A Clash of Proselytizations

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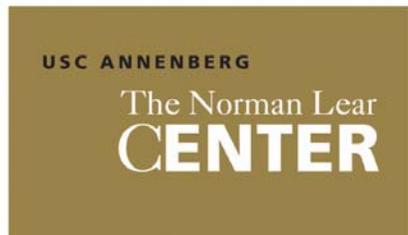
Celebrity, Politics & Public Life

Since Fall 2000, the Norman Lear Center has sponsored a popular faculty seminar series on Celebrity, Politics & Public Life. Faculty and deans from over 20 departments convene three times each semester to develop an interdisciplinary analysis of political life in this country as it is shaped by popular culture. The project is co-directed by USC History Department Chair Steven J. Ross and Leo Braudy, Leo S. Bing Professor of English. Our topics have ranged from Elian Gonzales and Timothy McVeigh to Angela Davis, Robert Mapplethorpe, and Edward G. Robinson. The group includes professors and deans from anthropology, art history, cinema-television, theatre, ethnic studies, American studies, German, sociology, business, political science, economics, education, policy and planning, philosophy, gender studies, art history, psychology, communication, journalism, English, and history.

Jack Miles

Fellow in Religion and International Affairs at the Pacific Council of International Policy, MacArthur Fellow (2003-2007), and Getty Scholar (2006-2007), Jack Miles' writings have appeared in *The Atlantic, The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Los Angeles Times, The Boston Globe*, and many other publications. His book *GOD: A Biography* won a Pulitzer Prize in 1996 and has been translated into sixteen languages, including Hebrew and (twice) Chinese. A sequel to that book entitled *CHRIST: A Crisis in the Life of God* was published simultaneously in 2001 in the United States, Britain, Germany, and France. Dutch, Italian, Japanese, and Brazilian translations are in progress or in print.

Over a period of nearly twenty years, 1975-1995, Miles was successively an editor at Doubleday, executive editor at the University of California Press, literary editor at *the Los Angeles Times*, and finally a member of the Times Editorial Board, writing on politics and culture. He serves on the final selection committee of the John Simon Guggenheim Foundation and is general editor of the forthcoming *Norton Anthology of World Religions.*

Miles has been at different times Visiting Scholar at Occidental College, Mellon Visiting Professor of Humanities at Caltech, Director of the Humanities Center at the Claremont Graduate University, Regents Lecturer at the University of California, Senior Advisor to the President of the J. Paul Getty Trust, and Visiting Fellow with the Committee on the Conceptual Foundations of Science, University of Chicago.

Born in Chicago in 1942, he spent the years 1960-1970 as a Jesuit seminarian, studying at the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome,1964-1966, and the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, 1966-1967, before enrolling at Harvard University where he completed a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages in 1971. He is fluent in several modern languages.

Miles served as a member of the nonfiction jury for the1999 Pulitzer Prize. In 1996, he chaired the jury for the *Irish Times* International Fiction award. He was the founding director, and for seven years the jury chair of the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Awards at the Claremont Graduate University. Miles is a past president of the National Book Critics Circle, and an advisory board member of PEN Center USA West.

This article began as a presentation to the Celebrity, Politics and Public Life Seminar, a project at the USC Annenberg Norman Lear Center. Particular thanks to the founder of the seminar, Prof. Marty Kaplan.

We are all missionaries (propagandists of our views).

Each of us disapproves of the other missionaries.

-- Mark Twain, Notebook, 1905

A Clash of Proselytizations

During the first years of the twenty-first century, two questions touching the place of religion in American political life have been particularly prominent: first, that of the real or supposed influence of conservative Christians upon a president whom they helped elect; second, that of the legitimate or illegitimate invocation of Islam by the al-Qa'eda terrorists who attacked the United States on September 11, 2001 and by kindred groups around the world, often enough after similar attacks.

These two questions, usually considered separately, can be mutually illuminating when joined at the relatively neglected topic of propaganda. At issue, ultimately, is whether the end of the George W. Bush Administration may be an opportune moment for the United States formally to reassert its political identity as a religiously neutral state.

A key objective, surely, within the propaganda mission of the United States is to convert all nations into full members of that growing international community within which, after the fall of Soviet Communism, the United States has had – and greatly benefited from – the leading role. Some invited to assume such membership fear a pernicious loss of identity. Others are sympathetic, but hesitant. Much of the challenge of turning samplers and sympathizers into full

and active members has fallen quite properly upon the United States as the pre-eminent beneficiary of the emergent world system.

Counter to this vision of progressive conversion to a global community stand overlapping, partially religious visions of globalization corrected, resisted, or halted. Latin American opposition draws on Christian activism for some of the energy on display during meetings of the World Trade Organization. But the Christian critique of globalism, as it might be read in a work like Rebecca Todd Peters' *In Search of the Good Life: The Ethics of Globalization* (Continuum International Publishing Group, 2004) serves a mostly peaceful, negotiable resistance

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Islamist opposition, by contrast, is often violent; and though it may command the allegiance of only a thin stratum of the world's Muslims, that stratum is remarkably broad, highly networked, and demonstrably lethal. The goal of al-Qaeda and cognate groups is to halt the expansion of the international community at the borders of the Ummah or world Muslim community, if not to sabotage it where it began. For these groups, conversion to or membership in the international community as generally understood, is tantamount to apostasy from Islam, and vice versa. Against this small but committed and embattled network stands the far larger and altogether less inflamed Muslim mainstream that sees no insuperable incompatibility between these two kinds of membership, even if it is skeptical about the benefits of globalization, and on guard against religious proselytization occurring under the cover of technical progress.

Between the passion of the militants and the skepticism of the mainstream, the United States is enmeshed in a clash of proselytizations for which the world's 1.5 billion Muslims are the contested population.

This campaign, as one waged on behalf of the international community rather than of a latter-day American empire, does not coincide exactly with any struggle to advance democracy, did not begin on September 11, 2001, will not end for decades, and has entered a new and volatile phase as the American adventure in Iraq accelerates toward its bloody conclusion and the sun sets on the Bush Administration's Global War on Terror.

Iraq, Conversions, and the National Interest

The American-instigated war in Iraq, whatever else may be said of it, has created a conversion theater with a world audience. And contrary to the myth of an America that always shoots first and asks questions after, there are great resources in American culture for the analysis and understanding of other cultures. Such were the resources that won the Cold War by, in the crucial first instance, fighting back the inclination of some to turn it into a Hot War with an early, preemptive, nuclear attack on the Soviet Union and, in the second instance, by prevailing in a great duel of definitions.

Victory in a propaganda war often goes to the side that more successfully defines the terms of the debate. Over time, Soviet Communism failed in its attempt to define the United States as the capitalist, militarist oppressor of the world's workers and itself as their heroic liberator. Conversely, the United States succeeded in its attempt to define the Soviet Union as a totalitarian, militantly atheist menace to all nations and itself as their trustworthy defender. Actions counted for much indeed; yet in the judgment of as relatively hawkish a historian of the Cold War as John Lewis Gaddis,[1] the determined and astute propagation of ideas counted for no less.

America is the country that virtually invented market research. Given resources, time, and the will to cultivate domestic assets, Americans are fully capable of learning about other cultures. But saying that, we come close to the cross-cultural difficulty of the propaganda challenge before us at this juncture. Iraq – not to speak of the Muslim world as a whole – is a market that we do not understand, and scarcely know how to research. Google is a wonderful tool, but one is given

pause by the words of a Special Forces colonel assigned to the Under Secretary of Defense for Intelligence, quoted in the military journal *Joint Force Quarterly*: "We literally don't know where to go for information on what makes other societies tick, so we use Google to make policy." [2]

Jonathan Schell, in his remarkable and regrettably under-noticed book *The Unconquerable World*,[3] argues that over the long haul, guerrillas fighting for their homeland against a technically superior foreign invader have won every time out. Guerrilla movements are effectively invincible because they cannot be defeated by *force majeure* but only by what, sticking to French, we might call *l'idée superieure,* and the latter is an asset that the culturally alien invader almost never has at his command. Whether or not the war in Iraq has now become a civil war, ideology will play a large role in defining the Iraqi future. And the ideological future of Iraq – emphatically including the future of contending forms of Islam in that country – will bear, in turn, on the global ideological conflict. In the Iraqi theater and the global theater, neither side doubts that these are the larger stakes.

In a prescient article, looking ahead to an outcome in the Iraq War that would not be victory for the United States, James Fallows proposed a carefully formulated "'containment' strategy for the age of terror" with a central ideological component. He began by asking how the George W. Bush Administration had approached the Muslim world since 9/11, and how it had invited the Muslim world to approach the United States: "America's approach to the Muslim world since 9/11 has made sense – to the Americans who designed it. First we would rout the Taliban from Afghanistan, and deny al-Qaeda the sanctuaries and training camps that were important to its growth through the 1990s. Then we would take the war to Iraq, solving the immediate problem of Saddam Hussein and whatever weapons he had, and foster a long-run example of a prosperous, democratic Arab-Islamic state. We would talk about freedom, and our actions would speak even louder; by the burdens we had borne, we would show how deeply we cared. Meanwhile, we could leave our policy toward the Palestinians and the Israelis unchanged, on the assumption that it would be easier to push forward after Iraq was stabilized. And as a side benefit, we wouldn't have to worry about energy conservation or alternative fuels, because a

peaceful Persian Gulf would be a bountiful supplier. That was the intention. Somehow the results looked different to the people this strategy was supposed to influence."[4] Why did this strategy look so different to those whom it is intended to influence? Why, as it must seem to many Americans, have our good intentions been so misconstrued?

Not to gainsay the psychological effect of the sheer destruction that Bush Administration policy has visited upon Iraq and, more recently, Lebanon, I submit that just as American perceptions of American performance have been shaped by the entire American history of war and peace, monarchy and democracy, religious faith and secular commitment, so also are Muslim perceptions shaped by a different but related history with similar elements. The lack of congruence between these histories explains, to begin with, the striking apple-and-orange "off-ness" of the duel of political vs. religious definitions. We call them "terrorists" and ourselves "free," using political designators. They call themselves "believers" and us "infidel," using religious rather than political designators. We refer to them as Iraqi and to ourselves as American, using national designators. They refer to themselves as "mujahedeen," on the one hand, and to us as "Crusaders and Jews," on the other, using, again, religious designators. We insist on talking politics. They insist on talking religion.

The Muslim world is asking many other questions about Iran and the United States than that one, and here was an exceptional opportunity to address those questions with certainty that least the Iranian portion of the Muslim world would be listening in. The president need not have addressed his response to Ahmadinejad personally. He need not have responded tit-for-tat by hectoring the Iranian about his Islam. ("Do you

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practice Islam or Khomeinism?") But he might have taken this high-visibility moment to announce that American presidents do not generally debate the merits of their own or their citizens' religions, and then gone on to explain why. He might have explained that the United States does not have a national religion, but does have a national way of dealing with religion. The difference between the two escapes much of the target audience, as defined just above. Here was a rare opportunity to explain the difference to Iran, by invitation from its president himself, and go on to explain why, as a result of the difference, Islam is so much more welcome in the United States than Christianity, or Judaism, or Baha'I, or any other faith but Shiite Islam is welcome in Iran. The underground circulation of such a letter would have been unstoppable. And having begun with religion, the president could have gone on to talk about democracy in some approximation of his own preferred terms. Instead, the diplomatic choices were foreshortened to Iran's nuclear program or nothing.

One hears from time to time that "Islam has never undergone a Protestant Reformation." This is true but scarcely adequate, just as it would be true but scarcely adequate to say "The United States has never experienced foreign conquest and colonization" or "There was no Russian Enlightenment." A long and complex story – far longer and more complex than the backstory of the Cold War –must first be understood, and only *then* made the basis for psychological operations including what is now called branding. For in the long run, the goal is indeed conversion rather than victory: it is not defeating or neutralizing all enemies, but turning enemies into friends and allies. Reaching that goal entails constructing a form of mutual acceptance that preserves identity. The preservation of identity, in turn, entails the quasi-literary challenge of telling an appealing, persuasive master story in which, by the last chapter, old enemies have become new friends and, rather than losing themselves, have found themselves anew.

"Fortunately," Fallows writes, "this is where the academic action is. ... Fighting terrorism and understanding Islam is as fertile a field as Soviet studies were during the Cold War. Seemingly, every day there is a conference somewhere in the world on the social, religious, economic, and geographic sources of terrorist movements, or on the titanic struggle between modernizing and radicalizing forces within Islam." On October 6, 2005, perhaps partly as a result of this new

"academic action," President George W. Bush, in a speech to the National Endowment for Democracy, seemed to break with his Administration's sanctioned terminology. G-WOT, the Global War on Terror, gave way for a moment to a more nuanced terminology, prefaced by an acknowledgement that terrorist attacks "...serve a clear and focused ideology, a set of beliefs and goals that are evil, but not insane. Some call this evil Islamic radicalism; others, militant Jihadism; still others, Islamo-fascism. Whatever it's called, this ideology is very different from the religion of Islam. This form of radicalism exploits Islam to serve a violent, political vision: the establishment, by terrorism and subversion and insurgency, of a totalitarian empire that denies all political and religious freedom. These extremists distort the idea of jihad into a call for terrorist murder against Christians, Jews and Hindus – and also against Muslims from other traditions, who [*sic*] they regard as heretics." [6]

The very earliest presidential rhetoric after September 11, 2001 never went so far as to concede to the enemy "a clear and focused ideology," even one that was "evil but not insane," and never spoke with such specificity about how an enemy, self-identified as Muslim, had to be distinguished from Islam itself. The enemy was characterized a-historically and infra-ideologically as "terrorism" or "terror" *tout court.*

One wonders, always, to what extent an apparent presidential breakthrough is actually only a breakthrough in the mind of a bright speechwriter like President Bush's Michael Gerson. Two years ago, much was made of the influence among the President's speechwriters of David F. Forte, a conservative Catholic professor of law who linked the ideology of al-Qaeda to that of the Kharajites, an early Islamic faction that denied Muslim identity to all who disagreed with the sect's

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interpretation of Islam. [7] That was a plausible linkage, though one that would predict for al-Qaeda a failure like the Kharajite failure itself.

A televised and much more noticed presidential address on December 18, 2005 briefly repeated this attempt to somewhat more elaborately characterize the American enemy as marginal and Islam, exploiting rather than central and genuinely Muslim; and yet elsewhere in the administration, the notion seems to live on that this aberrantly Muslim enemy might actually rally sufficient force to attempt the establishment of 21st-century global caliphate. [8] Most informed scholars regard the re-establishment of the caliphate as far beyond the capacity of any Muslim state or Islamist network, no matter how dedicated, to deliver. The Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which harbored Al-Qa'eda, was all but universally scorned within the Ummah. Until the Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Hezbollah faced massive opposition in Beirut and no significant international following. Rather than inflating and globalizing such movements, it is increasingly understood that containment dictates deflating and localizing them – two goals ill-served by the language of "global war." Yet what follows from this consensus? What new language should be employed?

No one denies that in some way we are engaged in a world war of ideas, but how can this premise mature into a long-term strategy? Fallows quotes Marc Sageman with approval: "This really is *a war of narratives* in a battlefield of interpretation" (emphasis added). Taking this much as given but adding that the winning narrative must end at a political destination in which no one's collective selfhood is sacrificed, let me offer the preliminary sketch of such a narrative – a sketch of the linked histories of the *Ummah,* the "Nation" of Islam, and the West, most especially the United States – ending in a politically imaginable world community at peace.

We may begin by drawing a line of demarcation at a treaty that occurred during the course of America's first foreign war, which happens to have been with a Muslim power – namely, the decades-long, off-and-on American struggle with the Barbary Pirates, Muslims sailing from North Africa who preyed upon Mediterranean shipping. Various agreements were signed during the course of a struggle that, the Marine hymn notwithstanding, ended rather inconclusively. Yet one of the earliest of these agreements, the 1797 Treaty of Peace and Friendship between the United

States and Tripoli, is of exceptional contemporary relevance for what it says about the religio-political assumptions of the two sides. In the English-language version of the treaty, Article 11 reads as follows: "As the government of the United States of America is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion, as it has in itself no character of enmity against the laws, religion or tranquility of Musselmen, and as the said States never have entered into any war or act of hostility against any Mehomitan nation, it is declared by the parties that no pretext arising from religious opinions shall ever produce an interruption of the harmony existing between the two countries." [9]

If this moment near the end of the eighteenth century marks the beginning of specifically American-Muslim relations, what led to it, we may ask, and what has led from it? The historical sketch that answers those questions has thus two parts: "Origins to Tripoli" and "Tripoli to the Present." From it, we may proceed to the perhaps startling policy question of whether the national interest, now so dependent on the formation and preservation of a global community of nations, would be well served were the United States formally to reassert its political identity as originally understood – that is, to dissociate its political identity from its social identity as a majority-Christian society. Is this the backstory we need in order to write a conversion scenario in which acceptable parts exist in the future international community both for our prospective proselytes and for ourselves?

Christendom, the Ummah and the International Community, Part I

Scholars estimate that before the six-decade Roman-Jewish Wars began (A.D. 68-135), there were six or seven million Jews in the world, one million or so living in Judaea, and another five or six million living abroad but linked to Jerusalem through a network of synagogues and the payment of a regular tax to the Temple priesthood. [10] It was through this pre-existing Jewish network that Christianity initially spread outward from Jerusalem through the huge Jewish Diaspora of the

Roman Empire. As time passed, however, Christianity so actively and successfully invited non-Jews into full membership in its brotherhood that what had been only a minority option within world Jewry became a momentous socio-religious movement within the Roman Empire itself. By the end of the fourth century, this dissident form of Jewish belief and practice had actually replaced traditional Roman polytheism as the Empire's official religion.

Once this happened, Christianity, till then a religious movement whose social novelty was that it lacked both government sponsorship and ethnic definition, became Christendom, a religio-political realm within which no ecclesiastical officer was more important than the emperor. Fatefully, however, the Roman Empire collapsed in the West at the end of the fifth century; and, there being no longer an emperor to head western Christendom, the patriarch or pope of Rome stepped into the breach and became, in theory, the temporal as well as the spiritual leader of all Christians from the Adriatic to the Atlantic. In practice, Western Christendom fragmented into a mosaic of small-to-middling kingdoms, principalities, and duchies with only a residual sense of Roman cultural identity. East of the Adriatic, to be sure, the Roman Empire lived on – still officially Christian, still headed religiously as in all other ways by the eastern emperor; and in the late sixth and early seventh century, under the emperor Justinian, the Eastern Empire actually re-took Italy and much of the western shore of the Mediterranean from the European tribes that had overrun it.

Then, however, came a far more fateful break in historical continuity. From the early seventh into the early eighth century, Arab tribes swept into the Roman Empire from the east and south, just as Germanic tribes had swept into it from the west and north. Fired by a new religion,

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Islam, the Arabs conquered outright, or otherwise assumed control over all of those parts of the Roman Empire that had an originally Semitic cultural substrate – that is, all of North Africa and the Levant. Religiously, Islam delivered complementary critiques to Christianity and to Judaism. To Christianity, it said that God has no son; to Judaism, it said that God has no chosen people. With Judaism, it shared the principle that religious authority consists primarily of expertise in a divinely revealed text. With Christianity, it shared the belief – enormously consequential for the rest of this capsule history – that God wills all mankind to worship him in a single great religious community.

The emergent polity of the invaders conformed at first more to the Roman imperial model than to the tribal polity from which it emerged. By the end of the Ninth Century, however, the newborn empire existed as set of powerful dynasties under only the nominal suzerainty of the caliph, roughly matching the European feudal domains under the nominal suzerainty of the pope. A historic religio-cultural divide then came into existence between these twin heirs to the Roman Empire, fraternal in most regards but identical in the global scope of their missionary ambition: the several Muslim dynasties of the Middle East and the Maghreb, on the one hand, and, on the other, the more numerous and more fragmented Christian realms of Europe.

According to the famous and, I believe, essentially correct thesis of Henri Pirenne, it was the relatively greater cultural cohesion and the superior military organization of the Islamic empire that brought Western Europe to consciousness of itself as a distinct cultural domain. Pirenne understood the coronation of Charlemagne in the year 800 as the first Holy Roman Emperor to be the perfect expression of this emergent western European cultural self-awareness. The Mediterranean had become, in his famous phrase, "a Moslem lake"; western Europe would be driven inward, as a result, impoverished materially by the lack of sea commerce, and impoverished intellectually by its growing separation from the intellectual center of Christendom in Byzantium. Spiritually, however, Europe's sense of itself as different would be intensified during the long civilizational apprenticeship of the Middle Ages, a relative isolation during which, in effect, the church would serve as its only tutor.

In Iberia, the *reconquista* of the one large portion of Arab-conquered Roman territory that did not have a Semitic cultural substrate began virtually on the day of the original eighth-century conquest but proceeded so slowly – it took more than eight centuries in all – that a fruitful cultural exchange or *convivencia* occurred en route. Beginning in the tenth century, with the Jews of Iberia playing a crucial mediating role, the originally Hellenic learning that the Arabs had imbibed from conquered Eastern Christendom or learned from Persia or India as Islam expanded eastward was transmitted to western Christendom. Greek scientific and philosophical (though, notably, not literary) classics that had been translated into Arabic were retranslated into Latin, sparking a European renaissance in the late eleventh and twelfth centuries. During the Crusades of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Europe attempted to break out of its isolation and take back some of the territories that Christendom had lost to the Ummah, especially the Holy Land itself; but the Crusaders' goals were vague, their methods brutal, and their success only temporary. In the fourteenth century, both sides were brought to a kind of paralysis by the Black Death. In the fifteenth, the Ottoman Turks conquered what remained of Eastern Christendom; and though the flight of Greek scholars to Italy helped spark a second, larger Renaissance, this time involving art and literature as well as neo-platonic philosophy, Europe's trade route to India and China was now more completely blocked than ever.

At this point, however, as the *reconquista* neared its culmination, Spanish and Portuguese navigators began their famous quest for a passage to India that would not lead through the Muslim Middle East. Before saying more about their success, it is worth pausing to recall that during the eight-hundred-years of Muslim-Christian warfare in Iberia, Islam and Christianity had both expanded more or less unimpeded into tribal areas at the outer ends of their respective territories: Latin Christianity into Nordic Europe, Greek Christianity into Slavic Europe; Islam into Indonesia, Turkic Central Asia, and – through the converted Mongols – into Afghanistan, the Indus Valley, and Northern India. In other words, each had made considerable progress in realizing its dream of becoming an all-embracing religious ecumene.

From this point on, however, Christian expansion would outstrip Muslim. The tribal cultures of the Americas yielded to the Spanish and Portuguese *conquistadores* just as the tribal cultures of

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northwestern and northeastern Europe had previously yielded to earlier Christian conquerors. Indeed, over the next three centuries, from 1500 to 1800, world Christendom would more than double in size because of the European conquest of the Americas. In the interim, to be sure, the Ottoman Empire consolidated the Muslim hold on three quarters of the coast of the Mediterranean. However, even in the Mediterranean, European naval power began to surpass Turkish, notably at the 1571 Battle of Lepanto. The last major Muslim assault on Europe, the 1683 Turkish siege of Vienna, ended in defeat as well. Significantly, both of these victories were won not by individual European states but by alliances mustered against the one power consistently seen as the common enemy of all Europe.

The Ummah, were it to have expanded eastward between 1500 and 1800 as dramatically as world Christendom expanded westward, would have had to assimilate India. But Hindu resistance halted the expansion of Islam southward into India at around the time that Christian resistance was halting the expansion of Ottoman rule at the gates of Vienna. Islam spread steadily southward into Africa, and grew in other areas as well, but its growth was simply not as explosive during these three centuries as the growth of world Christendom.

Moreover, to return to the story of the Spanish and Portuguese explorers, their success in sailing around Africa and around the Muslim heartland so as to approach India from the south and island-hop from there to the coasts of China and Japan – doing, in other words, what Columbus thought he would do – set the stage for what would eventually become the international community as we understand it today. That is, it brought about a geographical encirclement of the

Ummah as European Christendom – still very much understanding itself as Christian – linked up with a string of new Christian colonies in coastal Africa as well as in South and East Asia, often making tactical alliances with other non-Muslims along the way. European hegemony changed hands several times. Spanish and Portugese explorers yielded to French and Dutch traders, who yielded in turn to English empire-builders. By the end of the eighteenth century, the English would effectively replace and surpass the Mughals themselves as the rulers of Greater India. Like the fall of Moorish Spain at the start of this period, the fall of Mughal India at its end, the great eastern defeat matching the great western defeat, surely must have seemed to world Islam like a Christian attempt to issue an edict reading "Thus far and no farther."

How does it happen, then, that at just this moment of Christian triumph the American Treaty of Tripoli of 1797 declares no allegiance to globe-girding Christianity, but instead announces in its eleventh article that "... the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion"?

Christendom, the Ummah and the International Community, Part II

The answer to that question lies, I believe, in the history of internecine religious warfare among European Christians and its profound impact upon American political identity. As the mosaic map of medieval feudalism yielded to something approximating the early modern map of European nation states, tension grew between the monarchs of these states and the pope of Rome. France's attempt late in the fourteenth century to make the papacy a captive administration at Avignon was an attempt to Gallicize European Christianity itself. The wars of the Guelphs and Ghibellines involved an attempt to Germanize it by the same tactic. Both attempts failed, but after the rise of Protestantism in the early sixteenth century, the monarchs of one state after another did manage the parallel if smaller feat of making themselves pope as well as king within their own realms. Though Lutheran religious individualism and Anabaptist radicalism constituted a powerful ideological and incipiently democratic strand in the Protestant Reformation, that strand was overwhelmingly and immediately trumped by authoritarian Protestant nationalism.

Civil wars as well as horrendous international wars were fought on religious grounds: most often Catholics against Protestants but on a few occasions, as in Britain, high-church against low-church Protestants. These wars left Europe materially and spiritually exhausted. By the middle of the seventeenth century, after the trauma of the Puritan Revolution in Britain and the catastrophe of the Thirty Years War in Germany, it was clear to all that neither Protestants nor Catholics could impose their religious will on all of Europe: zeal yielded at last to resignation. The compromise formulated at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 allowed each monarch to be pope within his own borders but forbade any to employ military force to extend his religious preference beyond his borders. Neither Protestant nor Catholic states, it should be stressed, guaranteed individual freedom of conscience within their borders, but the attempt to make any one form of Christianity the established religion of all Europe was effectively and collectively abandoned. Thereafter, during the relatively peaceful century-and-a-half that lay between the Peace of Westphalia and the French Revolution, as religious fervor slowly receded, Europe much as we know it coalesced, and what historian Herbert Butterfield has called the Great Secularization began.

It was from the seed of that Great Secularization that what our era calls the international community has flowered. As Butterfield put it in his classic *Christianity in European History*, "Modern internationalism is the system of medieval Christendom with the religion evaporated out of it." [11] By systematically abstaining from religious war and yet not systematically suppressing or repudiating religion itself, the nations of Europe began to create a collective polity on an ideological basis other than that of their fissiparous Christianity. By doing no more than this, they had planted the seed of a future collective polity that could unite Christians with non-Christians on an equal footing. This community would be centuries in the making, and remains a work in progress, yet it was then and there that its emergence began.

As for the British North American colonies that became the United States of America, they were founded, some of them, in the heat of religious fervor that accompanied Europe's Wars of Religion. But the society that grew from them came of age during the Great Secularization, and the American Constitution, in which God is not mentioned, owes more to the Enlightenment than to the great Reformation confessions that to some degree anticipated it. At the practical level, it

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As the U.S. states federated, they knew that neither any one among them, nor any coalition of several of them was powerful enough to establish its preferred variety of Protestantism in the federation as a whole.

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should be stressed, American freedom of religion owes much to the simple but crucial fact that in North America religio-political power was divided. The establishment of sharply different varieties of Protestantism in Britain's American colonies, not to speak of Catholicism in Maryland, made eastern North America a microcosm of Europe on the eve of the Peace of Westphalia. But as these states federated, they knew, just as the Westphalia signatories had known, that neither any one among them nor any coalition of several of them was powerful enough to establish its preferred variety of Protestantism in the federation as a whole. The Constitution that they adopted in 1787, accordingly, stipulated in Article VI that "no religious test shall ever be required as a qualification to any office or public trust under the United States"; and the famous First Amendment to the Constitution, ratified in 1791, further stipulated that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." The several states retained the authority to impose a religious test for public office, to establish a religion, or even to prohibit the free exercise of religion if they saw fit within their respective borders, just as the signatories did in Europe after the Treaty of Westphalia. However, none could abridge freedom of religion beyond its borders, nor could they all collectively do so within the borders of the federation taken as a whole.

Christianity was not immediately disestablished in all the ratifying states. Though the popularity and prestige of the First Amendment were such that the states gradually brought their constitutions into accord with it, it was not until 1868 with the ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, guaranteeing equal protection under the law to every citizen, that individual freedom of conscience was guaranteed against any state's future decision to re-establish Christianity (or any other religion) within its borders. The intent of that amendment was to extend

the privileges of citizenship to the newly liberated American slaves, but its further effect was to prevent any establishment of religion even at the state level.

In our own day, however, the growing "Christian Nationalism" movement asserts that the Founding Fathers fully intended to preserve an establishment of Christianity in the United States by allowing it to continue at the state level. The vision of this movement is reflected in the Constitution Restoration Act, passed by the House in 2004, which in effect revokes the Fourteenth Amendment as it would apply to religion by stipulating that no federal court may ban a state officer or state court's "acknowledgment of God as the sovereign source of law, liberty, or government." The Senate is not expected to pass the Constitution Restoration Act; if it does, the act is certain to be challenged in court as an illegitimate attempt to revise the Constitution. Nonetheless, passage of the act by the House and its formal support in the most recent Republican platform prove that the American understanding of the separation of church and state is not as settled as it has seemed. Christian Nationalism cannot be dismissed as a fringe movement without support in government. Moreover, as we shall argue, its potential consequences in American international relations could yet be considerable.[12]

The years when the United States was adopting and then rather quickly amending its Constitution were, of course, the years of the French Revolution, the Declaration of the Rights of Man, the aggressive disestablishment of Christianity as the national religion of France, and the literally murderous termination of the French monarchy in favor of a French republic. The French Revolution aroused furious resistance in the rest of Europe, but this resistance was primarily that of monarchy and aristocracy against "monstrous" democracy and only secondarily that of Christianity against impious atheism. Significantly, the Catholic aristocrats of Austria and the Protestant aristocrats of Britain found their religious differences no impediment to their making common cause against radical French republicanism. They had royalist allies, of course, within France; and when their alliance triumphed at Waterloo, French monarchy was re-established. In truth, once Napoleon turned the French republic into a French empire, the cause of French democracy might have seemed lost anyway. But the democratic idea remained alive and spread

even under Napoleon, and alongside it another French idea of immense and less frequently noticed importance – namely, the idea of the politically constituted nation as a secular church to which all citizens belonged by equal right and with equal dignity and in which, at the emotional level, patriotism would become a surrogate for piety.

Nationalism in this fervid French sense of the word swept Europe and replaced religious fervor as the salient ideological rationale for war. So it happened that in 1798, when Napoleon invaded Egypt half a millennium after the fall of the last Crusader kingdom, he did so not in the name of Christendom, but in the name of France. And so it happened that in 1797, when the President John Adams signed the American treaty with Tripoli, pointedly stipulating that he endorsed every article within it, the United States – a nation privately as Protestant as France was Catholic and far more ethnically diverse – could declare itself to be "not in any sense founded on the Christian religion." If the Americans were not Christians, what were they? The word that the founding American generation favored was *patriot. Patriotism* bespoke holiness, finality, and communitarian power to the point that men were willing to die in its service as martyrs had once died for the faith.

In 1797, as it happened, no one in the United States Congress could read Arabic; and so it is apparently only in our own day that the fascinating fact has come to light that Article 11 in the Arabic version of the Treaty of Tripoli does not in any way translate Article 11 of the English version. Why not? Perhaps, though this must remain a matter of speculation, because the Treaty's declaration that the United States was not in any sense founded on Christianity would not have established, for Muslim Tripolitans, a comprehensible elimination of the ground for religious war with America. If the Americans were not Christians, what were they? The designation *patriots* would have been incomprehensible. Were they Jews? Clearly not. Were they unbelievers, infidels, *kuffār*? In the Islamic view of the matter, it is much easier to deal with an errant monotheist than with an outright infidel. The distinction harks all the way back to the Qur'an but also pervades Islamic legal and theological thinking. The remarkable decision to promulgate two version of the treaty at this crucial point may reflect a diplomatic awareness of this fact, but from this disparity we must infer the equally noteworthy fact that the treaty's explicit dissociation of the American

republic from Christianity was written for American rather than Tripolitan consumption. The nations of Europe, each with its established form of Christianity, may have had some residually religious reason to go to war with a Muslim nation, or so the drafters of the treaty seem to have been reminding themselves and their country, but this new American nation, with no established religion, would have no such reason. Let European armies fight crusades, they implied: American armies will fight none. And, of greatest interest at our own much later point in world history, the drafters of this minor treaty were prepared to extend the principle of international religious amity beyond the family of differently Christian nations to the family of all nations, whatever their religious differences. At the moment when the United States first became a political actor far beyond its own borders, they saw fit to assert American religious neutrality as a distinctive feature of the American international vocation.

As the absence of Article 11 from the Arabic version of the Treaty of Tripoli may suggest, the novelty – we may well say the peculiarity – of Christian religious history is the emergence within it of a broad and powerful cultural assumption that an individual may be negatively unreligious without being positively anti-religious, and that therefore a state may permit the free exercise of all religions while being founded on none of them. This idea, arising in the Enlightenment rather than the Reformation, is so counter-intuitive that resistance to it has remained perennial even in the West. In his recent history of the rise of the Italian Republic and the fall of the Papal State, David I. Kertzer writes as follows: "What most drew Pius IX's ire was not the Italian king, nor his ministers, nor even the generals who led the battles against him. What most enraged him were those Catholics who thought it possible to reconcile their religion with such blasphemies of modern times as the

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belief that Church and state should be separate … The principle that non-Catholics should have the same rights as Catholics was, for the pope, one of the greatest outrages of all. At an audience in 1863, a French cleric asked the pontiff how he could call on the rulers of non-Catholic countries to give Catholics equal rights when he denied such rights to non-Catholics in his own states. For Pius, the question was preposterous. How could God's vicar on earth support the right to preach error and heresy to Catholics? 'The pope certainly wants liberty of conscience in Sweden, as he does in Russia, but he does not want it in principle," reported the French visitor. "He wants it as a means provided by Providence to spread the truth in these regions.'" [13]

A German reader of mine once wrote me about helping a Saudi immigrant set up a mosque in Berlin. When my reader asked the Saudi if he would reciprocate and help set up a Christian chapel in Riyadh, the Saudi declined less in anger than in blank astonishment of the sort that Pius IX expressed to the visiting French priest. How could his Berlin benefactor, how could anyone, even *think* such a thing? A Muslim must do what God wishes not what mere human courtesy or western diplomacy dictates. To do otherwise is not to serve any supposed human good such as freedom of religion but only to serve Satan. Crucial to the mutual incomprehension in these exchanges, an incomprehension that continues to bedevil the confrontation between the West and the ***Ummah,*** is the tacit sanction given in all Enlightenment polity to a sacralization of the nation by the elevation of national above religious identity. Among the majority-Muslim nations, only 20th-century Turkey has sanctified nationality in this distinctively Western way (some would say: "this distinctively ***19th-century*** Western way"), and the Turkish nationalist establishment may be gravitating back toward the Muslim norm.[14]

If we may postulate that it was with approximately the pope's philosophy of religious freedom and his indifference to the mysticism of national identity that Tripoli agreed to make a provisional peace with the United States, then we may appreciate how differently the staggering loss of Muslim territory to Western powers in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries must seem to the affected parties. As Greece, Serbia, and Bulgaria broke free from Ottoman Turkey, what Europe saw primarily as national liberation Istanbul saw as Christian triumph. As for the Spanish, French, and Italian colonies established in Muslim North Africa, as for American colonialism in the

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Muslim areas of the Philippines, as for British expansion out of India into Afghanistan and Iran not to speak of British colonies in Kuwait and Oman, these, too, were understood as national victories by the colonizers, but in good measure as Christian victories by the colonized. Even less ambiguous was the eastward expansion of the Russian Empire into Muslim Central Asia inasmuch as Moscow had designated itself the Third Rome and explicitly saw all the tsar's military victories as, like the victories of Constantine or Justinian, victories for the one true church. In the twentieth century came the worst blows of all: the defeat of the Ottoman Empire, the abolition of the caliphate, the European occupation of much of the Arab heartland, the establishment of a Christian-dominated, sometimes French-speaking state in Lebanon, the establishment of a Jewish-dominated, Hebrew-speaking state in Palestine and later, for a time, a military alliance between these Jews and the Christians of Southern Lebanon, and finally – approaching the unthinkable – the establishment of a Shiite-dominated American protectorate in Iraq. What would the next logical step be if not a Western seizure of the Hijaz, perhaps by a coup launched from the American naval base in Shiite Bahrain, and Western rule in Mecca and Medinah?

The Muslim-Christian struggle for world religious domination overlies, on the Muslim side, a Shiite-Sunni split that, though conceptually different from and older than the Catholic-Protestant split in Latin Christendom, is no less profound than the Christian division. The Shiites – defeated early but never resigned to defeat – established their largest and most permanent base against the more numerous Sunnis when Iran established its first comprehensive Shiite regime in the early sixteenth century, at just the time when Martin Luther was launching the Protestant Reformation in Germany. The Sunnis, during the same period

and later, consolidated an even larger base as the Ottoman Empire came to its zenith, reaching at its greatest extent from the western border of Iran to the Atlantic. It may be a tribute to Muslim good sense and forbearance that whatever reciprocal discrimination or oppression existed within each of these two great realms, the two – each with a large penumbra of influence beyond its borders – never fought the equivalent of a Thirty Years War. By the same token, however, the two forms of Islam have never been constrained to renounce war as an instrument of orthodoxy as the two main forms of Western Christianity were forced to do at Westphalia. So it happened that when Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini came to power in Iran, he announced in the flush of victory that it was time for his Shiite Iranians to replace the Sunni Arabs of Saudi Arabia in administering Mecca and Medina.

Moreover, because the Shiites and the Sunnis have never fought each other to an exhausted draw, as the Christians of Europe did, they have never been seriously tempted to turn in post-war disillusion to their own version of Butterfield's Great Secularization. Instead, facing progressive Christian encroachment and finally outright colonization, they have repressed their differences without resolving them and postponed their religious ambitions without renouncing them. It is easy and not entirely wrong to state that Islam has never had a Protestant Reformation so long as the Protestant Reformation is made to stand for individualism in religion. But when, as seems more apt in this context, the Protestant Reformation is made to stand for the kind of revivalism that circles back past corrupting innovation to an original purity, it seems more apt to say that Islam *is* an ongoing series of protests and reformations. Muhammad himself preached that the Jews and the Christians had been corrupted God's prophetic word both in their scriptures and in their practice and that he was the reforming "Puritan" messenger sent to lead them back into submission to God's will and God's truth. Both Shiite and Sunni revivals recur rhetorically to the first decades of Islamic history, and both have had the capacity to mobilize intra-Islamic sectarian passion. Yet the two, even as this Islamic issue remains unresolved between, sees a larger challenge when the West, consciously or unconsciously, presents itself as Christendom redux.

To the extent that the Muslim Ummah can more easily grasp Christendom as Christianity's version of itself, while secular nationalism as a surrogate religion remains dubious or incomprehensible, to

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that extent the default conceptualization and assumed motivation for Western colonialism and the later triumph of the international community has remained primarily religious. In other words, the advances of the West are all most readily and plausibly understood as reenactments of the religious wars of old or, in a word, of the Crusades. The *sui generis* Westphalian system – that secular, religion-transcending, nation-based, indefinitely expandable world order that came into existence in Europe and in North America in early modern times – was unknown in the *Ummah.* Nationality was known, needless to say, but tribal loyalties were often far stronger than those to the nations now recognized as such by the international community, and in any case the sacralization of nationality as nationalism was not recognized. Indeed, the secularization of tribe had been integral to the success of early Islam in unifying the Arabs as one nation under its one God. God was holy and God alone. Submission to God, the act of *islam,* was a sacred duty. It was unthinkable that allegiance to mere nationality could circumscribe or contain or finesse that submission to the divine revelation by which an entire family of nations, the Ummah, had learned to cohere. Moreover, citizenship as distinct from ethnicity, as the criterion by which rather than by religion members of different ethnic groups might form a single large political unit, was more alien still.

If identity were a card game, which card would be trump? In his December 18, 2005 speech, President Bush applauded the recent election in Iraq as the elevation of nationality over religion. "Three days ago," he said, … "more than 10 million Iraqis went to the polls – including many Sunni Iraqis who had boycotted national elections last January. Iraqis of every background are recognizing that democracy is the future of the country they love – and they want their voices heard. One Iraqi, after dipping his finger in the purple ink as he cast his ballot,

stuck his finger in the air and said: "This is a thorn in the eyes of the terrorists." Another voter was asked, "Are you Sunni or Shia?" And he responded, "I am Iraqi." [15]

For the President as for the vast majority of Americans, citizenship in an established, citizenship-defined nation state is card that trumps both the religion card and the ethnicity card in the identity game. *You are a Jew, I am a Christian*, or, for the last half-century, *you are a black, I am a white, but what matters*, we say with our hearts swelling, *is that we are both Americans*. In Iraq, unfortunately, the citizenship card, so crucial to the establishment of the kind of political freedom the President seeks to bestow, may not function as a trump card. In neighboring Jordan, in one recent survey, 63% of Jordanians said that they regarded themselves as Muslims first, Jordanians second; only 23 percent regarded themselves as Jordanians first, Muslims. [16] In other words, given the profound difference in cultural history just reviewed, the more natural Iraqi sentiment may very well be: *You are an Iraqi, to be sure, and so am I, but what matters is that you are a Shiite and I am a Sunni*. In the inner-Islamic clash of proselytizations, al-Qaeda has actively and consciously sought to forestall the establishment of strong national identity and foster religious identity – or what Western commentators almost always call sectarianism – instead. Thus, the late Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, according to an article in *Foreign Policy*, "... was eager to drive a wedge between the Sunnis and the Shiites. Otherwise, he feared that the Iraqi insurgency might develop into a national resistance, with both sects finding common cause ... In his correspondence with bin Laden, Zarqawi relentlessly stressed the need to prevent Iraqi Shiites and Sunnis from uniting around a genuine nationalism. If this were to happen, he concluded, the jihadists would be cut out because they were foreigners and the insurgency would become a national undertaking."[17] As for the neighboring Shiites, so also, *a fortiori,* for the invading Americans: What matters most about them to the average Iraqi may well not be that they are Americans devoted to democracy, freedom, and national self-determination but that they are Christians and Jews.

The point to be made about the religion card in the *Ummah* identity game is not that it always trumps the others but only that it often does or, to make the point more cautiously still, that the instincts of a Westerner for when it will and when it will not are likely to be unreliable. In Iraq, a

common Sunni religious identity has not trumped ethnic difference in the unfinished struggle between Sunni Arabs and Sunni Kurds, and yet a common ethnic identity has failed even more completely to trump religious difference in the ferocious civil war of Sunni Arabs against Shiite Arabs. Meanwhile, against an American assumption made plausible by the Iran-Iraq War, Persian-Arab ethnic difference has failed utterly to trump common Shiite religious identity for Iraqi Shiites. Iranian influence and even Iranian personnel are rampant, as a result, in the Shiite-dominated, American-made government of Iraq. To all of this, the American experience is a poor guide, for American society is a pot in which most ethnic identity is still very reliably melted down, while the American polity is one in which citizenship is obligatory and materially consequential while religious affiliation is optional and, in most material ways, inconsequential.

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In sum, then, the state of affairs in which the proselytization challenge arises is one in which, by and large, the Ummah tends to see the West as a version of itself, greatly exaggerating actual Western religious identity, unity, and ambition, while the West – and the recent United States, above all – makes the mirror image mistake, seeing the Ummah as a version of itself and greatly exaggerating, as a result, actual civic identity and aspiration, while underestimating the degree of passion that can still attend competing allegiances (Sunni vs. Shiite) within a single religion. The Ummah assumes, wrongly, that the West is against Islam. The West assumes, wrongly again, that the Ummah is against freedom. The place that the West implicitly assigns Islam in its post-Christian internationalist vision is different, to be sure, from the place that the Ummah assigns Islam. No less important, however (in fact, more important because so rarely even thought about), what the

Ummah understands by citizenship (or "freedom") and nationality and how these fit into its received internationalist vision (and Islam does have such a vision) is different from what the West understands by the same terms. These differences are not beyond negotiation, we must hope, but understanding them must precede negotiating them. And crucial to understanding them is keeping in mind the story of how they came into being.

Colonialism, Proselytization, and the International Community

Let me turn now, if very briefly, to the quasi-literary question I formulated earlier in this paper: Would it be diplomatically useful or politically feasible in the aftermath of the Bush Administration to re-tell the American chapter of the world story as the Treaty of Tripoli did – namely, as the story of a country "in no sense founded on Christianity"? Would a dissociation of this sort make this nation, inherently so threatening because of its military might, religiously and politically less threatening to the Ummah than it otherwise would seem in its continuing role as hegemon in the international community? If so, then, of course, the American story must first be embraced in this form by the Americans themselves, and this at a time when not a few wish to indulge in just the "Christian Nationalist" identification from which the Treaty of Tripoli abstained. If American policy-makers can learn, on the one hand, to speak openly and freely of religion as a fact of life in every nation on the face of the Earth rather than avoiding this topic as not suitable for polite or educated company and if they can learn, on the other hand, to present their own country as religiously neutral but trustworthy in its neutrality, then they may have the makings of a long-

term strategy for the World War of Ideas analogous to the one that won the Cold War.

To recapitulate, secular nationalism and secular internationalism, though by no means incomprehensible in principle, are dubious to many in the *Ummah* because of secularity's perceived Christian genealogy and its hegemonic convenience. There is a secular political party in Iraq, to take the most pressing example, but it is a failed party, more appealing and more popular in Washington than it ever became in Iraqi elections. In most of the Muslim world, secular, nationalist parties, whether progressive or conservative, have a future only in alliance with Islamic parties. While learning how to deal with these parties, and how to appreciate how the course of history reads through their eyes, the United States must take better, more self-conscious possession of what may be its own deepest cultural strength. Perhaps the most widely applicable cultural lesson to be derived from the American political experiment is that the advance of secularism in a state need not entail the retreat of religion in the related society. Even in the United States, sadly enough, religion and secularism all too often see themselves playing a zero-sum game. Each imagines itself under siege by the other. We cannot be surprised then if contending religious parties in an inflamed country like Iraq see themselves in the same condition or if the world Muslim community entertains similar suspicions vis á vis its historic rival, world Christianity. Whether the United States will preserve or destroy its capacity for world leadership will depend to some significant extent on whether and how effectively it can project an international identity that is neither anti-religious nor, at the opposite extreme, confessionally Christian. In principle, American political identity would seem uniquely able to manage a balance that entails nothing more than

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being abroad who we are at home. In practice, both perception and reality are at a significant remove from this ideal.

Starting in 2004, the poll of Arab countries designed by Shibley Telhami and conducted annually by Zogby International has shown a progressive heightening of religious identification over ethnic or national identification and a concomitant growth in the view that the Bush Administration's G-WOT is a thinly disguised war against Islam. Writing in the *Los Angeles Times,* Telhami commented: "Increasingly, Muslims view the war on terrorism as a war on Islam. Conversely, many Americans now regard Islam as the source of the terrorist problem. These trends have provided Islamic groups with increasing grass-roots potential limited only by the operating space allowed them by insecure authoritarian governments." [18]

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If the trends Telhami describes can grow, they can also shrink, or so we must hope. Without denying Telhami's contention that G-WOT has heightened the current Muslim perception of a world war against Islam, the root system for such a perception are older and deeper than the Bush Administration.

Muslims do not see the West, by and large, as the West sees itself. For the most influential policy-makers in the West, Christian Nationalists excepted, the former identity of the West as Christendom has been superseded by a new, broader identity as a secular community no longer normatively Christian, even if no less global in its ambition than Christianity once was. In its recent relations with India and China, gigantic super-states numbering more than a billion each, the West has had considerable success in establishing this secular identity as its self-

transcending true identity, *at least for the purposes of international relations,* and in encouraging the Indians and the Chinese to assume a version of the same secular identity for the same diplomatic purposes. This extension is well nigh constitutive of the international community as international, for it is what makes that community a community of theoretical equals rather than merely "the West and the rest." Among Muslims, however, this new *entente cordiale* between the great powers of East and South Asia, on the one hand, and the great powers of Europe and North America, on the other, may only worsen a pre-existing sense of encirclement and siege. And to turn to the American role at this juncture, the Muslim sense of siege is scarcely dispelled when an American president takes well-publicized counsel from Christian leaders as he takes unilateral military action in a majority-Muslim country.

We come at last to the point where story and history, policy and propaganda, coincide. It was the Rev. Franklin Graham, famous throughout the *Ummah* for declaring Islam to be an "evil" religion, who delivered the invocation at the very inauguration of President George W. Bush for his first term in office. Was Graham's role in the inauguration to be regarded as an early propaganda misstep? Or did it, on the contrary, signal that the Bush Administration shared and actively continues to share Graham's views? Lt. Gen. William G. "Jerry" Boykin, deputy undersecretary for defense intelligence, attracted a storm of criticism for preaching sermons in Christian churches while wearing his uniform and saying things like "America is a Christian nation with a calling under the hand of God. Her battles, then, are spiritual and should be fought by men and women who comprise a 'Christian army.'" [19] Boykin, like Graham, has been a propaganda problem for the United States among the world's Muslims, lending credibility to the views that Shibley Telhami describes as spreading.

Whether Boykin's views are rare or whether, instead, they are part of the American Christian revival that some have called a Fourth Great Awakening is difficult to establish but intensely relevant to the clash of proselytizations. If we are to believe Stephen Mansfield, the author of *The Faith of the American Soldier*, Boykin's views are common coin in the American military. Boykin's controversial sermons, Mansfield writes, "... vilified as they were in the American press, were quietly absorbed by soldiers in the field. As one lieutenant colonel serving at USCENTCOM at

MacDill Air Force Base in Florida said, "I won't say it publicly, and you can't use my name, but I will tell you that I agree with everything Boykin said. In fact, I don't know many here who wouldn't. Most of us would give anything if the chaplains or our commanders would speak to us in the same terms Boykin did. What he gave us was the spiritual map we needed." [20]

Confessionally Christian influence on American policy bears on what I referred to at the start of this paper as the construction of an acceptable political destination. That destination must be a world community that can be joined without identity destruction. But if what the United States says about its religious identity indicates that its agenda for the international community is a Christian agenda, then resistance to membership in that community – resistance to will then seem religious conversion – will be massive among Muslims.

This is so for many reasons, but surely not least among them is the memory of how often – even after the rise of quasi-religious nationalism – confessional Christianity was woven into Western colonialism. Access for Christian missionaries and sundry in-country privileges were written, for example, into British and French treaties with China starting in 1860. Even before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Sultan had conceded to American Christian missions the same privilege of extra-territoriality that was enjoyed by the American embassy in Istanbul. [21] In defending America's annexation of the Philippines, President William McKinley said with florid piety: "I am not ashamed to tell you, Gentlemen, that I went down on my knees and prayed Almighty God for light and guidance that one night. And one night later it came to me this way. ... There was nothing left for us to do but to take them all and to educate the Filipinos and uplift and civilize ... them, and by God's grace do the very best we could do by them, as our fellow men for whom Christ also died." [22]

In his recent book **No God But God**, Reza Aslan tells the story of the so-called Sepoy Mutiny of Bengali Muslims, a religiously motivated uprising that began India's independence movement. Writing about the suppression of the mutiny to the Foreign Office in London, Frederick Cooper,

deputy commissioner of Amritsar, concedes that he had deliberately led the Bengalis to believe that they were being ushered out of custody ten at a time to have their religious grievances heard rather than to be summarily executed. But after 237 successive executions, the captives remaining alive realized what was happening and refused to leave the bastion where they were being held. At length, Cooper writes: "The bastion was surrounded, the doors opened, and behold! Forty-five bodies, dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat, and partial suffocation, were dragged into the light. These dead, along with their executed comrades, were thrown by the village sweepers into the well. Thus, within forty-eight hours of their escape, the entire 26th regiment was accounted for and disposed of. To those of you fond of reading signs, we would point to the solitary golden cross still gleaming aloft on the summit of the Christian church in Delhi, whole and untouched... How the wisdom and heroism of our English soldiers seem like mere dross before the manifest and wondrous interposition of Almighty God in the cause of Christianity!" [23]

It matters greatly that these memories, though faded away in American and European minds, are as recent and as fresh in the colonized countries as might be, in the United States, memories of the Civil War and racial segregation. They are a context that undermines the American assumption that the world takes American religious neutrality for granted. They are a part of the context in which this country promotes its political principles as if they were transparently separable from its majority religion, when in fact they are far from transparently separable.

The unity of Christendom, especially western Christendom, was so completely shattered by the Protestant Reformation that the West struggles now to appreciate how intensely the Ummah – which, for all the real differences within it, is still far less fragmented than Christendom – still experiences its own unity. The West fails even more completely to recognize that Muslims frequently and mistakenly attribute a quasi-Muslim unity to world Christendom and often enough, indeed, to the West as a whole, as if the West were still defined by its Christianity. The unity of the Ummah was most recently on display in the violent, worldwide reaction to the September 2005 publication in the Danish newspaper *Jyllands-Posten* of satirical cartoons depicting Muhammad. A comparably global and violent Christian reaction to any imaginable insult to Jesus will never be seen. By the most recent count, 139 people have died in violence

related to the Danish cartoons. But the West, while deploring the violence, was, on the whole, simply baffled at the phenomenon of, for example, Nigerian Muslims attacking Nigerian Christians over cartoons published in a secular Danish newspaper. What did Nigerian Christians have to do with the offense of the Danish cartoonists, whatever it was? But this Western puzzlement is a crucial clue, for what clearer proof could there be that the memory of the West's Christian past lives on in the Muslim perception of the West's secular present? That Denmark's flag has a cross on it is, for the most of the Danes themselves, merely a historical accident; but when that flag was burned in riots in Beirut, the rioters added other available cross-bearing objects to the fire and carried their riot from there to Maronite Christian church and the adjacent Christian neighborhood. By such acts, they signaled that for them the Danish action had a religiously Christian motive. The conflict was not freedom of the press vs. censorship; it was Christianity vs. Islam. For the rioters, the cross on the flag linked Denmark's government and its press to its church and thence to the churches of the local Christian population. [24]

In historical context, one must assume that Iraqi Muslim suspicions of a similar sort will have been aroused by the well-publicized arrival of American Evangelical missionaries with the American troops. [25] But even as the Iraqi security meltdown has led to an American missionary retreat, the continuing American presence in Iraq has led to continuing and escalating Iraqi Muslim persecution of local Christians and even to the assassination of Tom Fox, an American Christian peace activist who had come to Iraq to investigate the abuse of Iraqi prisoners in American custody. [26] Here is another clear signal that when little is said about religion, habitual thinking will fill the vacuum with anachronistic assumptions. The Chaldean and Assyrian Christians of Iraq, who are not regarded as Christians at all by some of the Evangelical missionaries and military chaplains, [27] had as little to do with the American invasion as the Christians of Nigeria had to do with the *Jyllands-Posten* cartoons.

A long and depressing list of such incidents could be assembled. Ramzi Ahmed Yousef and Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, jailed terrorists whose 1995 "Manila Plot" aimed at multiple midair explosions, had earlier sought to assassinate either Pope John Paul II or President Bill Clinton. Clinton or *the pope?* At this point, Western eyes roll, and comments are made to the effect that

we are clearly dealing with total madmen. ***What does Clinton have to do with the pope?*** But that blank incomprehension must yield to a measure of patient comprehension. The point is not to rally support for minority Christians in Muslim lands. The point is to recognize that even when an American president does not announce his Christianity as frequently and audibly as President George W. Bush has done, Muslim popular opinion will tend to attribute his policies to Christian motivation and then both to find a unity in them and to imagine a further conspiratorial unity between them and actions taken by other Western leaders. Call this "Clinton or the Pope" for short. The result, unless counter-measures intervene – effectively, a self-conscious and protracted campaign of counter-proselytization to ***distinguish*** Clinton or Bush or any successor from the pope – will be a hardening of the Muslim sense of siege and persecution, a further sacralization of disputes that need not be regarded as battles in a religious war, and harm to the international community as Muslims opt out of it or, in the case of the violent few, seek to sabotage it.

Americanization, Christianity, and the Clash of Proselytizations

In his second inaugural address, President Bush spoke of freedom rather than of Christianity, and yet the perception is more widespread now than ever, both at home and abroad, that the United States is in the throes of a Christian revival fully capable of shaping the decisions of the American government as directly as it sought recently to do in the case of Terri Schiavo. I submit that, much against the grain of that revival, what effective diplomacy – effective international proselytization – requires at this juncture is, minimally, a forthright disassociation of American polity from Christian evangelism and, beyond that, a reassertion both at home and abroad of the religious neutrality of the American Constitution. What was done at the time of the Treaty with Tripoli must be done again.

At issue here are questions that go well beyond the George W. Bush Administration. President Bush has been unjustly damned for using once and once only the dread word *crusader.* But the category lives on whether any President uses the word or not. On November 6, 2005, the History Channel aired a special program entitled "The Crusades: Crescent & Cross," which it promoted in a full-page, black-edged advertisement in the *Los Angeles Times* headlined: "Can a President Finish What a King, a Sultan and a Pope Began?" What is a visiting overseas Muslim to make of that advertisement or that program? Secretary of Defense Donald H. Rumsfeld has famously remarked, "You go to war with the army you've got." But this rather understates the matter: You go to war with the society you've got. If influential segments of American society are not just Christian but aggressively, crusadingly Christian, at home as well as abroad, then they must be at the very least monitored lest they undermine both national unity (including *esprit de corps* in the military; see n. 27), and the national effort to find a political destination to which all parties can repair in peace.

I do not for a moment mean to suggest that mere forbearance can resolve all opposition or bridge all cultural differences. An Iraqi pollster told a reporter for the *San Francisco Chronicle*, "If you ask an Iraqi if he supports a secular government, he might hurt you because this word is very dirty in the minds of Iraqis. Secular means no faith in God." [28] No, the importance of dissociating the American agenda from the Christian agenda begins not abroad but at home. It matters in the first instance for America's own understanding of what would constitute victory in the elusive and rightly troubling conflict now under way. Only thereafter does the propaganda challenge begin of formulating for presentation to the world the American combination of disestablishment and free

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exercise – not in order to impose this distinctive polity, I hasten to add, but simply to describe it in the interest of dispelling illusions that are far worse than it is.

Democracy itself, let alone secularism, is not an attractive political destination when it arrives at the point of an American gun and brings crime, want, disease, and social chaos in its wake. As James Dobbins observed in the January/February 2005 *Foreign Affairs,* Iraq was losing in 2004, proportionately, as many of its citizens every month to the chaos of its American war as the United States lost on September 11, 2001. Iraq is losing, proportionately, even more of its citizens every month in 2006. But if democracy arriving at the point of a gun is bad, religion arriving that way is even worse, and far more effort is almost certainly required than has yet been attempted to reassure the Ummah that the United States has no religious agenda. "It is not that the American military does not recognize the importance of psychological operations or that the American diplomatic establishment has ever doubted the importance of public diplomacy. Far from it. But alongside the efforts of Under Secretary of State for Public Diplomacy Karen Hughes, alongside the many millions spent in the hiring of contractors to literally buy favorable media attention in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States needs to draw on the counsel of bicultural Muslims who have given thought to the key questions, beginning perhaps with a figure like the former prime minister of Iraq. Speaking from the floor of the Arab League's General Assembly hall about the bloodshed in Iraq, then Iraqi Prime Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari referred to the mass murderers of his country by the term *takfiri,* a disparaging Arabic word for a Muslim who condemns a brother Muslim as an infidel or *kāfir.* Muslims do not like to be called *kuffār,* infidels, and are not inclined to make common cause with those who so characterize them. *Takfiri,* then, is a word with important possibilities."[29]

Or consider the more powerfully disparaging, fully Islamic term that Khaled Abou El Fadl discusses in his recent *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists*: "The classical [Muslim] jurists, nearly without exception, argued that those who attack by stealth, while targeting non-combatants in order to terrorize the resident and wayfarer, are corrupters of the earth. ... The legal term given to people who act this way was *muharibun* (those who wage

war against society), and the crime is called the crime of ***hiraba*** (waging war against society). The crime of ***hiraba*** was so serious and repugnant that, according to Islamic law, those guilty of this crime were considered enemies of humankind and were not to be given quarter or sanctuary anywhere. ... Those who are familiar with the classical tradition will find the parallels between what were described as crimes of ***hiraba*** and what is often called terrorism today nothing short of remarkable." [30] ***Muharibun*** is a word that takes some getting used to, but it is no stranger than the now familiar ***mujahedeen,*** a word far less suitable in the Muslim lexicon for purposes of disparagement and Islamic de-legitimization.

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Finding adequate language to say what and whom we are for, and what and whom we are against across deep cultural divides is a matter of unsurprising difficulty, but surpassing importance.

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Finding adequate language to say what and whom we are for, and what and whom we are against across deep cultural divides is a matter of unsurprising difficulty, but surpassing importance. Marine General Peter Pace, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, recently committed a faux pas in the presence of Secretary of State Donald H. Rumsfeld by referring to the enemy in Iraq as "the insurgents." It seems that Secretary Rumsfeld recently decided that "this is a group of people who don't merit the word 'insurgency'" and settled on a new designation: "enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government." [31] One sympathizes with Gen. Pace. "Enemies of the legitimate Iraqi government" is even less likely to catch on than previous failed Pentagon labels such as "Saddam Fedayeen," "regime death squads," "dead-enders," and "former regime loyalists." And ludicrous as this fumbling may sometimes seem, its consequences can be grimly large. The Barcelona Initiative, a once-promising attempt by the European Union to forge a common front against terrorism with North African and Middle Eastern countries, has been a signal failure, largely because of a distinct unwillingness on the

part of the Muslim participants to characterize simply as "terrorism" absolutely all Iraqi resistance to the American occupation and absolutely all Palestinian resistance to the Israeli occupation. [32] *Terrorism* is, after all, is a European word. When talking with Muslims about their brother Muslims, it might well help to begin with an Arabic word of established Islamic pedigree.

To jump-start this discussion and recover from recent blunders, a bold gesture or two might be called for. Not to prescribe one, it may be interesting to contrast John Adams and American relations with Tripoli in 1797 with Napoleon Bonaparte and French relations with Egypt just a year later at the time of Napoleon's famous Egyptian Campaign. Though British naval power called that campaign to a halt after just a year, Napoleon's understanding of the immovability of religion in the international order repays close examination, for during his lastingly influential sojourn in Egypt he did not attempt to enthrone reason over religion as had been done in France. Moreover, in bilingual, double-version declarations that might almost have been inspired by the Tripoli treaty he not only spoke of the duty of empire to protect religion but went so far as to encourage the invading French to convert to Islam! One of his leading generals did convert, changed his name, and took an Egyptian wife, much to Napoleon's pleasure. Years later, on St. Helena, he revealed that he had entertained the notion of a mass tactical conversion of the French forces. For him, to be sure, this would have been the creation in Egypt of a Muslim "church" as fully subordinated to French imperial power as the French Catholic Church was to be after the emperor's concordat with Pius VII. And yet, though one may easily smile and say, "It could never have worked," it does reflect awareness in the mind of a man with an undeniable genius for empire that concessions must be made. In his way, Napoleon was attempting to construct an imperial order to which they could convert without loss of identity, and yet within which French hegemony would be acceptable. Napoleon's efforts in Egypt were not characterized, as James Fallows says American efforts in Iraq have been characterized, by "an amazing lack of interest in how life looks to those we are trying to persuade, deter, or capture." [33]

We find ourselves engaged, in sum, in a large historical encounter, one that far transcends the immediate conflict in Iraq. The role of the United States in this encounter may ultimately prove much smaller than it now seems. We are, as it were, the still circulating first draft of a script that will be rewritten many times over. "Where is the story going?" we ask. Different answers are proposed in the messy process of catch-up research. This is as it must be, but this is, we may recall, as it was during the Cold War. The Cold Warriors, far more often than not, chose fear over hope, but they did think hard about their opponent, and thinking finally brought about an outcome that looks much more like conversion than like victory. Conversion of that sort will define the future not of the West alone but of the planet.

Notes

[1] See John Lewis Gaddis, *The Cold War, A New History (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).*

[2] Moustafa Bayoumi, "Disco Inferno," *The Nation,* Dec. 26, 2005.

[3] Jonathan Schell, *The Unconquerable World: Power, Nonviolence, and the Will of the People* (New York: Henry Holt, 2004).

[4] James Fallows, "Success Without Victory," *The Atlantic Monthly,* January/February 2005.

[5] Bush press conference: cited in Hendrik Hertzberg, "Comment," *The New Yorker*, May 29, 2006. Ahmadinejad letter: http:www.washingtonpost.com/cop-dyn/content/article/2006/05/09/.

[6] "Remarks by the President to the National Endowment for Democracy," October 6, 2005. http://www.ned.org/events/oct0605-Bush.html.

[7] On David Forte: Dana Milbank, "Professor Shapes Bush Rhetoric, White House Tapes Ohio Scholar's Writings on Radical Islam," *Washington Post,* September 26, 2001. On Michael Gerson: Carl M. Cannon, "Soul of a Conservative," National Journal, May 14, 2005.

[8] Cf. "Mapping the Global Future, Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project," Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2004). Cf. James Fallows, in "Declaring Victory," a survey of expert counter-terrorism opinion (*The Atlantic Monthly,* September 2006) writes:

"War implies emergency, and the upshot of most of what I heard was that the United States needs to shift its operations to a long-term, non-emergency basis. 'De-escalation of the rhetoric is the first step,' John Robb told me. 'It is hard for insurgents to handle de-escalation.' War encourages a simple classification of the world into ally or enemy. This polarization gives dispersed terrorist groups a unity they might not have on their own. Last year, in a widely circulated paper for the *Journal of Strategic Studies,* David Kilcullen argued that Islamic extremists from around the world yearn to constitute themselves as a global jihad. Therefore, he said, Western countries should do everything possible to treat terrorist groups individually, rather than 'lumping together all terrorism, all rogue or failed states, and all strategic competitors who might potentially oppose U.S. objectives.' The friend-or-for categorization makes lumping together more likely." The friend of my enemy may be my enemy, in other words, but it is the most childish sort of naiveté to suppose that all my enemies are friends.

[9] Tripoli treaty: see http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/diplomacy/barbary/bar1796t.htm. See also Joshua E. London, *Victory in Tripoli: How America's War with the barbary Pirates Established the U.S. Navy and Shaped a Nation* (New York: Wiley, 2005), pp. 46-47.

[10] See Wayne Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* ()New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986).

[11] Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity in European History* (London: Collins, 1952), p. 39.

[12] See Michelle Goldberg, *Kingdom Coming: The Rise of Christian Nationalism* (New York: Norton, 2006), especially pp. 46-50. For the text of the Constitution Restoration Acct, see http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/queryz?c109:S.520.

[13] David I. Kertzer, *Prison of the Vatican: The Popes' Secret Plot to Capture Rome form the New Italian State (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2004), p. 22.*

[14] Orhan Pamuk's novel *Snow* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004) is a superb exploration of the conflict between militant nationalism and militant religion in Turkey. It was the former rather than the latter that briefly threatened him with imprisonment and has, in fact, imprisoned a number of other Turkish writers and intellectuals.

[15] "President's Address to the Nation."
http://whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2005/12/print/20051218-2.html.

[16] "Islamic Extremism: Common Concerns for Muslim and Western Publics." Pew Global Attitudes Project, July 14, 2005, p. 1.

[17] Loretta Napoleoni, "Profile of a Killer," *Foreign Policy* November/December 2005.

[18] Shibley Telhami, "A Growing Muslim Identity, Increasingly Muslims define themselves in terms of Islam," *Los Angeles Times, July 11, 2004.*

[19] Stephen Mansfield, *The Faith of the American Soldier (New York: Jeremy P. Tarcher/Penguin, 2005), p. 19.*

[20] *Ibid.,* p. 129.

[21] Suisheng Zhao, "Nationalism's Double Edge," Wilson Quarterly, Autumn 2005. See also Walter Russell Mead, *Special Providence: American Foreign Policy and How It Changed the World* (New York: Taylor & Francis, 2002).

[22] Quoted in Paul Johnson, "Prayer in the White House," www.Forbes.com/global/2005, November 28, 2005.

[23] Reza Aslan, *No God but God* (New York; Random House, 2005), p. 222.

[24] 139 dead: see www.cartonbodycount.com. The heaviest loss of life was in Nigeria. Beirut riot: Megan K. Stack, "Beirut Rioters Attack Church," *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 2006.

[25] Charles Duhigg, "Evangelicals Flock Into Iraq on a Mission of Faith," Los Angeles Times, March 18, 2004: "At least nine evangelical churches have opened in Baghdad in the last eight months, many supported by American organizations contributing up to $100,000 per church. More than

900,000 Bibles in Arabic—along with hundreds of tons of food and medical supplies have been sent to Iraq. … An influential Shiite Muslim leader, Sheik Fatih Kashif Ghitaa, said, 'Iraqis already see the American occupation as a religious war.' Ghitaa said Shiite and Sunni clerics have discussed issuing a *fatwa*, or religious edict, against missionaries."

[26] See Lawrence F. Kaplan, "Crossing Over, The Plight of Iraqi Christians," *The New Republic,* April 3, 2006*.* On Tom Fox, see Chris Kaul, "Christian Captives Shown in Footage," *Los Angeles Times*, January 29, 2006 and Martin Weil and Alison Chandler, "Virginian Kidnapped in Iraq Found Dead," *Washington Post,* March 12, 2006.

[27] See Laurie Goodstein, "Evangelicals Are Growing Force in the Military Chaplain Corps," *New York Times*, October 31, 2005 and Alan Cooperman, "Fasting Chaplain Declares Victory," *Washington Post,* January 10, 2006. Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt, an Evangelical, celebrating a funeral for a sailor who had died on board ship, said of the deceased, a Roman Catholic, in his sermon that because he had not "accepted Jesus," "God's wrath remains upon him." This led his commanding officer to recommend that his chaplaincy commission not be renewed. Klingenschmitt then rallied 70 members of Congress and a long list of conservative Christian leaders and began a hunger strike outside the White House. His commission has been renewed, and a spokesman for the Navy would say only "we ask—ask—that [chaplains] be inclusive" and offer nonsectarian prayers and remarks on such occasions as a funeral on board. But "If a chaplain can't do that, he doesn't have to. We won't force him to." Almost none of the indigenous Christians of Iraq are Evangelicals. Most are either Roman or Eastern Orthodox Catholics, upon whom, in Chaplin Klingenschmitt's opinion "The wrath of God remains."

[28] Borzou Daragahi, "High Risk Business: pollsters have been called spies, beaten, kidnapped and thrown in jail," *San Francisco Chronicle Foreign Service*, January 29, 2005.

[29] Charles Levinson, "Iraqi political factions travel to Cairo to meet," *San Francisco Chronicle,* November 20, 2005.

[30] Khaled Abou el-Fadl, *The Great Theft: Wrestling Islam from the Extremists* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2005), pp. 242-3.

[31] Paul Richter, "Rumsfeld Hasn't Hit a Dead End in Forging Terms for Foe in Iraq," *Los Angeles Times*, November 30, 2005.

[32] Renwick McLean, "Muslim Nations Skip Meeting with Europe," *New York Times,* November 28, 2005.

[33] Steven Englund, *Napoleon, A Political Life* (New York: Putnam's, 2005), *passim.*