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Eastern Christianity and the Rise of Islam: Seventh to Twelfth Centuries

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EASTERN CHRISTIANITY AND THE RISE OF ISLAM:
SEVENTH TO TWELFTH CENTURIES

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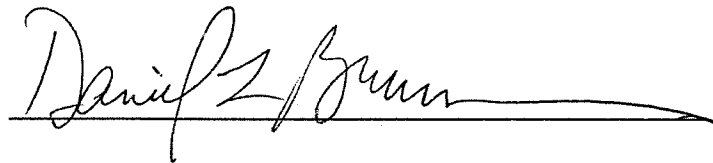
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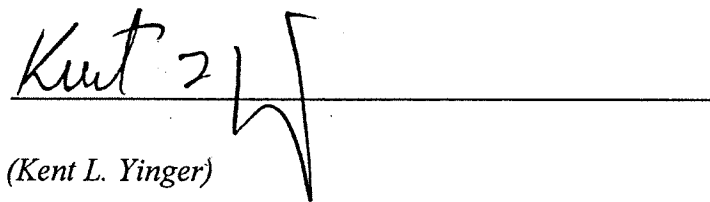
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We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the degree of Master of Arts in Theological Studies.



(Daniel L. Brunner)



(Kent L. Yinger)



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This work is dedicated to
my wife, Jeanette,
who has exhibited great patience and support
for my schooling over the years

and

to my two boys,
Caleb and Josiah,
who are the jewels of my crown
which is woven and held together by my wife.

If wealth is counted to man by his
wife and children,
I indeed am counted among the wealthiest
that has graced this earth
and not worthy to be entrusted with such wealth,
but by God's grace alone.

Amen.

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PREFACE

Marc Bloch once said, “Christianity is a religion of historians.”¹ It is true. Christians base faith on the events of the past and the wrestling of putting down in words statements of belief in the form of creeds. We can point out the day and year in which a council forms faith and in some cases the very hour of the day. The Christian faith believes the prophetic events of the Old Testament (which are themselves rooted in actual events of the time of their utterance) which predicted the birth, life, death, ascension, and the return again of Jesus Christ. It is not the council and paper that gave life to the faith but the very flesh and blood of those who lived and died for these histories; the blood of martyrs acting as seed which sprouted new life in the hearts of others who witnessed these events.

As a historian looks back on past events he/she keeps one eye open towards the future. In many ways the study of our past enlightens our present and in turn gives direction for the future. To neglect the past or to distort it to fulfill some personal agenda does an injustice to those who lived before us and those who will live after us. May they be so condemned and harshly.

To some this may be ‘just a Master Thesis,’ but I trust that what is written in these pages will reflect the reality of the events so described and with it gain an understanding of our today as we step into tomorrow.

Rev. Ed Lykens, M.Min.
February 27, 2004

¹ As quoted by Georges Florovsky in *Christianity and Culture, Vol. II* (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Pub. Co., 1974), 31

Introduction

On February 23, 1998, Usama bin Ladin and leaders of Jihad groups in Egypt, Pakistan, and Bangladesh wrote a declaration entitled *Declaration of the World Islamic Front for Jihad Against the Jews and the Crusaders* in Al-Quds al-‘Arabi, a British Arabic Newspaper, published in London. The declaration stated in part:

By God’s leave, we call on every Muslim who believes in God and hopes for reward to obey God’s command to kill the Americans and plunder their possessions wherever he finds them and wherever he can. Likewise we call on the Muslim ulema and leaders and youth and soldiers to launch attacks against the armies of the American devils and against those who are allied with them from among the helpers of Satan.¹

Approximately three and a half years later, Usama bin Ladin’s al-Qaida launched an attack on the United States on September 11, 2001, a date that, in the words of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on an equally devastating day in 1941, “will live in infamy.”

Why such an aggressive attack on the ‘Crusaders’ by fundamentalist Muslims? Has there always been such hatred and animosity between Islam and Christianity? It should be pointed out that there are some moderate voices beginning to rise within Islam.

Sheik Abdul Aziz al-Sheik, the top cleric in Saudi Arabia, the birthplace of Islam, told millions of Muslims around the world to forsake terrorism in a sermon at the height of this year’s annual *hajj*. Al Sheik proclaimed, “Islam forbids all forms of injustice, killing without just cause, treachery, . . . hijacking of planes, boats and transportation means.”² However, his voice is drowned out with headlines of Iraqi bombings and worldwide terrorism.

¹ Bernard Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and the Unholy Terror* (New York: The Modern Library, 2003), xxvii

² *The Bulletin* (Bend), 1 February 2004 ‘Top Saudi Cleric Calls on Muslims to Forsake Terror’, Rawya Rageh.

In the following pages I will present the case that Christianity and Islam have had a love-hate relationship since the time of Islam's rise on the world's stage. There were times in history when Eastern Christians lived peacefully under and alongside Islam's rule. The reasons for such peaceful coexistence is not always what it appears. When the two great religious and political empires laid down their arms we see Christians assisting in governing various parts of the Middle East and changing the face of the Arab tribes from that of a tribal people of the desert to a people of sophistication and science. The history of Eastern Christianity's survival under Islam and its response to Islam up to the twelfth century should enlighten our understanding of the contemporary relationships of the Islam in the Islamic East and the "Christian West."

Part one

A Survey of the Near and Middle East

Chapter One: The Byzantine Culture and People

An Overview of Society

The region of ancient Syria was part of a land bridge that connected Africa and Asia. Due to its location, it held a key position in the ancient Near East.³ This key region was part of the greater region known as the Roman/Byzantine Empire. The people who dwelt in this region developed much of Eastern Christianity, and in a later period, Islam.

The People of the Empire

The vast majority of the people in the empire lived in a rural setting and they were known as *georgos* or ‘soil tiller.’⁴ At any given time in the existence of the empire, it is estimated that no less than eighty percent of the people was engaged in agricultural and pastoral living. Only when the Byzantine Empire shrank to just the area of Constantinople and Thrace did the percentages significantly change.⁵ The Byzantines cultivated agricultural products during both the winter and summer seasons as their diet contained a great deal of grain.⁶

From the period of 750 to 200 BCE the Greek *poleis*, or towns and cities, were established throughout the regions of the Roman/Byzantine Empire. Nearly all the Greek *poleis* settled near or by a sea “like frogs round a pond”⁷ as envisioned by Plato. Thus, the most densely settled regions in Asia Minor were the narrow coastal plains in the north and south along with a

³ Mogens Herman Hansen, *A Comparative Study of Thirty City - State Cultures: An Investigation Conducted by the Copenhagen Polis Centre* (Copenhagen: The Royal Danish Academy of Sciences and Letters, 2000), 55.

⁴ Guglielmo Cavallo, ed. *The Byzantines* trans. Thomas Danlop, Teresa Lavender Fagan, and Charles Lambert *The Peasantry* by Alexander Kazhdan (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997), 43.

⁵ John Haldon, *Byzantium: A History* (Charleston, NC: Tempus Pub., Inc., 2002), 67.

⁶ The daily bread consumption by the people was about 3-6 pounds per person: Cavallo, 46.

⁷ Hansen, 141.

few *poleis* in an area of Asia Minor on the broad plains of the Aegean region.⁸ However, the towns were quite widespread in scope around the empire. The *poleis* stretched from the Emporion in Spain to Aikhanoum in Northern Afghanistan; from Olbia near the mouth of the River Bag to Kyrene in Libya. By the sixth century CE many of the *poleis* became true city-states, not merely as towns.⁹ Some of these city-states were to be fought over by the Byzantines, the Crusaders, and the Muslims.

The landowners shaped the agenda of daily life for society.¹⁰ The daily rhythm began at sunrise and ended at sunset. The daylight hours of the day were divided by twelve hours of greater or lesser lengths according to the season. Noon marked the dividing line of the day. As a rule, all people, whether elite, freeborn, freed persons or slaves arose at sunrise, washed, prayed to their household god(s), ate a simple breakfast, and went to their respective occupations. The people ended their workday shortly after noon, which is marked by a brief repast. The type of activity the people were engaged in depended upon their social status. The afternoon activity was similar by all. Those who lived in the city (and who could afford it) spent the time before supper at the baths. While the provision shops were still open, household slaves and lower ranking women prepared supper. As a rule, no one “worked” in the afternoon, including slaves, unless they had to, such as shop owners, farmers pressed by the weather, forced labor, and seasonal requirements.¹¹

In the midst of their daily duties was the exercise of marriage and begetting children. The institution of marriage was fundamental in the Graeco-Roman world. It was the duty of every

⁸ Haldon, 67.

⁹ Hansen, 141.

¹⁰ Richard E. Averbeck, Mark W. Chavalas, and David B. Weisberg, eds. *Life and Culture in the Ancient Near East* (Bethesda, MD: CDL Press, 2003), 359.

¹¹ Averbeck, Chavalas, and Weisberg, 361.

citizen of the empire to marry and beget children;¹² however, potential marriage partners did not enter into relationships with their “social inferiors indiscriminately.”¹³

Society was generally conservative and did not trust change. The mentality was, what has worked well in the past should continue. A case in point is Egypt. For over thirty centuries the Egyptian administration of government had been consistent. It did not matter who the rulers were of the time. Even when the Macedonian people ruled for a time in Egypt there was no change in administration. The consistency of administration is not due to the Egyptians hatred of change, but a reluctance to change something that has always worked.¹⁴ This trait of strong administration was needed to keep the vast and diversified empire together and running well.

The Church Fathers - a Product of Their Time

The reluctance of change and the honor of belonging to one's societal class found its way in the Eastern Church. The attitudes of the Church Fathers were not always free of prejudices.

The “gentle and civilized Christian” Octavious does not hesitate to censure Caecilius' worth as a Christian. He treats him like a “vulgar person who does not belong to the refined and urbanized.”¹⁵ Gregory of Nazianzus wonders “how great a distance (there is) between city-dwellers and the rural.” Dionysius of Alexandria is so urbanized that he is at a loss outside his city. He has servants to attend to all his needs. He confessed that his clothing was of such quality linen, it could have tempted any highwaymen.¹⁶ The bishops, priests, and deacons harbored great bitterness against Paul of Samosata because he had become wealthy after having been poor and a

¹² Judith Evans Grubbs, “Pagan” and “Christian” Marriage: *The State of the Question in Christianity and Society: The Social World of Early Christianity*, ed. Everett Ferguson (New York: Garland Pub, Inc., 1999), 186.

¹³ Averbeck, Chavalas, and Weisberg, 390.

¹⁴ Jack M. Sasson, *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, Vol. 1. (New York: Simon and Schuster Macmillan, 1995), 286.

¹⁵ Gildas Hamel. *Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1990), 225.

¹⁶ Hamel, 224.

beggar. A person whose background was of such low caliber had no place among the elite.¹⁷

Even Polycarp, the traditional first martyr, disregarded the crowd who had gathered in the arena as unworthy that a defense should be made to them, who were after all, of the poorer classes.¹⁸

We should not fault the prejudices of the early Fathers for they were men of their times. But it does help explain why the Orthodox fathers did not expand their horizons into the Arabian desert. If they did look toward the south and the east it was not with a pastoral heart. True civilization and faith was found in the cities and along the coastal regions. Very few desired to venture out into the desert nor did they care who dwelt there. For them, the region was full of heresy and heretics. As we shall see later, the region of Arabia, Yemen, and Persia were indeed filled with anti-Chalcedonian Christians. The vast majority of the population in the Byzantine Empire was Chalcedonian Christians.¹⁹

Other Communities of Faith Within Byzantine Empire

The Jewish communities thrived during this time. Holding to the society's love for the arts a person walking into a Palestinian synagogue would expect to see beautiful representations of the lives of the patriarchs or the signs of the Zodiac (sometimes with the depictions of the god Helios holding four horses which pull his chariot, or holding a globe in his left arm) inside. The worshipper may enjoy hearing traditional Hebrew prayers woven with new *piyyutim* or artful poems produced by the local artist for every single Sabbath and festival. The person could also listen to the recitation of Hebrew biblical texts and enjoy the Aramaic translation possibly accompanied by sermons in Greek or Aramaic.²⁰

¹⁷ Ibid, 226.

¹⁸ J. B. Lightfoote and J. R. Harmer, *The Apostolic Fathers, Second Edition* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1989), 141.

¹⁹ Robert Schick, *The Christian Communities of Palestine: From Byzantine to Islamic Rule* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995), 9.

²⁰ Gerrit J. Rernink and Bernard H. Stolte, eds. *The Reign of Heraclius (610-641): Crisis and Confrontation* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2001), 95.

After the rise of Islam in the seventh century the Byzantine Empire harbored several Muslim communities. These communities lived well under Byzantine rule. There is very little written about these communities, however. The bulk of scholarship linking Byzantine and Muslim communities focus on their interactions militarily and religiously as antagonists or their diplomatic and commercial exchanges. There are some works that deal with the “osmosis of cultural influences”²¹ that were more often barriers rather than bridges. The Byzantine rulers allowed the Muslims to worship, build, and grow with little to no restraint. Constantinople contained a large and ornate mosque which was erected with the help and blessing of the government.

The Empire's Efficiency

Near Eastern society was very wealthy for its time, especially in early Byzantine cities. The cities were adorned with monuments: baths, fountains, porticos, squares, *gymnasias*, and public buildings.²² The taxes collected allowed the Byzantine government to be immensely wealthy. The lack of social uprisings and revolts throughout the empire attest to the ‘fair level’ of taxes exacted from the people. Yet, the Byzantine Empire was able to afford a strong civil administration and standing voluntary army. “Healthy finances meant a healthy administration. Byzantium could afford a professional civil service and a standing army.”²³ The Byzantine citizens understood the need for both.

The Byzantine society believed that war ought to be condemned and peace extolled. Fighting was to be avoided at all costs. To reach that end the Byzantine government instituted a

²¹ Helen Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou, *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D.C.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 125.

²² Jean-Michel Spieser, *Urban and Religious Spaces in Late Antiquity and Early Byzantium* (Burlington, VT.: Ashgate Variorum, 2001), iii, 1.

²³ Andrew Sharf, *Jews and the Other Minorities in Byzantium* (Jerusalem: Bar-iLan University Press, 1995), 52.

strong diplomatic corps and advisors to deal with potential and embroiled troubles throughout the empire. They developed the art of diplomacy and bribery to a high skill (at times playing the enemies of their enemies off against each other to keep them busy from uniting to attack the empire). During the early period of the seventh century, the Palestinian and other regions of the empire enjoyed a remarkable time of tranquillity and peace.²⁴ This peace was a short calm before the rise of the Islamic invasion from the desert.

When diplomacy failed the empire relied upon the strength of its army to withstand and push back the invading forces. The Byzantine emperors could justify their wars on the basis of preserving the peace, extending the territory of the Christian world, and to “defend God’s Chosen People.”²⁵

The Byzantine State inherited the military administrative structures and much of the militaristic doctrines of the pre-Christian Roman Empire.²⁶ When a capable emperor leads the army the empire is virtually impregnable. The empire enjoyed times of greatness and times of distress. The empire rose and fell in greatness along with the quality of the leadership of the emperor.

During the times of distress there would arise an emperor who would take the empire back to greatness. When Heracius received the crown the empire was desperate to survive. Heracius took the demoralized army and people and brought them back to greatness. Heracius sought the strong enemies of the empire and destroyed them. Regan writes, “Between 622 and 628 Heracius was to achieve a military reversal without parallel in history.”²⁷ Yet, soon after

²⁴ Schick, 9.

²⁵ John Haldon, *Byzantium at War: AD 600-1453* (New York: Rutledge, 2003), 72.

²⁶ John Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204* (London: UCL Press, 1999), 275.

²⁷ Geoffrey Regan, *First Crusader: Byzantine’s Holy Wars* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 75.

these hard won victories were accomplished, the emperor died and with it the empire would face near “extinction.”²⁸ This period is known as the “Dark Age.”²⁹

During the Byzantine Dark Age of the mid seventh to end of the eighth century, fewer writers wrote, fewer teachers taught, fewer artists and artisans created, and fewer builders built. When they did their work the quality of the work was noticeably inferior to past works. The Byzantine people recognized the changes and believed that their military and political misfortunes revealed God’s disapproval against them.³⁰ Even the art of war was affected.

Into the ninth century the empire would lose more battles than it would win. Paradoxically, this was a period of imperial resurgence,³¹ which seems to make true that one does not need to win every battle to win the war. This resurgence would finally peak in 1050 when the Byzantine Empire would become the largest and most prosperous political entity in the Christian world.³² Many emperors did look out for the interests of the empire.³³

To keep and maintain a strong army that can defend the empire and defeat her enemies the state needed to pay its army well. This was a voluntary force,³⁴ thus the wages of military service needed to be well above the wages of the society they are sworn to protect.

The military officers received an annual salary of from one to forty pounds of gold. The annual salary of the soldiers ranged from a sixth to a quarter of a pound in gold. If the soldier

²⁸ Mark Whittow, *The Making of Orthodox Byzantium, 600-1025* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1996), 98.

²⁹ Warren Treadgold, *A Concise History of Byzantium* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), 116.

³⁰ Treadgold, 116.

³¹ John Haldon, *The Byzantine Wars: Battles and Campaigns of the Byzantine Era* (Charleston, SC: Tempus, 2001), 67.

³² Jonathan Harris, *Byzantium and the Crusades* (New York: Hambledon and London, 2003), 1.

³³ There were a few emperors and bishops of Constantinople who made their servants sprinkle gold dust on the ground in front of them so that their feet would not touch mere earth and stone. It reminds me of Jerusalem under Solomon with its wealth.

³⁴ Warren Treadgold, *Byzantium and Its Army: 284-1081* (Stanford, CA.: Stanford University Press, 1995), 118.

remained in the military his pay would increase by one step³⁵ every year until the twelfth year. Men were accepted in the army and naval forces at the age of eighteen and they retired at the age of sixty. Thus, if a soldier entered at the proper age and fully retired his lifetime earnings would work out to an annual salary of nine to nine and a half *nomismata* from the time of his enlistment to his retirement.³⁶ The average unskilled laborer in Byzantine society typically earned an annual wage of three *nomismata*.³⁷

The military faced a paradox. On the one hand the men are to honor life because all people are created in the image of God and on the other hand they are required to destroy their enemies, often with brutal methods. Retiring soldiers frequently took up the monastic life as a means of both “securing well-being and working towards the remission of sins.”³⁸

The eastern empire was able to survive the western empire because the aristocrats of the west took care of their own interests and neglected everyone else’s, including the emperor. The bureaucrats of the east took care of the interests of themselves and served the state.³⁹

As we shall see in the next chapter the Byzantine society was not exclusively separated between church and state. Church and state was virtually one and the same and the people within its boundaries were to serve this church/state entity. The entity is known as Byzantium.

³⁵ If a soldier received a half pound of gold per year and stayed in his position the next year his raise would be an additional half pound of gold, or one pound. This continues in increments of a half a pound per year unless he is given a higher rank which the soldier would be properly compensated at that rank.

³⁶ Treadgold, 127.

³⁷ Ibid., 118.

³⁸ Haldon, *Warfare, State and Society in the Byzantine World, 565-1204*, 275.

³⁹ Michael Grant, *From Rome to Byzantium: The Fifth Century AD* (New York: Routledge, 1998), 38.

Chapter Two: The Church-State *The Rise of the Eastern Christian Empire*

The Byzantine Empire regarded itself as the earthly representation of heaven itself with the emperor as the Chosen of God and his people as the Chosen People in succession to the Jews who lost favor with God for rejecting the Christ.⁴⁰ In Justinian's *Sixth Novel*, dated March 16, 535, we read:

There are two major gifts which God has given unto men of His supernal clemency, the priesthood and the imperial authority. . . . Of these, the former is concerned with things divine; the later presides over the human affairs and takes care of them. Proceeding from the same source, both adorn human life. Nothing is of greater concern for the emperors as the dignity of the priesthood, so that the priests may in their turn pray to God for them.⁴¹

The government of gods (Rome) becomes the government of God (Constantinople). How did it become so?

The establishment of the Eastern Empire along with the rise of Byzantine Christianity sets the stage for the rapid movement of the Islamic State and at the same time provide a buffer for the West. Some of the characteristics found in the Eastern Byzantine Empire will influence Islam and ultimately be one of the main causes for the Byzantine Empire's eventual fall.

Some have dated the beginning of east and west in July of 285 CE when Emperor Diocletian adopted as his son Maximian and made him Caesar. Maximian was given control of defending the provinces west of Illyricum, while Diocletian looked after Illyricum and the east.⁴²

⁴⁰ Regan, 37.

⁴¹ Georges, 77.

⁴² Warren Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 14. The author points out that while Maximian deferred much of decision making to Diocletian, each maintained his own court and ran his own army and administration with a separate praetorian prefect as his chief lieutenant.

Others put the more traditional date of east and west division when Constantine made Constantinople the new capital of the empire on May 11, 330 CE.⁴³

There is a possibility that the Byzantium Empire itself started on May 11, 330, but I see the seeds of separation at the government administrative level beginning in 285. The two structures of government in both parts of the empire continued to develop their own unique systems. Even language became a problem as both parts adopted their region's predominate dialect. Along with language came unique understanding and certain ideas of thought which itself turned into different theological emphasis and interpretation that would lead to the Great Schism in 1054 (which in reality came long before that year).

The division by Diocletian was intended to be permanent, although not in the way he had envisioned. This division itself was divided again and Diocletian instituted a Tetrarchy that multiplied authority but did not divide it. In spite of divisions of powers, the empire was still essentially "an undivided patrimony."⁴⁴

After twenty years of rule under the Tetrarch system, Diocletian abdicated before the army in Nicomedia on May 1, 305 CE.⁴⁵ Maximianus was forced to do the same at Milan. Diocletian spent his remaining years in "quiet" retirement where he was not about to exercise any authority.⁴⁶ Over the next seven and a half years the empire endured intrigue, suicides, and rebellions from their leaders, until October 28, 312.

Even though the empire remained one juridically and went back to a single emperor again, after 285 the eastern and western halves of the empire continued to have separate prefects and administrations.

⁴³ John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1997), xxxvii

⁴⁴ Grant, 8.

⁴⁵ Samuel N. C. Lieu. and Dominic Montserrat, *From Constantine to Julian: Pagan and Byzantine Views: A Source History* (New York: Routledge, 1996), 63.

⁴⁶ Treadgold, *A History of the Byzantine State and Society*, 27. Diocletian was asked by various rulers their opinions on certain matters relating to power. They needed to get his official endorsement on any changes. Diocletian died in retirement during this sad state of affairs of the empire. (Some believe he may have committed suicide in his palace in Salona in 311, p. 31.)

Constantine Becomes Emperor

The two armies of the divided empire met at Saxa Rubra (the 'red rocks') on the Via Flaminia on October 28, 312. It is here that Constantine experienced his well-known vision of the cross made of light. This is not the only vision recorded in the life of Constantine.

Constantine was brought up as a pagan. In 310 he had become devoted to Apollo after experiencing a vision of the god.⁴⁷ During the rebellion years within his domain Constantine was traveling to put down such a rebellion when he received word of the final collapse of a barbarian uprising on the Rhine. The news reached him at the precise moment in his journey when he came upon a road that led to a sanctuary of Apollo. It was there that the god appeared to him, accompanied by Victory, who both extended to Constantine laurel crowns. The panegyrist categorically states that Constantine did have the vision of the gods. This apparent pagan religious experience has had some modern scholars exclaim that it is "the only authentic vision of Constantine, the legend of the vision of 312 being nothing but a Christian distortion."⁴⁸ It is interesting some scholars would authenticate a vision only found in one source while ignoring up to six different sources for the Christian vision.

As Constantine approached the time of battle he knew he was greatly outnumbered. Just a few years earlier many troops of the Eastern Empire deserted to Maxentius, who himself was a man to be feared, strengthening his hand. According to Theophanes:

The great Constantine feared the sorcery of Maxentius, who cut up new-born babes for his lawless divination. While he was in great distress, there appeared to him at the sixth hour of the day the sacred Cross made of light, with the inscription 'In this conquer.' And

⁴⁷ John Haywood, *Ancient Civilizations of the Near East and Mediterranean* (London: Andromeda Oxford Ltd., 1997), 270.

⁴⁸ Lieu and Montserrat, 73. The authors point out that there is only one source that reports the vision of Apollo and it is untrustworthy while there is, by their reckoning, at least six reliable sources for the Milvian Bridge vision. Norwich doubts the Milvian Bridge vision took place. He believes the Christian community concocted the story to counter the Apollo vision. There was a desire to link Constantine to Apollo. There was an apparent need for a new patron deity for the new Claudian dynasty since the cult of Hercules had been thrown into disrepute by events leading up to the death of Maximianus Herculus.

the Lord appeared to him in a vision during the night, saying, 'Use what has been shown to you and conquer.'⁴⁹

Constantine had the Chi Ro symbol placed on the shields of his men. After the defeat and drowning of Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge Constantine became “absolute master of all Europe.”⁵⁰ Over the years Constantine developed and solidified the vast empire. One of his first acts as the undisputed Emperor was to issue (jointly with Licinius) the Edict of Milan in 313. The edict extended toleration to Christians, thus freeing them from persecution. Seeing that the empire encompassed most of Europe (a mostly stable region) to Asia Minor and Palestine (an unstable region due to the wars with the Persian Empire) Constantine set out to find a better location to rule the vast empire. He found it in a Greek city named Byzantium.

Establishing Byzantium

The Byzantium Empire was founded by Constantine the Great on Monday, May 11, 330 CE and lived on until it was conquered by the Ottoman Sultan Mehmet II on Tuesday, May 29, 1453, lasting 1,123 years and eighteen days – a time period longer than that which separates our time from the Norman Conquests of England in 1066.⁵¹ From this point on the heart of the Empire would be in Constantinople, no longer in the ancient city of Rome.⁵² Constantinople would become quite different than the city of Rome. The architecture, scenery, even administration of governmental and religious affairs would become quite different than in Rome. I cannot concur with Florovsky's statement that the kingdom of the Romans continued on in Byzantium in “Oriental garb” up to the very end.⁵³ Hugh of Honace would write of Byzantium,

⁴⁹ Cyril Mango and Roger Scott, trans. *The Chronicle of Theophanes Confessor: Byzantine and Near Eastern History: AD 284-813* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 23.

⁵⁰ John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), 6.

⁵¹ John Julius Norwich, *A Short History of Byzantium* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), xxxvii

⁵² Florovsky, 76.

⁵³ Ibid

“Byzantium was a fountainhead from which treasures were sprinkled around and from which sprang all western learning.”⁵⁴

Constantine inaugurated the city of Byzantium as Constantinople. The city stayed as the capital of the Empire until its demise in 1453,⁵⁵ however, it was not a continuous, unbroken span. The city was conquered, not by Muslims, but by fellow Christians and the city fell into the hands of the Latin Empire in 1204 and stayed in their hands until 1261.⁵⁶

Constantinople became ‘the first Christian City’⁵⁷ but Constantine was not the first Christian emperor, but the first openly Christian emperor. A Roman Emperor by the name of Marcus Julius Philippus, or commonly known as Philip the Arab, ruled between 244-249. He was a Christian, though in his official role as emperor he did not make this public, but kept his faith privately.⁵⁸

Soon after Constantine’s ascension to the throne he began a vigorous church building campaign. He built many churches including the basilica of St. Peter on Vatican Hill, the cathedral of St. John Lateran in Rome, the church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem, and the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.⁵⁹

Few of the Byzantine churches that survive to this day are the result of a single period of a rebuilding activity under Basil I (867-86). Basil restored thirty-one churches in and around

⁵⁴ Krijnie N. Ciggaar, *Western Travellers to Constantinople: The West and Byzantium, 962-1204: Cultural and Political Relations* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996) in *The Medieval Mediterranean: People’s Economics and Cultures, 400-1453, Vol. 10* (New York: E. J. Brill, 1996), 323.

⁵⁵ The Roman/Byzantium Empire flourished as long as it had due to the very fact that Constantine established the imperial capital at Byzantium. If he had moved the capital to Antioch, Damascus, Alexandria, or even Palestinian Caesarea, there is little doubt the Roman/Byzantium Empire would have been swept away as quickly as the Persian Empire during the Islamic conquests. Constantinople’s principle advantage was simply of its distance from the Fertile Crescent – Whittow, 99.

⁵⁶ F. L. Cross, ed. *The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church* Third ed., by E. A. Livingstone, ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

⁵⁷ Regan, 37-38.

⁵⁸ W. M. Watt. *Muhammed Prophet and Statesman* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 195, 226.

⁵⁹ Haywood, 270.

Constantinople that kept many of Constantine's original buildings intact. The *Vita Basilii* confirms this period of church building renewal. It reads in part,

The Christ-loving emperor Basil, by means of continuous care and the abundant supply of all necessary things, raised from ruin many holy churches that had been rent asunder by prior earthquakes or had fallen down, or were threatening immediate collapse on account of the fractures, and to the solidity he added beauty.⁶⁰

Through Constantine's building campaign and consolidation efforts both in government and society he had hoped to bring about a unity within the empire. He especially believed that if the Christian church was united the empire itself would then be united. He helped facilitate the rapid acceptance of Christianity by making certain proclamations, such as making Sunday the official day of rest in 321.⁶¹ His mother, Helena, is considered the first and arguably the most revered Christian imperial woman.⁶² Her unearthing the True Cross (no doubt derived from legend) was undisputed truth in early Byzantium. One of the reasons why Constantine chose Christianity himself was his hope that the Christian faith would serve as a foci for unity in the empire and thus bring about a renewed strength for the empire.⁶³ This was the goal of Constantine up to his death, a goal that was never realized. A major stumbling block to this unity was that of an Alexandrian priest, named Arius.⁶⁴

⁶⁰ Robert Ousterhout, *Master Builders of Byzantium* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 87.

⁶¹ Constantine's father worshipped the 'one god' *Sol Invictus* (Unconquered Sun) which also influenced him. The edict for rest on Sundays and the Christmas date near the Sun god gives Constantine's critics ammunition that he was not really a Christian but a pagan in Christian clothing. Theophanes Confessor would dispute this charge. In fact, Theophanes would dispute the deathbed baptism of Constantine. Theophanes cannot conceive the emperor being baptized by 'Arian' Eusebios of Nicomedia. His argument is that if he was not baptized earlier he could not have partaken the holy sacraments nor joined in the prayers of the holy Fathers. (Mango, p. 31.)

⁶² Anne McClanan. *Representations of Early Byzantine Empresses: Image and Empire* (New York: Palgrave, 2002), 14-15.

⁶³ Goddard, 12.

⁶⁴ Theophanes Confessor writes, that Constantine wanted desperately to see unity that in 320, "Constantine the Great, having learned of the Arian movement and being considerably grieved by it, wrote Alexander and Arius jointly, counseling them to end this evil controversy and be at peace with each other. He also sent out Hosios, bishop of Cordova, to Alexander to look into the Arian question, and to the East to set right the easterners who by ancient custom were celebrating Easter in the Jewish manner. He returned unsuccessful in both missions." Mango, 30.

In 323, Arius disputed the Orthodox belief of the Trinity, arguing that if Jesus was the Son of God, he must be younger than God and therefore lesser of Him. God was eternal, having no beginning and no end, but Christ had a beginning, thus was not eternal. If not eternal then he could not be wholly God.

Fearing that God might hold him responsible if the Church split, Constantine called forth the first general council of the Church to meet at Nicea in 325 to resolve the dispute.⁶⁵ Of course, argument and division were nothing new. There were many fierce debates raging in the first three centuries and this amidst severe persecution during that time. The early theological divisions of the Church were not institutionalized until the time of Constantine.⁶⁶

It is said that the story of Byzantium was an adventure in Christian politics that failed. Many today believe that in Byzantium the Church surrendered her ‘freedom’ into the hands of the Caesars⁶⁷ and thus blame Constantine for the spiritual ineptness of the Church today. I disagree. We can not lay the blame of Church division and spiritual dilution on Constantine. Constantine had political and religious motives to see the Church come into unity. While it is true that the Church experienced much division before Constantine, the bickering on theological matters could not continue. Statements of faith had to be drawn up. People needed direction and definition about their faith. The issues on the nature of Christ and the Trinity needed to be addressed. Whether the council was called by a secular emperor or by a bishop the results would remain the same. We only have to look to the west and see how the popes, along with their councils, fared in “running the world” in spiritual and political matters. Schism comes from the pride and power of the human heart; unity comes from the power of the Spirit.

⁶⁵ Haywood, 272.

⁶⁶ Goddard, 12.

⁶⁷ Florovsky is very much a pessimist regarding the close relationship between church and state. (p. 77)

The pivotal issue of Byzantine Christianity was the Person of Christ. The first seven ecumenical councils centered on a heresy regarding the Second Person of the Trinity.⁶⁸ The Byzantine Empire saw itself as the “God-protected state”⁶⁹ and for the empire, whose well-being depended upon Orthodoxy, heresy was tantamount to treason.⁷⁰

The Eastern Church had many splinter churches; it was not the “only church” in the east. Every form of controversy and religious fanaticism, followed by bitter religious animosities, beset the Eastern Church from the fourth to sixth centuries. What brought great difficulty later was the Persian rulers supporting any sect that rose up against Orthodox Constantinople.⁷¹

There were the Nestorians (who were ejected from the schools in Edessa but found a warm welcome among the Sassanians), Copts, Abyssinians, Jacobites, Malabars, and Armenians. All these schismatic groups were monophysite except for the Nestorians. The Malabars started out as Nestorian, but due to their isolation and contact with monophysite theology, the Malabars are a strange combination of both with an edge towards monophyism.⁷² For a time, the teachings of Marcion enjoyed favor among the upper classes of the Greek cities in Syria and Arabia.⁷³

One can see that Eastern Christianity was about as splintered with sects and heresies as the west. All the schismatic churches sprang from one of two great heresies in the fifth century: Nestorians,⁷⁴ condemned by the Council of Ephesus in 431 (which forced Nestorius to flee to

⁶⁸ Harry J. Magoulias, *Byzantine Christainity: Emperor, Church, and the West* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1982), 20.

⁶⁹ Helen Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou, *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D. C.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 1.

⁷⁰ Magoulias, 18.

⁷¹ W. S. W. Vaux, *Persia: From the Earliest Period to the Arab Conquest* (New York: E & J. B. Young & Co., 1893), 154.

⁷² Adrian Fortescue, *The Eastern Churches II: The Lesser Eastern Churches* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2001), 3.

⁷³ J. Spencer Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (New York: Longman Group Ltd., 1979), 52-53. The author states that Tertullian’s claim that Marcion derived his theology from the gnostic Cerdo only after arriving in Rome can be discounted. Marcion’s dualism is not the same as that of Cerdo. Marcion developed his ideas long before he came to Rome.

⁷⁴ Nestorius divides Christ into two persons.

Persia) and its extreme opposite, monophysism,⁷⁵ condemned by the Council of Chalcedon twenty years later.

The Nestorian church was founded by the followers of Nestorius and it prospered until the thirteenth century when it was nearly wiped out by the Mongol invasion.⁷⁶ Monophysite schism developed many sects as listed above. It is believed that these sects arose out of nationalism that was developing in parts of the empire, especially that in Egypt, Ethiopia, Armenia, and Eastern Syria. The sects did not take kindly to the Greek-Hellenic exclusivity in deciding on the matters of religion.⁷⁷ There had been attempts to reunite the sects by changing the definition slightly on the Second Person of the Trinity. Heraclius (610-641) suggested that Christ had two distinct natures but only one will (monothelites). Very few bishops and priests from both sides accepted the idea (the Maronite church, named after a Christian saint in the fifth century Syria, is of this theology).⁷⁸ The animosities between the Chalcedon Christians and the Monophysite Christians continued to grow over the years to the point that “to judge by the relationships between the Christian churches in the seventh and eighth centuries, it had been almost as if the frontier between the two rival political monotheisms did not exist.”⁷⁹

The decisions of Chalcedon in 451 “immediately led to the first great Schism of the Apostolic Church.”⁸⁰ Why did the decision of Chalcedon create such animosity in the east?⁸¹

⁷⁵ Monophysism confuses Christ into one nature.

⁷⁶ Obed Peri, *Christianity Under Islam in Jerusalem* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 39.

⁷⁷ Peri, 40.

⁷⁸ Peri, 40.

⁷⁹ Sidney Griffith, *What Has Constantinople to do with Jerusalem? Palestine in the ninth century: Byzantine Orthodoxy in the World of Islam in Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?* Edited by Leslie Brubaker (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Variorum, 1998), 181 See also *Life of Daniel of Sketis* in the appendix

⁸⁰ Aziz S. Atiya, *History of Eastern Christianity* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 1967), 69. The author writes that those who can read the Coptic sources directly rather than through secondary works by members of the opposite camp, “are left wondering whether political and ecclesiastical authority was not behind the unnatural exaggeration of existing differences between the two professions.” (p. 70)

⁸¹ Appendix one contains a story that relates some of the animosity.

Those favoring monophysite theology held strongly to the theology and terminology of Cyril of Alexandria. The ‘old Niceans’ in the fourth century refused to accept the formula of the three hypostaseis introduced by the Cappadocian Fathers because Athanasias did not use it. By the same logic, the leaders of the fifth and sixth century monophysitism (Dioscoros of Alexandria, Phloxences of Mablough, and the great Severus of Antioch) rejected the Council of Chalcedon and the Christological formula of the ‘one hypostasis in two natures’ because Cyril had never used it. They also interpreted it as a return to Nestorianism. The danger of Eutychianism, to them at least, was not serious enough to justify the Chalcedonian departure from Cyril’s terminology.⁸²

The Byzantine Empire, state and church, would rule under the Chalcedonian decision.⁸³ Almost immediately, the Chalcedonian confessors pushed out the heretics into the desert and the fringes of the empire. By 600 CE there were a number of non-Chalcedon Christian churches established along the regions of Arabia.

As early as the fourth century along the Northwest of Arabia, some Arab tribes accepted Christianity.⁸⁴ The Ghassan tribe, one of the key tribes for the protection of the early Byzantine Empire, accepted the Christian faith in the fourth century. By the sixth century, the Ghassanids gained political dominance when the Byzantine Empire designated Harith ibn Jabala as *phylarch* or tribal leader. Yet, the Ghassanids were monophysite.⁸⁵ Much of Arab Christianity was not Orthodox in the sense of accepting the Chalcedon confession. The Chalcedon Church pushed the

⁸² John Meyendorf, *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trend and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 34.

⁸³ However, not always. There would be times when an emperor would lean towards monophysite theology.

⁸⁴ Goddard, 15.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

monophysite followers deep into the desert through whom the Arab population first heard about Jesus. The heresy faiths are found surrounding Arabia.

On the northeastern borders of Arabia with Persia (modern day Iraq) was the opposite heresy, Nestorianism. The important tribe of this region is the Lakhm who were the main rivals of the Ghassainds. The Lakhm tribe enjoyed the same relationship with the Persians as the Ghassanids did with the Byzantines. The ruler, Nu 'man ibn Mundhir (583-602), converted to Nestorian Christianity. The Persian and Byzantium Arab tribes played an important role during the Persian war under Anastasius.⁸⁶

The region of Yemen, southwestern of Arabia, was monophysite Christian influenced by Ethiopia under the Christian kingdom of Axum (present day Ethiopia and Eritrea).⁸⁷ Finally, in the interior of the Saudi peninsula, Najd, the Taghlib tribe accepted the monophysite faith and the more important ruling tribe, Kinda, accepted Christianity (faith stream unknown) by the end of the sixth century. The peninsula was primarily polytheistic while her borders were monotheistic.⁸⁸

It should be noted that not all tribes on the Byzantine frontier accepted Christianity on theological grounds, but as an allegiance to the Byzantine Empire.⁸⁹ By the seventh century the Christian Church was deeply divided. One of the charges leveled against Christianity by the Qur'an is that the faith does not hold to a single truth. If the Christian faith does not hold to a truth it cannot possess truth.

And those who say, We are Christians, We made a covenant, but they neglected a portion of that whereof they were reminded so We stirred up enmity and hatred among them to the day of Resurrection. And Allah will soon inform them of what they did.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Harris, 12.

⁸⁷ Goddard, 16.

⁸⁸ Emory C. Bogle, *Islam: Origin and Belief* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1998), 3.

⁸⁹ Goddard 15.

⁹⁰ The Holy Qur'an, 5:14. Arabic Text with English translation and Commentary by Maulana Muhammad Ali, (Ahmadiyya Anjuman Isha'at Islam Lahore Inc. Dublin, Ohio, 2002.)

Until the early seventh century, Arabia had been relatively unknown to the west. “Then, in the twinkling of an eye, all was changed. In 633, they burst out of Arabia.”⁹¹

⁹¹ Norwich, 94

PART TWO

The Rise of Islam

Chapter three: Mohammed ***The Man Prophet***

Pre-Islamic Saudi Arabia

The people living on the Saudi peninsula of this time period were known in Greek as *Sarakenoi* and in Latin *Saraceni* from which we get the English word *Saracens*. Before their interaction with the Greek west (west from Arabia's standpoint) they were known as *Scenite Arabs*, the Arabs who dwell in tents (*skene*, a tent). They simply called themselves Arabs.⁹² Arab may mean either "nomad" or "the Land of the Setting Sun" (this would be west of Babylon the birthplace of the ancient migration).⁹³ The people have lived in this area longer than anyone can remember and no one can recall anyone arriving before them. The ancient Hebrews called Arabia 'country of the East' and the people 'children of the East' (east of Palestine).⁹⁴ For centuries empires have tried and failed to conquer and civilize the Arabs. It has been tried by the likes of Pompey and other Roman generals. Much of the time the Arab was looked down upon. An Arab approached a Persian king to seek the aid of his soldiers in return for a province. The king replied, "What is there to be found in your country? Sheep and camels! I am not going to risk my armies in your desserts for such a trifle."⁹⁵

The size of the land they live in is one-third the size of Europe. The region is very sparsely populated. The low rainfall has made most of it a desert. In some areas there may not be

⁹² Maxine Rodinson, *Mohammed* trans by Anne Carter. (New York: Panthen Books, 1971), 11

⁹³ Trifkoic, 14.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Trifkoic, 17.

rain for ten years. Vast areas are covered with dunes rising to six hundred feet or more high and stretch for several miles. One area is equivalent to the size of France (*Rab 'al-Khali*). Another region known as the *Nufud* covers forty thousand square miles and is a sea of enormous shifting of dunes forming a constant changing landscape.⁹⁶ In the midst of this vast desert can be found lava flows from a far ancient past.

The riverbeds are known as *wadis* and without warning a sudden downpour transform them into ranging torrents that the Arabs call floods. One must dig wells of hundreds of feet deep to find water. When a downpour does drench the land, it can bring forth wild flowers and grasses within hours.⁹⁷

Two thousand years before Christ the Arabs domesticated the camel and became a source of their livelihood. They drank camel milk and the Arabs soon formed small groups (bands in Arabic, thus *beduin*) and began to follow the camels to various pasture regions and desert oasis.⁹⁸ Their nomadic life, warfare, and hunting methods were virtually unchanged until the arrival of gunpowder.⁹⁹

The Arabs were realists and never had much time for religion. They did believe the land was filled with spirits, *jinns*, who were often invisible but can appear in the form of an animal. The first Mediterranean faith to arrive on the peninsula was Judaism. It arrived soon after Rome destroyed Jerusalem in 70 CE.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁶ Bernard Lewis, *The Arabs in History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 15.

⁹⁷ Rodison, 12.

⁹⁸ Ibid. The camel can carry loads of 400 pounds, cover sixty miles in a day, and travel twenty days without water in 120 degree+ heat if given a little green fodder, otherwise it can travel five days before it dies.

⁹⁹ G. R. D. King and Averil Cameron, eds. *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1994), 183.

¹⁰⁰ Manfred W. Wenner, *The Yemen Arab Republic: Development and Change in an Ancient Land* (San Francisco, CA: Westview Press, 1991), 119.

Arabia changed hands frequently between the Roman/Byzantine Empire, the Persians, and the Armenians. This resulted in seven centuries of wars with the victor taking the land for a time. This had an affect on the cultural life of the area.¹⁰¹ The Arabs do not belong to a single race but are made up of cultures outside the peninsula.¹⁰²

Major trading routes were developed through the peninsula during the time of the wars between the Byzantine Empire and the Persian Empire. In 384 CE a peace agreement was forged by the two superpowers (Byzantine and Persia) that lasted until 502 CE. During the long peace the two regions desired safer and more direct trading routes. The dangerous trade routes through western Arabia were no longer needed during the peace. This was a time of decline for the Arabian Peninsula and again the Byzantine and Persian Empires saw little need for the Arabs.¹⁰³ The road across the Syrian steppe provided a fast and direct route to the cities east and west. However, no trading route was completely free (a toll of some type) nor safe.¹⁰⁴ An ancient hymn attests to the danger of traveling the trade routes:

Shamash, there confronts you
the caravan, those journeying in fear,
The traveling merchant, the agent
Who is carrying capital.
The prowling thief, the enemy of shamash,
The marauder along the tracks of the steppe, confronts you.¹⁰⁵

Jews and Christians taunted the Arabs for being left out of the divine plan for they had no prophet nor any scriptures in their own language. More thoughtful Arabs believed they were a lost people, exiled forever from the civilized world and even ignored by God.¹⁰⁶ Then on the

¹⁰¹ DeLacy O'Leary, *How Greek Science Passed to the Arabs* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1949), 10.

¹⁰² Trifkovic, 14-15.

¹⁰³ Lewis, *Arabs in History*, 23.

¹⁰⁴ Elisabeth N. Cooper, *Trade, Trouble, and Taxation Along the Caravan Roads of the Mari Period. Death and Taxes in the Ancient Near East* Sara E. Orel, ed. (Lewiston, NY: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1992), 13.

¹⁰⁵ Cooper, *Old Babylonian hymn to the god Shamash*, 1-2.

¹⁰⁶ Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 3.

night of 17 Ramadan, “Mohammed woke to find himself overpowered by a devastating presence, which squeezed him tightly until he heard the first words of a new Arab’s scripture pouring from his lips.”¹⁰⁷ From that time on, the Arabs were no longer taunted nor were they to be ignored.

Mohammed

No one knows exactly when Mohammed was born, however the most commonly accepted year of his birth is 571.¹⁰⁸ ‘Abdallah, Mohammed’s father, belonged to the Hashim clan of the tribe Quraysh (shark). Research on the life of Mohammed is ‘in a crisis,’¹⁰⁹ in that the earliest resources we have are one hundred and fifty to two hundred years after the events took place (compared to Biblical sources written twenty to sixty years after the ascension of Christ). There is no reliable scholarship to verify the events. Muslims did not hesitate to gloss over certain events or to embellish others,¹¹⁰ as attested by Suliman Bashear: “There is difficulty in finding facts of early Islam due to the fact that nearly all the material we have comes from Islam compilations of which their goal was to write (rewrite?) history to reflect a more sacred history.”¹¹¹

Bernard Lewis writes that the early Muslims discovered at an early date the discrepancies they found within the histories. They developed a science of criticism to distinguish between that which is untrue or unlikely true and that which is true or likely true.¹¹²

The Making of Islam

Mohammed developed the Islamic faith over a ten year period (610-620) in a series of 114 visions in a cave on Mt. Hira near Mecca. This began when he meditated on the singleness

¹⁰⁷ Armstrong, 3-4.

¹⁰⁸ Rodinson, 38. Appendix 2 contains a timeline on Muhammad and Islam.

¹⁰⁹ Herbert Berg, ed. *Method and Memory in the Study of Islamic Origins* (Boston: Brill, 2003), 22.

¹¹⁰ Ibn, 66.

¹¹¹ Suliman Bashear, *Arabs and Others in Early Islam* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1997), 24. Bashear was trying to write a history of early Islam using primary sources before the ninth century.

¹¹² Lewis, 33.

of God. He had contact with Jewish belief that there is one God and not many gods. This fascinated him and began to contemplate the idea, which ignited his imagination.¹¹³ Mohammed saw the danger of multiple gods¹¹⁴ and the fragmentary life of the tribes. He sought a way to unite the tribes of the Saudi peninsula and faith held the key.

The Faith of the Arab and the Rise of Monotheism

From ancient pre-Islamic times Mecca had been a place for pagan pilgrimage. Arabs came to the Ka'ba, a cube structure, found in the center of Mecca. According to Islam, the structure was originally built by Adam but was first built in heaven two thousand years before creation and where a model of it still stands.¹¹⁵ The Ka'ba was destroyed by the Flood. God directed Abraham and Ishmael to rebuild the Ka'ba.¹¹⁶ The Arabs were to pray before a black stone that is believed to have been brought down out of heaven (probably a meteorite).¹¹⁷ Part of the ritual of the Ka'ba was to run around it seven times and then kiss the stone. After one kisses the stone the pilgrim runs to the dry well of Wadi Mina about a mile away and "throw stones at the devil."¹¹⁸

Each Arabian tribe had its chief deity. Unlike the Roman and Greek mythologies the Arab gods did not have a past or distinct characteristics. An Arab may like, fear, or placate the god by some ritual, but the Arab worshipper did not know the deity.

¹¹³ W. Wilson Cash, *Christendom and Islam: Their Contacts and Cultures Down the Centuries* (New York: Harper and Bros., 1937), 8

¹¹⁴ Mecca was a major trading center and incorporated virtually all the gods they ever heard of, similar to what St. Paul discovered on his journey to Athens. The Ka'ba was a home to all these gods including the Arab desert god of Allah – who is described as a Roman Zeus. Muhammad made Allah the only god.

¹¹⁵ Warraq, 41

¹¹⁶ F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and the Holy Places* (Princeton, NJ: The Princeton Press, 1994), 11

¹¹⁷ Islamic belief is that while Ishmael was looking for a stone to mark the corner of the building he met the angel Gabriel (known as *Ruhu al Quddas* – the Holy Spirit; Akbar, p. 13) who gave him the black stone, which was at the time 'whiter than milk'. It became black from the sins of those who touched it.

¹¹⁸ Trifkovic, 21

The dominate deity for the Arabs was the moon god whose title was *al-ilah* (the chief among all gods). The frequency of the name's usage shortened the name to 'Allah.'¹¹⁹ Muhammad wanted to unite these tribes against the imposing powers that seemed to surround the Arab world: the Roman/Byzantine to the west and Persia to the east.

The very first words of the Qur'an are: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate." These words were written by a Christian named Bahira,¹²⁰ a monk (a monophysite, possibly of the Nestorian church), who wrote for the illiterate prophet. The monk recognized, when still a boy, that Mohammed was the final prophet. The Christian and Muslim sources differ over Bahira. The Muslim version says that Bahira saw a miraculous vision above Mohammed's head and found the 'Seal of Prophethood' between his shoulders. This vision was to prove that Mohammed was a prophet and that it was foretold in the Bible.¹²¹

The Christian version just says that Mohammed did not receive his messages from God, but from a monk who tried to convert the Arabs to worship one God.¹²²

The Qur'an is made up of visions of Mohammed, which are broken into units, and is the basis of all Islamic beliefs. Muslims believe that the Qur'an is a replica of the original Holy Qur'an in heaven. Mohammed stated that the Qur'an was his only miracle, "since something so beautiful could come from a humble, illiterate man."¹²³ The Qur'an is difficult to read.¹²⁴ The Westerner must realize that the eloquent turn of a phrase appealed to an audience that placed form over content and style over composition.¹²⁵ Of course, it is better to read the Qur'an in its

¹¹⁹ Ibid, 22. The symbol of the crescent moon appears frequently in pre-Islamic archaeology throughout Arabia.

¹²⁰ David Thomas, *Syrian Christians Under Islam: The First Thousand Years* (Boston: Brill, 2001), 57

¹²¹ Once Mohammed began to gain power in Medina the Christian communities were being accused of falsifying their own Scriptures in order to conceal the prophecies referring to the arrival of Muhammad (Lewis, p. 42).

¹²² Thomas, 57.

¹²³ Emory C. Bogle, *Islam: Origin and Belief* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1998), 37.

¹²⁴ One author noted, the Qur'an and the Traditions contain war crimes, murder, rape, genocide, and child molestation among other activities of an uncontrollable immoral appetite by the prophet.

¹²⁵ Trifkovic, 29-30.

native Arabic for the reader to appreciate the nuances. No one really knows when the Qur'an became a closed canon and some sources indicate that the Qur'an may have evolved over a period of thirty to two hundred years.¹²⁶

According to the Qur'an, the Islamic faith is the original faith that comes from the ancient pagan beliefs¹²⁷ of the Middle East. These beliefs are from which Judaism and Christianity had polluted, but Islam is the 'reminder' of the truths everyone already knew.¹²⁸

Mohammed was not original in his thinking or introducing new ethical formulas.¹²⁹ Ignaz Goldziher writes,

The most important stages in [Islam's] history were characterized by assimilation of foreign influences It's founder, Muhammad, did not proclaim new ideas. He did not enrich earlier conceptions of man's relation to the transcendental and infinite. . . . The Arab Prophet's message was an eclectic composite of religious ideas and regulations. The ideas were suggested to him by contacts, which had stirred him deeply, with Jewish, Christian, and other elements.¹³⁰

Thus, the faith Mohammed formed is a mixture of pagan, Christian heresy (Arian, Nestorian, Zoroastrian), and Jewish beliefs.¹³¹ The Pilgrimage to Mecca, with its rituals and rites, derive from mostly old Arabian paganism.¹³²

Once the visions were complete Mohammed saw the need for scriptural integrity and commanded that the Qur'an not be translated into another language ('Uthman, the third Caliph [644-656] commissioned the official written version).¹³³ Mohammed claims the original

¹²⁶ Fred M. Donner *The Beginnings of Islamic Historical Writing* (Princeton: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1998), 35-37.

¹²⁷ Paganism is very prominent in the Qur'an. The belief in seven heavens and seven hells comes from Hindu and Zoroastrian beliefs.

¹²⁸ Karen Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2000), 8.

¹²⁹ Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 1995), 34.

¹³⁰ Ignaz Goldziher, *Introduction to Islamic Theology and Law* trans. Andras and Ruth Hamori. (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1981), 4-5 .

¹³¹ George Grant, *The Blood of the Moon: Understanding the Historical Struggle Between Islam and Western Civilization* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Pub., 2001), 41.

¹³² Warraq, 35.

¹³³ Bogle, 37.

language given to him was Classic Arabic¹³⁴ and keeping within this language allows the faith to continue without any potential of error and thus lose the one true, original religion again. The stubborn use of Arabic by Islam is a sign of unity among the nation and religious faith.¹³⁵ Muslims in general have a tendency to disarm those who are critical of Islam and especially the Qur'an by asking the critic if he/she has read the Qur'an in the original Arabic language.¹³⁶ Since a vast majority of Muslims themselves have not read the Qur'an in Arabic¹³⁷ it is unlikely anyone else has.

The Qur'an reflects Mohammed's close connection with Judaism. The book is filled with Old Testament stories, albeit mostly from rabbinical fable perspectives,¹³⁸ such as the stories of Creation, Adam and Eve, the Fall, Cain and Abel, Noah, the Flood, and the Tower of Babel, along with Abraham, Lot, Jacob, Joseph, Moses, Balaam, Solomon, and Jonah. The theology of his teachings are very close to Jewish understandings – Unity of God, prayer, angels, stoning, and the law of retaliation.¹³⁹ One could interpret this as “an Arab Judaism with Mohammed as prophet instead of Moses.”¹⁴⁰

Mohammed's understanding of Christ is much distorted as he received nearly all of his information from heretics such as those belonging to Arianism and Nestorianism.¹⁴¹ Yet, he

¹³⁴ There are about 275 words that are clearly not Arabic in the Qur'an but are Aramaic, Hebrew, Syriac, Ethiopic, Persian, and Greek. It's interesting to note that the word 'Qur'an' is Syriac and it's roots are in Christian sources.

¹³⁵ Yasir Suleiman, *The Arabic Language and National Identity: A Study in Ideology* (Washington, D. C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003).

¹³⁶ Ibn Warraq, *What the Koran Really Says: Language, Text, and Commentary* (Amherst, NY: Prometheus Books, 2002), 23.

¹³⁷ Warraq, *What the Koran Really Says*, 24 Only about 10% of Muslim population around the world is Arab. Many educated Muslims whose native language is not Arabic do learn to read the Qur'an. A vast majority of Muslims do not understand Arabic but many will memorize parts of the Qur'an without understanding a word. Bogle notes that while 10% of Islam is Arab, 10% of Arabs are Christian (p. 47).

¹³⁸ Warraq, 50; Cash, 12.

¹³⁹ Muhammad took what suited him from the OT and NT. He seemed to willfully depart from Judeo-Christian ethics by advocating easy divorce and only by the husband, polygamy, women inferior to men, slavery accepted.

¹⁴⁰ Cash, 12.

¹⁴¹ Mohammed's views of Christ are actually very high. He allows His virgin birth and that Christ has come from God. He accepts the miracles but not much of the teachings of Christ such as love, forgiveness, sacrifice, etc. A

viewed Jesus as the only sinless person who came from God. All prophets have sinned including Mohammed, but Jesus did not sin. He also believed that Jesus did rise up from the dead.

Mohammed began to preach what he discovered to be absolute truth he received from Allah. In 615, the people of Mecca began to ridicule him and his followers,¹⁴² but they did not kill any of Mohammed's followers.

In 622, after Mohammed received all his visions, the tension between him and the city leaders began to escalate. In June of that year, a group of seventy-five people from Yathrib (Medina) came to the prophet, professing Islam and pledging to defend him as if he were one of their own tribesmen. Mohammed persuaded his Meccan disciples to leave the city in small groups and move north. His decision to flee may be due to the fact that the Meccan Council met to deal with the issue of Mohammed. The Council leaders decided to kill Mohammed, not because of his prophetic claims, but because he was seen as a traitor.¹⁴³

So, on September 24, 622, Mohammed arrive in Yathrib. The Muslim calendar does not begin with the birth of Jesus nor from the birth of the Prophet, nor even from the day of his first Qur'anic revelations, but "from the moment of survival,"¹⁴⁴ the *Hejira*, or the migration of the Prophet from Mecca to Yathrib. From the time of Mohammed's arrival the city would be known as the city of the Prophet, *Medinnet el Nebi*, which has been shortened to Medina.¹⁴⁵ When

Moslem tradition even states that Muhammad admitted his sins and all the prophets sinned, but Christ has no sin, not even a taint. He also believed that Jesus would return and slay the anti-Christ and reign as king for 45 years.

¹⁴² Trifkovic, 31.

¹⁴³ Ibid, 34. Of course, the Muslim sources paint a more sinister and threatening picture. Hammudah relates that the *Hirah* (immigration), was due to the fact that a resolution was adopted to select a strong man from every tribe of Mecca to murder Muhammad. God instructed Muhammad to leave Mecca and migrate to Medina to reunite w/ native Muslims and earlier emigrants who fled from Mecca (p. 142).

¹⁴⁴ M. J. Akbar, *The Shade of Swords: Jihad and the Conflict Between Islam and Christianity* (New York: Routledge, Taylor, and Francis Group, 2002), 1.

¹⁴⁵ Trifkovic, 34.

Muhammad arrived in Yathrib/Medina the town was not so much a city as a collection of hamlets, farms, and strongholds scattered over an area of twenty square miles.¹⁴⁶

Once the prophet fled to Medina, the city of Mecca (a city of about 3,000) began to form an armed force. The city had no armed forces previously. They viewed Muhammad's teaching as more political than spiritual. Their fears were realized when he formed his own force and began to capture Meccan trading caravans. The visions of Muhammad would be fulfilled with the sword, not through peaceful means. Muhammad built a ruthless army that overtook the Arabian desert and in 630 CE overtook Mecca in a bloody assault. The sword and faith of Muhammad were unsheathed and they would march to the very gates of Jerusalem, Alexandria, and beyond.

¹⁴⁶ King, 188.

Chapter Four: The Faith and Sword of Mohammed *The Makings of a Religion and Its People*

The Islamic Faith

The word ‘Islam’ is derived from the Arabic root ‘SLM’ which means several things including but not limited to, peace, purity, submission, and obedience¹⁴⁷ or as simply, ‘surrender’.¹⁴⁸ “Islam sees itself as the most authentic representation of a universal, supernatural religion that has formed an inborn component of humankind since the first moment of Creation,”¹⁴⁹ says Uri Rubin.¹⁵⁰ Islamic author, Hammudah Abdalati, defines Islam when he writes:

Islam is the religion of peace: its meaning is peace; one of God’s names is peace; the daily greetings of Muslims and angels are peace; paradise is the house of peace; the adjective ‘Muslim’ means Peaceful. Peace is the nature, the meaning, the emblem, and the objective of Islam.¹⁵¹

The word ‘Allah’ in Islam means simply but emphatically, ‘the One and only Eternal God of the universe, Lord of all lords, and King of all kings.’¹⁵² Therefore, the standard profession of faith to become a Muslim is to recite: *There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet*. The unwillingness to acknowledge belief in God is the one unforgivable sin in Islam

¹⁴⁷ Abdalati, 7.

¹⁴⁸ Armstrong, 5.

¹⁴⁹ Hammudah states that Islam rejects the label from non-Muslims ‘Mohammadians’ for it implies that Islam is derived from a mortal being, Muhammad, and that the religion is just another –ism like Hinduism, etc.

¹⁵⁰ As quoted by Herber, 74.

¹⁵¹ Abdalati, 141.

¹⁵² Hammudah Abdalati, *Islam in Focus* (Indianapolis: International Islamic Pub. House, 1975), 11.

which is known as *shirking*.¹⁵³ Thus, the knowledge and belief in God constitutes the very foundation of Islam.

Ali Syed Ameer, a Muslim scholar and apologist, points out the many similarities between Islam and Christianity including the idea of a single God, but does note one major difference.

To the question what can be the cause of this divergence, the answer is not difficult. It consists primarily in the Christian dogma of the Sonship of Jesus – that he was ‘the only begotten Son of God.’¹⁵⁴

The following verses make it very clear that a Muslim cannot believe in Jesus as God nor as the Son of God. “God is only one, has no partner or son, and neither gives birth, nor is He born. He is eternally besought by all and has no beginning or end, and none is equal to Him.”¹⁵⁵ Islam sees itself as being born out of the will of God and its mission is to be a corrective to and fulfillment of the message of the Christian community. Thus, the rise of Islam does not see itself as fulfilling some ancient promise (as the Eastern Christians originally believed), but as a challenge to the Christian faith itself.¹⁵⁶ Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood writes that Christianity is not a doctrine derived from Paul or the clergy but is derived from the roots of early Middle Eastern paganism or Baalism. The doctrine of the Trinity is clearly, according to Maqsood, pagan.¹⁵⁷

Islam flourished during the ‘Dark Ages’ in the West, a time of transition from ancient civilization (Graeco/Roman) to the rise of modernity in Europe. Islam was the leading civilization in the world during that time period.¹⁵⁸ Before Mohammed, there was no such thing

¹⁵³ Bogle, 27; Hammudah, 11.

¹⁵⁴ Ali Ameer Syed, *Islamic History and Culture* (Delhi: Amar Prakashan, 1981), 75.

¹⁵⁵ Qur’an 112:1-5.

¹⁵⁶ Goddard, 36.

¹⁵⁷ Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood *A Muslim Study of the Origins of the Christian Church* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 96.

¹⁵⁸ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam: Holy War and Unholy Terror*, 4.

as an Arab nation.¹⁵⁹ What had captured the hearts and minds of the people to gravitate towards Mohammed? It is not due to, as some Islamic sources pronounce, “his intelligence and integrity”,¹⁶⁰ but his craftiness and ruthlessness.¹⁶¹

The new truths Mohammed announced were geared to the Arab. Islam is not a mere religion but a complete way of life; socially, politically, and legally,¹⁶² much like early Christianity and Judaism.

However, in modern times, the various Islamic countries of the Middle East have incorporated old pagan gods, like the goddess of Istar, into their faith practices.¹⁶³ The acceptance of incorporating pagan worship is in keeping with the spirit of Mohammed wanting to recover the old religions of Arab lands. Today, each Arab country is rediscovering their ancient pagan god who is then assimilated into the Muslim religion.

When we hear the word ‘Islam’, we think of Arabs. Islam did arise from Arabia. However, there is no attempt in the Qur’an to identify the early Muslim movement along national Arab lines.¹⁶⁴ The Qur’an and the *hadith* literature demeans the *bedouins* who are referred to as *a’rab* (Arab). There is one verse in the Qur’an that may concede the possibility that a nomad can be a sincere believer.¹⁶⁵

¹⁵⁹ Trifkovic, 15.

¹⁶⁰ Akbar, 5.

¹⁶¹ In much of my research it appears that Mohammed was quite ruthless in his dealings with various tribes and communities. If Mohammed could not entice a tribe with bribery or “friendship” he would “receive” a word from Allah that would in effect do away with the tribe or a treaty with a community. Karen Armstrong writes more romantically about the Arabs and Muhammad. Bernard Lewis has some sympathies toward the Arab people and Muhammad, but he is a bit more pragmatic about their history. Goddard is more objective. Even they can not completely paper over Mohammed’s occasional ruthlessness. Islamic sources have a completely different view of Mohammed’s behavior in that they do not dispute what took place under and by Muhammad, but in what attitude. Ruqaiyyah Waris Maqsood, for instance, completely defends Muhammad without making any apologies. In his view, all the actions were justified.

¹⁶² Trifkovic, 55.

¹⁶³ George Grant, 65.

¹⁶⁴ Suliman, 9.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid, 8.

The absence of positive Arab readings may be due to the fact that Mohammed had many dealings with non-Arab merchants and traveled to many places, enticing his desire to be wealthy and civilized. When the Qur'an speaks of a prophet that is 'raised from among them' or a messenger was sent 'from among themselves,' it refers to Mohammed and his followers, not the Arab people.¹⁶⁶ Islam was developed in an urban environment as Mohammed proclaims, "We are an urban people."¹⁶⁷ There are a few commentators who do entertain the idea that Mohammed was a prophet of the Arab people.¹⁶⁸

Although various Islamic countries incorporate their own pagan deity and rituals in their faith systems all of them adhere to the Five Pillars of Islam.

The Five Pillars

All that a good and sincere Muslim (who is called an *Umma*) needs to do is live faithfully to the pillars of faith.¹⁶⁹ These are:

1. *Shahada* – the profession of faith. The Muslim only needs to recite, *there is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his prophet*. There are no creeds to recite nor complex theologies to believe.¹⁷⁰
2. *Salat* – prayer ritual. Muhammad first began this ritual twice a day and then three times a day. Eventually Muhammad made it five times a day with everyone facing Mecca.¹⁷¹ Only the *shahada* need to be said.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 45.

¹⁶⁷ Bogle, 1.

¹⁶⁸ There is a problem of interpretation. If one interprets the Qur'an as only the Arab people that Muhammad was sent then the faith need not be universal. If the faith is universal then an Arab is not raised up, and in fact the Qur'an has more to say against the Arab than of praise.

¹⁶⁹ Serge Trifkovic, *The Sword of the Prophet: Islam History, Theology, Impact on the World* (Boston, MA: Regina Orthodox Press, 2002), 55.

¹⁷⁰ Recited Tradition is known as the Qur'an and the Unrecited Traditions is found in a six volume work known as the *Six Books* and are regarded as the de facto holy books in addition to the Qur'an. One of these books, *Sahih al Bukhari* (d. 870) is the most highly esteemed.

¹⁷¹ During sometime in the seventh month after 'the immigration', Muhammad asked his followers to turn and pray towards Mecca and no longer pray towards Jerusalem (Akbar, p. 12). Prayer Times: Early Morning Prayer (Salatu-l-

3. *Zakat* – alms tax. Every *Umma* gave to the poor and needy as he/she saw fit. There was no set amount to give. What the *Umma* decides to give is enough, as long as it was generous. But that definition is left up to the good Muslim.
4. *Haj* – pilgrimage. Every good Muslim was to travel to Mecca at least once in their life. At Mecca, the pilgrim would pray at the old *Ka'ba*¹⁷², the original temple dedicated to all the gods.
5. *Sum* – fasting. During the month of Ramadan, a good Muslim would fast all food and drink during the daylight hours.¹⁷³

As one can see, keeping the five pillars was relatively easy.¹⁷⁴ The concept is simple to understand and assimilate. It is a simple religion that can be grasped by anyone and lived by anyone. A person can gauge their spirituality by the works they do. It is a works righteousness that can earn one's way to paradise.

All five pillars listed above are rooted in pre-Islamic ideas, beliefs, and practices. It is especially noticed in the pilgrimage where it has virtually stayed the same since pre-Islam.¹⁷⁵

Fajr) between dawn and sunrise (2 hrs.); Noon Prayer (Salatu-z-Zuhr) anytime after sun declines after its zenith until midway to its setting; Mid-Afternoon Prayer (Salatu-l-'Asr) right after expiration of noon prayer time and extends to sunset; Sunset Prayer (Salatu-l-Maghrib) immediately after sunset till red glow of western horizon disappears; Evening Prayer (Salatu-l-'Isha') after red glow of horizon disappears and continues till just before dawn. One does not merely begin the prayer. There is a preparation, *Wa du'* (The Partial Ablution): 1. Have intention that the act is for worship and purity 2. Wash hands up to the wrist three times 3. Rinse out mouth three times w/water preferably with a brush when possible 4. Cleanse nostrils by sniffing water three times 5. Wash face three times w/ hands (if possible) 6. Wash right and left arms three times to far end of elbow 7. Wipe whole head or any part of it with wet hand once. 8. Wipe inner sides of ears w/ forefingers and outer ears with thumbs and wet fingers 9. Wash both feet including ankles three times beginning w/ right then left.

¹⁷² The Ka'ba is a 12 foot box found in the center of Mecca which houses a black meteorite. From before Muhammad, the structure was draped with a woolen cloth with a zigzag striping. The walls were made of alternating stone and wood. Unusual in that wood was scarce – it was brought in.

¹⁷³ Fasting during Ramadan combines the traditions of Yom Kipur and the Sabean's month long fasting ritual the Meccans adopted long before Mohammed was born

¹⁷⁴ Fasting was not difficult. A Muslim fasts during the daylight hours and then is free to eat when the sun goes down. A Muslim may have Breakfast before the sun rises in the morning and have a late supper in the evening when the sun goes down. Some Muslims do try to honor the spirit of the fast by only eating a light supper during fasting days.

¹⁷⁵ Trifkovic, 55.

Ed Hotaling, academic scholar of Islamic studies, described the salvation Muhammad preached as ‘simple human virtues’ that would lead one to salvation.¹⁷⁶ Notice, salvation is not of God, but that salvation is only realized when one simply obeys as best he/she can to the pillars. Hotaling quotes Yusuf Ali of the Washington Islamic Center in Washington, D. C., who summarizes Islam:¹⁷⁷

- Faith, hope, and trust in God
- Devotion and service in worldly life
- Love of truth
- Patience and constancy
- Humility and Self-denial
- Attention to God’s message
- Arabian tradition of charity

Notice that the Five Pillars of Faith do not call the Muslim to *jihad*.¹⁷⁸ The call to *jihad* has been abused by some of today’s clerics. Calling the Muslim faithful to *jihad* does not lead them to salvation. The type of *jihad* the clerics are calling for is a “lesser *jihad*” that Muhammad categorized (described below). Muhammad wanted the Muslim to fight a “greater *jihad*” of the inner person. Each Muslim must master their passions and build up their inner character in the sight of Allah.

Today, when a person hears about a *jihad* one immediately thinks of the *Intifada* in the West Bank or the destruction that occurred on September 11, 2001 in New York and Washington D.C. Muhammad did not intend *jihad* to be a purely destructive term. This Arabic word means ‘striving or struggling in the way of God.’ Muhammad wanted his people to strive to know and do the will of God. The term also has two levels associated with it:

¹⁷⁶ Ed Hotalin, *Islam Without Illusions: Its Past, Its Present, and Its Challenge for the Future* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 27.

¹⁷⁷ Hotaling, 27 Appendix 3 contains the general Articles of Faith of Islam.

¹⁷⁸ Both the terms ‘Islam’ and ‘Jihad’ were originally secular concepts, denoting a sublime virtue in the eyes of an Arab; defiance of death, bravery, and struggle. Peaceful asceticism was a concept alien to the desert warriors and condemned by Muhammad as ‘monkery’ typical of Christians (Trifkovic, 57-58).

1. *Greater Jihad* refers to the struggle each person has with him/herself to do what is right. The three major obstacles to contend with are sinfulness, pride, and selfishness.
2. Lesser Jihad involves the outward defense of Islam. Muslims should be prepared to defend Islam, including military defense, when the community of faith is under attack.¹⁷⁹

Enforcement of Faith

In the ten years since the *Hijra* in 622, Islam became the dominate force in Arabia. The dominance in the end was not accomplished out of diplomatic persuasion, although it began with cunning, practical diplomacy.

Soon after Muhammad arrived in Yathrib/Medina he began to consolidate his power. When he arrived in Yathrib/Medina he had relatively few numbers, but sufficient enough to guard against any violence. Some in the city did not appreciate the up and coming prophet.

Muhammad originally sought welcome among the Jewish tribes in the oasis. In order to attract their support he adopted some of their Jewish practices including praying towards Jerusalem (which was later dropped). The Jews did not take his overtures kindly. Seeing their rejection of him he began to make alliances with other tribes.

In March 624, 300 of his followers surprised a Meccan caravan at Badr. The Battle of Badr would mark the beginning of stabilizing the community and increasingly the visions Muhammad would have in Yathrib/Medina would become centered on practical governing.¹⁸⁰ His main concern was taking Mecca. The proclamations dealt with the adoption of the Ka'ba as the place of worship and taking Mecca would become the duty of the strengthening Islamic forces.

¹⁷⁹ Charles A. Kimball, *Roots of Rancor* (Christian Century, 10/24/2001, vol. 118, issue 29) 18.

¹⁸⁰ Lewis, 41-42.

From this time forward, Muhammad would begin to turn against the Jewish and Christian communities. Within a couple of years Muhammad began to fight and drive away the Jewish tribes. Those who opposed him were soundly defeated. Muhammad did experience a couple of setbacks. However, they were not really noticeable. He quickly regained strength and set out to conquer Mecca. Within a few years, Muhammad was able to raise up a force from roughly eight hundred men to ten thousand. In January of 630, Muhammad set out and took the city of Mecca.

Two years later, on June 8, 632, Muhammad contracted a fever and in a few days he died. In his short life he was able to turn the western part of the peninsula of nomadic, polytheistic tribes into a monotheistic, more urbanized people. He established a “well organized and armed state, the power and prestige of which made it a dominate factor in Arabia”¹⁸¹ and soon beyond.

In the words of an Arab envoy to the Persian Shah: “Once the Arabs were a wretched race, whom you could tread underfoot at will. . . . Now, for our glory, Allah has raised up a prophet among us.”¹⁸²

Now the prophet was dead and he did not lay any groundwork for succession. The community, although well organized, was not yet prepared to ‘elect’ a new leader. Who was going to lead? And if there was a civil war, will it lay waste all that has been built up?

¹⁸¹ Ibid, 45.

¹⁸² Hindley, *The Crusades: A History of Armed Conflict*, 13.

PART III
*The Cross and
The Sword*

Chapter Five: The Sword of Peace

Worlds Collide

The mosques are our barracks, the domes our helmets, the minarets our bayonets, and the faithful are our soldiers.¹⁸³

War: War is not an objective of Islam nor is it the normal cause of Muslims. It is only the last resort and is used under the most extraordinary circumstances when all other measures fail.¹⁸⁴

The eleven years (622-633) prior to the firm establishment of Islam are known as the Apostasy Wars.¹⁸⁵ When Mohammed died rather quickly in 632, the community was not prepared for a successor. The prophet did not leave instructions to elect a successor. Immediately after Mohammed's death there arose a question of succession. The Arabs did not know the concept of rightful succession by a relative: Ali, Mohammed's cousin who married his daughter, Fatima, would naturally be the successor. Ali asserts his pre-eminence based among other things, on the claim that he was a *muhajir* (one of the original supporters of Mohammed from Mecca)¹⁸⁶ while the other was *a'rabi* (a simple nomad).¹⁸⁷ Eventually, only the Shi'a recognized the

¹⁸³ Proclaimed by Tayyip Erdogan, Mayor of Istanbul, Dec. 1997 as reported by Lloyd V. J. Ridgeon in his book *Crescents on the Cross: Islamic Visions of Christianity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 90. The mayor received a ten month jail sentence for his public recitation. In his defense he stated that the poem was an appeal for peace – that *jihad* should be confined to the mosques as merely spiritual *jihad*. The Turkish court though otherwise and sentenced him for 'inciting hatred'.

¹⁸⁴ Hummudah Abdalati is an Islamic apologist.

¹⁸⁵ Averil Cameron, *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. III (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1995), 299.

¹⁸⁶ Lewis, *The Arabs in History*, 38.

¹⁸⁷ Suliman, 11.

rightful rule by Ali.¹⁸⁸ The only understanding they had was in the form of electing a tribal chief. The Muslim community had grown much larger than a simple tribe.

Three men immediately met to discuss a resolution for the crisis: Abu Bakr, 'Umar, and Abu 'Ubayda. Immediately the three set Bakr as one who would take the place of Mohammed. Abu Bakr succeeded Mohammed's leadership and became the first caliph (deputy - of the prophet).¹⁸⁹ His ascension marks the inauguration of the Caliphate.

Bakr immediately consolidated the Muslim forces and organized them into a solid fighting unit. There were no limits placed upon his power. He exercised political, military, and executive powers that contained an army and a rule over a vast region. During his swift two-year reign, Bakr set loose Muslims forces that proved to be unstoppable for years.

The first act of his new reign was to put down rebelling tribes. The *Ridda* (apostasy) wars were fought. The Arab tribes refusal to recognize Bakr was not due to a falling away of Islamic faith as much as they felt released from the 'contracts' and 'treaties' they made with Mohammed who was now dead. The tribes did not believe they needed to honor such agreements.

Bakr waged battles that brought all the tribes back under the Islam fold. The wars that started out as a 'reconversion',¹⁹⁰ led to a conquest, which itself eventually led to expansion.¹⁹¹ The conquest of the Arabian Peninsula along with the neighboring regions of Iraq, Syria, and Egypt was virtually simultaneous. The expeditions into the neighboring regions were at first only raiding parties. But when they saw the weakness of their neighbors they began to think about

¹⁸⁸ Thus the Shi'ites are a splinter group in Islam and raise a dissenting voice against other Muslims.

¹⁸⁹ Lewis, 49.

¹⁹⁰ Most Islam sources interpret the rebelling tribes as falling away from faith and needed to be 'reconverted'.

¹⁹¹ Lewis, 50.

conquest. The possibility of conquest by the Arabs was not due to the strength of the Muslims, but due to the weakness of their enemies, the Byzantine and Persian Empires.¹⁹²

The wars between the two then superpowers, Byzantine and Persia, had weakened both sides. The once great city of Alexandria was left partially desolate. The Arabs were heavily taxed by both Byzantine and Persian Empires (to pay for the wars) and anger grew. In a relative short period of time the Bedouin raiders rode unopposed up to the very gates of Jerusalem. “The time was ripe for the entry of a new player so far overlooked in the diplomacy of power politics. . . . The idea of Holy War was in the air.”¹⁹³

The door of conquest was virtually open to them; all they had to do was walk through it. It does not appear that Mohammed had any designs of foreign conquest. Conquest resulted because the people of the regions that were invaded were exhausted by prolonged warfare, distracted by internal divisions, and disaffected by harsh government rule. The large success of the Islamic raiders surprised and encouraged the Arabs to make permanent their excursions.¹⁹⁴ Norwich would characterize the start of the Muslim conquests as historical luck. The long Byzantine-Persian war (540-629) had drained many resources and resolve. The area of Syria, Palestine, and modern day Iraq was a battlefield at one time or another during this time. Over the years both empires weakened and set the Euphrates River as the border.¹⁹⁵ The Byzantine provinces were devastated and they never fully recovered. At the same time the monophysite faiths in Syria and Palestine felt no loyalty to Constantinople.¹⁹⁶ The Byzantine and Persian

¹⁹² Cameron, 299.

¹⁹³ Hindley, *The Crusades: A History of Armed Conflict*, 13.

¹⁹⁴ O’Leary, 132.

¹⁹⁵ Trifkovic, 20.

¹⁹⁶ Norwich, 95.

Empires either ignored or were not fully informed of the upheavals that was occurring in their deserts.¹⁹⁷

Bakr's chief general, Khalid ibn al-Walid restored the right of Muslim rule on the peninsula. Once that was accomplished, the general decided on his own to embark on a military conquest. The history of expansion can be dated in the year 633/11¹⁹⁸ at the Battle of 'Aqraba' in eastern Najd.¹⁹⁹

When Bakr died there again was a dispute over who should be caliph. 'Ali's supporters wanted to have only Hashimite blood relatives of Mohammed to lead Islam. 'Ali was the closest relative of Mohammed and should succeed him. The leaders of 'Ali (the Shi'i or Shi'ites meaning *the party or supporters of 'Ali*) believed that leadership be given to those of 'Ali's (and Mohammed's) bloodline. There is no greater provocative thread in Islam than this question of succession.²⁰⁰ However, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, at the age of forty-three, became the new caliph which laid a foundation for an eventual split in Islam.

With the succession of 'Umar as caliph Islam would launch its attack against the Eastern half of the Christian empire on its drive to conquer the world. The Byzantine Emperor, Heraclius (610-641) had just succeeded in recapturing from the Persians large regions of the 'old orbis Romanorum',²⁰¹ including the Holy Land. The sounds of Constantinople's celebrations barely died down when the people began to hear Arab horses marching across the once 'empty' desert.

¹⁹⁷ Andrew Whitcraft, *Infidels: The Conflict Between Christendom and Islam: 638-2002* (New York: Viking, 2003), 41.

¹⁹⁸ The Muslim calendar starts on September 24, 622 when Muhammad fled to Yathrib/Medina. The first year is according to our calendar and the next set of numbers refers to the Muslim year.

¹⁹⁹ Lewis, 51.

²⁰⁰ Bogle, 48.

²⁰¹ John Weyendorff, *The Orthodox Church: Its Past and Its Role in the World Today* (Crestview, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), 75.

Under Caliph ‘Umar (634/12-644/22), the Muslims gained quick successive victories. The Muslims took Damascus in 635/13 and a year later at the Battle of Yarmuk,²⁰² the Muslims took most of Syria. That same year (636/14) at the Battle of Qadisiyyah, the Muslims conquered Iraq and later they took Iran at the Battle of Nihawand in 642/22.²⁰³ In 675/33, The Arabs found their way into India by crossing the Oxus River and the Indus River, their first foray into the country.²⁰⁴

General ‘Amr ibn al-‘As pleaded to ‘Umar for permission to invade Egypt, the crown jewel of Byzantine Empire. ‘Amr knew the fortifications and routes to Egypt as an Arab caravan trader. Caliph ‘Umar reluctantly gave his permission when ‘Umar entered the newly conquered Jerusalem (638/16). Soon after taking Jerusalem, ‘Umar arrived back at Medina and he had second thoughts of attacking Egypt. He had no desire in having to deal with Byzantine forces so soon after taking Syria and Jerusalem. He sent off a letter to his general saying that if he receives the letter before crossing the Egyptian frontier that he should stop and turn back. But if he had already crossed the frontier, then proceed, and the Muslims would implore heavenly aid. When the letter arrived to the suspecting general he did not immediately open it. He waited until his forces were in Egyptian territory.²⁰⁵ In 641/19, Egypt formally surrendered.

Once Egypt surrendered to the Muslims the new conquerors allowed the Copts (monothysite Christians) to take the bulk of the administration duties.²⁰⁶ The Copts’ nationalistic pride was raised up against their perceived Byzantine imperialism, which peaked under Justinian

²⁰² Goddard relates a Muslim tale where the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius after losing Syria at the battle was driven to say, “Farewell Syria, What a good country for the enemy.” 34.

²⁰³ Bogle, 49.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, 57.

²⁰⁵ Atiya, 79-80.

²⁰⁶ Ibid, 85.

(527-565).²⁰⁷ When Egypt fell to the Muslims the Byzantine Empire lost its richest province and its breadbasket.²⁰⁸ Soon after this loss, Byzantium experienced a short famine.

With the Battle of Nihavand the following year (642/20) the Muslims took control of Persia. The Sassanian Empire was formally destroyed along with its emperor, Yazdagird III in central Asia nine years later.²⁰⁹ The Persian Empire would never rise again. According to Dunstan, the long survival of the Persian Empire is a tribute to Cyrus, Cambysees, and Darius who all ruled with tolerance and moderation.²¹⁰

Between the death of Muhammad and the second siege of Vienna (about 1,000 years), Islam expanded at a phenomenal rate. From 632/10 to about the sixteenth/tenth century Islam turned its borders with the outside world into a perpetual war zone.²¹¹ One border would experience peace while the other would be in conflict. Just when the conflict ceased the other border flared up in battle.

Under the early caliphs, the purpose of the conquests was not to spread Islam as such, but rather to establish rule of Muslim Arabs in the conquered lands. The leaders were surprised at the ease of their raiding parties going so deep into enemy territory. They saw the countryside was open for rule. The early Islamic State was a polity based primarily on persons and communities, not on territory over which it ruled. However, the Muslims did not occupy the entire region continuously. This fact, along with other realities, allowed other communities to co-exist with the Muslim rulers, namely Christian, Jewish, and others.²¹²

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 70.

²⁰⁸ Norwich, 98.

²⁰⁹ Goddard, *A History of Christain-Muslims* 84.

²¹⁰ William E. Dunstan, *The Ancient Near East* (Philadelphia: Harcourt Brace College Pub., 1998), 283.

²¹¹ Ibid, 95.

²¹² Trifkovic, 96.

²¹² Ibid, 95.

The conquests seemed to never end. If the Muslims continued on and conquered Spain the Qur'an would well be, as Gibbon points out, "taught in the schools of Oxford" to a circumcised people. When the Muslims crossed the Pyrenees they promised to stable their horses in St. Peter's in Rome. But they were soundly defeated by Charles Martel at Tours, exactly one hundred years after Muhammad's death. This defeat saved Europe and halted the Muslim westward march.²¹³

The spread of Islam also stopped at the Taurus Mountains where an established border between Islam and Byzantium was enforced. Although the Byzantines lost half of their territory to the Muslims, they were still a formidable force to deal with.²¹⁴ There were occasional naval raids by the Arabs against Constantinople, even as early as 669/47 and 717/65.²¹⁵

The Muslim advanced in major waves:²¹⁶ The first wave occurred in 632-750,²¹⁷ and the second in 1071-1453. The Muslim's reason for taking large tracks of lands and winning battles against the two major superpowers (Byzantine and Persia) was, "It is a sign that God loves us and is pleased with our faith, that he gives us dominion over all religions and all peoples."²¹⁸

By the end of the first wave in 750/128, the Islamic state had become the largest state ever seen in human history up to that time.²¹⁹ The state had included Africa, parts of Spain, the most fertile regions of central Asia, and much of today's Afghanistan and Pakistan. At this point, expansion would halt for the next several centuries.

²¹³ Trifkovic, 96-97.

²¹⁴ Goddard, 47.

²¹⁵ The ships in the last naval raid were rowed by Coptic Christians.

²¹⁶ Appendix seven contains a timeline of Islamic battles.

²¹⁷ Bogle would extend the expansion to 675 to include India.

²¹⁸ Cyril Mango, ed. *The Oxford History of Byzantium* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 123.

²¹⁹ Goddard, 34.

Rulership Etiquette

Early in Mohammed's life, he was quite generous and forgiving towards Jews and Christians. However, towards the end of his life his demeanor towards them remarkably changed to that of being highly critical. It was this attitude that dominated the early Islamic expansion, and the earlier raids just prior to the expansion were very hostile towards Christians.²²⁰ Within ten years or so after Mohammed's death (Muslim sources differ on the exact timing) Christians and Jews were expelled from the peninsula. Although Christians were 'encouraged' to leave there was still a Christian presence in the region for at least two hundred years. Many of those who did leave the peninsula migrated to Iraq.²²¹

Although 'Umar was a military man, he proved to be a capable administrator. When he directed and encouraged expansion he did not force Islamic beliefs nor Arabic traditions on those he came to rule.

During the expansion when the Muslims reached a city, the city's rulers were given a choice: the people could surrender, in which case they would be given assurances of their lives and property being spared, and places of worship would be secure, or they could resist. If they resisted and were forced to surrender the terms would be far less generous such as having their places of worship being turned into mosques and not being able to build new worship houses. Not surprisingly, many cities, such as Damascus, submitted peacefully.²²²

There were a few cities who did not surrender quite as easily, such as Caesarea and Jerusalem. Eventually Jerusalem sued for peace by the Greek Orthodox Bishop Sophronius. He negotiated the surrender of Jerusalem to the second caliph, 'Umar ibn al-Khattab, who personally

²²⁰ Ibid, 42.

²²¹ J. S. Trimingham, *Christianity Among the Arabs in Pre-Islamic Times* (London, 1979), 309.

²²² Goddard, 43.

oversaw the negotiations. When ‘Umar entered the city and then visited the ancient Jewish Temple, which was desolate at that time, he ordered that it be cleaned up and later it was established as a place for Muslim prayers. This single act by ‘Umar shifted the focus of power from the western Christian sector to the eastern Jewish sector where the Temple was located and where Muslims built their main place of worship.²²³ A historical record of the period relates the incident:

In the year fifteen of the Arabs, ‘Umar came to Palestine and was met by Sophronius, Bishop of Jerusalem. ‘Umar wrote him a treaty, according to which no Jew was allowed to live in Jerusalem. When ‘Umar entered Jerusalem he ordered the building of a mosque on the site of Solomon’s temple.²²⁴

The ninth/third century is known as ‘the Elaboration of Islam.’²²⁵ There were the military contacts between Byzantine and Islam, but more importantly there were contacts between Christian and Muslim communities that developed policies of toleration that would last centuries.

Thus, the Muslim conquerors established relationships with Christians and vice-versa. The largely Christian populations allowed the Muslim rulers to have political and military power over them while the people were given freedom of religion, if they submitted peacefully to their rule²²⁶ and paid the *jizya* (tax) found in the Qur’an.²²⁷ This ‘normalization’ of the ruler and the ruled relationship was codified and known as the Covenant of ‘Umar.²²⁸ The Covenant of ‘Umar

²²³ Ibid, 44.

²²⁴ MS 425 – D. R. Hill, *The Termination of Hostilities in the Early Arab Conquests: AD 634-656* (London: Luzac and Co. Ltd., 1971), 59.

²²⁵ Goddard, 5.

²²⁶ Ye’or Bat, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude: Seventh to Twentieth Century* (London: Associated University Press, 1996) writes that the Qur’an forbids forced conversion, but the Muslims never respected the verse. There are many stories that speak about Christians being gathered in churches and burnt alive or that Christians were summarily killed in the churches by other means. p. 88.

²²⁷ Qur’an 9:29, etc.

²²⁸ See appendix five for a sample document of the time period.

would set the tone for future relationships as Muslims entered a new area.²²⁹ The result of the Covenant of ‘Umar is that many Latin origin communities remained predominate Christian until the fourteenth century²³⁰ at which time during the second wave the Muslim rulers removed the era of toleration and laid aside the early caliph’s policies that had worked so well.

In Islam, Christians and Jews are known as the ‘*dhimmi*’ (protected ones), or commonly known as ‘the people of the Book.’²³¹ When the Muslims had dealings with the peoples of the new territory they were entering, the Arabs conducted most of their relations through the religious leaders. While in most negotiations the people were allowed to keep their estates, it did not always mean the army did not plunder the city. ‘Umar confiscated public lands and the lands of some select enemies and made them properties of the *umma*, Islamic community.²³²

Wielding vast areas of lands demanded wise policies from leaders that would ensure stability throughout the Islamic State. The early caliphs managed to introduce policies that set the tone for those following that enabled Islam to govern an empire. The leadership in Medina²³³ instructed the Arab armies to remain a distance from established population centers.²³⁴ The policy of lenient land confiscation and religious tolerance along with the military keeping out of population centers reduced conflict and animosity between the ruled and the ruler.

The Infidel Educates the Master

²²⁹ This covenant has precedent in the Sassanian Persian Empire. The empire had a highly developed Jewish and Christian presence. In areas such as Iraq the rulers experimented by granting the communities military protection and a degree of religious tolerance in return of paying a certain tax in which the leaders of their respective communities were responsible in collecting. (Goddard, p. 47).

²³⁰ Elizabeth Savage, *A Gateway to Hell, A Gateway to Paradise: The North African Response to the Arab Conquest* (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, Inc., 1997), 90.

²³¹ Mentioned more than 50 times in the Qur’an: 3:20, etc.

²³² Bogle, 49.

²³³ Medina served as capital of the developing Islamic empire, but Meccans dominated Arab and Islamic policy-making.

²³⁴ These military camps eventually became cities themselves such as Cairo, Basra, and Kufa.

As the Muslims gained new territory there was a question regarding what to do with the peoples of the newly gained lands. The Qur'an talked about dealing with kindness those who were 'of the Book' yet, there are passages that speak of killing the infidel. According to some interpreters the infidel are those who do not accept Islam and thus they are to be killed.

Abu Bakr took the interpretation of some Muslim leaders that the Qur'an spoke only of those Arabs who turn their backs on the faith and it is they, the apostates, who are to be killed by the sword. Other peoples who are conquered will have to submit to the new Muslim State by at least paying a tax. If they resisted then they were to be killed. This interpretation by Bakr allowed Christian and Muslim communities to live together. The Muslim tolerated both Christians and Jews²³⁵ because both are prominently mentioned in the Qur'an; the two faiths, Christianity and Judaism, had a truth that was lost, but is now regained and realized in final form as Islam, discovered by Mohammed.

Abu Bakr realized that conquering a foe is one thing, governing the masses was another. The taxation of the Christian community allowed him to finance the army and other projects. Perhaps the greatest contribution the Christian community gave to the followers of Muhammad was the cultural sophistication that civilized the desert Arabs. The contribution of the Christian community to Islam allowed the community to live among a hostile environment.

Christian Contribution to Islam

One of the very first realities the conquering Muslims encountered was that of governing. The leaders of Islam recognized that Christians were a valuable asset in administrating the rising Muslim Empire. The Christian community was better educated and had a better understanding of the arts and sciences. Consequently, Christians administered much of the conquered regions. The Coptic Christians in Egypt shared a large portion in governing the country. The Syrian Christians

held high offices and the governor of Medina (Mohammed's exile home and one of Islam's holiest sites) employed Christians to police the holy city.²³⁶

Along with governing the regions, the Muslim community encouraged the practice of medicine. The medical community was nearly entirely Christian. The Muslim leaders encouraged the Christian doctors to practice and develop their art, so much so that for several hundred years the Muslim medical community was virtually entirely Christian.²³⁷ There were two Christian Arabs who were well known for their healing capabilities. Saint Cosmos and Saint Damian were Arab brothers who were martyred under Diocletian and they became the patron saints for medicine and pharmacy. Just prior the Islamic expansion their cult revived during a devastating plague. Eventually, Rome inserted the two brothers in the canon of the Mass; the last saints to be so honored.²³⁸

The Muslim leaders admired Christian architecture and artworks.²³⁹ The Muslim leaders desired to build large mosques and other stately buildings. Early in the building program the Muslims employed large numbers of non-Arab workers (the Great Mosque in Damascus was built in the eighth-century by 12,000 craftsmen sent by the Byzantine Emperor Justinian II during his second period of rule)²⁴⁰ who were skilled in erecting beautiful buildings. Justinian II also sent craftsmen to caliph al-Walid (705/86-715/96) to build the Mosque of the Prophet in Medina.²⁴¹ Byzantine sources tell us that Justinian also provided columns for the mosque in

²³⁵ Bernard Lewis *Islam and the West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 6.

²³⁶ Cash, 61.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Irfan Shahid, *Byzantium and the Arabs in the Sixth Century*, vol. 1, part 2. (Washington, D. C.: Dumharton Oaks Research Library and Collection, 1995), 963-964.

²³⁹ Russian ambassadors when upon entering Hagia Sophia, the great Byzantine church in Constantinople, marveled whether they were in heaven or on earth.

²⁴⁰ Olenka Z. Pevny, *Perceptions of Byzantium and It's Neighbors: 843-1261* (New York: Yale University Press, 2000), 4.

²⁴¹ Goddard, 47.

Mecca, to the chagrin of the Christians in Jerusalem who did not want the caliph removing some of the columns found in the Jerusalem churches (Arab sources are silent on this point).²⁴²

Arab sources speak about the wonderment of their leaders when seeing great Byzantine mosaics (the mosaics at the Great Mosque at Cordoba in Spain came from “great Constantinople”).²⁴³ The mosaics at Hagia Sophia are considered of historical importance.²⁴⁴ They marveled at the paintings that could depict different ages of a person along with expression of their emotions. By employing these skilled Christian craftsmen the Muslims erected some of the most beautiful works of the time period. The first mosque in Constantinople was built during the reign of Leo III (717/98-741/123).

Perhaps the greatest contribution of Christianity to Islam is through education and sciences. As the Muslim leaders gained more control over the Palestinian and Egyptian lands they increasingly became influenced by Christian thinkers. The intellectual life of the Middle East was found in the Church. As Christians began to be employed in the governing of Muslim territories, the Christian community used the methods by which they were familiar – Christian and Hellenistic thought. With the conquest of Greek speaking Syria, Palestine, and Egypt by the Arabs, it was inevitable that Greek texts would be translated into Arabic. This was especially acute during the Umayyad period (661/39-750/128).²⁴⁵ The Muslim leaders grew interested in philosophy, physics, astronomy, and other scholarship endeavors through these influences of the Christian community.

²⁴² Ibid, 47-48.

²⁴³ Pevny, 4.

²⁴⁴ Nicolas Oikonomides, *Byzantium from the Ninth Century to the Fourteenth Century* (Brookfield, VT: Variorum, 1992), 153.

²⁴⁵ Gustas, 23 – the author points out that the Graeco-Syriac translations of Christian literature provided necessary technical background for the translations of secular works such as Aristotle.

With the increased hunger by Muslims in the area of scholarship, there came the need to translate Greek and Latin texts into Arabic. The Muslims valued Greek philosophy and hired Christian teachers to educate their children. The Arab world was fast becoming more cultured and civilized while at the same time the Christian community grew in strength and stature within the Muslim strongholds. This led to the Christian influence on Muslim theological implementation of the Koran. While Judaism played a strong role on Muhammad's development of the Islamic faith, it was the Christian Church that influenced the Islamic interpretation of that faith.²⁴⁶

Many of the early followers of Islam had considerable Christian backgrounds. They took the structure of Islam and filled it with 'a heart and a soul'. Islamic mysticism is largely the result of Christian influence.²⁴⁷ Every Muslim is called to experience God on a deep level. Ramadan is a time for each Muslim to show their love for Allah through sacrifice and prayers they offer. Another development, is the use of beads similar to a Rosary. There are ninety-nine beads with one larger bead at the end making one hundred total beads. There are ninety-nine names for God in Islam and each bead stands for each name of God. The meaning of the longest bead is in dispute, but the most accepted meaning is that the one hundredth bead stands for the name of God that contains all the essence of the Person of God that is not known by human understanding.

Another Christian influence in Islam is the time of Ramadan. Muhammad heard of the Christian time of Lent and wanted to incorporate such a time of devotion within Islam.²⁴⁸

²⁴⁶ Gustav, 24. (also, see Cash)

²⁴⁷ Cash, 49.

²⁴⁸ Cah, 50. (see also Goddard, 48)

Muhammad and many of his followers began to go out into the desert during this time in similar fashion by many of the desert fathers and monks would have done in the Christian tradition.

Christian influence is also found in many of the words used in the Qur'an and subsequent writings. The word that is most often used of God, *rahman* (the merciful), comes from Nestorian Christians and many other Christian communities in South Arabia and other areas. The word for *believer* is also a Christian word along with *prayer*, *praise* and other common words in Islam. Because of the similarities between the two faiths and the high regard for Christ, many in Christendom believed Islam was a distorted heretical form of Christianity. As the West gained access to Islamic literature through translation the Church realized Islam is not a cousin of Christianity but a religion of its own right.²⁴⁹

It was the use of these words and phrases that helped easily build relationships between the Christian and Islamic communities as Islam pushed ever outward. The Christian community also influenced Islam in areas of spiritual piety found within the person not just in outward appearance. This became a dire need after the first generation of Islamic followers died out. The new generation was overcome with new wealth and power, so much so that the Muslim leaders began to degenerate rapidly into a moral crisis not seen within Islam previously. It was this rapid materialism that solidified the need of a personal encounter with God through mysticism and asceticism as discovered through Christian writings and practices.

Through these contacts it soon became apparent to both groups that religion cannot be based on the material realm and that the use of military might to expand their religious influence was contrary to what God desires. Thus, for centuries the Muslim and Christian communities

²⁴⁹ Richard Fletcher, *Christian – Muslim Understanding in the Later Middle Ages* (History Today, April 2003, vol. 53, issue 4).

lived well together or at least cordially. The era of toleration employed by the Muslim rulers allowed the Christian community to remain in the cities living out their lives and faith.

As the boundaries of the Islamic State and the Byzantium Empire stabilized dialogue opened up between the two faiths.

Open Dialogue

Caliph al-Ma'mun (813/198-833/218), established an institution in Baghdad known as the *bayt al-hikma* (House of Wisdom).²⁵⁰ The purpose of the institution was for the translation of Greek and other works into Arabic and encouraged their dissemination within the Islamic world.

He also hosted a number of debates (or discussions) of religious questions by involving representatives from different religious communities.²⁵¹ Caliph al-Ma'mun sent emissaries to Constantinople to find and purchase scientific and philosophical works. Within two hundred years many of these works were widely circulated within Islam (many of the translators were Christians).

The caliph wanted to ensure a fair hearing by all those present. Each faith was allowed to go into great detail to explain their ideas and beliefs without reprisals. At one such debate, Abu Qurra, a Christian, made a statement that riled his Muslim opponent, which the Caliph, al-Ma'mun, stepped in and said, "This is a court of justice and equity: none shall be wronged therein. So advance your arguments and answer without fear, for there is none here who will not speak well of you. . . Let everyone speak who has the wisdom to demonstrate the truth of his religion."²⁵²

²⁵⁰ Muslim sources say that Aristotle himself provided the inspiration for the institution by appearing in a dream. Goddard, 52.

²⁵¹ The Jewish community was second largest faith community in the Babylonian region. Only the Nestorian Christians were larger.

²⁵² Goddard, 53.

These debates became popular throughout the Islam. One region of Islam receiving a great deal of open dialogue was in Syria. At such a debate a Melkite²⁵³ Bishop of Haran (Greek Orthodox) in northern Syria, Abu Qurra, found himself again in a debate (apparently he was well versed in Islam beliefs and other subjects which made him popular, even though his opponents at times desired to take vengeance on him for the sake of Islam). He came from the same school as St. John of Damascus. The topics included the question of whether or not circumcision was necessary and whether human beings have free will or not. At a particular debate with him held in 829/214, contains the most detailed and greatest discussion on the state of Jesus, whether or not Jesus is co-equal with God.

Caliph 'Umar ibn 'Abd al-'Aziz (717/95-720/98) wrote Emperor Leo III (717/95-741/119) asking for an exposition of the Christian faith. Leo affirmed that both faiths believed in the same God²⁵⁴ and they are alike in many respects. Leo also included the use of icons by the Church saying that they are not given reverence but they had educational and emotional significance²⁵⁵ (this is interesting since this letter is dated ten years before Leo's Edict of 726/104 on the prohibition of icons).

The living arrangements were not always consistent; there were battles fought between the Byzantium and Islamic empires. Like the days of the Persian wars, the region would become a constant battlefield, however; not just a single battlefield but two battlefields: one fought on the ground with men and machines, the other fought in the spirit with pen and persuasion.

²⁵³ The Christian community who survived and lived under Islamic rule came to be known as Melkites, because of their adherence to the Byzantine liturgy. The Melkites were almost always under suspicion of being to the Byzantine emperor. The figure representative of this community was John of Damascus. (Goddard, p. 38)

²⁵⁴ Emperor Manuel I in the twelve/sixth century entered a controversy with the patriarch of his day when he insisted that converts from Islam should not be forced to anathematize the God of Muhammad, since this would imply that Christians and Muslims did not believe in the same God.

²⁵⁵ Goddard, 58-59.

Chapter Six: Byzantine Response *Of Blood and Spirit*

Before the first wave of Islamic expansion reached the Byzantine Empire there had grown within the empire a restlessness among the population, especially those in the eastern and southern sections that include Eastern Syria, Palestine, and Egypt. The problems were fomented by careless policies found in both the political and religious administrations.

Emperor Justinian (527-565) closed the philosophy school in Athens in 529. As a result, many of the members of the school migrated to Gundeshaper in Iraq of then the Persian Empire. With the Athens school closed it left only the Alexandrian school of philosophy.²⁵⁶ The closing of the Athens school caused bitterness between the Chalcedon and non-Chalcedon Christians.

Another social rupture occurred with the decree of Heraclius. At the behest of the bishop in Jerusalem, Emperor Heraclius (610-641) decreed that all Jews were to be converted to Christianity in 632. The declaration unleashed a wave of cruelty and killing throughout much of the empire.²⁵⁷

Another region growing nationalistic was Egypt. Egypt had had a long history of restlessness toward Constantinople. The Copts in Egypt had been growing restless at the perceived arrogance of the Byzantines, not to mention their anathema towards Chalcedon Christianity or Byzantine Orthodoxy.

²⁵⁶ Within a decade both schools would fall under Islam who would in turn begin to influence Hellenism upon the religion (Goddard, 58-59).

²⁵⁷ Ye'or Bat, *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude: Seventh to Twentieth Centuries* (London: Associated University Presses, 1996), 37.

These with other incidents fostered a bitterness by the people to Constantinople. When the Muslims invaded the territories, the monophysite Christians and the Jewish populations were more than ready to accommodate their new rulers. Still, not everyone enjoyed being ruled by the Bedouin of the eastern desert. The Byzantine Empire would engage the Islamic State.

Key Battles in the Field

Byzantium had to defend itself constantly. For centuries the Orthodox had to be guarded against the enemy within, heresy. From the mid-seventh century, Islam became the external threat of Byzantium.²⁵⁸ The battles between the Byzantine and Islamic powers were many and varied. A typical battle is the one fought between the Muslim forces and the Byzantine forces in the middle of the Palestinian coastal region.

The Muslims defeated the governor of Gaza in early 634 just north of Beersheba. Emperor Heraclius immediately dispatched troops to aid the governor. The troops hugged the coastline so as to receive supplies from the supply ships. The Arabs used guerrilla tactics to keep the Byzantines busy.

When the troops reached Ramleh, they received reports that the Muslim forces were still near Gaza. As they traveled south of Ramleh the Arabs ambushed the Byzantines. The Byzantine forces gave wide berth to the Judean Hills and the only advantage the Muslims had were their “speed of maneuver and reckless zeal”.²⁵⁹ All day a few Arabs on horses would dart into the enemy’s camp and entice them to pursuit in which case the Byzantines would fall under a barrage of arrows. Khalid Al-Walid, the Muslim leader, would remind his men to save their strength for the night.

²⁵⁸ Wheatcraft, 39.

²⁵⁹ Wheatcraft, 43.

On the afternoon of July 31, 634 the Muslims experienced a major victory. The Muslims were able to break the ranks of the Byzantine army. Once that was done, the advantage of the Byzantine superior numbers and better equipment vanished like a mirage in the desert. The Muslims gutted the horses of the Byzantine army with their swords and cut off the limbs and heads of their enemies. However, the Muslims did not always enjoy such victories over the Byzantines.

In 674/52 under Emperor Constantine IV, the Muslim “floodwaters” were held back. For five years the Muslims used all the latest weaponry and siege engines to topple Constantinople. But the emperor had a secret weapon known as the “Greek Fire.”²⁶⁰ No one knows exactly the composition of this weapon except to know that the results were catastrophic for the Muslims.²⁶¹ Constantinople did not fall. Five years later the Omayyad Caliph, Muawiya, ‘sulkily’ accepted Constantine’s terms of peace: he was to evacuate the newly conquered Aegean Islands and give an annual tribute to Constantinople.

Norwich describes the above incident as a key event in east and west relations by saying that, the emperor withstood “five years of siege by a power hitherto considered irresistible, and in doing so he had saved Western civilization. Had the Saracens captured Constantinople in the seventh century rather than the fifteenth, all Europe – and America – might be Muslim today.”²⁶²

During the years after 750/123, Islam began to show signs of division. Caliphs were not always successful in keeping their generals and emirs in line. Some emirs were quite rebellious that sometimes brought retaliation by both friend and foe alike.

²⁶⁰ Norwich, 101.

²⁶¹ The flaming oil-based liquid floated on top of the sea, frequently igniting the wooden hulls of the ships and causing the additional danger to those who jumped overboard.

²⁶² Norwich, 101.

‘Ali (656/34-661/39) played a pivotal role in the early development of Islam. He spent most of his short reign suppressing rebellion. ‘Ali became caliph after his predecessor (‘Uthman) was assassinated²⁶³ for the perceived view of his abuse of power and transgression of Islamic principles. ‘Ali’s most fervent supporters held to strict interpretations of Islamic law. They regarded any deviation from their concept of Islam as apostasy. They supported ‘Uthman’s assassination as just punishment for his ‘unacceptable’ policies. They later turned against ‘Ali because he accepted arbitration with the ‘apostate’ Mu’awiyh who did not immediately support ‘Ali’s ascension and fought him (a sin to them) and thus withdrew support for him. They (the strict constructionists as they were called then) moved to Nahrawan where they became known as *Kharijites* (to secede; to leave).²⁶⁴ ‘Ali reacted violently against them and killed most of them. However, they survived and have proved to be the ‘conscience’ of Islam since.

The emir of Melitene (Malatya), Umar, and his Paulician sect allies would raid Byzantium Anatolia. The raids were always successful with little opposition over the years. Then in 863, Umar was intercepted by Emperor Michael III’s brother-in-law, Petronas, who trapped Umar near Ankara. The emir, along with the Paulician leader, were killed and his army all but annihilated. This event, along with the death of another Arab ruler (natural causes, however some believe a more sinister incident occurred) turned the tide for the Byzantium Empire. For the next one hundred years the Byzantines marched east.²⁶⁵

Although the Byzantines lost much of their eastern and southern lands, including the holy sites, the empire was able to gain new lands west and north from 843-1025. The empire received new ‘life’ and blood as the Slavs began to infiltrate the Balkans. They provided much needed

²⁶³ ‘Uthman’s (Muhammad’s son-in-law, as is ‘Ali) assassination was a shocking event which inspired the five year civil-war known as the *fitnah*, the time of temptation. Karen Armstrong, 33.

²⁶⁴ Bogle, 134.

²⁶⁵ Mark Whithow, *The Making of Byzantium: 600-1025* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1996), 311.

manpower and new life into Byzantium for they converted to Chalcedon Christianity and learned Hellenic civilization and Graeco-Roman statecraft.²⁶⁶ While the Orthodox Church did well to convert the Slavs (and later the Russians) the Church made no great attempt in making genuine conversions of the Muslims (or earlier, the Arabs). It was this shortsightedness that would help bring down Byzantium.²⁶⁷

The bulk of scholarship relating to the Muslim and Byzantine relationship centers on their militaristic, religious, diplomatic, commercial, and cultural interactions which were more barriers than bridges.²⁶⁸ While there had been some mutual admiration for one another in various degrees and fields of the arts, these were mostly, according to most sources, a love-hate relationship built on mistrust. Each side would try to ‘sanitize’ the history of one or the other even in modern times. A case in point is the fact that within the Byzantine Empire there were Muslim communities, though very little is written about them.

By the end of the ninth/third century the tone of the dialogue and contacts between the two monotheistic faiths began to sharpen. Byzantine Christians writers became overtly antagonistic. The Byzantine Empire and the Islamic State were warring with each other on the battlefields. A new phase of warfare was gearing up, the war of words. I ought to note that not all Byzantine writers took an antagonistic approach. Those under the rule of Islam kept the tone open and cordial.

²⁶⁶ Hussy, 9.

²⁶⁷ After reading countless sources (not all are listed in the bibliography) it would appear that ultimately the fall of the Byzantine Empire is due to political neglect from inept leadership. The empire did not fall from a superior outside army, but poor administration of new lands and weak (neglected) leadership.

²⁶⁸ Helen Ahrweiler and Angeliki E. Laiou, *Studies on the Internal Diaspora of the Byzantine Empire* (Washington, D. C.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 125.

Battle of the Pen

The conversion of Christians in the Middle East occurred in the first three hundred years of Islamic rule.²⁶⁹ After that time the faiths of those remaining were stabilized. The initial shock and fear of the invaders had worn off. Everyone made necessary adjustments. Those living under Islam and those outside of Islam began to take on different nuances of incorporating their faith in their environment.

By the early ninth/third century the Palestinian Christians were undergoing a change. The socio-political changes brought about by the rule of Islam began to affect their religious outlook and interpretation that began to become quite different than what was coming out of Constantinople.²⁷⁰ The differences were keenly felt between Jerusalem and Constantinople. Christians that were under caliphate rule began to take on Arabic culture.²⁷¹ The pre-occupying concern for those in Jerusalem was how to articulate their faith in response to the challenge of Islam. Those living out from under Islam dealt with Byzantine state and heresy issues.

While many Christians did convert to Islam (mostly out of practical reasons) many chose to rebel, such as those found in North Africa.²⁷² Still, many others maintained a kind of 'crypto-Christianity' beneath apparent acceptance of Islam.²⁷³ Christians were not the only group who saw the practical side of becoming submissive. For example, when the Byzantines captured Melitene in 934/312 entire Muslim families converted to Orthodox Christianity "because they did not wish to be deported."²⁷⁴ This swing from one and the other developed a cross-fertilization

²⁶⁹ Tolen, 55.

²⁷⁰ Brubaker, 181.

²⁷¹ Thomas, 9.

²⁷² Savage, 90.

²⁷³ J. M. Hussy, *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 114.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

of culture and belief. Both cities, Constantinople and Jerusalem, saw the need to confront in some way the Islamic tide.

The early attempts of making sense of the rise of Islam was through Biblical interpretation, especially through the Old Testament. One of the key passages that was used was Genesis 21 where God said to Abraham (21:13) and to Hagar (21:18) that God will raise up Ishmael and make him a great nation for he is the son of Abraham.²⁷⁵ The Christians noted that Ishmael's descendants are listed ahead of Isaac. The twelve tribes of Ishmael (Gen. 25:13-16) were interpreted in similar ways as the twelve tribes of Israel.

The Armenian Bishop Sebeos writing in 661/39 explained that Muhammad was teaching the Arabs to know the God of Abraham: "Being very learned and well-versed in the Law of Moses, he taught them to know the God of Abraham."²⁷⁶ Sebeos goes on to say that the prophet told his hearers that God was realizing in them the promise made to Abraham and his successors. It is for this reason the 'Ishmaelites' set out from the desert to the regions surrounding Jerusalem.

A Nestorian monk in Iraq wrote that the Ishmaelites were doing nothing unusual. They were just following the footsteps of their father Abraham. He also suggested that the Muhammad's changing the city from Yathrib to Medina is for the name sake of Midian, the fourth son of Abraham through Keturah (Gen. 25:1).²⁷⁷

After the first wave of Islamic expansion was completed, the Eastern Orthodox Church began to formulate a new interpretation on Islam. They realized that the Muslim invaders were going to stay. This forced them to take another look at Islam (some Christians did believe that

²⁷⁵ See also Gen. 17:20 and its fulfillment in 25:12-18.

²⁷⁶ Goddard, 35.

²⁷⁷ Michael Cook and Patricia Cone label the religion of Ishmaelites as Hagarism which they interpret as a self-conscience movement involving the descendents of Hagar. (Goddard, p. 36).

God truly raised up Islam and so joined).²⁷⁸ Many Syrian Christians were ambivalent towards their new rulers. Some began to openly challenge Islam and thus became the new martyrs.

Some began to view Islam as a judgment from God not as a fulfillment to Abraham. Most Christian writers began to see their Muslim invaders as “scourges sent by God to punish bad Christians for their sins.”²⁷⁹ But who were the ‘bad Christians’? Depending on the perspective of the writers the reader will immediately understand that the writer is condemning their fellow theological foes (Chalcedon verses monophysite Christians).

The writers continued using the Old Testament as their text, but now they were reinterpreting it in light of God’s judgment against the Church for abandoning the true faith. The Chalcedonians condemned the monophysites and the monophysites condemned the Chalcedonians.²⁸⁰ Some writers blamed the carnal sins of the Church (often sexual in nature). No matter who or what they blamed, all the writers hoped that a proper response of repentance would turn the Islamic tide.

All of the above interpretations seemed reasonable at first. However, when the Christian community began to realize the true nature of this rival faith, the writers began to change their tone. They were no longer preoccupied with blaming each other, but with confronting the Islamic faith head on. Few, however, bothered to research the beliefs of Islam. But, one key writer for this era, St. John of Damascus, understood whom he was confronting.

The family of St. John of Damascus (the last of the Fathers of the Eastern Church) had considerable influence in the area. It was John’s grandfather, Mansur ibn Sargun, who negotiated Damascus’ surrender to the Arab’s in 635/13. John was educated with the Muslim children until

²⁷⁸ John V. Tolan, *Saracens: Islam in the Medieval European Imagination* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 41.

²⁷⁹ Tolan, 40.

²⁸⁰ Goddard, 37.

the age of twelve. Because of his close interaction with the Muslims he knew Arabic as well as Greek. Like his father and grandfather before him, John rose into a high position in the Damascus civil affairs that included his position of secretary to the prince of the city and/or held a position of considerable financial responsibility.²⁸¹

John was well versed in Islamic beliefs and histories due to his education as a child, his position in government, and his close dealings with those who were of the faith. He knew about the ancient pre-Islamic polytheistic faith of the Arabs. He understood Muhammad's monotheistic preaching within the polytheistic environment. John even knew some of the contents of the Qur'an that were not readily known.²⁸² He knew about the Muslim practices such as the kissing of the stone in the corner of the Ka'ba, not keeping the Sabbath, and abstaining from wine and eating of certain foods. He also knew the Qur'anic stories of Jesus.

John wrote powerful works that refuted Islam. His writings encouraged others to follow his lead and eventually Islam was no longer seen as a promise of God fulfilled to Abraham and to Ishmael, but a faith to refute with force (verbally and when necessary, militarily). After retiring from his duties with the city, John spent the last twenty-five years of his life in the monastery of St. Sabas in Palestine.

Christians living under Islam needed heroic events to bolster their faith. One such story is that of Anthony.

Anthony was a Muslim official in the court of 'Abbasid Emir Harun al-Rashid. His main pastime was harassing Christian monks of the Damascus monastery of St. Theodore. One day Anthony shot an arrow at the icon of the saint; Theodore repelled the arrow, which wounded

²⁸¹ Goddard, p. 38. – In various readings, as Goddard states, there is mentioning of both positions. I don't see why he may not have held both positions at one time and the other.

²⁸² John mentions a title that is not generally recognized: 'the She-camel of God'. Some believe it may refer to Sura 7 or Sura 26.

Anthony in the hand. After a series of visions confirmed the miracle, a chastised Anthony journeyed to the Jordan River to be baptized. Upon his return to Damascus, his family denounced him as an apostate. Finally, he was brought to the caliph, who offered him wealth and honor if he would reconvert to Islam. Anthony refused and was beheaded on Christmas Day 799/377. A miraculous sign appeared in the sky that night to confirm his status as a martyr for the true faith.²⁸³

When a story was not available, methods were used to discern the coming of a ‘savior’ who will rescue those caught in the snare of darkness and crush the evil that plague the land such as Methodius’ teaching about the “ten weeks of years.”

Methodius writes about an end of the “ten weeks of years” of Muslim domination over the Byzantine Emperor. The emperor will suddenly and unexpectedly put an end to the ‘sons of Ishmael’ with the use of a large-scale military operation. The basis of his belief is founded upon Psalm 78:65. The emperor will awake and rout his enemies just when the Arabs thought themselves strong and the Byzantine emperor weak. Methodius suggests that just as when Christ was dead, but arose and defeated Satan, His enemy, so also will the emperor “who was considered by them (the Arabs) as dead”, will arise and defeat the Muslims, the enemies of the Christian religion.²⁸⁴

The Eastern Christian response was varied. The church dealt with the issues of worship and faith, facing them at times under harsh conditions and at times under bearable conditions. Islam was now an empire in its own right. The Church of Constantinople, looking out to the south and east, saw a land they hoped to regain, but realized that without a miracle the land will

²⁸³ The validity of the story can not be confirmed. There were many such stories. Tolan, 56.

²⁸⁴ Averil Cameron and Lawrence I. Conrad, eds. *The Byzantine and Early Islamic Near East*, vol. I (Princeton, NJ: The Darwin Press, 1992), 152-153.

never again be under the Christian Church. Then the unthinkable happened; a spark was thrown on tinder wood that ignited a thousand Crusaders campfires.

Chapter Seven: Holy Jihad

The Religious Wars of East and West

In 1009, Hakem, a Caliphate of Egypt, ordered the destruction of the Holy Sepulchre and all Christian buildings in Jerusalem.²⁸⁵ The years following the edict brought great persecution upon the Christian communities. The cruelty of the persecution became much more severe than at any time since Islam took the Holy Land. The earlier policy of the Covenant of ‘Umar and toleration had given way to hatred and mistrust, not just between the Muslim and the Christian, but between Muslim and Muslim.

A House Divided

The years of 661/39-750/128 was filled with religious dissent and open rebellion. The Muslims were dealing with establishing their gains of the first wave of the conquests and fighting off one another.²⁸⁶

The Umayyads were distrusted by just about everyone within the Muslim State. The Shi’ites, Kharijites, and the traditional Muslims saw the Umayyads as opportunistic unbelievers who used Islam as a tool for their own self-importance. In spite of the mistrust and infighting Islam was able to expand and develop itself culturally, architecturally, and intellectually.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁵ Trifkovic, 98.

²⁸⁶ It is interesting to point out that in Genesis 25:18 it states of the twelve tribes of Ishmael: *And they lived in hostility toward all their brothers*. We also know that the Twelve Tribes of Israel also fought each other (north and south and only after Solomon’s sin and never on such a scale as the descendents of Ishmael). When the Christian Church was in disagreement, such as the monophysites and Chalcedon, there were no continuous widespread holy wars (there were occasional flare-ups that caused some limited loss of life) between the sects. Just simple family feud animosities.

²⁸⁷ Bogle, 56.

The first Umayyad Caliph was Mu'awiyah. Once he was made caliph he immediately made Damascus his capital instead of Baghdad. He replaced 'Ali who was assassinated. 'Ali was the last of the 'Rightly Guided Caliphs' and who was the first Imam of Shi'i Islam of which he founded.²⁸⁸

Mu'awiyah proved to be a strong leader both in judgment and strength. He set standards in a wide spectrum of his nineteen-year reign that no one after him was able to match.²⁸⁹

The Abbasids rose up to challenge the Umayyads' right to caliphate. The Abbasids desired to have the caliph return to the blood line of the Prophet. The uprising began in northeastern Persia and spread to Mesopotamia. The Umayyads were destroyed in all places but Spain, thus eliminated any possibility of a future Umayyad reign in Islam.

The first Abbasid Caliph, Abu al-Abbas al-Saffah, was the great-great-grandson of Muhammad's paternal uncle 'Abbas. His ascension in 750 established the caliphate dynasty which lasted five hundred years. Once he gained the caliphate he switched from being Shi'i to sunni Muslim.²⁹⁰ Shi'i uprisings on behalf of the Alids²⁹¹ challenged every new caliph. Shi'i unrest of every kind was an ongoing problem with the Abbasids. The Abbasid caliphate continued long after it ceased to exercise viable leadership. The Abbasid's claims of legitimacy from the earliest days of Islam helped maintain their office long after it became powerless.

During the age of the Rightly Guided Caliphs, they made Medina their capital. During the age of the Umayyads, they made Damascus their capital. But when the Abbasids came to power they favored the far eastern region of the Islamic State. During the reign of the second Abbasid

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 57.

²⁹⁰ Bogle, timeline.

²⁹¹ Alids are those who are in 'Ali's family line.

caliph, Al-Mansur built the new city of Baghdad on the Tigris River. In 762 they moved into the city.

However, some Abbasids did not care for the new city and began to build private cities which became administrative centers.²⁹² By about this time the Turks began to fill the highest administrative and militaristic positions in the empire. The Turks began to provide personal safety for the Abbasid caliph. Turkish influence soon began to spread throughout Islam.

From the time the Seljuk Turks captured Baghdad in 1055, they began to march west towards Syria and Palestine. In 1071, the Seljuk Turks soundly defeated the Byzantine forces at the Battle of Manzikert in eastern Anatolia.²⁹³ From that point on the Byzantine Empire constantly defended themselves against the “prime agents of their decline.”²⁹⁴ The Turkish advance was not constant, but with the twin victories of Manzikert (1071) and Myriokephalon (1176) the Muslims forced the Byzantine Empire to look west for help.

By the end of the eleventh/fifth century the Islamic Empire of unity began to fall apart. The *emirs* constantly fought each other as the Seljuk Turkish Empire began to fall.²⁹⁵ After the Battle of Manzikert in 1071 the Byzantines were pushed back to the point that Turkish nomads roamed freely and the *emirs* founded city states in the region looked upon as a land of opportunity. In 1091, the Byzantine Emperor Alexius Comnencus I asked the Pope for aid. It was not until four years later that pope Urban II proclaimed “The Truce of God.”²⁹⁶

²⁹² Ibid, 59.

²⁹³ Pam Alexander, “The Crusades Through the Eyes of Muslims, Jews, and Christians” (Senior History Thesis, La Grande, OR. June 1999), 5.

²⁹⁴ Clive Foss, *Cities, Fortresses and Villages of Byzantine Asia Minor* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 1996), 145.

²⁹⁵ Armstrong. *Islam: A short History*, 93.

²⁹⁶ Edward Peters, ed. *The First Crusade: The Chronicle of Fulcher of Chariots and Other Source Material* (Philadelphia: University of Penn Press, 1971), 17-22.

there were many reports and quite a few at the meeting vouched their accuracy. The cry for help from the Byzantine Empire did not occur originally from Comnencus I but from Michael VII of Constantinople who appealed for help in 1074.³⁰¹

On a platform built for the occasion of the Council meeting at Clermont, Urban looked out and viewed the thousands of tents across the countryside. Looking out over such a throng of masses on an import of this magnitude must have inspired Urban to give the address, the call for a Crusade. Schaff says, “The address was the most effective sermon ever preached by a pope or any other mortal. It stirred the deepest feelings of the hearers and was repeated throughout Europe.”³⁰² On November 27, 1095,³⁰³ the call of the First Crusade went out to all Europe. The response of the crowd was overwhelming. As he still spoke the throng of humanity before him rose up with one voice, “God wills it, God wills it.” “It is,” added the pope, “it is the will of God. Let these words be your war cry when you unsheathe the sword. You are soldiers of the cross.”³⁰⁴ Immediately thousands took upon their clothing and even on their person the brand of the Cross.

The Crusaders began to gather and by the spring of 1096, the march was on. The First Crusade arrived in the Middle East in three waves. The first wave arrived in the summer of 1096 with the second wave soon following. The Byzantine policymakers were as surprised about the Crusader forces as were the Muslims. The Byzantines also mistrusted the Crusaders. The Crusaders and the Byzantine Empire had a difficult relationship.³⁰⁵ The Constantinople

³⁰¹ Philip Schaff, *History of the Christian Church*, vol. 5 *The Middle Ages From Gregory VII to Boniface VIII*. (Peabody Mass: Hendrickson Pub., 1996), . There may have been an earlier appeal in 1012 soon after the edict of the Caliph from Egypt calling for the destruction of all Christian sits in Jerusalem.

³⁰² Schaff, 227.

³⁰³ Trifkovic, 98. – Schaff has the sermon on the ninth and M. J. Akbar states that the Crusades officially began on November 25. It appears that Nov. 9 comes across more often than the other dates.

³⁰⁴ Schaff, 229.

³⁰⁵ Ralph-Johannes Lilie. *Byzantium and the Crusader States: 1096-1204* trans. J. C. Morris and Jean E. Ridings. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), 61.

administrators had little time to decide how to react before the initial forces arrived.³⁰⁶ The first two waves brought together a force of sixty thousand.³⁰⁷ By March of 1096 nearly one hundred thousand men “from nobles to robber barons to priests to peasants” were on the move in five armies.³⁰⁸ The third wave arrived in 1101. The Crusaders received a victory over the Turks in July of 1097. They moved across Asia Minor and in October of 1097 they laid siege to Antioch which fell in June of 1098 as a result of the second wave of Crusaders.

It was a difficult victory. Soon after the Crusaders experienced plague and famine that severely weakened the ranks. With rest and replenished supplies they set out heading towards Jerusalem in April of 1099. Then on July 14, 1099, a day that is seared in the memory of both Islam and Christendom, the attack began on the Holy City. On the following day, July 15, 1099, the Crusading army poured into Jerusalem from all sides. The inhabitants had no chance to get away from the tidal flood pouring into the city. Everyone, no matter the age or the sex, were massacred.³⁰⁹ The soldiers of the Cross ran the streets with the blood of the guilty and the innocent. With their hands stained they kneeled in blood before the site of the Holy Sepulchre and prayed. The fall of Jerusalem in 1099 stunned the Islamic world.³¹⁰

After the conquest of Jerusalem the Crusaders went out to finish the job they had come to do. With the help of the Norwegians, Genoese, Pisan, and Venetian fleets in 1112, the Crusaders were able to capture Syria (which was completed with the fall of Tyre in 1124) and in 1153 the conquest was finished with the capture of Ascalon.

³⁰⁶ Harris, 54.

³⁰⁷ Harris, 54.

³⁰⁸ Akbar, 70-71.

³⁰⁹ Trifkovic, 99.

³¹⁰ Tarq Ali, *The Book of Saladin* (New York: Verso, 1998), xiii.

The Crusaders surprised the Seljuk Turks. They had left only enough forces to keep the region free from any major internal uprisings. The main Turkish forces were on the outer rim of the empire moving into new territories. The Seljuks began a counter invasion to expel the Crusaders in 1127. By 1154 they were able to recapture most of Palestine and Syria including Damascus.³¹¹ The Seljuks were not able to expel all the Crusaders nor regain all the lost territory.

After the initial Crusade was completed several Christian kingdom states emerged: The Kingdom of Jerusalem, The Countship of Tripoli, The Principality of Antioch, and the Countship of Edessa.

As they began to govern the newly acquired states the leaders discovered what a mosaic of culture and people they had. Upon reaching Antioch, Walter the Chancellor chronicled the findings in his 'Principality' (c.1115-c.1122) describing the city as containing "Franks, Greeks, Armenians, Strangers, and pilgrims." He goes on to say that there were Muslim farmers living in some areas. At Edessa the population was predominately Armenian; Tripoli had enclaves of Greek Orthodox and other eastern Christians, as well as Sunni and Shi'i Muslims. Jerusalem was even more varied than any of the states.³¹²

The states developed two religious orders of knights: the Hospitallers and the Templars.³¹³ However these orders were not enough to safeguard the states. When the Seljuk Turks began their counter offensive the Principality of Edessa fell in 1144 and ten years later, Damascus fell. The other states were secure, especially that of the Kingdom of Jerusalem. It is because Jerusalem remained in the hands of the Christians that a Muslim named Salah-ed-Din

³¹¹ Bogle, 62-63.

³¹² Jonathan Phillips, *The Crusades, 1095-1197* (New York: Longman, 2002), 41.

³¹³ The Templars are the most infamous of the orders. However, according to Trifkovic, the 'unspeakable' practices by the brotherhood are unproven. p. 100.

becomes prominent in the annals of Christian and Muslim history. Only Muhammad would receive more acclaim or honor.

Saladin

The taking of Jerusalem by the Crusaders was a triumph for Christendom and a defeat for Islam.³¹⁴ The initial appeals for aid by the local Muslim leaders to Damascus and Baghdad went unanswered. The great counter-crusade did not begin for nearly a century.

For a vast majority of the Islamic world at the time, the Crusades “aroused very little interest in the region.”³¹⁵ The Muslims, who lived in far off places like Iraq, Iran, Central Asia, Malaya, Afghanistan, and India, saw the Crusades as “remote border incidents.”³¹⁶

Muslims today prominently speak about the Crusades, for they see the West as rising in power and threatening. Because of this perceived threat Muslim historians began to look back with ‘nostalgia’ to a time when another powerful threatening force of the West rose up against the Palestinian lands. One person united Islam and soundly defeated the Western powers. His name was Salah-ed-Din (Saladin as he is known in the West).³¹⁷

The story of Saladin could begin with a castration: Bihruz, Saladin’s father’s best friend³¹⁸ and Saladin’s father, Najm ad Din, decided to venture to Baghdad and ended up at the court of the Abbasid caliph. Eunuchs were valued and used in high office of the government. One of the rewards Bihruz received for his work was a castle in Takreet³¹⁹ on the Tigris River north of Baghdad. Bihruz appointed his good friend Najm ad Din governor of the castle. In

³¹⁴ Lewis, *The Crisis of Islam*, 47.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

³¹⁶ Armstrong, *Islam: A Short History*, 95.

³¹⁷ Armstrong, 95.

³¹⁸ Bihruz, the best friend of Najm ad Din, Saladin’s father, was a very charming man. His charm was both his strength and his weakness. He charmed the robes off the wife of the local emir but had the misfortune of being caught in her company with his pants down. The emir immediately castrated him and then banished him.

³¹⁹ The now captured Saddam Hussein of modern Iraq made it a point several years ago that he too was born in Takreet. Trying to link his name with Saladin.

1137/515, Najm ad Din had a son and named him Salah ad Din Ayyubi or Saladin (he who honors the faith).³²⁰ Immediately after the son was born he was forced to leave the castle and he went to Mosul.

In 1163/541 Saladin was serving in the forces to stabilize the Palestinian and Syrian regions. He did not have a command of his own but was a subordinate and served under Shirkuh. At the urging of caliph al-Adid³²¹ they ran skirmishes into Egypt in 1163/541, but never stayed. In 1168/546, the caliph ordered the forces back into Egypt and this time they were to stay. Saladin willingly served under his uncle, Nur-ad-Din's, command.³²² One of his very first 'exploits' was to seize the 'intriguing' vizier, Shavar, and execute him on caliph's orders.³²³ Once inside the country Saladin eventually took command over the Seljuk forces. Saladin received high praise after he defended Egypt against the Crusaders in 1170/548.

As Saladin consolidated power, his life was always in jeopardy. He never left his dwelling except under the escort of a strong guard. Saladin wanted the appearance to be non-threatening whenever he went out among the people. The guardsmen wore cloaks of yellow silk, while a trusted officer carried a parasol over Saladin's head. The yellow and black banners waved as if they were in a parade. But underneath all the silk, the men wore coats of mail.³²⁴

After the death of the Fatimid caliph in 1171/549,³²⁵ Saladin refused to replace him, but instead placed Egypt under Sunni Islam and the Abbasid caliphate. Taking advantage of his

³²⁰ Diane Stanley, *Saladin Noble Prince of Islam* (New York: Harper Collins Pub., 2002), 3

³²¹ Some say 'at the appeal of the Egyptians'. Both are plausible as the appeal would reach the caliph and the caliph in turn would urge his forces to assist.

³²² Yusuf Ibish, ed. *Saladin: Studies in Islamic History* (Beirut: The Arab Institution for Research and Pub., 1974), 105.

³²³ This is fascinating. The story of how the Franks got involved is a fascinating read. You will find it in the Appendix as given by Stanley Lane-Poole in his book *Saladin: And the Fall of the Kingdom of Jerusalem*. (London: Darf Pub. Ltd., 1995), 86-88. Yusuf Ibish, a Muslim writer only mentions what I wrote above in passing. The reader only knows that Saladin was ordered to kill the vizier for 'intrigue', but nothing more. The story given by Lane-Poole is found in Western sources but it is not found in Islamic sources.

³²⁴ Gertrude Slaughter, *Saladin* (New York: Exposition Press, 1955), 66.

³²⁵ Trifkovic writes that Saladin helped 'overthrow' the Shi'ite Fatimid dynasty, p. 100.

uncle's death, a Seljuk ruler of Syria in 1174/552, Saladin extended his authority beyond Egypt into Syria. Saladin became the Grand Vizier of Egypt. After securing these areas he began to move against the remaining Crusader's strongholds.³²⁶ Saladin took control over Damascus and in the following years took all of Mesopotamia except Mosul. Thus, with the Islam again under one banner, Saladin was ready to strike against the Crusaders. The tide was about to turn against the Christians. At the age of forty-five, Saladin had become the most powerful figure in the Muslim world.³²⁷ As Saladin gathered Muslims under one banner, unifying Islam once again, the "disease" that had cost the Muslims Jerusalem now grew rampant among the Christians: disunity.³²⁸

While there has been a call for *jihad* against the Crusaders in the past, there never arose a serious challenger.³²⁹ The Muslims were in disunity. The Kingdom of Jerusalem thrived on the division of the Muslims. "The thousand tribes of Arabia had their minor emirs and viziers, who aligned themselves with the caliphates of either Cairo or Baghdad", fighting over petty disputes.³³⁰

Before Saladin entered Egypt in 1168/546, Islamic fighters needed the help of the Franks to secure Egypt,³³¹ so agreements were made up between the Franks and the caliph. During the years of consolidating Islam Saladin went to the Franks and received reassurances that the treaties will still be honored. On October 24, 1175/553, Saladin sent a letter to Farrukh-Shah says, "Things are going in the best of ways. Men's hearts are united in our favour and our orders are obeyed." The only question of doubt was the Franks, whose treaty was still in force. He goes

³²⁶ Bogle, 63.

³²⁷ Newby, 97.

³²⁸ Akbar, 72-73.

³²⁹ Trifkovic, 100.

³³⁰ James Reston Jr. *Warriors of God: Richard the Lionheart and Saladin in the Third Crusade* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 10.

³³¹ The story is not found in the Islamic sources. See Appendix Four for the story.

on to say, “We do not know whether they will keep to the Damascus truce or break it, cut it short its time or extend it.”³³²

Philip of Flanders went back to Europe in 1178/556 and the truce was still enforced. Not long after Philip returned to Europe, the Franks broke the treaty. The Franks gathered an army and attacked the town of Hamah in Syria and were defeated. Saladin was furious by what he believed to be a breach of faith. He attacked the Franks and ordered that the Frankish prisoners be summarily executed.³³³

After putting down the skirmish, Saladin began to lay siege to Bait al-Ahzan or Jacob’s Ford³³⁴ on the Upper Jordan between Lake Huleh and the Sea of Galilee. Saladin began by ravaging the region the castle depended upon by setting large fires and raiding parties to confiscate the harvest.³³⁵ Saladin employed the use of a siege engine called the mangon, which was a huge sling that worked by torsion. The ‘sling’ was capable of hurling (inaccurately) rocks big enough to demolish a building. A counter weight was introduced that allowed the engine to become more accurate.³³⁶ After securing key points in the region, Saladin was ready to march toward Jerusalem.

Jerusalem Falls

In the summer of 1187/565 Saladin invaded the Kingdom of Jerusalem with a force of about twenty thousand men. His first act in the kingdom was to lay siege to Tiberias. The king of Jerusalem, Guy of Lusignan, on July 3, assembled the largest force the kingdom has ever seen and rushed to the aid of the people.³³⁷ After a long day’s march the army was forced to campout

³³² Malcolm Cameron Lyons and D. E. P. Jackson, *The Politics of the Holy War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 99-100.

³³³ P. H. Newby, *Saladin in His Time* (New York: Dorset Press, 1983), 83.

³³⁴ It was named Jacob’s Ford for it was here that Jacob wrestled with the angel.

³³⁵ John France and William G. Zajac, eds. *The Crusades and Their Sources* (Brookfield, VT: Ashgate, 1998), 12

³³⁶ P. H. Newby, 100.

³³⁷ Norwich, 296.

on the waterless plateau west of Lake Tiberias. The next day, on July 4, with his troops ‘half-mad with thirst’ and heat exhaustion, the forces were destroyed on the slopes of the twin-peaks known as the Horns of Hattin. Guy’s forces proved to be no match against Saladin’s men. By the end of the day King Guy and most of the leading nobles were taken prisoner and the True Cross confiscated.

After the battle ended, Saladin summoned king Guy and the prominent nobles to his tent. Saladin took a goblet of cool water and offered it to King Guy.³³⁸ This Middle Eastern gesture signaled that Saladin will spare King Guy’s life³³⁹ King Guy was released and free to go. However, all Templar and Hospitallar men were executed at the hands of the *Sufi* holy men. There was now no standing army between Saladin and the Holy City of Jerusalem. For all practical purposes the city was ‘captured’ on July 4, 1187/565.

Before arriving at the Holy City, Saladin took castles and conquered towns of the kingdom, all except for Tyre. Tyre was ably defended by Conrad of Montferrat.³⁴⁰

In the fall of 1187/565, Saladin reached Jerusalem. Upon his arrival he sent a letter to the bishop of the city: “I believe that Jerusalem is the House of God, as you also believe. And I will not willingly lay siege to the House of God or put it to the assault.” However, the city defended itself heroically for twelve days. But in the end they knew it could not last and they sought surrender on peaceful terms. Saladin decreed that all Christians could redeem themselves for a suitable sum (a sliding scale of wealth). Those who were too poor to pay any price, the nobles bought their freedom for a negotiated lump sum amount. On October 2, 1187 Saladin led his army peacefully into the city and for the first time in eighty-eight years, the flag of Islam was

³³⁸ Diane Stanley, 21.

³³⁹ The custom being that no captive who shares food or drink with his captor could then be killed.

³⁴⁰ Harris, 127.

raised marking the end of Latin rule. When the news of the fall reached pope Urban III, he died of shock.³⁴¹ Pope Gregory VIII issued the bull twenty-two days later.³⁴²

Saladin won people's hearts. He was a capable ruler and worked well with the Christian community. He vouched for the safety of Christian pilgrims visiting the Holy Land. Saladin did not blame the Eastern Christians for the Crusades and allowed Syrian and Armenian Christians to live in the city of Jerusalem. Some of the less tolerant among his troops wanted to destroy the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other Christian sites. Saladin did not allow his men to touch any of the sites.

Saladin also allowed the Jews to return and live in the Holy City, "and his name was celebrated throughout the Jewish world."³⁴³ Although Saladin "scattered benefits like rain," no one ever accused Saladin of purchasing friendship.³⁴⁴ Saladin had led the most successful *jihad* since the days of the Prophet.³⁴⁵ But it was not quite over. Within a couple of years he would have to again fight another Crusading army, this time led by King Richard the Lionheart and Philip Augustus King of France.

King Guy left the safety of the last Crusader stronghold and laid siege to Acre. Saladin gathered his army to dislodge the siege, however, King Guy was able to hold out for six hundred and thirty eight days. The siege proved to be one of the most interesting sieges in history. The Muslims were inside the city defending it against the siege from Christian forces outside it, besieging it, and spread out beyond the hills and plains of the nearby region was Saladin's forces, besieging the besiegers. More soldiers died of disease during the siege than in actual battle over

³⁴¹ Norwich, 296.

³⁴² Harris, 127.

³⁴³ Trifkovic, 76.

³⁴⁴ Slaughter, 67.

³⁴⁵ Akbar, 82.

this time period. The city finally fell to King Guy within a month after the Third Crusaders arrived under King Richard.³⁴⁶ The city would remain in Christian hands for the next one hundred years.

Saladin failed to keep the city. However, he succeeded in defending the Holy Lands against the Third Crusaders from gaining any more territory. Saladin and King Richard admired one another and made treaties together.

Saladin made lasting changes for the good of Islam. He replaced the Fatimid domination of Egypt and Syria with Sunni Islam. He placed the Palestinian lands and Egypt under the Abbasid caliph in Baghdad. He expelled the Crusaders from the Holy Lands (except for Acre and a small adjacent region) and he established civilized rules for good relationships with Christians.

Although Saladin was able to expel the Crusaders from Palestine, the Latin army was able to keep a foothold along the Near East coast until the end of the thirteenth/seventh century.³⁴⁷ Saladin's victories and especially his capture of Jerusalem have been and are today a source of inspiration to Arab leaders and peoples. Even in the Christian West, Saladin was justly admired for his chivalry and generous treatment of his defeated enemies.³⁴⁸

After successfully defending Jerusalem and the Holy Lands against the Third Crusade in 1192/570, Saladin went home. On March 4, 1193/571 Saladin lay unconscience from a fever of several days. A cleric was reading a passage of the Qur'an: "He is God, besides whom there is no other God, who knoweth the unseen and the seen, the Compassionate, the Merciful." Saladin awoke and softly said, "True." That was his last word.³⁴⁹ The great conqueror for Islam was laid to rest:

³⁴⁶ Stanley, 30.

³⁴⁷ Armstrong, 93.

³⁴⁸ Lewis, 49.

³⁴⁹ Stanley, 41.

Almighty God! Let his soul be acceptable to thee and open to him the gates of Paradise, that being the last conquest of his hopes.³⁵⁰

Within two generations after his death, Syria soon lost the unity Saladin had worked so hard for.³⁵¹ The successors of Saladin seem to have lost interest in the Holy City.³⁵² In 1229, an Islamic ruler ceded the city to Emperor Frederick II, King of Jerusalem,³⁵³ as part of a general compromise between the Muslims and the Crusaders.³⁵⁴ The Fifth Crusade was a bloodless triumph for Fredrick. Fredrick II was well knowledgeable with Islam and sought ways to bridge the gaps between the two faiths.³⁵⁵ The Muslims retook the city in 1244. From that time on the city lay quiet until the nineteenth century.

The Fourth Crusade marked one of Christendom's most regretful events. As the armies marched to the Holy Land they were diverted for the purpose of seizing control of the Byzantine Empire. On June 24, 1203 the Western fleet dropped anchor off Constantinople. On April 9, 1204 the Crusader from the West delivered their famous "stab in the back".³⁵⁶ Nicetas Choniates, a witness of the three-day sacking of Constantinople writes:

They smashed the holy images and hurled the sacred relics of the Martyrs into places I am ashamed to mention, scattering everywhere the body and blood of the Saviour . . . As for their profanation of the Great Church, they destroyed the high altar and shred out the pieces among themselves . . . And they brought horses and mules into the Church, the better to carry off the holy vessels, and the pulpit, and the doors, and the furniture wherever it was to be found; and when some of these beasts slipped and fell, they ran them through with their swords, fouling the Church with their blood and ordure. A common harlot was enthroned in the Patriarch's chair, to hurl insults at Jesus Christ; and she sang bawdy songs, and danced immodestly in the holy place . . . nor was there mercy shown to virtuous matrons, innocent maids or even virgins consecrated to God . . .

³⁵⁰ Inscription on the grave of Saladin.

³⁵¹ Bogle, 63.

³⁵² Appendix six contains a lament due to the Muslims disinterest in recapturing the lands and cities.

³⁵³ Fredrick received the title through his marriage to Yolande who was the daughter of John the Brienne.

³⁵⁴ Lewis, 49.

³⁵⁵ Akbar, 52-53.

³⁵⁶ Meyendorff, 76.

By the sacking of Constantinople, Western civilization suffered a loss far greater than the sack of Rome in the fifth century or the burning of the great library in Alexandria in the seventh – “perhaps the most catastrophic loss in all history”.³⁵⁷ When Pope Innocent III received the news of Constantinople’s sacking, he rejoiced, “He, who has dominion over the kingdom of man, . . . has transferred the empire of Constantinople from the proud to the humble, from the disobedient to the devout, from schismatics to Catholics.”³⁵⁸ The animosity between Rome and Constantinople had been raging from the very beginning. Geoffrey Hindley relates:

With the coronation of the Frankish King Charlemagne as ‘Emperor’ by Pope Leo III in 800, Western Roman Catholic Christians considered the Empire had been restored. Constantinople saw these Western emperors as pretenders to a usurped title.³⁵⁹

The Crusades were a temporary setback for Islam. The Crusades were not wars of aggression, but a delayed military response from Christian Europe to the invasion of Islamic forces over a period of three hundred years. Rashidun, a Muslim scholar, would characterize the Muslim conquest as “misunderstood” by the nations of the West. The Muslim advancement was simply a fulfillment of God’s will through a defensive rather than offensive expansion. However, many sources, Muslim and other, saw Islam purposely leaving the Saudi peninsula to conquer the Persian and Byzantine Empires. It is interesting that the Muslim speak about the “aggression” of the West in the form of the Crusades, beginning in 1095/473, yet ignore the previous four hundred years of Islamic expansion.

The failure of holding onto the lands of the Near East by the Crusades has been attributed partly to the growing disinclination in the late thirteenth century by the Western powers. They

³⁵⁷ Lewis, 306.

³⁵⁸ Alfred J. Andrea, ed., trans. *The Capture of Constantinople: The Hystoria Constantinopolitana of Gunther of Paris* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), 16.

³⁵⁹ Geoffrey Hindley, *The Crusades: A History of Armed Pilgrimage and Holy War* (New York: Carroll and Graf Pub, 2003), 10.

were more deeply involved in their territorial rivalries than to assist the keeping of far off lands.³⁶⁰ By 1280, at a time when kings had other more pressing matters on their minds, it became futile to call for another Crusade.

The edict by Pope Urban II of 1095 calling for the knights to cease fighting among themselves, failed. The fighting continued among themselves and Christianity was not united. Contrary to Pope Innocent III's elation³⁶¹ of a unified Christianity in 1204, the faith and the government were not.

³⁶⁰ Jonathan Riley Smith *What Were the Crusades?* Third ed. (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2002), 37.

³⁶¹ Andrea, 16.

Implications For Today

Reviewing the history of early Islam and its relationship with Christianity we can see there was a kinship between the two religions. As in any acts of conquest there were mistrusts and hatreds, however, the general attitude between Islam and Christianity was that of respect. Part of that reason was that the Qur'an instructs its followers to respect the people of "the Book." They were to be accepted as long as they accepted Islam's rule over them and gave a tax. Muhammad had a high view of Christ and thus Christians were given some greater freedoms than most.

The situation in the Middle East today has deteriorated between Islam and Christianity. The two groups, as we have seen, historically were able to live with each other and cooperate with one another (Saladin and the Franks, for instance). There are many Palestinian and Arab Christians today, but there is little or no respect of the community as there once was.

By looking at the early and progressive history of Islam we see that there can be coexistence, *but* only if the Muslim is lord over the Christian community and the community lives under Muslim restrictions. There was toleration of the Christian community, but at a price.

The call of *jihad* given today by the clerics, is given to a people who do not have a clear understanding of their own faith and of the writings of the Qur'an. If they did, perhaps there would be less *jihad* and more coexistence. The average Muslims do not know their own 'bible.' They receive what they are told and are happy to live out the Five Pillars as best they can. This is an opening for the Christian to witness to the Muslim. The Christian can point out the positive

message of the Qur'an about Christ and then reveal to them the message of love that is found in Jesus' teachings over against the lack of teaching on love found in the Holy Qur'an. Paradise, a Muslim hope, could become a reality by believing in the Sinless One of whom Muhammad gave great respect, Jesus Christ.

But what about political, secular issues? Islam is not a segregated religion in that one may be Muslim and not be involved in politics. A Muslim's faith is found in every corner of life. The religion is political and politics are religious. There is no separation for the Muslim. Any Arab in the Middle East who administers governmental affairs separate from any religious connotation is a secularist. Secularists are to be shunned or even killed for they have turned their backs on Islam.

The clerics claim that to find peace in the Middle East today, all things of life must surrender to Islam. The compromise of the first six hundred years is no longer viable. The Covenant of 'Umar is no longer valid. Why? There is never peace with Islam. Within a couple of generations after Saladin the Arab world was at war with itself and with their neighbors. It is ironic, the person whom Islam today so highly esteem, Saladin, will not emulate his policies of tolerance and cooperation with "western powers."

With the rapid growth of Islam and the continual rise of Christianity all over the world there will be critical challenges for the Church to live at peace with the Muslim community and vice versa over the next hundred years.³⁶² The Middle East Muslim and Western Christian fundamentalists make it difficult for the two groups to live in peace with each other and build trust. Until both communities learn to live with each other, at least as in the previous millenium,

³⁶² Steve Chambers. *Can Christianity and Islam Coexist and Prosper?* (Christianity Today, 10/25/99, vol. 43, Issue 12) p. 22.

the call of *jihad* will continue to be a militant *jihad*, *the lesser jihad* (of spirit and civility) –
found in both faiths.

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APPENDIX

APPENDIX #1

Life of Daniel of Sketis

It happened at the time when the impious Justinian was king, the one who defiled and upset the whole inhabited world and the universal church everywhere, that he tried to establish the accursed faith of the defiled Council of Chalcedon in every place; and he scattered Christ's sheep, expelled the orthodox bishops and archbishops and deposed them from their sees . . . When the king's soldiers brought the Tome full of ever impiety of the lawless Leo into the holy mountain of Sketis, our holy father Abba Daniel . . . went out to them . . . They held it (the Tome of Leo) out to the elders saying, "The king has commanded you all to sign the symbol of faith." Our holy father Abba Daniel . . . said to the soldiers, "What symbol of faith is this?" They said, "That of the great Council of Chalcedon in which the 634 bishops assembled." Our father Abba Daniel, filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit, jumped up and seized that Tome full of every impiety and tore it up, shouting and saying to the soldiers, "Anathema to the defiled council of Chalcedon, . . ." And it happened that when the soldiers saw the great firmness of our Abba Daniel . . . they became very angry and seized him and inflicted great torments upon him so that he almost died from the many blows they dealt him.

Life of Daniel of Sketis

Preserved in the Tenth Century

Cod.Vat.Copt.62

- In the Greek Chalcedon Tradition, this episode is not found

Timothy S. Miller and John Nesbitt. Peace and War in Byzantium. (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University Press, 1995), 106

APPENDIX #2

Muhammad-Islam Timeline

Chronology of Islam

Bogle, Emory C. Islam: Origin and Belief. Austin, TX; University of Texas Press. 1998.

- 570 - Muhammad is born in Mecca.
- 595 - Muhammad marries Khadija (his cousin who proposed to him).
- 610 - Muhammad receives first revelation during Ramadan at age 40.
- 616 - Most clans of Mecca agree upon a communal economic and marriage boycott of Muslims.
 - Major conflict begins among Yathrib tribes.
- 619 - After Khadija and Abu Talib deaths, Muhammad loses protection in Mecca-carries his mission to Ta'if.
- 620 - First seven residents of Yathrib (Medina) convert to Islam during a pilgrimage to Mecca. Following year, five more convert.
- 622 - Becomes first year of Muslim calendar. Seventy-five Muslims from Yathrib take oath of loyalty to Muhammad and his god in Mecca.
- 623 - Muslims begin to raid Meccan caravans. An attack kills a Meccan during holy peace.
- 624 - Muhammad changes the "qibla" from Jerusalem to Mecca.
 - Muhammad expels Jews from Yathrib to confiscate their property.
- 625 - Battle of Uhud is won by Muhammad forces despite having no horse cavalry to match Mecca's 200 horsemen.
- 627 - Muhammad and Muslims accuse Bani Quraydha Jewish tribes of complicity with their enemies and executes 700-800 Jews.
 - Muslims victorious in battle of the Ditch between Meccans and Muslims.
- 628 - Treaty of Hudaibiyyah provides a 10-year truce between Muslims and Meccans.
 - Muhammad battles against three Jewish tribes north of Yathrib. Jews pay a fee and are allowed to keep their property.
- 629 - Muhammad and nearly 2,000 Muslims perform the "umrah" while Meccans desert the city to avoid conflict fraternization.
 - Muslims are defeated at Battle of Mota in Southern Syria. Mohammed's adopted son dies in the battle.
- 630 - From January-October, Muhammad extends control from Mecca to Aqaba.
 - In October, Muhammad leads an expedition to Southern Syria to meet a supposed attack from Byzantines.
 - Gains many alliances along the way.
- 631 - Ta'if submits to Muhammad. Throughout the year, delegations arrive in Medina from all over Arabia to proclaim their loyalty to Muhammad and his god.
- 632 - Muhammad performs the hajj (pilgrimage).
 - June--Muhammad dies.
- 632-634 - The first Caliphate rule by Abu Bakr.

Islam Timeline

- 635 - Muslims conquer Damascus under the second Caliphate, 'Umar.
- 636 - Battle of Yormuk gives Muslims control of most of Syria.
 - Muslims control Iraq with Battle of Qadisiyyah.
- 638 - Muslims control Jerusalem.
- 641 - Muslims officially receive Egypt's surrender.
- 642 - Muslims gain control of Persia with victory at the Battle of Nihavand.
- 644 - A Persian slave assassinates Caliph 'Umar.
- 656 - Discontented Muslims assassinate Caliph Uthman in Medina (644-56).
- 661 - Caliphate of Mu'awiyah, first of the Umayyad Caliphs reigns after the death of Caliph Ali.
 - Capital is moved to Damascus.
 - Caliph 'Ali is assassinated, the last of the "Rightly Guided Caliphs" and the first Imam of Shi'i Islam, of which he founded.
- 669 - Death of Hasn ibn 'Ali, son of 'Ali, brother of Husayn, grandson of Muhammad, 2nd Imam for most Shi'i.
- 680 - Husayn, son of Imam 'Ali and Mohammed's daughter, Fatimah, the 3rd Imam of Shi'i Islam, is killed.
- 700-765 - Great confusion in Shi'i circles follow death of Muhammad ibn al-Hanifiyyah regarding line of succession and nature of the imamate.
- 714 - Tariq leads Muslim invasion of the Iberian peninsula. Gibraltar named after him, the Mountain of Tariq.
- 732 - Battle of Tours (S. France).
- 750-1258 - The Abbasid Caliphate, previously centered in Baghdad, replaces the Umayyad Caliphate, previously centered in Damascus. Abbasids forsake Shi'i and become advocates of Sunni Islam.
- 750-754 - First Abbasid Caliph, Abu al-'Abbas al'Saffah.
- 754 - Beginning reign of Caliphate of al-Mansuri, founder of the city of Baghdad in 562.
- 786-809 - Reign of Harun al-Rashid of Arabian Nights fame.
- ca. 800 - Turks begin to emerge as the providers of personal safety for Abbasid Caliphs. Within a few decades the Turks begin to fill the highest administrative offices and military positions of the empire. Turkish influence spreads throughout Islam.
- 874 - The 12th Imam, Muhammad al-Muntazar, disappears and goes into occultation. He is regarded as the Mahdi who will return to signal Judgement Day and the domination of righteousness.
- 899 - 'Ubayd Allah declares himself Imam to break with other Isma'ilis and begin Fatimid movement.
- 905 - End of Tulunid Dynasty in Egypt.
- 930 - Qarmatians devastate Mecca and carry away the Black Stone. It returns to Mecca in 951 after a payment is made by the Abbasids.
- 930's - The Buyids emerge from the Caspian Sea region and establish kingdoms throughout Persia and E. Mesopotamia (Buyids were Shi'i who dominated a caliphate that renamed Sunni).
- 945 - Buyids take control of Baghdad and the Abbasid Caliphate until 1055.

- 969 - Fatimid (newer form) regime begins construction on a new city called Cairo.
- 1055 - Seljuk Turks capture Baghdad and restore full authority of the Abbasid Caliph and Sunni Islam.
- 1064 - Seljuk Turks enter Syria and push Fatimids out of most of Syria and Palestine.
- 1071 - Seljuk Turkish victory over Byzantine Empire at the Battle of Manzikert in eastern Anatolia.
- 1073 - Fatimid administration in Egypt falls under control of Armenia (Christian) military element. Turks soon replace them.
- 1077 - After 150 years of controlling most of the Arabian Peninsula, Qarmatians lose control and cease to be important.
- 1099 - Crusaders capture Jerusalem from Fatimids.
- 1027-1154 - Seljuk Turks capture much of Syria including Damascus from Crusaders.
- 1163 - Saladin arrives in Egypt as a subordinate Seljuk officer.
- 1170 - Saladin repels Crusaders from Egypt.
- 1187 - Saladin captures Jerusalem.
- 1192 - Saladin completes the defeat of the Third Crusade

APPENDIX #3

The Fundamental Articles of Faith

Taken from *Islam in Focus* by Hammudah Abdalati, pp. 11-21

1. Belief in One God, Supreme and Eternal, Infinite and Mighty, Merciful and Compassionate, Creator and Provider.
2. He believes in all the messengers of God without discrimination among them. (25 are noted in the Qur'an)

Qur'an: We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and that which was given to Moses and Jesus; and that which was given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between one and another of them, and we bow to God (2.136).

3. Believe in all the scriptures and revelation of God.
However, all scriptures have been lost or corrupted and only the Qur'an is uncorrupted and true.
4. Belief in the angels of God.
5. Belief in the Last Day of Judgement.
6. Belief in the timeless knowledge of God and His power to plan and execute His plans.
7. Muslim believes that God's creation is meaningful and that life has a sublime purpose beyond the physical needs and material activities of man.
8. Believes that man enjoys an especially high ranking status in the hierarchy of all the known creatures.
9. Believes that every person is born "Muslim".
10. Believes every person is born free of sin and all claims to inherited virtue. He is like a blank book (fitrah - pure state of nature).
11. Believes that man must work out his salvation through the guidance of God.
To be saved a person must combine faith and action, belief and practice.
12. Believes that God does not hold a person responsible until He has shown him the Right Way.
13. Believes that in human nature there is more good than evil, and the probability of successful reform is greater than the probability of hopeless failure.
14. Believes that Faith is not complete when it is followed blindly and accepted unquestioningly unless the believer IS reasonably satisfied.
15. Believes that the Qur'an is the word of God revealed to Muhammad through the agency of the Angel Gabriel.
16. Muslim believes in a clear distinction between the Qur'an and the Traditions of Muhammad.

APPENDIX #4

The Franks Meet with the Caliph

The introduction of Christian ambassadors to the sacred presence, where few even of the most exalted Moslems were admitted, was unprecedented; but Amalric was in a position to dictate his own terms. Permission was granted, and Hugh of Caesarea with Geoffrey Fulcher the Templar were selected for the unique embassy. The vezir himself conducted them with every detail of oriental ceremony and display to the Great Palace of the Fatimids. They were led by mysterious corridors and through guarded doors, where stalwart Sudanis saluted with naked swords. They reached a spacious court, open to the sky, and surrounded by arcades resting on marble pillars; the paneled ceilings were carved and inlaid in gold and colours; the pavement was rich mosaic. The unaccustomed eyes of the rude knights opened wide with wonder at the taste and refinement that met them at every step;--here they saw marble fountains, birds of many notes and wondrous plumage, strangers to the western world; there, in a further hall, more exquisite even than the first, "a variety of animals such as the ingenious hand of the painter might depict, or the license of the poet invent, or the mind of the sleeper conjure up in the visions of the night,--such, indeed, as the regions of the East and the South bring forth, but the West sees never, and scarcely hears of." At last, after many turns and windings, they reached the throne room, where the multitude of the pages and their sumptuous dress proclaimed the splendor of their lord. Thrice did the vezir, ungirding his sword, prostrate himself to the ground, as though in humble supplication to his god; then, with a sudden rapid sweep, the heavy curtains brodered with gold and pearls were drawn aside, and on a golden throne, robed in more than regal state, the Caliph sat revealed.

The vezir humbly presented the foreign knights, and set forth in lowly words the urgent danger from without and the great friendship of the King of Jerusalem. The Caliph, a swarthy youth emerging from boyhood,--*fuscus, procerus corpore, facie venusta*,--replied with suave dignity: He was willing, he said, to confirm in the amplest way the engagements made with his beloved ally. But when asked to give his hand in pledge of faithfulness, he hesitated, and a thrill of indignation at the stranger's presumption ran through the listening court. After a pause, however, the Caliph offered his hand--gloved as it was--to Sir Hugh. The blunt knight spoke him straight: "My lord, troth has no covering: in the good faith of princes, all is naked and open." Then at last, very unwillingly, as though derogating from his dignity, the Caliph, forcing a smile, drew off the glove and put his hand in Hugh's, swearing word by word to keep the covenant truly and in all good faith.*

*William of Tyre, *Historia rerum in partibus transmarinis gestarum*, lib. xix., cap. 19, 20. The embassy is not recorded by the Arabic chroniclers.

APPENDIX #5

Covenant of 'Umar

A Person Reminding Their Rulers What Was Apparently Agreed To
And an Expectation That It Should Be Fulfilled
Based on The Covenant That Was Made

When you came to us we asked of you safety for our lives, our families and property, and the people of our religion on these conditions: to pay tribute out of hand and be humiliated; not to hinder any Muslim from stopping in our churches by night or day, to entertain him there three days and give him food there and open to him their doors; to beat the gong [used in eastern churches in lieu of a bell] only gently in them and not to raise our voices in chanting; not to shelter there, nor in any of our houses, a spy of your enemies; not to build a church, convent, hermitage, or cell, nor repair those that are dilapidated, nor assemble in any that is in a Muslim quarter, nor in their presence; not to display idolatry nor invite to it, nor show a cross on our churches, nor in any of the roads or markets of the Muslims; not to learn the Qur'an nor teach it to our children; not to prevent any of our relatives from turning Muslim if he wish it; to cut our hair in front; to tie the *zunnar* [a special belt] round our waists; to keep to our religion; not to resemble the Muslims in dress, appearance, saddles, the engraving on our seals [i.e. not to engrave them in Arabic]; not to use their *kunyas* [titles]; to honour and respect them, to stand up for them when we meet together; to guide them in their ways and goings; not to make our houses higher than theirs; not to keep weapons or swords, nor wear them in a town or on a journey in Muslim lands; not to sell wine or display it; not to light fires with our dead at a road where Muslims dwell, nor to raise our voices at their [?our] funerals, nor bring them near Muslims; not to strike a Muslim; not to keep slaves who have been the property of Muslims. We impose these terms on ourselves and our co-religionists; he who rejects them has no protection.

APPENDIX #6

A Song of Lament When Islam No Longer Fought For Her Brothers And Became Apathetic About the Infidels

To shed tears is a man's worst weapon when the swords stir up
the embers of war,

Sons of Islam, behind you are battles in which heads rolled at
your feet.

Dare you slumber in the blessed shade of safety, where life is
as soft as an orchard flower?

How can the eyelids close lids at a time of disaster that would
waken any sleeper?

While your Syrian brothers can only sleep on the backs of their
chargers or in vultures' bellies

Must the foreigners feed on our ignominy, while you trail
behind you in the train of a pleasant life?

When blood has been spilt, when sweet girls must for shame
hide their lovely faces in their hands

When the white sword's points are red with blood, and the iron
of brown lances is stained with gore!

At the sound of sword hammering on lance young children's
hair turns white

This is war, and the man who shuns the whirlpool shall grind
his teeth in penitence.

This is war and the infidel's sword is naked in his hand, ready
to be sheathed again in men's necks and skulls.

This is war and he who lies in the tomb at Medina seems to
raise his voice and cry: 'O Sons of Hashim!

I see my people slow to raise the lance against the enemy, I see
the Faith resting on feeble pillars.

For fear of death the Muslims are evading the fire of battle,
refusing to believe that death will surely strike them.

Must Arab champions suffer in resignation, while gallant
Persians shut their eyes to dishonour?'

Muzaffar al Abiwardi

APPENDIX #7

Muslim Conquests

Taken from Geoffrey Hindley.

The Crusades: A History of Armed Pilgrimage and Holy War.

New York; Carroll & Graf Pub., 2003.

- 635-642 - Arab armies conquer Byzantine provinces from Egypt to Syria. Damascus falls (635), Antioch and Jerusalem (637), Alexandria (642).
- 711-732 - Muslim conquest of Spanish kingdoms and cities; Cordoba and Seville (711), Toledo (712), Zaragoza (714).
- 732 - Battle of Tours/Poitiers. Frankish ruler, Charles Martel ends Muslim expansion in Europe.
- 903 - Conquest of the Balearic Isles completed.
- 965 - Arab conquest of Sicily from Byzantines.
- 969 - Byzantine Emperor Nicephorus II recovers Antioch.
- 985 - Antioch falls to Turks by treachery.
- 1012 - Caliph al-Hakim destroys Church of the Holy Sepulchre.
- 1071 - Battle of Manzikert (Eastern Turkey). Sultan Alp Arslan defeats Byzantine Emperor Romanus IV.
- 1090 - Visit of Count of Flanders to Constantinople prompts Emperor Alexias I to consider recruiting Western knights against Turks.
- 1095 - _____ of Clermont. First Crusade proclaimed by Pope Urban II.
- 1096-1097 - Arrival of main armies at Constantinople.
- 1099 - Jerusalem captured.
- 1107-1108 - Crusade against Byzantine Empire proclaimed by Pope Paschal II in favor of Bohemond, lord of Antioch.
- 1118-1120 - Knights Templar established in Jerusalem.
- 1119 - Battle of Sarmada or "The Field of Blood": the defeat of Roger of Antioch by Ilghazi of Aleppo.
- 1135 - Innocent II proclaims crusades against anti-pope Anacletus II.
- 1145 - Pope Eugenius III proclaims a crusade.
- 1147-1149 - 2nd crusade.
- 1148 - Defeat of 2nd Crusade.
- 1169 - Saladin wins control of Egypt.
- 1172 - Saladin displaces Fatimid Caliph in Cairo.
- 1174-1186 - Saladin wins control of Damascus, Aleppo and Mosul.
- 1187 - Saladin takes Jerusalem.
- 1187 - Pope Gregory VIII proclaims 3rd Crusade. Emperor Frederick I, Philip II Augustus, King of France, Richard I, King of England are military leaders.
- 1190 - Death of Emperor Frederick on Crusade.
- 1191 - Richard of England takes Cyprus and arrives at Acre where it soon falls.
- 1192 - Treaty of Jaffa between Richard I and Saladin.
- 1193 - Death of Saladin.