

The ADDENDUM TO

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REVISED
EDITION



THE
CRESCENT

THROUGH THE EYES OF
THE CROSS



Insights from an Arab Christian

IMPORTANT NOTICE

If you are reading this addendum, I assume that you have finished reading the book [*The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*](#), and now you want to delve into some additional issues that “Ahmad” raised in that book. [This addendum is written only for those who have read the book.](#) Without first reading the book, this document will *not make sense*. If you have not read the book, please go to my website/books and download the revised edition of *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*. You can read it on your computer or on your phone.

In the book, you met “Ahmad,” a *fictional character* I created as a *composite* of real people whom I have known personally or through their books and writings. In my book, Ahmad is an Egyptian international student studying in the United States who connected with some evangelicals who witnessed to him and invited him to their churches. One of them asked, “*Why is it so hard for you Muslims to believe in Christ and become Christians?*” Ahmad’s response to this American evangelical was this: “*I have three problems: your message; you, the messenger; and me, the receiver.*” The book unpacked and addressed the issues that Ahmad raised about *our message* as Christians, *the receiver (Muslims)*, and some of the issues about us, *the messengers*. This addendum will unpack and address the other issues of *the messenger*, such as the Crusades, colonialism and neocolonialism, the modern history of Israel and Palestine, as well as eschatology (end-times theology). These issues are very important to Ahmad and are an integral part of his worldview. In Islam, there is no separation between religion and state. *Islam*, they believe, is a “*religion and a state.*”

I decided to have these chapters outside the book for the following reasons:

1. These chapters might be too heavy for some readers. For some, the book is sufficient. Others who wish to do more in-depth study will be stretched by these chapters. It takes extra motivation and an open mind to be willing to learn about potentially sensitive topics.
2. The material in these chapters is not original with me. I will summarize the writings of experts to *whet the appetite* of the reader to go directly to the books themselves.
3. Some of the issues you will read about here are the *baggage* that Europeans and North Americans carry when they attempt to present the Gospel to Muslims. An Egyptian or Indonesian Christian will not be identified with the Crusades or with colonialism. Americans will read these chapters with a different mindset than an Egyptian or Indonesian Christian. Americans and Europeans need to figure out how to *unwrap the gospel* and how to distinguish it from “the dirty bath water” in our Christian history.

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CHAPTER 1
ZIMBARDO AND A JERK INTO REALITY

“What happened in Abu Ghraib prison was done by a few bad apples.”
-An American Christian

-Ahmad told me in one of his emails
“I do not think that the Iraq War of 2003 was a war of necessity, but a war of choice. At Abu Ghraib prison, it was a bad barrel that resulted in many soldiers there becoming bad apples.”

In the Spring of 2007, I heard an interview on National Public Radio with Dr. Philip Zimbardo, who became famous because of the 1971 experiment he conducted known as the “Stanford Prison Experiment.” I had heard a few things about that experiment but never knew any of the details. Perhaps the increased interest came as a result of the obvious similarities between the experiment and the images of depravity in Iraq’s [Abu Ghraib prison](#)—of nakedness, bagged heads, and sexual humiliation. The interview motivated me to buy Dr. Zimbardo’s book and read it.

The Experiment

Zimbardo documented his famous experiment in his book, *The Lucifer Effect*. His website contains reviews of the book, including one written by Zimbardo himself in the *Chronicle of Higher Education* (March 30, 2007).¹

By 1970, psychologists had done a series of experiments that established the power of social groups. Groups of strangers were able to persuade people to believe statements that were obviously false. Participants in other experiments were willing to obey figures of authority even when it violated their beliefs and values. Zimbardo, a professor of psychology at Stanford University, was intrigued by how these experiments challenged the assumption that personality traits, morality, and religious upbringing directed people to upright living and kept them on the narrow path. He wondered why “good people” like Henry Kissinger and Robert McNamara would escalate the Vietnam War even though they knew it was not winnable. Zimbardo’s interest in this subject motivated him to conduct an experiment to find out who would win—*good people* (good apples) or an *evil situation* (bad barrel)—when brought into direct confrontation.

In 1971, Zimbardo and his assistants chose 24 male college students from about 100 applicants. The participants were physically and mentally healthy with no history of crime or violence. The Vietnam War was waging, and the U.S. draft was in place. College students, especially in that part of California, were against the war. All the students selected, in Zimbardo’s terminology, were “good apples.” They were told they would be paid \$15 a day² and that the experiment would last two weeks.

¹ http://www.lucifereffect.com/about_reviews.htm

² Value of money has changed over the years.

The students were randomly assigned to play the role of “prisoners” or “guards” in an imprisonment setting in the basement of the psychology department at Stanford. To make the experiment seem more real, the Palo Alto police agreed to “arrest” the “prisoners.” Once the prisoners were brought into the mock prison, they were ordered by the “guards” to strip naked. They were given large smocks with no underwear and nylon stockings to wear as caps. Their names were never used during the experiment; they were given numbers for identification. Each of the guards was referred to as “Mr. Correctional Officer” and wore reflecting sunglasses. There were three sets of guards. Each patrolled eight-hour shifts, the first being 2 a.m. to 10 a.m., the second 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and the third 6 p.m. to 2 a.m. Zimbardo took the role of “superintendent” of the prison and was assisted by two graduate students, one of whom played the role of “warden.”

The guards were asked to prevent the prisoners from escaping, but they were not to use physical violence. The guards on each shift were free to make up their own rules and were very “creative” in inventing a variety of tactics to demonstrate their power. Nakedness was a common punishment, along with chaining the legs of the prisoners, repeatedly working them during the night, and forcing them into humiliating activities. At 1 a.m. the prisoners were forced to line up and recite their ID numbers, along with the 17 rules invented by the guards. They were yelled at, cursed at, and made to say abusive things to each other, then sent to sleep. An hour later when the next shift came, the whole procedure was repeated. By the fifth day, five of the students (the prisoners) were dismissed because of extreme stress. Those who remained were like doormats, totally obedient to the guards’ escalating demands.³

An Encounter with Reality

The experiment was terminated on the sixth day rather than lasting 14 days as planned. During these six days, dozens of people visited the mock prison to watch the abuse and its effects, including psychologists, a chaplain, parents, and friends. None challenged Zimbardo to terminate the experiment. In contrast, Christina Maslach, an assistant professor at the University of California in Berkeley, was invited to join the experiment and conduct interviews with the staff and participants. Christina, a former doctoral student of Zimbardo’s, would later become his wife. When she came to the mock prison and saw the prisoners lined up with bags over their heads, their legs chained, and guards shouting abuses at them, she was shocked and very upset. She ran out of the basement, followed by the surprised Zimbardo. He did not have a clue why she was upset. She told him it was terrible what HE was doing to *those boys*. She said that if this heartless “superintendent of the Stanford prison” was the real Zimbardo, she wanted to break off their relationship.

³ http://www.lucifereffect.com/about_reviews.htm

All of a sudden, Zimbardo had a realization of the truth. Those prisoners were *students*. They were *human beings* who were suffering. They were not “experimental subjects” nor “paid volunteers.” He realized that he was personally responsible for the horrors she had witnessed, and that powerful *jolt into reality* snapped him back to his senses. He realized that *he too had been transformed by his role*.

Later, he realized that the main reason he did not end the study sooner was because of his conflicting dual roles. He was *principal investigator*—and thus guardian of the research ethics of the experiment—as well as *prison superintendent*, eager to maintain the stability of his prison at all costs. He realized that there should have been someone with authority over him, someone in charge of overseeing the experiment, who surely would have blown the whistle sooner. Zimbardo concluded from the experiment that *decent moral humans, once they become a part of the “evil system” can be transformed into evil human beings who perceive themselves as the “good guys.” As good guys, they have the right to dehumanize others and treat them as animals, believing that pain is good for the “bad guys.”*⁴

Humans are vulnerable to subtle but powerful situational forces. Group pressures, authority symbols, dehumanization of others, imposed anonymity and dominant ideologies *enable the ends to justify the immoral means*. The message of Zimbardo’s book is that when evil at a large scale was committed, it did not come from a few “bad apples.” Instead, it came from a “bad barrel,” which was the evil system. The full title of Zimbardo’s book is *The Lucifer Effect: Understanding How Good People Turn Evil*.

The Lure of Power

In his book, Zimbardo does not tackle the subject of evil from a biblical perspective of mankind’s dignity and depravity. His worldview comes from social psychology and is based on a few assumptions:

- “The world is filled with both good and evil. Was, is, and will be.
- The barrier between good and evil is permeable and nebulous.
- A set of dynamic psychological processes can induce good people to do evil, among them de-individuation, obedience to authority, passivity in the face of threats, self justification, and rationalization.
- Dehumanization is like a cataract that clouds one’s thinking and fosters the perception that other people are less human... enemies, deserving of torment, torture and annihilation.
- It is possible for ‘angels’ to become ‘devils’ and, perhaps more difficult to conceive, for ‘devils’ to become ‘angels.’ ”⁵

⁴ http://www.lucifereffect.com/about_reviews.htm

⁵ Zimbardo, Philip, *The Lucifer Effect* (New York: Random House, 2007), xii.

From the Bible, we know about original sin and mankind's depravity. The Bible does not shy away from showing evil—not only the evil of nations, but also the evil of the people of God. Albert Einstein stated: "What terrifies us is not the explosive force of the atomic bomb, but the power of the wickedness of the human heart." Dwight Edwards in his book [*Revolution Within*](#) stated: "In our fallen state we much more closely resemble Adolf Hitler than Jesus Christ." We also know from the Bible about the transformation that can take place because of the Holy Spirit dwelling in the life of a human being. It would have been interesting if some of the subjects in Zimbardo's experiment were known to be born again, Spirit-filled students. Would they have been able to resist the evil system, whether they were guards or prisoners? Could "good apples" transform a "bad barrel," thus making it a "good barrel"? (A good book on this particular subject is written by Gregory Boyd and published by Zondervan, [*The Myth of a Christian Nation*](#). I will discuss this controversial book in Chapter 9 of this addendum. Boyd addresses from the Scriptures many of the questions that Zimbardo raised.)

The Bible shows clearly that the sin of being inflated with power has dangerous consequences. It was the cause of Lucifer's fall. Our human history started with Adam wanting to be like God. The story of the lure for power, becoming inflated with power, and abusing power continued throughout history and will continue until we stand on the Day of Judgment before the throne of God. The Bible illustrates that those who become inflated with power tend to abuse it. I will limit my discussion to looking very briefly at a few illustrations in the life of David to demonstrate this point. I chose David because there is much in the Scriptures about his life. Unlike many world leaders, David admitted his sins and truly repented, yet he still had to live with the consequences of his sinful choices.

David: A Biblical Example of the Dangers of Power

David was a man after God's own heart. He enjoyed a deep and intimate personal relationship with God. The psalms in general—and several psalms in particular—attest to his love and intimacy with God. *"I love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, my fortress and my deliverer; my God is my rock, in whom I take refuge. He is my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold."*⁶

Nabal and Abigail encountered David when he was a victim running for his life from King Saul. Abigail *"was an intelligent and beautiful woman, but her husband [Nabal], a Calebite, was surly and mean in his dealings."*⁷ David's men offered protection to Nabal's shepherds when David and his private "army" were in that region. It was the custom at that time for rich people, during the shearing time, to be generous to those in need, especially to people who offered them service and protection. David sent ten men to Nabal with a message of congratulations and a request for help. Nabal's response was mean, disrespectful, and insulting.

⁶ Psalm 18:1–2

⁷ 1 Samuel 25:3

By that time David had killed the giant Goliath and had become a general in King Saul's army and the son-in-law of the king. When David received the news through Nabal's servants, in a moment of anger, he ordered 400 of his men to take swords and seek revenge. Now David was no longer a victim running for his life from King Saul. He had become the oppressor as he planned to abuse his power.

David had a great deal of power to inflict damage on Nabal and his family, but Abigail intervened. She went to meet David and sent a gift ahead of her. *"She took two hundred loaves of bread, two skins of wine, five dressed sheep, five seahs of roasted grain, a hundred cakes of raisins and two hundred cakes of pressed figs and loaded them on donkeys."*⁸ This gift calmed David's anger and helped *jolt him into reality*. Abigail's humility and graceful remarks protected David from abusing his power.

Abigail bowed down before David and calmed him with her very gracious words. David responded by saying to Abigail, *"If you had not come quickly to meet me, not one male belonging to Nabal would have been left alive by daybreak."*⁹ God was merciful to David by sending him Abigail, and David was humble to listen.

After he became a powerful king, David did abuse his power. First Samuel 11 records David's sin of adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, one of David's officers. He made matters worse by keeping his sin a secret to protect his reputation with his family and his people. Furthermore, the cover-up escalated the abuse of his power. Keeping it a secret worked until Bathsheba sent him news that she was pregnant. David came up with deceptive strategies to cover up his sin. It was a slippery slope that started with lust, then abuse of power, then adultery, then more abuse of power, then deception. Finally, David used his power to order the murder of Bathsheba's husband and others to cover up his sin.

What protected David from continuing this slippery slope was the presence of Nathan the prophet. He was not afraid to tell mighty King David the truth. That confrontation brought about a *jolt into reality*. Finally, David said to Nathan, *"I have sinned against the Lord."*

As a result of his genuine repentance, David wrote beautiful psalms that have ministered to millions upon millions of people over the centuries. In Psalm 32, he described the agony of the cover-up by saying to God: *"When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped... Then I acknowledged my sin... and you forgave the guilt of my sin."*¹⁰

⁸ 1 Samuel 25:18

⁹ 1 Samuel 25:34

¹⁰ Psalm 32:3–5

In Psalm 51, one of the most beloved psalms in the Bible, David cried out to God: *“Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love... Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight... Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice... Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.”*¹¹

When there is true repentance, there can be redemption. It encourages me to see that of all the sons David had with all his various wives, Solomon—his second son with Bathsheba—was chosen to be the future king.

If we pick the sin of greatest consequence that David ever committed, we might think of his adultery with Bathsheba and the sins that resulted from his cover-up. But there is another sin that had far more costly consequences; it had to do with inflation of power. It is recorded in 2 Samuel 24.

Toward the end of his life, David wanted to take a census of Israel and Judah to find out the number of the fighting men in his kingdom. Soldiers were usually counted when the kingdom was preparing for war. At this time, there was no obvious need for taking a census. Perhaps the hidden reason was David’s desire to find out how great he had become. Although the military commander, Joab, reminded the king that there was no need to do the count, David insisted it be done.

The process took nine months and twenty days. Not until the report was given to David did he feel guilty about his sin of becoming inflated with power. Another prophet, Gad, was sent by God to David with three options as punishment for his sin: *“Shall there come upon you (1) three years of famine in your land? (2) Or three months of fleeing from your enemies while they pursue you? (3) Or three days of plague in your land? Now then, think it over and decide how I should answer the one who sent me.”*¹²

David chose the third option, maybe because it was short, and his family would not be affected. Public health at the palace was surely better than among the poor. Option two would have been the most difficult for David—the one responsible for the sin—yet he did not choose it. By choosing the third option, people paid a high price for David’s sin. Seventy thousand died, and death would have continued if David did not have a *jolt into reality*. David truly repented and confessed his sin: *“When David saw the angel who was striking down the people, he said to the Lord, ‘I am the one who has sinned and done wrong. These are but sheep. What have they done? Let your hand fall upon me and my family.’”*¹³

¹¹ Psalm 51:1–10

¹² 2 Samuel 24:13.

¹³ 2 Samuel 24:17

It looks like being inflated with power and abusing it is the greatest temptation with the most dangerous consequences, especially to those in power. No wonder the Bible teaches us to pray for our leaders.

Ahmad Jolting Us into Reality

The issues that Ahmad raised in Chapter 2 of the book, [*The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*](#)—especially the ones that have to do with Islam being a *religion and a state*—could be very disturbing to some of us. As you read Ahmad’s arguments about the Crusades, colonialism, and Israel, perhaps some of these questions came to your mind.

- Why should I be identified with the Crusades?
- Why should I be identified with colonialism when I live in a country that had nothing to do with colonialism?
- When will Muslims accept the fact that Israel is a reality, and no one can do anything to change it?
- When will Muslims stop seeing themselves as the victims?
- Can Muslims forgive and forget?
- Why don’t Muslims take the planks out of their own eyes before they point to the specks of sawdust in our eyes? Is their history better than ours?

These are legitimate questions.

[*The Crescent Through The Eyes of the Cross*](#) is not written to Muslims. It is written to Christians. This Addendum is also written to Christians, who are called to carry the cross and follow in the footsteps of our Lord. The words of Jesus in Matthew 7:1–5 apply to us.

In the huge cosmic battle, Jesus defeated the devil by smashing his biggest weapon—fear of death—by going to death Himself. Jesus was tempted to become inflated with power and to abuse it, but he did not fall into that sin.¹⁴ Instead, he *lived* the cross before he was crucified on it. Jesus is saying to us as we go into these chapters: "*Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged... Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother’s eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother’s eye.*"¹⁵

Unless we repent from any “Jonah” attitude, reading this Addendum will not be helpful. Ask God, as you read these chapters, to help you remember that you are primarily an

¹⁴ Luke 4

¹⁵ Matthew 7:1-5

ambassador of Christ rather than an Englishman, a Dutchman, or an American. Ask God to help you stand in the shoes of Ahmad so you can learn to see the world through the eyes of Muslims. Ask God to give you compassion for Muslims as you read.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. How is the 1971 Stanford Prison Experiment relevant to our world and to current events these days?
2. Could the results of this experiment help us understand, but not condone, suicide bombings?
3. Why didn't German Christians speak out against the evil structure of power and the system that Hitler created before the Second World War? Did they become part of the "bad barrel"? (Of course, [Dietrich Bonhoeffer](#) was one big exception.)
4. Please read Appendix C. A few months before the Iraq War began in 2003, Leighton Ford was one of several U.S. Christian leaders invited to the office of the Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld. As a result of that meeting, L. Ford wrote an open letter to Christian leaders. Was he a prophet who was not heard? Why were the voices of Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson louder than his voice? Were there courageous prophetic voices who spoke truth to the Bush administration before the Iraq war? Who were they?
5. Old Testament kings had the safety valve of prophets who dared to speak truth to their faces. What safety valves do we have today? Was President George W. Bush playing two roles in one person, the Commander in Chief and the Chaplain in Chief?
6. Does the church of Christ have the responsibility to offer a prophetic voice? To whom? Is it happening in your country? If not, what keeps it from happening?
7. Can you think of illustrations of evil systems that turn normal people into "doormats" who do not challenge the evil that exists within the system? How many illustrations can you come up with? (One illustration was the clerical sex abuse scandal in the U.S. Catholic church.)

CHAPTER 2
FRED WRIGHT ON THE CRUSADES

“How long will it take for Muslims to forgive and forget?”
—A Canadian Christian

-Ahmad, in his presentation of the Muslims' worldview, said:
“*The Crusades took place in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. Wave after wave of armies kept coming to invade our lands for two hundred years. Western Christian countries sent their armies to Jerusalem to force upon Muslims a Christian jihad or ‘holy war’ to clean up Jerusalem. Jerusalem is a city that is very special, not only to you, but to us, too. Sir Steven Runciman, your famous historian of the Crusades, said, ‘It was this blood-thirsty Christian fanaticism . . . that recreated the fanaticism of Islam.’ In your current U.S. Middle East policy, are you fueling and strengthening fanaticism within Islam? In your neo-Crusader attitude, have you unleashed Islamic fanaticism and escalated violence?*”¹⁶

Here is a short quiz to help you see how informed you are about current events in the Middle East. As you read the four quotations below, try to identify who said each one: Hasan Nasrallah of Hezbollah, Osama Ben Laden of al Qaeda, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi of ISIL, or the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei of Iran?

Quote 1:

“A pagan people has prevailed strongly against us, and they have already cruelly laid waste and occupied with tyrannical violence everything... they have slain many thousands, as if they were herds of beasts... Our brotherly love demands that we lay down our lives for the liberation of our brethren.”

Quote 2:

“She [a certain city] seeks therefore and desires to be liberated and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid. From you especially she asks succor [assistance in time of distress] because, as we have already said, God has conferred upon you above all nations great glory in arms. Accordingly undertake this journey for the remission of your sins, with the assurance of the imperishable glory.”

¹⁶ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*, 37

Quote 3:

“Let this then be your war-cry in combats, because this word is given to you by God. When an armed attack is made upon the enemy, let this one cry be raised by all soldiers of God. It is the will of God. It is the will of God.”

Quote 4:

“Let those who are accustomed to wage private wars wastefully even against believers, go forth against the Infidels in a battle worthy to be undertaken now and to be finished in victory. Now, let those, who until recently existed as plunderers, be soldiers; now, let those, who formerly contended against brothers and relations, rightly fight barbarians; now, let those, who recently were hired for [poor wages], win their eternal reward. Let those, who wearied themselves to the detriment of body and soul, labor for a twofold honor. The sorrowful here will be glad there, the poor here will be rich there, and the enemies of God here will be his friends there.”

The answers will appear later in this chapter.

In this section, I will:

- Show how concepts of Christian violence arose in our Christian history.
- Demonstrate that contemporary Muslim “terrorists” have no monopoly on violence.

As you read, look for theological similarities between Christianity of the time of the Crusades and the theology of today’s Islamic Fundamentalism.

The Dynamics Behind the Climate

The focus of this brief presentation is not on the military events of the Crusades. Rather, it is an attempt to look at the *ideas, thought patterns, and spiritual dynamics* that created a climate or system that allowed and encouraged the existence of the Crusades. If we focus on these things, what we learn from history becomes relevant for us today. The dynamics that created the climate or system include social, political, psychological, and spiritual factors. Important names and factors surface: Gregory VII, Constantine, Charlemagne, tendency for humans to be prejudiced, relics, fear of purgatory, hell, mass conversions to Christendom, and Urban II are but a few. Daring to stop and reflect might help us detect similar ideas, thought patterns, and spiritual dynamics that continue to exist in our world today, not only within Islam but also within Christendom or the West.

One of the texts that has been greatly abused over the centuries is Matthew 27:25: “*All the people answered ‘Let his blood be on us and on our children.’”*

This was the response of the Jews to Pilate’s appeal to release Jesus rather than have him crucified. Christians over the centuries, including during the time of the Crusades, have abused this text, giving free expression to their innate anti-Semitic tendencies.

How do we deal with this text? Some accuse Matthew of being prejudiced and adding this verse to his gospel. Others believe that the Jews of that one generation were punished severely for their actions. That punishment took place in A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans. Making this text inclusive of all Jews through the centuries is an anti-Semitic interpretation. I believe that the verse applied only to the generation of Jews who participated in taking Jesus to the cross.

Another text that has been abused over the centuries is a prophecy about Ishmael: *“He will be a wild donkey of a man. His hand will be against everyone and everyone’s hand against him, and he will live in hostility toward all his brothers.”*¹⁷

One of my friends sent me this commentary on this text:

“The context of compelling Hagar to return to Abraham in Genesis 16 is significant. This is a passage of blessing and promise, not a declaration of a curse. Moreover, the phrase ‘hand against everyone and everyone’s hand against him’ is a description of power. Same is true of the phrase ‘wild donkey of a man.’ This is a desirable trait—one indicating strength and independence. There is nothing pejorative about this passage. Tragically, the NIV translates ‘to the east of all his brothers,’ as ‘in hostility to all his brothers.’ What God is saying here in Genesis 16 to Hagar is this: ‘Return to Abraham. Your offspring, the slave, will now no longer be a slave. The slave will be an equal; a powerful and independent equal.’ That is the promise to Hagar. That is how Hagar is compelled to return to the intolerable life with her mistress. Genesis 16 is not a curse on Ishmael. It is a blessing!”¹⁸

Here is a [38 minutes lecture](#) by Mike Kuhn the author of the book *Finding Hagar*. This video is very much worth watching.

Even if it were a curse—and it’s not—it would apply only to Ishmael and his immediate descendents. To assume that this is a prophecy about all Muslims around the world throughout the centuries is simply racist. Do all Muslims today come from the bloodline of Ishmael? Are Nigerian Muslims, Indonesian Muslims, Pakistani Muslims, Turkish Muslims, and Iranian Muslims the descendents of Ishmael? Even if a small fraction of the 1.8 billion Muslims in the world today has a bloodline traced back to Ishmael, what right do we have to demonize all Muslims, throughout the centuries, and link them to Genesis 16:12?

In the past, white Americans used the Scriptures to justify racism against African Americans. White Afrikaans in South Africa justified the Apartheid regime from the

¹⁷ Genesis 16:12

¹⁸ *Finding Hagar* by Mike Kuhn

Scriptures, as well. We need to be careful that we do not hijack Genesis 16:12 and other related passages. Demonizing Muslims and making it justifiable to hate them only makes us racists.

The Cross Became a Sword

If the Satan is very smart and wants to bring damage to the church, he could facilitate the conversion of an African autocratic President to Islam and with time that whole nation might become Muslim. That is a victory for the devil.

The greatest victory for the devil is the Crusades. Satan managed to change in the minds of Muslims since 1099 AD and all through the Muslim world today the meaning of the cross. The cross was intended to mean Jesus laying down his life for us and we in turn lay down our lives for people. With the Crusades the new meaning of the cross in the minds of Muslims throughout the centuries, is killing them under the banner of the cross. This is the greatest victory that Satan achieved in our history with Muslims. I call it the first hinge in our history with Muslims. Today the church is facing a similar challenge to the challenge that the church faced before the Crusades and I call it the second hinge. With the first hinge, Satan attacked the Muslims with a veil over their eyes by changing the meaning of the cross. As a result of 9/11, the second hinge in our history with Muslims, Satan attacked the Christians, not only in the West but all over the world. Satan wants Christians to react violently against 9/11 and other events all over the world culminating in ISIS/ISIL/IS and omitting Muslims from the Great Commission. If we consciously or unconsciously omit Muslims from the Great Commission, it will be no longer the Great Commission. It will become the great omission. The church is at crossroads. Are we going to kill them or lay down our lives for them?

The following is a summary of a book written by Fred Wright, *The Cross Became a Sword: The Soldiers of Christ and the First Crusade*. In a few instances in which I quote Wright directly, I will supply the relevant page number. For brevity's sake, I present the summary of Wright's book in a numbered list; the points are not necessarily in chronological order. If you are like me and you enjoy reading history, please read the following about our history.

1. *Constantine* (280–337 A.D.) was proclaimed Caesar at York in Britain in 306 A.D. upon the death of his father. He had high aspirations to expand his rule. Before the battle of Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D., Constantine in a dream caught a sign of the cross in the sky and received the word, "*In this sign [of the cross] conquer.*" He ordered that the sign of the cross be painted upon the shields of the troops. In the year 313 A.D., through the edict of Milan, Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire. By the year 324 A.D., he became the emperor of the whole empire. One wonders about the depth of his relationship with Christ because in 326 he had his wife and son put to death—just one year after his

deep involvement in the council of Nicaea which produced the Nicæan Creed.

Before the conversion of Constantine, followers of Christ were perceived as a cult. They were severely persecuted under Nero (54–68), Decius (249–251), and Diocletian (284–305). With Constantine’s conversion, Christianity became a recognized and legitimate religion. It became an advantage to be a Christian. The emperor, who used to be the persecutor of the church, had become its defender, supporter, and promoter. Bishops accompanied Constantine in his wars, praying for his success. With time the persecuted became the persecutors and backed Constantine in his program to demolish pagan religions. The power of God shifted from the church to the state.

2. Certain aspects of *Augustine’s theology*.¹⁹ Augustine of Hippo (354-430 A.D.) argued that the intention behind punishment was to make the person punished grateful and happy. The one imposing the punishment should be motivated by love. Punishment was to be understood as an act of kindness and love to those who were being put to death and were damaged by their sins. Elijah killed the prophets of Baal, fulfilling God’s command.²⁰ Paul commanded the church in Corinth to hand the sinner to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that the spirit might be saved.²¹

The most-read book at the time was Augustine’s *City of God*. His thoughts permeated not only the clergy’s circles but also the educated laity. *“The idea of a holy war being meritorious and even desirable had come to be established by the mid-ninth century. Pope Leo IV (Pope 847–855) declared that anyone losing his life in battle while in defense of the Church would receive a reward in heaven. The concept of heavenly reward was amplified by Pope John VIII (Pope 872–882) who declared that those dying in a holy battle received forgiveness of their sins. Leo IV and John VIII also introduced the idea that those dying in battle [against Vikings and Arabs] receive the status of holy martyrs.”*²²

3. *Charlemagne* (768–814 A.D.) was crowned by Pope Leo III as emperor over what is now modern France, Germany, and Italy. His passion was to draw close ties with the papacy (church and state). He perceived himself as a Davidic type of emperor, establishing a “Christian empire.”
4. The situation in the West between 325 and 1000 A.D. went as follows: The western part of the empire fell to “barbarians” in 476 A.D., only 150 years after Constantine. For several hundred years thereafter (the so-called “Dark Ages”),

¹⁹ In the next chapter I will cover the life and relevant theology of Augustine in more detail.

²⁰ 1 Kings 18:44

²¹ 1 Corinthians 5:5

²² Wright, Fred, *The Cross Became a Sword* (Herts, U.K.: RW Publishing, 1995), 104.

there were no real states, only gradually emerging ones. During this period—before 1000 A.D.—these emerging states were often subservient to the church and its associated orders (monasteries and monks). There was always tension. By 800 A.D., much of Western Europe had been consolidated by Charlemagne. There was an uneasy partnership between the church and the state that did not last. There was great competition between church and state (Pope and Holy Roman Emperor) during the 11th and 12th centuries, which were also the years in which antipopes—a “pope” set up against the one chosen by the church laws, usually nominated by the Holy Roman Emperor, and creating a schism with the church—were most numerous.

5. The great division in 1054 A.D. split the church *into Eastern and Western Christianity* with two capitals, one in Constantinople and the other in Rome. The spiritual climate of the church, especially the Western church, included Christian teachings along with superstitions, paganism, witchcraft, and folklore. Many people were gripped with fear of disease, famine, wars, and above all, fear of punishment in the afterlife. Punishment could come either in purgatory or in hell. In purgatory, the soul gets purified of sin while awaiting transit into heaven. Purgatory could be short, or it could last for one thousand years, depending on the kind of life the person lived on earth. Purgatory time could be shortened by prayer, masses, indulgences, and treasuring and protecting the relics. The relics of the greatest importance were those associated with Christ: the cross, the empty tomb, the nails, the manger, and the shroud. A piece of the “true” cross was discovered within the Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem. This became the most important relic in Christendom. It was venerated and taken to battles in the same way the arc of the covenant was taken to battles during the Old Testament time.
6. *Pope Gregory VII* (Pope 1073–1085 A.D.) sought to establish the supremacy of the clergy over the laity. Furthermore, under Gregory, a theology began to develop that sanctioned Christian violence. From this complex situation emerged what was called “*milites christi*,” Christ’s militias.
7. *Conversions to Christendom*. Another factor that contributed to the climate of the time was the kind of conversions taking place. Many of those who were recruited to the Crusades were perhaps not converts to Christ but converts to Christendom. There was no transformation of lives on an individual basis. Many of those recruits were men with violent pasts. Given the opportunity to join the Crusades, they continued to practice violence but for a new cause. The only difference was the sign of the cross on their shields and uniforms. Perhaps their tendencies toward violence were given justification by the “noble” cause that Urban II and others provided.

8. *Martyrdom*. For some Christians there was virtue in suffering and death as a witness to faith. Some came to believe that Christ Himself suffers in the body of the martyr and defeats the devil there. In Rome, a roll of honor of the martyrs was celebrated in the yearly church calendar. Furthermore, there was a popular belief that martyrs had an incredibly special place in the heavenly hierarchy, right below the Virgin Mary, the angels, John the Baptist, and the apostles. Below the martyrs came the virgins, the widows, the innocents, and the penitents. At the time of Pope Gregory VII, martyrdom in battle was highly esteemed. Martyrdom was not to be feared but embraced. It was a new baptism in the blood of Christ. Those who were killed in battle went straight to paradise.
9. *Cry of the martyrs for revenge*. The church at that time understood this cry in light of Revelation 6:9–11. Martyrs entered paradise wearing white robes and called on the Lord to avenge their blood.
10. *Eschatology and the sleeping redeemer*. As the first millennium was ending, a renewed expectation of the imminent return of Christ fascinated those who were seeking redemption from their impoverished lives. The character of the Messiah had undergone changes in the minds of some Christians. Fred Wright says:

“There was an expectation of a Christian redeemer who would be the last emperor. He would redeem Jerusalem from the foe and battle with the Antichrist. This event would usher the return of Christ in glory to establish the kingdom of God on earth... Charlemagne was an obvious candidate to be an archetypal last emperor... After his death in 814 A.D., despite the fragmentation of his empire, the eschatological hope not only continued but grew... Charlemagne had not died but was simply sleeping in a mountain retreat until the glorious day when he would be restored to the living world as an eschatological figure. The Christians clung to the motif of the last emperor and saw in him not only one who would defeat the infidel, but also raise them from their state of poverty.”^{23, 24}

11. *The theology of indulgence*. Many Christians believed there was a possibility of canceling sins by the intercession of the church personified by its leader. Penalties could be reduced, and the period of purgatory could be shortened. The treasury of merit that was accumulated in heaven, because of the sacrifice of Christ and the righteous acts of the saints, could be tapped by the desperate and impoverished Christians. The pope had the keys to this treasury.

²³ Wright, Fred. *The Cross Became a Sword* (Herts, U.K.: RW Publishing, 1995), 68–69.

²⁴ The similarities between this doctrine and the Muslim Shiite doctrine of the Hidden Imam are amazing.

12. Pope Gregory VII took the theology of Augustine a step further. *“The neighbor is the one who is part of the church only. Action was to be taken against all of those outside the church, be they infidels or lapsed Christians. Inside the church heretics were considered rightful subjects of armed correction, endorsed by the motive of showing love towards them by the punitive action.”*²⁵
13. Inception of the Crusades by *Pope Urban II*. This pope was waiting for an opportunity to reunite the Western and Eastern churches by invading the Muslims, and an opportunity came that sparked the idea of the Crusades. Pope Urban II received a message from Alexus I, the Eastern Roman emperor, for assistance in defending the Eastern (Byzantine) empire against the incursions of the Seljuk Turks, who were making it difficult for European Christians to make pilgrimages to Jerusalem. Urban eagerly responded to Alexus, seeing an opportunity to reunite the Western and Eastern churches. Urban changed the concept of the pilgrimage into an armed enterprise—a holy war. Those who were recruited to this holy war were rewarded with indulgence that wiped out the penalties of sin. Muslims were presented to the “holy warriors” in dehumanized terms. They were aliens to God, agents of the devil, and servants of the Antichrist. Urban elevated the Crusaders from serving the apostle Peter, who was limited to the see—the official seat, or center of authority, of a bishop—of Antioch, to serving Christ everywhere around the world. In his short-sightedness, Pope Urban II promised the warriors that if they entered a holy war against Muslims, they would be saved. Eternal salvation was promised to those who shed the blood of Muslims or died in battle.
14. From 1000 to 1300 A.D., the *church’s power grew and became politicized*. During this period, the Crusades took place, and the *Inquisition* began in 1233, initiated by Pope Gregory IX. Both the Crusades and the Inquisition are considered major blots on the reputation of the church, for unspeakable atrocities were committed by Christian leaders and their followers in each of these quite different “campaigns.” During these centuries and the two that followed, the mother church in Rome dedicated itself to the destruction of “splinter groups” of Christians who divorced themselves from, or were driven out of, the “real church.” The damage caused by the Crusades is monumental. Jews were massacred in Europe as the Crusaders headed toward Jerusalem. In the Middle East, Jews, Muslims, and Eastern Christians were massacred. Most of those killed were unarmed. The crusading armies captured towns, cities, and villages, raping, looting, and killing. They left behind a trail of blood and smoke of destruction for generations. By the time the crusading movement came to an end, all Eastern Christendom, which was pleading for help, was under Muslim rule. The

²⁵ Wright, Fred, *The Cross Became a Sword* (Herts, U.K.: RW Publishing, 1995), 105. Does this remind you of the Hidden Imam for whom that the Shiites are waiting?

Crusaders regarded Eastern Christians as inferior and heretical. *“The savage intolerance of the Crusades to the Muslims was a direct causation of the intolerance towards Christianity by Islam. Under the Muslim reign, the Christians were the first to suffer... The Crusades were not simply dressed in religious clothing, they were understood to be the action of faith. Triumphs were ascribed to divine intervention... They were God’s army doing God’s work.”*²⁶

Perceptions of the Crusades

During this bleak picture were some rays of sunshine. One bright ray was Francis of Assisi (1181–1226 A.D.) who visited Egypt during the Crusades. In his humility and love, he lived out his famous quote: *“Preach the Gospel always; if necessary, use words.”* *Waging Peace on Islam* by Christine Mallouhi covers St. Francis’s life as he related to Muslims and how Muslims perceived him.²⁷

Now for the answers to the short quiz at the beginning of this chapter. These were not quotes made by Muslims such as Osama Ben Laden or by the Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei of Iran. The first quote is from a letter written by Gregory VII. (This is the pope who forced Emperor Henry IV to stand barefoot in the snow for three days begging the pope to rescind his excommunication.) He was writing to Count William of Burgundy in 1074 asking for help in defending the Christians in Jerusalem.

The second quote is from a sermon by Pope Urban II in 1095. He was addressing soldiers committed to fighting the Crusades, appealing to their chivalry, patriotism, and allegiance to the church for the purpose of the promised salvation. He urged them to be emissaries of God in conquest.

The third quote is the emotional climax of a sermon by Pope Urban II in 1095 to a congregation of bishops.

The fourth quote came from a sermon by Pope Urban II in 1096 summoning the masses to redeem their empty lives by joining the Crusades.²⁸

These pronouncements by two distinguished popes (the Roman Catholic Church has beatified both) are virtually indistinguishable from the statements we hear from radical Islamists today. Does this surprise you?

Today, Palestinians and Israelis view the Crusades with special meaning. For Palestinians, the Crusades being forced to leave symbolize the ultimate triumph of resistance to foreign invasion and colonization. The Crusaders had to admit defeat at

²⁶ Wright, Fred, *The Cross Became a Sword* (Herts, U.K.: RW Publishing, 1995), 261.

²⁷ Mallouhi, Christine, *Waging Peace on Islam* (London: Monarch Books, 1988).

²⁸ All four quotations: Wright, Fred, *The Cross Became a Sword* (Herts, U.K.: RW Publishing, 1995).

the end. For the Israelis, the Crusades are contrasted unfavorably with the more successful Zionist enterprise.

How do Muslims in general perceive the Crusades? They view them not only as painful historical events but as expressions of a modern-day attitude that Christians still hold toward Muslims. This attitude is best described with these words: *“Islam is a menace that has to be defeated before it overwhelms Christendom.”*²⁹

Furthermore, if the United States after leaving Afghanistan and the Taliban gains more control of the country, Muslims will see Christendom/the West, or the neo-Crusaders, defeated again by Muslims like the Crusaders before them. The Soviets, a superpower at the time, were pushed out of Afghanistan by the Muslim Mujahedeen. It will communicate the message that with time, sooner or later, even the superpowers of the world—including the United States—will collapse before the vanguards of Islam. It will give some Muslims greater hope for a future Muslim empire, the Caliphate.

By September 2021, twenty years after 9/11, the situation on the ground in Afghanistan looks like this map reveals. The Taliban controls the areas in blue, the Afghanistan government controls the areas in white and the areas in red are contested. After the US military leave Afghanistan, the battles will start in the red areas on the map between the Taliban on the one side and the Afghanistan government troops on the other side. There will be some aid provided from the US military in terms of intelligence and drones. In the final analysis will possess and control the contested areas in Afghanistan.



So far in this section, we have looked at how concepts of violence arose in our “Christian” history and how these have obvious parallels to Islamic Fundamentalism

²⁹ Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 225.

today. Now we will consider the issue of how to heal the wounds of the past and build a better future in our relationship with Muslims.

Healing the Wounds

There are public and spoken motives for war, and there are private and unspoken (but no less real) motives. The deeper and *real motives* for waging a war rarely get mentioned by the leaders. How was the church in Rome able to rally warriors, gather leaders, and then justify the slaughter? How did the papacy justify the first “Christian army” in history? How was the pope able to declare and legitimize a “Christian Jihad”? What were the public motives communicated to the soldiers going to war? Was it for the purpose of assisting and protecting the Christians living in Jerusalem? Was it that the Muslim Caliphs were oppressing the Christians in Jerusalem? Was it because Turks were robbing and torturing Christian pilgrims journeying to the Holy Land? Was it to regain the right to possess the holy sites in Jerusalem? Were these reasons worthy of thousands of deaths on both sides? Did these reasons justify creating hatred, fanaticism, and animosity with Muslims for centuries?

We need to understand that the Crusades were fought under the flag of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ and his “blessing.” They were marshaled by “Christian” leaders who were supposed to be the “vicars” of Christ. Superficial Christianity and nominal conversions among those with violent pasts explain why some Crusaders fought. But perhaps the biggest motivation was the explicit promise of salvation for martyrdom and a healing from their sins. Joining the Crusades offered them purpose and assurance of salvation. Are suicide bombers in Islam that different?

The first crusade was the most successful from a military point of view. Accounts of this action are shocking. Historian Raymond of Agiles described the capture of Jerusalem by the Crusaders in 1099:

“Some of our men cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows, so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into the flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were to be seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one’s way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened at the temple of Solomon, a place where religious services were ordinarily chanted. What happened there? If I tell the truth, it will exceed your powers of belief. So let it suffice to say this much at least, that in the temple and portico of Solomon, men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins.”³⁰

As humans who are always dealing with our contradictions—dignity on the one hand and depravity on the other—we will always struggle with our personal agendas and

³⁰ <http://gbgm-umc.org/UMW/bible/crusades.stm>

ulterior motives. We humans have become such experts in covering up our dirty motives and justifying our evil deeds that at times we convince ourselves we have pure motives, and we end up believing our self-deception. One of the godliest men I know, who has been an example to me on how to live for Christ, once said: *“I do not know if I have ever had a pure motive.”*

Many times, the reasons given for waging war are not the real reasons. Instead, they are for the purpose of mobilizing the masses to get behind the war and to energize a sense of patriotism. We use words such as “collateral damage” to reduce our guilt and to justify our decisions. The enemies, on the other hand, have an advantage in seeing through our motives. They are not duped by sound bites or political and religious slogans used internally to justify war. The enemy can more easily smell the real agenda or our ulterior motives. How did the Muslims read the motives for the Crusades? How did they see the “collateral damage” done in the name of Christ? Did they agree with what was declared, or did they identify the *real motives*? David Bosch, addressing the issue of the Crusaders’ motives, writes:

“It is really impossible to regard the Crusades as ‘missionary wars,’ even if many ordinary Christians saw them in this light. Pope Urban II, however, had no thought of converting the Muslims by military action; rather, Islam was a menace that had to be defeated before it overwhelmed the church.”³¹

Earlier in this chapter the question was posed, *“How long will it take Muslims to forgive and forget?”* That depends on if they are allowed and encouraged to forgive and forget. If I have a wound on my arm and it keeps getting hit, it will have no chance to heal. The pain caused by the Crusades continues to surface in the minds of most Muslims whenever they are treated by Western superpowers with an attitude similar to the attitude behind the Crusades. How do Christians in the West view Muslims? Do we see them as *“a menace that has to be defeated before it overwhelms the West?”* If this is our true motive, how do we deal with this attitude in light of what the Bible teaches? How do Muslims perceive the unconditional support for the state of Israel by many Christians in the world, especially Americans? Do they see hidden motives? What do they see as the real reason for the war in Iraq? Is it for the purpose of propagating democracy? Do they see us as honest people?³²

In [*The Crescent Through The Eyes of The Cross*](#), Ahmad said: *In your current U.S. Middle East policy, are you fueling and strengthening fanaticism within Islam? In your neo-Crusader attitude, have you unleashed Islamic fanaticism and escalated violence?”*

³¹ Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 225.

³² In 2007, a friend in England sent me a photo of a bumper sticker from his country that said: “Be kind to America; otherwise, they will bring democracy to your country.”

It looks like Ahmad sees U.S. Middle East policy under President George W. Bush as a continuation of the Crusades. He calls it “Neo-Crusader’s attitude.” In contrast, Vatican II and, some decades later, Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis helped most Muslims forgive and forget the damage that Urban II and the Catholic Church caused. The damage caused by the Catholic Church impacted the reputation of all Christians in general and the reputation of Catholics in particular. Pope John Paul’s statements about what should be done with the issue of Israel, Palestine, Jerusalem, and Iraq made him a figure worthy of great respect by all Muslims. His humility and the humility of Pope Francis and their outreach to Jews and Muslims brought more respect to Catholicism throughout the world. Pope John Paul II was the first pope in history to enter a mosque. Imams and Muslim leaders from many countries attended his funeral. I hope that the popes who follow will continue the legacy rather than reverse the progress. Certainly, Pope Francis is continuing the legacy.

In *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*, I presented one of the biggest assumptions I have: *The Muslim majority are being pulled in one of two directions*. On one hand, they are being pulled by moderate, open-minded Muslims toward *moderation and open-mindedness*. On the other hand, they are being pulled toward *fanatical Islam and Islamic Fundamentalism*. My assumption is that we, as Christians, along with the governments of the United States and Europe, have a role to play in tipping the scale among Muslims in the direction of moderation and open-mindedness for the sake of the Gospel.

Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis helped do this. They helped heal wounds. They were perceived as a Christ-like men of God and men of justice and peace. In contrast, many famous Christian leaders in America appeared as warmongers after 9/11. Which of the “two Christianities” will Muslims consider the main representative of true Christianity? With which of the “two Christianities” did President George W. Bush and Donald Trump align themselves with in their policies in the Middle East? Let us never forget that the greater *war* waging today in our world is *for the souls and minds of Muslims*. It is much easier to reach out and connect with a moderate, open-minded Muslim than with a fanatic. The Great Commission is at stake. Muslims will soon become a quarter of humanity.

The prophet Micah points out our need to humble ourselves before God and avoid self-deception: “*With what shall I come before the Lord and bow down before the exalted God? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves a year old? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I offer my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*” (Micah 6:6–8).

God’s requirements of us are crystal clear in this passage:

- Act justly.
- Love mercy.
- Walk humbly with God.

When mainstream Muslims think of Christians and U.S. policy in the Middle East, do they “smell” justice, love, mercy, and humility?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of the chapter. Do you identify with the Canadian Christian’s statement: *“How long will it take for Muslims to forgive and forget?”* What do you think of Ahmad’s statement: *“In your neo-Crusaders’ attitude, are you unleashing a new Islamic fanaticism and escalating violence?”*
2. Look again at the four quotations at the beginning of the chapter. What biblical passages motivated Gregory and Urban to come up with this theology?
3. What are the characteristics of a “just war”?
4. How can I listen to a Muslim friend in humility without having to agree fully with his/her arguments?
5. What can you practically do, in light of Micah 6:6-8, to show love, justice, and mercy to the people of the Middle East? How can you become an ambassador of good will?
6. As a Christian, what can you do in your sphere of influence to help heal the wounds and tip the scales in the direction of strengthening moderate and open-minded Muslims?
7. When ISIL men decapitate people while chanting "Allahu Akbar" (God is great), are they driven by Satan?
8. When the Crusaders marched on with the sign of the cross on their uniforms and on their shields as they killed people, did they transform the meaning of the cross in the minds of those whom they encountered? From what to what did the meaning change? Is Satan behind this?

CHAPTER 3
DAVID BOSCH ON COLONIALISM

“We have civilized many nations during the peak of our Empire days. Muslim countries need our civilization and our Christian culture; otherwise, they will never catch up with the 21st century.”

—A British Christian

-Ahmad, in his presentation, said:

*“Every Muslim country in the world, except Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia has been colonized by Western Christian nations such as Portugal, Britain, France, and Holland. These Western Christian countries came and depleted our natural resources. Under the guise of wanting to civilize us and introduce democracy, they wished to impose on us Muslims an inferior status. Some of our Muslim leaders wonder, is this same colonialism continuing today under a different name? If the war in Iraq and its aftermath go your way, what kind of control will you exercise over Iraq and its neighbors?”*³³

Those who have watched the movie *Gandhi* will have a different perspective from the British Christian quoted above. The following is an online synopsis of the movie, which shows how Richard Attenborough’s award-winning epic recounts the life and times of Mahatma Gandhi.

“In South Africa, a young Indian lawyer was brought down from the train for refusing to ride second-class with a first-class ticket. Fed up with the unjust political system, he joined the Indian Congress Party, which encouraged social change through passive resistance. He was put in jail, which resulted in masses of low-skilled workers conducting strikes to support his non-violent yet revolutionary position.

Back in India, Gandhi renounced the Western way of life and struggled to organize Indian labor against British colonialism. As a result of one of the strikes, many British soldiers lost their lives, so the British government responded by slaughtering 1,500 Indians. Enraged, the ascetic, spiritual leader continued to preach pacifism until he had led India out from under the tyranny of British imperialism.”

I have watched this movie several times. Each time, I was deeply moved with emotions and longings: anger over the evils of colonialism, deep admiration for those who practice non-violent resistance, and a desire to read again E. Stanley Jones’s book, A

³³ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*, 36.

Song of Ascent. Jones was a missionary in India in the twentieth century. His book helped me to see Indians through his eyes when I traveled to India. Jones not only knew Gandhi personally, but he also was an international peacemaker.

Historical Roots

In preparing to write this chapter, I found myself immersed again in the book *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission* by David Bosch. *Transforming Mission* has become a classic and is one of the most used books at seminaries for the study of missions' history. Because Bosch's book is so extensive, I have found another book to be very helpful, Stan Nussbaum's *A Reader's Guide to Transforming Mission*. In 160 pages, Nussbaum summarizes the small print of Bosch's 520-page book. In this chapter, I rely heavily on both Bosch's and Nussbaum's books.

Another book that was helpful was authored by David Gushee with the title *After Evangelicalism*. He described how racism was justified even though it was unbiblical.

Just to pick three of the most relevant items, these would include the doctrine that all humans are made in the image of God and thus are of equal worth to God (Gen. 1: 26–27), the doctrine that all human beings are kin because all are descendants from Adam and Eve (Gen. 2: 4–25; 3: 20), and the doctrine that God is the author of moral law, which includes universal bans on murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness (Exod. 20: 1–17). But the European imperial powers decided to believe heresies instead. They believed in the unequal worth and value of, and the ontological differences between, persons based on their “race” and “color,” and they came to believe that God's moral law against murder, adultery, theft, and covetousness did not apply in the relation between European conquerors and those they conquered.

Christian faith taught that people should be humble, aware of their mortality, sinfulness, and dependence on God. But the European conquerors instead succumbed to the deadly sin of pride. They believed they were the best people on earth, the most advanced, the agents of civilization, the bearers of faith. Their church told them that they had the right and duty to conquer, colonize, and enslave non-European populations. As Willie Jennings has put it, these Europeans developed a “diseased social imagination.” It infected the entire world. Christian faith should have served as a brake on this pride and the wicked behaviors that it spawned. But Christianity had long since been fatally compromised by nationalism and proximity to political power. Rather than speaking with the prophetic voice of an Isaiah or Jesus, European Christianity became a cheerleader for colonial conquest and enslavement, in the name of Jesus.

Certainly, the direct encounter between light-skinned Europeans and darker-skinned peoples whom they conquered and enslaved played a significant role.

We were white and Christian and European and better; they were “red” and “brown” and “black,” and heathen and native and worse. We were normal humans, or peak humans, and they were less-than-that humans. We were entitled to rule. They were slated to suffer, serve, and die. All of this with God’s supervision and blessing. The single best term to describe this kind of vision is white supremacy. Whiteness confers supremacy.³⁴

According to Bosch, the roots of colonialism lay in the church’s perverted interpretation of mission. Here is a quick and brief review of how the understanding of mission evolved and eventually became the foundation for colonialism.

Biblical History

The Old Testament writings provided some essential starting points for New Testament mission. We see God in the Old Testament stepping into the flow of human history in a way unlike other gods of the nations. He chose Israel to be his representative among the nations, and he gave her promises. In the New Testament, we see the sending of Jesus to our planet as the ultimate example of God stepping into history and fulfilling many of the promises he gave Israel. When Christ came as the Messiah, something happened not only to Israel but to the whole world.

Jesus announced and demonstrated the arrival of the kingdom of God. With the arrival of the kingdom and reign of God, the Torah assumed a secondary importance. Jesus not only announced the reign of God, but he also became *king and lord* over his disciples—not just their *teacher*. With his resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit, his kingdom and reign were more deeply rooted in the hearts and minds of his followers.

After the ascension of Christ and Pentecost, the Jewish followers of Jesus in Judea saw their identity as a sect within Judaism, alongside the existing sects of Sadducees, Pharisees, Zealots, and Essenes. Stephen, a Hellenistic Jew, and follower of Christ, was stoned by the Jews who were *defending* Judaism against his criticism. He was perceived by those who stoned him as a Hellenist and not as a *real Jew*. His martyrdom was followed by a wave of persecution that dispersed many followers of Jesus to surrounding regions, while the apostles stayed in Jerusalem.

Antioch was the third-largest city in the Roman Empire. The church there was made up of more than just Jews. Gentiles worshiped alongside the Jews in Antioch. The apostles sent Barnabas to Antioch to examine this unusual church. Upon visiting them, Barnabas got caught up in what God was doing and recruited Paul from Tarsus to help him in that ministry. Paul was a Hellenist with a rabbinical education—a combination of both worlds. The Antioch church ended up sending Paul and Barnabas out as missionaries to the Gentile world. The success of Paul’s ministry among Gentiles triggered more fears

³⁴ <https://a.co/69BU5Fw>

among the Jews in the church in Jerusalem. This led to the convening of the Council of Jerusalem.³⁵ As a result, the door was formally opened to the Gentiles.

In 70 A.D., a revolt in Jerusalem against the Romans led to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman army and the banishment of the Jews. The Sadducees collapsed, the Zealots were killed or went underground, and the Essenes withdrew to their hiding places. Only the Pharisees continued because their connection was to the Torah and the synagogues rather than to the temple and Jerusalem. By this time, the Jesus movement included large numbers of Gentiles, so by 85 A.D. (or perhaps earlier), the Pharisees declared an open confrontation with Christians and forbade them from entering the synagogues.

Initially, followers of Jesus saw themselves as a movement within Judaism. In the next stage of their development, they realized that they had a mission to the Gentiles. In the third stage, they realized that the Gentiles did not need to follow the Law of Moses. And finally, they became a new religion.

The Importance of History

Many Christians think that we do not need to look at history. Instead, they reason that we should go back to the Bible and deduce from it our understanding of missions for our day. I believe that looking at history is essential to understanding our prejudices. Without looking at history, we will not be aware of our blind spots. David Bosch affirms this assumption: *“It is an illusion to believe that we can penetrate to a pure gospel unaffected by any cultural and other human accretions.”*³⁶

Bosch observed the existence of several models in the transformation of mission through history:

- The New Testament model or models (Jesus, Matthew, Luke, and Paul)
- The Eastern Orthodox model (100–600 A.D.), driven by John 3:16
- The Roman Catholic model (600–1500 A.D.), driven by Luke 14:23
- The Protestant Reformation model (1500–1800 A.D.), driven by Romans 1:16–17
- The Protestant model of the enlightenment and modern era (1800–today), driven by Matthew 28:18–20 and Luke 4:18–19
- New paradigms continuing to emerge

We will look very briefly at the Eastern Orthodox model. More discussion will be given to Augustine and the Roman Catholic model, because in that model we find the roots of colonialism.

³⁵ Acts 15. In chapter 18 in *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*, the Council of Jerusalem is addressed.

³⁶ Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 182.

The Eastern Church Model

The driving New Testament text for missions at this stage was John 3:16—*"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."*

Although Christianity was banned in the early second century, the message continued to penetrate the Roman Empire because of the winsome lives of ordinary Christians. In the second and third centuries, church leaders tried to reach out to the upper classes of society. They reformulated the categories of their faith in language that appealed to those influenced by Greek philosophy. They presented Christianity in user-friendly language to the educated. At the same time, they presented Christianity in stark contrast to the pagan religions of the Eastern world. Early in the fourth century, the ban against Christianity was lifted, and people were encouraged to become integrated into Christianity.

When Christianity became the religion in power, concern shifted to 1) *protecting the message from getting corrupted* and 2) *preventing the spread of heresies*. From the second to the sixth century, a transition took place: The Christian message moved from being a *breaking news story* to becoming a *creed*. *"The Christian message was in the process of being transformed from the announcement of God's imminent reign to the proclamation of the only true and universal religion of humankind."*³⁷

Important things got lost in this shift: the message of the Good News that affects the totality of life, ethical demands, doctrines, and the spontaneous witness. Constantine made Christianity the religion of the empire. As a result, *"The church announced a political theology in which the church and state were inseparably united. It did not know what poison it was letting into the system. It could not foresee what historians have noted since... The bite of the pro-Christian state proved more deadly to mission than the bite of the anti-Christian state had ever been."*³⁸

The amalgamation of state and religion was not only characteristic of the pre-Christian Roman Empire, but of all historic empires—Egyptian, Persian, etc.—of that geographical area, including the Jewish empire of David and Solomon. The people of that region and era knew of no other pattern. In this light, Islamic convergence of state and religion becomes understandable and not so different from Christianity.

The Impact of Augustine

The Western part of the church, the Roman Catholic Church, agreed with the Eastern Orthodox Church on two issues: the *power in the unity between church and state*, and communicating the message of the church in the form of a *creed*. There were also differences between the two branches of the church. The Eastern church focused on

³⁷ Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 196.

³⁸ Nussbaum, Stan, *A Reading Guide to Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 54.

incarnational theology, while the Western church focused on salvation theology, namely the substitutionary death of Christ.³⁹ With time, the polarization between the Eastern and Western churches increased; Augustine contributed to that polarization.

The teaching of Augustine (354–430 A.D.), bishop of Hippo (a city in what is now Algeria), is central to Christian history. He launched the medieval paradigm, and for centuries to come the Catholic and Protestant churches were deeply impacted by his teaching. He taught that salvation was a free gift to everyone who belonged to the church. This salvation could not be earned by good deeds, nor could it be lost.

Augustine's theology was affected by two major factors. The first was to confront two heretics, Pelagius and Donates, whose teachings were poisoning the church. The other factor was the fall of Rome in 410 A.D. The fall of the Western Roman Empire had an earthshaking effect on Latin Christians, who assumed that the unity of the church with the state was divinely ordained and unconquerable. *"Christians tended to look upon the empire, and particularly the capital, as being as unconquerable and permanent as the Catholic Church. They were therefore traumatized by the success of the Goths. If Rome can perish, what can be safe?"*⁴⁰

To help Christians regain their equilibrium, Augustine wrote his famous work, *The City of God*, in several volumes. He divided reality into two realms, the spiritual and the earthly. He described the earthly realm as temporary and perishable, while the spiritual realm is eternal and unshakable. Rome could fall, but the "city of God" would never fall. He wrote that the world we live in is not entirely evil, but it is evil enough to make it wrong for us to put our hopes in it for peace and justice. The city of God, in contrast, is the spiritual society of all believers who live under God's reign and keep their eyes focused on him and their eternal destiny. The citizens of the city of God need to influence the world by living a life that is attractive and marked by high ethical standards. Furthermore, the citizens of the city of God need to provide counsel and guidance to the people of this world.

The theology of Augustine paved the way for two models:

- Mission through war, colonization, and political control
- Mission through monasticism

The remainder of this chapter will focus on the first of these models.

³⁹ Augustine held to the "ransom" theory, not the penal substitution theory, which was introduced by Calvin in 1500.

⁴⁰ Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 220.

Direct and Indirect Missionary Wars

The missionary paradigm of the Roman Catholic Church (600–1500 A.D.), was driven by Luke 14:23—“*Then the master told his servant, ‘Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.’*”

In this parable of Jesus, the master sent his servant on a mission, gathering people to his banquet. He encouraged the servant to do whatever it took to fill the banquet hall. The papacy at that time understood the phrase “*compel them to come*” to include the use of all means, even force, to bring people into the church. To our modern minds, it’s hard to imagine how a text like this could be interpreted in a way that justifies direct and indirect Christian wars.

Baptism was the rite of passage that offered conquered people the opportunity to gain citizenship into the city of God. The church had the responsibility to protect its baptized citizens from all deviation. Nussbaum’s book says:

“If any citizens stray from the church teachings, Christian rulers are to discipline them with fines, imprisonment, torture, or even execution. All the pressure, which looks totally incomprehensible and indefensible to us today, was regarded as discipline intended for the eternal good of the citizens concerned.”⁴¹

As the church became inflated with power, it became acceptable for Christian rulers to use violence against those outside the church for *their own good*. International law in medieval Europe denied non-Christians their human rights. They had rights only as *creatures* of God, but once they were baptized, they had more rights as *children* of God. It was for the political, material, and religious advantage of outsiders to get baptized and enter the church.

During the first three centuries, the church did not sanction war. It was Augustine who introduced the ethics of war. Although he believed that wars were evil, he argued that at times there was a need for *just wars*. The purpose of the just war was not conquest but peace.

“In addition to the ‘just war,’ Augustine spoke of ‘war sanctioned by God,’ in which the two parties could not be judged according to the same yardstick; one side fought for light, the other for darkness; one for Christ, the other for the devil.”⁴²

Augustine’s teaching did not go far enough to justify a religious war against non-Christians. It was Gregory the Great who advocated such wars for the expansion of

⁴¹ Nussbaum, Stan. *A Reading Guide to Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 2005), 58.

⁴² Bosch, David. *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 224.

Christendom. The aim of these wars was the conquest and subjugation of non-Christians, thus paving the way for mission work and the missionaries who followed the conquests. When Charlemagne conquered the Saxons, the terms of surrender included baptism. The aim of the Crusades, however, was not to convert Muslims to Christianity but to get rid of them and to be free from their control.

Since the second Vatican Council (1962–1965), the Catholic Church has rejected most of this theology. Pope John Paul II, in his life and message, improved the reputation of the Catholic Church in the minds of most Muslims. Pope Francis went even further. I hope the popes who follow will continue that tradition.

Muslims' Perceptions

It's easy to look at a mirror and see our faces, but is it possible to see the backs of our heads? After getting my hair cut, my barber holds a mirror behind the back of my head. This double-mirror setup helps me see the back of my head as well as the front and sides. Similarly, we will not be able to deal with our prejudices and blind spots unless we look with double mirrors. Our church history provides us with a front-mirror perspective of what we believe and why we believe it. Listening with humility and a desire to understand, even from those who do not agree with us, is the other mirror that gives us a more complete picture. What can we learn from Ahmad?

In his presentation, Ahmad said:

*“Every Muslim country in the world, except Iran, Turkey and Saudi Arabia has been colonized by Western Christian nations such as Portugal, Britain, France, and Holland. These Western Christian countries came and depleted our natural resources. Under the guise of wanting to civilize us and introduce democracy, they wished to impose on us Muslims an inferior status. Some of our Muslim leaders wonder, Is this same colonialism continuing today under a different name? If the war in Iraq and its aftermath goes your way, what kind of control will you exercise over Iraq and its neighbors?”*⁴³

Is there truth in what Ahmad says about the history of Western colonialism and Western attempts to control Muslim nations? What can we learn from our colonial history? Is there some truth in what he says about the motives for the Iraq war?

The reasons for going to war against Iraq, according to the U.S. government, began with Iraq possessing weapons of mass destruction. When WMD were not found, the *declared reason* changed to removing the despot Saddam Hussein and promoting democracy. Muslims in general, and the Arab world, assumed that the *real reasons* for going to war on Iraq, right from the start, had to do with oil and the strategic position of Iraq. Dr. Rashid Khalidi, the chair of Arab studies at Columbia University, puts it very bluntly:

⁴³ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of The Cross*, 37–38.

“The Iraq War was a golden opportunity to unfetter the imperial presidency, cut Congress down to size, muzzle the press, profit the private interests with which they were connected, and conclusively show the world that it could have no influence over the actions of the United States.

Khalidi goes on to say: “Occupying and imposing a new regime in Iraq, the United States may be stepping, intentionally or not, into the boots of the old Western colonial powers, and even worse, may be doing so in the region that within living memory concluded a lengthy struggle to expel those hated occupations.”⁴⁴

American journalist Larry Everest wrote a controversial but highly documented book on this subject called *Oil, Power and Empire*. In his book, which was received with suspicion in America, Everest provides documents affirming the suspicions of Muslims regarding the motives for the Iraq war.

“Overthrowing Saddam Hussein, creating a client state in Iraq, and opening up Iraq’s economy are key components of a much larger, multi-faceted global agenda in which energy resources play a crucial role. The point is not that the Bush inner circle waged war simply to secure Iraq’s oil for American profit or consumption. Yet petroleum was a central and major objective—if understood in the larger context of global empire. Most broadly, the 2003 invasion and occupation were designed to solidify American political/military domination of the energy heart of the world... to ensure the smooth functioning of U.S. capitalism, strengthen its competitive position in world markets, and increase U.S. leverage against potential rivals. In short, oil is a powerful instrument of hegemony.”⁴⁵

Is there truth in what Larry Everest is saying about motives for the Iraq war? Is Ahmad justified in asking the question: “*If the war in Iraq and its aftermath go your way, what kind of control will you exercise over Iraq and its neighbors?*” We need to remember that Muslims perceive Europe and America as Christian nations. To them, Western nations represent Christendom, just as Western Europe did in medieval days.

⁴⁴ Khalidi, Rashid. *Resurrecting Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), xiii and 8.

⁴⁵ A book review of *Oil, Power and Empire: Iraq and the US Global Agenda* by Larry Everest (Monroe, Maine, Common Courage Press. 2004).

Neo-Colonialism

In his presentation, Ahmad says:

“When you try to convert me, I feel like you want to impose upon me your values. Back home, many Muslims who do not understand you like I do think that your strategy is, under the guise of freedom, to penetrate and destroy our culture, and especially our youth, with immorality and sex through your movies. Our values are very precious to us. We do not want to lose them because of globalization. Our values are primarily honor, loyalty, courage, politeness, passion for justice, generosity, hospitality, and fear of God.”⁴⁶

Ahmad makes a distinction between what he thinks after living in the States for several years and what the Muslim masses, who do not have authentic U.S. exposure. He does share their concern, however, about the negative impact of globalization by a superpower. It becomes more dangerous for Muslims when they see globalization serving the interests of one superpower.

Recently, the respected Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Foundation, a Dutch organization, issued its report of a fact-finding mission. The report focuses on colonialism in Tibet, but it is equally applicable to how Muslims perceive colonialism:

“In many cases this ‘colonization of the mind’ has important political implications. Replacing a traditional belief system of a people by an alternative frame of reference often amounts to changing the entire identity of this people. As this distinct identity is often a vehicle of nationalist aspirations, the modification of this identity may be a means of diminishing (potential) political resistance to colonial rule.”⁴⁷

As we looked for the roots of colonialism, we started with biblical history, both in the Old and New Testaments. Then we looked at the gradual and steady perversion of biblical texts over the centuries, especially since the time of Constantine. We looked at Augustine and how his theology paved the way toward colonialism. Finally, we looked at the suspicions of Muslims and how they see not only the continuation of the spirit of colonialism, but new cultural and religious neo-colonialism. In the next chapters, we will look at the history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

⁴⁶ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of The Cross*, 42–43.

⁴⁷ www.tibet.com/Humanrights/Unpo/chap5.html

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of this chapter. What do you think about the statements made both by Ahmad and the British Christian about colonialism?
2. The difference between the biblical model and the Roman Catholic model of the middle ages is huge. What factors contributed to that change in paradigms?
3. At the time of Augustine, Christians assumed that the unity of the church with the state was divinely ordained and unassailable. *“Christians tended to look upon the empire, and particularly the capital, as being as unconquerable and permanent as the Catholic Church. They were therefore traumatized by the success of the Goths. If Rome can perish, what can be safe?”*⁴⁸

Is there similar thinking today among some Christians?

4. David Bosch wrote: *“In addition to the ‘just war,’ Augustine spoke of ‘war sanctioned by God,’ in which the two parties could not be judged according to the same yardstick; one side fought for light, the other for darkness; one for Christ, the other for the devil.”*⁴⁹
Do we use these same categories the same way Augustine did? Do you see this perspective among Muslims as well?
5. The contemporary Catholic Church has moved radically from the medieval paradigm. The Vatican Council of 1963 and, more recently, Pope John Paul II and Pope Francis aided this shift. Has the Protestant church experienced a similar transition? Why or why not?
6. What truth do you hear in what Ahmad and other Muslims say about neo-colonialism?

⁴⁸ Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 220.

⁴⁹ Bosch, David, *Transforming Mission* (New York: Orbis Books, 1991), 224.

CHAPTER 4
THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN:
THE HISTORY OF THE ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

“The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciences that they are a defeated people.”

—Moshe Yaalon, Israeli army chief of staff, August 30, 2002

Ahmad, in his presentation of the Muslim worldview, said:

“Since the creation of Israel in 1948, and the events that led to it, Israel has been a thorn in our side. Before that time Muslims did not have a big problem with Jews. Those responsible for the Spanish Inquisition and the Holocaust came from a Christian background, not a Muslim background!”⁵⁰

In my book, [The Rumbling Volcano](#)⁵¹, I begin with this story:

“On the 6th of June 1967, on the way to the American University of Beirut (Lebanon) to attend one of my classes, I heard people in the street shouting that the war with Israel had broken out. For days we had been anticipating it, since Gamal ‘Abdul Nasser inspired within us tremendous hope that the Arabs could beat Israel and help the Palestinians gain back their legitimate rights. I dashed to the university hoping to find someone with a battery radio. The university was almost deserted. As I entered the cafeteria, there were about forty students huddling over a little radio. The batteries were weak, and the sound was extremely low. As I huddled along with everybody else, I sensed that I was a part of a solidarity belonging to people who believed in Pan Arabism. Religious differences were nonexistent at that moment. It was of no relevance whether a person was a Christian or a Muslim. What really mattered was that all of us around that radio were Arabs. Somehow, I was able to suppress temporarily that lingering theological view that God helped establish the state of Israel in 1948 in fulfillment of prophecy.⁵² But at that moment, nationalism was much closer to the heart than theology.

⁵⁰ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of The Cross*, 37.

⁵¹ Jabbour, Nabeel, [The Rumbling Volcano](#) (Pasadena, California: Mandate Press, 1993), 3–4.

⁵² Over the years my convictions regarding that issue have evolved and given me breadth of understanding. A chapter on eschatology appears later in this Addendum.

In the midst of that euphoria of anticipation, excitement, and hope, a student climbed on a table and frantically started screaming, “*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar*”(God is great or transcendent). The other students joined him in loud voices declaring, “*Allahu akbar, Allahu akbar.*”

“A Christian would not use that terminology to praise God. This was Muslim terminology. There I stood, a Christian—silent, stunned, cheated, and confused. Was I one of them? Was this my war, my cause, or was it the monopoly of the Muslims?”

Over the years, I have wondered about Christians. Can they experience harmony between what they believe about end times and their need to practice justice? In these next two chapters, I will deal very briefly with the history of the conflict between Israel and Palestine. In Chapter 6, we will look briefly at end-times theology and how it affects our perceptions.

A Launching Pad

One of my objectives is to provide you an opportunity to get deeper into this subject by reading excellent sources on this important topic. It will be impossible to do justice to the topic of Israel and eschatology in three chapters. I will only *scratch the surface*, but I hope to arouse your curiosity and *increase your hunger* to know more. I hope you will seek to go deeper in your personal research and study. A good starting point is to look carefully at those maps describing the disappearing of Palestine.



History gets colored by the people who write it, and usually it is written by the victors. If Nazi Germany had won WWII, how would the history of Europe and America have been written? Current events are also covered subjectively. The Arabic-language TV station Al Jazeera presents news about Iraq different from CNN’s American journalists. Can you imagine the coverage, since November 19, 2005, by Al Jazeera and other Arab news agencies, of what they saw as the “*massacre by American Marines of 24 innocent Iraqi*

civilians,” which took place at [Haditha](#), a town in Iraq? The American press was completely silent on this event until *Time* magazine disclosed the story three months later. Can you imagine how the media in the Muslim world presented what happened at the [Abu Ghraib prison](#)? There is a difference not only in the contents of the reporting, but also in what is perceived as cover-up.

It is natural that people in the West are exposed to one side of the coin when it comes to current events, while Arabs in the Middle East and Muslims all over the world are exposed to the other side. For true understanding to occur, both groups need to see the other side of the coin.

Because the audience for my book is English-speaking Christians, I would like to help expose you to the *other side of the coin* which is the Arab side. It is actually a great experience to stand in the shoes of those who are different and try to see the world through their eyes. We might not agree with everything they say, but they will surely stretch us and challenge us. Many years ago, I spent several hours listening to a Malaysian friend explain to me the history of his country. I wanted to see the history of Malaysia through his eyes. At another time, an American friend and I sat with an Ethiopian friend in Addis Ababa and listened to him explain in detail the history of his country because we wanted us to see Ethiopia through his eyes. Both were unforgettable experiences.

Personal experience intertwined with history often makes for enjoyable reading. Here are a few suggestions for books that shed light on the Israeli-Palestinian tension. I have quoted excerpts from the back covers to whet your appetite.

1. [Blood Brothers](#) by Elias [Chacour](#). An unforgettable story of a Palestinian Christian priest who calls Jews his blood brothers and works for peace in Israel.⁵³

Elias Chacour, in 2001, said to a group of Americans who support Israel: “You who live in the United States, if you are pro-Israel, on behalf of the Palestinian children I call unto you: give further friendship to Israel. They need your friendship. But stop interpreting that friendship as an automatic antipathy against me, the Palestinian who is paying the bill for what others have done against my beloved Jewish brothers and sisters in the Holocaust and Auschwitz and elsewhere. And if you have been enlightened enough to take the side of the Palestinians—oh, bless your hearts—take our side, because for once you will be on the right side, right? But if taking our side would mean to become one-sided against my Jewish brothers and sisters, back up. We do not need such friendship. We need one more common friend. We do not need one more enemy, for God’s sake.”

⁵³ An American friend told me that reading this book was life-transforming.

2. [Light Force](#): *A Stirring Account of the Church Caught in the Middle East Crossfire* by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen. In the midst of never-ending debates, protests, riots, suicide bombings, and broken peace initiatives, one man came to make a difference. He sought out church leaders and urged them not to flee the violence but to stay and strengthen their congregations to become a force for change. He faced the fiery rhetoric of Muslim fundamentalists head on and told them that the only hope for peace is the Prince of Peace. This book is a dramatic new mission for God's Smuggler, Brother Andrew.

At a time when most people demonized Hamas, Brother Andrew connected with them at a critical time in their history and treated them as humans loved by God. Since then, his impact continues as a man of peace who can speak the truth in love. When I saw the life of a friend transformed from reading this book, I decided to read it. I found this book refreshing and helpful. It is a must.

3. [Ten Myths About Israel](#) is written by the Israeli historian, Ilan Pappé. The "ten myths" that Pappé explores—repeated endlessly in the media, enforced by the military, accepted without question by the world's governments—reinforce the regional status quo. He explores the claim that Palestine was an empty land at the time of the Balfour Declaration, as well as the formation of Zionism and its role in the early decades of nation building. He asks whether the Palestinians voluntarily left their homeland in 1948, and whether June 1967 was a war of "no choice." Turning to the myths surrounding the failures of the Camp David Accords and the official reasons for the attacks on Gaza, Pappé explains why the two-state solution is no longer viable. This is a very powerful book and is very much worth reading.
4. [Palestine](#): *Peace Not Apartheid* by President Jimmy Carter. I have read this book twice. From all the books I have read, this is the most concise, easy-to-read, and helpful book on the subject. Furthermore, it is highly documented with valuable appendices. I find only two weaknesses. The major weakness in this book is that President Carter was unable to clearly point out the difference between Christian Zionism and the premillennial position of eschatology. He wanted to attack Christian Zionism and not dispensationalism nor the premillennial position, but he failed to do that in a clear manner. His Christian readers assumed that he is attacking premillennialism when in reality he wanted to attack Christian Zionism.

For more scholarly, in-depth books that are highly documented, I recommend these:

1. [Whose Promised Land](#): *The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* by Colin Chapman. Chapman is a British lecturer in Islamic studies and is the author of several books. *Christianity Today* says of this book: "Highly illuminating and gives an excellent analysis (with thought provoking questions) of both sides of the problem."

I have read this book three times and have learned a great deal from it. It is required reading in the seminary courses I teach.

2. [The Looming Tower](#): *al Qaeda and the Road to 9/11* by Lawrence Wright.

A sweeping narrative history of the events leading to 9/11, a groundbreaking look at the people and ideas, the terrorist plans and the Western intelligence failures that culminated in the assault on America. Lawrence Wright's remarkable book is based on five years of research and hundreds of interviews that he conducted in Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Sudan, England, France, Germany, Spain, and the United States. I have read this book twice. It is an excellent book.

3. [Resurrecting Empire](#): *Western Footprints and America's Perilous Path in the Middle East* by Rashid Khalidi. Dr. Rashid Khalidi of Columbia University is knowledgeable of Middle East history. American readers might disagree with some of his conclusions, but it is a book worth reading. Nobel Prize winner Joseph Stiglitz said about this book: "Rashid Khalidi's extraordinary book is enormously relevant for our times, especially in light of America's growing involvement in the Middle East."

According to an American evangelical professor I know, *Resurrecting Empire* is the best book available today on Middle East politics (as of Summer 2006).

4. [Whose Land Whose Promise](#) by Gary Burge.

Because events in the Middle East continue to escalate in tragic complexity, Christians still struggle with making sense of it all. In this updated version of "Whose Land? Whose Promise?," Gary Burge further explores the personal emotions and opinions, and sharpens his theological argument in the context of the new developments surrounding the crisis in the Middle East. "Whose Land? Whose Promise?" offers insight for the thoughtful reader on an explosive topic and challenges personal truths on peace.

This book is one of the required readings that I have in the course that I taught on Islam and the geopolitics of the Middle East.

For a thorough reading of the history of the land, Colin Chapman's book *Whose Promised Land*, is a must. Chapman starts out with the history of the land—from Abraham to the return from the Exodus to the kingdoms of Saul and David, to the exile in Babylon, to the return from Babylon, to the land under the Persians, the Greeks, and the Romans. He goes on to cover the land under the Byzantine Empire, the Arabs and Seljuk Turks, then under the Crusaders and the Mamluks and Ottoman Turks. He then details the history of Palestine under the British Mandate 1922–48, then the U.N. Partition Plan of 1947, and finally the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Chapman then covers the conflicts between Israel and the Palestinians since 1948, and the peace process since the Madrid talks in 1991. He also presents the different interpretations of the same facts as made by Israelis, Arabs, and Americans.

A Bird's-Eye View

At the beginning of this chapter, we talked about the two sides of the coin. Arabs tend to see one side when they hear about current events; Westerners tend to see the other side. Are you willing to take a look at the Arab and Muslim side of the coin? It will take humility, openness, and a desire to learn. As you continue reading, ask God to help you be a learner.

I have found that I learn a great deal from those I partially disagree with. When it comes to politics, I do not learn anything new from those I fully agree with. They only confirm my bias and fill in details. I find it hard to learn from those I completely disagree with, but I need to grow in that area. I get stretched by those who can expand my thinking and my assumptions. One person who does this is Dr. Khalidi, the Muslim professor who occupies the chair of Arab Studies at Columbia University. Dr. Khalidi's book, *Resurrecting Empire*, is a helpful tool to see things from an Arab and Muslim perspective. From now to the end of the next chapter, I invite you to stand in the shoes of Muslims and see the history of Palestine through their eyes, as presented by Dr. Khalidi. It will not be easy, but it will be worth the effort.

Professor Khalidi points out that Britain—not the United States—was behind the creation of the “problem” of Palestine. On November 2, 1917, with the Balfour Declaration, Britain put all its weight behind creating a Jewish state in a land that was overwhelmingly Arab. All that has transpired since then followed from that declaration. Later, the United States would take the baton from Britain and has since put all its weight behind Israel. How did this happen?

There are various reasons why Americans feel a strong allegiance to Israel. One main reason is the way in which many evangelicals read and interpret the Bible's end-times theology, also known as eschatology. According to Dr. Khalidi, many evangelical Christians are swayed toward pro-Zionist sentiment rooted in a certain interpretation of eschatology. Furthermore, because of their pioneer heritage, Americans identify with the Jews' pioneering spirit, assuming that the Jews have tamed Palestine as European emigrants “tamed” America.

Arabs in general, and Palestinians in particular, have failed to influence America like the Jews did. For example: They could not come up with an alternative interpretation to biblical eschatology that does not predispose Christians to pro-Zionism.⁵⁴

- They failed to communicate their strategic value to U.S. interests in the Middle East.
- They failed to form an influential lobby like the powerful Israeli lobby. They were also ineffective at utilizing the media as a tool to express their perspective.
- From the 1940s until now, Palestinians have demonstrated ignorance of how American politics worked.
- They could not help Americans separate their compassion/guilt about the Holocaust from the fairness of the Palestinian cause.

America's Evolving Support of Israel

Woodrow Wilson was the first American president to publicly support Zionism. He paved the way for awarding to Britain the mandate for Palestine. In doing this, Wilson went against the advice of his experts. Under the protection of the British mandate, by 1939 the Zionist movement had created the DNA of a viable Jewish state. On May 15, 1948, President Truman recognized the state of Israel and supported the Zionist movement, although most of his foreign-policy advisors were against that action. He justified his decision by declaring: *"I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."*⁵⁵

What does the Bible say about decision-making? What makes a decision right or wrong? Does pleasing constituents in America always lead to justice for the people in the Middle East?

President Truman's decisive support for the establishment of the state of Israel did not initially spoil America's relationship with the Arab world for the following reasons:

- Arabs blamed Britain, not America, for the Palestinian tragedy.
- The United States was not perceived as a colonial power like the many European countries steeped in colonialist history.
- Most rulers of Arab and Muslim countries did not have much experience with the American government in the 1940s and 1950s.
- In 1956, the U.S. government took a powerful stand against Britain, France, and Israel in their aggression against Egypt in what is known as the Suez Canal crisis.

⁵⁴ This topic will be covered in Chapter 6.

⁵⁵ Khalidi, Rashid, *Resurrecting Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 121.

- In 1957, the United States forced Israel to withdraw from Sinai and Gaza.
- In the 1950s, the United States voted repeatedly in the United Nations Security Council to condemn Israel when need arose.
- The United States did not sell Israel military weapons until the 1960s. President Kennedy sold Israel anti-aircraft missiles, and President Johnson sold fighter-bombers to Israel. Before that, the main provider of weapons (including the nuclear reactor) to Israel was France, not the United States.
- Throughout the 1950s, the United States and other mediators made repeated attempts to solve the problem of 750,000 Palestinian refugees who fled or were driven from their homes in 1948.
- Despite being perceived as biblically biased toward Israel, until the mid-1960s, the United States was viewed by Arabs and Muslims as a relatively balanced and an honest broker.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of this chapter. What do you think of Ahmad's statement about the Holocaust? What do you think of the statement made by Moshe Yaalon?
2. President Truman justified his decision to support the new state of Israel with these words: *"I am sorry, gentlemen, but I have to answer to hundreds of thousands who are anxious for the success of Zionism; I do not have hundreds of thousands of Arabs among my constituents."*
 - a) As a Christian, how would you evaluate the wisdom of that decision?
 - b) Try to look at this statement through the eyes of a Muslim Palestinian who is still living in a refugee camp. His parents lost their home and all their agricultural land because of the events of 1948 and 1967. What do you see? How do you feel?
3. Is the opinion of the majority the standard of truth and justice in the Bible? What examples from the Scriptures come to mind?
4. Have you found it hard to stand in the shoes of Dr. Khalidi and see the history of the Middle East through his eyes? If so, what is the difficulty? What can you do to prepare yourself to learn more from Dr. Khalidi in the next chapter?

CHAPTER 5
KHALIDI ON ISRAEL AND PALESTINE

“I should much rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs on the basis of living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish State. Apart from practical considerations, my awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish State, with borders, an army, and a measure of temporal power, no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain—especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight strongly, even without a Jewish State. We are no longer the Jews of the Maccabean period. A return to a nation in the political sense of the word would be equivalent to turning away from the spiritualization of our community which we owe to the genius of our prophets.”

56

—Albert Einstein on the formation of a Jewish state in 1948

Mahatma Gandhi wrote an article on November 26, 1938, titled “[The Jews in Palestine](#).”⁵⁷ Gandhi starts the article this way: “Several letters have been received by me, asking me to declare my views about the Arab-Jew question in Palestine and the persecution of the Jews in Germany. It is not without hesitation that I venture to offer my views on this very difficult question.” This article is relatively short and is very much worth reading.

In a private conversation with Ahmad, he told me:

“When I read in Arabic the modern history of Israel and Palestine, I could tell that there is a bias in our history books toward the Palestinians and against the Jews. Now when I read the same history written by Americans and Europeans, I find that there is also a bias, but in the opposite direction. Are people in the West aware of their bias?”

I have a great deal of respect for people who can be brutally honest with themselves. I respect Ahmad’s ability to see an Arab bias. He easily could have gotten carried away by his sense of patriotism. I have an even greater respect for Albert Einstein. His writing, even before the creation of the state of Israel, is insightful. He has an amazing perspective regarding the need for the spiritualization of the Jewish community, which, according to his thinking, goes along with the genius of the Old Testament prophets.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Einstein, Albert, *Out of My Later Years* (New York: Philosophical Library, 1950), 262.

⁵⁷ <https://www.countercurrents.org/pa-gandhi170903.htm>

⁵⁸ The prophets did indeed spiritualize their faith, moving it away from the sacrifices of bulls and rams to the offering of a meek and humble obedience and to a time when God’s law would be written on the heart. Nevertheless, at the same time they looked forward to the kingdom of God, which, in their view (and in the view of Jews generally, including Jesus’ disciples), would mean the literal restoration of the material kingdom of Israel.

As we continue our quick review of Middle East history and politics through the eyes of Dr. Khalidi, may God develop within us a broader understanding and a deeper compassion. You may disagree with Dr. Kahlidi's analysis of the situation, but please keep reading and asking God to help you see the world through the eyes of those who have lived with the consequences of the conflict. According to my New Testament professor and friend, Dr. Kenneth Bailey, Khalidi's book is the best book he has read on the subject.

America's Evolving Support of Israel

In the previous chapter, we saw that Americans were perceived as honest brokers in the Middle East before the 1967 war. Egypt and Syria were crushed by Israel in the 1967 Six Days War, and their need for weapons increased. The only available provider of weapons to those countries was the Soviet Union, which was happy to win their allegiance away from the United States. The alignment of Egypt, Syria, the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO)—and, to a lesser degree, Iraq—with the Soviet Union was perceived through Cold War lenses. The Soviets were perceived as the patrons of the Arabs.

After the 1967 war, the *classic phase* of the Arab Israeli conflict started. This phase included:

- The 1967 war
- The war of attrition along the Suez Canal between Egypt and Israel that lasted until 1970
- The 1973 war
- The 1982 invasion of Lebanon by the Israelis

According to Dr. Khalidi, the United States lost its status as an honest broker in the Middle East after the 1967 war. U.S. support for Israel started growing out of proportion, and Israel became a very close friend to America—a much closer partner than Turkey and Iran. The United States was providing Israel with F-4 Phantom fighter-bombers faster than those being used for its war in Vietnam.

The United States ignored the Palestinians and focused its attention on its relationships with the Arab states. Under Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, the primary U.S. concern was to win Egypt to its side and away from the Soviet umbrella. At the same time, the United States turned a blind eye to Israel's ambitions and repeated breaking of international law. From President Nixon onward, every American president signed a nuclear treaty with Israel under the disguised name "Nuclear Ambiguity." It essentially meant that Israel would be allowed to secretly continue its nuclear program. This is quite a contrast to America's current attitude about Iran's desire to possess nuclear power. With these actions, the United States lost its reputation for fairness as an honest broker.

In 1977 President Carter attempted, through U.N. ambassador Andrew Young, a comprehensive Middle East initiative that included the Palestinians and even the PLO. Under pressure from the powerful Israeli lobby, however, President Carter soon pulled back and withdrew. Egyptian President Anwar Sadat came to the rescue with his unprecedented trip to Jerusalem in 1977, which eventually led to the Camp David peace treaty between Egypt and Israel. Very soon after that, the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, and President Carter found himself crippled by the Iranian hostage crisis. Still, President Carter continues to be perceived by Arabs as one of the most respected American presidents.

According to Dr. Khalidi, during the Reagan years America's alignment with Israel reached new depths because of the neoconservative influence. U.S. neglect of Palestinians became policy and turning a blind eye to the expansion of settlements into the West Bank and Gaza became the norm. The right-wing Israeli Likud government found in Reagan's administration a strong ally. President Reagan's administration gave a covert green light to Israel to invade Lebanon in 1982 to expel the PLO from Beirut. What a contrast to America's intervention to stop Israel, France, and Britain in the 1956 Suez Canal crisis! By the end of the Reagan years, the rumbling volcano among the ignored Palestinians erupted in the first *Intifada* (uprising) in December 1987.

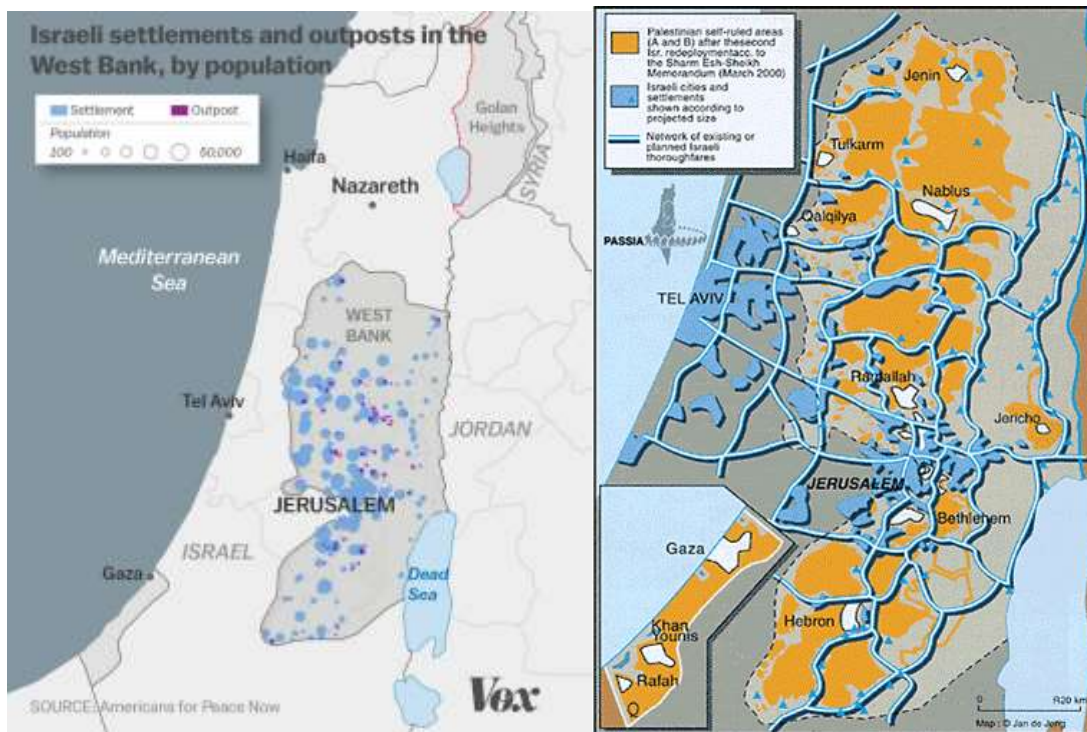
In the wake of the 1991 Gulf War, the first Bush administration, through Secretary of State James Baker, brought all parties in the Middle East—as well as international representatives—to Madrid for an unprecedented meeting. The reason for the meeting was to resolve the Arab Israeli conflict, including the issue of the Palestinians. The proceedings broke up into bilateral negotiations in Washington, D.C., between Israel and its neighbors. The United States, under Israeli pressure, enforced the following ground rules:

- Palestinians were forced to accept a Jordanian-Palestinian joint delegation.
- Palestinians were not allowed to choose their own representatives.
- Discussion on the final status between Israel and the Palestinians was excluded. Palestinians were obliged to accept an indefinite postponement of the negotiations of final-status issues such as sovereignty, statehood, settlements, refugees, final borders, water, and Jerusalem.

The Madrid talks and the bilateral talks that followed produced the Palestinian Authority (PA). The PA had limited control over the 17.2 percent of the West Bank and Gaza Strip that was divided into isolated entities by checkpoints and byroads connecting the settlements. In the meantime, Israel could continue to expand its illegal settlements in Palestinian land.



Many Palestinians thought it was wrong to continue negotiations under such unfair ground rules. Negotiations continued for years, while thousands of acres of land were confiscated, and hundreds of roads were built connecting the Israeli settlements riddling the West Bank and Gaza. The Israeli settlers in the Palestinian West Bank increased from 200,000 in 1991 to 400,000 in 2000. Israeli roads for Israeli settlers crisscrossed the West Bank and the Settlements continue to increase.



After Yitzhak Rabin was elected as prime minister of Israel in 1992, direct negotiations with the PLO started in Oslo and other places. The PLO delegation was made up of Arafat associates who did not speak English well. Neither did they understand the history of negotiations since Madrid. Furthermore, they were not proficient in the art of negotiation. These negotiations resulted in the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles signed at the White House by Rabin, Arafat, and Clinton on September 13, 1993. Since then, according to Dr. Khalidi, the Palestinian Authority has been living in a political, economic, legal, and diplomatic straight jacket.

More Recent History

With the famous handshakes between Rabin and Arafat on the White House lawn, most people believed that peace had been achieved. This was illusory. True, the PLO recognized Israel, and Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinians. But Israel did not recognize the right of the Palestinians to statehood, self-determination, sovereignty, the right to borders, and the right to determine where these borders should be. This was a far cry from real peace.

Nevertheless, because of the Oslo Accords, Israel got acceptance and recognition from much of the Arab world, including some commercial and political ties with a majority of Arab countries. With the assassination of Rabin by a Jewish right wing young man and with Netanyahu's winning the elections as the prime minister, the construction of settlements increased at a very fast pace, a primary cause of the escalating tension.

The lives of ordinary Palestinians went from bad to worse after the Oslo Accords.

- The Palestinians were partially forgotten by their Arab supporters because it was assumed their problem was solved.
- Their movements through checkpoints and closures was restricted.
- Additional bypass roads were built to connect Israeli settlements, cutting off adjacent Palestinian areas from one another.
- Palestinians' hopes and dreams of statehood were dashed as Israeli settlements constituted the true "facts on the ground."
- Palestinian Gross Domestic Product (GDP) per capita was on the decline, and unemployment rose due to the restrictions on daily travel for work.
- Yasir Arafat appointed unqualified loyalists to high positions rather than enforcing the rule of law.

After the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin in 1995, the Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, which had been continuing, bogged down. At a time when the Oslo Accords were still possibly salvageable, the United States failed to resolve the differences between the two sides. President Clinton allowed Israel to continue to drag out and delay the talks, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) maintained only partial control over about 20 percent of the West Bank and 60 percent of Gaza and the Palestinian land continued to shrink.

Despair and anger spread among Palestinians as their hopes and dreams evaporated. Their lives were getting more difficult day by day as they saw Israeli settlements in Palestinian territory increasing, checkpoints controlling their lives, and the strategic bypass roads isolating them in pockets. The volcano was rumbling again, waiting for the spark that would ignite a second *Intifada* (uprising). For nearly the entire duration of his eight-year presidency, President Clinton did not put any considerable pressure on Israel to address the important issues such as *water, refugees, Jerusalem, the settlements, bypass roads, and the right of Palestinians to a homeland.*

Four months before the November 2000 U.S. election, President Clinton invited Ehud Barak and Yasir Arafat to Camp David. Dr. Khalidi writes,

“Barak made a stingy take-it-or-leave-it offer to Arafat that was predictably rejected. The offer would have divided the West Bank into three disconnected segments and gave Israel complete control over the borders of a state that would thereby have been much less than sovereign.”⁵⁹

Sholomo Ben Ami, Israel’s foreign minister at the time, has conceded that what was offered to Arabs in Camp David was unfair and unacceptable. The “generous” offer made to Arafat included about 95 percent of what he was hoping for. That number is deceiving. It is the five percent he was not given that was most important to the Palestinians, including the Israeli settlements and the bypass roads connecting them. Furthermore, it meant that Israel controlled all of Palestine’s borders, including the eastern border of the West Bank next to Jordan. How can there be an independent, viable state if it is riddled with settlements connected by bypasses and with controlled borders? It was a Swiss-cheese offer that did little more than create a large prison for Palestinians.

According to Dr. Khalidi, the January 2001 Sharm al-Sheikh negotiations at the Egyptian resort of Taba was most promising. The Israelis and Palestinians came to close agreement and narrowed the gap on many important issues such as sovereignty, Jerusalem, and refugees. But time was getting late at the end of President Clinton’s presidency, and negotiations stalled. The days of Barak’s government were also coming to an end. Again, the Palestinians’ dreams were dashed.⁶⁰

The spark that finally caused the volcano to erupt came in the year 2000. Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to a famous mosque in Jerusalem accompanied by a huge security contingent. This insult sent a message that Israelis controlled the temple mount and would come and go as they pleased anywhere in Israel and the Palestinian territories. Endless years of negotiations that did not achieve results had primed the Palestinians for an explosion, and Sharon provided the spark. The Palestinian political entities Hamas and Islamic Jihad started the second *Intifada* as an unarmed mass protest Sharon’s provocation. Stone throwing by Palestinian youth was met by automatic weapons and sniper fire from Israeli soldiers. The U.S. media barely mentioned the Palestinians killed and wounded, and they failed to report that the Israeli army had been planning for an all-out assault on the

⁵⁹ Khalidi, Rashid, *Resurrecting Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 141.

⁶⁰ It is interesting that at the end of President George W. Bush’s presidency, there was new interest in addressing the issue of Israel and Palestine. Will history be repeated, and will it again be too late?

Palestinians. Instead, the Israeli and American media focused on reporting the suicide bombing by Hamas and Islamic Jihad on Israeli civilians.

The world was shocked by the suicide bombings, *and rightly so*, but most did not realize that the suicide bombings did not come until five weeks after the start of the *Intifada* and after the death of about 140 unarmed Palestinian civilians. The U.S. media barely mentioned that long-range sniper rifles, missiles, helicopters, and tanks were used by the Israelis on heavily built-up Palestinian civilian areas. Any attacks on Israeli soldiers inside the occupied territories, any resistance to the occupation, was branded by the U.S. media as “terrorism.”

In the first three years of the *Intifada*, the number of Palestinians killed, and wounded was 26,053. In that same period, the number of Israelis killed, and wounded was 6,752. The majority of casualties on both sides were unarmed civilians. The stories of Israeli casualties were reported humanely and in detail, while the 3.5 million Palestinians imprisoned in their cities and towns were hardly mentioned. Furthermore, the U.S. media lumped Arafat in with Hamas and Islamic Jihad. The process of demonizing Arafat began gaining speed.

Shortly after George W. Bush was elected president in 2000, Ariel Sharon won Israel’s February 2001 elections and became prime minister. Although President Bush was the first American president to speak clearly of an independent and viable state for the Palestinians, his pre-election exposure to Israel came through the eyes of Sharon. According to Dr. Khalidi, the dominant neoconservatives in the Bush administration were inclined to wholeheartedly accept the hard-line Likud analysis. (Likud was Prime Minister Sharon’s party.) The neoconservative bias was based on ignorance and misinterpretation of the history and culture of the Middle East. The Likud analysis of the situation included the following:

- The Oslo negotiations were a mistake.
- Arafat was demonized and became a lost cause.
- The Palestinian Authority was made up of terrorists.
- Force was the only appropriate method to deal with the Palestinians.
- The Israeli army was justified in what it did and continued to do.
- A determined refusal to negotiate.

The Bush and Sharon administrations’ ideological agreement on what constituted terrorism converged after 9/11. After the occupation of Iraq in the spring of 2003, the Bush administration sensed a need to communicate concern about Palestine to the Arab world. There was an attempt to energize the almost dead “road map” produced by the United States, Russia, the European Union, and the United Nations. As Professor Khalidi notes:

“It reflected the views of the American drafters... Originally prepared for presentation in mid 2002 but was delayed again and again at the behest of the Sharon government... The Israeli government wanted to gain more time for its army to impose a military solution, in pursuit of the mirage of a “defeat” of the Palestinians. However, the aim of the Israeli army general staff was not just the defeat of Palestinian militant groups... It was rather the defeat of the entire Palestinian people, via the imposition of draconian collective punishment of the whole population of over 3.5 million men, women and children in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. This involved curfew imposed on tens of thousands of people at a time for days and even weeks, the enforced closures of scores of villages and towns, over a hundred check points that prevented normal movement, all of this combined with punishing raids on heavily populated built-up areas by Israeli troops and armored vehicles in which civilian casualties frequently exceeded the number of militants killed, wounded, or captured. The objective of this campaign was clearly evidenced by the statement of the Israeli army chief of staff Moshe Yaalon: ‘The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people.’”⁶¹

With time, both the Israelis and Palestinians grew weary of the violence and concluded that it had failed to bring their opponents to their knees. At that critical time in the spring of 2003, President George W. Bush decided to throw his weight into the “road map.” On June 29, 2003, Hamas and other militant Palestinian groups decided to initiate a unilateral three-months cease-fire mediated by the Egyptians. Israel in turn withdrew some of its troops from Gaza and Bethlehem. However, much more was needed to halt the violence because:

- The Israeli settlements continued to expand.
- The Israeli occupation of West Bank and Gaza remained in place.
- Israel’s government and the militant Palestinian groups remained committed to a military solution.
- No timetable was set for both sides regarding accountability to obligations.
- Israel continued to attack Palestinian leadership.
- The Palestinian Authority failed to wage a civil war against militant groups.
- There was no assurance that minimal Palestinian aspirations would be met.

⁶¹ Khalidi, Rashid, *Resurrecting Empire* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2005), 147–148.

The cease-fire lasted only two months. The Palestinians claimed they were responding to Israel assassinating Palestinian leaders. The Israelis conversely claiming that they were responding to Palestinian suicide bombers killing innocent civilians.

The latest unofficial effort, made by moderate former Israeli and Palestinian officials, took three years of negotiations, and resulted in the *Geneva Accord*. These negotiations dealt with issues that other negotiations avoided, such as:

- The fate of Israeli settlements
- The borders of a Palestinian state
- The status of Jerusalem
- The Palestinian refugees

The Geneva Accord demonstrated that if moderates on both sides are supported by the international community, peace can be achieved. Former President Jimmy Carter was quoted in a December 2003 article by Associated Press writer Ravi Nessman: *“It is unlikely that we shall ever see a more promising foundation for peace [than the Geneva Accord].”*

In March 2005, Hamas announced it would take part in the Palestinian legislative elections. Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas refused to disarm militant groups before the balloting out of fear that he would provoke civil war. Perhaps Abbas assumed that if Hamas joined the election, they would lose. The problem was the corruption within the P.L.O. Had the P.L.O. not been so corrupt, it is likely that Hamas would not be in power. In September 2005, Israel ended 38 years of occupation of Gaza. Hamas claimed victory and pledged to continue its struggle against Israel. In January 2006, Hamas defied poll predictions and swept to victory in the Palestinian parliamentary democratic elections.

Reflections as Evangelicals

How can the Bible speak into this very complex and messy situation? If we can postpone bringing our end-times eschatology into the discussion, how can we objectively look at the situation with the perspective of justice?⁶²

Ahmad, in his presentation, said: *“Where is the humility and sense of justice that your Bible teaches? I love the passage in the Bible that one of you showed me: ‘With what shall I come before the Lord? Shall I come before him with burnt offerings? Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams? He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the Lord require*

⁶² In the next chapter we will get into eschatology.

of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God' (Micah 6:6–8). Like Gandhi, I am very much attracted to Christ but not to your Christianity.”⁶³

As we connect with and listen to people like Ahmad, how can we really act justly, love mercy, and walk humbly with God? Can we in good conscience, as Christians and as evangelicals, support an attitude like that represented by Moshe Yaalon’s statement? Can we support the idea that the Palestinians must come to understand that they are a defeated people?

Most Palestinians are Muslims. We cannot expect them to “turn the other cheek” to the Israelis, for this would be completely unacceptable to them. Palestinians want to be treated with dignity and honor rather than to surrender as a precondition to any serious negotiations. As we look at the Israel-Palestine issue, what biblical principle should we consider? Should the Israelis turn the other cheek to suicide bombers? Should the Palestinians turn the other cheek to the Israelis who are occupying their land?⁶⁴ Or what if both parties followed a lower biblical standard, “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”? Under that principle, many innocent people would become “blind” and “toothless.”

When my family lived in Egypt and our younger son was still in primary school, I remember having a discussion with him on the meaning of “do not resist an evil person.” I recall advising him that if one of his classmates was bullying him and started a fight, he should forgive him when there is power behind the forgiveness. “If the other boy is on top,” I told my son, “then keep on fighting until you are on top, and then forgive him.” It just did not make sense for my son to say “I forgive you” when the other boy was on top of him. At that time, I wondered if I had overstretched the meaning of “turning the other cheek.” More recently, I was exposed to another perspective in understanding of what it means.

Many Muslims and Christians assume that Christ taught subservience— becoming like a doormat—when he taught his disciples to “turn the other cheek.” What Jesus actually said was: *“Do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also”* (Matthew 5:39).

What does that mean? Here is a helpful interpretation based on the historical context at the time.

⁶³ *The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross*, 42.

⁶⁴ It’s not mere occupation. Israel is expelling them from their land, choking their economy, and placing Palestinians in living situations that are barely tolerable. Palestinian land—land that belonged to Palestinian families hundreds of years before the creation of the United States—is systematically being taken from them, and there is nothing they can do.

“To hit someone on the right cheek assumes that the aggressor has hit the person with the back of his right hand. In the ancient customs of the land, this was considered a deep insult. This was how the powerful struck the powerless, the way a master struck his slave, or a Roman struck a Jew. But a blow administered with an open hand on the left side of the face was a blow struck at an equal. The difference between the two types of blows was codified in Jerusalem’s local law at the time according to some historians. A backhanded slap to the right cheek of a man’s peer was grounds to sue for punitive damages. The fine for a backhanded blow to a peer was 100 times the fine for a blow with the forehand. If a backhand was delivered to an underling, however, there was no fine. So when Jesus said to offer the left cheek, by this historical interpretation he wasn’t prescribing a blind, masochistic pacifism. He was telling his followers, effectively, ‘Confront the person offending you, forcing him to face you as an equal, but do not respond with violence in return.’ That, in the context of Jesus’ time and the social and legal codes that existed then, was a radical act of defiance. It turned the tables, forcing the stricken to accept the humanity and the equality of the one he was striking, even if he was not legally, or militarily, or politically, or economically recognized as an equal.”⁶⁵

According to this interpretation of Matthew 5:49, is it wrong for the Palestinians to “*understand in the deepest recesses of their consciences that they are a defeated people*”? Does God want the Palestinians to become a doormat? Should the Palestinians, including Hamas, be robbed of all dignity before we can treat them with some respect? If that happens, they will not be able to respect themselves because we have robbed them of their humanity. President Nasser of Egypt could not and would not have considered negotiating with Israel after the humiliating defeat of 1967. President Sadat would not and could not have considered visiting Israel after the humiliation of 1967 and before the relative victory of 1973 war. The 1973 war provided President Sadat with dignity and honor as an equal, and that empowered him to take the unprecedented journey to Jerusalem.

As Christians, aren’t we supposed to look for the underdog and defend the defenseless? Jesus gave dignity to the “despised” Samaritans by choosing a Samaritan, not a Judean, as the hero of his parable. As Christians, do we have the freedom to resign, wash our hands in despair, and conclude that nothing can be done in the Middle East except to let injustice continue?

Some of us have a hard time pursuing justice because of its incompatibility with a certain understanding of eschatology. Is there incompatibility? That is what we will discuss in the next chapter.

⁶⁵ Chapman, Colin, *Whose Holy City?* (Oxford: A Lion Book, 2004), 201.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of the chapter. What do you think of Ahmad's question? What do you think of what the Jewish genius Albert Einstein said? Is there truth in what he said?
2. Which parts of Dr. Khalidi's understanding of the history of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict do you disagree with? What are your sources?
3. Out of the books recommended in the earlier chapter, which will you read first?
4. How do you understand the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in light of Matthew 5:49 and the turning-the-other-cheek principle?
5. As a follower of Christ, how can you continue to develop and grow in your understanding of the Middle East situation? What practical steps will you take?
6. Try to stand in the shoes of the Palestinians as you look at the four maps: Do you see injustice committed against them?
7. There is an 80 minute video documentary with the title "[Peace, Propaganda and The Promised Land](#)." It is produced by Media Education Foundation. It will be worth watching alone or as a group followed by a discussion. At all the seminaries where I teach, we watch this video with a break in the middle then at the end we have a lively discussion.
8. A valuable resource is a scholarly work done by MJ Bryant with the title: "American Evangelicals and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Exposing and Overcoming Missional Blind Spots."

CHAPTER 6
CHAPMAN AND OTHERS ON ESCHATOLOGY

“The Bible is my road map. Any negotiations for peace between Israel and the Palestinians will delay the countdown to Christ’s return. Israel must not compromise by giving back any occupied territory to the Palestinians. New Israeli settlements and rebuilding the third temple are God’s will for Israel, no matter how violent the consequences. God will bless those who bless, love, and facilitate the welfare of the state of Israel.”

—A Christian from New Zealand

In a private conversation, Ahmad told me:

“I do not see much difference between some Shiites in Iran who are waiting for the Hidden Imam and Christian Zionist preachers in America. They both seem to believe that they can speed up the appearance of the Hidden Imam or the return of Christ.”

On an unforgettable Sunday afternoon in the early 1990s, I was invited by a friend from our church to visit another church for a special meeting in our city, Colorado Springs. A guest speaker from Israel was coming to explain to Christians some of the Jewish forms in the Old Testament. The friend who invited me said he would be late to the meeting, so I arrived by myself. Only about 35 people present. I was looking forward to learning more about the Jewish forms that exist in the Bible. During the singing, I noticed that most of the hymns had Jewish tunes, and none mentioned Jesus. I had assumed that the Israeli speaker was a Messianic Jew, but when the pastor introduced him, I began to wonder.

The speaker was an Israeli Jew who did not believe in Jesus. He had a kippah on his head and was a right-wing Likud party activist. After a detailed flowery introduction, the pastor asked him to explain to us some of the Jewish forms in the Old Testament. The guest speaker replied that he would focus on that topic in a future visit. He explained that there was a more pressing issue he would like to address that day. He said that in the past when Christians in America asked him the critical question, “What can we do to help?” he responded by saying: “Visit Israel, organize tours to Israel, invest in Israeli stock and bonds.” The speaker said that these answers were shallow, but now he had the right answer. He went on to describe the reason for his mission to the evangelical churches in America. He was here to visit churches and recruit them to adopt settlements in the West Bank!

He went on to describe the settlements and the settlers *as if* they were beachheads for the Gospel. When he finished, the pastor asked all of us to come forward to lay our hands on him and pray for him as we commissioned him on his important mission of visiting U.S. churches. The only two people who did not go forward were me and an older woman in a wheelchair. After the meeting ended, my friend arrived. By that time, I

was sweating in consternation. I was given a pamphlet by the organizer of the meeting, and it blew my mind. One of the conditions requested of Christians if they wanted to get involved was never to share the Gospel with the settlers or with any Jews in Israel. Didn't these Jews need to know and embrace Jesus Christ the Messiah as much as anyone else?!

Systems and a Box Mentality

A long time ago, a year or so after I came to know Christ, the book *The Late Great Planet Earth* was recommended to me, and I read it. As a young Christian, I thought Hal Lindsey's position on eschatology must be the only possible biblical interpretation of end time theology. Over the years, I learned that there are several positions on eschatology, and I learned to distinguish among them.

Throughout our church history, various people have attempted to create systems to explain biblical truth. Systems can be helpful if they are flexible. If, on the other hand, the systems become hard, tight, and brittle, they can create in the mind of the Christian preacher, or his listeners, a "box" mentality. Once we make a tight and brittle system, a box is created in our minds. We will try to squeeze every text of the Scriptures on that topic into our system or box. One of the biggest challenges for me is to continue to be a learner. I need to have flexible theological systems that can help me evaluate issues. If systems lock me up and make me hard and un-teachable, then they are counter-productive and leave me in a theological straitjacket.

One of my first introductions to systems was when an American missionary in Lebanon told me that the word "yeast" in the Bible always implied evil. There is truth in what my friend said. Jesus warned his disciples about the danger of the "yeast of the Pharisees." The mention of yeast in Matthew 13:33, however, does not fit into this system. Here, Jesus described the kingdom of heaven as yeast: *"The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."* This verse cannot be squeezed into the box of that system.

As I grew in my understanding of the Scriptures, I was happy to discover that the Bible is much broader and deeper than the systems we create. I assume that most of my readers have already arrived at conclusions regarding their end-times beliefs. To keep the integrity of the Scriptures we must go back to the source and be ready to learn. When we are open and in a learning posture the Holy Spirit may use the Scriptures and even other people to teach us underlining truth. Perhaps God will enlarge your horizons through others who might see things differently from you.

The Millennium

Revelation 20:1–6 is a key text on the Millennium, and it has been interpreted in a variety of ways.

“And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. [2] He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. [3] He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. [4] I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshiped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. [5] (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. [6] Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years” (emphasis added).

In this text, the word “millennium,” or one thousand years, is mentioned four times. How the thousand years is understood determines whether a person adheres to the amillennial, postmillennial, or premillennial position. In the diagram below, I have put these three positions on a solid line. All those on the solid line are my brothers and sisters in Christ with whom I am bound together through many things. There are many things we agree about that are more crucial and central to our faith than our beliefs about the millennium.

The two positions at the ends of the spectrum, namely Replacement Theology and Christian Zionism, which I represent on dotted lines, have gone too far and can be dangerous.



Replacement Theology

People who adhere to Replacement Theology believe that Israel has no place whatsoever in God’s economy. They believe Israel’s role is finished and is totally replaced by the new Israel, the church. I do not agree with that position. In Romans 9, 10 and 11, Paul talks about how we as unnatural branches were grafted into the olive tree, Israel. He also points out that we are now citizens in Israel. We do see in the New Testament that Jesus replaced the temple, but there is no evidence that the church fully replaced Israel. The olive tree was not pulled out from the roots and the church planted in its place. By the grace of God, we the Gentiles who put our faith in Christ who are unnatural branches were grafted into that olive tree. Many Christians speak loosely of the church being the new Israel, but we do not find that clearly stated in the Bible. John

Goldingay, an author, and professor of Old Testament wrote on why that term should be avoided.

“There is actually no point in the New Testament where ‘Israel’ denotes the ‘Church.’ Although the New Testament uses terms to describe the ‘Church,’ which the Hebrew Bible uses to describe ‘Israel,’ it does not describe the ‘Church’ as ‘Israel’ or the ‘New Israel’ or the ‘True Israel.’ The transference of such terms from Israel to the Church begins with Justin Martyr,⁶⁶ when the tension over Israel’s position which is maintained in the New Testament is lost and the Church is distancing itself over against Judaism. In the New Testament, ‘Israel’ means ‘Israel.’ The Jewish-Gentile Church comes to share in Israel’s privileges and so is described by means of the images that the Old Testament uses to describe Israel, but this does not mean in itself the Church has replaced Israel.”⁶⁷

N.T. Wright, the British Bible scholar, addressed this issue as well:

“From the earliest evidence, the Christians regarded themselves as a new family, directly descended from the family of Israel, but now transformed... Those who now belong to Jesus’ people were not identical with ethnic Israel, since Israel’s history had reached its intended fulfillment: they claimed to be the *continuation of Israel in a new situation*, able to draw freely on Israel-images to express their self-identity, able to read Israel’s scripture (through the lens of Messiah and spirit) and apply them to their own life. They were thrust out by that claim, and that reading, to fulfill Israel’s vocation on behalf of the world” (emphasis added).⁶⁸

I find N.T. Wright’s conclusion accurate and biblical. When some Christians say that the church fully replaced Israel as Christ replaced the temple, they have gone too far and are no longer biblical. The church is a *continuation of Israel in a new situation*; it has *not* taken the place of Israel.

Another factor to be considered when we look at Replacement Theology appears in Matthew 27:25. The Jewish high priests and elders decided to put Jesus to death but could not carry out the execution, so they brought him to Pilate. In the meantime,

⁶⁶ Justin Martyr (100–165 A.D.) was born in Judea in what is now modern-day Nablus. He was an early Christian apologist. His works represent the earliest surviving Christian apologies of notable size.

⁶⁷ Chapman, Colin, *Whose Promised Land: The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 224.

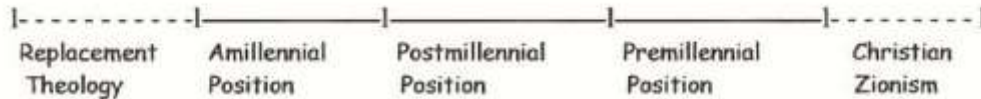
⁶⁸ Chapman, Colin, *Whose Promised Land: The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 224.

Pilate's wife, because of a dream, warned her husband against commanding the execution of Jesus. Pilate, in a dilemma, tried to bargain with the Jewish leaders for Jesus' release, but it did not work. Barabas was chosen to be released, and Pilate washed his hands of the responsibility, saying: "*I am innocent of this man's blood. It is your responsibility.*"⁶⁹ The Jewish people answered, "*Let his blood be on us and on our children.*"⁷⁰

This last sentence has been used by Christians throughout the centuries to justify their anti-Semitism. Some of those who hold to Replacement Theology might assume that all Jews since the death of Christ have suffered and have been paying for what they did to Christ. That is an anti-Semitic attitude. I believe that the generation of Jews during the fall of Jerusalem in 70 AD was punished for what they did to Jesus. It would be wrong to understand the statement, "*Let his blood be on us and on our children,*" to include all the suffering the Jews have experienced since the first century.

We will discuss the other end of the continuum, Christian Zionism, in a moment. First, let's look briefly at the three millennial positions.

Three Interpretations of the Millennium



For most evangelicals, there are many fine-tuned positions on eschatology. Here we want to focus only on the main three broad eschatological positions.

- The amillennial position
- The postmillennial position
- The premillennial position

Colin Chapman gives the following definitions of each of these positions:⁷¹

"The amillennial interpretation is that the 1,000 years in the book of Revelation is not to be understood as a literal period of 1,000 years, but rather as a symbol describing the period of time in which we now live, following the victory that

⁶⁹ Matthew 27:24

⁷⁰ Matthew 27:25

⁷¹ Chapman, Colin, *Whose Promised Land: The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2002), 173–174.

Christ has won through his death and resurrection. This was John's way of describing what is a present reality—namely the victory of Christ in which all Christian believers (and especially Christian martyrs) can share.

“The postmillennial position is that the second coming of Christ will take place after the millennium. The 1,000 years represents a period in which Christianity spreads throughout the world. At the end of this period of gradual conversion and transformation for the better, Christ will come once again to the world.

“The premillennial position holds that the second coming of Christ will take place before the millennium. The return of Christ to this world will usher in a literal period of 1,000 years in which Christ will reign over the world.”

Some people believe that the ambiguity on these three positions is intentional—God doesn't want us to know when his Son will come back. He wants us to focus on our job here on earth rather than being occupied with the exact timing of Christ's return. God wants us to understand that the future is his. He has given us the present, and we are to live it as though we do not know when Christ will return. We too often forget this as we bicker about tomorrow and neglect the urgency of the present. I believe that a Christian can adhere to any of these three without having a compatibility problem with the issue of justice in the Middle East.⁷² Christians lose their objectivity and compromise justice when they go to the far right and end up at Christian Zionism.

Christian Zionism

A simple definition of Christian Zionism is attempting to find biblical basis for political Zionism. Christian Zionists believe that the promise God gave to Abraham is eternal and unconditional.

*"To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates. The whole land of Canaan, where you are now an alien, I will give as an everlasting possession to you and your descendants after you; and I will be their God."*⁷³

As in previous chapters, I will only scratch the surface of this topic. I hope that I will whet your appetite and motivate you to go deeper into this subject. For further reading, here are a few sources that address the dangers of Christian Zionism:

1. *Whose Promised Land: The Continuing Crisis over Israel and Palestine* by Colin Chapman.

⁷² Please read Appendix B. It is an article by Mark Harlan that appeared in *Christianity Today* and is very much worth reading.

⁷³ Genesis 15:18, 17:8

2. *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon* by Stephen Sizer. The well-known leader and Bible scholar John Stott endorsed this book with these words: *"I am glad to commend Stephen Sizer's ground-breaking critique of Christian Zionism. His comprehensive overview of its roots, its theological basis and its political consequences is very timely."*

From the back cover of Sizer's book: "Evangelicals are increasingly polarized over whether Christian Zionism is biblical and orthodox or unbiblical and cultic. Stephen Sizer provides a thorough examination of the historical development, variant forms, theological emphases, and political implications of Christian Zionism. His excellent and informative survey is interwoven with critical assessment that repudiates both nationalistic Zionism and anti-Semitism."

3. *Whose Land, Whose Promise* by Gary Burge. Dr. Burge taught at Wheaton College for 25 years.
4. *Imperial Hubris: Why the West is Losing the War on Terror*. Michael Scheuer. The book was published in 2004 while Secretary of Defense, Rumsfeld was still in place. The author was one of the CIA directors who understood bin Laden well and resigned from his position in the CIA to make a statement. This book is now one of the required readings for the new CIA recruits. If this book were a required reading of all the Bush Administration personnel, we would have been living in a different world today. Osama bin Laden in an audio tape on September 7, 2007, he said: *"If you want to understand what's going on and if you would like to get to know some of the reasons for your losing the war against us, then read the book of Michael Scheuer in this regard."* He was referring to his book *Imperial Hubris*.

Although this book does not deal with Christian Zionism directly it presents an accurate and an insightful understanding of what is happening in the Middle East and the danger of putting on neo conservative or Christian Zionists' lenses.

5. "Open Letter to Kay Arthur" and "Open letter to Hal Lindsey" by Dr. Mark Hanna. An American of Arab descent, Hanna lived four years in the Middle East and understands Muslims. His two open letters came because of his concern that people around the world are confusing Christian Zionism with dispensationalism.⁷⁴ Dr. Hanna is a dispensationalist who rejects Replacement Theology. He adheres to the premillennial position, strongly disagreeing with the Christian Zionism that Arthur and Lindsey's advocate. Dr. Hanna taught at Talbot School of Theology for years and gave a series of lectures at Dallas Theological Seminary—the most famous U.S.

⁷⁴ Dispensationalism is a form of premillennialism that teaches biblical history, the present, and the future as a number of successive "administrations" or "economies" (from the Greek word *oikonomia*) called "dispensations," each of which emphasizes aspects of the covenants God made with his various peoples.

seminary that adheres to the premillennial position. [Christianity Today](#) gave feature status to Hanna's article "Israel Today: What Place in Prophecy."

The Dangers of Christian Zionism

Stephen Sizer, in chapters two and three of his book *Christian Zionism*, gives the theological basis of Christian Zionism and its political consequences. The theological basis includes the following:

- An ultra-literal and futuristic interpretation
- The belief that Jews remain as God's chosen people. God's work with the Jews is his primary focus, and his work with the *church* is a *mere parenthesis* in God's economy
- Restorationism and the return of the Jews to Palestine
- The justification of *Eretz* or Greater Israel
- The centrality of Jerusalem as the Jewish capital
- The expectation that the temple will be rebuilt
- A pessimistic view of end-times theology

These views have political consequences and affect Muslims around the world, especially in the Middle East, and their attitude toward the gospel.⁷⁵ Muslims cannot distinguish between the gospel and the powerful wrappings of Christian Zionism around it. Furthermore, to most Muslims around the world, evangelicals and Christian Zionists are synonymous. The political consequences of Christian Zionism result in the following actions:

- Empowering the Israeli lobby in America and the Western world
- Facilitating the return of the Jews to the Land
- Sustaining the West Bank settlements
- Lobbying for international recognition for Jerusalem
- Promoting the rebuilding of the temple
- Opposing a peaceful settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict

Christian Zionism moved from Britain to America and is now making its way to Christians around the world.

Stephen Sizer writes:

"Just as British evangelicals exported... Christian Zionism to the United States in the nineteenth century, so now, through the popular writings of Tim LaHaye and Jerry Jenkins, for example, evangelicals in the United

⁷⁵ It also affects the Christians who are living in Muslim countries. Let us also remember that there are Palestinian Christians who are our brothers and sisters. The book *Light Force* by Brother Andrew and Al Janssen gives an eye-opening perspective of the church's situation in the Middle East.

States are exporting their... pro-Zionism to the rest of the world, with devastating consequences in the Middle East.”⁷⁶

Mark Hanna erects a clear and necessary line separating his premillennial position from the position of Christian Zionists. To many Christians around the world, this line is hazy, and they cannot distinguish between the two. Hanna gives one of the best presentations I know of distinguishing between the two points and arguing that Christian Zionism is not biblical. A summary of his points follows.

1. Genesis 12:3 has nothing to do with the state of Israel, per se, that was founded in 1948... Genesis 12:3 did not envisage the political entity that is Israel today. It refers to *people, not to political structures*. It refers to the covenanted physical and spiritual seed of Abraham.
2. It is wrong to read the term “Israel” in the Bible as if the current nation-state of Israel is its equivalent.
3. A careful study of the remnant in the entire Bible shows that it is the seed of Abraham. Even then, it is only secondarily the seed of Abraham, for Christ is his preeminent Seed in whom and from whom the Abrahamic covenant must be understood (Galatians 3:16). From Genesis to Revelation, it is the remnant of true believers, whether in Israel or subsequently in the professing church, that is the seed of Abraham. “If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:29). This church-age remnant consists of Jews and Gentiles who savingly trust in Christ, in whom there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Galatians 3:28).⁷⁷
4. The contemporary state of Israel is largely secular—rejecting Christ and deriding the Bible as a hodge-podge of mythical folklore—and both its secularists and its so-called observant Jews reject Christ, thereby putting themselves outside the Abrahamic seed in both its primary (Christ, the Seed) and secondary (true believers who constitute the Body of Christ) senses.⁷⁸

⁷⁶ Sizer, Stephen, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 25.

⁷⁷ According to Dr. Hanna, “Even the Israel that will enter the Millennium is a relatively small remnant (Romans 11:25), for two-thirds of the Jews in the land of Israel will perish during the Great Tribulation (Zechariah 13:8, 9) and all unbelieving, Christ-rejecting Jews will be purged and removed from the earth by divine judgment at the end of the Tribulation (Ezekiel 20).”

⁷⁸ Dr. Hanna elaborates on this by writing, “The Christian community in the state of Israel today is a very small remnant, constituted by ‘messianic Jews’ and other ethnic individuals, including some Palestinians and ex-patriots who are residing in Israel. *Therefore, if we want to fulfill the mandate of Genesis 12:3, we must focus our blessing on our fellow believers in Israel and in the rest of the world.* A radically skewed

5. Scripture nowhere teaches that we should have ultimate or even penultimate loyalty to the nation-state of Israel. It clearly teaches that our ultimate loyalty should be to Christ, for “in everything he should have the supremacy” (Colossians 1:18).⁷⁹

Arab and non-Arab Christians living in Muslim countries as minorities suffer greatly because of the statements made by famous Christian Zionists in the West. These Christian nationals especially the Arabs who live in Muslim countries might be far from being Christian Zionists, yet they are identified with Western evangelicals who, in turn, are identified with Christian Zionists. They are persecuted, not for Jesus’ sake, but for the Christian Zionists’ sake.

Christian Zionists assume that the Jews perceive them as close allies and loyal friends. The opposite may be true. Journalist Gorshom Gorenberg, an Israeli Jew, is critical of Christian Zionists. In a *60 Minutes* T.V. interview, he said: “They don’t love real Jewish people. They love us as characters in their story, in their play, and that is not who we are... If you listen to the drama that they are describing, essentially, it is a five act play in which the Jews disappear in the fourth act.”⁸⁰

More important and dangerous is that Christian Zionism becomes a wrapping around the gospel. Muslims have a hard time separating the message of the gospel from the proclamations that Christian Zionists make. Let us remember that Muslims number about 1.8 billion people in the world. It is predicted that it will not be long before they become a quarter of all humanity. I believe that many of these people stumble and become hardened against the gospel because the Christian Zionist message gets wrapped around it.

All Muslims, whether they are Sunnis or Shiites, Nigerians, Indonesians or Jordanians, tend to agree on four things: 1) God is one 2) Muhammad is his messenger 3) The Qur'an is the holy book 4) Palestinians experienced injustice and the West turned a deaf ear to their grievances.

In March 2004, John Piper, a famous American Baptist pastor, preached a sermon with the title: “Israel, Palestine and the Middle East.” The sermon in its audio and written format is based on his understanding of the Scriptures and especially Romans 11, is

view of Scripture ignores or twists the teaching of Romans 9:11. The passage teaches that the Jewish remnant in the church age are those Jews who receive Christ as Savior, Lord, and Messiah just as Gentile believers do (Romans 10:12).”

⁷⁹ God has always been more concerned with our relationship to him than with our bloodlines.

⁸⁰ “Zion’s Christian Soldiers,” *60 Minutes*, October 6, 2002.

available on his website.⁸¹ Here is a summary of the main points of his article. (Make special note of point 5).

1. God chose Israel from all the peoples of the world to be his own possession.
2. The land was part of the inheritance he promised to Abraham and his descendants forever.
3. The promises made to Abraham, including the promise of the land, will be inherited as an everlasting gift only by true, spiritual Israel, not disobedient, unbelieving Israel.
4. Jesus Christ has come into the world as the Jewish Messiah, and His own people rejected him and broke covenant with their God.
5. Therefore, the secular state of Israel today may not claim a present divine right to the land, but they and we should seek a peaceful settlement not based on present divine rights, but on international principles of justice, mercy, and practical feasibility.
6. By faith in Jesus Christ, the Jewish Messiah, Gentiles become heirs of the promise of Abraham, including the promise of the land.
7. Finally, this inheritance of Christ's people will happen at the second coming of Christ to establish his kingdom, not before; and till then, we Christians must not take up arms to claim our inheritance; but rather lay down our lives to share our inheritance with as many as we can.

As you consider point 5 in Piper's sermon: "The secular state of Israel today may not claim a present divine right to the land, but they and we should seek a peaceful settlement not based on present divine rights, but on *international principles of justice, mercy, and practical feasibility*." As a Christian how can you live with a Micah 6:6-8 perspective and pursue justice if you are a Christian Zionist? Here is a message that an American who lived in Bethlehem for three years wrote to one of her friends in America.

"I am an American who lived in the Palestinian Territories/Israel for the last three years. I spent these years in Bethlehem working with Palestinians in refugee camps. The experience was vastly eye-opening. Restrictions placed on Palestinians living in the West Bank were noticeably tiring - even to the select internationals living alongside those who possess the power of a foreign passport. The restrictions in movement kept them from entering Israel at all with

⁸¹ <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/israel-palestine-and-the-middle-east>

the thirty-foot wall, a constant reminder that they are not autonomous and Israel has the right to come into their land and homes at will. The camps in Bethlehem still experience raids nearly weekly - a neighbor's house is burst into in the middle of the night as the IDF searches for an individual who may have information about someone involved in violent intentions toward Israel. This unsteadiness wearies the souls of those in the camps and breeds a sense of walking on eggshells even in their own homes. Moreover, most Palestinians have a strong sense that they are pawns on the international stage. Premature death is widespread. It is common for people in their twenties to have at least one deceased parent - often from heart issues or other stress-induced conditions. There is a real struggle to believe that the future is bright.

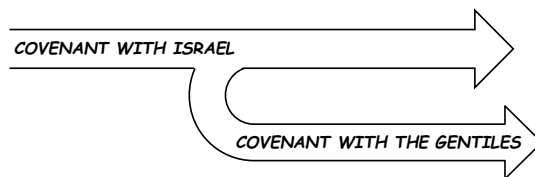
In the midst of all this, God is moving radically amongst Palestinians. He is drawing them to Himself and many are choosing to follow Jesus, acquiring an eternal life-spring of living water within themselves, a life-spring that gives them steadfast hope despite the look of things. I've seen many Muslims in the camps who now follow Jesus, love the Jews, and commit to loving their neighbors though gross injustice has been committed. This is the real revolution - the real intifada. It's an intifada of love. And it is the hope of the nations."

In 2021, a [24-minute film](#) was produced and it is accessible only on Netflix has the title [The Present](#). It was given many awards and was nominated for the Oscar.

Diagrams

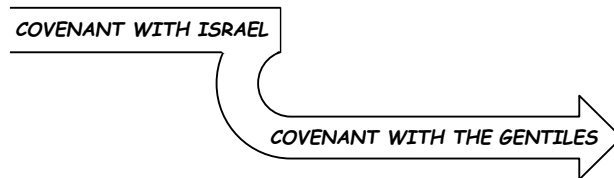
Here are three diagrams that explain further Christian Zionism, Replacement Theology and Biblical Israel. As we have seen earlier in this chapter some Christian Zionists believe that Jews do not need to believe in Jesus Christ to be saved because of the Abrahamic Covenant.

Christian Zionism



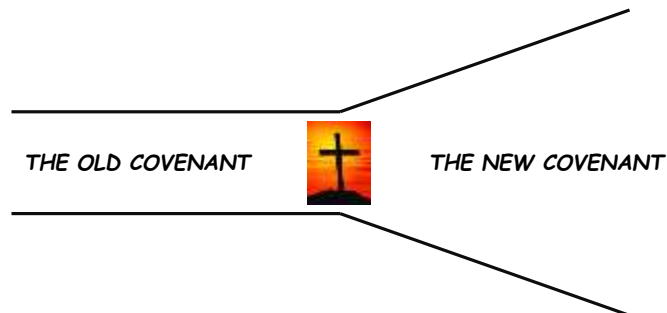
Replacement Theology on the other hand has a strong reaction to Christian Zionism which is not Biblical either.

Replacement Theology



In contrast to both Christian Zionism and Replacement Theology we see Biblical Israel which includes both Jews and Gentiles.

Biblical Israel



So far, we have looked at the Crusades, colonialism, the history of Israel, and end-times theology. In the next chapter, we will look at current events through Muslim eyes and in light of taking the Gospel to them.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of the chapter. To what extent is Ahmad justified in making comparisons between Christian Zionism and Shiite eschatology? What do you think of the New Zealand Christian's views on Israel?
2. Do you have a position on eschatology? How would you articulate it?
3. Where do Muslims and Arabs (including Christian Arabs) fit in your eschatology? What is your Christian responsibility towards Palestinian Christians who love the Lord Jesus and Palestinian Muslims who surrendered their lives to Christ? What is your responsibility toward those members in the body of Christ?
4. What is Christian Zionism? What are its underlying assumptions? What are its perils?
5. What do you think of John Piper's points? Do you agree with them? Specifically, what do you think of point 5
6. Did Jesus make a prophetic statement in the parable of the tenants in Matthew 21:33 - 44? "38 But when the tenants saw the son, they said to each other, 'this is the heir. Come, let's kill him and take his inheritance. 39 So they took him and threw him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do those tenants? 43 Therefore I tell you that the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and give to a people who will produce its fruit. 44 Anyone who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; anyone on whom it falls will be crushed."

CHAPTER 7
THE DANGERS OF ESCALATION

“The only way to permanently get rid of an enemy is to turn him into a friend.”

—E. Stanley Jones, American missionary to India and a great peacemaker during World War II

“We do not negotiate with terrorists. We put them out of business.”

—White House spokesman during the Bush administration

“What terrifies us is not the explosive force of the atomic bomb, but the power of the wickedness of the human heart.”

--Albert Einstein

It does not take long for current events to become history. I started working on this chapter during President George W. Bush's second term presidency in September 2006 as I looked at the important “current” events of that time. Those events are now history. In this chapter I want to focus on the first decade in our century because of the consequential decisions that were made and the events that took place. This first decade is important when it comes to Islam and Muslims and it paved the way to other events in the years that followed. The attack on 9/11 took place in 2001, and as a result for the first-time people around the world became aware of the name Osama bin Laden and his organization, al Qaeda. The Afghanistan War started in 2001 and it continued for many years making it the longest war in American history. In 2003 the Iraq War started and had many consequences. Following the Iraq War, in April 2003 a large prison run by the US military with the name [Bucca Camp](#) (2003-2009) near the Iraq-Kuwait border housed more than 100,000 Iraqis including Baathists⁸² former officers and soldiers of the Saddam Hussein regime. In 2004, the Abu Ghraib prison scandal came to public attention with the publication of photographs and so it became headline news around the world and especially in the Muslim world. In [Abu Ghraib prison](#) violations of human rights cluded “physical and sexual abuse, torture, rape, sodomy and murder.” That prison was closed and some of the prisoners were moved to the Bucca Camp prison. In 2004, Abu Bakr al Baghdadi was arrested and imprisoned at Bucca Camp prison for one year. During that year he made connections with the top former leaders in Iraq who were at that prison and ISIL⁸³ was conceived during that year in 2004 in Bucca Camp prison by Abu Bakr al Baghdadi and his new associates.

⁸² Baath party was the party of Saddam Hussein's regime. In Arabic it means “resurrection” or “renaissance.” No Iraqi could go up in the ranks unless they belonged to that party. One of the biggest mistakes committed in the Iraq War by the American was the disbanding of that party and putting in prisons its prominent leaders.

⁸³ ISIL stands for Islamic state in Iraq and the Levant. The Levant includes Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, Israel

Since I first wrote this chapter in 2006, I have visited and revisited what I had written. History is a great teacher, and we can learn a great deal when we stop and reflect. As the famous American journalist William Shirer writes, “*Those who do not remember the past are condemned to relive it.*”

Following that first decade in the 21st century, the Arab Spring started in 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt and had ripple effects in both the Arab world and many other countries around the world. People around the world saw the usefulness of the social media in mobilizing the masses against dictators and they saw the power of demonstrations in toppling dictators. A decade later, for instance, people in Myanmar in 2021 are resisting the military regime by demonstrating in the streets and not allowing themselves to be intimidated by the brutal force of the military by the Myanmar military. The Arab Spring in Syria resulted in a civil war that left many Syrians dead or wounded. It also resulted in immigrations to Arab countries such as to Jordan and to European countries especially Germany, let alone the many Syrians who fled their homes and towns and went to other safer towns within Syria.

Here are a few lessons from America’s history regarding the Muslim world in general, and the Middle East in particular.

Fanaticism Need to be Marginalized

Americans seem to have decided that fanaticism is the enemy, and many equate Islam and Arab Muslims with fanaticism and therefore Islam is the enemy to American way of life. I personally believe that the enemy is not Islam or Arab Muslims, but it is *fanaticism* in all its forms and not just in Islam. I believe that the United States should attempt to transform that mistaken enemy (Islam or Arab Muslims) into a friend by empowering the moderate majority within Islam. The moderate majority, in turn, will be more equipped to neutralize or contain *the real enemy: fanaticism*. I distinguish between fanaticism and fundamentalism in Islam. Fundamentalists are driven by a certain theology and a deep degree of commitment. I can respect some Muslim fundamentalists. Fanatics on the other hand are driven by an attitude of self-righteousness demonizing all those who disagree with them. I have no respect for fanatics wherever they exist. As I have stated earlier, the enemy are not the Muslims, but the real enemy is fanaticism. Of course, the true enemy is Satan, who fuels fanaticism not only among Muslims but also in our ranks.

Immediately after the 9/11 attacks, most of the world, including the absolute majority of Muslims, was in sympathy with and in support of the United States. This was a golden opportunity for the United States to mobilize the world and to empower moderate Muslims so that they could paralyze the *ideology of fanaticism within Islam*. If within 24 hours after the 9/11 attack, the US military bombed Al Qaeda in the

and Palestine. ISIL vision was not limited to Iraq and Syria.

Afghanistan/Pakistan border, the whole world would have been sympathetic with this military action. The Taliban did not attack the United States on 9/11. It was Al Qaeda who carried that attack and Al Qaeda members were at the borders of Afghanistan/Pakistan. Instead, the United States decided to go to war in Afghanistan for a *regime change*. The US administration did not learn from history that showed us that neither the British nor the Soviets were able to bring about a regime change in Afghanistan. Both admitted their failures and reduced their losses by getting out of Afghanistan. The American war in Afghanistan ended up becoming the longest war in the history of the United States. Not learning from history is very costly in blood, treasure, and the reputation of America around the world. If instead of going for a regime change in Afghanistan, the U.S. waged a war against *fanaticism, wherever it existed*, imagine how the world would have looked like today with no wars in Afghanistan and Iraq and with not Al Qaeda left nor ISIL coming to existence. We would not have seen the extreme polarization that exists today between the West and the Muslim world. The U.S. Bush, Clinton, Obama, Trump, and Biden administrations could have focused on marginalizing the fanatics by undermining their ideology and at the same time empowering moderate Muslims to fight the evil ideology of the fanatics. Fanaticism exists not only among Muslims but also among white supremacists in the United States and in Western countries.

Events in Their Historical Contexts

We often hear that “9/11 changed everything,” but is it a true statement? What does 9/11 mean and what does it include? If it means only the attacks on the World Trade Center, Pentagon, and the unknown target on that day, then it is not a completely true statement. But if 9/11 includes the history that preceded that date and contributed to inciting that event, then it becomes a completely true statement. It would also include *actions* and *reactions* on the part of *Muslims*.

We cannot view 9/11 apart from history. If we start at 9/11, then the West can put all the blame on the Muslim world for allowing al Qaeda to exist and flourish. People in the West become the “good guys,” and Muslims become the “bad guys.”

The West sees the attacks on 9/11 as an *action*. Muslims see it as a *reaction* to grievances that go back a long time.

When the West looks at certain Muslim *actions*, they see evil acts that justify a strong *reaction*. Some of these actions committed by Muslims include:

- The attack on the Marines in Beirut, Lebanon in 1983.
- The attack on the Marines in Somalia in 1993.
- The attacks on the U.S. embassies in Africa in 1998.
- The attack on the *U.S.S. Cole* Navy ship in Yemen in 2000.

- The two *intifadas* and the suicide bombings in the West Bank and Gaza.⁸⁴
- The 9/11 in 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center, the Pentagon, and the one possibly intended for the White House or the Capitol building.
- The suicide bombings in Iraq and the insurgency.
- Al Qaeda
- Hezbollah
- ISIL

When Muslims look at the *actions* of the West, the other side of the coin, they see evil acts that justify a strong *reaction*. Some of these actions include:

- Injustices committed in the establishment of the state of Israel in 1948 (covered here in earlier chapters), which Muslims see as having implicit U.S. approval.
- The United States' consistent refusal to apply pressure on Israel to abide by U.N. Resolution 338, which required Israel to "withdraw" to the borders defined in 1967.⁸⁵
- Allowing Israel's invasions of Lebanon.
- Allowing Prime Minister Sharon to invade the West Bank and Gaza in 2002.
- The American war in Iraq, which is perceived not as a *war of necessity* but a *war of choice* for ulterior motives.
- The U.S. rejection of the democratic election of Hamas.
- U.S. refusal to give financial aid to the Palestinian government following the Hamas victory and before the civil war, which resulted in a break between Fateh and Hamas. This occurred in the summer of 2007 and served to starve the Palestinian population in Gaza as a form of collective punishment for electing Hamas.
- The Trump administration recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel⁸⁶.
- Israel's control of Gaza's water supply, electricity, coastline, and borders along with repeated invasions where many Palestinian civilians get killed or wounded.

Let us suppose that we can take a slice of our recent history, starting with 9/11, isolated from the larger historical context. The *actions* of al Qaeda were unquestionably very evil. From a biblical perspective, does that *justify* the reaction of the West?

⁸⁴ *Intifada* is an Arabic word meaning "uprising." *Intifadas* refer to the Palestinian uprisings against the Israelis in 1987 and 2000.

⁸⁵ The withdrawal terms were open to negotiations regarding the borders. The United States also refused to apply pressure on Israel regarding U.N. Resolution 242, which requires a just settlement to the refugee problem.

⁸⁶ If the US administration recognized Jerusalem as the capital of both Israel and of Palestine, then there would have been no problem. But when it recognized Jerusalem only as the capital of Israel, then it tipped the scale and sided with Israel against the Palestinians.

Reacting vs. Responding

Jesus demonstrates for us the difference between *reacting*—taking actions based on circumstances without reasoned thought for the consequences of those actions; and *responding*—making a conscientious choice in the face of circumstances to act based on our values. Jesus was arrested, unjustly sentenced, and tortured before his crucifixion. These acts were very evil. Jesus could have *reacted* by ordering angels from heaven to punish those who committed evil. He could have *reacted* by immediately going back to heaven, refusing to be crucified, and leaving humanity to go to hell because they deserved it. Jesus had every right to *react* by condemning us because of the way we treated him. Instead, he *responded* by being willing to go all the way to the cross.

The statement “*The cross changed everything*” is true. It includes:

- *Our evil acts*: treating Christ with contempt and defiance, sentencing him to death, spitting in his face, torturing him, crucifying him.
- *His loving response*: allowing us to torment him and crucify him, accepting the crucifixion as a punishment on our behalf, giving us his robe of righteousness in exchange for the evil we have committed, looking at us not as his enemies, but as his beloved (while knowing the real enemy was the devil).

The cross—including our actions and Jesus’ response—really did change everything.

The United States and Britain could have *responded* very differently to al Qaeda’s evil acts. If that had happened, the world would be a different place today.

The United States had a choice of how to respond on 9/12. The Bush administration could have taken the route of Romans 12:17-21⁸⁷, which is based on the ethics taught by Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, or it could have taken the route of Romans 13:1-4⁸⁸ by bombing al Qaeda camps within twenty-four hours after the attack of 9/11. It would have been the right time since al Qaeda leaders were not dispersed and when all the world was still very sympathetic with America. Instead of that, the attacks on Afghanistan took place on November 7, 2001, eight weeks after 9/11. If a combination

⁸⁷ Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord. “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink... Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

⁸⁸ Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God... For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong... For the one in authority is God’s servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God’s servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment on the wrongdoer.

of Romans 12:17-21 and Romans 13:1-4 could have happened rather than going for *regime change* in Afghanistan, followed by another regime change in Iraq, how our world would have looked like today? We should have learned from the mistakes of the British and the Soviets in Afghanistan.⁸⁹

Taking the route of Romans 12:17-21, especially because President Bush is a born-again Christian, and *responding* rather than *reacting*, could have taken the West in a completely new direction. It could have opened a large door to bring about needed change in our broken world. It could have paved the way for the gospel among many of the world's Muslims.

Looking at a more up-to-date example that occurred in 2020 of choosing to practice justice or to practice mercy. Imagine if the police officers Dereck in Minneapolis, Minnesota, decided the morning of May 25, 2020 that they wanted to practice mercy as much as possible rather than to enforcing punitive justice. What would have happened? Perhaps upon discovering that George Floyd was using a counterfeit \$20 bill and one of the police officers offered to pay the \$20s to the Cup food store, how would have that day been for those police officers? What would they have reported to their families at the end of the day when they finally went back home? Would there have been a trial in April 2021 for the death of George Floyd?

Choices and Consequences

Martin Luther, following the thinking of Augustine, insisted on the reality of “two kingdoms”—the spiritual kingdom and the kingdom of this world—each with its distinct and proper ethics. Many Christians in the West and in democratic nations have resorted to this kind of thinking, assigning the values Christ taught to the spiritual kingdom but making them somehow irrelevant to their political dealings. Is this right?⁹⁰

⁸⁹ The Afghanistan War was the longest war in American history and resulted in a great loss in life and treasure. Osama bin Laden, the former director of al-Qaeda who was responsible for the 9/11 attacks was killed during the Obama administration. According to Fareed Zakaria in his GPS program on CNN, the Obama administration increased the number of soldiers in Afghanistan and wanted to do nation building by winning hearts and minds. The Trump administration scaled down the number of soldiers and wanted to fight the enemy but not do nation building. Henry Kissinger upon reflecting on the Vietnam war concluded: “*The guerrilla wins if he does not lose. The conventional army loses if it does not win.*” The US administration should have learned from the Vietnam War and from the history of the British and the Soviets in Afghanistan. The conclusion by Kissinger summarizes well what happened with the Taliban in Afghanistan. The Taliban had an ethnic identity. The Pashtuns, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, identified with the Taliban. In contrast, the Afghanistan government is associated with the outsiders and the foreigners. Furthermore, the Taliban whenever faced pressure, had and continues to have a safe sanctuary across the border in the neighboring Pakistan. Finally, the Taliban benefited from the massive corruption which was unleashed by the billions of Dollars that came into the country in the form of aid.

⁹⁰ I found Gregory Boyd's book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, very helpful on this subject. I will refer to this book in the last chapter.

In the past, the United States had credibility in the eyes of others and attempted to be a model of democracy because of the values upon which it was founded, such as promoting economic and social justice, advocating human rights, protecting, and enhancing the rule of law, and cooperating with other nations to achieve those common goals. If these values are abandoned for pragmatic reasons or because of their perceived irrelevance to *real life*, then America is gambling for its soul. Like the Old Testament prophets, the church of Christ should challenge those in power to adhere to the values of the Kingdom of God and let those values permeate and influence the kingdoms of this world.⁹¹

The United States could have capitalized on the world's 9/12 sympathy by *empowering moderate* Muslims to cripple the ideology of fanaticism within Islam. These moderates include political leaders, open-minded Islamic scholars, journalists, academics, influencers in the society, and even regular men and women on the streets. Rather than taking the "bull by the horns," the U.S. administration could have practiced decisiveness and patience and communicated vulnerability and humility by asking the Muslim world for help in dealing with al Qaeda and terrorism.⁹² The opportunity existed for the majority of the world's Muslims, alongside the United States, to turn against al Qaeda, cut its resources, and eliminate its leadership by being decisive *immediately* after 9/11 by getting sufficient intelligence from the friendly Muslim countries. Instead, the United States, along with Britain, chose to wage a war against al Qaeda and against terrorism by bringing about a regime change in Afghanistan.

The United States could have started on that path of humility from the first week after 9/11, when Saudi Prince Al-Walid Ibn Talal offered a gift of \$10 million to the City of New York. It was rejected because of an inappropriately timed statement that the Saudi prince made while presenting the check and while the wound was very raw:⁹³ He said: "At times like this one, we must address some of the issues that led to such a criminal attack. I believe the government of the United States of America should re-examine its politics in the Middle East and adopt a more balanced stance toward the Palestinian cause."

Although this comment was certainly made at the *wrong time* and in the *wrong context*, his point was that without addressing the "swamps," there will always be "mosquitoes." The biggest swamp from his point of view was the issue of Israel and Palestine.⁹⁴ I wish

⁹¹ Please read the open letter that Leighton Ford wrote before the Iraq war offering an alternative. It appears in this addendum as Appendix C.

⁹² Zimbardo, in his book, *The Lucifer Effect*, gives a detailed analysis of the Abu Ghraib prison and how the U.S. moral standard was lowered starting in Guantanamo Bay.

⁹³ The majority of 9/11 terrorists were Saudis. The mayor of New York City, Rudi Giuliani, at the time rejected the gift and humiliated the Saudi prince.

⁹⁴ In my teaching I have often used an analogy describing the terrorists and their real or imagined grievances. The analogy is: "We can eradicate a generation of mosquitoes, but if we do not address the swamps, every few years we will have to wage a new war against a new generation of mosquitoes. What

we could have listened to the Saudi prince instead of publicly insulting him in front of the entire Muslim world. To them, this was a sign of contempt for all Muslims.

The United States could have allowed spiritual-kingdom ethics to influence the decisions made in the kingdom of this world. E. Stanley Jones's statement could have become the fragrance of the United States: *"The only way to permanently get rid of an enemy is turn him into a friend."* A good first start could have been to call for an international conference and with a humble request ask the international community for advice and help, reserving the right to go to war only out of *absolute necessity*. If the United States had demonstrated decisiveness, by attacking Al Qaeda within 24 hours, and patience by willing to listen to its allies especially in the Arab world, it could have discovered that the road to transform the Middle East did not go through *Baghdad* and *Kabul* but through *Jerusalem*.⁹⁵

Before the assassination of Israel's Prime Minister Rabin, he and Arafat were considered the "good guys." They were seen as moderates and peacemakers. The "bad guys" at that time included radical Palestinian Muslims, along with Israeli settlers, who were both perceived as *fanatics* and enemies of peace and moderation. The U.S. administration, under President Bush, changed the formula by waging a "war on terrorism." Prime Minister Sharon and the Israeli right wing hijacked that slogan to make themselves look like the good guys. Arafat was demonized in the process and became, along with the Palestinians, the bad guys.

Americans and other Westerners see themselves and other democratic nations as the good guys and Muslim nations as the bad guys. On the other side of the coin, Muslims see themselves as the good guys and Christendom and the West as the bad guys.⁹⁶ Perhaps we can learn from the wisdom of others as we try to see events through their international eyes.⁹⁷

terrifies me is the fact that every new generation will be tougher to deal with because violence tends to escalate." The bipartisan Iraq Study Group agreed with this assessment regarding the grievances. Furthermore, while President Bush, late in his presidency, chose to engage in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, he went about it the wrong way—he supported Abbas in the West Bank while ignoring Hamas in Gaza. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Scheuer

⁹⁵ Decisiveness immediately after 9/11 by hitting Al-Qaeda leaders and exercising patience to find out whether invading Afghanistan for a regime change was an absolute necessity.

⁹⁶ Muslim fundamentalists divide the world into two spheres, the sphere of true Muslims (house of Islam) and the infidels (the house of war).

⁹⁷ Please see Appendix A for the very insightful lecture delivered by the former prime minister of Singapore.

A Bleak Picture

As a result of the war in Iraq, polarization increased at a rapid pace. According to polls, during the Bush era and in the summer of 2006, five years after 9/11 only 2% of the populations of Jordan and Egypt looked with favor on the U.S. administration. (Jordan and Egypt are America's friendliest allies in the Arab world, and both have peace treaties with Israel.) Osama bin Laden had become more popular in Pakistan than the politicians ruling this very strategic country—a country that possesses nuclear weapons.

Putting on pessimistic but realistic lenses and looking at the future with that perspective, it would not be farfetched to imagine an attack in the future carried by al Qaeda, or a new "Islamic State" (ISIL), or their sympathizers, on Saudi oil wells, causing a worldwide oil crisis. An oil crisis could also come because of Iran shutting down its oil resources in response to an Israeli attack on its nuclear plants. A bigger threat than a worldwide oil crisis could come because of destabilization in Pakistan and possible loss of control of its nuclear arsenal. Or what if Pakistan becomes a radical Muslim state?

In 2006, a new generation of al Qaeda leaders predicted that by the year 2016, al Qaeda or its splinter groups such as the Islamic State known as ISIS or ISIL would be ready to attack the world's computer systems and ultimately bring about the collapse of the economy through cyber warfare.⁹⁸ These were unrealistic aspirations on their part. And while their cyber warfare capabilities are limited at this time, it would not be far-fetched to expect that one day their cyber warfare capabilities will increase and so become to democracies around the world.

Is the West *reacting* to world crisis or *responding* through constructive plans based on bridging relationships among nations and advocating peace and prosperity among all people? Will the U.S. administration continue the war against terrorism by focusing on the "*mosquitoes*," leaving the "*swamps*" unaddressed? There is a great deal of diversity within Islam, yet *all Muslims* around the world, whether Sunnis or Shiites, agree on four things:

- God is one.
- Muhammad is the messenger of God and the seal of the prophets.
- The Qur'an is the holy book.
- Injustice has been committed and continues to be committed against the Palestinians and the West turned a deaf ear to their grievances.

The injustice committed against the Palestinians and the continued conflict is the major *swamp* in the world. If the Palestinians continue to live under occupation and are not

⁹⁸ Lawrence Wright, *The New Yorker*: "The Master Plan: For the new theorists of jihad, al Qaeda is just the beginning," September 11, 2006. According to the article, al Qaeda is saving its money in gold because it is convinced that in the cyber war, the U.S. economy is going to crash.

allowed to live with dignity, more swamps will be created. Other future swamps could include Iran, Pakistan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, and other parts of the world. Before it is too late can the White House and Congress work together to win the hearts and minds of the silent, moderate majority of Muslims around the world, so that the moderates get empowered to marginalize the fanatics.

During Bush's presidency, rather than looking for bridges for peacemaking, the U.S. administration contributed to the polarization by utilizing *fear tactics*. In the summer of 2006, the Bush White House released extreme quotations from speeches by Osama bin Laden, Ayman Zawahiri, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad, and Hasan Nasrallah. These served to *terrify* Americans and show them that the terrorists are coming in full force after the United States. The White House released the statements under the title, "In Their Own Words: What the Terrorists Believe, What They Hope to Accomplish, and How They Intend to Accomplish It."⁹⁹

Will Americans be bombarded with these kinds of messages to influence elections? What conclusions will they come to? Will Americans adopt a "holy war" mentality, thinking, "*We need to get them before they get us*"? In the meantime, the acceleration of polarization continues. Do you remember the heated election campaign in 2016 when the ISIL was perceived to be the great Satan?

In this atmosphere, it is easy to be blind to opportunities. With pessimistic perspective we might conclude that it is too late, but perhaps there are opportunities to those who can see them.

Missed Opportunities

When we do not focus on bridge building for peacemaking, we tend to miss opportunities. Here is a huge one:

Christopher Dickey of *Newsweek* was interviewed by Terry Gross on NPR's "Fresh Air" program on April 2, 2002. This was almost a whole year before the war in Iraq started. Dickey was excited to report on the potential for a breakthrough toward peace—real and genuine peace—in the Middle East.

Once each year, an Arab League conference takes place in a different Middle East capital. Arab leaders annually meet in one of the capitals of the Arab countries to discuss their current burning issues. In 2002, the Arab League met in Beirut, Lebanon. That conference was *unique* and *pivotal* in the modern history of the Middle East. In that conference, Crown Prince Abdullah¹⁰⁰ of Saudi Arabia put all the weight and power of his country behind convincing every Arab country, all 22 of them, to commit to *full*

⁹⁹ <http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/09/20060905-7.html>

¹⁰⁰ The king of Saudi Arabia in 2002 was King Fahd and he did not attend the Arab League of 2002 because he was sick. Crown Prince Abdullah became the king after the death of King Fahd in 2005.

and active peace with Israel based on U.N. Resolutions 242 and 338, were passed following the 1967 and 1973 wars. The last two countries to sign up and commit themselves to full and active peace with Israel were Syria and Libya.

At the conclusion of that conference, Prince Abdullah was so elated with the results of the conference that he did not return to Saudi Arabia to celebrate with King Fahd the successful conclusion of the Arab League conference of 2002. Instead, he went straight to Crawford, Texas, where President Bush was vacationing. One would assume that Prince Abdullah pleaded with President Bush to postpone the war on Iraq and to focus instead on the road map for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. He most likely assured him that all the Arab countries would help him deal with Saddam Hussein if President Bush would focus on the issue of Israel and Palestine. He must have tried to convince President Bush that the road map to transforming the Middle East goes through *Jerusalem* rather than *Baghdad*.

It was an historic time and an *opportunity that needed to be grasped*. It seems that President Bush was not willing to listen because, in my opinion, he was surrounded by neo-conservatives and already set on invading Iraq. President Mubarak of Egypt and King Abdullah of Jordan, close friends of the United States, pleaded with the U.S. administration to postpone the war on Iraq, but it seems that President Bush would not listen. It seems Iraq was on his mind even before he became president.¹⁰¹ In an interview with Wolf Blitzer of CNN during his 2000 presidential campaign, Governor George W. Bush indicated his desire to go after Saddam Hussein in Iraq. Perhaps because of this, a huge opportunity was missed in April 2002, one whole year before the war in Iraq and the United States and the rest of the world paid and are still paying for it.

In an April 2006 article, Janiki Cingoli wrote in the Israeli newspaper, *Haretz*:

Two great Israeli intellectuals, A.B. Yehoshua and Amos Oz, have stated in the last few days that given this stalled situation, and with re-launching negotiations impossible, the only alternative to the unilateral option is to turn to a different diplomatic track – a regional one, like that in *the peace initiative of the Arab League's 2002 Beirut Summit*. In short, that proposal said if Israel were to withdraw from the territories occupied in 1967, including east Jerusalem, provide a fair and agreed-upon solution to the refugee problem, and agree to the creation of a Palestinian state, *all the Arab states would be willing to recognize it and create normal relations...* This proposal was unanimously approved, even by Syria and Libya, because for the first time it made it possible to imagine a peaceful, stable Middle East.

¹⁰¹ Noam Chomsky's speech gives an interesting presentation on the motives for going to war. <http://www.traprockpeace.org/edrussell/Chomsky11October05Almedia.mp3>

In April 2007, the Arab League met in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. Once again, King Abdullah of Saudi Arabia pressured all the Arab countries *to recommit* themselves to the decision made in 2002, and remarkably, they all did, despite all the bad blood that had occurred since 2002. That unique and historic opportunity was missed again. In his last year in office in 2008, President Bush was too weak, and it was too late to take advantage of that opportunity.

Looking for Bridges to Peace

In January 2006, I was teaching a course on “Islam and Current Events” at a U.S. seminary. During the intensive one-week course, a student brought me the text of a videotaped message by Osama bin Laden. It was released by Al Jazeera on January 19, 2006. As I read the text, both in Arabic and English, I yearned to see the Bush Administration respond to the “positives” in that message. This was the first time I saw potential for a *bridge* and a connection with Osama bin Laden.

He said: “We do not object to a long-term truce with you [the United States] on the basis of fair conditions that we respect... In this truce, both parties will enjoy security and stability and we will build Iraq and Afghanistan which were destroyed by the war.”

The day after the release of bin Laden’s speech, I was eager to hear the U.S. response. To my dismay, bin Laden’s offer was dismissed.¹⁰² America’s concern was focused on detecting background sounds that could help locate where bin Laden was hiding. White House spokesman Scott McClellan quickly dismissed the truce offer by saying, “*We do not negotiate with terrorists. We put them out of business.*” If we count the number of American soldiers killed and wounded since that date, the number of Iraqis and Afghans killed and wounded, and the growth of al Qaeda’s support base and splinter groups in the Muslim world since that date such as ISIL, it is staggering. What does “putting them out of business” mean, not only in Iraq but also in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia, Yemen, and many other parts of the world? Is America negotiating with the Taliban twenty years after the Afghanistan War started? Has America put Taliban out of business?

Muslims mistakenly perceive the United States and Europe as Christian nations. They accurately perceived President Bush as a born-again Christian. When they look at the U.S. administration’s decisions on how to deal with Muslims, do they see values that reflect the *fragrance of Christ* or values that reflect the *neo-conservatives* in America? Which of the following quotations better illustrates biblical values?

- E. Stanley Jones: “*The only way to permanently get rid of an enemy is turn him into a friend.*”
- White House spokesman Scott McClellan: “*We do not negotiate with terrorists. We put them out of business.*”

¹⁰² Was this a missed opportunity to help bin Laden move in the direction of moderation?

In the summer of 2006, an American missionary in a Muslim country asked me what I thought about the open letter President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad of Iran wrote to President Bush. I had skimmed it in the past and ignored it, but upon the suggestion of the missionary I returned to it and read it carefully. After reading it, I agreed with the American missionary that there was an olive branch in that letter for those who would look for it. It seemed to me that Ahmadinejad was appealing to President Bush's faith in Christ and asking him to live up to Christ's teaching. In some ways, he was reminding him of the ethics of the spiritual kingdom and asking him why these ethical teachings of Christ are not impacting the values of the kingdom of this world. I think he was pleading with President Bush to recognize that there are grievances that need to be addressed. Ahmadinejad wanted to *be heard, listened to, and taken seriously*. As far as I know, President Bush did not respond to that letter. No wonder Iran gave up and started pursuing the nuclear route wholeheartedly.

On September 19, 2006, President Ahmadinejad gave a speech at the United Nations. I read the speech and found that only the last couple of paragraphs were offensive as he declared his faith in Islam and pushed his religion on those who heard him at the United Nations. The rest of the speech was full of grievances that most people in the Middle East agree on.¹⁰³ The statement he made in the past about eradicating Israel continues to haunt him. It was a bravado statement meant for internal Middle East consumption, and it was foolish of him to make that statement. Everyone knows that Israel, with its huge nuclear capacities, could wipe Iran off the map in fifteen minutes. I believe Ahmadinejad wanted to have a *place at the table* with the important countries in the world. He knew that unless he had power, his concerns would continue to be ignored. He believed that the United States was able to invade Iraq because Iraq did not have nuclear power. India and Pakistan practice restraint in their relationship because they both possess nuclear power. Ahmadinejad wanted to have nuclear weapons *so that* he will not be attacked by the United States or Israel. He also wanted to have a place at the table of the powerful. It is a pity that neither the U.S. administration nor the media were able to see any bridges in Ahmadinejad's speech.¹⁰⁴

So, during the Bush era, we saw that Iran refused to "surrender," and the West, alongside Israel, insisted that Iran should unequivocally give up its nuclear program. Another deadlock was created. The radicals in Iran along with the Republicans in the United States, encouraged by Prime Minister Netanyahu, went against President Obama's efforts to arrive at a deal with Iran. The deal with Iran which would have prevented Iran from acquiring a nuclear weapon was finally concluded after months of hard work by the Obama administration along with other participants such as Europe, China and Russia. The Trump administration canceled that agreement, and the Biden

103. <http://www.google.com/search?hl=en&sa=X&oi=spell&resnum=0&ct=result&cd=1&q=%22Ahmadinejad+speech+at+the+UN+&spell=1>

104 Did the U.S. administration miss an opportunity to help Ahmadinejad move toward moderation?

administration is caught between the rock and the hard place in how to resume the peace talks with Iran.

Breaking Deadlocks

Americans are united by their sense of national pride. *"We do not negotiate with terrorists,"* is an unquestioned assumption to most Americans. Should we question that assumption and dare to explore E. Stanley Jones' suggestion: *"The only way to permanently get rid of an enemy is turn him into a friend."* Do we have the freedom to think in creative ways and use the best people, whether they are Republicans or Democrats, in resolving the deadlock? Could a U.S. president be free enough from partisan politics to commission and empower the "best person," even if she or he was from another political party to negotiate peace with U.S. enemies in the Middle East? Can we as individuals reach out to people who see politics differently and try to build bridges for peace making and restored relationships?

Polarization has reached high levels and has been increasing at a fast rate and as Chuck Colson stated: "Gradually, the unthinkable became tolerable then acceptable then legal then praised." Even COVID 19 which could have united Americans got polarized. The issue of race and the death of George Floyd, the Black Lives Matter movement, Antifa, the Tea Party, the belief among many Americans that the elections were stolen in November 2020 and the attack on the US Capitol on January 6, are all landmarks in American history.

Farid, our older son, was a boarding student for six years at Black Forest academy (BFA) in Germany during our years in Egypt. BFA was a school for sons and daughters of mostly Evangelical, American Christian missionaries. Upon graduating from that high school, almost all of those students ended up in America. Farid has a shepherd's heart for his classmates and friends from school days who are supposed to have critical, thoughtful and independent minds especially when it comes to politics because of their faith in Christ. Furthermore, they are supposed to be broader than typical Americans who have not lived abroad. He is having a ministry of influence on Facebook with some of his friends and uses their language. The man who was his dorm parent at BFA commented on Farid's latest Facebook post by saying: "Well done. How much does it cost to subscribe to the Farid Feed of Weekly Wisdom Writings? I'm in. Keep it coming."

Here is Farid's Facebook post that he wrote in February 2021. It is about a World Cup in soccer and the political polarization in America.

"If you are an avid soccer fan you will be aware of the World Cup clash in 2006 between Portugal and Holland. If you are not familiar with that game you can look up it, it has its own Wikipedia entry. It is under "Battle of Nuremberg" and also can be found under "Massacre of Nuremberg".

To summarize, the match turned into a contest of who could inflict the most pain on their opponent. There were multiple fights, dirty tackles galore, 16 yellow cards and 4 red cards. One of the coaches justified a head butt delivered by his team captain by saying "Jesus Christ may be able to turn the other cheek but Luís Figo isn't Jesus Christ." Towards the end of the game there was an interesting shot of two of the ejected Dutch players sitting and calmly watching the game with a Portuguese player who had also been tossed out. The irony being that the two opposing players played for the same club. They would return from one of the most violent games in soccer history to be teammates!

In the last 6 months, I have watched my Facebook feed with the same horror as that soccer match. Politically there is much on the line and at some point winning seems to have taken a backseat to inflicting the most damage on our political foes. I am told that one side is keen on destroying America and ushering in Communism and the other side is both racist and deplorable.

The victimhood is also on full display; soccer players are well known for turning minor contact into a dramatic death blow. My feed is full of people lamenting being mistreated for the color of their skin (white) to people decrying the demonization of their political idol while simultaneously calling the opposing politician a demon.

While we have passed 500,000 deaths in our country from a worldwide pandemic that has ripped families apart and destroyed careers; people are instead aghast that Mr. Potato-head may lose his Mr. designation. How will kids survive without knowing if their potato-head is a man or a woman? Dr. Seuss was left off a Presidential proclamation and some libraries have stopped carrying his books. This slight coming on the heels of Starbucks not putting "Merry Christmas" on coffee cups and people attacking Christmas by uttering the malicious "Happy Holidays". Meanwhile about half the nation feels betrayed by an election they feel was stolen and feel betrayed and attacked by their own countrymen.

I guess I feel powerless to stop a lot of what I see on my feed and what I see people say in message boards and forums. I hesitated to post this because I do not want people to feel like they cannot share what bothers them. It is fine to have fears, it is fine to acknowledge hurt done to you or to a group you associate with. The only thing I can control is how I react to others and if I decide to lash out. Lashing out feels great in the moment but with me leaves lasting regret. I would venture some no longer experience regret when they mock others, they feel they are operating under a type of holy rage that justifies their rage. Like the coach said, we should not have to act like Jesus and turn the other cheek. It is now "do unto others before they can do it to you."

I hope we realize that in the end, we will be equally remembered for how we responded to others and how we treat our own teammates.”

In the next chapter, I would like to ask the question, “What if?” What if the founders of the state of Israel had had a vision like the founders of Dubai? What would the Middle East have looked like today, and what would our world have looked like?

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Please go back to the beginning of the chapter. What do you think of the statements made by E. Stanley Jones and Scott McClellan?
2. By assuming the road map to transform the Middle East goes through Baghdad rather than Jerusalem, the Bush administration put the road map on hold for a long time. In what ways do you think the administration miscalculated?
3. How would admitting that the war in Iraq was a mistake and apologizing to the world help ease the tensions of polarization? Does Proverbs 28:13 apply as well in international politics? *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”*
4. Isaiah gave hope to the Jews when they were surrounded by the Assyrian army. Jeremiah challenged the Jews to surrender to the Babylonians and go into exile with an attitude of seeking the peace and prosperity of Babylon. Nathan confronted King David about his sins of adultery and cover-up. What prophetic role does the church of Christ need to play in our world today? How can the church play a prophetic role without politicizing the gospel? Did the open letter written by Leighton Ford in Appendix C have a prophetic message?
5. Look at the Middle East over the past 70 years.
 - a) What wrong decisions did the Arabs make?
 - b) What wrong decisions did the Israelis make?
 - c) What wrong decisions did the British make?
 - d) What wrong decisions did the Americans make?

What can be done to bring about healing?

6. What good news does the gospel bring to this crisis? What difference can Christ make among Muslims in the Middle East and around the world?

CHAPTER 8
WHAT IF
ISRAEL'S FOUNDERS HAD A VISION SIMILAR TO
THE FOUNDERS OF DUBAI?

"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging"

--Will Rogers

"An error does not become a mistake until you refuse to correct it"

--John F. Kennedy

When our sons were young, on long boring trips my wife and I used to play a game with them called "What if?" I created imaginary situations to help them think. I would say to our first-grader at a time when there were no cellular phones: "What if at the end of the school day tomorrow you wait for Dad or Mom to pick you up, but they do not come. What would you do?" I saw the anxiety on his face before he told me that he would call home. So I would ask him, "Do you know our home phone number?" With a smile he quickly would recite it. Then I would say: "What if you call our home and no one answers? Then what would you do?" Confidently, he replied that he would call our neighbors. Then I asked if he knew the phone number of our neighbors. If his answer were no, he would be highly motivated to memorize that phone number.

"What if?" is an important question, and unless we stop at times and ask it, we might never learn from our mistakes. With hindsight we can go back and learn important lessons and rectify our roadmap. Proverbs 28:13 says: *"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy."*

What if the football player who is fast, strong, and deeply committed is running with the ball in the wrong direction? What if the surgeon successfully removes the patient's gall bladder only to discover that the problem was really with the pancreas? Similarly, what if the founders of the State of Israel thought they were doing the right things but based their actions on wrong assumptions? If they had had better vision, would Israel, the Middle East, and the whole world be different today? This statement is true: *"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."* Another wise statement was made by President John Kennedy: *"An error does not become a mistake until you refuse to correct it."*

The Israeli settlers and those who support them have assumed since 1948 that the Abrahamic promise regarding the land meant *occupation* and *control*. What if there was another interpretation for how the Abrahamic promise could be fulfilled? Does Israel

have to *occupy* and *control* and become a *fortress* to be a blessing to the nations? Think about biblical history. When did the Jews make the greatest impact on the nations by introducing them to Yahweh? Was it during the kingdoms of David and Solomon when Israel was at the peak of its power? Or was it during the exile in Babylon when names such as Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther come to mind?¹⁰⁵

If Israel were founded like a *yeast* (Mt 13:33)¹⁰⁶ rather than as a *fortress*, would the Abrahamic promises have been fulfilled? As Christians, can we trust that the promises of God can be accomplished while we are *acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God*, or do we accept that sometimes injustice must occur to accomplish the purposes of God? According to Genesis 23, Abraham insisted on paying for the field to bury his wife, although God gave him the promise that the land belonged to him. Is there a contradiction between *owning the land* according to the promise of God and still *paying for it* to possess it? Does possession occur only by taking land by force, without paying for it? If the founders of the State of Israel had the same attitude as Abraham and desired to be a *blessing to the nations*—rather than possessing the land by force—would we see the Abrahamic promises fulfilled there today?

Many though would like to think that the way the state of Israel was established is according to God's perfect plan and that all the land which is now Israel was bought from the Palestinians or possessed through battles of self defense. Is this the whole story? History tends to be subjective. Israeli citizens and Jews in general are exposed through their media and history books to a set of "facts" that present the events of 1947-1948 as a war of self defense against superior Arab armies. Palestinians and Arabs on the other hand are exposed through their media and history books to a set of "facts" that present the events of 1947-1948 as an ethnic cleansing. What are the true facts? As newly released primary sources are being studied by Israeli historians in Israel some disturbing facts to the Israeli public are being exposed.¹⁰⁷

Going even further and deeper with our "what if" questions. What if the Jews had different assumptions about Jesus? What if rather than seeing him through the narrow interpretation of the Rabbinic Jewish literature and declaring him a blasphemer, what if

¹⁰⁵ David Bosch in his book "*Transforming Mission*" points out that the biggest impact that Israel did on the nations was during the period of the exile.

¹⁰⁶ "The Kingdom of heaven is like a yeast that a woman took and mixed into a large amount of flour until it worked all through the dough."

¹⁰⁷ "Israeli historians have continued to mine newly-released primary sources that present a narrative contrary to the Zionist depiction of the birth of the state of Israel in 1948 simply as a war of self-defense against superior Arab armies. Ilan Pappé's 2006 "*The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*" revealed that a plan to rid large sections of Palestine of its indigenous Palestinian inhabitants was planned well in advance of the 1947 United Nations' partitions vote and was carried out deliberately by Jewish forces between 1947 and 1949. Pappé who is an Israeli historian maintained that the subsequent policies of the state have continued to implement a program of ethnic cleansing." Mark Braverman, a Jewish scholar in his book, "*Fatal Embrace*" agrees with Ilan Pappé on Page 18.

they had expanded their vision and saw him as a prophet like Isaiah or Amos? Would Judaism have moved more towards *inclusivism* rather than to a sense of *exceptionalism* and *entitlement*? What if they went even further and gave their people the freedom to believe in Jesus as the Yashou', the Savior of the World, thus allowing Messianic Jews to be part and parcel of real Judaism? If Judaism allowed those two options, then there would have been two main denominations in Judaism today, one that recognized Jesus as a prophet¹⁰⁸ and the other would have recognized him as the Messiah.

What if the founders of the state of Israel had perceived themselves not as a military power coming to possess the land by occupation and control, but instead as a creative, well resourced people who could live side-by-side with the Palestinians as a blessing? Could they have created a state like the emirate of Dubai?

Dubai The Magnet

Years ago, I read the book, *Forces of Fortune*, written by an Iranian-American Muslim named Vali Nasr. The thesis of this book is that the most effective way to marginalize Muslim fundamentalists is to allow capitalism to flourish among middle-class Muslims all over the Muslim world. The most interesting chapter to me was on Dubai. I will share in this chapter some of Vali Nasr's points, which come from a purely economic perspective. Previously, in both my book and this Addendum, I have presented the Muslims' worldview from a Christian perspective. In this chapter, I am not presenting a Christian solution to Muslim-Christian tensions in general or to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict specifically. I am simply asking the question, "What if?" and allowing our imaginations to soar. My question is this: What if the founders of Israel had followed the model of the founders of Dubai? What would our world look like today?

According to Vali Nasr, Dubai, the size of Rhode Island, is one of seven emirates on the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula that form the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Dubai boasts that it has the world's tallest buildings, the biggest shopping malls, the largest and most beautiful airport, the largest arched bridge, the largest man-made harbor, and even the largest theme park, which is twice the size of Disneyworld. This small emirate set out to create a standard for luxury, consumerism, education, medicine, and everything that the West appreciates and the world longs to experience.



¹⁰⁸ Islam recognizes Jesus and esteems him as a prophet.

In the year 2000, the eastern edge of Dubai was a desert. Eight years later it became the world's largest building site with projects worth \$300 billion, including towers, a financial city, and hotels. The Dubai skyline competes with New York and Shanghai. It has more malls per capita than anywhere else in the world. Dubai has become a *magnet* for American investors. Halliburton moved its headquarters there. Vali Nasr describes Dubai this way:

"Dubai's story begins in 1831 when the al-Maktoum family, the emirate's current rulers, took control of what was then nothing more than a poor, desolate village that barely survived on fishing, pearl diving, and trade. Those in Dubai learned early on that to get by they would need to survive on commerce, but the village had little to offer the world other than its location at the crossroads of the Persian Gulf and the Indian Ocean. Astute emirs realized that if they refrained from taxing traders heavily and sheltered them from the wrath of their own governments, perhaps those traders would find it expedient to set up shop in the little emirate. The emirate's economic growth took off, though, largely due to its enlightened ruler... He built wharves and warehouses, roads and schools, daring to envision Dubai as a major port city. Sheikh Rashid was a humble tribal ruler, a man of the desert with little experience of the world beyond. But he was a doer, a ruler with a vision and the determination to realize it, and he was quick to change laws and regulations to woo merchants to his town. Sheikh Rashid was unique among Middle Eastern rulers. At a time when better-known Arab leaders were preoccupied with grand social schemes and lofty political goals, he saw himself as a businessman... The ruler of Dubai is Sheikh Rashid's son, Sheikh Muhammad bin Rashid al-Maktoum, affectionately known as 'Sheikh Mo' to the many foreign workers and businessmen who live in his emirate. Sheikh

Muhammad has built on his father's vision since he inherited the emir's title in 1990, also running Dubai like a business, and fashioning himself as the 'CEO Sheikh.' Money escaping political troubles and economic stagnation in Iran and Pakistan was attracted to Dubai, as was a good deal of Saudi and Russian investment, along with money from China and India. All that money coming in generated demand for financial services and large volumes of trade, and soon turned Dubai into a regional investment hub. Dubai sits between the major financial centers of Europe and Asia—London and Singapore—perfectly placed to be a crossroads between Asia and Europe... Just as Hong Kong and Singapore developed as entrepôts for a rising Asia, the emirate is positioning itself at the center of a rising Middle East and South Asia, a region of some 2.2 billion people with a combined GDP of \$2.5 trillion, from Egypt to Iran to India. There is plenty of money in this region and Dubai has figured out the way to tap into it."¹⁰⁹

What if the founders of the state of Israel in 1948 had a vision similar to that of Dubai's rulers? Is it fair now to ask this question more than seventy years after the founding of

¹⁰⁹ "Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Middle Class and What that will Mean for our World".

the state of Israel? I believe that it is not only fair but also necessary; otherwise, Israel will continue to be like the misguided football player fiercely running the wrong way down the field.

One of the Israelis' biggest perceived threats is the size of the Arab families in Israel. The Arabs who live in Israel and have Israeli citizenship tend to have large families, and with time they will become most of the population. If most of the population is Muslim, how then can Israel be *democratic* and yet at the same time be a *Jewish* state? When Benjamin Netanyahu was running for office in 2015, he boldly promised his right-wing supporters that as long as he is in office, he will not allow a state for the Palestinians to exist. Thomas Friedman, a Jewish American journalist wrote an article on March 15, 2015 in New York Times with the title "[Netanyahu will make History](#)." Friedman started out the article with this bold statement: " Having won the Israeli elections — in part by declaring that he will never permit a two state-solution between Israelis and Palestinians — it means Netanyahu will be the father of the one-state solution. And the one-state solution means that Israel will become, in time, either a *non-Jewish democracy* or *Jewish non-democracy*."(Emphasis is added). Unless the leaders of Israel stop and have a hard look at where they are going, the future does not look very bright.

Let us just imagine if Israel was like Dubai. Dubai does not need nuclear weapons, nor a huge army, nor a wall of protection around it. Dubai is a *magnet* rather than a *fortress*, and magnets do not need walls. By contrast, Israel has one of the most powerful armies in the world and a nuclear arsenal. It is surrounded by enemies. Its survival is dependent on the annual \$6 billion a year coming from the United States. What if Israel was a *magnet* in the region for financial services, large volumes of trade, higher education, inventions, medical centers, and movie businesses, in addition to being the center of three world religions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Imagine if Israel was not a *fortress* but a *magnet* like Dubai.

"Dubai has shown that growth is possible if the right regulatory environment is created, administrative reform is undertaken, and a spirit of public-private partnership is fostered.¹¹⁰ People in the region who visit Dubai return home wondering why their governments can't issue passports in a day or provide clean mosques and schools, better airports, airlines, and roads, and above all better government... Dubai has already proven something that is more important. It has shown that Muslims are ready to engage the world economy. They can be eager capitalists aiming to excel and prosper. Dubai shows that the enthusiasm for Islam need not mean opposition to thriving business... Isolated as Iran is from the international economy, the Islamic Republic has long looked to Dubai as its gateway to the world. Iranians invest in Dubai, and trade with it, and through

¹¹⁰ The preceding sentence and the long quotation from Vali Nasr's book resonate with Republicans and with evangelical readers who tend to think and vote Republican. It will not be accepted at face value by readers who think and/or vote otherwise.

Dubai with the world. They also visit Dubai for fun in droves, to shop and enjoy everyday pleasures not available in Iran... Iranians like to say 'Dubai is the best city in Iran.' Billions of dollars leave Iran for Dubai every year, amounting, by some estimates, to the equivalent of a third of Iran's oil revenue. The estimated total of Iranian assets in Dubai is \$300 billion"¹¹¹

What if Israel were like Dubai? It could be argued that Dubai has oil and Israel does not. That is true, but Israel has the support and the empowerment of very generous Jews around the world with their abundant financial resources. Furthermore, it was not oil that made Dubai what it is today. Iraq and Iran have a great deal of oil, but they have not succeeded like Dubai did. Iraq and Iran have not created a regulatory environment nor undertaken administrative reform the way Dubai did. Nor have they fostered public-private partnerships to all or encouraged the middle class to prosper and to believe that economic growth is possible.

Absurdity of the Fortress Vision

The Israeli settlers who have occupied the most strategic land in the West Bank and parts of East Jerusalem have been empowered by successive governments in Israel, whether Labor, Kadima, or Likud parties. Israel's government gave protection to the settlers, gave them subsidies, and built for them connecting roads and highways. The vision of those settlers and those who stand behind them is to possess "every grain of sand" promised to Abraham. Here is a list of questions that come to mind:

- Was it sin to withdraw from Gaza because it was a loss of possession? Is the commitment to what is politically feasible and convenient or to possessing every grain of sand?
- Was the promise to Abraham a piece of real estate from the Euphrates to the Nile? Is the goal of Zionism and Christian Zionism expansion into Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and parts of Iraq and Egypt in order to experience the promise in its fullness?
- Has Israel mistakenly compromised by being satisfied only with Gaza and the West Bank?
- Does a war with Iran open opportunities for further expansion?
- Can Israel control all the territories that it occupies? Does it have the man and military power to control those regions? ¹¹²
- Even if Israel can directly control what it occupies, how would it deal with the increase of the Muslim populations within its own borders?

¹¹¹ *Forces of Fortune: The Rise of the New Middle Class and What that will Mean for our World.* A Council on Foreign Relations Book. Vali Nasr.

¹¹² After it occupied south Lebanon for many years, Israel withdrew because it could not control that "safety belt" in south Lebanon.

- How can Israel be democratic if its strategy is occupation and domination?
- Does Judaism equal the state of Israel or is Judaism larger than the state of Israel?
- Should Jewish identity be defined by the Holocaust?
- Should Jewish identity be defined by loyalty to the state of Israel and to right wing Zionism?¹¹³

These are interesting and important questions for not only Jews but also Christians and all Americans. Loving Israel and the Jews means daring to speak truth in love without the fear of being branded as anti-Semitic.

What if Israel Started Out Like Dubai?

If Israel started with a vision like that of Dubai, then I would dare to say that the Middle East and the whole world would be different today. Of course, there will always be wars and rumors of wars, but could the following wars have been avoided?

- *Would the 1948 war between Israel and its neighbors have taken place?* If Israel started out with a “pay-for-the-land” attitude like Abraham’s in Genesis 23, I believe that the Jews would have been welcomed by the Palestinian population.¹¹⁴ With the occupation, expansion and control vision, events cascaded.
- *Would Israel’s 1967 war against Egypt, Syria, and Jordan have taken place?* Even if that war did occur, I believe that if Israel were willing to abide by the U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 and pull out to the pre-1967 borders, the Middle East would be different today.¹¹⁵ The 1967 war gave power and recognition to the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Before 1967 the PLO and its leader, Yasser Arafat, were marginal and very weak. Furthermore, Osama bin Laden in Saudi Arabia, Ayman Zawahiri in Egypt, and many others were galvanized by that humiliating defeat in 1967, and the Islamic fundamentalism movement started to take deep roots.
- *If Israel were like Dubai, would it have invaded the West Bank and Gaza and occupied them in 1967?* The biggest factor that helps fundamentalist leaders to

¹¹³ Marc Ellis, a Jewish scholar, wrote an interesting book dealing with Jewish identity pointing out that Israel does not equal Judaism. Mark Braverman, another Jewish scholar, wrote a book with the title “*Fatal Embrace*” addressing Jewish identity and criticizing Zionism and Christian Zionism.

¹¹⁴ Colin Chapman's book “*Whose Promised Land*” describes in full how the land was possessed and how animosity emerged and evolved. Also, in previous chapters in the Addendum those issues were addressed.

¹¹⁵ This resolution emphasized the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war and the need to work for a just and lasting peace in which every State in the area can live in security.

gain new recruits to fundamentalism is the illegal occupation and control of the West Bank and Gaza. According to international law the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza is illegal.

- *If Israel had not taken Sinai, the West Bank and Gaza, and the Golan Heights, would their 1973 war with Egypt and Syria have taken place?* I believe there would have been no need for a war because no territory would have been occupied illegally.
- *Would Israel have invaded Lebanon in 1982?* I believe that if Israel had been a neighbor like Dubai, it would have had no enemies like the PLO; in fact, the PLO itself, with nothing to feed on, would have been weak and insignificant. That 1982 invasion of Lebanon created a great deal of destruction, not just among the Palestinians but also in Lebanon's infrastructure. Israel refused to pull out from south Lebanon. This invasion and the continued policy of occupation and control of south Lebanon gave birth to Hezbollah.¹¹⁶ Even though Israel pulled out of the area years later, Hezbollah¹¹⁷ justifies its continued jihad against Israel, even today, because of that 1967 occupation of Lebanon's Sheb'a Farms.
- *If Israel were like Dubai, would it have invaded Lebanon in 2006?* Certainly not. That was a fight against Hezbollah, which would not even have existed—or if it had, it would be a social organization caring for the poor among the Shiite population in Lebanon. Hezbollah would not have had any reason to shoot rockets on Israel if Israel were a neighbor like Dubai. Muhammad Atta was an Egyptian living in Germany, and he hated so much what he saw on the TV screen in 2006 invasion of Lebanon. He wanted to have al Qaeda training in Afghanistan. He flew a plane that hit one of the two towers on 9/11.
- *If Israel were like Dubai, would it have invaded Gaza in 2008 and repeatedly in later years?* I would dare to say that Hamas¹¹⁸ would not have come into

¹¹⁶ "Hezbollah is a Shiite Islamist political and paramilitary organization based in Lebanon. Hezbollah is also a major provider of social services, which operates schools, hospitals, and agricultural services for thousands of Lebanese Shiites and plays a significant force in Lebanese politics. It is regarded as a resistance movement throughout much of the Arab and Muslim world. The United States, Israel and Canada regard it as a terrorist organization." Wikipedia.

¹¹⁷Renovations on the ruined synagogue in central Beirut began in 2009 after an agreement between various religious denominations and permission from the Lebanese government, planning authorities and even Hezbollah. The project received the green light after political officials and community leaders became convinced it could show that Lebanon is an open country, tolerant of many faiths including Judaism.

¹¹⁸ "Hamas 'Islamic Resistance Movement' is a Palestinian Islamic organization with a socio-political wing and a paramilitary force. After winning a majority of seats in the Palestinian parliament in January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections, and defeating rival Palestinian party Fatah in a series of violent clashes, since June 2007 Hamas has governed the Gaza portion of the Palestinian Territories. The European Union, Israel, Japan, Canada and the United States classify Hamas a terrorist organization, but

existence if the West Bank and Gaza were not occupied by Israel in 1967 and controlled by Israel ever since. In fact, Hamas in its first years of existence was financially supported by Israel in order to weaken the PLO. This used to be a well kept secret but with the internet this fact can easily be [documented](#).

The list goes on to include other important factors:

- The phenomenon of suicide bombings *may* not have flourished and spread all over the Muslim world as we have seen. Suicide bombing was born in Iran during its eight-year war with Iraq. Boys who volunteered to fight the Iraqi armies walked in lines in front of the Iranian soldiers and used their bodies to explode the land mines planted by the Iraqis, thus protecting the Iranian soldiers from certain death. The phenomenon of suicide bombing was exported to Hezbollah in Lebanon, which was also composed of Shiites and supported by Iran. Hezbollah, in turn, passed the tactic on to the Hamas leaders and with the years it reached America with the 9/11 attack.
- Egypt, Syria, and Jordan, instead of spending a high percentage of their budgets on military armaments, could have directed their money into economic prosperity for their people. Instead, these countries were preoccupied with their enemy Israel.
- Iran would not have an excuse for nuclear weapons. More likely, all countries in the Middle East, including Iran, would want to commit to a region free of nuclear weapons. But because Israel has nuclear weapons, Iran wants the right to possess them as well, guaranteeing a place at the table with the other power players.
- If fundamentalism had been marginalized, the Afghanistan and Iraq wars would not have occurred.
- America would not be hated by Muslims around the world. If a dog with rabies bites you, you do not sue the dog; you sue the owner of the dog who was holding the leash. Israel is perceived as a bully, but America holds the leash with its \$6 billion a year support. Instead of restraining Israel, US administrations under the pressure of the Zionist lobby gave Israel the green light and used the veto power to keep Israel unrestrained.
- The polarization that exists between Christians in the West and the Muslim world would not be as strong as it is today.

Muslim countries regard it as a resistance movement since Gaza and the West Bank are occupied by Israel." (From Wikipedia)

- If Israel were like Dubai, it could be a *magnet*, attracting not only Jews and Christians but Muslims from all over the world to enjoy the benefits of what they have lacked in their own nations. If Israel were like Dubai, our world would be quite different than it is today.

My purpose in this chapter is not to point the finger at individual Jews, but to ask necessary questions about the state of Israel and its fortress mentality. Since coming to the United States in 1991, I have come to love many Jewish people that I have met here. I do not believe it is inconsistent to love Jewish people yet still disagree with right wing political Zionism. Recently, I have read books on the topic of Jewish identity that have further convinced me that Jewishness is an ethnicity and a religion, while Zionism is a political ideology. Ilan Pappé, ([Ten Myths About Israel](#)), Mark Braverman (*Fatal Embrace*) and Marc Ellis (*Judaism Does Not Equal Israel*) are Jewish men who are not afraid to speak out against mistakes committed in the name of Zionism, and for that I deeply admire them. These men and other Jewish leaders like them who are willing to question the status quo encourage me to be more hopeful about the situation in the Middle East. The most powerful and recent book that I read on the subject is written by the British, Alan Hart. The title of the book reveals the running theme: [Zionism, The Real Enemy of the Jews](#). It is a trilogy with three volumes, and it is a valuable resource.

In 1950 Albert Einstein, a Jew, published the following statement on the question of Zionism. This speech was originally given at the National Labor Committee for Palestine, in New York, on April 17, 1938 but republished by Einstein after Israel's creation.

I should rather see reasonable agreement with the Arabs based on living together in peace than the creation of a Jewish state. Apart from the practical considerations, my awareness of the essential nature of Judaism resists the idea of a Jewish state with borders, an army, and measure of temporal power no matter how modest. I am afraid of the inner damage Judaism will sustain - especially from the development of a narrow nationalism within our own ranks, against which we have already had to fight without a Jewish state.

In the next and final chapter of the addendum, I will make some concluding remarks and introduce a book to you. This book that I will introduce helped me make sense of our broken world and to maintain a proper perspective about current events.

Questions for Discussion and Reflection

1. How do you think this strange phenomenon of Dubai can exist in the Muslim world? Is there a contradiction between Islam and "Capitalism" and or commerce? ¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ "In November 2006, when Pope Benedict XVI visited Turkey, he made a stop at the seventeenth-century Blue Mosque, so called for the more than twenty thousand handcrafted cobalt-blue tiles that adorn its interior. The great mosque is an architectural marvel of unrivaled beauty. At one point, the

2. Why do you think the founders of Israel did not come to Palestine with a vision like the vision of Dubai's founders? What was it in their makeup that made them come with power and with a vision to become a fortress? Alan Hart's [trilogy](#) addresses this question with excellent documentations.
3. How do you think the Arabs would have responded if the Jews came with the attitude of Abraham in Genesis 23? (Please go to Genesis 23 and read it. From my experience, I see Arabs as similar to the people who interacted with Abraham in that chapter). Does the animosity between Muslims and Jews go back centuries, or is it primarily since 1948?
4. Does Dubai have enemies? Who?
5. Are you exposed to any Jewish groups who disagree with right wing Zionism? Who? How can you get that exposure so that you will get to see both sides of the coin? Here is [one](#) and here is [another](#).
6. What do you think of the statement: *"If you find yourself in a hole, stop digging."* Does this in any way apply to the state of Israel?

gently strolling pontiff stopped and looked up at a large black tableau with ornate white calligraphy, etched into an arch at the mosque's main exit, and asked his guide what the flowing script said. They were the words of the Prophet, he was told: "A merchant is the beloved of God" (al-kasib habiballah). On that day at the Blue Mosque, the pope discovered that for centuries, the last words worshippers read when leaving the mosque were a call to commerce. Not only was commerce important to the seventeenth-century Muslim world but to Muslims in the 21st Century as well." Vali Nasr in *"Forces of Fortune."*

CHAPTER 9
BOYD ON THE MYTH OF A CHRISTIAN NATION

AND CONCLUDING REMARKS.

“Why are Western Christians so terrified of the expansion of Islam? From what I learned from your New Testament, the early church flourished and spread like wildfire when it was a persecuted church!”

—Ahmad in a private conversation

“We will never allow another ‘siege of Vienna’ to take place. That is unthinkable. The dream that Muslims have to establish a Caliphate must be crushed.”

—An American Christian

Where Do We Go from Here?

You may feel discouraged or confused by what you have read here so far—especially the bleak picture painted in chapter 7. Some might even refuse to believe that such a bleak picture could ever become our reality.

Eugene Peterson, in his introduction to the book of Ezekiel in *The Message* translation of the Bible, says:

“Catastrophe strikes and a person’s world falls apart. People respond variously, but two of the more common responses are denial and despair. Denial refuses to acknowledge the catastrophe. It shuts its eyes tight or looks the other way; it manages to act as if everything is going to be just fine; it takes refuge in distractions and lies and fantasies. Despair is paralyzed by the catastrophe and accepts it as the end of the world. It is unwilling to do anything, concluding that life for all intents and purposes is over. Despair listlessly closes its eyes to a world in which all the color has drained out, a world gone dead.”¹²⁰

In the book, [*The Crescent Through the Eyes of The Cross*](#), and in this Addendum, we have dared to look at the Muslim worldview through the eyes of Ahmad, the international student from Egypt. We do not want to go in the direction of either *denial* or *despair*. We want to face reality, confess any sins of prejudice, and move forward with courage in Christlikeness, tackling the issues of our day. Some questions that might come to our

¹²⁰ Peterson, Eugene H., *The Message: The Bible in Contemporary Language*.

minds are these:

- Is there a compass that can keep us on track and help us maintain a proper perspective?
- Do we have the tendency to fuse the kingdom of God with our nation and therefore conclude that God will never abandon our national interests?
- What is the difference between the kingdom of God and all the kingdoms of the world, including our nation?

Boyd on the Kingdom of God

To help you process these questions, I recommend a book by Gregory Boyd, pastor of a large church in St. Paul, Minnesota. In 2004, he preached a series of sermons on “The Cross and the Sword.” The response surprised him. He had never received so much positive feedback. People reported that “*their eyes had been opened to how they unwittingly allowed political agendas to cloud their vision of the uniquely beautiful Kingdom of God.*”¹²¹ On the other hand, 20% of his congregation, roughly 1,000 people, were very offended by this series and left the church as a result.¹²² About 1,000 people joined his church because of this series. His book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, provides a thought-provoking contrast between the kingdom of God and the kingdoms of the world in five main areas.

1. *A Contrast of Trusts.* The kingdom of the world trusts the power of the sword, while the kingdom of God trusts the power of the cross. The kingdom of the world advances by exercising “power over,” while the kingdom of God advances by exercising “power under.”
2. *A Contrast of Aims.* The kingdom of the world seeks to control behavior, while the kingdom of God seeks to transform lives from the inside out. Also, the kingdom of the world is rooted in preserving, if not advancing, one’s self-interests and one’s own will, while the kingdom of God is centered exclusively on carrying out God’s will, even if this requires sacrificing one’s own interests. To experience the life of the kingdom of God, one has to die to self (Matthew 16:25, Mark 8:35, Luke 17:33, John 12:25, Galatians 2:19-20).
3. *A Contrast of Scopes.* The kingdom of the world is intrinsically tribal in nature and is heavily invested in defending, if not advancing, one’s own people group, one’s nation, one’s ethnicity, one’s state, one’s religion, one’s ideologies, or one’s political agendas. That is why it is a kingdom characterized by perpetual conflict. The kingdom of God, however, is

¹²¹ Boyd, Gregory. *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 10.

¹²² Boyd has been accused of believing in the doctrine of “open theism.” His book, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, doesn’t even touch on that doctrine. Open Theism declares that God is not all knowing.

intrinsically universal, for it is centered on simply loving as God loves. It is centered on people living for the sole purpose of always replicating the love of Jesus Christ to all people in all places without condition. The kingdom-of-God participant has by love transcended the tribal and nationalistic parameters of whatever version of the kingdom of the world they find themselves in.

4. *A Contrast of Responses.* The kingdom of the world is intrinsically a tit-for-tat kingdom; its motto is “an eye for an eye and tooth for a tooth.” In this fallen world, no version of the kingdom of the world can survive for long by loving its enemies and blessing those who persecute it; it carries the sword, not the cross. But kingdom-of-God participants carry the cross, not the sword. We, thus, aren’t ever to return evil with evil, violence with violence. We are rather to manifest the unique kingdom life of Christ by returning evil with good, turning the other cheek, going the second mile, loving, and praying for our enemies. We are to respond to evil in a way that protects us from being defined by it and that exposes the evil as evil, thereby opening the possibility that our “enemy” will be transformed. Far from seeking retaliation, we seek the well-being of our “enemy.”

5. *A Contrast of Battles.* The kingdom of the world has earthly concerns and, thus, fights earthly battles. The kingdom of God, however, has no earthly enemies, for its disciples are committed to loving “their enemies,” thereby treating them as their “friends,” their “neighbors.” There is a warfare the kingdom of God is involved in, but it is “not against enemies of blood and flesh.” It is rather “against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers of this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12).¹²³

Boyd argues:

“Christians should live in such a manner consistent with God’s character... At the same time Christians are commanded to “honor the emperor” and live-in conformity to the laws of their land... insofar as those laws do not conflict with our calling as citizens of the Kingdom of God... God uses governments as he finds them in all their ungodly rebellious ways, to serve his own providential purposes... The sword is part of our common *curse*, yet God uses it to keep law and order in the world (Romans 13:3-4).”¹²⁴

¹²³ Boyd, Gregory, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 47–48.

¹²⁴ Boyd, Gregory, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 19–20.

Boyd asked the question: When God flexes his muscles, what does He look like: *Rambo* or *Calvary*? Boyd's assumption is that according to the New Testament it is always Calvary. Do you agree with that assumption?¹²⁵

The Myth of a Christian Nation is one of those books I could not put aside until I finished it. I liked it for the following reasons:

- Boyd addresses in detail the topic of how to advance the Gospel of Jesus and his kingdom into the United States and the nations.
- He addresses the topic of spiritual warfare in a fresh and powerful way.
- He talks about “the already” and the “not yet” by saying:
“Christ defeated the kingdom of darkness and set humanity free. In *principle*, therefore, the world has already been reconciled to God... What is true in principle has not yet been *manifested as an accomplished fact*... From God's eternal perspective, the interval between what is true in principle and what is manifested as fact is undoubtedly no larger than the interval we experience between, say, turning on a light switch, on the one hand, and seeing the room filled with light, on the other. From our perspectives, however, the interval has already lasted two thousand years.”¹²⁶
- He emphasizes integrity and living kingdom values—inner transformation rather than merely a change of behavior.
- He makes excellent contrasts between the kingdoms of the world and the kingdom of God. Boyd contrasts the “power over” approach, which is the sword or the enforcement of the law of the land; with the “power under” or the cross approach (Philippians 2:3–4).
- I admire his courage to challenge the church in America. He asks whether we have fallen into the temptation of fusing the kingdom of God with a preferred version of the kingdom of the world—whether it is national interests, a particular form of government, or a particular political program.

Gregory Boyd's ideas are radical! This, along with his alleged association with open theism, might keep some evangelicals from reading his book. I found nothing about open theism in this book, but his ideas on how to be in the world and yet not of the world were radical and refreshing. I struggled a few times while reading the book and especially the last chapter, but in general I found myself resonating with many of his ideas.

¹²⁵ I asked a similar question in the previous chapter. "When God flexes his muscles does he look more like Joshua or more like Jesus"?

¹²⁶ Boyd, Gregory, *The Myth of a Christian Nation*, 67–68.

It is challenging to differentiate between the kingdom of God and our political ideologies. Jesus lived at a time when Judea was under Roman occupation. People around him attempted to drag him into their politics and get him to take sides. His questioners were not only the Pharisees and religious leaders, but also Pilate. Even his own disciples, up to the last minute before his earthly departure, were still thinking in terms of worldly kingdoms. Christ resisted every temptation to be dragged into taking political sides. He kept his eyes on his Father and his Father's kingdom. We need to follow his example. By focusing on the Kingdom of God we will have the courage to look at the events in our world *without denial* and we will *not despair* because of the hope that vision provides.

* * * * *

In my blogs at www.nabeeljabbour.com I have addressed current issues like why would any Muslim in his right mind join the Islamic State (ISIS, ISIL)? I also addressed the main figures who are trail blazers for the Islamic State.

I hope that I have motivated you to read and study more for yourself through the many books that I recommended.

Please read the three appendixes following this chapter. The first is a speech given by the former prime minister of Singapore giving an international perspective on to how to deal with terrorism. The second is a *Christianity Today* article offering an alternative theological position on the Israeli-Palestinian situation and on eschatology (end times theology). The third is an open letter written by Leighton Ford right after his visit to the Pentagon before the Iraq war. He was deeply stirred and moved as a result of his encounter with Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld and felt compelled to write this open letter.

APPENDIX A
FIGHT TERROR WITH IDEAS, NOT JUST ARMIES
By Former Prime Minister of Singapore Goh Chok Tong
(Originally published May 7, 2004)

Militant Islamic terrorism is to the 21st century what Communism was to the 20th—a global ideological battle that needs to be fought both off and on the battlefield. This is why absolute, unsentimental clarity is needed, not political correctness that fudges the seriousness of the threat, says Prime Minister GOH CHOK TONG.

The terrorist attacks in Madrid in March this year could become a turning point in the war against terrorism. Unless we make the right moves, I fear the turn could be for the worse.

The choice of the target and the timing of the attack were strategic. The Spanish Socialist Party had made the withdrawal of troops from Iraq part of its election platform. Attacking Madrid just before the election was obviously calculated to achieve a strategic effect, as indeed it did when the new government so quickly confirmed its intention to pull out of the United States-led coalition in Iraq.

This will only encourage the terrorists to exploit political differences within countries, and divisions between the US and Europe. We must not let them succeed.

Any lingering doubts about the terrorists' strategic intentions should have been put to rest by a statement attributed to Osama bin Laden in April wherein he offered a "truce" to Europe if it stopped "attacking Muslims or interfering in their affairs including participating in the American conspiracy."

And, notwithstanding what some critics of the war in Iraq have alleged, this statement also demonstrates that Osama bin Laden himself sees the war in Iraq as part of the larger struggle against terrorism. He pointedly said, "the killing of Europeans came after their invasion of Iraq and Afghanistan."

The war against terrorism could shape the 21st century in the same way as the Cold War defined the world before the fall of the Berlin Wall. To win, we must first clearly understand what we are up against.

Terrorism is a generic term. Terrorist organizations such as the Tamil Tigers in Sri Lanka or the Basque separatists in Spain are only of local concern. The virulent strain of Islamic terrorism is another matter altogether. It is driven by religion. Its ideological vision is global. The communists fought to live, whereas the jihadi terrorists fight to die, and live in the next world.

My perspective is formed by our own experiences in Southeast Asia, which post-9/11 has emerged as a major theatre for terrorist operations. In December 2001, Singapore arrested 15 people belonging to a radical Islamic group called the Jemaah Islamiah (JI). They were plotting even before 9/11 to attack American and other Western interests in Singapore. In August 2002, we arrested another 21 members of this group. Malaysia, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Thailand have also made many arrests of terrorists.

The JI regional leadership spanned Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and the southern Philippines. Its tentacles even probed into Australia. JI's objective was to create a Daulah Islamiah, an Islamic state in South-east Asia. This was to be centered in Indonesia but would include Malaysia, southern Thailand, southern Philippines, and, inevitably, Singapore and Brunei.

But the most crucial conclusion our investigations revealed was this: the existence of a trans-regional terrorist brotherhood of disparate Southeast Asian groups linked by a militant Islamic ideology to each other and to al Qaeda. Whatever their specific goals, these groups were committed to mutual help in the pursuit of their common ideology: They helped each other with funds and support services, in training and in joint operations.

In 1999, JI formed a secret caucus called the Rabitatul Mujahideen, meaning Mujahideen Coalition, to bring together various militant South-east Asian Islamic groups. Between 1999 and 2000, Rabitatul Mujahideen met three times in Kuala Lumpur. It was responsible for the bombing attack against the Philippine ambassador to Indonesia in Jakarta in August 2000. The brain behind the attack was Hambali, the link man between Southeast Asian terrorism and al Qaeda. Fortunately, he is now under arrest.

But the threat remains. It stems from a religious ideology infused with an implacable hostility to all secular governments, especially the West, and in particular the US. Their followers want to recreate the Islam of seventh century Arabia, which they regard as the golden age. Their goal is to bring about a Caliphate linking all Muslim communities. Their means is jihad, which they narrowly define as a holy war against all non-Muslims whom they call "infidels."

The Arabs call this religious ideology Salafi. Our experience in South-east Asia is not without wider relevance because of what the Salafis themselves believe. This is what one of them, an Algerian named Abu Ibrahim Mustafa, has said: "The war in Palestine, in Afghanistan, in Iraq, in Algeria, in Chechnya and in the Philippines is one war. This is a war between the camp of Islam and the camp of the Cross, to which the Americans, the Zionists, Jews, their apostate allies, and others belong. The goal of this war, which they falsely called a War on Terror, is to prevent the Muslims from establishing an Islamic state..."

Likewise, JI's goal is a Caliphate, by definition not confined to Southeast Asia. The dream of a Caliphate may seem absurd to the secular mind. But it will be a serious mistake to dismiss its appeal to many in the Islamic world, though the majority do not believe in killing and dying for it.

But there are radicals and militants who do. The terrorist brotherhood in Southeast Asia and its links to al Qaeda were first forged through the struggle against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. Ibrahim Maidin, the leader of the Singapore JI cell, underwent military training in Afghanistan in the early 1990s. His encounters with the Mujahideen deeply impressed him. Ibrahim wrote several letters to the Taliban supreme leader Mullah Mohammed Omar and to Osama bin Laden. He asked whether Mullah Omar was to be regarded as the Caliph of the Islamic world. After returning to Singapore, Ibrahim arranged for JI members to visit Afghanistan and to undergo training there.

When one of those convicted of the October 2002 Bali bombings was sentenced to death, he thanked the prosecutors and said that this would bring him closer to God and "the death penalty would mean nothing except strengthening my faith."

Islamic militancy is not new to Southeast Asia. But what is new is this type of fanatical global ideology (including the phenomenon of suicide bombers) that has been able to unite different groups and lead South-east Asian groups to subordinate local interests to the broader struggle.

Ibrahim has confessed to a senior Singapore intelligence officer that in retrospect, he made the mistake of moving too quickly and should have waited for Malaysia, Indonesia, the southern Philippines, and Singapore to become an Islamic state before acting against US interests. But he still believes that his side would ultimately win. He also said that if the US was "doing things against the Muslims," the JI would continue to attack the US.

From our experience in Southeast Asia, I draw three principal conclusions that I believe have a wider relevance.

NO COMPROMISE

FIRST, the goals of these terrorists make the struggle a zero-sum game for them. There is no room for compromise except as a tactical expedient. America may be the main enemy, but it is not the only one. What Osama bin Laden offered Europe was only a "truce," not a lasting peace.

The war against terrorism today is a war against a specific strain of militant Islamic terrorism that wants, in effect, a "clash of civilizations" or, in the words of the Algerian I earlier quoted, "a war between the camp of Islam and the camp of the Cross."

The JI has tried to create the conditions for Christians and Muslims in Southeast Asia to set against one another. In December 2000, it attacked churches in Indonesia, including one church on an Indonesian island off Singapore. It has sent its members to fight and stir up trouble in Ambon against Christians.

At the trial of those responsible for the Bali bombings of October 2002, one of the defendants, Amrozi, dubbed by the media as the “smiling terrorist,” said that he was not sorry for the Westerners killed in the Bali attacks. He said: “How can I feel sorry? I am happy, because they attack Muslims and are inhuman.” In fact, he wished “there were more American casualties.” What was most chilling is that this hatred is impersonal.

One of those we detained in Singapore was a service engineer with an American company. He confessed that he liked his American friends and bosses. He was nevertheless involved in targeting American interests. We have a sense that he had struggled with this. He eventually decided to testify against the spiritual leader of JI, Abu Bakar Bashir, but only because he felt betrayed by Bashir’s denial of the very existence of the JI organization which Bashir headed and to whom he and other members had sworn allegiance.

The favorite tactic of terrorists of all stripes has always been to try to provoke a backlash to serve their cause. When news of the JI arrests broke, my immediate concern was to maintain social cohesion in Singapore. Singapore is a multiracial society with a 15 percent Muslim population. They are well integrated in our schools, housing estates and the workplace. Nevertheless, misunderstandings could easily arise. We met Muslim leaders in several closed-door sessions to share details of the investigations and to explain that the arrests were not targeted against the Singapore Muslim community or Islam.

I also held dialogues with several thousand grassroots leaders of all ethnic groups and religions to make clear that I viewed the Muslim community in Singapore as peace-loving and to stress that the JI arrests should not cause fault lines to develop in inter-racial and inter-religious relations. We formed inter-racial confidence circles in schools and workplaces to promote better inter-racial and inter-religious understanding between the different communities.

But on a global plane, I sense that the beginnings of a backlash may already be upon us. Antagonism against Muslims has risen in Europe and the US since 9/11. Several senior European politicians have spoken against admitting Muslim Turkey into the European Union. The municipal government of Rotterdam wants to change the city’s racial profile and an all-party report to the Dutch parliament recently concluded that 30 years of multicultural policy had failed; yet Holland is one of the most liberal and tolerant of European countries. In Britain, the chairman of the Commission for Racial Equality has dismissed multiculturalism as out of date and no longer useful.

Muslims are feeling this unease with them. Perhaps as a response, many of the younger generation of Muslims everywhere are increasingly adopting the symbols of religiosity.

My second conclusion is that it is only through absolute and unsentimental clarity about the threat we face that we can define, differentiate, and therefore isolate militant Islamic terrorism from mainstream Islam. It is not sufficient to repeat, mantra-like, that most Muslims are peaceful and do not believe in violence. Unfortunately, we too often sacrifice clarity to be politically correct.

Last month, the Muslim Council of Britain, a government-linked organization, provoked a storm of protests when it asked the authorities of some 1,000 mosques to preach peaceful Islamic doctrines, be vigilant against Islamists and cooperate fully with the police. Baroness Uddin, a Labor peer of Bangladeshi origin, condemned it as “entirely unacceptable that 1,000 mosques were written to as if they were all harboring terrorists” and accused the council of supporting a witch hunt. But who would be better than the Muslims themselves to make the necessary distinctions? If we pretend in the name of political correctness that distinctions ought not be made, it is inevitable that all Muslims be viewed with suspicion.

This brings me to my third and perhaps most important conclusion. Just as the Cold War was an ideological as well as a geopolitical struggle, the war against terrorism must be fought with ideas as well as with armies, with religious and community leaders as well as police forces and intelligence services.

GLOBAL MENACE

THIS ideological struggle is already upon us. The terrorist threat has moved beyond any individual or group. It has become a global menace. Unless we win the battle of ideas, there will be no dearth of willing foot soldiers ready to martyr themselves.

This ideological struggle is far more complex than the struggle against communism because it engages not just reason but religious faith. Non-Muslims have no legitimate standing to engage in this struggle for the soul of Islam. It is a matter for Muslims to settle among themselves.

In Singapore, one of those we arrested admitted that he and others had been programmed and manipulated to have a “tunnel vision” of the concept of jihad. Another detainee told our security authorities that he hoped an ustaz or religious teacher could come to the detention centre to help him ‘purge’ his wrong ideas about Islam and teach him “true Islam’.” In other words, although he recognized that his religious teachings were wrong, he would acknowledge only a religious authority to change his ideas.

We were fortunate that in Singapore the Muslim community and Islamic leaders trusted the Government sufficiently to be willing to offer their help. They understood that

unless they acted, all Muslims could have been tarred by a few. Several Islamic religious teachers have volunteered their services to our security authorities to undertake religious counseling and rehabilitation of our JI detainees.

We welcome their help. But as a secular government, we cannot and do not tell religious teachers what they must preach. If they do not espouse violence, we must be prepared to risk a certain amount of criticism. Religious leaders regarded as too pro-government may not be credible to their ground. Participation in the rehabilitation of JI detainees by Islamic scholars and counselors gave the Muslim community in Singapore a stake in combating extremist Islamic terrorism. It facilitated the evolution of self-policing by the Muslim community and helped inoculate it against radical elements.

This may seem an obvious point. A Rand report released in March categorized Muslims into fundamentalists, traditionalists, modernists, and secularists. The report recommended that the West support the modernists first; support the traditionalists against the fundamentalists; confront and oppose the fundamentalists; and selectively support the secularists. Such an approach is a start. But I believe that it oversimplifies the problem by failing to recognize what all Muslims share. It overstates the differences within the global Muslim community.

THE UMMAH IS REAL

IT IS a fact that there is a living, vibrant Islamic ummah or global Islamic community, perhaps more so today than in any time in modern world history. The ummah is not monolithic. But the identification that all Muslims feel for events affecting other Muslims has become real and visibly stronger and more widespread since global communications have facilitated the dahwa or missionary activities of the Arab states, especially Saudi Arabia preaching and spreading Wahhabism with its oil wealth. Denying that there is such a globalized Muslim political and religious consciousness or trying to argue that a universal ummah is a danger or somehow undesirable, only mobilizes all Muslims to dig in as they feel their religion is under siege.

What we are confronted with is a dynamic spectrum and not static categories within the ummah. When we ask why is it that moderates in such a spectrum do not raise their voices to challenge extremists, we must acknowledge that one reason is that on many issues they share much common ground even when they disagree on particulars.

Do you seek to change the world by prayer and faith? Do you work with an imperfect reality and strive towards its perfection? Do you not reject all that is not Islamic and seek to destroy it by force to re-establish the perfect Caliphate? These are all questions that vibrate and resonate around a single axis of faith.

We know that we should work with the moderates and isolate the extremists. But as we seek to separate the wheat from the chaff, we need to recognize that both come from

the same plant. How we seek to engage and encourage the Muslim world to fight the ideological battle against the extremists must reflect this sensitivity and awareness.

This is complicated but not impossible. In Malaysia, Prime Minister Abdullah Badawi fought the Islamic party, PAS, on the issue of the kind of Islamic state that Malaysia should be. He won a resounding victory in the general election. He checked PAS' advance towards an austere Muslim state with shari'a laws with his vision of an Islamic state that is Islam Hadhari or 'Progressive Islam'. He has joined issue not on whether Malaysia should be an Islamic state but on the nature of such a state; and the struggle to define Malaysia's Islamic state will continue for a long time.

In Indonesia, Islamic-based parties generally did not do as well as parties that do not campaign under the banner of Islam in the recent parliamentary elections. But the Islamic parties will remain a crucial swing factor in the presidential elections later this year.

I recently traveled to Egypt, Jordan and Bahrain and met a number of other Middle Eastern leaders in Singapore. I found them determined to fight the ideology that feeds the Islamic terrorists through educational reform and other means. They understand the problem. I am encouraged by these signs and am trying to initiate a dialogue between Asia and the Middle East to share experiences and forge understanding. India and Southeast Asia together have more Muslims than in the Middle East. It is possible Asian Muslims can contribute to the ideological fight.

ROLE OF THE U.S.

ONLY the US has the capacity to lead the geopolitical battle against the Islamic terrorists. Iraq has become the key battleground. Before he was killed in Saudi Arabia, Yousef Al Ayyeri, author of the al Qaeda blueprint for fighting in Iraq, said: "If democracy succeeds in Iraq, that would be the death of Islam." That is why Osama bin Laden and others have put so much effort to try and break the coalition and America's resolve to stay the course to build a modern Iraq that Muslims will be proud of. Those who do not understand this, play into their hands. The key issue is no longer weapons of mass destruction or even the role of the United Nations. The central issue is America's credibility and will to prevail. If that is destroyed, Islamic extremists everywhere will be emboldened. We will all be at greater risk.

But the US cannot lead the ideological battle. The Rand report also fails to sufficiently acknowledge the deep distrust Muslims across the spectrum feel for the West and for the United States in particular. It overstates the ability of any external force to influence one Muslim group against another. Recently, a Malaysian Muslim academic told one of my officials that while moderate Muslims did not condone what the extremists were doing, they were reluctant to speak up because they felt that this was a Western agenda

and did not want to play into the hands of the US and its allies. They were distrustful that the US would manipulate Muslim voices for its own agenda.

The sources of Muslim anger and distrust of the US are complex. At one level, it is perhaps no different from the discomfort many, including US friends and allies, feel about US pre-eminent supremacy. At another level, it reflects the anguish of societies unable to cope with US-led globalization and its occasional unilateralism. But I can think of no Muslim society anywhere in the world where the Palestinian issue does not provoke a basic, common emotional response, no matter how it may be expressed or intellectually articulated.

I am familiar with and indeed fully agree with the argument that even if the Palestinian-Israeli conflict were to be resolved, terrorism would not end. This is only logical, given the ideologically driven motivations of Islamist terrorists of the al Qaeda strain. But while most Muslims do not approve of suicide bombings, they all do empathize with the plight of Palestinian Muslims. They are angered and disappointed by what they perceive as America's acquiescence in Israel's disproportionate use of force against the Palestinians and, most recently, its policy of "targeted assassinations." They are critical of what they regard as America's double standards, citing, for example, the US determination in acting against Iraq but not Israel for non-compliance with UN Security Council resolutions. These are views expressed consistently by leaders of Muslim nations whom I have met, including those most strongly supportive of America.

The end of the Palestinian conflict will not end terrorism. But moderating the perception that Muslims have of America's role in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict would certainly go a long way to moderating their view of the US. And this is essential if the ideological battle is to be won.

I am aware of the various measures that the US has taken to try to win the Muslim mind, such as setting up radio and television stations to broadcast alternative views of US policies to the Middle East. But the real issue is political policies, not public relations.

Like it or not, the Palestinian issue has become the lens through which Muslims around the world view the war against terror and actions against Iraq, Afghanistan, Iran, among others. That is why when, for example, one of the convicted Bali bombers, Imam Samudra, justified his actions by claiming that "the war against America and its allies is a war against evil, against tyranny and a war against terrorism and this is jihad in the path of Allah," it strikes a disconcerting resonance in the Muslim community.

And that is why when the likes of Abu Bakar Bashir claim that the CIA engineered the Bali bombings "to discredit Islam," even rational, educated Muslims do not speak out to dismiss what they know to be preposterous.

I know that these are sensitive issues. I do not want to be misunderstood. Singapore is a friend of Israel. Israel helped Singapore build up its armed forces and to survive at a time when no other country in the world, not even the US or Britain, was confident enough in us to take the risk of doing so. We will always be grateful. Singapore's relationship with Israel is one of the best in Asia.

But like most people in the world, we watch the escalating cycle of violence with deep anguish— "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth." We know there are no simple solutions. Still, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict and the cycle of violence fuel the global ideological struggle in which we are now all engaged. The Palestinian-Israeli conflict can no longer be seen only as a regional conflict or a matter of the self-defense of one country. The Palestinians know this. They know that Israel's reactions win sympathy for their cause from Muslims all around the world and help the Islamic terrorists.

We are unfortunately now in a situation where Muslim friends of the US feel uncomfortable about speaking out in America's defense and where mainstream Muslims hesitate to condemn extremists lest they be regarded as supporting the West. Beyond the Palestinian issue, I found many Middle Eastern leaders uncomfortable with the pace at which the US is urging reforms for the region. They are concerned that their interests and fears are not taken seriously enough by the US. Unless the US gains the confidence of the mainstream Muslims, they will not engage the extremists vigorously. If they do not, I fear the ideological battle will be lost.

Education and opportunities for further studies abroad, especially for Muslim women, are crucial to winning the ideological fight. This is an area in which the West can play an important role. There is nothing wrong with the right type of religious education. But if mental horizons are shaped only by a religious education of even the most mainstream type, it means a limitation of opportunities for jobs and career development. And if opportunities are limited, sooner or later any religion will turn inwards on itself. This will make it easier for deviant ideologies to take root. In Singapore, we have insisted that the madrasahs or religious schools include a secular curriculum that will enable its graduates to make a living.

Genuine post-9/11 security concerns should not lead the West to shut off or shun the Muslim world. To do so will be self-defeating. But with grants, scholarships, fellowships and investments, the West should seek to create maximum exposure, engagement, and opportunities. Once Muslims have been exposed to the modern world as in Malaysia or Indonesia, and have benefited from it without compromising their faith, it will be much more difficult for the Islamic ideological strain that only harks backwards to the seventh century to take root.

I found the Middle Eastern countries I recently visited, in particular Bahrain and Jordan, eager to build modern economies. We are close to concluding a free-trade agreement with Jordan and have agreed to start negotiations on an FTA with Bahrain. We are also

pursuing similar initiatives with Egypt and Qatar. Viewed in the context of the broader ideological struggle, FTAs are strategic as well as economic choices by these governments.

Other Arab countries should be encouraged to plug themselves into the 21st century economy. Education, development, opportunities for employment and career development are not only what most Muslims themselves want. They are also less sensitive areas than democracy, human rights or equality for women and can be pushed more vigorously with less prospect of resistance. Education, including education for women and better employment opportunities which bring about a higher standard of living are areas in which mainstream Muslims and the West have clear common interests. With education will come greater access to news and information and knowledge beyond their own borders.

Social and political changes will take time, but progress will be unstoppable. A gradual approach is more likely to succeed and take root than a “big bang” strategy which could have unpredictable and unwelcome results.

If we are to win the war against terrorism, we must, as Sun Tze in *The Art of War* says, understand the enemy. And we must, all of us, Muslims and non-Muslims, Americans, Europeans, Arabs, and Asians, unite against it. But we must create the conditions that will make this essential unity possible.

Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong delivered this speech to the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington's premier think-tank, in May 2004.

APPENDIX B
A MIDDLE WAY IN THE MIDDLE EAST
A third theological path through the Israeli-Palestinian thicket
By Mark Harlan

The first signs of stormy sailing for my theology appeared as I approached the shores of the Arab world, where I headed after graduating from a dispensationalist seminary. I knew I would have to avoid sensitive topics on which Middle Easterners would not appreciate my theological views.

But it was only a matter of time before the issue of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict arose. I had to graciously state that God's position on the matter was plain: Like it or not, the land belonged to God's chosen people, and Arabs just needed to accept reality and "get over it." But they just would not get over it.

This was especially evident in an article in a leading Jordanian Arabic daily. It was titled "Evangelicals Help Prepare to Rebuild the Temple," and it accused Jordanian evangelicals (and the seminary where I taught) of engaging in political blasphemy and religious treason. What surprised me most was that this (false) accusation came not from the poisoned pen of a militant Muslim, but rather from an Arab Christian bishop.

Many Middle Easterners are deeply troubled when U.S. evangelicals zealously support political policies and aggressive expansionist actions of the state of Israel in its conflict with the Palestinians. And they automatically associate all evangelicalism with Christian Zionism—which they see as an instrument of Western colonialism and American imperialism.

Christian Zionists characteristically anticipate fulfillment of a prophetic scenario that is reflected in popular books such as the Left Behind series. This theological framework understands that despite the creation of the church, the nation of Israel continues to have a distinct role in the redemptive plan of God. Upon Christ's second coming, a regenerate Israel will play a leading role in mediating God's blessing to the nations during the millennial reign.

As a consequence, many give unquestioning allegiance to Israel, concluding that God is on the side of the Jews. Most Arab evangelicals, on the other hand, are pro-PLO, anti-Israel, and deny any unique role for eschatological (end-time) Israel.

Naturally, both camps filter their political and social experiences through their theological grids, with some unhealthy consequences. Arab Christians often seem to justify, or at least "understand," the mentality that sanctifies suicide bombing as martyrdom. Pro-Israeli evangelicals often overlook Israel's abuse of Palestinian rights because their theology says that God is on the side of the Jews.

My personal pilgrimage, including 17 years of ministry in the Middle East, has acquainted me with both of these positions. After four years of seminary study, I became even more convinced that God was not finished with Israel and would fulfill all biblical promises and prophecies concerning his chosen people. The Bible all the more firmly buttressed the political sympathies for Israel I had before entering seminary.

But seeing current events and recent history through Arab-colored glasses revealed to me that the Palestinians (including many Christians) had suffered serious injustices. My ship's eschatological port had sprung some serious leaks, but I could not budge from the biblical teaching that Israel remains God's chosen people. I began thinking how to patch my theology to keep it from sinking.

The result is, I believe, a more balanced theology, one that allows me to take seriously both the biblical teaching about Israel's special place in God's unfolding purpose and the cries of injustice by Palestinians.

Two key teachings

Let me outline just two scriptural teachings that suggest we don't have to always side with Israel against the Palestinians, or vice versa, in order to be biblical.

1. *The Abrahamic covenant is both conditional and unconditional.* The basis of God's plan for the nation of Israel is his covenant with Abraham. Theologians have hotly debated whether this covenant is conditional (and thereby invalidated by Israel's unfaithfulness) or unconditional (and therefore a permanent promise).

Arab Christians, often influenced by Islam and the PLO, normally focus exclusively on the conditional elements. On the other hand, pro-Israeli Western Christians tend to focus solely on the unconditional elements.

It is best to recognize that there are both conditional and unconditional elements in the covenant. The unconditional elements demonstrate God's unmerited grace in electing the participants and his unwavering faithfulness in fulfilling the covenant.

At the same time, certain conditions had to be fulfilled for the covenant to become a reality: Abraham had to leave Ur and most of his family and go to Canaan. Once he had done that, the Lord entered into an unconditional covenant with Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob (with whom God confirmed and expanded the covenant).

But later restatements of the Abrahamic covenant (such as Gen. 22:16ff.) suggest conditionality. Rather than trying to deny this duality, we can harmonize it as follows: The promise of land, seed, and blessing to Abraham's descendants

is an irrevocable covenant from God. The experience of these blessings, however, was conditioned by the faith-obedience of each generation of Israel. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant (plainly conditional) was to make clear to Israel the faith-obedience necessary to participate in the blessings of the promises given to Abraham.

Adherence to the Mosaic covenant would enable any generation of Israel to experience the blessings promised by the Abrahamic covenant, while unfaithfulness would result in curses, though the promise of restoration to the land (after repentance) remains in perpetuity.

2. *Israel must fulfill the covenant stipulations of righteousness.* If Jews today want to make a Scripture-based claim to the land, then all parties can fairly demand that they adhere to the stipulations of their own Scriptures.
 - a) The purpose of God's granting the covenant to Abraham's seed was that they might bring blessing to "all the families of the earth." Possession of the land must bring blessing to non-Israelites and ultimately to the world.
 - b) We must also remember that ownership of the land is ultimately God's. The Israelites are only residing "aliens and tenants" (Lev. 25:23). The Lord warned the Israelites that if they failed to adhere to the covenant, then the land would "vomit them" from it (Lev. 18:24-30; 20:22-26; Deut. 4:25-27, 40; Deut. 8 and 9).
 - c) The Law of Moses forbids murder, theft, and coveting. Obtaining any land by means that violate any of these commands would invalidate alleged claims to such land on biblical bases. The case of Ahab murdering Naboth to obtain his land clearly reveals God's intolerance for such conduct (1 Kings 21).
 - d) The conquest of Canaan does not provide a precedent for genocide or confiscation of land. Joshua's mandate applied to a period when Canaanite religion and culture had plummeted to the depths of pagan depravity: it included sorcery, spiritism, and child sacrifice (Deut. 18:9-15). God gave Israel a special assignment to act as an instrument of his judgment on the Canaanites."

Joshua had a clear and direct commandment from God both to conquer and to kill the inhabitants of the seven Canaanite nations," says David Stern, a messianic Jew who believes in the irrevocable promise of the land to the nation of Israel. "It was a very specific ad hoc commandment, and it did not extend to all living in the Land, only

to certain nations that had had 400 years in which to repent of their evil ways (Genesis 15). It cannot be stated rationally that the Palestinian Arabs today are in the category of the Canaanites. . . . Such an ethnic comparison expresses an unbiblical attitude of racism, nationalism, and hate which cannot be disguised by calling it 'faithfulness to God's promises.' Moreover, the prophetic vision of resettlement of the Land after the exile is not based on violent takeover but on divine intervention (Isa. 60-61, Ezek. 36-37)." We must also remember that the Lord promised to expel the Israelites from the land if they practiced any of these evils (Lev. 18:24-28).

- e) Neither should the Palestinians be dealt with as Philistines. "There is no relationship whatever between the Philistines of biblical times and the Palestinians of today, even though the names are related," Stern says. "The Philistines were descended from Japheth, while the Palestinians are Arabs descended from Shem." (This does not mean these peoples are so descended in the absolute genetic or ethnic sense. It does reflect their primary identity. Many of the Palestinians are a genetic mixture of other peoples over the millennia).
- f) Non-Israelites living in the land are not to be abused or oppressed. The Law repeatedly instructs Israel: "Do not mistreat an alien or oppress him, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Ex. 22:21). "The alien living with you must be treated as one of your native-born. Love him as yourself, for you were aliens in Egypt" (Lev. 19:34). Social welfare programs cared for aliens along with orphans and widows. These included the right to glean from harvest fields (Lev. 19:10; 23:27; Deut. 24:19–21), to receive a part of the distributed tithes (Deut. 14:29; 26:12) and to have protection from permanent slavery (Lev. 25:47-50). Non-Israelites were to have access to the same legal system as Israelites. No law could bind aliens that did not also bind Israelites (Lev. 24:22; Num. 9:14; 15:16; 15:29). There was to be only one system of justice for all (Deut. 1:16; 24:17), and Israel could not deprive aliens of their rights (Deut. 27:19). Wages had to be fair and never withheld (Deut. 24:14). Aliens were equally entitled to the system of "cities of refuge" to protect the accused from revenge (Num. 35:15; Josh. 20:9).
- g) The Palestinians as Arabs are not accursed sons of Ishmael destined to be eternal archenemies of Israel. Recent evangelical scholarship reveals the mistake of deriving a stereotype of Ishmael and his descendents from their portrayal in Scripture. To summarize Tony Maalouf's findings in his 1998 dissertation at Dallas Theological Seminary, God promised to *bless* Ishmael (meaning "God hears," Gen.

17:20), whom he so named after *hearing* Hagar's affliction. To comfort her and encourage her to return to her mistress, the Lord promised to reverse Hagar's fortunes in the life of her son.

Though Hagar experienced subjection, helplessness, and separation from her people because of her flight from the face of Sarah, the Lord promised to make her son free as a nomad, strong enough never to be subjugated permanently, and given a place in the presence (face) of his brothers (Israel) (Gen. 16:12). God was "with" Ishmael and remained uniquely present in his land of Paran and made him a great nation (Gen. 21:17-21; 25:12-17; Hab. 3:3). In short, the Law demanded kind and just treatment of non-Israelites living in the land. Generous treatment should all the more be extended toward Arabs and Palestinians—for they are not "bad guys of the Bible," but rather those whom God has determined to bless alongside Israel.

Beginning in Jerusalem

If I had more space, I would discuss the role of national Israel in future fulfillment of biblical prophecy. I would also set out the political and social implications of all the foregoing, including the case against Israel's claim to exclusive possession of the Land in the present age.

For now, I only assert that we can sustain the biblical teaching that Israel remains in some sense God's chosen people, while also taking seriously the claims of non-Israelites who live within her borders.

Establishing peace between Ishmael and Isaac will not be easy, but it is not a hopeless cause—and certainly not precluded by theological necessity. Christians cannot succeed in fulfilling our biblical mandate to be peacemakers, however, unless we take more balanced theological and political positions on this issue.

Though reconciliation may seem to be a distant dream, "all things are possible with God." He has employed the followers of Christ to eliminate slavery from the British Empire and to end apartheid in South Africa.

Certainly, there is a time of great tribulation ahead for Israel and the world. But it is not for us "to know epochs and times which the Father has fixed by his own authority." Instead, we are to witness (with our lives of love, as well as our lips) to the transforming power of Christ throughout the world, "beginning in Jerusalem" (Acts 1:7-8).

Mark Harlan has served with Christar since 1984, including eight years as a professor in Jordan. Copyright © 2003 Christianity Today.

APPENDIX C THREE QUESTIONS ABOUT WAR WITH IRAQ

A letter written by Leighton Ford to young Christian leaders in December 2002 a couple of months before the Iraq War

Shortly before Christmas, in 2002, I was invited with a few other religious leaders to meet with Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld and other officials to discuss terrorism and Iraq. One official explained, "If we are going into conflict with Iraq we need the moral support of the public."

Although I appreciated being invited to the session, I left troubled. Certainly Saddam Hussein has wrought great evil against his own people and others, greater perhaps than most of us realize. Yet I was not convinced that the connection between Iraq and terrorism was clear enough to justify war.

In the weeks since I have wrestled with the question of this war, and its moral defensibility. I had thought of writing an open letter to the president. But he has more than enough advice! So instead, I write this to you, as young pastors, evangelists, and mission leaders to ask you to confront honestly and prayerfully three questions that we who follow Jesus should be asking of ourselves and those we lead.

Question #1: What is the moral justification for a "pre-emptive" war?

I am not a pacifist, although I deeply respect my friends who are. There are times, I believe, when force must be used to oppose evil. As the apostle Paul taught, rulers are given the "power of the sword" from God to "execute wrath on the wrongdoer." Yet Paul's words must be held in tension with those of Jesus who told his disciples, as they were pulling out weapons to fight off those sent to arrest him, "Put up your sword. All who take the sword will perish by the sword."

Former President Jimmy Carter surely had it right: "War may sometimes be a necessary evil, but it is still evil." The problem is still that of the human heart. Sin distorts our decisions and motives and our ability to see and execute judgment purely.

All of us can too easily find ways to "justify" our actions. Thus, some moral criteria for a "just war" and not only the claims of "realpolitik" must be our guide. This is why across the centuries thoughtful Christians have sought to weigh the pros and cons of any specific conflict in the scales of so-called "just war" theory"; e.g., that war must only be waged as a last resort, to protect the innocent, to restore justice, avoiding as far as possible injury to non-combatants, and with grounds for believing that limited military action will prevent greater evil.

What, then, justifies a pre-emptive or "preventive" war? This takes the ethics of war to a new level and demands a higher and clearer standard. Unless military power is used with a clear moral clarity, we set a precedent that may come back to haunt us and the world.

Suppose that a year from now India wishes to justify a pre-emptive strike against Pakistan, fearing that Pakistan may provide weapons of mass destruction to Kashmir rebels (or, vice versa). On what moral grounds will the U.S. and other nations be able to challenge them? It seems to me that a preemptive war is justified only when three conditions are met:

1. That injury is threatened to a third (innocent) party.
2. That there is clear intent and demonstrated preparation to attack.
3. When it can be shown that waiting would greatly magnify the risk.

In a democracy we must trust our elected leaders to weigh these issues. Yet we may also require, if they want our "moral support," that they provide a moral and legal basis for a pre-emptive war.

It may be that in a world of violence, force will sometimes be needed to stop tyrants and protect the innocent. But such actions must always be for the sake of justice, never for vengeance, and justice be tempered by mercy.

If, then, we are called to be merciful, do we not have a moral imperative to prepare to practice mercy? How will we wage war mercifully, when Saddam Hussein may deliberately move his military forces right next to civilians? How will we plan to make peace? Must we not be clear about our intentions now?

Question #2: What effect will war have on fellow believers in other parts of the world?

We often forget that in the Middle East and the Arab countries there are not only Muslims and Jews, but fellow followers of Christ. How will a war affect them? A friend who heads a major Christian ministry in that part of the world recently e-mailed to say: *"We pray with all our hearts that by the time you receive this . . . war with Iraq will have been averted. From our perspective, war against Iraq would have devastating repercussions in the region—not least of which is a serious undermining of the message of the Gospel. The reason for this is that Arabs are interpreting war against Iraq as Christian aggression against an Islamic nation. This false perception is so deeply ingrained among most Arabs that it undermines any perception of Christianity as a message of love and peace."*

As my friend says, the perception is false. Yet it is real to those who hold it! And we have a responsibility to manage perceptions, and not just deny them.

How would you respond to my friend? How do I respond? I can only let him know that I am praying that war may yet be averted, and other means found to deter Hussein. And, if not, then we must pray that the war will be as limited as possible, that civilian loss may be minimal, and that in any post-war rebuilding Christians will be able to join with many others to minister to the hungry and hurting people of Iraq, and especially to the children!

Question #3: What war is most worth fighting?

At the end of the day I have tried to look at our world not as a "religious leader," but as a grandfather. My wife and I have four precious grandchildren, ranging from a college freshman to a little girl just learning to turn over in her crib. How will our decisions as a nation affect them? And the other billions of children in our world

The greatest risk may not be from Hussein, but from what would happen in the ten to twenty years after a war, in attack and counterattack, in anger and revenge. I do not want our grandchildren to grow up in a kind of global Northern Ireland!

I also ask myself: what about the money? War with Iraq will cost anything from fifty to a hundred billion dollars or more. Is that the best way to spend these billions? To build a future for our own grandchildren and others?

Yet there is another war, one well worth fighting—the war against HIV-AIDS in southern Africa and much of Asia. In the long run the HIV-AIDS pandemic is a greater threat than Saddam Hussein. If the war against AIDS is lost this disease has the potential to destabilize entire continents, and much of the world.

President Bush has committed fifteen billion dollars over the next several years for the fight against AIDS in Africa. Yet this is only just a beginning. The Secretary General of the United Nations has said "With ten billion dollars a year AIDS can be globally controlled in ten years." This is a war that can be won!

I thank God for President Bush's leadership in this commitment. But I am hoping that he and UK Prime Minister Tony Blair (who a year ago called for a global "Marshall Plan" to wipe out AIDS) will with all the authority of their offices build a "coalition of the willing" in this war.

War with Iraq will end many lives. War against AIDS will save tens of thousands of lives.

So let's ask ourselves, and our leaders: which war is most worth fighting?

There's still time to seek an alternative to war. Consider this: A church in Boulder, Colorado is encouraging people to put a cup of rice in a sandwich bag and send it to the White House with a note that says "'If your enemies are hungry, feed them.' Romans 12:20. Please send this to the people of Iraq."

In the mid '50s famine ravaged China while the US and China were at odds over threats to the islands of Quemoy and Matsu. Such a "rice campaign" took place then but not until much later was the effect known. President Eisenhower met with the Joint Chiefs of Staff to consider US options and twice the use of nuclear weapons was recommended. Each time Eisenhower turned to an aide to ask how many little bags of rice had come in. When told they numbered in the tens of thousands, Eisenhower told his generals that as long as so many Americans were asking for the US to feed the Chinese, he certainly wasn't going to consider using nuclear weapons against them. (The story is related by David Albert in *People Power: Applying Nonviolence Theory*).

If I had the ear of the President I would want to say:

Mr, President, please: keep the pressure on Saddam to disarm. Please: feed the children of Iraq. And please: lead the war against AIDS.

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RECOMMENDED READING LIST

I highly recommend this excellent scholarly work by MJ Bryant on the topic: “American Evangelicals and US Foreign Policy in the Middle East: Exposing and Overcoming Missional Blind Spots.” MJ Bryant wrote: “*I have finished reading [The Crescent Through the Eyes of the Cross](#) and the Addendum. I appreciate your work and I am eager to continue to learn more through the books that you have recommended. There are many difficult truths in your book and the Addendum that need to be communicated to other believers and I hope from now on to join you in sharing this message with others.*” MJ Bryant ended up reading every book that I recommended and much more. You can access [this scholarly work on this link](#).

My latest revision of the Addendum took place in April 2021. At times, in the blogs on my website, I address important issues such as the Islamic State Group (ISIS, ISIL) and the men who paved the way for it. My website is: <http://www.nabeeljabbour.com>

I suggest that before you get into the attached recommended reading list, that you read the following blogs in my website in this order.

1. <https://www.nabeeljabbour.com/blog/2018/12/21/isis-10-reasons-muslims-are-eager-to-join>
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