian scholars, claims that a notable difference between Christianity and Islam is rooted in the absence of a sacred language in the first, while the sacred canon of the second is unfailingly linked to Arabic. From that distinction they infer an essential difference between Christianity and Islam, attributing to the latter rigidity and inflexibility with respect to cultural diversity.²⁸⁷ These are sophisticated subterfuges that preserve the hostile posture toward Islam fatally spanning the history of Western Christianity. Those apologists forget the excessive frequency with which in Christianity and Judaism the idolatry of the sacred letter has become abominable and repressive for those who do not share its precepts. This is something already judiciously pointed out in the 17th century by Baruch Spinoza, that splendid heterodox Jew,²⁸⁸ stigmatized by both church and synagogue, of whom Jorge Luis Borges, with admiration, writes:

*“A man engenders God. He is a Jew
With saddened eyes and lemon-colored skin;
Time carries him the way a leaf, dropped in
A river, is borne off by waters to
Its end. No matter
From his disease, from nothing, he's begun
To construct God, using the word. No one
Is granted such prodigious love as he:
The love that has no hope of being loved.”²⁸⁹*

286 Meaningful in this context are the books of Anouar Majid, *Unveiling Traditions: Postcolonial Islam in a Polycentric World* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000); *Freedom and Orthodoxy: Islam and Difference in the Post-Andalusian Age* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004); *A Call for Heresy: Why Dissent Is Vital to Islam and America* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

287 Lamin O. Sanneh, *Translating the Message: The Missionary Impact on Culture* (Orbis Books, 1989).

288 Baruch Spinoza, *Tractatus theologico-politicus* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989).

289 Jorge Luis Borges, “Baruch Spinoza,” in *Selected Poems*, edited by Alexander Coleman (New York: Viking, 1999), 383.

The idolatry of the sacred letter has led often to the execution of women considered witches (Exodus 22:18 “Do not allow a sorceress to live”) or of non-virginal newlyweds (Deuteronomy 22:20-21). Men with social power and violent souls read those texts, with passionate devotion, before proceeding to cut down afflicted feminine lives. Too many of the victims of religious inspired man-made aggression happen to be women.²⁹⁰ Many believers today cite dogmatically canonical texts to justify the persecution of homosexuals with a cogitative logic very similar to what their ancestors wielded against the abolition of slavery or the emancipation of women. That idolatry of the sacred letter has been the inspiration of holy wars, crusades, and Jihads. Countless human beings have been sacrificed on the altar of jealous, excluding, and implacable deities.

Global peace requires intercultural and interreligious dialogue and the cessation of bellicose and degrading confrontations. Otherwise, we run the risk of globalizing sacred violence. It behooves us to forge bridges and channels of dialogue, mutual recognition, reciprocal respect, and bonds of solidarity among distinct human religiosities. Unfortunately, this year, 2011, began with a sinister act of terror: the murderous attack, on New Year's Eve, against the Coptic Orthodox church of Saint Mark and Pope Peter, in Alexandria, Egypt, a city so dear to the Christian historical memory.

Nothing less than the future of humanity is at stake. It is essential today to promote a creative dialogue among the three monotheistic religions that consider the city of Jerusalem a sacred metropolis. Is it too utopian to dream that someday Jerusalem, with its so tragic and bloody history, will be a symbol of coexistence in peace and harmony between adorers of distinct incarnations of the sacred? Is it feasible to imagine that not far from the Wailing Wall could one day be erected a monument to peaceful accord among Christians, Jews and Muslims, in celebration of the end of holy wars, crusades and Jihads? Is it illusory to think a future in which finally Jerusalem, the sacred city that during millenniums has witnessed so much violence and devastation, honors the etymology of its name, “city of peace?”

Maybe the time has arrived to forge what the Catholic theologian Johann Baptist Metz has called the “ekumene of compassion,” an inclusive project of solidarity with human affliction that transcends the frontiers of Christianity.²⁹¹ By compassion we understand here not merely indulgence or tolerance, but “to suffer with,” “to share the passion of,” the identification and solidarity with those who

290 Cf. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, “Woes of Captive Women: From Lament to Defiance in Times of War,” in *Lament: Reclaiming Practices in Pulpit, Pew, and Public Square*, edited by Patrick Miller and Sally A. Brown (Louisville, KY: Westminster - John Knox Press, 2005), 121-134.

291 Johann Baptist Metz, “La compasión. Un programa universal del cristianismo en la época del pluralismo cultural y religioso,” *Revista Latinoamericana de Teología*, año xix, núm.55, enero - abril 2002, 25-32.

suffer the dreadful “mystery of iniquity” (II Thessalonians 2: 7, KJ). Regarding diverse cultural and religious traditions, the challenge is to overcome mere tolerance and to learn to estimate, appreciate, and relish, in the words of Rabbi Jonathan Sacks, the dignity of difference.²⁹²

The Latin root of tolerance suggests that its semantic range is limited to endure difference. What it is needed today, however, in our globalized and multicultural world is to value and celebrate cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity. It is the only way of abrogating modern racism, whose most disastrous expression was the infamous phrase of Carl Schmitt, Nazi political and ideological philosopher: “Not all who have human faces are human beings.”²⁹³

Is such ecumenism of compassion a dream, an illusory utopia? Maybe it is, but human beings are constituted by the nobility and boldness of their dreams and aspirations. I have always preferred *Utopia*, by Thomas More, to *The Prince*, by Niccolò Machiavelli, both texts written during the early birth of Western modernity. When faced with the lethal pragmatism of the realists forged in Machiavelli, Hobbes and Clausewitz, on the one hand, and the apocalyptic atrocities of bellicose fundamentalisms on the other, is it not preferable to dream about the passionately erotic and utopic instant in which “justice and peace kiss each other,” as prayed and evoked in the biblical psalm (Psalm 86:10)? Christians should never forget that the Jesus portrayed in the Gospels never construed the adherence to dogmas, ecclesiastic hierarchies, or ritual prescriptions as the decisive tenets of his message. He was rather heterodox in his predilections, preferring the solitary and compassionate Samaritan to the pious Levite or the devout priest (Luke 10:29-37). He went so far once as to tell some religious leaders of his time that “the prostitutes are going into the kingdom of God ahead of you” (Mt. 21: 31)! His radical challenge calls us to assume full solidarity and compassion with those who Franz Fanon called “the wretched of the earth.”

When religious leaders proclaim holy war against those whom they stigmatize as “adversaries of God,” we should remember the sensible warning of John Locke: “I ask how shall any one distinguish between the delusions of Satan, and the inspirations of the Holy Ghost?”²⁹⁴ The central core of most religious sacred texts evokes a spirituality of peace and justice, of compassion and solidarity towards humanity. Precisely that spirituality might be the necessary foundation for a humane and compassionate culture of peace.²⁹⁵ Regarding

292 Jonathan Sacks, *The Dignity of Difference: How to Avoid the Clash of Civilizations* (London: Continuum, 2002).

293 Quoted by Claudia Koonz, *The Nazi Conscience* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 1-2.

294 John Locke, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1690), bk. iv, chap. 19, par. 13.

295 Cf. Elise Boulding, *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000) and Anaida Pascual Morán, *Acción civil no violenta: fuerza de*

doctrinal differences, we should pay attention to the norm affirmed by Umberto Eco in his dialogue/debate with Cardinal Carlo Maria Martini: “in conflicts of faith, Charity and Prudence should prevail.”²⁹⁶ Only thus can men and women of faith place limits on the voracity of those who seek to continue our sinister legacy of death and destruction. Only thus can those who today live between terror and hope intone the biblical hymn of peace:

*“How beautiful on the mountains
Are the feet of those who bring good news,
Who proclaim peace!”
(Isaiah 52:7)*

TOWARD A PALESTINIAN EMANCIPATORY THEOLOGY

The tragic plight of the Palestinian nation since the 1948 and 1967 armed victories, military occupation, and territorial expansions of the newly created state of Israel,²⁹⁷ should be of prime consideration for any theology with emancipatory horizons,²⁹⁸ that cares about the sufferings and aspirations of oppressed peoples and victimized communities. As the eminent African American author Alice Walker has recently written, after visiting the Gaza strip: “whatever has happened to humanity, whatever is currently happening to humanity, it is happening to all of us. No matter how hidden the cruelty, no matter how far off the screams of pain and terror, we live in one world. We are one people.”²⁹⁹ The Palestinian situation brings to the fore several crucial theological issues that should not be avoided.

4) Liberation theologies all over the world have focused on the biblical *Exodus* story as a key emancipatory paradigm. However, they have usually neglected the sinister dimensions of its accompanying story: the conquest of Canaan. Palestinian theological hermeneutics is able to foreground this usually silenced ominous dimension of the *Exodus* story, both in its biblical context – the atrocious rules of warfare that prescribed forced servitude or annihilation for the peoples encountered in Israel’s route to the “promised land” (Deuteronomy 20: 10-17) - and in the present historical circumstances wherein the Palestinian people are harshly mistreated by the state of Israel. In the biblical process of invading and conquering Canaan, the indigenous communities were perceived as potential

espíritu, fuerza de paz (Río Piedras, Puerto Rico: Publicaciones Puertorriqueñas, 2003).

296 Carlo Maria Martini and Humberto Eco, *Incosacrede chi non crede?* (Roma: Liberal Atlantide, 1996), 80.

297 Edward W. Said, *The Question of Palestine* (London: Routledge, 1980) and Ilan Pappé, *A History of Modern Palestine: One Land, Two Peoples* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

298 Cf. Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, “God the Liberator: Theology, History, and Politics,” *In Our Own Voices: Latino/a Renditions of Theology*, edited by Benjamin Valentin (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2010), 1-20

299 Alice Walker, “Overcoming Speechlessness,” *Tikkun*, September/October 2009, 35-36.

sources of ethnic, religious, and ethical contamination. The Hebrew tribes thus claimed divine right to displace, expel, and even exterminate them (“as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall annihilate them . . . just as the Lord your God has commanded”). A similar discriminatory attitude can be found in the process of reconstructing Jerusalem, according to Ezra 9-10 and Nehemiah 13: 23-30, resulting in the cruel expulsion of foreign wives and their children. These are truly, in Phyllis Trible’s apt phrase, texts of terror. Sad resonances of this lethal and discriminatory outlook are found in the writings of some Spanish theologians and jurists during the sixteenth-century Iberian conquest of the Americas,³⁰⁰ as well as in the proclamations of many contemporary Zionists who quote those biblical texts to legitimate their aspiration for a Greater Israel (Eretz Yisrael), sanitized from any possible “contamination” by Palestinians. We are, thus, obliged to consider the darker side of the Exodus biblical narratives.

5) From the painful memory of the *al-nakba* (the “great catastrophe”), Palestinian theology is able to highlight the biblical themes of exile, displacement, dispersion, and captivity, the crucial tragic historical matrixes of the biblical scriptures, as meaningful loci of theological enunciation and reflection.³⁰¹ It is from the tragic sufferings entailed by national defeat, devastation, the destruction of the holy places, and exile that the biblical sacred scriptures emerge, fueled by the need and desire to remember, to preserve the memory of God as the ultimate source of liberation and of the desperate but obstinate hope for a peaceful return to the lost homeland. Contrary to other ancient Middle East sacred scriptures, written by courtly scribes and characterized by their laudatory paeans to the national authorities, the Bible arises from the tragic experience of exile and captivity and evokes the flaws and misdeeds of the Israelite and Judean monarchs. They are sacred scriptures precisely because they surge and arise from a displaced people, who remember with deep sadness the devastation of their homes and places of worship and their forceful displacement, but that do not surrender their divinely inspired hopes for restitution. It has been an expatriate Palestinian, Edward Said, who with his typical eloquence and literary elegance, has described, like perhaps nobody else since the biblical psalmist, the plight of the exiled: “Exile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted.”³⁰² Exile, an important

300 Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, *A Violent Evangelism: The Political and Religious Conquest of the Americas* (Louisville, KY: Westminster - John Knox Press, 1992).

301 See Daniel L. Smith-Christopher, *A Biblical Theology of Exile* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002).

302 Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), 173.

feature of human historical experience and a crucial source of the biblical sacred scriptures, becomes in Palestine a crucial philosophical and theological concern. In many Palestinian hearts and souls the nostalgic sadness inscribed in Mahmoud Darwish’s verses resonate with uncanny familiarity:

*“There is no place on earth where we haven’t pitched our tent of exile
Longing is the place of exile. Our love is a place of exile.
Our wine is a place of exile
and a place of exile is the history of this heart.
How many times have we told the trees
of the place to wipe off the invader’s mask
so we might find a place? . . .
Poetry is a place of exile.”*

I SEE WHAT I WANT TO SEE.

6) Palestinian theologians are able to respond critically to the employment of the Hebrew Bible to justify Israel’s policies of appropriation and exclusion, under the pretext that Palestine is the land promised by God to its biblical ancestors, the Patriarchs. After all, it is impossible to evade or sideline the prophetic core of the Hebrew sacred scriptures, with their indissoluble linkage of the knowledge of God and the deeds of justice (Jeremiah 22: 16) and its emphasis on solidarity and compassion with the most vulnerable sectors of society - the poor, the widows, the fatherless, the strangers (Jeremiah 7: 4-7) – as the main expression of faithful obedience to God’s will. How can the Hebrew Bible be quoted to justify the aggressive military actions of the actual state of Israel when those same sacred scriptures constantly rebuke and condemn the biblical Israel due to its unjust policies and oppressive actions? Compare the condemnation of king Jehoiakim in II Chronicles 36: 5 (“He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD his God”) with Jeremiah’s invective against the same monarch’s social policies: “your eyes and heart are only . . . for practicing oppression and violence” (Jeremiah 22: 17). Both take place under the shadow of the ominous Chaldean threat, perceived by the scribes in charge of narrating the history of Israel as a divine punishment against that nation’s oppressive social structures (II Chronicles 36: 14-17). Of the thirty-nine kings of Israel and Judah mentioned in the Bible, only one, Josiah, is considered to do “what is right in the sight of the LORD” (II Kings 22: 2). All the biblical narratives, be they juridical, historical, or prophetic, strongly express God’s disavowal of Israel’s endemic structures of social injustice and, therefore, call their hearers/readers to engage in resistance against them. The Bible is always a perilous minefield for all those who attempt to

use it to legitimize domination or exploitation.³⁰³ As a character of one of Margaret Atwood's novels asserts: "The Bible is... an incendiary device: who knows what we'd make of it, if we ever got our hands on it?"³⁰⁴

7) The theme of the "chosen people of God" has been a classic theological quandary. The first biblical confession of faith begins thus: "A wandering Aramean was my ancestor; he went down into Egypt and lived there as an alien. When the Egyptians treated us harshly and afflicted us, by imposing hard labor on us, we cried to the Lord, the God of our ancestors; the Lord heard our voice and saw our affliction, our toil, and our oppression" (Deuteronomy 26: 5-7). Who are the genuine descendants of that wandering Aramean, ancestor of a divinely "chosen people"? In Palestine, two views regarding this matter clash: Some Zionists allege that the Jews, wherever they are, and whatever their ethnic, cultural or linguistic heritage (Ashkenazi or Sephardic; Yiddish, Russian, or Arabic speakers), constitute the elected nation endowed with the divinely decreed rights (mainly the possession of Palestinian lands). Israel's laws of return are based upon this premise. The already-quoted biblical first statement of faith, however, does not emphasize that alleged biological ancestry or lineage.³⁰⁵ Its crucial point is that there was an enslaved, subjugated, and endangered community and that God, after paying compassionate attention to the sorrowful cries of that mistreated people, liberated them. The concept of "chosen people of God," therefore, does not refer to an absurd DNA genetic testing, but to reading the signs of the times in terms of oppression and liberation. It evokes a hermeneutic of oppression and liberation.³⁰⁶

8) In its long and tragic history Jerusalem has been both blessed and cursed due to its claim as holy city by the three Abrahamic, monotheistic religions (Judaism, Islam and Christianity). For centuries they have considered the city, and its surroundings, a "holy land," sanctified by the divine presence. As the Israelite writer Amos Elon has splendidly described, the intense religious feelings evoked by Jerusalem (where the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, the Wailing

303 Richard A. Horsley (ed.), *In the Shadow of Empire: Reclaiming the Bible as a History of Faithful Resistance* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2008); Walter J. Houston, *Contending for Justice: Ideologies and Theologies of Social Justice in the Old Testament* (London: T & T Clark, 2006); Norman K. Gottwald (ed.), *The Bible and Liberation: Political and Social Hermeneutics* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1983).

304 Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 103.

305 See the trenchant critique of the Zionist blending of religion, the concept of a (chosen) people, and land by the Israeli scholar Shlomo Sand in his much-debated book *The Invention of the Jewish People* (New York: Verso, 2009).

306 Cf. Marc H. Ellis, *Toward a Jewish Theology of Liberation* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2004); Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 1989); Hamid Dabashi, *Islamic Liberation Theology: Resisting the Empire* (London and New York: Routledge, 2008).

Wall, and the Dome of the Rock are located), has transfigured it, in the active imagination of innumerable believers, pilgrims, holy warriors, and crusaders, into a dangerous, cruel, and bloody land, like no other city in human history.³⁰⁷ Many Jews, Christians, and Muslims have invoked the famous sorrowful words of the nostalgic biblical hymn to the lost city: "How could we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land? If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy" (Psalm 137: 4-6). A magnificent lament, indeed! But let us not forget the revengeful last verses of that paean to the holy city, when the lament is transmuted into vindictive and cruel hatred: "O daughter Babylon, you devastator! Happy shall they be who pay you back what you have done to us! Happy shall they be who take your little ones and dash them against the rock" (Psalm 137: 8-9). Paradoxically, the sacred nature attributed to significant areas of Palestine has been a source of violent and sanguinary confrontations. Do we have the spiritual and intellectual resources to reconfigure the debate in such a way that the concept of "holy land" might become a basis for dialogue, reciprocal respect, understanding and solidarity among the three great monotheistic religions? As the Palestinian *Kairos*, so eloquently affirms: "Jerusalem is the heart of our reality. It is, at the same time, symbol of peace and sign of conflict . . . Jerusalem, city of reconciliation, has become a city of discrimination and exclusion, a source of struggle rather than peace" (*A moment of truth: A word of faith, hope, and love from the heart of Palestinian suffering*, December 15 2009, 1.1.8). The fate of the diverse peoples inhabiting and sharing Palestine might depend upon the success or failure of that endeavor. Yehuda Amichai's poem devoted to Jerusalem, *If I forget thee, Jerusalem* faithfully mirrors the nostalgia that too many Jews, Muslims, and Christians deeply feel for their beloved holy city:

*"If I forget thee, Jerusalem,
Let my blood be forgotten.
I shall touch your forehead,
Forget my own,
My voice change
For the second and last time
To the most terrible of voices –
Or silence."*

9) Palestinian theology, maybe more emphatically than other liberation theologies, emphasizes the intertwining of justice and reconciliation, truth-telling and forgiveness, prophetic denunciation and peacemaking annunciation.

307 Amos Elon, *Jerusalem: Battlegrounds of Memory* (New York: Kodansha International, 1995).

The ultimate goal of the prophetic denunciation is neither the destruction nor the humiliation of the enemy, but the fulfillment of Isaiah's prediction of a new creation, a world free of bellicose violence and devastation, where the conflicting communities, Palestinian and Israeli, Jewish, Christian, and Muslim, "shall build houses and inhabit them; they shall plant vineyards and eat their fruit. They shall not build and another inhabit; they shall not plant and another eat... They shall not labor in vain, or bear children for calamity; for they shall be offspring blessed by the Lord - and their descendants as well..." (Isaiah 65: 21-23) This a dream shared by many Israelis and Palestinians, be they Jews, Muslims, Christians or non-believers. A dream of peace and reconciliation. It is the aspiration of two peoples with severely wounded memories: the memory of the *shoah* and the memory of the *al-nakba*. This hopeful aspiration promises to become a main tenet of creative Palestinian theologies.³⁰⁸ As the Palestinian *Kairos* concludes: "We say that love is possible and mutual trust is possible. Thus, peace is possible and definitive reconciliation also. Thus, justice and security will be attained for all" (9.1). This sacred vision is also shared by many of us, who from Gentile lands, hope and pray for peace and reconciliation among peoples of faith and good-will in Palestine.³⁰⁹

“Stripped of my name and identity?
On a soil I nourished with my own hands?
Today Job cried out
Filling the sky:
Don't make an example of me again!
Oh, gentlemen, Prophets,
Don't ask the trees for their names
Don't ask the valleys who their mother is
From my forehead bursts the sword of light
And from my hand springs the water of the river
All the hearts of the people are my identity
So take away my passport!”

PASSPORT
Mahmoud Darwish

308 Naim Stifan Ateek, *Justice and Only Justice: A Palestinian Theology of Liberation*, chapter 7 (“A Dream of Peace”), 163-175; Mitri Raheb, *I Am a Palestinian Christian* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1995), conclusion (“I Have a Dream”), 112-116. See also Naim Stifan Ateek, *A Palestinian Christian Cry for Reconciliation* (Maryknoll, New York: Orbis Books, 2008).

309 Luis N. Rivera-Pagán, “Desafíos teológicos del conflicto palestino-israelí,” *Signos de Vida*, no. 55, marzo de 2010, 6-9.

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MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS IN NORWAY CONFRONTING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN A JOINT STATEMENT

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ABSTRACT: In October 2009, the national Norwegian Contact Group between the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway launched a joint statement against domestic violence. Together with it was a plan for further joint action to engage with the problem of violence in close relationships. This paper will present the statement, explain the motivation behind it and give a brief overview over the discussions the statement generated among the members in the Contact Group. Further, the paper will address current challenges of analyzing the dynamics between various interpretations of Christian and Islamic canonical texts and violent practices in close relationships, and discuss the responsibilities of the Christian and Muslim faith communities in this respect. Relating to this specific problem in a Muslim-Christian dialogue setting, however, carries a significance of its own, as the issue of domestic violence in present public discourse in Norway sometimes is placed primarily as a problem limited to Muslim groups only, thus fostering prejudices against Muslims in general. This happens regardless of the fact that domestic violence and violence against women committed by men (in close relationships) occurs within all religious, cultural and social groups in current Norway. This creates a horizon for dialogic action in this field that calls for integration between the struggle against domestic violence and the deconstruction of stereotypical negative images of Islam and Muslims in the Norwegian context.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- ❖ The Contact group between the Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway (1993 –
- ❖ Consists of religious leaders from the Church of Norway and the Islamic communities, students, academics, men and women, all appointed by the Church and the Islamic council
- ❖ Meet regularly, four times a year
- ❖ Creates space for building institutional and personal trust and mutual relations

THE CONTACT GROUP:

- ❖ Institutional, official dialogue where reports from the work is published on a website
- ❖ <http://folk.uio.no/leirvik/Kontaktgruppa.htm>
- ❖ Addresses contextual issues concerning the parties:
 - Muslim minority rights
 - Human rights issues
 - The understanding of Islam in Norwegian society
 - International issues

THE USE OF STATEMENTS AS PROCESSUAL WORK

- ❖ Other statements from the contact group:
 - On the right to religious conversion (2007)
 - Addressing Christians and Muslims congregations to cooperate for understanding in local communities (2001)
 - Denouncement of the violence against Christians in Pakistan (2009)
 - Say no to violence in the family and in close relationships (2009)

THE PROCESS BEHIND THE STATEMENT ON DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

- ❖ Addressing the theme: Discussions about 'gender justice' ended up with a decision to address the problem seen as most urgent, violence against women in close relationship

- ❖ Discussions went on through several meetings, not because the issue in itself caused disagreements, but to discuss the following:
 - How to address the issue
 - What kind of obligation for the faith communities would the statement entail
- ❖ When the Contact group agreed on a text (a working group made the drafts), the Imam committee of Norway, The Islamic council and the Church of Norway's committee on ecumenical and international work sanctioned the text.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN NORWAY

- ❖ The police definition: violence, or being threatened with violence from partner, parent, siblings, children. Reported cases are increasing from 2008.

27% of Norwegian women have experienced violence committed by partner or former partner (2005. www.folkehjelp.no)

The shelters for victims of domestic violence ('krisesentre') reports 1861 women and 9 men seeking shelter in 2009.

SAY NO TO VIOLENCE! JOINT STATEMENT ON VIOLENCE IN THE FAMILY AND IN CLOSE RELATIONSHIPS BY ISLAMIC COUNCIL OF NORWAY AND CHURCH OF NORWAY COUNCIL ON ECUMENICAL AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

- ❖ Introduction: Since 1993 a Contact Group between Islamic Council of Norway and Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of Church of Norway has met to discuss various issues concerning religion and society. The group works for greater understanding between Christians and Muslims and seeks to further the contribution of these religions to the community at large.
- ❖ For a long time the Contact Group has discussed issues concerning gender and equality. The dialogue has shown that both Christians and Muslims regard human integrity and freedom from violence as fundamental starting points for approaching these issues.
- ❖ Nevertheless, violence in families and in close relationships is a serious social problem in Norwegian society. Suffice to say that one out of four women is exposed to violence in the family and in close relationships. Therefore, in our capacity as religious communities, we want to contribute

positively to the struggle against the violence in family and in close relationships, both by our attitudes and our actions.

- ❖ The use of statements as processual work
- ❖ Other statements from the contact group:
 - On the right to religious conversion (2007)
 - Addressing Christians and Muslims congregations to cooperate for understanding in local communities (2001)
 - Denouncement of the violence against Christians in Pakistan (2009)
 - Say no to violence in the family and in close relationships (2009)
- ❖ The process behind the statement on domestic violence
- ❖ Addressing the theme: Discussions about 'gender justice' ended up with a decision to address the problem seen as most urgent, violence against women in close relationship
- ❖ Discussions went on through several meetings, not because the issue in itself caused disagreements, but to discuss the following:
 - How to address the issue
 - What kind of obligation for the faith communities would the statement entail
- ❖ When the Contact group agreed on a text (a working group made the drafts), the Imam committee of Norway, The Islamic council and the Church of Norway's committee on ecumenical and international work sanctioned the text.
- ❖ Domestic violence in Norway
- ❖ The police definition: violence, or being threatened with violence from partner, parent, siblings, children. Reported cases are increasing from 2008.

27% of Norwegian women have experienced violence committed by partner or former partner (2005. www.folkehjelp.no)

The shelters for victims of domestic violence ('krisesentre') reports 1861 women and 9 men seeking shelter in 2009.

- ❖ **Say NO to violence! *Joint Statement on Violence in the Family and in Close Relationships by Islamic Council of Norway and Church of***

Norway Council on Ecumenical and International Relations

- ❖ Introduction Since 1993 a Contact Group between Islamic Council of Norway and Council on Ecumenical and International Relations of Church of Norway has met to discuss various issues concerning religion and society. The group works for greater understanding between Christians and Muslims and seeks to further the contribution of these religions to the community at large.
- ❖ For a long time the Contact Group has discussed issues concerning gender and equality. The dialogue has shown that both Christians and Muslims regard human integrity and freedom from violence as fundamental starting points for approaching these issues.
- ❖ Nevertheless, violence in families and in close relationships is a serious social problem in Norwegian society. Suffice to say that one out of four women is exposed to violence in the family and in close relationships. Therefore, in our capacity as religious communities, we want to contribute positively to the struggle against the violence in family and in close relationships, both by our attitudes and our actions.
- ❖ As Christians and Muslims, we believe that man and woman are created equal, and that none of them has a right to exercise violence against the other. In unambiguous terms we especially denounce violence against women since women are most exposed to domestic violence. We believe that both of our religions can provide sources of inspiration and counsel that can lead to a better life filled with love and mutual respect. We believe that the home should be a safe and pleasant place for children to grow up – without violence. Last but not the least; we strongly condemn any misuse of the teachings of our religions in order to legitimize violence in the family or in close relationships.

ANALYSIS OF THE STATEMENT AND THE PROCESS

- ❖ Process: long term work, requesting patience and commitment from many people
- ❖ Formally sanctioned not only by the contact group, but by the faith communities themselves
- ❖ The latter increases the chances of obtaining an ownership of the statement for the parties, and provides legitimacy

HOW IS THE PROBLEM ADDRESSED IN THE STATEMENT?

- ❖ Using gender inclusive language: the victim and the victimizer can be both men and women
 - Reference to the discourse on gender equality
 - Recent attention in Norway about men being victims of domestic violence
- ❖ Using positive language about the Islamic and the Christian traditions as resources
 - To use the traditions to legitimize domestic violence is stated as misuse
- ❖ That women are overrepresented in the statistics over victims of domestic violence is emphasized
- ❖ But there is no analysis or addressation of gendered power relations that may cause this
- ❖ The Christian and Islamic religious traditions are taking the responsibility to act against the problem, but not through addressing internal gendered power structures or interpretation of canonical texts that may circulate in the communities legitimizing domestic violence

AVOIDING SIGNIFICATION OF RELIGIOUS DIFFERENCES – POSSIBLE CAUSES

- ❖ Empirically, domestic violence happens across social, religious, cultural boundaries.
- ❖ Islam is often portrayed as a religion that causes oppression of women in Norwegian public discourse (Cf. Orientalism).
- ❖ Some researchers have pointed out that there exist an image of the Muslim man as victimizer and the Muslim woman as victim (Thorbjørnsrud 2003).
- ❖ To avoid a confirmation of this biased, stereotypical view on Muslims, a common statement should not reflect on religious differences

GENDER INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE AND FOCUS – THE DILEMMA

- ❖ Gender differences downplayed to avoid fixation on the roles of men and women?
- ❖ Or to avoid a confrontation with gendered power structures?
- ❖ Challenge: To avoid essentialism based on gender, and at the same time

relate to the problems created by gendered power structures

INCLUSIVE, SHARED LANGUAGE ABOUT BOTH RELIGION AND GENDER

- ❖ The text is a negotiated text, and it has one important message: To provide legitimization for stopping domestic violence in the name of the two traditions
- ❖ It was established to reach out in a broad sense among the Norwegian public and inside the faith communities
- ❖ The purpose was not to establish self-reflection or address gendered power structures

HOW WAS THE STATEMENT RECEIVED IN NORWEGIAN PUBLIC?

- ❖ Little was reported by the media
- ❖ The Norwegian shelter organization for victims of domestic violence were positive, and wanted copies of the statement to distribute
- ❖ The statement was published on the webpages of the Contact group, Islamic Council of Norway and the Church of Norway

CONCLUSIVE REMARKS

- ❖ The Muslim-Christian dialogue through the Contact group related to the issue of domestic violence and made a clear statement against it.
- ❖ The perspective was inclusive regarding religious and gender differences, and did not address specific causes or challenge gendered power structures in the religious communities or in the Norwegian society at large.

This means the statement can be embraced by many, across different analyses on gender and power. It also means that it is more of a practical document than a thorough analysis of the problem of domestic violence, the appearance of it in Muslim and Christian faith communities, and the religious traditions' roles in how domestic violence is interpreted/allowed/legitimized.

FROM INVESTMENT TO DIVESTMENT: NON-VIOLENT RELIGIOUS
PROTEST AND THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH IN AN HISTORICAL
CONTEXT

Dr. Cheryl Riggs

ABSTRACT: In 1095, Pope Urban II preached a call to arms against what he described as the unjustified conquest of the Holy Land by Muslims. Many such religious justifications of violence are found in the historical record; yet, one should question whether any of these conflicts have a single, religious motivation. In our post modern world, where global economic inter-dependence and political power are irrevocably intertwined, religious zealots and fundamentalists often (wittingly or unwittingly) fail to realize that theological justifications for religious violence are fed by mixed motivations, and the most powerful inducement to conflict is frequently economic. Money matters. Money sustains conflict. Divestment threatens the status quo and eliminates the cost-benefit of conflict. Soon the perpetuation of violence comes at too high a price to pay. As a result, the opportunity to then intellectually divest from the religious rhetoric that sustains violence becomes possible. This paper will briefly point out historical examples of mixed motivations in “just war” conflicts, focusing on economic incentives for conflict and the role of divestment in conflict resolution. The current social justice movement by the United Methodist Church in the U.S. to divest from companies that support Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories will be the case study in this paper, focusing on the processes involved in divesting for conflict resolution.

In 1095, in response to the Byzantine Emperor's request for assistance, Pope Urban II preached a call to arms to Christian Europe against what was described as the unjustified conquest of the Holy Land by Muslims. Examining that call from a more critical and analytical point of view, scholars have revealed the mixed motivations behind this holy war: Europe's economy was bereft with landless knights who shattered the peace with incessant fighting and who needed lands and wealth to sustain their social status.

In addition, the Eastern and Western Christian faith communities had recently severed, and their mutual excommunication revealed a reciprocal animosity toward their conflicting theologies and practices. It was in Europe's interest to insert itself into the activities of the lucrative eastern Mediterranean seaboard with its trade and pilgrim routes, and in the best interest of the papacy not to support Byzantium's exclusive claims to the conquered territories. This call to violence, justified by religious ideology, invested Europeans with the perceived right to conquer and occupy lands far from their European homeland.

Many such religious justifications of violence are easily found in the historical record; yet, one should question whether any can be shown to have purely religious motivation. Historical analysis demonstrates all are fraught with mixed motivations that also invest antagonists with wealth, power and/or property. In these cases, two motivations are most prominent: the investment in extremist religious ideology and the investment in economic gain that supports that extremism. In our post-modern world, where global economic inter-dependence and political power are irrevocably intertwined, religious zealots and extremists often (wittingly or unwittingly) participate in the violence, which is fed by these mixed motivations.

Although religious extremism is employed to initially justify violence, it is economic investment that helps sustain it. It is essential to realize then, that economic divestment removes at least one of the mixed motivations that engineers inter-religious violence, because it removes one of the most powerful inducements to continuing conflict. Money matters. Money sustains conflict. Eliminate the cost-benefit of conflict and soon businesses no longer will participate in the economy of violence; because no one will fund it. It then becomes more feasible to challenge the religious rhetoric; one can intellectually question the ideology behind the violence and expose it for what it is: exploitation of religion for political or economic gain. Although the most zealous antagonists will continue to adhere to the ideology of religious extremism and support the economics of violence to achieve their goals, arguments calling for more rational behaviors can find their voice, with the end goal being to re-invest in the ideology of true religious beliefs. Since religious conflict feeds on the two investments; ideological and economic, the process of divestment must then be two-fold:

ideological and economic.

History shows us that ideological conflict begins with two kinds of disputes; the first being the differences of opinion, quarrels and controversies that are resolved within legal codes and diplomatic circles. The antagonists recognize a higher authority; they accept the oversight of a governing body or give consent to arbitration, mediation or negotiation – because there is an expectation of resolution, especially when the antagonists recognize the cost-benefit of ending hostilities for mutual gain. Out of such negotiations, treaties are made, boundaries marked and violent conflict avoided or ended.

The second kind, however, includes radical religious conflict. In zealot or extremist religious ideology, core beliefs are seen as inviolate, absolute and without compromise and, most importantly, mandatory for and imposed on everyone; even on those outside of the faith. Adherents become players in a cosmic battle for Truth, truth with a capital "T." There can be no compromise, no negotiation, and no resolution for mutual benefit. It is an "all or nothing" scenario with little hope for resolution as the two sides entrench in ideological incompatibility. Defense of these core beliefs becomes paramount, negating all other aspects of the religion, and violence becomes an acceptable and justifiable vehicle to achieve success. This is most easily described as the conflict between good and evil; it is the ultimate conflict in which all the antagonists see themselves as fighting for the good and their adversaries, consequently, as defending evil. They demonize the "other." When people emotionally and psychologically invest in this ideological absolutism, it becomes virtually impossible to change their minds with the facts. Facts don't matter, belief and faith matter, the defense of Truth matters; this is why conflict resolution is so difficult when dealing with religious ideology. And, where they invest their emotion, they invest their wealth. They also become easy prey for those who reap financial gain from conflict and who, consequently, are motivated to continue hostilities.

In the case of Pope Urban II and the crusades, Europeans were not only promised forgiveness of sin (essential for eternal life) and opportunity for new wealth but also Christian control of the Holy Land. It is essential to understand Christian affinity for the land of Jesus' birth in order to understand crusader mentality; it is this affinity that is the ideological basis for the era of the crusades, as well as current empathy by many American Christians toward Jews in the Arab-Israeli conflict. Urban rallied the faithful with the rhetoric of war by creating an emotional and psychological investment in the idea that God wills the Holy Land be kept in the hands of pious Christians. This is echoed by some American Christians today, who believe the Holy Land ought to be in the hands of only Jews and Christians. Urban's religious rhetoric was clear; let me relate one section of the account of Robert the Monk, who may have attended the meeting:

*“From the confines of Jerusalem and the city of Constantinople a horrible tale has gone forth and very frequently has been brought to our ears, namely, that a race from the kingdom of the Persians, ...has invaded the lands of those Christians and has depopulated them by the sword, pillage and fire; ...When Pope Urban had said these and very many similar things in his urbane discourse, he so influenced to one purpose the desires of all who were present, that they cried out, [Deus Vult, Deus Vult] ‘It is the will of God! It is the will of God!’”*³¹⁰

The ideology of Christian crusade is rampant with inflammatory religious zeal, and this is one of the less obnoxious vitriolic rants from the sources. We see, from the various versions of Urban’s Clermont speech, a justification for violence that echoes what scholars have come to call the just war theory.³¹¹ Pope Gregory VII argued a justification of violence, war, for the defense of the faith and in the service of the Church.³¹² Those who attended the Clermont speech would have recognized the appeal to the religious authority of Augustine and accepted the call to arms. Urban now added the enticement of the remission of sin for the combatant, going beyond the original defense argument. The investment of life and limb now included eternal salvation, as well as the expectation of wealth and

³¹⁰ Robert the Monk, *Historia Hierosolymitana* in Dana C. Munro, “Urban and the Crusaders,” *Translations and Reprints from the Original Sources of European History, Vol 1:2*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1895), 5-8. There are four versions of the speech and one letter from Urban referencing the speech; for the other three versions of the speech and Urban’s letter see: Fulcher of Chartres: *Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium* in Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, 1, pp. 382 f., trans in Oliver J. Thatcher, and Edgar Holmes McNeal, eds., *A Source Book for Medieval History*, (New York: Scribners, 1905), 513-17; *Gesta Francorum* in Rosalind M. Hill, ed. and trans., *Gesta francorum et aliorum Hierosolymitanorum: The Deeds of the Franks* (London: 1962); Archbishop Balderic of Dol in August C. The First Crusade: *The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants* Krey,, (Princeton: 1921), 33-36; Guibert de Nogent, *Historia quae dicitur Gesta Dei per Francos* in August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton: 1921), 36-40; Urban II, Letter of Instruction, December 1095 in August C. Krey, *The First Crusade: The Accounts of Eyewitnesses and Participants*, (Princeton: 1921), 42-43. All references can be found at *The Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>. (Accessed 11/1/2010).

³¹¹ Augustine, *Concerning the City of God*, book 1, chapter 26, Translated by Henry Bettenson, Penguin Books (New York, 1972) p37. See also book 1, chapter 21, p. 32, “. . . the commandment forbidding killing was not broken by those who have waged wars on the authority of God,” and see book 29, chapter 7, pp. 861-862 and see chapter 12, pp. 866-870 where he argues that peace is the ultimate purpose for a just war.

³¹² For a general overview, see “The Crusades,” in *New Catholic Encyclopedia, Second Edition, Volume 4*, pp. 405-412, 2003. (Catholic University of America, Washington, D. C., 2003).

land.

It was not much of a leap to recognize that Christian control of the Holy Land had an economic as well as a religious reward. Chroniclers had Urban explaining to the crowd that Europe was fraught with conflict and its accompanying devastation.³¹³ Urban knew full well that removing the warring and criminal elements from European society would have positive results in Europe in terms of local peace and economic gain. The Crusades could accomplish what the “Peace of God” and “Peace of the Church” could not.

I have spent some time on this particularly dark period in Christian-Muslim relations as a counterpart to the reality of violence in the 20th and now the 21st century. The Arab-Israeli conflict does not affect Jews and Muslims only, but also Christians of all theological backgrounds. Armenian, Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic and a variety of other Christian sects and Protestant denominations have populations in the Holy Land, who witness and experience the hostilities by virtue of proximity. And, contrary to what most American Christians believe, not all Israelis are Jews and not all Palestinians are Muslim. Many American Christians, outside of the Holy Land, identify with and are sympathetic to the multiple sides of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, but most are woefully ignorant of the complex political and economic issues required to make informed decisions on how to end it. They reduce the cause of hostilities to a religious conflict between Muslims and Jews, creating a false dichotomy. And because of their affinity toward Judaism, they choose to support Israel.

In addition, some American Christians have an ideological commitment to the Holy Land based on what some call Christian Zionism. The rhetoric of Christian Zionism influences the broader American Christian perception of conflict in the Holy Land. It is particularly persuasive among Evangelical Christians, especially those in the exegetical tradition of dispensationalism. These Christians follow a rapture theology that calls not only for the establishment of a Jewish state but for the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem, an event which will herald the apocalypse. In summary, through a series of events, the true church will be taken up into heaven while the Devil will rule the earth during a period of tribulation, ushering in the *parousia*, (the second coming of Jesus) when Christ will reign for a millennium.³¹⁴ (Of course variations on this theme abound across

³¹³ Fulcher of Chartres: *Gesta Francorum Jerusalem Expugnantium* in Bongars, *Gesta Dei per Francos*, 1, pp. 382 f., trans in Oliver J. Thatcher, and Edgar Holmes McNeal, eds., *A Source Book for Medieval History*, (New York: Scribners, 1905), *The Medieval Sourcebook*, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/sbook.html>. (accessed 11/1/2010).

³¹⁴ See Floyd Elmore, «Darby, John Nelson,» *Dictionary of Premillennial Theology, Mal Couch, ed.*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1996); Paul Enns, *The Moody Handbook of Theology* (Chicago: Moody, 1989); and Craig A. Blaising and Darrell L. Bock, *Progressive Dispensationalism* (Wheaton: Victor, 1993) and Charles C. Ryrie, *Dispensationalism* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1995).

the spectrum of apocalyptic theologies.) Because of this eschatology, there are vast numbers of Christians who have been taught to read the troublesome book of Revelation in just this way.³¹⁵

Israel's triumph over any and all adversaries is the harbinger for the *parousia*. The Israeli occupation and the violence it sustains, therefore, are signs from God that the *parousia* is not far off. Just as Pope Urban II justified European invasion of the Holy Land in 1095 as God's will, a section of today's Christians endorse Jewish Zionism and the resurrection of what they believe to be the ancient state of Israel, without reservation and with the avocation of violence, if need be. Dispossession of Palestinian property is an acceptable necessity to achieve the ancient boundaries of the Davidic kingdom. Violent retaliation by suicide bombers and missile launches from Palestinian territories are seen as justifications for extending Israeli occupation in the name of security and defense. One hears the call of "*Deus vult! Deus vult!*" echoing down the centuries as antagonists justify continuing violence.

In contrast to these apocalyptic groups, many Christian, Jewish, and Muslim faith organizations focus on non-violent resolutions to the Arab-Israeli conflict—and the Palestinian homeland question, in particular. Many American Christian groups have been slow to respond to the reality of Palestinian land loss; others have identified it but with little more than committee or institutional programs to study the humanitarian problem. The protracted responses have resulted in the plaintive call by Palestinian Christians for the end of occupation in the December 2007 *Kairos Palestine Document*.³¹⁶ When pleas for peace and justice from faith groups do materialize, they have been largely ignored by those in positions of power and authority and have essentially failed to make any lasting change. In most cases, calls for Israeli policy changes result in alarmist responses, such as charges of anti-Semitism. Reactionary rhetoric creates a confused narrative among rank and file church membership and feeds negative media coverage. Ignorance of the historical facts juxtaposed with both Christian affinity toward Judaism and the misguided understanding of which policies constitute a secure Israel, clouds and paralyzes American Christian faith communities' responses.

Some Christians look to historical precedents of boycotts and divestment as templates for resolving the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Mahatma Gandhi's divestment against the British salt tax began with the march to the sea to produce Indian salt, and later his homespun cotton program helped to bring Britain's policies of exploitation and occupation to an end in the early 20th century.

315 Note the popularity of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins' *Left Behind* book series.

316 *Kairos Palestine Document*, December 11, 2009 (Bethlehem, Palestine). For the full text in English and Arabic: http://oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other_ecumenical_bodies/kairos_palestine_document.html. (accessed 10/28/10).

Boycotts of bus-lines and products helped a culture of racism and discrimination shift towards one of civil liberties in the United States, under Martin Luther King Jr. and Caesar Chavez. The first boycott against Israel was at its inception; in 1948 the Arab League voted to deny any economic trade with Israel and later to boycott companies that did trade with Israel, neither of which was sustained.³¹⁷

Economic divestment, however, came into its own as a major deterrent to human rights violations during the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. Divestment moves beyond boycotts, in that stockholders divest company assets, in order to achieve social change through threatening a business' bottom line. This modern non-violent approach to conflict resolution centers on anti-racist ideology, which was successful in South Africa, in part because it followed anti-racism movements in the United States and Europe during the 1960s. Apartheid ended for a variety of reasons but for American Christian faith communities, the idea of economic divestment on social justice grounds initiated an ideological divestment toward African policies that mirrored the civil rights movement in the United States. For companies economically invested in South Africa, adverse publicity, boycotts and divestment against racist ideology proved too overwhelming to ignore. As a result, protest divestment came of age.

The most famous Christian who has used the apartheid analogy for the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is former U.S. President Jimmy Carter (a Southern Baptist), whose book *Palestine, Peace Not Apartheid* has drawn both criticism and praise.³¹⁸ Progressive Christians, like President Carter, hope to challenge the romanticized perception of "Israel, right or wrong," reminiscent of the 1960's American mentality of "America, love it or leave it," and replace it with a more reflective and non-politicized view of actual conditions. Divestment of this Christian, idealized view of the state of Israel should result in a re-investment in the faith communities' social justice doctrines that demand that both Israeli and Palestinian policies be consistent with international sanctions and human rights laws.

This process began in the United States with multiple studies, calls for travel and fact finding and taskforce organization among American Christians. Ideological divestment may follow these educational processes, opening opportunity for a re-investment in an ideology that is less romanticized and

317 Martin A. Weiss, "Arab League Boycott of Israel." *Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, Order Code RS22424, April 19, 2006. This document, however, points out that there was little to no oversight and trade does exist between league members and Israel.*

318 Jimmy Carter, *Palestine, Peace Not Apartheid* (New York, 2006). See also: Jimmy Carter, *We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land* (New York, 2009). It is interesting to note that Southern Baptist members are among some of the most vehement Christians against divestment. Yet, within the United Methodist Church membership you have both Hilary Clinton and George W. Bush, whose political polarity demonstrates the significant challenges to United Methodists achieving consensus on any politically related policies.

politicized and more reflective of actual conditions. Economic divestment then can be the result of this paradigm shift, as well as a catalyst for re-investing in the new paradigm of a fair and equitable solution.

Since 2000, several faith communities have turned to these historical models of divestment to challenge Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory. I will look at two examples of American Christians struggling with the divestment issue, first and briefly, the experience of the Presbyterian Church, and secondly, in greater depth, the United Methodist Church, both of which have experienced significant resistance to divestment within their general memberships.³¹⁹

The Presbyterian Church has had multiple policies and statements on the Holy Land passed at its General Assembly, which is held every two years.³²⁰ The General Assembly is the governing body of the Presbyterian Church; it sets policies and doctrines for the entire membership of approximately 2.3 million throughout 11,000 congregations. Support for economic divestment, however, has received a mixed review and movement toward divestment has been controversial. In 2004, the General Assembly voted in favor of a phased selective divestment in multinational corporations operating in Israel.³²¹

But by 2006, The General Assembly commissioners, by a vote of 483-28 (1 abstention), adopted a recommendation to reconsider the previous decision on divestment action after significant negative feedback emerged from a variety of denominational venues. Those voting in favor of reconsideration argued that engaging in dialogue with participating companies through the “Mission Responsibility through Investment Committee” was preferable to divestment. Many among the general membership of the Presbyterian Church and a significant number of commissioners to the 2006 General Assembly argued that divestment should be the last, not the first, resort taken.³²² Former CIA Director James

Several U.S. Christian denominations are investigating divestment with various results, including the Church of Christ, The Evangelical Lutheran Church, The Mennonites, The Episcopalians and other members of the World Council of Churches.

For an academic assessment of the Presbyterian Church’s initial decisions and a look at the resistance to them see Duncan L. Clarke, “Mainline Protestants Begin to Divest from Israel: A Moral Imperative or “Effective” Anti-Semitism?” in *The Journal of Palestinian Studies* Vol.35, No. 1 (University of California Press, 2005) 44-59.

216th General Assembly action, <http://oga.pcusa.org/ga216/news/ga04121>. (accessed, 11-2-10)

217th General Assembly actions, <http://oga.pcusa.org/ga217/newsandphotos/ga06124.htm>. Access to each news report on actions of General Assemblies from 2004 to 2010 can be found at <http://oga.pcusa.org/generalassembly/past.htm>

Woolsey, a Presbyterian himself, warned the General Assembly that divestment placed the Presbyterian Church “clearly on the side of theocratic, totalitarian, anti-Semitic, genocidal beliefs.”³²³

By 2008, commissioners to the General Assembly were still divided. Item 11-01, which passed 504-171 (7 abstained), merely affirmed the 2007 Amman call of the World Council of Churches for a “two state” solution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, “a shared Jerusalem, human rights of refugees and occupied people [and] a call to resist extremism,” among other points.³²⁴ But economic divestment was not supported.

Most recently, in July of 2010, the General Assembly again fell short of the numbers required to pass economic divestment but the commissioners did accept major recommendations from the “Middle East Study Committee,” some of which were: encouragement for all Presbyterians to study the *Kairos Palestine Document*, a call on the U.S. government to make aid to Israel contingent upon Israeli observance of international law, a call for Israeli and Egyptian governments to limit blockages to military equipment and the establishment of a Middle East monitoring group to review all companies doing business with Israel, which were found to negatively impact Palestinian property – especially Caterpillar. The General Assembly also re-affirmed previous General Assembly policies and statements, including a call for immediate cessation of violence from all parties, the right of the state of Israel to exist within U.N. recognized borders (1967 borders), the cessation of occupation of Palestinian territories, a freeze on the expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and acquisition of Palestinian land in East Jerusalem and shared status for Jerusalem. The General Assembly’s commissioners, however, remained steadfastly against a strong statement in favor of economic divestment.³²⁵

The outcome of the 2010 General Assembly was to essentially educate and monitor, with additional appeals for action on human rights violations. The Presbyterian experience is exemplary of a movement toward ideological

Rabbi Rudin quoting James Woolsey in “Decision to Rescind Divestment Was Sound,” *Coalition for Responsible Peace in the Middle East* website (July 5, 2006) <http://c4rpme.org/bin/articles.cgi?Cat=divestment&Subcat=presbyterian&ID=491>. (accessed 11-2-10)

218th General Assembly, <https://oga.pcusa.org/ga218/news/ga08141>. (accessed 11-8-10). For the text of the Amman Call, access: <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/wcc-programmes/public-witness-addressing-power-affirming-peace/middle-east-peace/the-amman-call.html>

The General Assembly approved the legislation in a vote of 558 in favor, 119 against, 7 abstain. For the full document see: <https://pc-biz.org/Explorer.aspx?id=3179&promoID=126>

divestment without the incentive of economic divestment behind it. The General Assembly hopes that dialogue with companies such as Caterpillar will put enough pressure on the corporate offices to withdraw their participation in Israeli occupation policies, thereby rendering the need for stockholder divestment moot.

Similar to the Presbyterians, the United Methodist Church has a democratic decision making process. Local churches elect representatives to regional conferences, which take action on resolutions for local and regional needs, under the chairmanship of a bishop (there are fifty-seven regions in the United States, called Annual Conferences). Total membership in the United Methodist Church is approximately 12 million, with 8 million in the United States and the remainder in Europe, Asia and Africa.³²⁶ These annual conferences elect representatives to a governing body called the General Conference, which meets every four years and is presided over by an episcopal council composed of the bishops of each region. It is only the General Conference that can set doctrine and adopt resolutions that are binding on the whole United Methodist Church and determine policy for or action by general boards and agencies, e.g. divestment actions by the Board of Pensions. It is at this General Conference that the Book of Discipline, the doctrinal and policy statements for all United Methodists are written and edited.

Annual Conferences often send resolutions on behalf of their region to the General Conference; in addition, regional and general boards and agencies submit resolutions on behalf of special concerns related to that committee. Since the General Conference only meets every four years, policy development can be somewhat slow and seemingly unresponsive.

Similar to other religious entities, the United Methodist Church has a history of using economic divestment to achieve social justice.³²⁷ In the 1980's, the United Methodist Church's General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits divested from seventeen companies doing business in South Africa; this divestment was worth about \$77 million. The General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits currently is the largest clergy pension fund in the United States. Additionally, like the Presbyterians and other Protestant groups, United Methodists face similar ideological challenges in the movement toward economic divestment in companies whose products are employed in Israeli occupation policies.

For United Methodists, as with other Christians, ideological investment in

³²⁶ It should be noted that the United Methodist Church, which is the combined membership of Methodists and Evangelical United Brethren, is a member of the World Methodist Council made up of 76 Protestant denominations in the Wesleyan tradition. World membership is approximately 75 million. The World Methodist Council meets every five years.

³²⁷ As does the World Methodist Council. This paper, however, will concentrate on United Methodists under the jurisdiction of the General Conference.

Israel's success as a state is tied to Christian/Jewish heritage, Christian guilt over the atrocities of WWII, and the anti-Semitism that afforded no port in the storm for Jews fleeing holocaust Europe in the mid-20th century. United Methodists support security for Israel, which leads some to conclude that any economic divestment is somehow a challenge to that security. Although there have been periodic concerns over Middle East violence and Israeli occupation expressed in regional annual conferences and previous General Conferences, only by the 2000 General Conference was there a call for action and debate, regarding treatment of Palestinians and loss of Palestinian land. As a result, a statement was adopted in support of the United Nation's resolutions 242 and 338, that ended with this conclusion:

“United Nations Resolutions on the Israel-Palestine Conflict

...Therefore, be it resolved, that The United Methodist Church calls upon the United States, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, to accept the authority of Security Council resolutions and abide by Resolutions 242 and 338, as well as all other relevant Security Council resolutions, that provide a framework for bringing this conflict to a just and permanent end.”³²⁸

In the following years, 2001 and 2002, the United Methodist Council of Bishops issued two statements, encouraging further study and non-violent resolution of conflict. In the 2001 statement, entitled “Middle East,” the bishops called on the U.S. government to “use all measures possible, including the cutting off of all funding to the Israeli government, to ensure that...human rights violations cease, building of roads for the purpose of dividing the Palestinian lands through the West Bank and Gaza cease [that] no more Jewish settlements [be] built in occupied territories [and that] all home demolitions cease.”³²⁹ In addition they called for Israelis and Palestinians to cease hostilities, for United Methodists to become educated on the issues and for all congregations to host interfaith conversations to “foster deeper understanding of the issues.” In 2002 the bishops issued a statement entitled “Precious Stones, a Statement on the Middle East Crisis,” which was a response to a delegation tour of the Holy Land, where visiting bishops saw first-hand the devastation brought on by violence. The

³²⁸ The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004, Item 323: United Nations Resolutions on the Israeli-Palestine Conflict (The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, 2004) pp. 811-812.

³²⁹ The United Methodist Council of Bishops, “Middle East,” May, 2001. https://www.umhltf.org/United_Methodist_Church.html#Council_of_Bishops_Statements.

bishops called for an immediate cease-fire in Israel and Palestine, the end to suicide bombing, immediate withdrawal from all occupied territories, a halt to destruction of homes and buildings and Palestinian infrastructure, and a call for international intervention in conflict resolution, as well as requests for continued prayer and education.³³⁰

At the following General Conference in May of 2004, delegates passed resolution 312 (by a vote of 877 for and 19 votes against), in opposition to Israeli settlement in Palestinian lands, submitted by the Middle East Network of United Methodists, a subcommittee of the Methodist Federation for Social Action.³³¹ The resolution celebrates the diversity of religious expression in the Holy Land and recognizes that the three Abrahamic faiths share an affinity for the holy city of Jerusalem. It calls for cessation of violence and military occupation, and respect for human rights under international law.

The resolution also states, in part, that the United Methodist Church opposes “continued military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem, the confiscation of Palestinian land and water resources, the destruction of Palestinian homes, the continued building of illegal Jewish settlements and any vision of a ‘Greater Israel’ that includes the occupied Palestinian territories and the whole of Jerusalem and its surroundings.”³³² The resolution goes on to call for the “Palestinian Authority and all Palestinian religious leaders to continue to publicly condemn violence against Israeli civilians and to use nonviolent acts of disobedience to resist the occupation and the illegal settlements.”³³³ It ends with a United Methodist call for peace advocacy, such as individuals calling for the U.S. administration and Congress to implement the stated proposals of the resolution, providing financial support to the Palestinian people through contributions, supporting international peace and human rights organizations and promoting interfaith discussion on both peace and justice.

Significant work by several annual conference groups and taskforces in the U.S. resulted in a variety of annual conference resolutions that supported boycotts and divestment. In 2005, the Virginia Annual Conference passed a resolution entitled “Act for Peace in the Middle East,” calling for:

1. The United Methodist Board of Pensions to review its investments and undertake a process of phased, selective divestment from any multinational corporations profiting from illegal demolition of Palestinian homes, destruction

330 *The United Methodist Council of Bishops, “Precious Stones,” May, 2002. https://www.umhltf.org/United_Methodist_Church.html#Council_of_Bishops_statements.*

331 *For the entire text, see: The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004, Item 312, pp. 787-790. The resolution was voted out of Committee with 78 votes in favor, 0 votes against and 26 not voting.*

332 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004, Item 312, p.789.*

333 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church 2004, Item 312, p.789.*

of Palestinian economy and confiscation of Palestinian land, with adherence to United Methodist guidelines which require a period of information gathering and evaluation of alternative means of intervention before undertaking a boycott.

2. [calling for]...the United Methodist General Board of Church and Society to initiate a study of the feasibility of advocating a wider form of phased, selective divestment from any multinational corporations profiting from...illegal and violent activities.”³³⁴

Also in 2005, the New England Annual Conference passed legislation designated “Divestiture of Funds that Support Israeli Occupation,” calling for a committee to initiate investigation into companies that financially benefit from Israeli occupation and report its findings to local churches and investment managers. The committee’s responsibilities included establishing and maintaining a company list, contacting and engaging the company in discussions and requesting a change in policy concerning the company’s relationship with Israeli occupation. If no company policy change was forthcoming after sixty days, the company was to be placed on a list for possible divestment. Individual churches within the New England Conference were encouraged to review their portfolios and consider divestment from any companies on the divestment list.³³⁵

In 2006 the New York Annual Conference passed a resolution mirroring the Virginia “Act for Peace in the Middle East” of 2005. Also in June of 2006, the California Pacific Annual Conference enacted “Seeking Peace and Pursuing Justice in the Holy Land,” calling for local churches in the conference, the Cal-Pac Conference Board of Pensions and United Methodist Foundation and others to review and identify companies that profit from sales or services that might harm either Palestinians or Israelis and to divest their holdings.

In addition, the resolution called for support of other religious entities that were divesting at that time, such as the Presbyterian Church (whose decision to rescind did not take place until July 2006) and the General Synod of the United Church of Christ. Finally, the resolution was to be forwarded to the General Board of Church and Society for “submission to the 2008 General Conference in order to call upon the United Methodist General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits and the General Council on Finance and Administration and other general church agencies with investment responsibilities to review and identify companies that profit from sales or products or services that cause harm to Palestinians and

334 *To see the text of the Virginia Annual Conference resolution and other annual conference resolutions, access: https://www.umhltf.org/UMC_Annual_Conf_Resolutions.html. (accessed 11/1/10).*

335 *Resolution 204, http://www.neumc.org/console/files/oFiles_Library_XZXL CZ/Res-204-2005_2JTPGT8M.pdf (accessed 11/5/10). The New England Annual Conference is significantly involved in the divestment movement; for a review of all their activities access the New England Annual Conference Website, Justice and Social Action, Divestment Task Force at <http://www.neumc.org/pages/detail/375>.*

Israelis and divest from these companies.”³³⁶

By the time the 2008 General Conference was convened, significant groundwork, in response to these previous annual conference resolutions, was achieved to counteract General Conference divestment legislation. Similar to the Presbyterian experience, anti-divestment groups gained momentum against the resolutions sent to the General Conference for action. Six annual conferences and several groups, including the Methodist Federation for Social Action, submitted resolutions, each calling for selective divestments from companies whose products or services helped to sustain occupation policies.³³⁷ Several of these were submitted as “Proposed Non-Disciplinary Legislation,” (e.g. not changing the discipline of the Church) that essentially called for general church boards and agencies to act on divestment from companies that support occupation. More conservative United Methodists held sway over key committees within the General Conference that first review and recommend all resolution legislation, resulting in their impeding divestment legislation from reaching the floor of the full conference for vote.

For example, the Northern Illinois conference submitted an amendment to Resolution 312 (which had in 2000 passed “Peace and Justice in the Holy Land”), suggesting a phased and selective divestment, following sufficient time for dialogue with identified companies. In addition, the amendment included a request that these companies review their Codes of Business Conduct and publish a public report. Additionally, a clear call was made for transparency with the General Board of Pensions placing the results on its website. This amendment was referred to the committee on Finance and Administration and was rejected 50-0. It was forwarded to the floor with unrelated legislation but was rejected by the delegates, 826-38. Some proponents of divestment have suggested that this and other similar resolutions purposefully were submitted to the Finance and Administration Committee instead of the General Board of Church and Society Committee (the more appropriate group since it normally deals with all peace and justice resolutions) in order to guarantee a negative outcome.

Although there was significant resistance to resolutions calling for denominational divestment from companies economically invested in the Israeli occupation, the 2008 General Conference overwhelmingly passed a resolution calling for prayerful consideration for personal and board and agency divestment from companies in Sudan by a vote of 710-83.³³⁸ This clearly demonstrates

336 *California-Pacific Conference of the United Methodist Church, Seeking Peace and Pursuing Justice in the Holy Land*, https://www.umhltf.org/UMC_Annual_Conf_Resolutions.html. (accessed 11/18/10).

337 For an overall review of General Conference 2008 divestment actions, access: <http://www.unitedmethodistdivestment.com/GenConferenceActions.html>.

338 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2008. Item 4072 Divestment*

that the United Methodist Church does not have an aversion toward divestment policies. It does, however, reveal a significant concern by General Conference voters toward divestment in companies dealing with Israeli policies in relation to Palestinian lands.

The General Board of Church and Society introduced a more focused resolution that would have divested from the Caterpillar Corporation (“Divestment and Caterpillar”). The resolution was withdrawn when Caterpillar presented a declaration of intention that its products were not to be used in actions that violate human rights and that the company would participate in good faith dialogue with faith communities.

In the end, a final resolution running contrary to the idea of divestment was overwhelmingly passed (839 in favor, 44 opposed) which stated that the United Methodist Church should advocate for peaceful settlement through negotiation and diplomacy rather than through these methods of violence and economic coercion.³³⁹ This final resolution perhaps best demonstrates the reluctance of the General Conference to entertain any strong legislation on economic divestment in companies dealing with Israeli occupation. Divestment continues to be viewed as a threat to the security of Israel by many and attempts to enact resolutions prohibiting economic investment in occupation companies is identified as coercion.

At the same time, there is evidence of the slow process of ideological divestment from the “Israel, right or wrong” mentality. By a vote of 528-273, the 2008 General Conference amended the previous 2000 General Conference statement on U.N. resolutions 242 and 338, to include all recent relative U.N. resolutions and the decisions of the International Court of Justice, most specifically the conclusion that the wall annexing Palestinian lands is illegal.³⁴⁰ Similar kinds of recommendations accepted from the Middle East Study Committee at the 2010 General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church demonstrates some progress is being made toward an ideological shift within mainline American Christianity.³⁴¹

and Sudan (The United Methodist Publishing House, Nashville, 2008) pp. 598-599.

339 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2008. Item 6075 Saying No to Violence in the Middle East*, pp. 836-837.

340 *The Book of Resolutions of the United Methodist Church, 2008. Item 6074 United Nations Resolutions on the Israel-Palestine Conflict*, pp. 835-836.

341 *In preparation for the upcoming General Conference in 2012, many United Methodist conferences are introducing legislation for upcoming 2011 annual conference meetings, with the intent to have multiple submissions of the same resolution for divestment.*

CONCLUSION:

Putting aside the more extreme Christian Zionist positions, what we learn from the Presbyterian and United Methodist experiences is that American Christian communities are at a crossroads, regarding ideological and economic divestment. Many Christians equate the sporadic attacks on Israel by a minority of Palestinians as representative of a larger Arab rejection of the right of Israel to exist. This raises significant alarm regarding Israel's security and undergirds Christian affinity for a "Greater Israel" solution. On the other hand, human rights violations, including confiscation of territory, disparate military reactions, and embargos of basic needs supplies by Israel offend Christian social justice doctrines. It is this dichotomy of ideological investments that logjam divestment strategies in the governing bodies of these churches.

The difficulty of ideological and economic divestment, in the case of the Israeli occupation, is amplified when reviewing United Methodist Church's doctrinal statements on socially responsible investments. The Book of Discipline emphatically states that

*"...all general boards and agencies, including the General Board of Pension and Health Benefits...shall [emphasis mine], in the investment of money, make a conscious effort to invest in institutions, companies, corporations, or funds whose practices are consistent with the goals outlined in the Social Principles; and shall [emphasis mine] endeavor to avoid investments that appear likely, directly or indirectly, to support racial discrimination, [or] violation of human rights...The boards and agencies are to give careful consideration to shareholder advocacy, including advocacy of corporate disinvestment."*³⁴²

Yet, even with these strong statements for social justice, there remains a reluctance to take the logical step toward economic divestment, in the case of Israeli occupation, because the decision making process is hampered by historical ignorance and the Islamophobic rhetoric found within Western society. Many Americans think all Palestinians are Muslim. In addition, unlike the apartheid precedent, there is no anti-racial/anti-Islamophobic cultural shift to aid in changing attitudes concerning Islam within the United States. In fact, since 9-11-2001, anti-Muslim rhetoric and hatred has been on the rise.

At the same time, however, there is movement among progressive Christians to divest from the ideology of Israel as a resurrected state who perceives itself as justly occupying lands given in the ancient times by God.

This ideology cannot be sustained in the face of a growing understanding of the

³⁴² Neil M. Alexander, *Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church 2008*, (Nashville, 2008), paragraph 716, p. 492-493.

reality on the ground. The loss of credibility on the international stage, calls for advocacy of a Palestinian homeland by stockholders and appeals for social justice and condemnation of violations of human rights are becoming too burdensome for companies to ignore. Therefore, American Christians are experiencing a process of emotional and psychological divestment from the aforementioned, idealistic view of the state of Israel. It has been a slow, painful process but, at the same time, now demands urgency, when Palestinians and Israelis alike are both the propagators and victims of violence. But in order for an ideological re-investment in a fair and equitable two-state solution to be successful, some form of pressure needs to be applied as incentive for this ideological divestment to continue more rapidly.

To date, appeals and resolutions have fallen on deaf ears. Several faith communities have shifted to a less controversial plan of corporate engagement as an alternative to economic divestment, arguing that it is less destructive to the peace process.³⁴³ It is clear, however, from the most recent world-wide recession that corporations are not managed by moral principle but by the health of the bottom line. This strategy, most likely, will fail. As in the examples of Indian Independence from England, apartheid in South Africa and civil rights in the United States, economic divestment may be the only successful pressure valve to ensure fair and equitable conflict resolution in the Holy Land.

³⁴³ This idea is implicitly woven into many of the United Methodist resolutions. For a recent article pertaining to the American Episcopal Church, access: Matthew Davies, "Peace Fellowship Supports Economic Sanctions for Middle East Peace," *Episcopal News Service*, http://www.ecusa.anglican.org/79425_122182_ENG_HTM.htm.

VIOLENCE, IDEOLOGY AND RELIGION

Dr. Fatma Kasse

ABSTRACT: The paper presents the way religious terminology and religious beliefs are recruited in order to justify current national and state ideology using the Palestinian –Zionist conflict as a case study. It shows how the uses of religious rhetoric convey subtle violence and serve as a violent tool to promote secular national ideology. It explains how this terminology impacts maintaining and sustaining the conflict as essential and eternal. The aim of the paper is to bring consciousness to the premises and meaning of such rhetoric and the political and social implications. Raising awareness about terminological use, while referring to the conflict, is crucial to enable peace builders to reject the ideological use of religious terminology, which aims to substantiate violence. Instead this paper offers non-violent terminology as a venue to resolve the Palestinian-Zionist conflict and lead to a just and sustainable peace rather than managing conflict to maintain war.

This paper presents the way Eurocentric, Zionist, secular ideology co-opts names from Old Testament biblical stories for categorizing Palestinians, as a means of dehumanizing and humiliating them, while to justifying violence against them and the subordination of them.

In referring to Palestinians who are outside the borders of 1948, Israelis use, in both written and spoken Hebrew, the biblical term Philistines, פְּלִשְׁתִּינָיִם, of which Goliath was one. In referring to Palestinians who became involuntary citizens after the establishment of the Jewish State of Israel in 1948, Israelis use ‘Arab Israeli.’ I would like to reflect on the covert and overt meaning of such naming schemes and argue that Zionist, Eurocentric, secular ideology’s success, in using co-opted biblical names, is itself an act of violence toward the Palestinians. This language aims to humiliate and subordinate Palestinians, in order to defeat them and avoid a peaceful solution. Furthermore, by employing these names, Zionist, Eurocentric, secular ideology perpetuates the fear of Palestinians, by the Jewish population, while concurrently dehumanizing the Palestinians.

Why does Zionist discourse employ these terms? What is the purpose and meaning behind these terms? Raising awareness of the subtle, yet violent, premise behind these labels and their political implications is liberating. This awareness helps us to understand how religion is used to promote violence as a tool of a secular ideological agenda.

Firstly, I examine how the analogy between Old Testament biblical Philistines and contemporary Palestinians is drawn from the biblical stories which depict the Philistines as the Jews’ historic and brutal enemy, before delving into the meaning and political implications of this analogy, in the context of the Zionist–Palestinian conflict today. Additionally, I will address the meaning and political implications of the term ‘Arab Israeli.’

I will take you back to 2005, when I started writing my Ph.D. dissertation, in the department of Behavioral Sciences, at Ben Gurion University. The Jewish–Israeli editor kept changing the way I wrote the word Palestinians in Hebrew, פְּלִשְׁתִּינָיִם, to Philistines, פְּלִשְׁתִּינָיִם, which was followed by a comment about the importance of being consistent. When I checked the way I wrote Palestinians in Hebrew, I found that I mixed the spelling and sometimes wrote Philistines in its Hebrew version. Upon reflection, I realized I had wavered, in the face of Zionist hegemonic power. As a Ha’aretz (the spelling was changed in 2008) reader, the well-known left newspaper in Israel and abroad, I noticed that publication used the biblical name, Philistines, in referring to the Palestinians outside the border of 1948 and “Arab Israelis,” in referring to Palestinians citizens of Israel. My

attention to this linguistic detail alerted me that it is common practice to use the term *Philistines* in academic writing, journals (both political left and right wing), official reports and documents, literature, newspapers, political speeches, books and school texts, in both elementary and secondary levels.

There are overt and covert meanings to the analogy Zionist actors draw between Palestinians and Philistines and violent political implications, in relation to the current Palestinian–Zionist conflict. Old Testament stories present the Philistines as a cruel, barbaric and brutal enemy of the Israelites, with the latter depicted as the ‘people of God.’ The most prominent of these biblical stories are Sampson’s battles against the Philistines and the battle between Goliath, the Philistine giant from Gath, armed with sword, spear and javelin, and David, the young Israelite shepherd, armed with a slingshot and a pouch full of stones. The story ends with David slinging one of his stones at Goliath and killing him, and the Israelites defeating the Philistines. Variations of the story can be found in Genesis, Judges and Samuel. For example, in 1 Samuel 17:26, David asked the men, who were standing near him, “What will be done for the man who strikes down this Philistine and frees Israel from this humiliation? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he defies the armies of the living God?”

The analogy of ancient Philistines to contemporary Palestinians is made to promote three primary Eurocentric Zionist ideological purposes:

The first: According to historical and archaeological knowledge, the Philistines originated in Crete and were known as sea people, who invaded the land of Palestine around the twelfth century BCE. According to the Old Testament, the origin of the Philistines is Egypt. As such, regardless of which place of origin chosen, the use of the name Philistines, in Zionist discourse, conveys the message that they are foreigners. Referring to Palestinians as ‘Philistines,’ in Hebrew, is a linguistic maneuver, the intention of which is to insinuate that the Palestinians are invaders to the “Land of Israel,” foreigners, neither indigenous nor native, while at the same time maintaining a claim that was appointed by the Zionist ideology, depicting Jews as “Native Israelis” and “indigenous.” By using these biblical terms, Zionism deprives Palestinians of their entitlement to their homeland.

The second: By creating a link to the Philistines, Zionism conveys to Israelis that Palestinians are their historical enemy; that they are brutal and cruel. Zionism uses the mere presence of Palestinians to terrify Jews. This suggests to Jews that they have to continue to persecute Palestinians and fight them, until they are totally defeated. This mentality is legitimized because the Palestinians/

Philistines are their ultimate cruel enemy; one that remains a constant threat to the security of Jewish lives, therefore, Palestinians as a collective whole, must be defeated and expelled by the Jews from the land, as did David to Goliath. The clear message, therefore, transmitted to Jewish Israelis, through this analogy, conveys that the Jewish people were historically successful in defeating the Philistines, thus, we are able to do the same to the Palestinians.

In I Samuel 17:50, we read how David prevailed over the Philistine, with just the sling and the stone. He struck down the Philistine, killing him. David did not even have a sword in his hand. In the next verse, David ran and stood over the Philistine, grabbed Goliath's sword, drew it from its sheath, killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw their champion was dead, they ran away.

The third: This linguistic analogy aims to elevate Jews to a position of superior moral standing, compared to the 'debased' Palestinians/Philistines, who are perceived as having no moral values. In turn, this simultaneously allows for dehumanization of the Palestinians and justifies the use of excessive aggression, which is sanctioned by the 'moral' state of Israel and the international community.

It is in this manner that Eurocentric, Zionist, secular ideologists have co-opted Old Testament stories to convey contemporary messages which justify the continued aggression of the Zionists against the Palestinians. I find it striking that, in official British documents, during what is called the 'British Mandate' in Palestine, the Hebrew word *Philistia* (פְּלִשְׁתִּיָּה) is used, strongly suggesting the British established a precedent of referring to the Palestinians as 'Philistines,' the cruel enemies of the Jews. The pervasive reference to Palestinians as Philistines is also present in academic articles, Israeli television subtitles and popular forms of writing. Ironically, the introduction to the website *Palestine Remembered, al-Nakba 1948*, فلسطينياالذاکره, uses the same spelling in Hebrew characters (פְּלִשְׁתִּיָּה). These examples represent the influence of the hegemonic power of Zionism and its alliance in conveying this ideological message.

In accordance with the Israeli policy, followed and inspired by the Balfour Declaration, it has been policy, since 1917, to fragment the those Palestinians; Palestinians within the 1948 borders were referred to using multiple terms. For example, in official state documents they are called 'non-Jewish' or 'minorities,' in the plural form, but not 'minority' in the singular form. The plural avoids acknowledging Palestinians as a national collective, carrying on the tradition, begun with the Balfour Declaration, when Palestinians were classified according to their religious background. The most widespread term used in Israel and

throughout the world in referring to the Palestinians in Israel is 'Arab Israeli.'

Extensive use of the category *Arab Israeli* by the Israelis, Palestinians and the international community, reflects the success of the hegemonic power of Zionist ideology and its 'secular' discourse. The term also serves a security function, it aims to confine Palestinian identity in Israel to 'an Arab as one of us,' which is a popular slogan in the Jewish-Israeli community. This phrase represents the conditional acceptance of Palestinians to the state of Israel. That is, in order to be an 'Arab Israeli,' a Palestinian must detach her or himself from the Palestinian collective and history, instead annexing her or himself to Israel, the land and the people. This confined and conditional sense of belonging indicates that Palestinians in Israel are located in a space of eternal internment within the Jewish Israeli state, thus erasing their rights to their homeland as natives and obliterating their identity.

The forced affiliation of Palestinians to Israel, by naming them as Arab Israelis, has connotations of humiliation. It designates Palestinians as Arabs who now belong to Israel, Jacob and the Jewish State. This affiliation detaches Palestinians in Israel from their entitlement to the land of Palestine, in order to become legitimate within the State of Israel. The only acceptable way for Palestinians to live in their own homeland, according to the Zionist nationalist agenda, is by becoming 'Arab Israelis,' rather than native Palestinian people in their homeland, living as free people.

Zionist-Israelis use these terms consciously to humiliate and delegitimize Palestinians, which is born from their violent and aggressive tendencies. The wide-spread use of referring to Palestinian citizens, within the state of Israel, as 'Arab Israelis' shows the success of Zionist hegemonic ideology. The use of these terms by Palestinians, and many Arabs in the Middle East, exemplifies how we internalize the aggression and violence of the Zionist perpetrators, whether the use is made consciously or unconsciously. In order to liberate ourselves, our mission is to be aware and conscious to the terms and words we use to describe and identify ourselves. In order to make peace with 'others' we have to make peace with ourselves individually and collectively. It is only when we begin using our self-defined terms, rather than those placed upon us, that we will be open to make peace with others.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE *KAIROS* PALESTINE DOCUMENT:
A TOOL FOR NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE

Ms. Nora Karmi

Samahat al Sheikh, Distinguished Guests, Dignitaries, Sisters and Brothers,

Thank you for still being here after such a long day. I am sure that you must all be extremely tired, so I do not know if it is a privilege or a challenge for me to be the last speaker at this conference. I extend my thanks to the organizers, from Bethlehem University, and in particular, to Father Jamal for choosing a theme that, although has been extensively discussed around the world, but definitely not certainly not well enough in the context of the Palestinian-Israel context.

For several decades, the connection between religion, violence and non-violence has been deliberated by the academic community, religious leaders and committed peacemakers, who care for the welfare of both Palestinians and Israelis, and have urged an ending of violence and injustice; prophetically calling for a just peace. We have noticed an increase in this trend in the recent years. The afore mentioned task would be a much easier task, if the concepts of peace and justice were understood in the same manner, by the parties involved, especially those who perpetuate oppression and militarism.

This is indeed an opportune moment, the *Kairos*, (Greek for “this is the time”) to reflect on “A Moment of Truth: the *Kairos*-Palestine Document,” which was introduced in Bethlehem on 11 December 2009. Several of the fifteen document’s authors, as well as supporters, are among us today. Many of those present here today may be familiar with what started as a document and is now growing into a movement, a set of guideline and way of life. For the sake of those who have not yet heard of *Kairos*, allow me to briefly introduce it, and through, it you will discover why it was included in this conference.

Before I continue, allow me to thank both Dr. Luis Rivera Pagán and Dr. Cheryl Riggs for having made reference to the *Kairos document* in their presentations. You have made my task easier!).

❖ What is *Kairos*? What is the origin and how is it meant to be used?

- ❖ Is it a prescription for instant peace? Or a magical wand which might succeed where other initiatives have failed?

This document is simply a genuine call, a Palestinian Christian cry, from the heart of the Palestinians' suffering, and suitably entitled "A Moment of Truth." As covered in the Introduction on page 4, "It is a word based on our Christian faith and our sense of Palestinian belonging." The document comes at a time when the disappointing conditions of the management and perpetuation of the crisis have sucked the hope from the hearts of those who still believe in miracles, and hold on to the thin glimmer of a better future. *Kairos* is the moment when we see God's grace and gifts, in the midst of our sufferings. It is the time to act.

THE ORIGINS

The World Council of Churches (WCC) has indirectly been the inspiration behind this document. Following the establishment of the Palestine Israel Ecumenical Forum in 2007, as well as the Amman Call Statement, which enumerated the different possible strategies to end the Israeli occupation and start building a real peace, it has become evident that one basic necessary step, for peace was for Christians, and other faiths, to honestly look into the theological interpretation of scriptural passages that legitimize occupation, violence and holy war in the name of God Almighty, and which subordinate God to temporary human interests and distort the divine image for human beings living under political and theological injustice.

For about a year and a half, a group of committed theologians and lay persons, who practice theology on the ground, and encouraged by leading consultants, worked hard to produce the 18-page document asserting Faith, Hope and Love, the three basic principles of Christian belief. The cynics among us will remark that these principles have not stopped the so-called Christian world to wage bloody wars or to violate all that is sacred.

The Palestinian Call was also inspired by South African *Kairos* document that celebrated, a few months ago, 25 years of its articulation, and that was instrumental in ending Apartheid. Of course, it had to be adapted to be relevant in a Palestinian Context.

1. The reality on the ground:

The call starts by quoting Jeremiah 6:14, which says "*They say: Peace, peace, when there is no peace,*" and lists a number of realities that describe not only the absence of peace, but the unwillingness to build peace. The stations of the cross of the Palestinians truly exist; some very visible others more

subtle and more dangerous since they gradually destroy humanity. The wall, settlements, revoking residency rights, the right of entry, checkpoints, land confiscation, home demolitions etc. Not only exasperate our lives, separate families, destroy infrastructure but shrewdly divert the international focus from Israel's continued disregard of international and humanitarian laws. How can one justify the Judaization of Jerusalem, discriminatory policies against the Palestinian Arabs in Israel, erasing the rights of the refugees that led to the eruption of the volcano of injustices in either emigration/escape from their homeland, violent retaliation, or worse still, the internal collapse of the Palestinian society? As in the Amman Call and the WCC statements, "A Moment of truth" suitably declared the Israeli occupation a sin against God and humanity.

This first part was maybe the one that was most criticized by those who attacked *Kairos* Palestine for stating the ugly facts, yet how else would one be able to offer responses and options without stating and dealing with the realities on the ground?

Christians and *Kairos* focus on three themes, which form the basis of our faith. Those themes are: faith, hope and love. *Kairos* is a statement of our faith: We believe in one God, a good and just God who created us together, to build, protect the creation in love and mutual respect. As Christians, we believe in God's eternal word, in our savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit that helps us understand the revelation of God to humanity, past, present and future. We understand the Word of God to be a source of life for all. The word of God cannot be the cause for death or dehumanization. It is not static and cannot be buried in the past. It is dynamic and God continues to relate with His creation.

So is our understanding of the land and its universal mission. "The earth is the lord's and all that is in it. The world, and those who live in it" (Ps. 24:1), therefore we belong to it and not the other way round. Today, it is the homeland of two peoples of three religions. It is our responsibility to liberate it from evil and injustice. It is a Promised Land for all and not to one group of people, especially when that people denies the rights of the other, the natives, and threaten their existence. The challenge is not to destroy God's creation, namely humanity. How much more conciliatory can one be when and if justice is done?

Our presence here is not accidental. As Palestinian Christians and Muslims, we are deeply rooted in the history and geography of his land. As Christians, we have a special relationship with the Palestinian Jew, Jesus

Christ, our Savior, who lived in this land under a Roman occupation and who taught us that it is our responsibility to speak the truth and to non-violently resist any injustice.

Hope is the capacity to see the Creator amidst trouble, a vision from which we derive the strength to be steadfast, to remain firm and to work to change the reality in which we find ourselves. Hope means not giving in to evil. It requires that we stand up to it and continue to resist it courageously and non-violently. Some of the signs of hope in Palestine/Israel are:

- A) The steadfastness of believers of all faiths,
- B) Joint non-violent signs of solidarity (weekly demonstrations organized by popular committees
- C) Real dialogue (intra confessional and interreligious)
- D) Determination of many to transform resentment and hatred into reconciliation based on a minimal measure of relative peace, both inner and outer
- E) Mission of the Church, prophetic and points to the kingdom of God which in the words of St. Paul “The Kingdom of God is not food and drink but righteousness and peace and joy in the holy spirit (Romans 14:17)
- F) Ours is a culture of life and not death. Life is abundant with the hope of the Resurrection

THE COMMANDMENT OF LOVE

Our South African friends and many local Muslims were deeply touched by the love that permeates every saying, attitude and act amidst the deep pain and suffering. Universally, the Golden rule is “*I want for you what I want for me.*” In Christianity, the greatest and most difficult commandment is “*Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another (John 13:34)* and the unheard of: “*Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you*” (Matt. 5:45) which one would argue that it is easier said than done. But if we understand love to mean “*Do not repay anyone evil for evil,*” (Romans 12:17,) than the commandment makes sense. Resisting evil among friends and enemies is a right that accomplishes with love and transforms both, the oppressed and the oppressor.

Our mere steadfastness (*sumood*), to remain in our lands when policies of expulsion, transfer and continuous laws deny our existence, rights, culture and humanity is a form of non-violent resistance. Turning the other cheek means defying the humiliation, oppression and dehumanization and uplifting and preserving our own dignity, and that of the ‘other.’

The call addresses first the Christian Community to repent, to admit our own misgivings and bridge our differences, and, most of all, to revisit our theologies. God is love and created us in His image. There exists in each of us a bit of the divine, which we cannot kill or deface.

We address our Muslim brothers and together we refuse violence

We address the neighbor, the enemy and invite him/her to put an end to Occupation. We address the Churches to be as courageous as the one who died for all humanity, to dare and speak the truth and live their faith. Many Western churches have taken brave stands and understood that the Kingdom of God starts on earth.

Among the non-violent resistance tools that we offer are: education and awareness building/(curriculum) in schools, participation of youth, clergy, imams and rabbis, and having the support of many around the world is a sign that we are on the right track. One of the controversial tools proposed is Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). Many hopeful but skeptic people cannot see that having tried all means and ways, this is a tool which still really means that we are investing in peace building.

It is a way to invite back the Jews to the morality of Judaism and in the words of the well-known Israeli Scholar at the Ben Gurion University, Neve Gordon: “I am for boycott and BDS. It is the only way to save my country.” It an initiative which contains many options, which could include commercial boycotts, cultural boycotts, etc. Each group and country can choose its own method. This non-violent campaign will show its true effectiveness when Israeli pockets are first affected.

To summarize, *Kairos* is a reaffirmation of the miracles of love lived and not only preached. The word of God (and for others Universal Laws based on faith beliefs) replenishes and rejuvenates us to love mercy, do justice and walk humbly with God. This urgent, if perhaps utopian call, to humanity, to a spiritual, moral and legal basis to eradicate injustice will succeed if we are equipped with the spiritual armor: the belt of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, with the gospel of peace, with the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, the sword of the

spirit, and the word of God that is the source of life. (Adapted from Ephesians 6)

Today, locally and internationally, *Kairos*, already translated into thirteen languages, is picking up momentum and may become the non-violent tool for reconciliation, through justice and love.

