Muslims and Latter-day Saints: Building Bridges
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The Paradox of Religious Pluralism and Religious Uniqueness: ‘Cause My Church to Be Established’

by Elder Charles Didier, Presidency of the Seventy, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

First of all, I would like to thank the International Society for the invitation to address this distinguished audience tonight. I use the word distinguished on purpose as it means literally “to separate by pricking” (Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary). Your mark of distinction, of excellence, is your testimony of the divinity of Christ and His restored Church on the earth today. Using this mark in your professional field is making a difference in the way The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is being known, recognized, and established in the nations of the world.

As for myself, my field is as general as it can be as a General Authority, and my only distinction is to prick the hearts of people with the word of God, as mentioned in Jarom 1: 11–12:

Wherefore, the prophets, and the priests, and the teachers, did labor diligently, exhorting with all long-suffering the people to diligence; teaching the law of Moses, and the intent for which it was given; persuading them to look forward unto the Messiah, and believe in him to come as though he already was. And after this manner did they teach them. And it came to pass that by so doing they kept them from being destroyed upon the face of the land; for they did prick their hearts with the word, continually stirring them up unto repentance.

This proselyting message will never change; it is eternal in our mortal perspective. It is, of course, associated with the verb to prick, which also means to affect with anguish, grief or remorse, or repentance! Where did it start?

From the very beginning of the history of mankind, man has been characterized by physical and spiritual needs, as we may refer to the so-called primitive man of Africa, Australia, or Neanderthal, or to our biblical religious ancestors Adam and Eve. Their physical needs were their first priority in order to survive, and the earth became their first resource. Three essential questions were asked on a daily basis.

The man: “What are we going to eat tonight?”
The woman: “What am I going to wear tomorrow?”
Both of them: “Where are we going to find shelter and protection from the elements around us?”

But after being satisfied with an answer to their physical needs, namely, from the earth, there came the quest for knowledge about themselves, their existence, their hopes and pains, their future. How to face the challenges of life and, especially, death? Spiritual or philosophical needs emerged rapidly and were answered by revelation from God or by worshiping manmade idols. It seems that there was always an inborn need for worship or religion. It is the Greek historian Plutarch who wrote, “In history I have found cities without ports, cities without palaces, cities without schools, but never have I found cities without places of worship.”

Religious, as well as social, economical, or political, pluralism developed from the beginning in one form or another. The one religious form, the original, came by direct revelation from God giving knowledge of who to worship and how to worship and giving mankind a plan of happiness, also called the plan of redemption. Another religious form was a deviation from divine revelation that could be defined as human divination leading to a worship of manmade idols or man-created gods. This deviation, by the name of apostasy, would take place by defection from true knowledge or renunciation of true faith. It is interesting to note that despite eras of apostasy, they were always followed by a restoration of the true nature of God and His plan of redemption for His children. Such a period of establishing or restoring true religion was called a “dispensation”—God literally dispensing divine knowledge for the benefit of His children. Thus, in this religious pluralism, people had to deal with a fact called divine revelation and not only the uniqueness of it, but also that this divine revelation had been witnessed by men called prophets, whose testimonies were recorded in sacred books.

Atheists, pagans, or idolaters did not have such written or revealed evidence except their own. In the Book of Mormon, Alma the prophet, confronting Korihor, the Anti-Christ, asks him, “And now what evidence have ye that there is no God, or that Christ cometh not?” The answer is plain and direct, “I say unto you that ye have none, save it be your word only” (Alma 30: 40). Evidence throughout the centuries testifies of the existence of God—even though some may choose to deny that there is one.

For example, returning to our beginnings, we read of what happened to our religious ancestors, Adam and Eve, as they were pondering and praying about their spiritual needs. From the book of Moses, a prophet, in the Pearl of Great Price, we read,

And Adam and Eve, his wife, called upon the name of the Lord, and they heard the voice of the Lord from the way toward the Garden of Eden, speaking unto them, and they saw him not; for they were shut out from his presence. And he gave unto them commandments, that they should worship the Lord their God, and should offer the firstlings of their flocks, for an offering unto the Lord. And Adam was obedient unto the commandments of the Lord (Moses 5: 4–5).
Religious uniqueness has always been declared by revelation from God, by angels—his messengers—or other means, and through prophets called by Him. Religion, a revealed system of beliefs, ordinances, rites, and a way of life, was to become an integral part of life to save man from his mortal and imperfect condition. A Savior and Redeemer was announced to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man through the Atonement. His name would be Jesus Christ, the Messiah, the Son of God.

Jumping over the centuries, we find the same reality today. The recent dedication of the Nauvoo Illinois Temple, a house of worship, is a vivid and modern example of what happened yesterday with Adam and Eve and what has continued in all the various dispensations of the gospel. May I first refer to the words uttered by the Prophet of the Restoration of the gospel, Joseph Smith, in his prayer of the dedication of the first temple in this modern dispensation of the fulness of the gospel, the Kirtland Temple:

Remember all thy church, O Lord, with all their families, and all their immediate connections, with all their sick and afflicted ones, with all the poor and meek of the earth; that the kingdom, which thou hast set up without hands, may become a great mountain and fill the whole earth; That thy church may come forth out of the wilderness of darkness, and shine forth fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners; And be adorned as a bride for that day when thou shalt unveil the heavens, and cause the mountains to flow down at thy presence, and the valleys to be exalted, the rough places made smooth; that thy glory may fill the earth (Doctrine and Covenants 109: 72–74).

Is that prayer different from the dedicatory words of President Gordon B. Hinckley, our present prophet, for the Nauvoo Illinois Temple? Let us review a short excerpt:

Now, Beloved Father, this is Thy house, the gift of Thy thankful Saints. We pray that Thou wilt visit it. Hallow it with Thy presence and that of Thy Beloved Son. Let Thy Holy Spirit dwell here at all times. May Thy work be accomplished here, and Thine eternal purposes brought to pass in behalf of Thy children, both the living and the dead. May our hearts reach to Thee as we serve within these walls. May all who are baptized in behalf of those beyond the veil of death know that they are doing something necessary under Thine eternal plan. May those who are here endowed understand and realize the magnitude of the blessings that come of this sacred ordinance. Seal upon them the covenants which they make with Thee. Open their eyes to a clear perception of Thy divine purposes. As they move into the beautiful celestial room, may their minds be brought to an understanding of Thy glorious plan for the salvation and exaltation of Thy children.

May those who gather at the altars in the sealing rooms, whether in their own behalf or in behalf of their forebears, comprehend by the power of the Spirit Thy divine will concerning the eternity of the family—fathers, mothers, and children, joined together in an everlasting union. May they receive a vision of Thine infinite ‘plan of happiness’ which Thou hast designed for Thy faithful sons and daughters (Dedicatory Prayer, 27 June 2002).

Again, from the beginning until now, all that has been done to exercise the true worship of a living God and His Son Jesus Christ has been accomplished through the establishment of the Church of Christ upon the earth. Modern revelation confirms it over and over, as I quote from the Doctrine and Covenants, section 1, verse 30:

And also those to whom these commandments were given, might have power to lay the foundation of this church, and to bring it forth out of obscurity and out of darkness, the only true and living church upon the face of the whole earth, with which I, the Lord, am well pleased, speaking unto the church collectively and not individually.

One God, one Savior, one plan of salvation, one church, one priesthood, one set of ordinances of salvation. That uniqueness has always been the subject not only of questioning this assertion but especially of criticism leading even to persecution. Elder Dallin H. Oaks once said, “Anyone who preaches unity risks misunderstanding” (“Weightier Matters;” BYU Devotional, 9 February 1999). One may add that one is not only risking misunderstanding but also risking life—as we have witnessed in the cases of Joseph Smith the Prophet and even Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

How to deal with that paradox of uniqueness declared by God and pluralism advertised by the world as being politically correct? Is it religiously correct to condemn and silence or persecute nonbelievers or members of other faiths?

One of the early apostles, Paul, said, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek” (Romans 1: 16). Another apostle, James, asked the following question, “Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Lehi warned his son Jacob, “For it must needs be, that there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2: 11).

As simple and innocuous as it may seem, establishing the Church of Christ among religious pluralism has not only been met by skepticism but also by opposition, persecution, destruction, and violence by believers and nonbelievers. Religion or church are too often associated with chauvinism and exclusion. Being recently in Palmyra and Kirtland, I rediscovered the reality of the persecution endured by the early Saints trying to establish the restored Church of Jesus Christ.

Has the situation changed in the beginning of this twenty-first century? Are new religious movements or the restored Church exempt from religious or state persecution? Apparently not, as it is quite evident in view of the destruction of sacred sites, sacred lives, and sacred values all around the world in our days. The devastating human effects of religious wars, that we thought belonged to the Dark Ages of civilization, are alive and doing well in the Middle East, Nigeria, Kashmir, Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia,
and Bosnia-Herzegovina, to mention only a few. The more insidious of these wars are also being fought in the Western nations dealing with religious freedom and human rights versus the amazing explosion of religious plurality among the traditional religions. Paradoxically, this awakening of various new religious movements has been accompanied by a growing extension of the exercise of religious freedom and rights, but also with increased restrictions to limit that new freedom to worship how, where, or what we may. Religious exclusiveness related to nationalism, patriotism, or favoritism is not new and will continue, as we recently saw in an incident in Russia between the Orthodox and the Catholic churches. Tolerance does not seem to belong to the religious vocabulary!

The major monolithic religions, Judaism, Islam, and Christianity, also seem to build more than ever before the physical and spiritual walls of intolerance, hate, and distrust among them. All three are major revealed religions based on words of prophets recorded in their sacred records: the Torah, the Qur’an, and the Bible. In essence, all have the same source and foundation!

How can ordinary people, who are members of these religions, deal with constant references to war? The most challenging temptation of this twenty-first century will be to turn to oneself and to use reason to deal with religion or to simply negate the role of religion, churches, and priesthood. The recent scandals affecting priesthood leaders and church shepherds in the Catholic Church will neither help the growing desertion of their faithful nor prevent growing distrust for church leaders of other confessions.

The dogma of the existence of God is a message of love to help us be transformed to become like Him. A dogma is a promise, it is hope that will change life by faith. It is up to the individual to accept it or to tear it down. Logical reasoning, relativism, and the modern propensity to discard judgments to be politically correct are the temptations to change the divine nature of God into a natural god, the divine instrument of love and salvation into a worldly instrument of friendship and unconditional salvation, the divine righteousness into hedonism. That is much easier to believe when there is almost nothing left to believe in.

The Lord has warned us about this calamity in very clear terms:

They seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol, which waxeth old and shall perish in Babylon, even Babylon the great, which shall fall (Doctrine and Covenants 1: 16).

What is the Lord’s solution? He called a prophet, Joseph Smith. He gave him commandments. He told this prophet and his followers to proclaim the restored truths unto the world that the fulness of His gospel might be proclaimed by the weak and the simple unto the ends of the world, and before kings and rulers. Then, in His preface to the doctrines, covenants, and commandments given in this dispensation, the Lord said:

For verily the voice of the Lord is unto all men, and there is none to escape: . . . And the voice of warning shall be unto all people, by the mouths of my disciples, whom I have chosen in these last days. . . . Wherefore the voice of the Lord is unto the ends of the earth, that all that will hear may hear (Doctrine and Covenants 1: 2, 4, 11).

Religious pluralism and religious uniqueness, despite being a major cause for contention and wars, can coexist—even if at first glance it seems unsolvable as a paradox. The one and only truth can exist without excluding or condemning the unbelievers and others. Religious freedom has a double edge but addresses both sides of the table and should assure communication, friendship, and peace, despite the differences.

So are there any doubts about the uniqueness, the reality, the necessity to share and expose the gospel of salvation to mankind? The Lord has spoken in our day. His Church will continue to be established in all the nations of the earth, missionaries will continue to share their testimonies, there will continue to be persecution, but we have a spiritual duty and a spiritual assignment to declare the message of the Restoration—that Jesus is the Christ, that Joseph Smith was the Prophet of the Restoration, and that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the church led by Jesus Christ. It is our motivation to do so without imposing our message or restraining the agency of others.

The eleventh Article of Faith is a declaration of love and respect as “We claim the privilege of worshiping Almighty God according to the dictates of our own conscience, and allow all men the same privilege, let them worship how, where, or what they may.” It is not different from the various international declarations trying to cope with the mortal challenge for an individual to decide for himself or herself without the intervention of the state or a church or a court to join, belong, or leave a religion or a church. The Universal Declaration of 1948 states, “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion; this right includes the right to change his religion or belief.” It has been repeated in every possible assembly of government and church leaders, as it was recently in Rome in the International Symposium on Human Rights in Islam. In his message to the symposium, Kofi Annan, Secretary General of the United Nations, stated, “Human rights are the expression of those traditions of tolerance in all cultures that are the basis of peace and progress. Human rights, properly understood and justly interpreted, are foreign to no culture and native to all nations.” He then went on to refer to Imam Ali, the fourth Khalifa after Prophet Muhammed, who “instructed the governor of Egypt to rule with mercy and tolerance toward all his subjects, for ‘your subjects . . . are your brothers in religion or your equals in the creation.’”

Apparently, everyone agrees today, too often in words only, that religious freedom and the exercise of human rights can or should be applied equally to all political regimes, cultures, nations, and particularly religions. The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action of 1993 states:
All human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent, and interrelated. The international community must treat human rights globally in a fair and equal manner, on the same footing, and with the same emphasis. While the significance of national and regional peculiarities and various historical, cultural and religious backgrounds must be borne in mind, it is the duty of States, regardless of their political, economic and cultural systems, to promote and protect all human rights.

There is still a major difference between the word of the law and its intentions and the reality of the world and its traditions. We can help by building bridges of communication, friendship, and peace instead of elevating walls of incomprehension, hate, and war. It is not only our duty but also our responsibility to claim our religious uniqueness.

What is the conclusion of this very short examination of religious plurality and religious uniqueness, that unique paradox? We must look and listen as Joseph Smith did when he prayed to know which of all the sects was right, that he might know which to join. The vision was of the Father and the Son, the message was the greatest ever given again to mankind: “This is My Beloved Son. Hear Him.” It was the message of love: “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3: 16).

Jesus Christ is the Son of God sent to bring to pass the immortality and eternal life of man. He is the central part of the plan of salvation, and the ordinances of salvation are found in His Church, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This message is unique and is an invitation for the honest and sincere to find out for himself or herself as Moroni the prophet concluded his exhortation:

Remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down until the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts. And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost. And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things (Moroni 10: 3–5).

The invitation is not coercive. It is given with respect for others’ beliefs; it is given in the spirit of love and recognition that we may be different in our religious thoughts but we are essentially the same—all are spirit children of our Heavenly Father. Our quest for happiness and peace is also the same, and eternal life is a result of agency and choice.

May the Lord help us to remember our religious uniqueness among the religious pluralism of our days, but may we also do it the Lord’s way and not the world’s way, as He commanded us to love our neighbor as ourselves.

In the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

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Palestinian–Israeli Conflict—Where do We Go From Here?

BYU Moderator: Bradley J. Cook, academic vice president, Utah Valley State College

Panelists: Omar Kader, president and CEO, Pal-Tech, Inc., and J. Bonner Ritchie, emeritus business professor, BYU

The Palestinian–Israeli Conflict Reconsidered
by Bradley J. Cook, academic vice president, Utah Valley State College

Context

For over fifty years, the conflict between Palestinian–Arab nationalism and Jewish Zionism has become one of the most protracted and seemingly irreconcilable conflicts in the world. It is often difficult to discuss this conflict academically or intellectually because it is so fraught with emotion and significant implications. It certainly is a conflict that has caught the world’s attention because it centers so directly in a land that is holy to three of the world’s great religions: Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. The ancient connection that all three religions place on Jerusalem in particular is a complicating and exacerbating issue to the political dimensions of the conflict. Muslims have a special connection to Jerusalem as it was the place of the Mi’râj, where the prophet Muhammad ascended to the throne of God and is the location of the Haram al-Sharif, the third holiest site in all of Islam behind Mecca and Medina. Jerusalem is significant to Jews because it is the location of the Western Wall of the destroyed Second Temple, which was in turn built on the ruins of the Temple of Solomon. The wall is often regarded as the most holy place in Judaism. And of course, Jerusalem is significant to Christians because it was so central to Jesus’ mortal ministry and crucifixion. It has particular significance to Latter-day Saints because it is the site of a great latter-day temple that will be constructed there before the second coming of Christ.

The conflict is also emotional because it is closely associated with images of persecuted Jews escaping the horrors and butchery of the German Holocaust and the hateful-ness of anti-Semitism. The conflict also conjures up images of millions of Palestinians as they have been displaced from their homeland and have become refugees either in the West Bank, Gaza, or other neighboring Arab countries. Aware of the horrors of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism, one may wonder why Western society found a way to absolve those sins at the cost of Palestinian lives, and ask why is this the fault of the Palestinians? And yet, we can also ask with equal poignancy: does not Israel have a right to live in peace and security, as we see Israeli civilians murdered and maimed by the carnage of Palestinian suicide bombers? While we are feeling empathy for Israeli victims, we also see broadcasts of Israeli soldiers shooting young Palestinians, and Israeli tanks plowing down Palestinian homes. This is a very difficult issue that eludes any easy solutions or analysis, but one that deserves greater understanding and discourse.

Both Israelis and Palestinians have valid and legitimate claim to the same land, and both can and have laid claim to victimhood. But, both peoples have also resorted to aimless and indiscriminate terrorism in the absolute certainty of their own moral rightness. Although we in the West most often associate terrorism with violence perpetrated by Palestinians and terror carried out by individuals or small groups, we must keep in mind that state violence carried out by Israel (and while being seen as carrying more legitimacy) can often be defined as terrorism by other means.

How Might Latter-day Saints View this Conflict?

So, how might we as Latter-day Saints view this conflict given what we know about prophecy and modern-day revelation? Where should our sympathies lie, particularly with our understanding of prophecy that Judah’s scattered remnants shall return to the “land of their inheritance, which is the land of Jerusalem” (3 Nephi 20: 29)? Is not the immigration of hundreds of thousands of the Jews to Palestine beginning in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and the establishment of the Israeli state in May of 1948, a direct fulfillment of prophecy? And if so, shouldn’t we as Latter-day Saints somehow lend at least our moral support to the government of Israel and its policies because it is the closest approximation we have currently for the political embodiment of God’s chosen people?

Clearly, this is an argument I hear often in my discussions with my students or others who have a particular interpretation of scripture. Latter-day Saints are not unique in their sympathies toward Israel. There is a transcendental affinity that most Christian Americans have towards Israel, and a sense of a sacred responsibility to protect and preserve Israel. For some (including some policy makers) there is a serious concern that to abdicate our responsibility of defending Israel, America risks the withdrawal of divine providence. As evidence of the pervasive Christian Zionist ethic in the U.S., we need not look too far past the more than $3 billion a year in military and economic aid to Israel.

Let me try and deconstruct this argument and provide, perhaps, an alternative way of looking at the issue as Latter-day Saints.

First, let us reel back the discussion to the prophet Abraham, to which both Palestinians and Israelis claim lineage. In the Old Testament, God established an everlasting covenant with Abraham and his “seed”...
tions,” involving certain priesthood blessings as well as a certain piece of real estate, that of “all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession” (Genesis 17: 8). The land of Canaan, as we know, is that land west of the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and is today a part of modern Israel. These blessings were intended for all the descendents and covenant people of Abraham, not just a particular line of Abraham’s descendents, although Isaac and Jacob (i.e., Israel) have been explicitly identified as inheritors. What constitutes a “covenant people” and those who have access to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant is contingent upon righteousness and the keeping of God’s commandments. As 2 Nephi 30: 2 says:

For behold, I say unto you that as many of the Gentiles as will repent are the covenant people of the Lord; and as many of the Jews as will not repent shall be cast off; for the Lord covenanteth with none save it be with them that repent and believe in his Son, who is the Holy One of Israel.

In other words, eligibility for covenant blessings is less about which family lineage one can claim, and more about whether one has claim to righteousness. So, are the Jews then, as descendents of Isaac, God’s covenant people? They could be, but not necessarily. Are Palestinians, as descendents of Ishmael, God’s covenant people? They could be, but not necessarily. Are Latter-day Saints, as descendents of Jacob, God’s covenant people? We could be, but not necessarily. The answer to these questions is dependent on a variety of factors, not the least of which is the purity of our hearts. As such, the promise to the progeny of Abraham for land inheritance has always been contingent upon spiritual righteousness. Thus, both Palestinians and Israelis have legitimate spiritual and transcendent claim to the land of Canaan, but only if they keep the commandments of God. Neither of them have exclusive title to the land, particularly if they are disobedient. Indeed, the scriptures indicate that this land shall be rightfully occupied by more than one people. The prophet Ezekiel prophesied:

And it shall come to pass, that ye shall divide [the land] by lot for an inheritance unto you, and to the strangers that sojourn among you, which shall beget children among you: and they shall be unto you as born in the country among the children of Israel; they shall have inheritance with you among the tribes of Israel (Ezekiel 47: 22).

So, what are we to make of the remarkable—even miraculous—return of Jews back to Palestine over the past 120 years? Is this not a realization of prophecy? The scriptures clearly indicate that the Lord himself will gather his people back to the land of their inheritance. Is the Zionist ideology of the late nineteenth century (which was largely a secular, socialist, nationalist movement) and its subsequent brutal military occupation, the chosen apparatus of God for the return of his people? I have always been troubled by more than one group of his children in subjugating and abusing another group of his children, particularly in light of the commandment to “renounce war and proclaim peace” (Doctrine and Covenants 98: 16–17). The establishment of the state of Israel and the bloody wake it has left is a historical fact to be sure. But to witness the founding and expansion of the Israeli state at the expense of so much Palestinian suffering gives me deep moral pause. Is God responsible for the prolonged adversity, humiliation, and suffering arising from austere political and economic conditions of the Palestinians? Is he responsible for their hunger, illiteracy, poverty, unemployment, hopelessness, and their despair? Fortunately, nothing in the scriptures holds us to such an image of God ordering the establishment of one political entity at the excessive expense of another people.

It can be argued, I think persuasively through the Book of Mormon, that the gathering of Judah to their land of inheritance as prophesied by Zechariah (2: 12; 8: 7–8), Ezekiel (11: 17; 28: 25; 36: 24), Isaiah (11: 12), Jeremiah (16: 14–15; 30: 3), and others, is still largely yet to come. While we might interpret the current state of Israel and the Jewish immigration, as what Dan Peterson calls a “preparatory gathering,” he goes on to note that “it does not seem to meet the Book of Mormon’s requirements for the ‘gathering’ in the full sense of the word” (Daniel Peterson, Abraham Divided, Aspen Books, 1992, p. 356). This opens up the possibility for me that this precursor gathering may not necessarily have been led by the Lord, but perhaps by well meaning men. Dan Peterson distinguishes between political Israel and spiritual Israel, between the nation-state of Israel and the Israel established for the eternal purposes of God. And, he asserts, they are not one and the same (ibid, p. 364). Even the apostle Paul indicates: “they are not all Israel, which are of Israel” (Romans 9: 6).

It must be kept in mind that the covenant of the Lord to his people is always contingent upon righteousness, and as outlined in 1 Nephi 19: 15:

Nevertheles, when that day cometh, saith the prophet, that they (the Jews) no more turn aside their hearts against the Holy One of Israel, then will He remember the covenants which he made to their fathers (emphasis added).

So, when do the scriptures say this gathering will occur? The scriptures provide some insight into the particular timing of the gathering:

Wherefore, after they (the Jews) are driven to and fro, for thus saith the angel, many shall be afflicted in the flesh and shall not be suffered to perish because of the prayers of the faithful; they shall be scattered, and smitten, and hated; nevertheless, the Lord will be merciful unto them, that when they shall come to the knowledge of their Redeemer, they shall be gathered together again to the lands of their inheritance (emphasis added, 2 Nephi 6: 11; see also 2 Nephi 22: 12; 2 Nephi 10: 7).

And again:

And I will remember the covenant which I have covenedanted with them that I would gather them together in mine own due time, that I would give unto them again the land of their fathers for their inheritance, which
is the land of Jerusalem, which is the promised land unto them forever, saith the Father. And it shall come to pass that the time cometh, when the fulness of my gospel shall be preached unto them; And they shall believe in me, that I am Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and shall pray unto the Father in my name. Then shall their watchman lift up their voice, and with the voice together shall they sing; for they shall see eye to eye. Then will the Father gather them together again, and give unto them Jerusalem for the land of their inheritance (emphasis added). First, (v. 6) the gospel shall come forth

from the Gentiles, and (v. 23) “a new city will be built, called the New Jerusalem,” “then (v. 28) shall the work commence with the Father among all nations in the preparing the way whereby his people may be gathered home to the land of their inheritance” (emphasis added). It appears then that the time spoken of when God himself will do the gathering is sometime yet in the future.

So what are we supposed to make of the current political Israel? Does this mean we need not have empathy and compassion for the terrible and horrific conditions which spawned the establishment of the State of Israel? No, I believe we should. Does this mean we can justify being anti-Israeli? No, I believe we should have sympathy for Israel just as we should for any peoples who have suffered so unjustly and so cruelly at the hands of their fellowman. But, we also have a responsibility to see the government of Israel and its policies for what they are: an earthly nation-state struggling as all nation-states do for power, security, and autonomy, and not as a divinely ordained or guided political entity. As

such, we have a responsibility to be very circumspect about how and in what form we provide financial or political support for Israel, and not exempt them from the same accountability that we demand of ourselves and other nations when it comes to human rights and international law. Our work should be about actively publishing peace and preserving the dignity and survival of Israelis and Palestinians alike.

The Lord will, as he always has, accomplish his ends in spite of the foibles and evils of men and women, but I do not believe he inspires evil to accomplish those ends. While it is seductive to take sides in this emotional issue that seems to bear so much significance, it is a temptation that we as Latter-day Saints must resist. Taking sides in this conflict is not compulsory and indeed by doing so we lose any moral high ground that we may have as Latter-day Saints to possibly bring understanding to both sides. Elder Howard W. Hunter, in a 1979 speech entitled “All are Alike unto God,” cited the Palestinian–Israeli conflict as an example of exclusiveness that we as Latter-day Saints must avoid:

Both the Jews and the Arabs are children of our Father. They are both children of promise, and as a church we do not take sides. We have love for and interest in each. The purpose of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to bring about love, unity, and brotherhood of the highest order . . . to our kinsman of Abraham, we say: We are your brethren—we look upon no nation or nationality as second-class citizens (BYU Fireside, 4 February 1979).

But many say to me that armed and bloody conflict is inevitable in that part of the world. Why should we bother getting involved? It is bound to happen, isn’t it? While this may be regrettably true, we must be careful not to reduce the current conflict to a religious one between Muslims and Jews, or Muslims and Christians. The current conflict is not about differences in theology, but a modern politico-national struggle between two peoples making claims to the same piece of ground. Is the great and final conflict of Armageddon a religious conflict between members of different faiths? Indeed, the apocalyptic literature of Jews, Christians, and Muslims share important characteristics. All three faiths believe that there will be an imminent cosmic conflict between God’s chosen seed and forces of evil. All three believe that the world will conspire against them individually and it will appear that they are on the very verge of annihilation. They all believe that at the very moment that it appears that they will be destroyed, they will be saved by a messianic figure, a mahdi, who will preserve them and fight their battles for them. Could it be that all three are right? Is it just possible that the world will continue to become more polarized, not along religious or even political lines, but that it will become more polarized between the believers of God and the godless? That perhaps the righteous spoken of in this great and final conflict are true and righteous believers of all religious denominations, who are bound by their common belief in God and who are compelled to bear one another’s burdens because of the expediency of their common survival as they come under attack by the wicked? Zion, after all, is defined in Doctrine
Palestinian Liberation Organization. Anyone who has heard
In fact, he brings insightful and relevant knowledge to the
educational organizations, as well as various governments.
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behavior theory, business ethics, conflict management, and
Palestine, and the Western University of Jordan. He
has served as an official International Election monitor, an
Development) in Egypt, the West Bank, and Gaza. He
of State, and USAID (U. S. Agency for International
Department of Health and Human Services, the Department
Inc., a management consulting firm focusing on training,
Discrimination Committee. In 1987, he formed Pal-Tech,
University of Southern California, where he wrote a dissertation on international ter-
rorism. He served as assistant dean in the College of Social
Sciences and taught in the Political Science Department and
the Marriott School of Business here at BYU. Following
his academic career, he served as executive director of the
United Palestinian Appeal and the Arab American Anti-
Discrimination Committee. In 1987, he formed Pal-Tech,
Inc., a management consulting firm focusing on training,
technical assistance, and management, which currently has
160 employees. Pal-Tech currently has contracts with the
Department of Health and Human Services, the Department
of State, and USAID (U. S. Agency for International
Development) in Egypt, the West Bank, and Gaza. He
has served as an official International Election monitor, an
observer in elections in Morocco, Yemen, and in Palestine.
Omar has experience working with projects involved with
training and management, developing rule of law, democracy
and governance, local government development, and
private exports. Omar today will be commenting on issues
of settlement in the current Palestinian–Israeli conflict and
the role of the United States.

J. Bonner Ritchie. Bonner, professor emeritus of inter-
national organizational behavior at the Romney Institute
of Public Management at the Marriott School, just completed
a stint as interim dean for the School of Business at Utah
Valley State College, where I got to know him better. He
received his PhD from UC Berkeley in labor relations and
organizational theory. He’s taught in various and sundry places such as St. Mary’s College in California, University
of Michigan, Berkeley, Stanford, Birzeit University in
Palestine, and the Western University of Jordan. He’s
internationally recognized as an authority on organizational
behavior theory, business ethics, conflict management, and
organizational change. He’s been consulted by business and
educational organizations, as well as various governments.
In fact, he brings insightful and relevant knowledge to the
topic at hand as a political consultant to Yasser Arafat of the
Palestinian Liberation Organization. Anyone who has heard
Bonner speak is immediately enthralled with his vast experi-
ence and sharp insight.

Omar Kader

I don’t have any answers to the Arab–Israeli conflict, but I
did read from an author, an Israeli who teaches in
London, about two possible solutions. One was miraculous
and the second is divine intervention. Those would be the
two. The miraculous would be if the two parties agreed.
I’ve traveled in the Middle East a lot. About every forty-
five days I go to Jerusalem, and I have for the last six years.
My work takes me there on contract with the U.S. govern-
ment. I do development contracts with the United States
Agency for International Development. Over the years,
we’ve done private sector work where we teach people how
to do exports and imports. We did one on the setting up of
their court system. They have a nine-year back log. Those of
you in the law school may understand how you bribe your
way to the docket. Judges moonlight sometimes as defense
and sometimes as the prosecution. It’s just the luck of the
draw. We’re trying to clean that up, and right now we’re
doing a health care project, and surprisingly, in one of my
trips earlier this year, I ran into Blaine Tueller’s son-in-law,
Kirk Dearden, who has joined the faculty here in nutrition.
He was out there doing behavioral change communication
and some other things in Gaza during the heat of battle, and
I saw him the day he got out of Gaza. I was in Jerusalem.
The work we’re doing out there now is health care.
We’re trying to build clinics in villages and towns where
they can’t reach hospitals for maternal and childcare health.
We’re finding out that far, far too many women are having
babies in the backseats of taxi cabs. What you’ve got is
some of the best health care in the world within thirty miles
of where they live. No village is more than thirty miles from
a good hospital. We find that a lot of Israelis want to help
us, including doctors. There is a five-hundred doctor group
called the Israeli Physicians for Human Rights who have
been trying to work with Palestinians for the last five years,
but it’s against the law for them to go to the West Bank.
Every Saturday, these Israeli physicians go get arrested as
a defiance of the Israeli authorities. The Palestinians at the
same time, some of them are graduates of Israeli hospitals,
can’t get around to the various villages.

What I find in this whole spectacle of conflict is that
there are a lot of wrongs and there are a lot of rights. I don’t
want to be so meaningless as to say this is all just a mistake
and that they can all just reach agreement. There are some
really truly awful people operating in this arena on both
sides. I wouldn’t stereotype them all in the same category.
For example, I run into a member of Hamas, my own family.
I have inherited land in Jerusalem. My father left us a lot
of land and we’re building houses. I have several
apartments with my family, with my brothers and sisters, in
Jerusalem. I run into these family members, and they are determined
to the death to make sure that Israel never has a sleepful night.
They’re committed by money and by commitment to make
sure that the United States never has a happy moment in
the Middle East. I can go across my own family; we have
a thousand members just outside of Jerusalem. We have a
village where there are secularists all the way to extremists. These extremists are committed and they talk to me as though they just got off the phone with God. They talk to me with a surety that they know exactly what it is that needs to be done. They need to end the state of Israel and they need to end American influence in the world. They are totally committed to that.

As I go across the way, I run into the other family members who are businessmen, who are businesswomen, who are going to school and are saying there’s only one way for peace in the Middle East. They get their land, we get our land, and we start living and working together. You hear perfectly rational reasons. I can tell you that it’s not going to be easy to convert the Hamas, Islamic Jihad on the Arab side. When I go up on the other side and I run into an Israeli settler born and raised in Brooklyn, what I meet is a truly, totally, dedicated racist and bigot who says that Arabs are like animals. There’s no way to negotiate with them and there’s only one way to deal with them and that’s to kill them all. Where do you begin negotiating with that kind of a mind-set? Now, imagine sitting down at the table and saying, come on in Islamic Jihad and Hamas, I’d like you to meet a local settler who is stealing your land, and I’d like you to work it out. It’s about as realistic as saying, you know, Hitler had his good points. It’s not doable.

In my studies on terrorism, I’ve found that there are people on the continuum in which there’s only one place for them and that is incarceration. There is no place in open society for them. I would put the massive group of fundamentalists in the Islamicist’s camp—not Islamic, Islamicist, that is political Islam—on one side of that spectrum. I would put most settlers on the other—along with the religiously-convicted extremists on the Israeli side—and say there is no middle ground, and we’ll never reach accommodation with them. We can defeat them at the election, we can defeat them in debate, but incarceration is probably the most likely place for most of their leaders. There’s not a place at the negotiating table. We have to be realistic about this. My work in the West Bank and Gaza—for many of you who don’t know, I taught at BYU for ten years before going back to Washington, D.C., and creating a firm where I do a lot of government contracting, but the Middle East is my real interest. My work has convinced me in the end that peace is possible in the Middle East; it’s really possible. It’s not something that we have to wait for divine intervention or a miracle.

The United States has so much credibility in the world right now. We practically control most of the political activity that goes on in any sphere we choose. Once committed, there is progress made. During the Clinton administration, as soon as Bush left office and Clinton came to power, Clinton picked up the same negotiators that President Bush had been using from 1988–1992, and he didn’t let a moment drop in which he kept the negotiations moving. There were secret negotiations going on that most of us were indirectly and unknowingly involved in by gathering information and sending research. We didn’t know who we were sending it to, but we had people come and request it. We’d go to government officials in the United States government and ask them for answers to questions and they were off-the-wall questions. We didn’t know what they meant. After September 1993, we found out that’s where the Oslo secret talks were going on. I met the negotiators later, and they told us the why of the questions and put it into context. It was quite rewarding. But what was interesting about the whole thing is that when President Clinton took over, he took over from a long string of achievements that the previous president, President Bush, had achieved. He didn’t let the ball drop.

So when September 1993 came along, and they announced an agreement, there was President Bush on the White House lawn who had initiated it. There was President Bush’s negotiator who became President Clinton’s negotiator there ushering it in. There were five thousand of us on the White House lawn. Arabs, Jews, and others celebrating when Yitzhak Rabin and Yasser Arafat met and had the famous handshake. Immediately after the ceremony, they took us into the White House briefing room. On one side of the room, there were twenty Jewish–American leaders and on the other side there were twenty or twenty-five Arab–American leaders. The president, vice president, and secretary of state came in, and he said, “This is a great day in the history of the world. We’re going to keep this ball rolling just like when we inherited it from President Bush. We’re going to keep this ball rolling until we get an agreement.”

From 1993, as groups of Arab–Americans and Jewish–Americans working with the White House, we got business leaders together, we got scholars together, and we put together a lot of agreements. We put together a U.S.–Palestinian business advisory group under the leadership of the vice president of Hewlett-Packard. We brought in, as a matter of fact, there was the vice president from Enron there, I wonder where he is. We put together about twenty-five of us and we went out and we started putting together business deals. I found a member of the Church who was a Jewish convert in Virginia that had a patent on a special chair. I introduced him to a Muslim in Hebron who made chairs and we shipped out the parts and we began an effort. It wasn’t successful, but they made great friends and were waiting for the road blocks to end so they could continue the work. Our job was to do tens of thousands of these kinds of marriages in business. In the end, after eight years of work, there were numerous agreements between Palestinians and Israelis. You hear about this every day. Every time you hear of a suicide bombing and every time you hear about somebody dropping a thousand-pound bomb to assassinate one guy you begin to throw up your hands and say nothing’s possible. For those of you that are interested, look up on the web the International Crisis Group. The International Crisis Group has written a three-volume set, and it’s just a little notebook like this, on what the end will look like. What the peace agreements are. Every agreement that they’ve reached so far. Let me just turn to that for a minute. There is a solution in sight. The solution is laid out, and it’s in detail. I can give you the agonizing detail right here—all the negotiations.

On 20 January 2000, when Bill Clinton left office and George Bush took over, he decided that he would do nothing
that had any kind of fingerprints left on it by Bill Clinton. At TQC in Egypt, a cultural area resort where Egypt, Jordan, and the Israeli borders around the Aqaba and along the Mediterranean Sea, there were negotiations going on all through the end of the 1999 campaign into 2000. Right to midnight they were negotiating and they reached agreement on everything that was outstanding. There was nothing left off the agenda—Jerusalem, borders, settlement, evacuation, trade of land, how they would assume control of Jerusalem, right down to hilltop by hilltop. I have a map of every agreement that the Arabs and Israelis and Palestinians made neighborhood by neighborhood in the old city of Jerusalem and outside the old city—who would govern and which houses would come and which houses would go.

There is a settlement, and then on 20 January, the new president gets inaugurated, and he says, “I’ll have nothing to do with anything Bill Clinton did,” and he dropped the peace process. Dead cold. That’s where we are today. As a result of dropping the peace process, every time they’re in negotiation, every time there is engagement, deaths, suicides, dropped precipitously from seven years of negotiations—eight years of negotiations—and as soon as those efforts ended the suicide bombers began. The deaths began; the terrorism began. Now we’re in full-scale war. Let me tell you, in the short time that this president has been president and this prime minister has been prime minister in Israel, we’re up to 1,670 deaths as of about a month ago on the Palestinian side and 570 on the Israeli side. From 1936 to today we’ve lost 78,815 Palestinians 11,714 Israelis to this conflict. It’s not a big number, but it’s a very very small population that you’re drawing it from, as Elder Porter mentioned. Everyday in Africa you’re losing 100,000 here and 100,000 there to AIDS and civil war. When you take the global perspective on this, they aren’t large numbers. Let me just tell you, this administration has dropped the ball on peace. This administration has chosen to let the combatants fight it out. As a conscious articulated public policy saying that we’re not going to waste the presidency or the prestige of the presidency and American resources on two parties until they battle it out and until they’re exhausted and they’ve bled themselves dry and then maybe they’ll come to the talks willingly. As long as the conflict does not get outside the region, we’re not going to intervene.

That’s the policy of this administration. I think it’s shortsighted. I think that needlessly you see every day Israeli suffering and Palestinian suffering for lack of leadership. Now, I will say that in the conference that we’ve had all over the Middle East and in the travels I went with two parties with President Clinton meeting with Israelis, meeting with the generals, meeting with the cabinet ministers, meeting with the Palestinians and Arafat and his people. There is no animosity among the senior people. They are ready for peace. They are willing to work out whatever it takes, but no one on the Palestinian side and no one on the Israeli side is going to walk into this thing just freely whistling, saying, “Hey, it’s time for peace.” They both need to be dragged to the table. And both appear to be forced to come to an agreement for two reasons. Number one, the Palestinian and Israeli populations are not going to reward a leader that makes compromises. They both want strong leadership. So what’s going to have to happen is the second. The United States is going to have to take the Israelis and the Palestinians and drag them to the table, force the agreement with rewards. The Palestinians will not get everything they want and neither will the Israelis. On the Israeli side there’s about a thirty percent radical fringe on the current government side that says all of the West Bank and Gaza belongs to them. On the Palestinian side, there are about fifteen to eighteen percent that says Israel has no right to exist. When Arafat makes that compromise or when the Israeli leader makes that compromise he’s got to be able to say, “We jeopardize losing the support of the whole Western world.” The United States with Western Europe and the whole United Nations behind them. And in return for that, here’s a billion or two billion or three billion dollar development fund from which you can borrow money and develop the economy. The Israelis are expecting the same thing. The cost of buying the peace will be a far, far greater bargain than allowing them to beat themselves up and to shoot themselves until they’re exhausted. I don’t think there’s any vision currently coming from the United States.

The reason for that is that they’re taking a broader global vision, thinking of remaking the world in what I consider to be a very dramatic departure from fifty years of American foreign policy. We have gone from working, including four previous administrations, to build the international organizations to police the world when things come up. Getting United Nations, getting NATO involved like we did in Kosovo, it’s a far less expensive way of bringing peace in the world and it’s doable. Ultimately we’ll come back to that plan, but we have decided now that we would do preemption and unilateral intervention. Those are new policies that we’re just beginning to experiment with and a lot of people are arguing that this is a lot like 1949–55 when we had a nuke monopoly. When we had the bomb all to ourselves. We should have bombed the Kremlin; we should have bombed all of the enemies and brought them into the table. There’s a lot of literature going through the Cold War that says they regret that. Every fifty to a hundred years the opportunity to act unilaterally comes along and we’re in one of those eras right now, and right now, we have a president in office who has theorists behind him who are advocating that we act unilaterally while we can because the world won’t be that weak in relationship to our own power for very long.

Now the negotiations, and I’ll just finish by telling you here’s what the peace process is going to look like. It’s a pretty simple, straightforward one. The territory on both sides they have agreed to go back to the UN Resolution 242 where the divide from 1967 on, and it’s a pretty straightforward agreement, and it’s not very complicated. It involves territory, Jerusalem, refugees, and security. For territory, Israelis actually agreed to swap Israeli land that’s been in Israel from 1948 until now, which is majority Arab—to swap land for annexing where the population of Jerusalem has expanded. They would annex that population around Jerusalem and that land and trade Palestinian land elsewhere. They’ve agreed to withdraw settlements. They’ve said there
are certain mountaintops they would take and plant emergency troops around them and there are some settlements that Arafat and the Palestinians have agreed to allow to stay if they’re willing to become Palestinian residents or citizens and some settlers said they’d be willing to do it.

About Jerusalem, they actually got right down to the maps of Jerusalem that are pretty impressive. If any of you go look at this web site, you’re going to see that they’ve gone into more detail than you want to know. It’s like getting married: Don’t tell me everything. You know? The Armenian quarter, the Christian quarter, and the Arab quarter go to the Israelis, the Jewish quarter goes to the Jews. The Wailing Wall goes to the Jews, but above the Wailing Wall, which the Jews call the noble sanctuary of the Palestinians and Haram-al-Sharif and the Wailing Wall areas, right down to feet. They argued over whether to use a felt-tipped pen or a sharp pencil to draw the line, because in past negotiations they’ve drawn lines with felt tip pens and by the time they got down on the ground, the felt tipped pen’s width was a half a mile. They had to go to really narrow pencils—engineering pencils that they use for blueprints—so that the line they drew was no longer than fifty to a hundred feet wide by the time they finished the map and went down. Every time they drew a line—Brother Porter talked about dealing with Israeli lawyers—it is a picnic. You go and draw a line and the Israelis says, “The line is on that side of the ink. Not this side of the ink.” “Well, let’s just take it right down the middle.” “No, No! This is where the line begins.” You can spend days and it’s a matter of fifty feet. Imagine, fifty to a hundred feet of the old city of Jerusalem. That’s a lot of territory. So, on territory they have reached an agreement.

On Jerusalem, they have reached an agreement. I’m not talking about a definitive agreement, the outlines of the agreement are done. On refugees it was a real sticking point. The Israelis did not want to see a million refugees brought back and the refugees were demanding the right to return and the Palestinians were demanding that Arafat not give on refugees because if the refugees couldn’t come back, then what was the use of a settlement? Where would you send them? If Arafat signed an agreement without resettling the refugees in their homes, then he would be de-throned. Where would you put these refugees? Well, they’re from all around Jerusalem and Tel-Aviv. All over Israel. You couldn’t resettle them, you couldn’t bring them back because Israelis live in their homes now. They’ve been there for fifty years. So they reached an agreement with the Europeans that the refugees would be resettled in Palestine at so many per year, and then the rest of the world agreed to take ten to twenty thousand of them, including the United States ten to twenty thousand, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Canada, and all the other Arab countries agreed to take them, and that was reached an agreement on.

Now, that was a quiet agreement because that put Arafat in a great deal of trouble. Security was a big deal for the Israelis. When you break it all down, the Israelis want security, and the Palestinians want statehood and dignity to end their suffering and humiliation. The Israelis are saying, “If we give you this state and you continue to tolerate bombers and we lose a citizen here and there, the whole thing will be lost. Not a fingernail, not a hair can be lost off an Israeli after an agreement is done. Now how are you going to secure us that? And so the Palestinians sat down with an international police force to handle three years of tutoring. The Palestinians, to statehood, with an international police force, joint patrols, and most likely American troops on the ground with Israelis and Palestinians developing. That’s going to be a tough one because what do you do with those Islamic radicals who say, “No Jewish state!” And those Jewish radicals who say, “No Palestinian state!” We’re not talking about a few criminals, we’re talking about tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of highly-motivated people who talk to God everyday, everyday. And they know that they have the inspiration to go destroy the peace process. So the security is going to be tough, but the international community has to be involved.

Now there are other disputes. Let me just give you one and then I’ll end. They actually got right down to the details of how to tell the story of the suffering of the Palestinians that the Israelis would agree to. And what they said is, “We agree to write a national narrative with you, and we’ll sign off on it.” And the reason for it is that people have spent whole careers with their narratives telling your national myth. Did George Washington really cut down the cherry tree? Did Abraham Lincoln really walk five miles to get back to a penny, or whatever the case is? Palestinians wanted theirs and Israelis wanted theirs. When you got right down to writing it and talking about it, there was just enormous difficulty in being able to say, “You did this to us.” And the Israelis not wanting to admit it, and the Palestinians not wanting to admit that they evicted Jews out of the Arab lands during the same time. So we’re down to some pretty simple, basic issues. We will let you tell your story and let me tell you that about eighty percent of the trees that are chopped down to make the books to write about the Arab–Israeli conflict is a wasted environmental disaster. The books are absolutely, nearly useless for teaching the Arab–Israeli conflict with a precious view.

So let me end by telling you that I remain optimistic, but I believe there is a lot of wrong on both sides. I do believe that settlers are international criminals. I do believe that the prime minister of Israel could be tried as an international criminal. I do believe that this administration has dropped a precious opportunity for peace and is exhibiting extraordinarily poor judgement in not leading the world to peace in the Middle East. I believe that the Arab world is so deficient in their progress and so horribly led, all the way across the bar, that it is going to take decades to bring them into the twenty-first century. Our work is cut out for us, but we’re talking about 280 million Arabs; six to eight million Jews—a people that are not impossible to bring together. It was done in Ireland, it has been done with the Tamals in Indonesia, it is being done all over the world. Peace is not easy.

There’s one thing if you look at the material that was produced out of Ireland, and you look at material elsewhere where they brought about peace, there was one area that they all had in common. After one session in Oslo, one of
the leaders of the negotiating team had a mild heart attack. His Jewish colleague said to him, “What brought that on?” He said, “Whenever I start talking about what your people have done to mine, it just so enrages me that I can barely contain myself.” And he says, “From the day that we both decided not to talk about our past, that’s when we made real progress.” And Senator Mitchell, in Ireland said, “When they stopped talking about the past, that’s when they made real progress.” So the saying is that those who ignore history are condemned to relive it; those who dwell on it are condemned to relive it as well.

J. Bonner Ritchie

A lot of people ask me why I go over there [the Middle East], why I spend so much time. Omar goes frequently, but I have spent a heck of a lot more time over there than he has in terms of total time, and let me tell you why I go back and how I got there in the first place. There are two people who were influential in getting me involved in that part of the world—one was Omar, and the other was President Hunter. Let me put that in context.

I was walking down the hall in the Kimball Tower one day, and Omar and I both shared offices in that building at one time, and I pass Omar and he says (and this was just before Thanksgiving twenty-two years ago), and he said, “I gotta go to Jerusalem, you wanna go?” And that was the extent of the conversation, and I said, “Sure,” and then I forgot about it; I didn’t really think he was serious. A week later I got a call from Murdock Travel, and they said, “We have a ticket for you, a round-trip ticket to Tel-Aviv, and we wondered how you want to pay for it.” Omar was serious, and so we went.

We went to visit one of his relatives whose home had just been blown up by the IDF, Israeli Defense Forces, because a young child had thrown a rock at a Jeep, and this is very common policy to destroy homes where someone in the family, a child or a relative, engages in some sort of civil disobedience and protest. There were two or three generations in the home, it was a beautiful old Jerusalem limestone building, with the banisters, wrought-iron filigree, really a very, very nice place, and to sit there and watch the grandmother and parents and children and they can’t get permits to rebuild, that’s a given in that context. I thought, “Gee, something’s wrong here.” I went over as relatively—as most of my friends and acquaintances—pro-Israel, and I came away from that experience very troubled and very critical of Israel.

Well, then I didn’t do much for awhile. Then I was walking down the hall again—walking down the halls of BYU can be dangerous—and I encountered Bill Evanson who was—what was Bill, academic vice president? This was 1989, and he said, “You know, we just finished the Jerusalem Center,” and he said, “How would you like to go to Jerusalem?” And I said, “Yeah, that would be fun sometime; I’d like to do that,” and then I forgot about that conversation. Two weeks later, I got an e-mail—before e-mail, it was a fax—from George Horton, the director of the center, saying, “We’ve acquired housing for you and your family for next year in Jerusalem, and we’re delighted to have you coming.” I went back to Bill, and said, “Jeez, you were really serious about this, weren’t you?” And he says, “Yes, weren’t you?” “Yeah, but not now. I can’t go now; I’ve got a junior in high school and kids in college and commitments this next year.”

I was department chair at the time in the Organizational Behavior Department here, and I said, “This is not a good time, I can’t do it.” He said, “Well, let’s talk some more.” We made an appointment for the next week at three o’clock in his office. He said, “We need to go to Salt Lake for this meeting.” We walked into President Hunter’s office, and he said, “I understand that you’re going to Jerusalem.” I said, “Well, I hadn’t really decided; it’s not a good time.” He asked, “Well, can you decide right now?” And I said, “Well, why?” And he said, “Well, we want you to go build bridges to the Palestinians.” I said, “Really, me? I don’t speak the language. I’ve only been there once; I don’t know much about it,” and then he said something that troubled me. He said, “We want you to go do something that’s noncontroversial.” I’ve never been described as noncontroversial in my academic career. He said management training and development would be noncontroversial, and in that context, I should go do some training work. A couple of months later my family and I were on our way to Jerusalem, and Arnold Green was there during that time. We had a wonderful experience.

Well, then I have kept going back since, teaching at several different universities and working with the Palestinian authority and others, but a key point in that discussion with President Hunter came at the end of our relatively short meeting, when he said, “Let me read you a scripture.” I paused and was very carefully attentive, and he said, “Let me read to you from Isaiah chapter nineteen.” He said, “Pay close attention,” and—I say—Isaiah 19: 23–25—and he paused every sort of phrase and interpreted it and gave me a different perspective, which he had some right to do, I would suggest. My interpretation was pretty weak and shallow. And it reads, “In that day,” and he paused and he said, “In that day is a day of peace between Israel and its neighbors and the Palestinians, a peace that we must be part of, a peace before the end, before the second coming, before Armageddon; a time of peace in the near future.” He continued quoting, “In that day shall there be a highway out of Egypt to Assyria, and the Assyrian shall come into Egypt, and the Egyptian into Assyria, and the Egyptians shall serve with the Assyrians. In that day shall Israel be the third with Egypt and with Assyria, even a blessing in the midst of the land: Whom the Lord of hosts shall bless, saying, Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance.”

Now this was in 1989. This was just at the beginning of the first intifada, there was a fair amount of conflict. Jordan and Israel had been at a state of, sort of an armed truce, but at a formal state of war for a long time. There had been an agreement with Egypt, a Camp David accord with Menachem Begin and Anwar al-Sadat, so there had been something done, but President Hunter said, “There will be peace with Jordan. There will be stability. There will be an economic common market. There will be trade,
There will be open access. There will be opportunities for development, and we must contribute to that process.” So in referencing that part of Isaiah, he said, “There will be peace, and we must be part of it.” Then he reiterated that I must go build bridges to the Palestinians.

That was a powerful metaphor for me. I grew up in San Francisco, and I used to look at a very impressive bridge all the time. I think that’s the only true bridge in the world. But I would look at that bridge, and I decided I wanted to build one of those some day. That was my dream as a kid. And so the way to build a bridge was to become an engineer, and so that’s what I did, and I was in San Francisco during World War II, and was troubled by the assumptions of—treatment of Japanese, Japanese-Americans, especially, but the Japanese and Japan. I thought if we just had a bridge from San Francisco to Tokyo, we could probably solve some of those problems, we could probably have some interaction. So I wanted to grow up and build a bridge from San Francisco to Tokyo. As I learned a little bit more about engineering, I saw that that would require suspension that I wasn’t really quite up to, but still, the idea hung on. And then when President Hunter said, “We want you to build bridges to Palestinians.” I decided that the cold world of steel and girders and the suspension cable were not the tools that I was supposed to use, but I needed to find a new set of tools to build those bridges.

The next experience came a few years later, in the fall of 1992—between Omar and President Hunter, I got started, and I just couldn’t stop. And this was a time when Omar and I were in Tunis meeting with some PLO people, Suha Arafat [wife of Yasser], and we had dinner. I sat next to her, and she said that since 1967, or really 1964, when the PLO was organized, Yasser Arafat had been married to the PLO. She said, “Now he’s married to me, and we’re going to have children. And those children must grow up in peace, in a Palestinian state.” Now this wasn’t a time when anybody was predicting that, but that’s what she said. I don’t know—do you remember that, Omar? Do you remember that dinner? What? [Omar: “I thought she was his secretary then.”] Oh, yeah, then he’d just been married a few months. I didn’t realize it, but she was pregnant with her daughter Zahwa, who was born a few months later, actually in July of the next year, and the Time magazine story was fun, it said, “And Baby Makes Peace.” Yitzhak Rabin, especially, said that this was the bond that pulled them together for the negotiations at Oslo. At any rate, at this point, she said, “We’re going to have children, they must grow up in peace in Palestine, in a Palestinian state, and therefore it’s time to get on with the peace process.”

Also at that time, Arafat told us of his near-fatal plane crash in the Libyan desert, you may remember, early that year, his plane went down in the desert, and Arafat is somewhat of a mystic. He moves around and changes seats and rooms and accommodations, and he’s a clear survivor, and he’s been a voice for Palestinian dignity and identity, at a time when a lot of groups were forgotten. The Kurds and the Armenians didn’t do so well during that same period after all that had been promised, states and dignity in the international community, but nobody was speaking out for them in the way that Arafat was, and he kept reminding the world—in some ways that I wouldn’t agree with, but he kept reminding the world that Palestinians needed attention, and needed dignity and needed recognition. But he’d been in this near-fatal plane crash, and he said in unequivocal terms that God had not preserved him from that plane crash to continue in terrorist activity; it was time to negotiate peace.

It was time to get on with the process of finding a way to build peaceful relations with Israel—and then Oslo followed shortly thereafter.

Well, with those events, I established some relationships with people, especially universities. I went back to teach at the Birzeit University on two different occasions, University of Jordan on two different occasions, and at Birzeit, I got acquainted with a lot of people, and especially students, decided that while I did some training programs and some development work with the Palestinians, I was far more committed to the eighteen- to twenty-year-olds than I was to the fifty- to sixty-year-olds in terms of building a future. I saw an opportunity for that future that was very dramatic. I took the children to heart, in terms of their needs, their dignity, their opportunities, and so I concentrated much of my efforts on the teaching process. I remember one day at Birzeit when a student came in and said he needed to talk to me, and I’ve spent a lot of time teaching, and had a lot of students come in and want to talk, often about the fact that they can’t get a paper in on time, or they’re going to miss an exam, or they have a problem with a girlfriend or boyfriend or something, I’ve had lots of those discussions, and I’ve had really good answers for all those questions, but this student came in and said his mother had been offered fifty thousand dollars for him to become a suicide bomber and he wanted to talk about it with me. This was a person—eight brothers and sisters, no father, he had been killed many years ago in a conflict with Israelis. A poor Palestinian rural family, fifty thousand dollars was a lot of money, he would be a hero, a martyr, and you know, we talked and talked and talked. I tried to understand the depth of desperation, the depth of hostility, but on the other hand, the kind of naive dream of peace that might come as a result of this.

One of the things that’s so troubling to me is that when I talk to Israeli operatives, they feel that only by using force and violence against the Palestinians can they ever bring the Palestinians to agreement, or to the table to talk. And the Palestinians feel that—not all, but enough—that only by engaging in the violence of terrorism and the confrontation can they bring the Israelis to talk. And they both feel that many of the past agreements that Omar described—and then they are in detail, and they are agreed too—that the internal politics of implementation is very difficult, but the framework is there; both think that only by violence do they bring the other to an agreement, or to the recognition of the need for that agreement. And so it’s a self-perpetuating process of conflict, rather than a transcendent notion of finding some larger way.

One of the telling messages when you live in the Gaza area are signs and bumper stickers and statements that say, “Green grass is a terrorist act.” And you really need to understand what that means, “Green grass is a terrorist act.”
Now, the Gaza strip is a very impressive little place. It’s five miles wide and twenty miles long. I don’t suspect many of you have lived there for very long, but it’s a very interesting place, one of the most friendly and hospitable and supportive places—in fact, Jordan is exactly that, the Arab world is far more a supportive and friendly, pleasant place to live than any place I’ve ever been. But in Gaza—keep in mind the numbers—there are several settlements, these little circles or Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip. They’re not very functional, and a lot of people are only there for a short period of time, but they have green grass in those homes on the settlement. They have a resort hotel. They have swimming pools. Water is a scarce resource in that part of the world. In the Gaza Strip, there are 1.2 million Palestinians and four thousand Jewish settlers. The four thousand Jewish settlers have forty percent of the land, and seventy percent of the water. And I’ve lived there with Palestinian families trying to go to their farm to get their tomatoes and their cucumbers, their dates, their olives and their figs, and they couldn’t get through the checkpoints to get to their farm to get to their food, and they couldn’t get water.

Again, forty percent of the land and seventy percent of the water for four thousand people, with 1.2 million Palestinians. That’s why green grass is a terrorist act, it is the water that goes for the grass is denied to the life-sustaining food and resources that are so desperately needed in that most densely populated area on earth. And it is a very, very moving experience to meet with students at El’ Azar of Gaza, or Islamic University there, and to hear them. They’re angry at the United States, they’re angry at Israel, but they have a naive dream of peace, and the hopelessness that you feel right now there is real, and it’s vicious. It’s a vicious hopelessness. But underneath is a dream of peace, and that same way we’re going to get to it. The means are troublesome, but understand that conflict, that reality. The settlements that Omar’s talking about are in the West Bank; in the West Bank there are another 1.2 million Palestinians, and 100,000—120,000 Israeli settlers along the hilltops and over the lot gathered right around Jerusalem. That’s the area that will be traded to the State of Israel, Palestinian land, in return for other land, but those agreements have been made. Most of the West Bank has been under Palestinian control in terms of the cities and the people, but the problem is, you can’t get between the places, you can’t get from one city to another, because of the Israeli roadblocks—they control the highways, and so it’s a Swiss-cheese model of geography, of a state, and it’s very troublesome.

I’ve lived in Jerusalem and taught in Ramallah, about thirty kilometers north of Jerusalem, and getting there, I had to go through two roadblocks and often didn’t make it, often couldn’t get through to go to class, and the students often couldn’t get through to come to class, at least a third of the classes didn’t carry because either I couldn’t get there or the students couldn’t get there. It was very disrupting in terms of planning, and students would turn in papers with a different name on them, and one time I asked a student, “Why the different name today?” And he said, “Well, that’s who I had to be today to get through the checkpoint.”

They had ID cards, and the survival imperative is such that you have to be different people depending on what’s going on and who’s in jail. Developing a sympathetic heart for these kids was not difficult, because they were struggling so much and wanted education so much and struggling so hard to get to school and to do what needed to be done. I don’t know if you realize Jineen is on the northern part of the West Bank, which has been an interest place of late in terms of the tragic refugee camp situation, the massacre, but there’s an American University of Jineen, that the Church has been involved in supporting, Utah State University especially has been very active in supporting it, including having an academic vice president at American University of Jineen from Utah State, and that school has done wonderful things, and has made an enormous contribution to the education of Palestinian kids—but again, the issue is, they can’t go anywhere—they can’t get anyplace. Unless you live adjacent to the school, you take your life in your hands and you have to risk the checkpoint, sometimes it takes hours and hours and you never make it. But that desire for education, and it is the peaceful desire of these kids, it is so impressive.

I was at Birzeit during a student body election one time, and I think it’s important to realize that the student body elections mirror the larger national political setting. They have the same parties—they have Hamas, they have Fatah, Arafat’s party, they have Islamic Jihad, they have the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine, and they have a Communist Party. They have all these parties in the student government that mirror the larger political system, and they vote on those platforms. You look at a hard-core terrorist movement, but then you look at those parties and those elections. And if there are jobs, and some minimal expectation of peace, the votes for Fatah go way down, and Islamic Jihad, and the Brotherhood, they go down, it changes very quickly when there’s the slightest ray of hope for jobs and peace. And Ramallah was a place where there were jobs, and where there was a future, and things were stable for a long time, until they felt betrayed again, until they felt that the people were not acting in their interests, both Palestinian leaders and Israeli, and the thing falls apart. But they can change, and they can change fast, and they will support a peaceful solution, and they will support a constructive approach if given half a chance.

Well, I go back because I, too, am optimistic. I’m optimistic and committed to building a reservoir of skills, competency, managerial ability, administrative, organizational, and philosophical ability, and a peaceful reconciliation. It’s not easy, there’s no dream world here, but it’s clearly feasible, it’s clearly possible, and I trust President Hunter when he says it will happen, and that we must be part of it. I also have built on the dream of—that only can be captured with images—the dream of the children of Palestine. And let me conclude with some of my friends. I lived in, I think you were in my apartment, weren’t you, Omar? In fact, you lived in that apartment, didn’t you? Just inside Damascus Gate, in the Christian Quarter? Our neighbors—cute little kids who deserved the opportunity to grow up in peace and love and uncommitted to how—a boy dressed as a monk,
and his sister’s sort of embarrassed by him, but people don’t realize that there are a lot of Christian Palestinians who are very involved. I agree with Elder Porter and with Brad—it’s not a religious war, it’s a war of Zionism and Arab nationalism; it’s a war for peace and stability and dignity, and a lot of Christian Palestinians are very active in the PLO, in the movement; it’s not a Muslim–Jewish war at all. A lot of people use Islam and the tenets of their faith system as a rallying point, but it’s a nationalism kind of issue.

Two darling little girls in a refugee camp desperately needed material, needed books, needed education, wanted education, struggling hard to get it, sacrificing, risking life and money in order to get an education. My wife loves to take pictures of children; she’s got at least a thousand pictures of Palestinian children; I’m not going to show them all to you, but these kids deserve peace. At a refugee camp just north of Jerusalem, up on the other side of Shofat, I’ve seen these kids tear-gassed because they’re playing soccer in an unauthorized field. What does that do to the mind-set of a group of young children as they’re trying to grow up and live in the world? The little boy eating falafel—very good food, by the way—tragic circumstances, needing—needing love, and needing someone to say that we must make peace for him, even—even if we’re not as committed to some of the troublesome adults that are living. Kids in a school, a refugee camp with sewage running down the middle of the street.

Now, Ehud Barak, the previous prime minister of Israel, did say one day, in a moment of honesty, that if he’d grown up in a Palestinian refugee camp, he would have become a terrorist. That did not endear him to the Israeli establishment, but this little boy carrying a sign following 11 September, “Terrorism is our common enemy,” my colleagues at Birzeit say, “Where was CNN when we had protests of this sort?” But they were there when we had a staged protest by a French film crew, of people dancing in the streets following that. And it was staged; the New York Times wrote an exposé on what happened there. But these little boys—this is a little boy in a hospital room in Ramallah, hit by a rubber bullet in the same attack where I was hit by a rubber bullet. I’ve only been shot at four times in my life—twice in the South [U.S.] in civil rights demonstrations, and twice in Israel, West Bank, and I’ve never been hit by a real bullet; I’ve been hit by a rubber bullet, and they hurt, and this little boy was in the same schoolyard when a rock was thrown over a wall and fire was opened in the schoolyard. And he was hit by a rubber bullet in the head, and I was hit in the side. This is one of my favorite pictures. This is a piece of art done by a twelve-year-old girl in a refugee camp school. It’s a very telling picture, done not many years ago following Oslo and the failure to implement all of the Oslo dreams. The dove of peace is impaled on a barbed-wire fence. But there is a dove of peace, and it does have an olive branch in its mouth. It is bleeding, and the blood is dripping down on the ground to nurture the olive trees that are going to grow to bring future peace. It’s beautiful art from a small child, but more than that, it’s an incredible story of a dream of peace for the children of Palestine. I share that dream, I’m committed to that dream.

I pray for the peace of Jerusalem and want to be part of that, and would plead with all of us to get better information, to have better understanding, to build a broader framework of understanding, to understand what Elder Porter said in his, and in Brad’s references to President Hunter’s talk. I would hope that all of you would get that talk and read it, “All Are Alike Unto God,” it was reprinted in the Ensign, where he talked about our friends in the Islamic world who feel that we’re not understanding of them. But that dream is there, and I have the confidence that it will be implemented, but it will take a lot of people, it will take governments, and it will take goodwill on the part of many, who at this point don’t have that goodwill. I also think it will take a change of governments, in the Palestinian authority and in Israel. But I don’t think that’s very far away, and so I would simply commit myself to the larger process, to the dream of peace.

Q&A Session

Q. Brother Omar indicated that President Bush dropped the ball. Well, this report said, and I’ve been suspect to whether it’s true or not, indicated that Arafat met with President Clinton and they practically, at least the news reports indicate, that there was an agreement put on the table and that Chairman Arafat turned it down. Now, is that true or isn’t it true? That was before President Bush took over, now what happened there?

A. It’s not true. He didn’t turn it down; he asked for clarification. At Camp David he was given a whole series of issues to settle. If any of you are following this debate there is a really interesting debate, if you’d just type into your Internet “Robert Malley;” he was a national security advisor to Clinton on this process. Arafat said, “We haven’t done enough ground work to go to Camp David; I think it’s too early.” The Europeans agreed with him. They hadn’t done the spade work, the paper work, the agreements hadn’t been laid out. He said, “I’ll come on one condition, if it doesn’t work out I don’t want to be blamed for it.” He has written promises that he wouldn’t be blamed for it. He gets to Camp David and, Ehud Barak, prime minister of Israel, says, “I’m going to pull rabbits out of a hat; I’m going to give you something you’ve never seen before,” and he does. And he gives him enormous promises, and Arafat says, “How can I trust what you’re going to do,” and he [Ehud] says, “Believe me, I can do it.” He [Arafat] says, “Why don’t you write that in a memo.” And Ehud wouldn’t write anything; everything was verbal. Everything at Camp David was oral. So about three weeks ago, I was involved in a debate on Capitol Hill where I got the same question. There were five Jewish congressmen from New York taking the same line. I ask in the room, “How many of you who read about just what you read about have read the documents in which Arafat turned down?” Everybody raised their hand. My response to them as now is, in your dreams. There wasn’t a written document; there’s not a written document—not a written word, not a slip of paper anywhere in the world of what Arafat was offered at Camp David. And I challenge any of you to find those along with the 116 pages of the lost Book of Mormon pages. They’re not there. So what happened after,
is they went to Camp David and they continued the negotiations, and they did come up with text on them, and they did flush it out, and they did initial some of those original agreements, but at Camp David there was no written agreement given to him. He said, “Let’s see,” and what followed is what flushed them out, not what was at Camp David, and he conditionally accepted a lot of that material. Now, I generally agree with the thrust of your question, Arafat dropped the ball, not a terribly astute negotiator—didn’t trust anybody. But at the same time, I would rate Barak probably as one of the worst Israeli prime ministers—everything was from the hip. He fired his office every ninety days; he had a chief of staff every ninety days. He was just a tough, tough guy to deal with, and Arafat was an even flakier guy to deal with. And believe it or not, it was the United States team that kept them all together.

Q. [microphone off]

A. Barak and Clinton tore after Arafat with a vengeance. That’s why Robert Malley came out of the closet. Robert Malley said, “Wait a minute.” He wrote it up in the New York Review of Books, he wrote it in Foreign Affairs, in the last two or three issues of Foreign Affairs. Robert Malley is an American Jew who was assistant to Clinton at the time and went on to explain what really happened at Camp David and Clinton and Barak have been silent on his account, so his credibility is pretty high. He’s also part of this international . . . [microphone off]

Q. In a subsequent interview in Palestine by one of the news reporters, it’s been reported that Arafat said that he’s sorry that he never kept that agreement. That he refused it and he’s now sorry about that. Now is that true or untrue?

A. I read the same account that he says, “I would have taken it had I known now what I know then.” It doesn’t matter what he said; he lost the opportunity. But the progress that was made post-Camp David is still on the ground. There’s another dimension to that, and that is that neither Barak or Arafat had their internal systems together in terms of the government, the Palestinian authority, or the Cabinet of Knneset. Barak was not a good internal manager and he didn’t have his party, the labor party or the Knesset or the cabinet lined up, and Arafat didn’t have it either. But for the other Arab countries, they were not prepared for that Camp David, it was a last stage attempt and the lack of preparation meant that internally they did not have the support they needed to bring it off.

I will say and add to that—Arafat got a telephone call from the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, Abdullah, and the President of Egypt, he said, “Don’t be making deals on behalf of all Muslims; you’re not authorized.” So the United States got pretty upset with Saudi Arabia and Egypt for undermining Arafat while he was at Camp David. He didn’t have the home support. The polls were against Barak. We’re not sure how it would have turned out had he accepted it; he may still have lost the election.

Q. I understand that Arafat told you at one point that if those two sides get together that they ought to sign the agreement at the Jerusalem Center, BYU, there.

A. That wasn’t Arafat, that was one of the PLO executive committee that told me that, somebody else. In fact, if you read Elder Hunter’s speech, his 1979 speech, “All Are Alike Unto God,” he makes a comment that an Egyptian minister, a government minister said that if there is ever peace between the Israelis and the Palestinians, that it could likely be because of the Latter-day Saints.

Q. The comment is often made that Arafat is saying one thing to the general press while at the same time, in his own native tongue, is speaking quite a different message to the local population and that is the basis of a great deal of the hostility of the terrorism—that he is really encouraging it on the one hand while telling a different story on the other.

A. I hear that a lot. Let me just tell you that there is just a snow, a blizzard of propaganda coming from every side. This is not a personality cult problem. If Arafat were to leave the scene today the problems would remain. The people that he faces who are in opposition to him are going to be there after he’s gone. Whatever it is that he is accused of doing, it will be there after he’s gone. The suicide bombers don’t come from Arafat, they come from Islamic Jihad and Hamas which are headquartered in Lebanon and in Syria. The money that comes from them comes from all over the world. Arafat is everything everybody has ever said about him and more. He’s short, he’s fat, he’s ugly, he’s smart, he’s cunning, he’s a survivor, he’s brilliant, he’s just everything you want to say about him. But it is not a personality cult problem, just like it’s not a war of religion. And Arafat has marginal control right now, marginal control. The guy can’t even leave a city block physically, a corner, or a city block. He tried to put together an alliance just five days ago, six days ago of eight groups on the West Bank, a popular front for the liberation of Palestine and communist outfit. Two, three Islamic groups, his group Fatah, a couple of other secular groups, and he said no more suicide bombings inside Israel, and he couldn’t get agreement. They were meeting in Gaza, so he doesn’t have that much support. There are some margins there where the radicals control the agenda right now. In fact, a couple of days ago I met with a group of Palestinians, and they’re arguing that much of the violence is internal, is really Palestinian verses Palestinian and it’s an attempt to gain control or to impress people with the power of some of the wings of the PLO, and so it’s an attempt to unseat Arafat or to remind people that he doesn’t control the streets. And so a lot of it is simply an internal struggle for power, within the Palestinian Authority, which is an awkward kind of a thing.

Q. I was intrigued by your slide with the school girls. I’ve traveled extensively through Lebanon and I lived in Saudi Arabia for twenty years. I’ve recently returned to the United States, and I’d like you to comment on the type of teaching that’s being done in the refugee camps throughout Lebanon that Hamas and Hezbollah are sponsoring. I don’t know
how many people in the audience here are aware of who is running the education in those camps, because the people are so desperate to have any kind of education for their girls and their boys.

A. That’s an interesting question. The camp schools are very troublesome. The camp schools in the West Bank, in Gaza, are unread schools. The United Nations teachers there are teaching and providing food and so forth. In Lebanon, it’s not Hamas, it’s Islamic Jihad and to a large degree Hezbollah that is very involved and does a lot of humanitarian things. And as I’ve traveled through Lebanon, I’m impressed with what Hezbollah does. I went through a Hezbollah checkpoint a few months ago going south from Beirut, and it was really interesting to see what they do in terms of food and medical care and so forth in the humanitarian sense. But then there is the school situation where there is a lot of rhetoric, a lot of very, very vicious teaching—anti-Israel, anti-American—that I think needs to be looked at. The same thing is in the schools in Saudi Arabia. But the Israeli schools are not a heck of a lot better as a matter of fact. Because you go into some of these Israeli schools and you see the textbooks and the biases and the perspective. People are telling their story in some really vicious ways, denying the existence of the Palestinians and so forth. So yes, the schools are a vicious opportunity for some people to teach rhetoric of hate. I did not see that in the refugee camp schools in the West Bank of Gaza at all. I did not see any of that. I think Hezbollah does some different things, and I think some of the madrases in other places in Pakistan and Afghanistan and in Saudi Arabia, I think those are different if they come under control of the religious structure rather than civil structure in terms of schools.

Q. . . . those schools . . . a lot of them are not acceptable, but certainly the schools in Lebanon are, because any one of us can go there today and have an impact in those societies, a very positive impact.

A. Well it’s an issue and a problem not just to Palestine or Lebanon, but extends throughout North Africa and Egypt in particular. But the thing to keep in mind is that while on the one hand, these independent religious schools do teach pretty extreme religious dogma at times, the state-sponsored schools are not meeting the economic or social needs of the citizenry. I have to point out that the charity groups do an awful lot of good, and we talked about Hezbollah. But I know Hamas and also the Islamic Brotherhood in Egypt have really responded well to the basic needs of the average Egyptian and Palestinian in terms of alleviating poverty and alleviating illiteracy. This is not to minimize the negative implications of these religious schools, but they are symptomatic of problems in education offered by the state.

A. I would like to take issue with the good that Hamas does. Hamas is a terrorist group; it does no good. Islamic Jihad is a terrorist group, it does no good, just like the settlers. In Egypt, I have a very large contract to sidestep the minister of education because he’s been there thirty-five years. He’s the president’s pediatrician for his kids, and he’s never done anything right for education. They’ve got, I think you would know better than I how badly in need the Egyptian education system is of reform. The United States has given Egyptians a major grant to start piloting technology in the elementary and universities. So we were given a contract about a year ago to start an E.T.U., an Egyptian Technology University, and alongside that, a hundred piloted elementary schools to integrate technology into the curriculum. So we have now introduced a Western-style curriculum, in these one hundred private elementary schools in Cairo and one major technology university. If you look at any of the studies of education anywhere in the Arab world, they are woefully inadequate. They’re inferior to just about any educated system in the world, and there are enough studies on that now. The reason that Islamic Jihad or Hamas have made contributions that are positive that Brad talks about, is because of the total failure of the government.

Q. Say something about malnutrition. The recent health studies and one of the reasons that some of these groups are seen favorably, is because they provide food and some of these kids are in deep trouble. What does the study say?

A. What we have is malnutrition going on throughout the whole of the West Bank and Gaza because of closures. And it turns out that it’s Hamas and Islamic Jihad that are able to deliver food to them surreptitiously, and able to provide them with the needs that they’re getting because the Palestinian Authority can’t get any of the resources to the people, because the Israelis have frozen their funds. Israelis gather their taxes but they won’t turn it over to the Palestinian Authority. And there are a lot of reasons why they don’t do that, but they’re up to $600 million that they’ve embargoed and won’t give to the Palestinian Authority to run the regime, the school system, or whatever the case. Now we’re into serious malnutrition throughout the West Bank among children and women in the Johns Hopkins study that was just issued. One particular example of this is the 1991 earthquake in Cairo and the inability of the Egyptian government to be able to respond to that tragedy. The Islamic Brotherhood was able to step in and provide relief, which you showed, had much more effectiveness in terms of resolving real poverty and real suffering, and the governments just don’t do it. So often the people have sympathy towards these groups. Even though they do have militant dimensions to them, there’s a humanitarian dimension as well.

Q. First, thank you each for your insights, question for each of you. Bonner, I think the biggest obstacle in trying to gain empathy for the Palestinians is in each of the instances we hear about in the press, and in fact, in each of your examples, it’s the Israelis retaliating for a stone thrown or a suicide bombing when a house is destroyed. A single stone thrown sounds like a silly thing to return fire to, until you’re Elder Porter in the van and you’re very grateful that you escaped alive from the stoning attack. And so, I wanted to, in search of better information, I wanted to give you a chance to retract your calling the Jenin incident a massacre. Which brings up collateral damage, and you termed the
Israeli actions terrorism by other means. And if we accept the fact that Israel, as a state, has a right to defend itself, and we call it terrorism, then how is it different than collateral damage in Hiroshima or the Dresden fire bombings, etc, and in fact every nation who was ever engaged in a war would have to be considered a terrorist state if collateral damage is considered terrorism or retaliations for attacks.

And finally, Omar, you talk about U.S. unilateralism and Bush in a very disappointing way and yet, you used the phrase twice that the U.S. should drag the parties to the table, that we have to drag them to the table. So is it not the United States' power and projection of power that you object to, but simply Bush's direction of it?

A. I was driving in East Jerusalem; I was driving a BYU car behind Hebrew University, in a little Arab village, and a car pulled out in front of me and stopped and the rocks started flying and came through the windshield and the driver's left-side window and hit me in the side of the head and shoulders—I had twenty-five pieces of glass cut out of my face and side. I could have felt angry; I could have retaliated; I could've taken a strategy. But instead, I went back to the village and met with the people and talked with them and we became friends. Retaliation is a vicious philosophy. It's a very inappropriate philosophy for a state, I think, or for an individual. I'm very critical of both sides, for the inability to forgive and forget the past and move on. But, I don't think it's a state protecting itself. I think it's a very calculated, aggressive terrorism, and I've been a victim of it; I've observed it firsthand many times. There are times when protection is justified, but there are a lot of times when the aggressive act, I think it isn't. And I think they have been very, very guilty on that account.

Comment: The next question is from Popus Picati, a native of Pakistan, who is the district president there.

A. Before you give that question, he [member of the audience] deserves an answer. On terrorism, the official definition of terrorism, is nonstate actors perpetrating violence against noncombatants. So, official Israeli government activity is considered acts of war generally, but it's not a terrorist act. A terrorist act is a nonstate actor that's splitting hairs, but that's the official definition. What the settlers do is not on behalf of the state. The settlers are a militia and a separate activity, so they get involved in terrorism. But to your last point about Bush dragging them to the table. We're not talking about the United States dragging them to the table, we're talking about the United States leading the international community with the European Union and the United Nations—the quartet right now. And then you bring in the other three, the quartet plus three, they call it. That would be the EU, the United States, the United Nations, who's the fourth of the quartet, there was a fourth party to it, then Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Egypt, and that was the group that was going to bring them all to negotiating. But until the United States leads that group, nothing happens. So it's not unilateralism, it's bringing the international community and the whole force of the international community to the negotiations.

Q. I'm from Pakistan and have an Islamic point of view about terrorism. One of the Pakistani writers said that the most damage done to Islam is not from outsiders but is from the Islamic people. The question was raised here about Yasser Arafat taking something else to international community and the local people, the different things and that is not just Yasser Arafat's problem. It's most of the Islamic leaders; they do the same thing because they don't tell the total reality to their own people. The one basic thing is that Islam, they use as a weapon in their own country to keep themselves in power. And if Yasser Arafat has no power or some power on Palestinian people, why Palestinian people don't choose other leaders. There's a lot of brilliant leaders in Palestine. And why they don't elect a person who can represent most of the Palestinians?

A. I have to disagree with Omar in terms of this cult personality. I am convinced that the peace process isn't going to move forward with the two current actors—Yasser Arafat and Ariel Sharon. I think we need new leadership in order for the conflict to come to some sort of resolution. And I'm also convinced that the only solution is a two-state solution. If we do not have a two-state solution, then it will become, by defacto, a one-state solution. And what I mean by that is that it will follow the model of South Africa. The current growth demographics of the Palestinians indicate that they are going to outnumber the Israelis within Israel within a very short period of time. And if Israel claims itself to be a democracy, the Knesset, therefore, would have a different composition and would have much more representation by Arabs. So, unless Israel chooses an apartheid model, it will be overcome with its own Arabs and then Israeli Jews will become minorities. And so, I think Israel needs to either come to the realization that there has to be an independent, unilateral, sover-
eign Palestinian state, or a solution will be forced on them as a one-state solution, a Palestinian-state solution.

A. He [Ritchie] made a comment about Arafat and the elections. I will say that Arafat is, it may sound a little crazy to some of you, he’s the only legitimate elected leader in the Arab world, as strange as that might seem. There was an election in January of 1996 and it was covered by international monitors. I was part of the forty-two person committee led by Jimmy Carter to go out and observe those elections. They were free, fair, and open elections. There weren’t that many candidates running against him, but there were a lot of candidates running for the parliament. They would like to have another election. The likelihood of Arafat winning again was pretty slim until President Bush demanded his ouster. His popularity went from the low thirties into the eighties within a matter of three weeks. There’s a fun cartoon in the Jordan Times that had Arafat saying, “Americans should get rid of George Bush as a President.” But I agree. I think it is time for Arafat to move on, or to be a figurehead president like Israel has and then have a prime minister that manages the government. But it’s got to happen in a way that’s legitimate. It’s got to happen in a way that’s appropriate, and simply the United States announcing it, is not an appropriate way to change a government. I think we’ve been very, very at fault, even if it’s an honest issue. I think it’s troublesome. Arafat is an important symbol. He’s a much more important symbol than he is a reality leader, and that symbol is critical. He’s been the symbol of Palestinian dignity for a long, long time and when that symbol is demeaned or threatened, the people will rally around him—not because he’s an effective administrator, but because of the symbolic nature, and that’s a terribly important thing to understand.

Q. When I was teaching at Kuwait University and had time to spend in Amman and Jordan University and also in Saudi Arabia, I would talk to these professors about problems that they had all of these foreign experts, most of whom came from Egypt or Palestine. And there’s all this suffering going on there. Why aren’t you fellow Arabs concerned about their welfare? Money talks and you ought to use all your money to use the poor Palestinians as a buffer against Israel. In other words, they’ll be the head of the ram while you beat on Israel. Why don’t you use them as brothers, that’s what you’re talking about in Islam. Oh, but if we did that then we would make no progress against Israel. I would submit that we’ve got to have these other nations that have the money and of course the big one would be Saudi Arabia. The other one, of course, is a still different problem: Iraq and Iran, if they could all agree then I think we would go somewhere. But I think even if we had the U.S. and the Palestinians and the Arabs all agreed, there would be all of this “under the table” money from these other Arab countries who are not interested, really, in the welfare of the Palestinians. They just want to bash Israel. That’s my perception. I’d like the response of these experts on that subject.

A. You’re not too far off. I think the Arabs have exploited the Palestinian issue, terribly. On 28 March 2002 of this year, there was a meeting in Beirut and the Crown Prince of Jordan issued a declaration and here it is. “The acceptance of a sovereign independent state on the Palestine territories occupied since 4 June 1967 consequently the Arab countries affirm the following: One, Consider the Arab–Israeli conflict ended, and enter into a peace agreement with Israel and provide security to all the states in the region. Two, Establish normal relations with Israel in the context of a comprehensive peace and be willing to underwrite it . . . .” and on and on. That’s probably the most significant event in fifty years and it went totally uncommented on, absolutely ignored by this administration for two or three reasons. This administration has another agenda. This administration is troubled by the fact that Saudi Arabia and Egypt have been fomenting and generating terrorists who’ve been attacking the United States since 1993, the first World Trade Center, and then 2001 last year, with the second World Trade attack. The United States is just beginning to emerge in the faint lines in what they’d call the new Bush doctrine and the new Bush doctrine is to say that the whole of the Arab world needs to be transformed. And that most of the governments are too decrepit to transform and that they’re going to have to have supplanting leadership and a complete change. So the new language out of this administration started about five to eight weeks ago, on transforming the governments, meaning regime change. And that’s where they’re aiming right now. They started with Saudi Arabia, they’ve been talking about it for the Palestinians explicitly. They’ve been talking about it for Iraq for two years. So, the next few months you’re going to see some dramatic changes in terms of our attitude toward the Arab government. The Arab governments are stuck in poverty; they’re stuck in inefficiency. Even leaders can’t get their ministers to behave in what we would call, “bureaucratically efficient” ways. It’s a very difficult process. So the United States is, instead of trying to get the leaders to change, they’re looking at the possibilities of replacing leaders.

A. I think the leadership in the Middle East really is their own worst enemies. In fact, I remember going to a Chamber of Commerce meeting in Cairo right after the Gulf War. The Ambassador of Kuwait was speaking to Egyptian businessmen. I recall an Egyptian businessman asking, “Listen, you want Egyptian support, military or financial support, right? But over 70 percent of your revenues generated in Kuwait aren’t invested in the Middle East; your investments don’t go to the Arab world; they go to the United States or Western Europe.” And the ambassador responded, “Don’t talk to me about where we put our money. If you look at the wealth generated here in Egypt, it doesn’t stay here either.” So even Arabs fight over where their resources should be invested. I think there’s a lot of room for criticism of Arab governments but also within civil society. Arab states should begin investing more and more into solving their own problems—infrastructure issues and development—and up until now they just haven’t.

Q. While we have these three experts here and we have a Latter-day Saint orientation—what should our response
be and in this way is it more effective, because I work in places where it is not effective for the Church to be officially involved, or is it more effective, individually, to go out, set up as you have done Omar, and set up individualized situations and go out there as Latter-day Saint people on a heart to heart, person to person basis? And I know that you’ll say, well you need to do both, but what’s going to be the most effective? Because the same people will be contributing to the activity. And what is the most efficient and effective way that we can begin to turn around some of this hatred within this area?

Q. Can I bridge my question with that? You can respond to both of them. Because, one of the things from time to time I see stories like the five hundred doctors that Omar mentioned, where people are working for peace at cross bridges, or collaborate on things between Arabs and Israelis, or Palestinians, people who are trying to switch the division to more of, where on one side of the continuum are the people who want to work together for peace versus the other side of the continuum, the people who want fight and retaliation. And so I’m wondering, in terms of things that have been brought up today of the good versus evil, if there are ways that we can promote dialogue and strategies, not around the Palestinians versus Israelis and the traditional political continuums, but people from both of those groups and other groups that want peace versus the other?

A. I think there are a lot of bridges to build between the West and the Islamic and Arab world. You know, one of the most effective things that’s happening right now is BYU’s Islamic translation project. Dan Peterson is with us and we’ll hear more from him today. But I hear more from my Muslim friends and from academics about this incredible institution in Utah; a Christian institution that’s translating these really important, groundbreaking, philosophical Islamic texts into English. Projects like this do a tremendous amount of goodwill building. I think that this is one of those great examples of where, from a scholarly perspective, we’re able to dial down some of the threatening stereotypes and the fears that the Islamic world has toward Western society.

A. You know, there are people making a difference individually out there all the time. People send doctors out, doctors go out and accountants go out and volunteer in small businesses. There is no end to things that could be done at a whole variety of levels. I think one of the greatest obstacles to peace in the whole Arab–Israeli conflict is the U.S. Congress. I don’t think your congressmen and senators hear enough about it, and I don’t think they care that you’re giving away two billion dollars a year to Egypt, another three and a half billion to Israel. Israel has a standard of living higher than Spain and Italy and it’s the highest recipient of foreign aid in the world. Well, maybe we ought to get something from that. Palestinians get another $400–500 million a year. Your congressmen just continue to vote it. Right now, they’re battling in Congress whether to give Israel another $200 million and the Palestinians fifty million just to keep them going. And the Israelis are on par with the Utahans. Utahans get about $615 a year per person in federal aid, and Israel gets about $550 per person in federal aid. There’s six million of them and about two million of you, or less. We don’t look at those details very closely, but you’ve got congressmen and senators who have just rubber stamped every time Israel wants something and every time Egypt wants something. Maybe we ought to start getting a little bit back and pushing in that direction. They don’t think that you worry about it. I had a congressman recently, I’ve talked with who told me he would never get involved in any patronizing way on the Arab–Israeli conflict because he had no interest in it. Then he turned around and he voted on a bill that says no matter what Israel wants we’re going to give it to them. I went and visited him, and I said, “You don’t have any Jewish voters in Utah; you don’t have any contributors; why did you do it?” He said, “Jewish tax gave me fifty thousand bucks to do it.” So, I can tell you right now that Congress is an obstacle to peace and there’s something you can do about that by making them a little more nervous. There’s only two things that move elected officials and that’s votes and money. All you have to do is have a neighborhood with ten votes and you’ll get their attention. The other way to do it is to establish personal contacts. These personal contacts can be doctors, lawyers, accountants, students, anyone else, and befriend them. Henry Kissinger at Harvard taught so many people over the years, that eventually he got to know forty-five, fifty prime ministers because they were graduate students in his classes. And when you start looking at the number of scholarships you’ve run through this university, you’ve got Arabs all over the world that are your friends and people that you can contact. BYU and the Church have been the most generous institutions to the Palestinians that I have seen in years, and we have got, I don’t know 100–150 graduates, and they’re all over—and that’s lots of contacts. The same with our Jewish friends out there, there’s a lot of Israeli friends that we work with. There are 300–400 thousand Americans who are Israelis, that are out there living full-time that we communicate with. The personal contact is useful but, putting pressure on our politicians is going to make the big, big, big difference.
Building Bridges of Understanding Through Church Humanitarian Assistance

by Garry R. Flake, Humanitarian Services director

Many of you have had such extensive experience in many countries throughout the world. We are here because of our interest to see the influence of the gospel expand to these people we love. The humanitarian effort of the Church is part of the whole. It is a way of helping the needy of the world and, at the same time, increasing awareness of the Church. We are interested—through humanitarian services of the Church—in helping to build bridges of understanding wherever we can. Today I’d like to respond to the most common questions we receive about Church humanitarian work.

Why is the Church involved in providing worldwide humanitarian assistance?

Foremost, the Church provides assistance simply for the good it does. Our Christian giving demonstrates that the gospel is a gospel of love. Spiritual and temporal well being results for both the giver and the receiver. An important benefit for the Church, where feasible, is to help open doors of nations that have been closed to the Church and its message.

How extensive is Church humanitarian aid?

Church humanitarian aid has tripled in the last five years. This, of course, is due to the generosity of members and friends of the Church who sustain this effort with cash and in-kind donations. Assistance was provided in over one hundred countries last year in about fifteen hundred different projects. Literally millions have been blessed.

What is the focus of Church humanitarian aid?

The emphasis continues to be on providing life-sustaining goods as emergency response to an increasing number of disasters. Humanitarian Services is part of the inspired Welfare Services program of the Church. The focus of Welfare Services has always been to help people become more self-reliant and to provide effective temporary assistance as needed.

Humanitarian emergency response has the unique ability to quickly draw on the resources of the Bishops’ Storehouse Services and Deseret Industries. With the immediate availability of organized labor, needed goods can be packaged for shipment in a matter of hours. That coupled with a worldwide Church organization ready to receive goods and quickly distribute them enhances Church response to any disaster. The Church is recognized worldwide as a premier emergency relief agency.

Within the two months preceding this meeting, the Church delivered in-kind assistance directly to the needy flood victims in Chile, to those affected by mammoth forest fires in Arizona, to those severely affected by a devastating typhoon on the remote Chuuk Island in the Pacific, and to members and others on the brink of starvation due to drought in Southern Africa. It has actively participated with many local and national governments in Central Europe due to extensive flooding.

In addition to emergency response, what else does the Church do to assist the needy not of our faith?

Since the Church stresses helping people help themselves, there are humanitarian missionary couples currently serving in approximately thirty countries. Development projects are focused on the skills of missionary couples who share their expertise. This has included laboratory technologists improving the blood bank services in Mongolia and dentists who trained instructors in a dental school in Peru. The Church has established food processing training programs at universities in Cambodia and Syria. There is English and vocational teacher training in many countries.

Hundreds of tons of used clothing and donated medical and educational supplies are distributed each year. Humanitarian missionary couples, among other assignments, assure these donations reach the needy. Their field presence reduces theft and misuse.

What is the relationship of Church Humanitarian Services and Latter-day Saint Charities?

All Church humanitarian effort is given without regard to race or religion. Latter-day Saint Charities is the registered nongovernmental agency of the Church. It is a delivery agency. The primary focus is on the Church as the donor agency, whenever possible. However, there are countries where the Church is not officially recognized, but Latter-day Saint Charities has been registered. Latter-day Saint Charities also allows often improved access to other international agencies.

Does the Church work with partnership organizations?

Yes. Over the last decade, the Church has collaborated with over five hundred local and international organizations and agencies, drawing on their strengths to deliver goods and services. The Church has always had a good relationship with the Red Cross. It works closely with Catholic Relief Services and other faith-based organizations. Recently, there has been a unique partnership with the Wheelchair Foundation, providing nearly ten thousand wheelchairs to those that cannot afford them in fourteen countries. These have been provided through the First Lady’s charitable organization in most locations. There has
been favorable public recognition, but the most important result is providing mobility to individuals who otherwise would be homebound.

Church humanitarian services desire full participation with partnering agencies. There is little interest in only being a funding source.

**How are Church humanitarian efforts financed?**

Church members have been generous in their support of Church humanitarian aid. Many friends of the Church participate as well. Contrary to the practice of so many other organizations, there is no pressure and no funding campaigns. Every donation is an individual, voluntary initiative.

In addition, as President Hinckley explained in a recent general conference session, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints Foundation also supports the Church humanitarian cause.

**What is the overhead cost, and who pays it?**

The Church, from its general budgeted funds, covers the minimal overhead costs that occur. This allows every donated humanitarian dollar to go to those being assisted. Since there is such an extensive volunteer effort, the overhead is very low—far below that of most other humanitarian organizations.

**What else do members of the Church do to support humanitarian efforts?**

Literally thousands of hygiene, school, and newborn kits are prepared and brought to the Church humanitarian center. Many are made by individuals and families. Since the Kosovo refugee crisis in the spring of 1999, over two hundred thousand quilts have been donated. Thousands of tons of clothing come through regular Deseret Industries donations.

Recently, the leadership of the Gresham Oregon South Stake thought if the Lord could feed five thousand, stake members could make five thousand hygiene, school, and newborn kits. They applied for an eight thousand dollar grant from Church humanitarian funds to purchase materials, then multiplied the value many times over. One Relief Society sister sewed 117 infant blankets. Another sister in a retirement home with arthritic hands slowly crocheted one hundred pairs of baby booties. Two Laurel girls who had never sewn before ended up making 250 blankets. The stake president reported, “As with the loaves and fishes, the true miracle was manifested in the lives of our stake members that were changed forever. We want the approximately ten thousand children who receive these kits to know of our love for them, whoever and wherever they are.”

**Does the Church assist Muslims?**

Yes. Church humanitarian aid is provided throughout the world to those in need, regardless of race or religion. The Church is balanced in its assistance, helping Muslim, Christian, and Jew alike.

The Church provided substantial support following the earthquakes in Turkey. Nearly one hundred thousand hygiene kits were prepared in Indonesia in partnership with an Islamic humanitarian organization for Timorese refugees.
I’ll tell you something about myself that isn’t true. It was mentioned earlier today that the passage from President Hunter’s article involving brothers, some Egyptian diplomat said that if peace was to be achieved, it was very possible that Latter-day Saints would play a prominent role in the peace achieved between Arabs and Muslims, between Palestinians and Israelis, excuse me—between Muslims and Jews. And a few years ago a colleague of mine in the Department of Near Eastern Languages came up to me and said that he’d just gone into Deseret Book to buy something that I’d written and he asked for directions to find it and the person showing it to him said, “By the way, do you know that Brother Peterson negotiated the Arab-Israeli peace accords?” Well, he hadn’t known that, and so he came back and asked me about it and of course I confirmed that it was true and noted that I was at work, at the time, you know, in Ireland and with Sudan and in various other places around the world trying to bring about peace. He wanted to know why I didn’t make a big deal about this, and I just said I thought it would be sort of tacky to do that and depart from the rank advancement thing. So I just leave that off. I took that as an example of the way rumors spread in the Church. I remember two summers in a row I came back to find myself as an undergraduate married to people I didn’t know. But anyway, much of what we know about the world isn’t so and a lot of that is true also, of the Islamic world.

I’m going to assume that people here basically know a great deal about Islam—the basics anyhow—so I won’t dwell on those sorts of things. But I think it’s important to know that there are a great many non-Muslims in the so-called Arab and Islamic world, and we need to understand that. The conflicts that exist, for example, between the Arabs and the Israelis are not necessarily, as has been already pointed out, not necessarily conflicts between Muslims and Jews. There are Christians on the so-called Muslim side, on the Arab side, and in many Christian minorities in the Middle East that we sometimes lose track of, lose sight of, forget that they exist. Another thing that people in the West often forget, is that not every person with a darker skin and a beard is a Muslim. You probably remember or have heard of the unfortunate incident in Mesa, Arizona, right after 11 September, where a convenience store owner was gunned down by a quote unquote “patriot,” who was trying to defend the United States in some bizarre way against Arab or Islamic aggression.

And of course, we need to know too that Islam is not a monolith. We tend to look at the Islamic world and think, “Oh my word, you know, it’s so foreign to us, it’s so different, and we just don’t know where to start.” But of course that just bespeaks our own lack of familiarity with the Islamic world. But there’s a great deal of variety between various Islamic regions, Islamic nations, Islamic cultures. And so what is true of a Muslim in one place may or may not be true of a Muslim in another location, though I would have to say that Islam is probably more uniform in many ways than Christendom is for various historical reasons.

But what I’d like to talk about today is—to borrow a phrase with modifications from C. S. Lewis—“Mere Islam.” And I’m going to emphasize what can be called fundamentalism. This is one of the brands of Islam that is out there, but it’s by far not the only one. It also should not be confused with Islamic extremism of the type that we’re very familiar with. Not all fundamentalists, by any means, are extremists. They are not all bomb-throwing, bomb-toting terrorists; they’re simply people in many cases, who are very committed to an Islamic vision of society and of life and of how that ought to be implemented in daily living.

Now normally, I’ve seen myself as a kind of missionary for Islam among Latter-day Saints and others, trying to construct, I think, a fair, a more-appreciative understanding of the Islamic world among people that I care very much about and hope will understand the Islamic world better. Today though, I’m going to take a slightly different tack, and I hope it doesn’t disappoint or shock people. I’m going to emphasize the challenge of at least some forms of Islam and possible areas of difficulty or incompatibility, and this is by no means a complete list. But I’ll just talk about some of these. It reminds me of an experience I had sitting in an auditorium, is it Heward Hall at AUC? There was an inscription above the stage. I remember the first night I went in there, I struggled and struggled and struggled with it. My Arabic wasn’t very good, but I just couldn’t read it. It looked like Kufic to me, and I spent probably ten minutes staring at it trying to read it from right to left until I realized it was actually English and went from left to right. You know, often what you see is affected by what you expect to see and that really threw me.

But areas of incompatibility, areas of challenge, for Latter-day Saints there are a number. It is often said that Latter-day Saints and Muslims share a great deal and that’s true, we do. We share basic moral values, basic understanding of the world as a place that has a divine purpose, that has a God, that is ruled over by a God who is active in the processes of history. A God who is personal, who has set out a goal for history and for our personal and individual
histories, and that's very similar. There are other things, though, that are different, and areas that I think will prove to be challenging for us. The fundamental principle of Islam, bar none, is the principle of monotheism, with the one God in worship. The fundamental statement of testimony for Muslims is, "I testify there is no god" (small "g") "but God" (capital "G") "Allah, and Mohammed is the messenger of God." Very devout Muslims have had a problem throughout the history of Islam with the Christian idea of the Trinity. Muslims historically, have been very good at mathematics, and it's been very difficult for them to understand how one can be three and three can be one and they tend to say, well it's just nonsense and that somehow the Trinity is a very clever thing, but it sure looks polytheistic to us. And so I wonder, frankly, how Muslims will react to the very frank description of the Gods in the book of Abraham. We see ourselves as sharing fundamental values with Muslims. This is one area where we will still insist that we are monotheists, but it may take some explaining to get that across.

Another area where I talk to missionary-minded members of the Church is, what about Islamic rules on proselytizing? Capital punishment for people who convert from Islam. This principle is not in the Qur'an, but it has been in Islamic law since roughly the late eighth century. This is another area of possible flash-point difficulty. Now one of the most interesting experiments that's going on right now is the spread of Islam into the Western world, away from areas where governments are available to enforce Islamic law, and it will be a really interesting thing to see how Islam develops in a place like the United States or in Western Europe. Will it come to be a kind of denomination among other denominations where it's understood that people can convert freely from Christianity to Islam, but also the other thing can sometimes happen. We'll see. That experiment is still underway; we just don't know how that is going to turn out.

For the Christian West, or what I might think is more accurately described as the post-Christian West, what is much more fundamental than the things I've just mentioned? What are some of the challenges that we will face? Let me give you some background, some of the challenges we do face, particularly looking at this from the aspect of Islamic fundamentalism or even the Islamic so-called extremists. The word Islam means submission. It's from a verb. Islam ought to submit, to surrender, and Islam, in the sense of submission, means submission to God, submission to the will of God. And that submission is demonstrated, represented in a very visual way in Islamic life by the form of the five daily prayers in which people literally bow down and touch their foreheads to the ground before the supreme Lord of the universe, in a time-honored gesture to a monarch. The ideal muslim, small "m," the ideal submitter, in Islamic tradition is Abraham, who was willing, despite everything he'd been taught, everything he thought he knew, everything he thought he understood about God, to take his son and nearly sacrifice him at the behest of God. And that shows complete submission to the will of God.

Now, Islam is a comprehensive religion. One of the important things to know about it, and I think Latter-day Saints can begin to appreciate this a little bit, is that it's not a Sunday-go-to-meeting kind of religion. It is not something where you go and attend a service for one hour on a Sunday morning or Saturday night and then you're done with the requirements for the week. It's a religion that makes comprehensive demands upon how you live, how you orient yourselves towards the universe, how your society should function. In that sense, it's somewhat like Islamic law is, somewhat like Jewish law. Jewish law covers all aspects of daily life. The Shariah of Islam is very like that, to call it law, in some ways, is misleading. It is not just law in our sense. It includes five categories of behavior. Things that are mandatory, things that are approved but are not mandatory, things to which the law is indifferent. I can't think of any law in the books in the U.S. where Congress passes a bill indicating they don't care about something. But there is a category in Islamic law where the law says that this action is a matter of indifference to the law. There are also things that are forbidden. Forbidden and mandatory we can understand as legal categories, it's the three in the middle: approved but not mandatory, neutral, and reprehensible but not forbidden—you can do it, it's not a good thing but it's okay, you won't be damned for it. But those categories demonstrate to me at least, that Islamic law does cover a wide range of things, far more than our law does in just about every action of daily life. Just about everything in society and social arrangements—it's covered somewhere or other in the Shariah of Islam, the Islamic legal code. So what that indicates, since Islam is a comprehensive religion making comprehensive demands, is that the submission demanded by Islam to God, is comprehensive. It's not just a matter of personal piety, it's a matter of the submission of everything in the created realm, to God—and that includes society. So that ideally, from the Muslim point of view, society itself and social arrangements should be obedient to God and not in rebellion to God.

Now traditionally, Islamic thinkers have divided the world into two parts, and this is a familiar idea going back to many ancient cultures. There is the good culture and the bad culture. In the Islamic world it's the distinction between the abode of Islam or the abode of submission—the area in which people have submitted to the will of God. And then the other area is the abode of strife or war and this is the area that has not yet been subjugated to the will of a law. Now, this a very complicated issue, and it's not one that I want to get into in any detail right now, and I couldn't. Just exactly how was the Islamic world supposed to react or interact with the, as yet, unsubmitted part of the world? There are those who say that it is always a matter of war, jihad. There are others who say that is not the case, especially lately of course, where gradually we have begun to understand that we actually have to get along with each other more or less, in the world.

But, among a certain strain of Islamists that we're now seeing very prominently displayed in the news, there really is a state of war existing between the Islamic world, the abode of submission and the abode of strife or war. They notice some very interesting things that we also notice about the West. They're very aware about what's going on here.
The critique that’s been made of the West by many Muslim thinkers is far more sophisticated than you might guess by seeing the kind of things that go on in the so-called Arab street or the Pakistani street. They’re aware of what’s going on in the West. Many of them have lived in the West and they know what we’re like in some ways and they’re quite acute in some of their observations. Some of the things they say are not so very different from the kinds of criticism you might hear from the pulpit of the Tabernacle, or now the Conference center. The West, they recognize, used to be a Christian society, but isn’t necessarily anymore. It’s a post-Christian West, as one author calls it in the United States, we have now a naked public square. The decalogue has been or is being removed. Any references to God are being taken out of the various public oaths and so on, the very ceremonies that we indulge in.

And so for Muslims who were raised on tales of Crusader warfare from the West, at least once the West was a kind of spiritual brother and now they’re not so sure that it is. They see it as a society that has gone back into a state very much like the original time of ignorance that existed in pre-Islamic Arabia, a time of paganism that is not worthy of religious tolerance. It’s a very hostile enemy that they’re dealing with. It was Hassan al-Banna, the fellow who founded the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt, who first described the West as this type of society—a society that was fundamentally pagan like pre-Islamic Arabia.

One phrase that many of us are familiar with is the phrase that has been used to describe the United States—something like that [What’s So Great About America]. It’s an interesting book and one of the arguments weren’t political immorality, that they want to be there when God is mentioned. They’re horrified at them—worse, the West is a seductive, insinuating, tempting enemy.

I remember years ago living in Egypt there was an episode, I should look this up to make sure I get the details right, but I think I have it right. There was some upset at the great mosque in Mecca, and because of it there were attacks on U.S. embassies across a region of the Middle East extending over to Pakistan. I think seven U.S. embassies were attacked, one very seriously. In the meantime, at the same time the Soviet Union had invaded Afghanistan and was actively butchering Muslims on the ground. Yet there was no attack on any Soviet Embassy. I remember being somewhat mystified by that and then it gradually occurred to me—and here I’m indulging in some amateur psychohistory, psychobiography—that part of the reason was that nobody ever found the Soviet Union particularly tempting. I went there when it was still the Soviet Union, and it was thoroughly untempting to me. I remember getting back to Egypt, and someone commented earlier today, Elder Porter did, about how happy the Egyptians were despite their poverty. I remember flying in from Moscow and landing in Cairo and just thinking, what a wonderful place. Now, Moscow was much more advanced technologically, but the people seemed far more dismal than the people in Cairo did, and I think that’s a really true observation that people seem to be happy in the Middle East. But the fact was that the Soviet Union could not be tempting. It was an atheistic society that does not appeal to Muslims. There was something grim and unhappy about the whole thing.

The West is a different thing. Our movies, our lifestyle, all these sorts of things are simultaneously repulsive and attractive. I think we’d have to say the same thing is true. From our point of view what we’ve got here is a good society with huge flaws and a lot of moral problems and they’re attractive moral problems. They’re the kinds of things that threaten our youth, that draw people in, and that sort of thing. Many Muslims, many conservative Muslims, see this and they’re horrified. They’re horrified at themselves for finding it attractive I think. I think part of the explosive mix here—here I am indulging in psychohistory, psycho-biography—is that there is a mixture of attraction and repulsion. And this creates a far more potent mix then just repulsion, just being angry. You feel yourself being drawn in and hating yourself and hating the tempter for doing the same thing. So it’s the West as Satan, not only in the sense of overt enemy, but as tempter, as insinuator, as the whisperer who is constantly there spreading doubt about your values, the values your society has trained you to hold and so on. That’s very, very dangerous.

Now, one other observation. There’s a recent book out by Dinesh D’Souza, some of you may have seen it, called “What’s Right About the West, What’s Right About America” something like that. It’s an interesting book and one of the arguments
he makes suddenly struck me as containing a great deal of truth, and I don’t want to push it too far, but he was trying to explain that he’s not a specialist in Islamic studies or anything. But he’s trying to explain what the fundamental difference was between a conservative, I’m speaking a conservative Muslim view here, a fundamentalist to extremist view. Again I’m going to be over simplifying to beat the band here, and I don’t want to suggest that these are either or’s, but sort of idealized tendencies. That in the West, the end of civil society, the end of political society, is freedom. Certainly it is true in the West, or in America that we have seen ourselves historically as creating a free environment in which there was liberty to choose this or that and the government really didn’t direct you as to which choice was right. That freedom was regarded as, within the political sphere at least, a kind of end in itself. And so we are willing, for example, to put up with a lot of really bad things, because people have the right to choose them. We regard it as obvious that virtue that is not freely chosen is not really virtue. That a person who is forced to be chaste because there are no alternatives isn’t really necessarily chaste. And so there has to be freedom to make those choices morally meaningful. Now D’Souza argues that the ideal of Muslim theorists, on the end of the conservative spectrum, is virtue, as the end of government. That government ought to promote virtue. Now in the West it’s increasingly difficult to even talk about that. We are in such a relativistic mire right now that no one can even talk about that. I have even heard colleagues and have read about cases where people say, students say, who’s to say that the Nazis were wrong? I mean I wouldn’t have done it, but you know, they chose it. It was meaningful for them. It puts most of us here into a little bit of an awkward situation. We don’t feel very comfortable with that sort of view. But that’s the direction to which Western societies are tending—very nonjudgmental; freedom is everything.

Islamic conservatism goes the other way and says no, no, no, that freedom leads to immorality, which it undoubtedly does. And so, their choice is to create a society that teaches virtue, that promotes virtue. Muslims see, at least the conservative critique sees, the immorality created by Western freedom, quote, unquote, as “too high a price to pay.” So Islamic fundamentalists tend to believe in social controls that will promote things like chastity, the proper role of women, proper behavior—certain behaviors will be illegal. Prohibition, problematic in the West, is very much in force in certain Muslim societies.

Now there’s another problem. One of the things that also creates the enmity that we’re now seeing between or on the part of Muslim critics of the West, is that, after centuries of triumph, where Islam was the cutting edge civilization on the face of the globe, and it saw itself as the final revelation, and it still does see itself as the final revelation. It went on from triumph to triumph to triumph. There was a long period—several centuries—where Islamic civilization was clearly the leading one on the earth. The West was a backwater. My ancestors, at least, were running around in skins in Northern Europe while they were doing advanced mathematics in Baghdad. However, for the past several centuries there has been a notable faltering. Islamic society has ceased to be the cutting edge technologically and scientifically and culturally.

At first it was easy to miss that; most Muslim societies weren’t paying much attention to what happened in the West. There’s a wonderful line by Ibn Khaldun, the greatest of the late Muslim historians, the late Medieval historians, where he’s giving a survey of what’s going on around the world. China, they’re doing these wonderful things, they’re doing these interesting things in India and so on, and then there’s Northern Europe and he says, who knows, who cares, God knows best what’s going on up there. It’s of no interest to him at around 1400, he doesn’t care, nothing interesting had ever come out of the place and probably never would. Well, it was about that time that the West was beginning to come to life. This little half peninsula that we sort of ethnocentrically call a continent—that sticks out into the Atlantic ocean—was beginning to become the center of the world culturally and scientifically, or would soon there after. But nobody was paying attention to it. When they finally realized there was a crisis in the Islamic world, people began to ask the question “why,” and I would submit that the situation was very similar to what it would be for Latter-day Saints, to try to bring this home. We see ourselves, the Church, as the final dispensation, the last restoration of the gospel. It’s supposed to be the stone that is cut out of the mountain without hands and will go forth and fill the earth. We’re used to triumph after triumph. Missionary success, new temples, new churches, all this sort of thing, but what if we went through a period where we began to falter, where the progress slowed down, where we began to have to sell off temples—things like that. I would imagine there would be people out there wondering what on earth has gone wrong? Maybe it wasn’t true. How can we fix it?

And there were several solutions suggested. People tried to renew Islamic society with, first, borrowed military technology, then parliamentary democracy, socialism under Nasser and people like that, now Islamic fundamentalism. They’re getting back to their roots, “This is the way we were successful in the early days, so let’s go back to what made us successful,” and they make a powerful argument for that. Another thing that helps to understand this is that Islam is an apocalyptic faith. We forget that sometimes, but the Qur’an is full of apocalyptic visions much like the Bible, about the end of time, the culmination of human history and so on and so forth. And for a certain strain of Islam, they see us moving towards the end time as well, the time of the triumph of Islam, the decisive intervention of God. One of the interesting things to come out of the fall of the Soviet Union was that there were people in Afghanistan, Al-Qaeda, and the Taliban, who thought they were responsible for the fall of the Soviet Union. That it was their stance against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan that finally brought the Soviet system down—because God had intervened on their behalf. And so now, small though they be hiding out in caves in Afghanistan, they would be able to bring down the other great imperialistic power of the twentieth century, and that’s the United States, and that God would intervene decisively on their behalf. So they see themselves as warriors against this secularizing, tempting, evil society that menaces them,
that really is, as Osama Bin Laden says, a genuine threat, the

As I said, I’m painting a portrait of a particular group

The vast majority of Muslims don’t have these apocalyptic
visions as far as I know, at least my friends don’t. But there
are some who do, and these are the ones we have to worry
about—the situation where extremists on all sides drive
the conversation, the discussion, the debate on the situation.
These people right now are driving the dialogue, such as it
is, from the Islamic side, and other people are cowed and
intimidated by them. But you run into this sort attitude in
surprising places. Several years ago I had the experience of
going up to Idaho State University to speak at a Muslim–
Mormon dialogue. The Muslim Student Association at
Idaho State had sought to get Elder Holland and they only
got me. But it was an interesting experience. I’d done one
of these before and it was really a lot of fun and very suc-

As it got closer, for various reasons, I began to have a
really funny feeling about this thing. And sure enough when
I arrived, there were tables full of Muslim, anti-Mormon
literature and so I had never seen Muslim anti-Mormon lit-
erature before so it was kind of fun. They have a lot of work
to do; they could borrow some materials from some of our
evangelical critics and do a little better. Anyway, the fellow
that had been brought in to speak as my opposite number
was armed for war. I had no idea. I had this little talk ready
on common areas between Islam and Mormonism and I
soon realized that that was out of place. This was a full scale
war that he was prepared for. He had overhead transparen-
cies and everything, attacking mainly the deity of Christ. I
think I did alright, but the fun part at the end was, for some
of the audience, and by the way, there were no Latter-day
Saints in the audience; they were all at some big institute
activity that night, and so the only people in the audience
were Muslims and the Evangelical Protestants, who were all
gunning for me. At the end, one of them, a Muslim fellow
who is a professional evangelist from Toronto, was unlike
a lot of people I’ve met before. I asked him what would
happen if his brand of Islam came to power in the United
States, and he said, “We would ban all other religions and
make conversion from Islam a capital offense.” And then
they turned to me and said, “Well, what do you have to say
about that?” I said, “Well, I don’t think I could approve of
that answer to that,” and he turned to me and said, “What?
Admit it! If you Mormons came to power in the United
States, you would do exactly the same thing. You would
criminalize all non-Mormon religions and make conversion
from Mormonism a capital offense.” I said, “Absolutely not.
It’s not true.” Because, of course, central to our belief is
the idea of freedom; clearly not in his form of Islam. It was
a little bit scary. See, from his point of view—this is a view
that I’ve heard from time to time—although the Qur’an says
there is no coercion of religion, I sometimes wonder if cer-
tain people have not read that verse. But anyway, from his
point of view, the time for the lack of coercion has passed.
Jews, Christians, others have been around long enough, they
now know the truth, it’s time to push through to a final—I
want to say “final solution,” but that has unfortunate con-
notations. It’s time to push through to a time when Islam
will rule the world by force, because the old prohibition of
coercion of religion is obsolete.

Now, what I want to suggest is that Samuel Huntington’s
view of the clash of civilizations—maybe some of you have
heard of this—is probably not a fair summation of the over-
all situation between the West and the Islamic world, but in
the minds of certain people, it is. One—my last major trip to
the Middle East was last year in April, and I was struck by
how much press that book was getting among the Muslims I
always talked with. Everybody was talking about it. Nobody
here was talking about it, but everyone over there was. They
were all furious about it. I have no doubt that for those sorts
of people I was meeting, that’s not an issue for them. But
for a certain faction in the Islamic world, it very much is,
and they see it as a clash of an atheist civilization of the
West, and the submitted civilization of the Islamic world,
and that’s a bit scary.

What is our role in this? Well, it seems to me that
Omar Kader’s position that certain people are simply not
dialogue-able is right. You can’t negotiate with them. These
terrorists, they simply belong in jail. There’s not much you
can do about it. Maybe a next generation can be talked to,
but not the one’s currently tossing bombs. We can’t do
much about the extremists. I remember an experience I had
just a little while ago where an ambassador came through
here, and we were about to watch a series which the first
book should be off the press in about a week or two, where
we were going to be translating the medical works of
Moses Maimonides, the greatest of the medieval Jewish
rabbis—obviously a Jewish rabbi—who wrote in Arabic—a
philosopher, theologian, legal specialist and physician. This
was an ambassador from Morocco, and I asked him, I was
a little worried about whether doing this would jeopardize
the good relations we had built up with some of the Islamic
world through our Islamic translation series. He said, “Oh,
no, no, no, this is a wonderful idea,” he said, “Maimonides
was an Arab,” which of course is true; culturally he is an
Arab, despite the fact that he was Jewish. And then he got
this thoughtful look on his face, and he said, “Well, of
course, you can’t, you won’t please Hamas.” But then he
said, “Who cares? You can never please Hamas.”

And that’s the way I feel about it. What we need to
do is to build bridges with the moderate Muslim commu-
nity out there, which is a very large community. Maybe
the silent majority, to borrow that old phrase from the
Nixon era. These are people who right now are feeling,
in many cases, I think, intimidated, scared, because of the
ascendancy of militant extremists, but we need to talk with
them. They’re the ones that we really do share values with.
It seems to me we are very much on the same side, against
secularism, but against the forces of religious extremism as
well. We need to reach out to them, we need to give them
successes. One of the failures, one of the reasons that the
parliamentary democratic movement failed in the Islamic world in the early twentieth century was that the West lingered on too long. These various parties promised to get the imperialists out, but the imperialists didn’t leave, and so people turned to a new way of getting rid of the imperialists, namely, Marxist socialism, and so on. We need to make sure that, to the extent that it’s in our power, the moderates are strengthened, the moderates are given success, that we deal with them, that we encourage and support them, and marginalize the extremists. That will help the Church; it will help the United States; it will help the West. I think we need to think regionally. We need to look at various areas where we can do the most good. Certain areas right now are probably unworkable, but other areas are not. I always think of Turkey in this regard—places we can deal with moderate, serious-thinking Muslims. Not only as a Church, but as a country, and as a civilization. There are many, many places in the Middle East. It’s not a monolith. It’s not one big, undifferentiated mass. We just have to think this through intelligently, and make our approaches where we can, and make common cause with those Muslims out there with whom we have so much in common.

Well, I think Latter-day Saints are in a very good position to do that. These Middle Eastern text series that I’m involved with, I think are one good way of doing that. I remember an experience I had years ago talking with a fellow, a convert to Islam in Cairo, who asked me if I was studying Islam, and I said yes. We talked about that for a while, and then he began to denounce me as someone who didn’t take religion seriously. He never actually asked what my own religious views were; he was thinking I was just an Orientalist who was just looking at Islamists as an interesting intellectual exercise. It’s an image that too many people in the Middle East have—too many people in the Islamic world have—of the United States and the West as a thoroughly godless place, which is not altogether inaccurate. Latter-day Saints could come across as a real exception to that rule. We surprise people. I remember a conversation with a girl in Syria. She was a medical professor, but young; people are younger and younger to me now. But she said they have stereotypes of us, and we have stereotypes of them, and she said that meeting the Arabic-intensive Arabic students who are over there in Damascus was an eye-opener for her, because she had been led to believe that all Americans were godless, amoral, and everything else, and to meet these kids just changed her entire image of Americans in general, but certainly for the first time when she met Latter-day Saints and realized there was a group out there that was as serious in their way about their faith as she was about hers. And so I like to think that Latter-day Saints do, can serve as a kind of bridge between West and East in this regard, that we are a people who still take the spiritual dimension of life seriously, and the idea of building these bridges with the youth was the same concept, building up a Zion society. I’d want to be careful about using that term with Muslims because of its unfortunate connotations, but we take the social dimension seriously, too. We think there’s such a thing as a righteous society, and not only righteous individuals. This is something we can share with our Muslim interlocutors. We have a great deal in common, but we need to find those people with whom we have commonalities and work with them; there’s quite a great deal of optimism, about the possibility of doing that.
I was wondering whether the point I’m going to make today would be different than the point that I would have made on 19 August 2001. And I’ve wondered this at various times during the year: am I thinking differently because of the media onslaught that talks about the intersection of politics and religion when one looks at Islam. If I’m going to be very honest at all, I shouldn’t have fallen off one answer to the other, either in berating the Muslim world or in defending them and apologizing for them, but we have to admit that the world has changed. But how much of it has changed? Are we the ones who have changed? Have they changed? Exactly what is happening? We will be marking in less than a month the anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center towers, and I think this is an event that is engraved in all of our hearts, and it’s something that has changed our lives. But we’re finding that it has changed lives all over the rest of the world as well. We now see not just a few teenage suicide bombers in Palestine, claiming that religion is behind the bombings to a great extent, but we’ve seen them coming day after day after day, we’ve seen the troubles in Indonesia, we’ve fought a war in Afghanistan. We’re speaking of a preemptive attack in Iraq. And suddenly the Middle East, far from being the backwater it was when I began in Middle Eastern studies a few decades ago, is now become the center of world thought and world politics.

I want to make a few observations about the way politics and religion fit together, but I want to start with a statement that’s going to be very bluntly phrased. I think there’s an awful lot of bad thinking going on, on all sides. I just spent a month, in a couple of installments, in North Africa, and so I heard some of what people are talking about. I’ve been reading the media devotedly ever since 11 September, and I’m not sure that it’s doing me a favor. The newspapers made the point over the weekend that psychologists have studied the reaction of individuals to television broadcasting following 9/11, and they’ve found that the more we’ve watched TV, the more we’ve been exposed to repeated rebroadcasts of what happened, or to discussions of what happened, the more anxious and the more upset we seem to be. They are now making recommendations that no children under the age of four be allowed to watch the anniversary footage that will be shown, because children under the age of four are not able to differentiate what is happening now on television and what was happening in the past. And they say it’s very upsetting for them to watch adults being so out of control. So we may want to take a look at what we’re saying and how we’re taking a conflict situation, and how we’re dealing with it. How are the people in the Middle East, and the other parts of the Muslim world, taking the conflict situation and what are they making of it? Well, when one goes to the Middle East and begins speaking in Arabic about the situation, there are a number of different words that can be used to mean “extremist,” and they run from one side of the spectrum, which is “terrorist,” to the other side of the spectrum, which simply means “somebody that we disagree with.” And the way of setting up the terms of debate, how positive and how negative they are, can be very well differentiated. I hope that we are all able to do the same thing, and that we are not falling into polarizations that push people into the different categories.

I was raised in Bountiful, Utah. I went off to do graduate school in Chicago, and I spent a fair amount of time in the Middle East. When I returned to Utah to take up a position at Brigham Young University in Utah County, I found myself in what seemed to be one of the most fascinating places on earth, judging from the newspaper headlines. I came back to Utah in time for Emmanual David, who drove himself and his family off the Shilo Hotel. I came back in time for the Lafferty brothers’ murders of their sister-in-law and her daughter, correct me if I’m wrong. I came back for the Mark Hoffman bombings, which turned our entire society upside down as we had random bombings going off murdering people here and there. And one of the questions one of my colleagues from Chicago asked was, “Is this something that Mormons do? Or is this something that Mormonism does to us? You know, where is all this coming from? Do we have more of this to look forward to?” Well, at the time, the Middle East was very calm, and when I would go back to visit my friends and tell them what was happening in Utah, they were fascinated. They were absolutely fascinated, and they said, “What is it about your religion that combines in this way to produce people who take the law into their own hands?” Well, we can probably ask some of the same question these days of the Middle East, and we are.

I’d like to take up a few points. The first point is that the present conventional view of Islam is that Islam is a religion that combines religion and state. And this is said in Arabic again and again, and especially if you are trained in historical Islam the way I was, that religion is state and religion, and it’s tied together. Now, the more I’ve thought about this, I’ve realized that the Muslims say that they’re very distinct in this, and many people, many U.S. Orientalists, say the same thing, but I’m not really sure that Muslims are unique. My study of world religions leads me to the conclusion that not all, but most world religions also
marry religion and politics in some way or another. Muslims are very up-front about it, and they emphasize it. Islam lays down rules for contact, for personal contact and for social contact, and it gives them hints about political order, but it says very, very little about politics. Islamic law is composed of a variety of different books of law, and they take up questions such as personal devotion and religious duties, the way one governs oneself, the way a family is organized, and the way family relations are taken care of, conduct during war and times of war, and commerce.

The political hints that one picks up are fairly slight, and they have been developed over time. In reality, throughout history, state and religion were actually relatively separate. Religion was used to legitimize the power politics of military leaders, and was essentially utilized as a veneer to make the rule of men (who were sometimes useful statesmen, sometimes absolute despots) more acceptable to the people that they ruled. Today, we see very much the same use of religion to legitimize a political action front. Politics cloaked in the language of religion. Now, why would this be so? Well, this shouldn’t be a difficult question to anyone who attends a Mormon ward, because in most of the wards I’ve attended at one time or another, politics—political questions—comes up, and we search for light through religious means that can illuminate our political choices. It is very easy to move from this point to laying down a political position that becomes defended by religion. And I was fascinated to leave Chicago and find out when I returned to Utah, that if I wasn’t a Republican, I was godless. And I think, Omar, that you were famous for that, weren’t you? That’s where you gained your first reputation. Well, religion gives a lot of power to politicians. And in the Middle East, some of the most important political issues are the need for social justice, the need for some kind of economic balance and care, for the have-nots as well as for the wealthy, the issue of stamping out corruption, and the search for leaders that are virtuous leaders, not venal leaders.

The language of religion, and the teachings of Islam, call for fair play in politics. The lack of an express political roadmap, by any kind of Muslim writings, opens up the political game for anyone who wants to use religious labels to push their positions. One of my colleagues, the chancellor of the Muslim university in Morocco, spoke to me one day about politics, and he said, “In Morocco, in the current day, if we had an Islamic party running in the elections, they would corner between 75 percent and 90 percent of the vote in the country.” I asked why, and he said, “Because people assume that if it is an Islamic party, it will be a fair, just, and equitable party; that the political leaders will not be corrupt.” He went on to add that it is precisely for this reason that the government prohibits organization of political parties along religious lines. They allow a certain amount of leeway, but no religious-political parties may organize or run for office.

For us in the West, tying together virtuous leaders, social justice, economic justice, a lack of corruption, to an Islamic ideal, can make things a little bit difficult for us in trying to analyze and understand what’s going on in the Middle East. Let me just mention a couple of drawbacks to our analytical powers. The first is that is the case for Mormons, for Muslims, religious symbols can have double meanings. This was shown vividly during the revolution in Iran, when the religious passion plays commemorating the death of the grandson of the Prophet Muhammad, which are enacted every year at a set time during the year, became a double for an attack on Shah Mohammed Reza Pahlavi. And every time a village, or a town, or people in a city went to the religious passion plays, they were essentially staging a political tract in the most vivid possible terms. And as the years approaching the Iranian Revolution proceeded, the understanding of the people watching the passion play, as to the political action they were watching, became more and more fervent. The second drawback is that religious institutions and religious buildings can be used for religious purposes, but they can also be used for purposes of organization. They may be used for worship, but they may also be a place of organization. Iran is also an instructive example here. Before the Iranian Revolution, the opposition at the very strong religious side used mosques and religious schools as conduits for political messages, and religious students carried messages or transmitted them around the country without any problem whatsoever. Although censorship was almost absolute in Iran, messages coded in religious terms were sent on cassette tapes and sometimes through Xerox copies. We watched this going on in the Soviet Union, although not in a religious sense, but I think, given our electronic age today, we have to think back to how effective censorship could be, and the ways of getting around it needed to be fairly devious. I asked my students—and as a matter of fact, I continue to ask them—I say, “Assume that everything—your telephones, your cell phones, your computers, your e-mail—is being monitored by the government. But working within a Mormon network, we have to transmit messages by hand, say, from northern Mexico into Canada. How much trouble would you have using wards and seminary buildings and institutes to get a message from Mexico to Canada, by hand, in a week or so?” My students, evidently, would make natural spies. They all said, “We could do it in three days, max. It would be no problem at all.” We have a ready-made network, and no one would necessarily know that anything else was happening.

The drawback for us in the United States is trying to monitor which organizations may be politically oriented to a destructive degree and which may be politically oriented to a positive degree. Because we have to understand their language, their symbolism in the language. And we have to note that there are organizational patterns that may be difficult for us to penetrate.

My next point is that, as you probably have heard a number of times, there is no pope in Islam. Muslims have no central religious hierarchy. This lack of a clear, defined religious hierarchy hinders moderation far too often, and it far too often can facilitate extremism. The lack of a central hierarchy, and an accepted way of defining a position for the community of Muslims worldwide, allows groups to speak for themselves. And any group with a position that they care to publicize can become equally prominent, in the eyes of those observing in the West, to any other group.
And we’ve noticed over the past year that the extremist groups tend to command far more of the attention than the moderate groups. In the Western eye, since we know so little, and since we’re feeling highly threatened, we pay a lot of attention to Al-Qaeda, to Hamas, to various groups that have arisen at different times and different places in the Muslim world, whether from Indonesia, Egypt, or Algeria. Mainstream Muslims tend to be hurt the most, since they seldom lack an agenda, or a moderate leader, or the access to airtime to present their moderate views, and if so, they’ll probably get perhaps equal time as one extremist, or perhaps less time than any extremist. And to their credit, various Muslim leaders have tried to move and make themselves available for the media. Media cuts generally play to more extreme positions, and they find it not so interesting to say, “We’re moderate; we don’t believe in killing people; we don’t defend these positions.” One of my friends in college, Henry Munson, who is himself a Muslim, in a book about extremism in North Africa, made the point that—it was a very poignant point, actually—he said, “If I go to pray in a mosque, to many people in the world, I become an extremist.” But he said, “All I’m doing is praying to my God. The fact that I go to the mosque to pray does not make me an extremist. It is not a sign of political activism. It is a sign of personal devotion.”

Many Islamist groups have projects to work on social welfare systems. In this, they find any discussion of our church welfare program, our humanitarian program, to be enormously illuminating. Muslims have set up soup kitchens, they have set up welfare organizations, they have set up organizations to try to provide housing, care for orphans, care for widows; there are a number of different organizations in every Muslim country in the world, and there are numbers of different organizations within almost every country. These Islamist organizations may or may not be politically active. The organizations that are politically active, such as is the case with some of the most prominent Islamist organizations in Jordan, may have no agenda connected to terror. Other organizations may have ties to extremist groups, or to groups that utilize terror. Our job is to differentiate among all of these different groups which are seeking just to educate their children, which are seeking to provide an outlet for their neighborhoods, which are working to try to buffer the poverty in their groups, and which may have political motives that could be destructive, either in their own country or in countries outside the area. We greatly need moderate Muslims to stake out moderate positions. Not Muslims with agendas that are pushing world conversion, such as the story that Daniel just told, but moderate Muslims who understand their religion and who are willing to step up and defend a moderate stance. There are various historical statements, within the religion, some of them—most of them of dubious attribution—which play to extremists. Perhaps the one that most haunts Mormon missionaries and mission presidents today is the injunction to kill the apostate—anyone who apostatizes from Islam should be killed. This statement has little support among most Muslim scholars, but when individuals are not well educated, when they have a strong agenda, these statements can be used to cause harm. Individuals with agendas that pursue them can be very difficult to deal with.

The final problem that I want to lay out is the complication of the current political situation in the Middle East. We have an extremely dynamic situation in Palestine, as was laid out very ably this morning. We also are involved to a fairly strong degree in Pakistan. We are looking at the possibility of a preemptive strike in Iraq. There are political machinations going on throughout the Muslim world and throughout the Middle East, and it’s been a very difficult, a very troubling year because almost anything you read in the news magazines, you have to ask yourself what particular group has pushed for this article to be included—especially in the American media. The preoccupation that we have, and the perceptions that we have in the United States in terms of Palestine, even the possibilities that we’re laying out a preemptive strike in Iraq, immediately polarize Muslims throughout the world. And we are extremely naive if we don’t recognize that our actions engender very strong reactions, and that what we may be seeing may not totally be an action on the Middle Eastern part; it may be a reaction. And as we spiral, action to reaction, we begin a widening spiral that sets more and more into actual violence or into potential violence. It’s difficult to talk to moderate Muslims in the Middle East, in North Africa, I assume throughout the rest of the Muslim world, about anything having to do with the world situation today, without them being extremely apprehensive about Western motives, about U.S. motivations. It’s very—they do not believe that we are an honest broker, and I do not believe that we are an honest broker. This will complicate relations between Muslims and Christians, it will complicate relations between Muslims and Jews, because politics will always be barely under the surface.

If we were to bring an Islamist here today, and let him speak, a moderate one, you would probably find that you were fairly sympathetic with about 90 percent of the issues that he or she raised, because most of their issues would have to do with the moral standards of society. They’re concerned about adultery. They’re concerned about teenage sex. They’re concerned about what comes over the satellite television. They’re concerned about the virtue of their national leaders. They are concerned about political systems that tend to be corrupt. On these issues we may find that we are very sympathetic. The answers of about 90 percent of the Islamists to the situation, in terms of what should be done, we would probably find not sympathetic, we would probably find them unsatisfactory. The reason for this is that, having been socialized in a liberal, democratic society, and being brought up as Latter-day Saints, with the doctrine of agency, the freedom of choice, where we’re told that, as Samuel the Lamanite said, that we have freedom. We have knowledge. We are to know good from evil. And it is for us to decide. The answers and solutions of many Islamists is to close the system, to have the system be more coercive—and this is a strong percentage of them, not all, so I don’t want them all characterized, but a strong percentage—we would find these answers unsatisfactory. But we need to notice, at the same time, that millions and millions of Muslims, increasing numbers of Muslims, live in Canada
and the United States, France, England, Germany, throughout the developed world in liberal democracies. They live there quietly, in secular societies, having no difficulty whatsoever reconciling the religious demands of their personal religion and the demands of a secular state, and the demands of democracy, and the individual responsibility that is demanded from a citizen in a democracy. This, I think, may give us pause for thought in terms of evaluating the compatibility or the incompatibility of the religion of Islam with democracy and with governmental systems that we hold dear to ourselves.
Sovereignty, Legal Religious Exclusivity, and Legal Religious Pluralism in Monotheistic Societies

by Arnold H. Green, professor of history, BYU

This essay considers how expressions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam either have used sovereignty to create legal religious exclusivity for themselves or have allowed legal religious pluralism. Sovereignty entails wielding supreme power over a country within its territory. In many situations, a sectarian group established with a government a special relationship enabling it to direct sovereignty to the end of creating for itself a privileged role. Legal religious exclusivity refers not to theological claims. A religion, even if asserting theological exclusivity (only its way leads to the zenith of salvation), might not seek legal religious exclusivity (state-enforced constraints on rival denominations). The opposite of theological exclusivity is theological pluralism, which holds that many religious paths can lead humankind to spiritual fulfillment. The opposite of legal religious exclusivity is legal religious pluralism, which a religion practices if it acquiesces in other faiths having more or less equal constitutional status in the society.

It is of interest in this discussion to consider what policies can be inferred from the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an concerning sovereignty, legal religious exclusivity, and legal religious pluralism—the topic of this essay’s initial section. However, historians prefer examining the actual “was” to the theoretical “ought.” Heavenly counsels have not been implemented consistently in human societies—not even in those identifying themselves in religious terms. Indeed, investigating historical situations discloses patterns of behavior stemming mainly from the natural drive for hegemony, patterns in which leaders selectively quote scriptures as legitimizing symbols. Perhaps for that reason, if we take the Prince at face value, Machiavelli advised would-be statesmen to draw their political understandings not from abstract maxims about how governments should function but rather from concrete cases illustrating how they really operate.

In regard to exploring these issues on the basis of concrete experience, on the one hand five observations summarize this essay’s argument about the “track records” of Islamic, Christian, and Jewish societies. First, virtually all denominations having access to sovereignty promoted legal religious exclusivity for themselves while inhibiting others. Second, employing to that end violent or coercive means correlated with rulers using religion to expand territory and to consolidate power as well as with popular fanaticism. Third, transitions by denominations away from legal religious exclusivity toward legal religious pluralism occurred involuntarily, along with their loss of access to sovereignty, owing mainly to the secularization of the modern West. Fourth, certain modern pressures that led erstwhile “Christian societies” to abandon legal religious exclusivity did not arise within the Islamic world but impinged upon it through Europe’s global expansion. Fifth, policies of many Islamic states and movements today therefore reflect ambivalence about and tension between a still vigorous regional tradition of using sovereignty to maintain legal religious exclusivity and the model of legal religious pluralism emanating from the modern, now secularized West.

On the other hand, the relationship between a society’s past and its future is no more necessary than that between its pious professions and its earthly practices. Examining the historical record may be a better way than reading scriptural texts to achieve understanding of actual behavior in monotheistic societies. Yet, just as these have drawn symbols from their scriptures to justify past institutions and policies, they are free to draw various symbols from their historical traditions to chart and legitimize future initiatives.

Abstracting Scriptural Symbols

Even in efforts to furnish dispassionate evaluations of a theme in a scriptural corpus, informed observers often disagree. Nevertheless, insights come through deducing from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptures, generalizations about sovereignty, legal religious exclusivity, and legal religious pluralism. These include appreciations that principles must sometimes be abstracted from cryptic verses and that disparate polices can be justified on grounds of different passages.

The Hebrew Bible illustrates such appreciations. On the one hand, that sovereignty should be sought and wielded to promote legal religious exclusivity for Mosaic Judaism can be inferred from the many injunctions to “go in and possess the land” (Deut. 4: 1). That armed force is justified to maximize legal religious exclusivity and to minimize legal religious pluralism can be inferred from related commands to “drive out” and “smite” Canaan’s previous inhabitants on grounds that their religions were seductive as well as abominable. On the other hand, because the applicability and success of the “possess” and “smite” mandates were conditional upon faithfulness, the scriptures attribute to sinfulness not only the mandates’ invalidation but also military reverses, enemies’ dominion, and exile or dispersion. Consequently, the major prophets, who arose under growing Mesopotamian hegemony, argued against seeking sovereignty, implying that—at least in the short run—personal and community righteousness might be pursued without it. For a Jewish society, the books of Isaiah and Jeremiah...
thus furnish a different set of scriptural symbols than do the books of Deuteronomy and Joshua.

Writing under Roman sway, the Gospel authors did not at all encourage Christians to seek sovereignty—a prerequisite for legal religious exclusivity. Quite the opposite; they quoted Jesus as advising disciples to “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” and as making it clear that “My kingdom is not of this world.” Paul likewise counseled Christians “to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates.” Whereas, to some Christians, the money changers incident might justify using force to stop the desecration of holy places, the circumstance and language of Jesus’ instructing his apostles to bear persecution cheerfully while teaching all nations implies spreading the word by persuasion rather than by armed might. On the whole, the New Testament contains no clear symbols for insisting upon sovereignty or for using it to enforce legal religious exclusivity for a Christian denomination. Conversely, while the New Testament lacks explicit mandates for legal religious pluralism, the parable of the good Samaritan and passages from the sermon on the mount might well serve as the basis for it.

The Qur’an has numerous counterparts to the Bible’s many “possess” and “smite” injunctions. Indeed, it cites the examples of Saul and David in urging Muslims to “fight in the cause of Allah” (2: 246–51), the command’s standard formulation that recurs often. Muslims are told to examples of Saul and David in urging Muslims to gent symbols. The former counsels to sympathy toward legal religious pluralism, the Hebrew Bible teaches to forget about sovereignty in certain circumstances and to forget about sovereignty in others, while the latter provides justification for coercive conversion, as well as for allowing religious differences.

**Track Records: Sovereignty and Legal Exclusivity**

**Jewish Societies.** The quest for a clear, complete understanding of the actual experience of nonbiblical Jewish societies founders on the shoal of insufficient evidence. There has survived very little documentation about the religious policies of the Jerusalem-based Hasmoneans/Maccabees (140–63 BC), the Judean state of Bar Kokhba (AD 132–135), the kingdom of the South Arabian convert-to-Judaism King Dhu Nawas (AD sixth century), and the Central Asian Khazar kingdom (AD seventh–eighth centuries). While scholars agree that many Sidonians (Phoenicians) and Idumaeans (Edomites) were Judaized under Hasmonean rule, they disagree about whether or the degree to which force was involved in that process. Nor is it clear whether South Arabsians simply followed the lead of Dhu Nawas in espousing Judaism or whether he pressured them to do so. Not only is there little data about the Khazars’ religious policies, there lacks consensus about whether Judaism was even the majority or the official religion of that Turkic kingdom. Nevertheless, it does appear safe to conclude that the Hasmonean rulers and Bar Kokhba sought and exercised sovereignty and legal religious exclusivity for Judaism and that they did not cultivate legal religious pluralism.

**Christian Societies.** There has survived a better documentary corpus for making generalizations about the one hundred-plus regimes that defined themselves mainly in Christian terms from third-century Armenia and fourth-century Byzantium until secularizing trends began to “dechristianize” European states after the seventeenth century.

Every one of these societies had some particular Christian denomination as its official religion. In Eastern Europe and the Levant, the state religion was invariably some version of Eastern Orthodoxy or a Monophysite expression. After the Protestant Reformation, some states in NW Europe adopted as respective official faiths either Lutheranism or a variety of Calvinism. As a rule, having access to sovereignty, the official church saw to it that rival Christian faiths, deemed heretical, were permitted no legal footing (Calvinist Netherlands proved a rare exception). Following Christian Rome’s example, many Christian states regarded Judaism as a religio licita (legal region), while imposing on Jews various disabilities (extra taxes, severe limitation on numbers of synagogues, prohibition on owning certain kinds of property, inability to pursue certain educational or professional paths, and to hold governmental offices). These disabilities made it clear that Jews and others not belonging to the official religion could not participate fully in any given Christian society. In other words, although the New Testament seemed pointedly to avoid requiring sovereignty and legal religious exclusivity as Christian goals, these nevertheless were universally pursued by Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant clergy and rulers.

**Islamic societies.** Their scripture containing injunctions to “fight in the cause of Allah” and their founding prophet having in effect established a state as well as a religion, Muslims had strong theoretical grounds for seeking and exercising sovereignty to maximize legal religious exclusivity while minimizing legal religious pluralism. As a rule the fifty-plus Islamic states materializing from the
seventh century to the present, have pursued these objectives and implemented these policies no less zealously than did contemporaneous Christian ones. Typically, on the one hand, a particular expression of Islam20 became the official religion, which pulled the levers of power to marginalize other Islamic and non-Islamic religious groupings.

On the other hand, by the seventh-century Muslim conquest of the Fertile Crescent and Egypt, this region was a religious “shatterbelt”—a term geographers use to describe an area that numerous conquests and immigrations have endowed with a mosaic of human populations. Under Islamic rule during the seventh–nineteenth centuries, the Fertile Crescent contained many Christian denominations, streams and offshoots of Judaism, and several Muslim groupings and offshoots. While privileging their respective official version of Islam, Muslim dynasties as a rule applied the Roman religio licita label and policy to most other faiths, excepting some Islamic offshoots deemed heretical, which were frequently suppressed de jure but only sporadically de facto. Christians and Jews occupied the legal status of ahl al-dhimma (people of protection), which represented an Islamic adaptation of the Byzantine Christian policy toward Jews. This policy allowed non-Muslim monotheists relative freedom of worship in exchange for explicitly subservient behaviors (no proselytizing, limitations on numbers of churches/synagogues, paying higher taxes, avoiding bearing arms or riding horses, not holding governmental offices, wearing identifying badges or headgear) that clearly relegated them to second-class status. During early Ottoman times (1300–1700) this policy was formalized as the Millet system, which co-opted into the Ottoman bureaucracy Christian and Jewish leaders who added governmental to ecclesiastical powers over their flocks.

In other words, outbursts aside, the actual experience of Islamic states—regarding the human tendency to seek power and to exercise it in favor of one particular religious group over others—has been more or less comparable to that of Christian societies. Indeed, whereas Christian states invariably ignored the New Testament’s anti-sovereignty message, Islamic states more or less mirrored the Qur’an’s diverse symbols.

Violence as Popular Outburst and as State Policy

At the end of a career spent studying Near Eastern and Western faiths, Stanford University’s Gavin Langmuir observed that “no religious stance has caused more violence than monotheism.” Their antiquity, paucity, and poor documentation hinder generalizing about nonbiblical Jewish states’ behavior toward religious minorities, with one snippet of an exception. Justin Martyr (d. ) recalled (I Apol. 31.6) that “in the Jewish war which happened just recently, Bar Kokhba, the leader of the Jewish revolt, ordered that Christians alone should be led away to terrible punishments, unless they would deny Jesus the Messiah and blaspheme.” Two observations apply to this section generally as well as to this incident particularly. The first deals with the author’s bias; Justin observed from his own sectarian perspective. The second concerns contextualization; Bar Kokhba regularly attacked Jews unwilling to support his war, so perhaps Christians (most of whom were Jews in early second-century Palestine) suffered persecution in part for that reason. Contextualizing violence of course does not excuse it, an observation that applies as much to the Bar Kokhba-like ideology and policy of contemporary Israel’s “settler rabbis” as it does to Bar Kokhba himself.

Sufficient records do exist to demonstrate that in most Christian and Islamic societies violence was a common occurrence but not necessarily a continuous policy. That is, while all Islamic and pre-1700 Christian states systematically practiced legal religious exclusivity, violence against religious minorities normally was episodic, although some episodes were quite lengthy. These bouts tended to correlate with a spectrum having popular fanaticism at one end and state expansion through conquest at the other.

Popular Christian aggression against religious minorities was spasmodic until the First Crusade (1096–99). Then, despite objections by many princes and some bishops, monk-led mobs slaughtered or forcibly baptized thousands of Jews in France, the Rhineland, Germany, and Bohemia. Arriving in Jerusalem in 1099, the milites Christi (soldiers of Christ) killed (often by mass burning) numerous civilians—Muslims, Jews, and even Eastern Christians. One renegade Crusader boss delighted in decimating Mecca-bound caravans of Muslim pilgrims. Acting decisively at the start of the Second Crusade (1146–47), authorities prevented fresh massacres in Europe, although the Jews of Wurzburg were exterminated anyway. King Richard I’s decision to join the Third Crusade (1189–92) spurred mobs to attack Jewish quarters in all English towns, with the massacre at York in 1190 proving the most serious. The epoch’s popular fanaticism included “blood libels” (accusations that Jews kidnapped and crucified Christian children), charges of “ritual murder” (Jews steal sacrament wafers, having transmuted to become Christ’s very flesh, in order to torture Him afresh), and rumors that Jews were poisoning wells to spread the Black Death. Such defamations provoked additional outbursts—such as the massacre at Fulda (1235) after a blood libel or that at Rottingen (1298) following a ritual murder charge—that claimed thousands of victims. European Jews not killed or forcibly baptized were evicted; by the end of the long Crusading era (1096–1396), most of West-central Europe was judenrein ("Jew-free"). By that time, the Christian Reconquista was nearing its completion in ex-Muslim Spain, where in the late fourteenth century penance-seeking militants decimated Muslim and Jewish civilians and forcibly baptized thousands of Jews. These Conversos or Marranos, subsequently accused of practicing Judaism in secret, were then subjected to the Spanish Inquisition, which claimed numerous victims while spreading into every Spanish or Portuguese colony and lasting until the eighteenth century.

Additional popular outbursts, like the St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre in 1572, when Catholic mobs butchered French Protestants, occurred in the context of the Counter-Reformation and the attendant religious wars. Catholics had no monopoly on murderous zealotry. Luther initially expected Jewish support of and voluntary conversion to his reformed Christianity—as suggested in his Jesus
Christ Was Born a Jew (1523). But he became embittered when his expectations failed to materialize and published Of the Jews and Their Lies (1544) while successfully urging German lords and commoners to attack Jews and to burn their homes and synagogues. In Eastern Europe, where (by way of contextualization) Jews served as resented tax-collectors for the Polish overlords, Ukrainian Orthodox peasants perpetrated the Chmielnicki Massacres (1648–49), exterminating more than 150,000 Jews. During the next 250 years pogroms became increasingly frequent in Russia and neighboring Christian principalities.

Church chroniclers of virtually every once-Christian-land conquered by Islam recorded wanton killing by Muslims of Christians and Jews and destructions or confiscations of their meetinghouses. Although apologists point out that Islamic policy was to convert by force only pagans (polytheistic Arabs or Berbers) but not ahl al-kitab (scripture-possessing monotheists), practice did not consistently follow policy. For example, despite the terms of the Pact of Omar, Greek Christians were forcibly Islamized at Gaza’s conquest (634). Egypt’s Shi’i (and perhaps deranged) Caliph al-Hakim slaughtered Christians and Jews (and Sunni Muslims!) in Egypt as well as in Palestine. Muslim mobs massacred the Jews of Grenada in 1066. Much later, in the context of European pressure on Islamic states to guarantee the civil rights of religious minorities, there were a number of Muslim massacres of Christians—most notably in Lebanon and Syria in 1860. A comprehensive list of such popular fanatical outbursts by Muslims would require a book-length format, as would a complete catalog of massacres perpetrated by Christian mobs.

At the spectrum’s opposite end, violence against religious minorities can also be correlated with rulers using religion to expand territory and to consolidate power. If the Hasmoneans forcibly Judaized Idumeans and Sidonians, it was likely in that context. Indeed, a half-century earlier the Hasmonean or Maccabean revolt itself arose to contest the Jews’ forcible hellenization by Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV (r. 175–164 BC), whose policy of maximizing control through forced religious homogenization subsequently proved more imitated than did the religious pluralism of Persia’s Cyrus the Great (d. 530 BC).

Thus the histories of Christian states yield many examples of conquerors’ deliberately using force and violence to enlarge their domains and to firm up their sovereignty. Constantine (r. 312–37 AD) himself converted to Christianity in part because it offered him an effective ideological tool for defeating rivals and becoming Roman Emperor. Byzantine Emperor Justinian I (527–65) forcibly converted local Jews when conquering North Africa. In 613 Visigoth King Sisebut compelled the Jews of Iberia to convert or emigrate. Merovingian King Chilperic (d. 584) coerced the Jews of France to accept baptism. Many northern “barbarians” were attracted voluntarily to Christianity along with all things Roman. However, that conversion under duress occurred regularly as state policy (rather than just as popular outburst) is symbolized by Charlemagne (r. 768–814), who forcibly Christianized the Saxons and Frisians at the same time he was improving French Jews’ status in order to promote lucrative international trade. Owing to the decisive roles of Ferdinand and Isabella, the Spanish Inquisition represented royal policy as much as it did popular fanaticism. The Papacy played a similar role in the earlier three-century crusade and inquisition directed against the Albigenses and other Christian movements deemed heretical.

Religious coercion also regularly figured into the policies of Islamic states. Pagans (polytheistic Arabs, Berbers) were forcibly Islamized regularly as the Muslim policy expanded. At Armenia’s conquest by the Arab–Muslim Umayyads in 653, Christian subjects were compelled to pay an annual “tax” of one thousand children who were Islamized before serving as slave soldiers—a precedent for the later Ottoman devshirme system that lasted about three centuries. To eliminate potential fifth columns, the Almoravids killed or forcibly Islamized many Christians and Jews when they conquered Spain in 1085, a policy replicated by the Almohads when they seized Spain in 1172.

That popular fanaticism and state policy overlapped at the spectrum’s midpoint is symbolized by several multi-century crusading and jihad movements. The Knights of the Sword and the Teutonic Order systematically and over a long period used violence and force to Christianize the Slavic peoples of NE Europe. It proved a regular pattern on the expanding Islamic world’s frontiers for a would-be leader to proclaim as kaffar (unbelievers) a poorly-Islamized rural society preliminary to creating a military force for an orthodoxy-imposing jihad against it, often producing a puritanical Islamic regime. This pattern—to which conformed the Almoravids, the Almohads, “Wahhabism,” the Sokoto Caliphate, Sudan’s Mahdiya, and many other cases—has been reified in recent “Islamic fundamentalist” movements. These find their blueprint in the writings of violence-justifying ideologues like Pakistan’s Alaa al-Mawdudi and Egypt’s Sayyid Qutb.

In sum, besides implementing legal religious exclusivity, in most monotheistic societies nonofficial faiths experienced violent persecution stemming both from popular fanaticism and from institutionalized coercion for state reasons. Ignoring the Sermon on the Mount, Christian principalities proved no less aggressive than Islamic ones. Indeed, according to some Jewish historians, during medieval times the frequency and level of violence against Jews was rather greater in Christian societies than in Islamic ones.

Europe’s Transition from Exclusivity to Pluralism

The Reformation experience included Protestantism’s differentiation into numerous denominations during an era when many Sephardi Jews escaped the Spanish Inquisition to find refuge in Europe alongside Ashkenazi Jewish survivors of the Crusades. Several regions of Europe consequently acquired something like the religious diversity long characterizing the Middle East. One response to that new diversity took the form of the Counter-Reformation and the seventeenth-century religious wars, which tried to impose through military force the traditional pattern of legal religious exclusivity. But that policy failed badly while ravaging human and other resources. So NW European states
gradually moved toward an alternate response symbolized by Elizabeth I’s Edict of Toleration (1559), Henry IV’s Edict of Nantes (1598), the English Parliament’s Toleration Act (1689), and Emperor Joseph II’s Edict of Toleration (1781). That alternate response, in effect promoting legal religious pluralism, of course materialized neither quickly nor smoothly; in France, for example, in 1791 the French Assembly extended to Jews citizenship rights that were revoked by Napoleon until Jewish leaders proved their loyalty to French nationality by renouncing aspects of their theology—but then the Dreyfus Affair demonstrated that most Frenchmen still considered Jews unworthy of citizenship in the 1890s (although now more on grounds of race than of religion). Moreover, legal religious pluralism materialized on the initiative not of popes and archbishops, who typically clung to the ideal of legal religious exclusivity, but on that of political leaders, who increasingly identified their constituencies in national (versus religious) terms and who distinguished between the interests of their multi-religious nations and those of the separate denominations.

In that regard, Europe’s Scientific Revolution and Enlightenment steadily secularized philosophy, including political philosophy; Jacques Bossuet (1627–1704) was perhaps Europe’s last major political thinker to justify a political system in explicitly religious terms. The social contract theorists—Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679), Baruch Spinoza (1632–77), John Locke (1632–1704), the Baron de Montesquieu (1691–1755), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), and Thomas Jefferson (1743–1826)—in effect secularized Augustine’s “natural rights” ideas in elaborating modern Western political theory. As political thought became less and less grounded in religion, political institutions grew more and more distant from religion per se, as well as from any particular church or faith. The increasingly nondenominational governments in Europe and North America effectively became guarantors and enforcers of the emerging legal religious pluralism. Leaders of some religious organizations resisted losing both access to sovereignty and the attendant privileged status. But, unable in the long run to buck the tide of secularization, most denominations became accustomed to the new system of legal religious pluralism by agreeing more or less to coexist under a secular constitutional canopy. When in the nineteenth century European states abandoned the slave trade (which they had developed), they moved to pressure societies elsewhere in the world to outlaw slavery and to suppress traffic in slaves. Likewise, after shifting by the twentieth century from legal religious exclusivity to legal religious pluralism, secularized European and North American governments elevated this novel system peculiar to the modern West as a model for the rest of the world, which has been reluctant to embrace it.

Pressures Toward Pluralism in the Middle East

Tentative manifestations of the modern secular European model of the religion-state relationship emerged in parts of the Islamic world in three contexts. The first of these consisted of nineteenth-century modernizing reforms, when Middle Eastern leaders sought to close the widening strength gap between European nations and their own. First-generation reformers restricted their interests to acquiring improved military technology. But second-generation ones perceived that Europe’s military power derived in turn from its revolutionized financial, industrial, scientific, educational, legal, and constitutional institutions. Ottoman “men of the Tanzimat” and other comprehensive reformers often published guarantees for the citizenship rights of religious minorities. But such pledges were seldom implemented for two reasons. First, their inclusion in reform manifestos usually came at the insistence of European powers, who were suspected of protecting Levantine Christian client groups as a tactic to accelerate their own penetration of the region. Second, Muslim populations bitterly opposed stripping Islam of its legal religious exclusivity, often resorting to violence to express their opposition.

Another context, in which there tentatively emerged in Islamic countries a religion-state separation on the Western model, was that of European control over Asian and African territories during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Colonial regimes tended to introduce European law codes and systems that in effect moved some Islamic countries toward legal religious pluralism. But such movement’s distance and permanence were undermined by a pair of factors, the most important of which concerned the indigenous inhabitants’ perception of the Europeans as foreign occupiers. Also, the activities of Christian missionaries, acting under the protection of European troops and law codes, made these constitutional innovations appear to benefit Christianity in particular rather than legal religious pluralism in general.

The third context arose as decolonizing European powers transferred sovereignty in their ex-colonies to indigenous elites. Having been exposed to Western education, many Middle Eastern dynasts and nationalists were determined to steer their newly independent states away from strictly religious education and law toward modern systems. The Turkish Republic, under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk (r. 1920–38), went far down this secularizing path—to the point of disestablishing Islam as the state religion. Indonesia, Iran, Egypt, and Tunisia proceeded more tentatively in the same direction. On the one hand, this situation—wherein indigenous leaders innovate for their own societies without direct external pressure—proved the most successful of the three contexts. On the other hand, that there existed widespread resistance to this development at the popular level is indicated by the numerous “Islamic fundamentalist” movements, beginning with Said Nursi’s opposition to the secularizing reforms of Ataturk and with the Muslim Brotherhood’s contesting those of the Wafd Party during Egypt’s monarchy (1922–52) and of the Free Officers after the 1952 Revolution. From the 1960s, such fundamentalists have appeared throughout the Islamic world, seizing power in Iran, Sudan, and Afghanistan, and threatening most other Middle Eastern governments

In effect, efforts in the Islamic world to move toward legal religious pluralism have been tentative and weak in part because such efforts have largely consisted of (or at least have been perceived to consist of) Western pressure or
impingement and because there exists widespread popular hostility and opposition to such trends.

Ambivalence in Contemporary Islamic Societies

Islamic societies have not differed from Christian societies in uniting religion and government to the advantage of one particular faith and to the detriment of others; that union and consequent double standard became the norm in virtually every monotheistic country from the third century onward. Nor have they differed in the pattern of violence and coercion directed against religious minorities; indeed, in premodern times explicitly Muslim states probably had a slightly better record in that regard than did explicitly Christian ones. Instead, there exist two main sets of differences. First, Christian principalities sought sovereignty and imposed legal religious exclusivity on the basis of human nature rather than on grounds of scripture or authoritative precedent, whereas Muslim principalities could cite Qur’anic mandates to conquer as well as Muhammad’s having founded a state as well as a religion. As a result, of the three monotheistic faiths, Islam has developed the strongest theology of sovereignty and has exhibited the greatest need to exercise sovereignty, in part, for reasons of self-validation. Second, financial and industrial capitalism, the Scientific Revolution, and the Enlightenment—as well as the materialization of religiously diverse populations after the Reformation and the carnage of religious wars during the Counter-Reformation—combined to secularize Western governments, driving their policies away from legal religious exclusivity toward legal religious pluralism. Long ruling religiously diverse populations, Muslim states fostered a quasi-pluralistic tradition while maintaining Islam’s privileged status. But the modern Scientific, Industrial, and Democratic Revolutions have not occurred within the Islamic world; rather, their consequences have diffused into or impinged upon it as the West expanded its commercial, technological, and cultural institutions worldwide. Perceived as an alien, Western value, legal religious pluralism has consequently not taken root in most Islamic countries, except to a degree in Turkey and Indonesia.

Two other reasons mitigate against the rapid, thorough development of legal religious pluralism in the Middle East. First, Muslims—along with believers of other faiths—can perceive that disconnecting the religion-state relationship in Europe and North America ultimately produced some negative along with several positive results. Besides promoting a healthy constitutional framework, secularization has also allowed the legalization and acceptance of pornography, promiscuity, and other “alternate lifestyles,” along with abetting the disintegration of the natural family and the legal elimination of religion and religious values from public arenas; in the Islamic world, such phenomena are called “West diseases.” From Europe’s experience, it appears to many Muslims that abolishing legal religious exclusivity, for the sake of fairness to all denominations, can put a society on a slippery slope to atheism and hedonism.

Second, in moving from legal religious exclusivity to pluralism, Christendom traveled a very bumpy road during at least two centuries. Just recently starting down that road, having a stronger theology of sovereignty and wary of “West diseases,” the Islamic world is apt to have a longer experience and a bumpier journey. Many of the bumps will be provided by ideologues who, in the absence of a Muslim hierarchy, will continue to form ad hoc militancies to perpetuate medieval ideals and patterns of Islamic conquest and to forestall the advance of West-inspired secularism.

In the end, however, the positive values of a genuine constitutional system may outweigh the few negative side effects for insightful and courageous decision-makers from all monotheistic faiths. If so, then each of the three Abrahamic religions has at its disposal, besides “smite” and “fight” verses and commensurate actual experiences, rich scriptural and historical traditions from which to choose symbols of humaneness, respect, and cooperation toward shared religious values.

Notes

1. As Spinoza put it, “On every side we hear men saying that the Bible is the Word of God, teaching mankind true blessedness, or the path to salvation. But the facts are quite at variance with their words, for people in general seem to make no attempt whatsoever to live according to the Bible’s teachings. We see that nearly all men parade their own ideas as God’s Word, their chief aim being to compel others to think as they do, while using religion as a pretext.” Baruch Spinoza, Tractatus Theologico-Politicus

2. Applying that distinction between theory and practice to jurisprudence, an eye witness (“I saw the accused commit the crime”) might, as a matter of evidence, support a different verdict than a character witness (“my friend wouldn’t have done that”). As a rule, courts accept the former’s testimony over the latter’s, although of course both kinds of witnesses can unwittingly err or deliberately lie.

In exercising priesthood authority the distinction is underscored by juxtaposing Doctrine and Covenants 121: 36 (“the powers of heaven cannot be controlled nor handled only upon the principles of righteousness”) with 121: 39 (“We have learned by sad experience that it is the nature and disposition of almost all men, as soon as they get a little authority, as they suppose, they will immediately begin to exercise unrighteous dominion”).


4. Emphasis added. See also Gen. 17: 8; 28: 13; Ex. 33: 1; Lev. 20: 24; Num. 12: 22–23, 29; 32: 32; 33: 53; Deut. 1: 8, 21, 2; 31: 3; 18, 20; 4: 5, 22, 47; 5: 31; 6: 1, 18, 7: 1; 8: 1, 10: 11; 11: 8, 31; 19: 1; 26: 1; 29: 7–8; 30, 5, 20; 31: 7, 32: 49; Josh. 1: 1, 2; 11: 11, 23; 13: 1; 18: 3; 24: 8; Judg. 11: 21–22, 18: 19, 1 Chron. 28: 8.

5. e.g., “ye shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land” (Num. 33: 52) and “thou shalt smite them, and utterly destroy them” (Deut. 7: 2). See also Ex. 23: 28–33; 33: 2; Num. 21: 3, 24, 35; 25: 17; 33: 55; Deut. 2: 24; 3: 6, 18, 7: 2–5, 23–24; 9, 4–5; 12: 29, 13: 15; 18: 12: 20; 17–18; Josh. 19: 19, 28, 39; 11, 11, 14, 20–21, 12: 13; 6, 12; 14: 12, 17: 18; 23: 5, 24: 8, 31: 3; 33: 27; Judg. 11: 24; 1 Sam. 15: 3; 3, 2 Sam. 22: 38–41; 2 Kgs. 21: 3; 1 Chron. 44, 2 Chron. 31: 1; Judges 21: 8–14 implies that forced conversion occurred although not necessarily that it was mandated.

6. For example, “Because that this people hath transgressed my covenant . . . and have not hearkened unto my voice; I also will not henceforth drive out any from before them of the nations which Joshua left when he died” (Judg. 2: 20–21).

7. “And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD: and the LORD delivered them into the hand of the Philistines forty years” (Judg. 13: 1). See also Judg. 3: 7–8, 12: 4, 1–2, 6: 1, 10-
13. Whereas the priest and Levite passed by the wounded Jerusalemitc, the Samaritan (of a sect deemed heretical) cared for—

16. These include, in alphabetical order: Albania, Anjou, Aquitaine, Aragon, Armenia, Austria, Baden, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Brittany, Bulgaria, Burgundy, Byzantium, Carinthia, Carniola, Castile, Catalonia, Croatia, the Crusader states, Dalmatia, Denmark, England (several dynasties), Ethiopia, Finland, Flanders, Franconia, France (several dynasties), Frisia, Gascogne, Hanover, Hesse, Hungary, Ireland, Leon, Lithuania, Lombardy, Lotharingia (Lorraine), Meissen, Moravia, Naples, Navarre, Netherlands, Normandy, Norway, Novgorod, the Papal States, Poland, Portugal (several dynasties), Provence, Prussia, Russia (several dynasties), Sardinia, Savoy, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Scotland, Serbia, Sicily, Slavonia, Styria, Sueves, Swabia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thuringia, Transylvania, Trier, Tuscany, Ukraine, Valencia, Venice, Wales, Wallachia, Westphalia, and Wurtemburg.

15. These include, in alphabetical order: Albania, Anjou, Aquitaine, Aragon, Armenia, Austria, Baden, Bavaria, Brandenburg, Bremen, Brittany, Bulgaria, Burgundy, Byzantium, Carinthia, Carniola, Castile, Catalonia, Croatia, the Crusader states, Dalmatia, Denmark, England (several dynasties), Ethiopia, Finland, Flanders, Franconia, France (several dynasties), Frisia, Gascogne, Hanover, Hesse, Hungary, Ireland, Leon, Lithuania, Lombardy, Lotharingia (Lorraine), Meissen, Moravia, Naples, Navarre, Netherlands, Normandy, Norway, Novgorod, the Papal States, Poland, Portugal (several dynasties), Provence, Prussia, Russia (several dynasties), Sardinia, Savoy, Saxony, Schleswig-Holstein, Scotland, Serbia, Sicily, Slavonia, Styria, Sueves, Swabia, Sweden, Switzerland, Thuringia, Transylvania, Trier, Tuscany, Ukraine, Valencia, Venice, Wales, Wallachia, Westphalia, and Wurtemburg.

14. In the Qur’an, see also 4: 84; 2: 216, 244; 4: 74-76; 8: 65; 9: 123.

17. e.g., Armenian Apostolicism.

18. e.g., Dutch Reformed, Scottish Reformism, or Presbyterism.

19. These include, in alphabetical order: Abbasid Caliphate (based in Baghdad), Aghlabid Amirate (Tunisia), the Akkoynulu (Azerbaijan), Alawi Sultanate (Morocco), the Assassins (N Persia), Buyid Amirate (Iraq & Persia), Husaynib Beylicate (Tunis), Delhi Sultanate, Deylicate of Algiers, Fatimid Caliphate (Egypt, Syria), Handanid Amirate (Syria), Kingdom of Ghana, Ghaznavid Amirate (NE Persia, Afghanistan, N India), Golden Horde Mongol Khanate (S Russia, Ukraine), Hafsid Caliphate (Tunis), Hausa Kingdom (W Africa), Ikshidid Amirate (Egypt), Idrisid Amirate (Morocco), Karakhanids (NE Persia, Central Asia), Karamania (Central Anatolia), Khwarizim Shahs (NE Persia, Afghanistan, N India), Kingdom of Mali (W Africa), Mamul Sultanate (Egypt, Syria, Hijaz), Mamul Pashalik (Iraq), Marinid Sultanate (Morocco), Mughal Sultanate (India), Nasirid Kingdom (Grenada, Spain), Oman, Ottoman Sultanate (Balkans, Anatolia, Fertile Crescent, Hijaz, Yemen, Egypt), Qaramanid Amirate (Libya), Qamathian Amirate (Bahrain, E Arabia), Rashidun Caliphate (based in W Arabia), Rasulid Amirate (Yemen), Rustemid Amirate (Algeria), Saadid Sultanate (Morocco), Safarid Amirate (E Persia), Samanid Amirs (NE Persia, Uzbekistan), Saudi Arabia, Seljuk Sultanate (Iraq, Anatolia, Syria), Shaybanid Khanate (Uzbekistan), Kingdom of Songhai (W Africa), Timurid Khanate (Persia, Uzbekistan), Urnayyad Caliphate (based in Damascus, then in Cordova), Zanjids (N Iraq, Syria), Zaydi Imamate (Yemen), Zirid Amirate (Tunisia, E Algeria).

20. e.g., Sunni, Zaydi Shi'i, Ismaili Shi'i, or Twelver Shi'i.

21. These include Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Maronite, Jacobite, Melchite, Assyrian, Chaldean, Coptic, Armenian Apostolic, Armenian Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Coptic Catholic.

22. These include Karaite, Mizrahi, Sephardic, Ashkenazi (Mitnagdim and Hasidic), and Donmeh.

23. These include Sunni, Shi'i, Druze, Alawi, and Bahai.
An Historical Perspective on Mormon–Muslim Interaction

by David P. Charles, graduate student, Oxford University, England

Introduction: a Novel, but False, Impression

By way of introduction to the main topic of my paper, I wish to draw your attention to a remarkable recent novel. It was written by Sarah Louise Baker and published last year by a small press in England. The title is From Utah to Eternity: a Mormon–Muslim Journey. This novel tells the story of Jake, a Latter-day Saint missionary from Salt Lake City who is serving in Japan. Jake is a promising young man with leadership potential, but he is plagued by questions and doubts. Jake feels confined and oppressed by the rules and structure of the mission. Convinced that he has been leading a sheltered, incomplete existence—a “comfortable straight-jacket,” as he calls it (p. 237), Jake decides to henceforth “think for himself” (p. 238) and “do what felt right to him” (p. 238), regardless of the consequences. About halfway through this five-hundred-page novel, the narrator notes that Jake has “lost his enthusiasm for missioning [sic]” (p. 240). During a visit to Hiroshima, Jake is again reminded of his ignorance and blinkered view of the world:

The missionaries soon forgot about the bomb in the flurry of Christmas, but Jake felt it in the back of his mind, like a bad smell cropping up, threatening to ruin the season. What bothered him most was that it made him feel pretty ignorant of history and politics and the world in general. His life had been so focused up until now, so church-oriented. His world was Utah, and the world outside was full of potential Mormons. He had learnt something from the training but only insofar as a certain country or people were so many steps away from the Church. Wider issues had hardly impinged upon his experience (p. 255).

A chance encounter with a young Indonesian student named Suleiyman drastically alters the course of Jake’s mission and of his life. Following their initial meeting in a donut shop, Jake finds himself puzzled and intrigued by Suleiyman’s religion, Islam.

“So what church do you belong to? I mean what religion are you?” asked Jake.
“I’m Muslim.”
“Oh really. I thought Indonesia was Buddhist like China. Is that unusual then, Muslims in Indonesia?”
“No, actually it’s very common. There is a very large population of Indonesians who are Muslim, al-hamdu li’llah, but we also have a few Buddhists, Hindus, animists, a few Christians.”
“What about Christians?”
“Mormons? No I’m afraid I haven’t heard of that church. It’s Christian, right?”
“Yes. There are Mormons all over the world.”
“Also in Muslim countries?”
“Now that I’m not sure. I know we had a Middle Eastern section at our training centre but they said it wasn’t so easy working in those countries. Only some of them accept missionaries.”
“You had a training centre?” said Suleiyman impressed.
“That is good. It’s good they take religion seriously. I wish it was the same for Muslims. We have so many people with so much to tell the world but what we’re lacking is some organized way of doing it, you know like the Christians have. There are a lot of Muslims back home who fast and pray and go to Hajj and then they seem to forget about it. I think they forget about spreading the message.”

Jake was surprised at this fervour. His image of the Muslim religion was that it was something more or less imposed on the people which they deeply resented. It had never seemed to him to be in the same league as the Mormon faith, a message to be spread. It looked like he had competition. “Perhaps,” said Jake tentatively, “God helps the true faith to be spread.”

“There’s no doubt about that,” said Suleiyman firmly.
“Allah has told us in the Qur’an that he will make His true religion prevail in the end. He will show the truth to anyone who will open their hearts to it.”

Jake hadn’t expected such an answer. He had been hinting that maybe Mormon missionaries were more successful and organized about propagating the faith because it was true and God helped them. “So the name of your God is Allah?”

Suleiyman smiled. “My God and your God, Jake. Everyone’s God. Allah is THE God, the One and Only. That is His name.” (272–73)

As his friendship with Suleiyman continues over weekly meetings at Donut Heaven, Jake is drawn deeper and deeper into Islamic theology. The question of God is of particular interest to him. Eventually, the narrator tells us, Jake “realized he [relied on] parroting the familiar doctrine that he used in missionary work. He wanted his own understanding of God if he was to work with it, to come through personal conviction and not blind obedience to the church.” The text story continues:

But He can’t be like that in reality, thought Jake. That’s kid’s stuff. Like Santa Claus. But he came back to the familiar verse of the Bible, that God created man in
his own image and likeness, Joseph Smith had stated it clearly, as usual: ‘If you were to see Him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves, in all the person, image, and very form as a man.’ Is that likely? thought Jake. A God of flesh and blood? Then he remembered that Ellis had told him what to do when beset by doubts. First he should pray. Instinctively, he began to pray to Jesus, but then checked himself and began: ‘Oh Heavenly Father. Show me Your essence. Teach me what You are like. If You are like a picture, show me a vision!’ Again Jake felt a little arrogant, demanding visions on cue; but this was a crisis and he was serious. He waited, and nothing happened. He just had the question in his mind. He saw no picture, no image, no dazzling light. He knew only the word, God, the name of God. The word ‘God’ hung before his eyes inside his head like a space waiting to be filled. He waited a while, and the waiting calmed him. Perhaps it had been nothing at all. As he opened his eyes the dark shadows of the room looked strange and he blinked, feeling disoriented for a while. The meditation over, he let his thoughts crowd in again and take up the familiar places within his mind. Suddenly one memory from the conversation with Suleyiman hit him in a flash: ‘My God, your God, Jake. Everyone’s God. Allah is THE God. The One and Only. That is His name.’ (278)

In this and similar passages, the author displays a keen sense of the intricacies of religious conversion: the questioning, the doubting, the hopes, the fears, the range of psychological responses to conflicting religious impulses. This process of feeling one’s way through a varied internal landscape is well depicted. Many of the internal monologues I find rather convincing.

The following passage is taken from the final section of the book. Having long wrestled with his mixed emotions, Jake has now come to the point of decision:

Could a person live himself or really be happy if he did not live by what he believed? Suleyiman was always telling him that belief in Islam required enormous commitment. It was not enough to play with the faith. If you believed it, you had to follow it. You had to come down on one side or another. The Qur’an was full of stories of people who professed to believe in the message but when it came to any hardship or time to make sacrifices they would make excuses and run. But his case was different, Jake reasoned. God would understand. He couldn’t help being born Mormon, being a missionary, and now having this important job. Anyway he didn’t want to jeopardize his career. It was OK for Suleyiman in a Muslim country with a Muslim family. Jake could remain a secret Muslim who believed it but was involved with the church teachings. He looked again at his comparison list. More and more the side of plus points for Islam was growing at the same rate as the list of doubts about LDS. So far, every question he had asked had been answered by Islam. He couldn’t deny that he believed it. So was he Muslim now? Jake began to feel afraid again as if he was poised by the side of a pool, afraid to dive; and then he had an overwhelming sense of his will telling him what to do and an overwhelming urge to pray in the Muslim way. He wanted to submit himself in prayer, body and soul. It didn’t matter which direction Mecca was. A magnetic force was pulling his head to the floor and he prayed properly for the first time, and felt renewed and strengthened. Before he had time to doubt what he was doing he read the instructions on how to do shahada. He couldn’t go to the bathroom for a shower now in the middle of the night but he didn’t want to delay. He wanted to commit himself. Allah would understand his intention. So he washed himself quickly at the basin, sat on the floor and began his private ceremony. He read through the list of beliefs. Yes, he believed them all. Then he said the simple word: ‘La ilaha illa’Llah, Muhammad-ar-rasulu’Llah.’ He felt daring and elated, and brand new. (351–52)

This is, of course, the standard LDS mission narrative turned on its head: the convert becomes the converted. Indeed, as Jake says to his mission companion, “I still believe in revelation. I just believe the Qur’an is the revelation. I believe Islam is the religion that teaches us how to live, that teaches God’s guidance. It’s not even a change as such. It’s more a refinement of what I already knew, picking out the things that were right and correcting the mistakes” (361, emphasis added).

While From Utah to Eternity succeeds in recreating an authentic, credible picture of the appeal of Islam and of the real-life dynamics of religious conversion, the portrait of Latter-day Saints and their religion is neither kind nor, to my mind, accurate. Aside from the description of a Latter-day Saint mission as a near-totalitarian state run by mindless, soulless automatons (and which, moreover, is based on lies and deceit), there is throughout the book a clear message that, on the whole, Latter-day Saints are unable to understand, not to mention appreciate, the merits of another religion, in this case Islam.

When Jake returns to Salt Lake City (he was recalled by telegram after his conversion to Islam became known), he is verbally assaulted by his family. They want to know about “this cult you’re involved with” (394). Jake tries to calm their fears, to no avail:

“Before we go any further,” said Jake, “there is no cult. Do you all get the message? There’s no cult. Yes I’ve been thinking a lot about my beliefs. Yes I’ve had a lot of questions and done a lot of reading. Now I’m pretty sure I believe in Islam but there is nothing weird going on, OK?”

They all gasped. They had heard it themselves, the confession of faith in Islam, and they realized the people in Japan had not been exaggerating.

“I’d like to sleep, Mom,” said Jake, looking beseechingly at her, his ally.

“Yes, I think that would be best. Frank, take up Jake’s bag! C’mon and have a bite to eat first Jake.”

“Can I just tell everyone,” he said, “so there’s no confusion. It’s Ramadan. I’m fasting. That means I
can’t eat or drink anything until sunset. OK? Just so you know.”

Jake’s madness was confirmed. “I think you’re delirious, dear,” his mother said. “Now go right up and sleep and we won’t disturb you till the church people come.”

By now Jake was beginning to doubt his own sanity. He was dizzy with jet-lag and full of cramp from the journey. His mouth was dry. He took a shower and got into bed. It was so welcome. His head was heavy and ready for sleep. Any worries could be suspended until further notice. (395–96)

His sleep is abruptly shortened, however, by the arrival of two thuglike characters who knock on the door of Jake’s home. They are anticultists who have come to deprogram Jake’s brainwashed mind. In the end, Jake stays true to his newfound beliefs, moves to San Francisco to escape the pressures exerted by his family and the Church, and eventually takes up undergraduate studies in philosophy at Indiana University, which offers an extensive curriculum in Islamic thought.

The impression given in Baker’s novel, of Latter-day Saints as fiercely narrow-minded and fearful of any attempts at interreligious understanding, is contradicted by the substantial efforts, past and present, of Latter-day Saints to befriend Muslims and to understand their religion. The *Islamic Translation Series*, the recent issue of *BYU Studies* devoted to Islamic topics, the BYU Jerusalem Center, the extraordinary exhibit of Ottoman art and artifacts currently on display at BYU’s Museum of Art, and other efforts—including this very conference—may all be cited as evidence.

“The Door is Slightly Ajar”: Joseph W. Booth and Mormon–Muslim Relations, ca. 1900

For the remainder of this paper, I will focus on one particular historical context: the Latter-day Saint missionary presence in the Middle East between the 1880s and the 1920s. The ample contemporary documentation provides an intriguing historical view of Mormon–Muslim interaction.

First, however, some basic background information.3

The last decades of the nineteenth century were the near-final days of the Ottoman Empire. The Middle East was a heavily-contested field for Christian missionaries of various denominations. Dozens of Protestant missionary groups were seeking converts; they were most successful among members of Eastern Christian churches. The Latter-day Saint’s Turkish Mission was opened by Jacob Spori in 1884. He was based in Constantinople (modern Istanbul). Initial efforts to preach the restored gospel in Constantinople, Egypt, and Palestine resulted in a few baptisms, but the mission struggled to gain a lasting foothold in the region. At the end of the 1880s, President F. F. Hintze moved mission headquarters from Constantinople to Asia Minor. The city of Aintab (modern Gaziantep) became the Church’s base of operations until 1907, when headquarters were moved southward to Aleppo. Throughout the major initial period of proselytizing in the Middle East (1884–1928), Latter-day Saint converts were primarily of Armenian ethnicity.

Joseph W. Booth succeeded Hintze as president of the Turkish mission. Booth served three missions to the Middle East for a total of almost eighteen years. He was a native of Alpine, Utah, and a graduate of the Brigham Young Academy. He was also a prolific diarist; his daily record of mission life is an invaluable primary source for understanding the history of the Church in the Middle East. Much of the source material I have used for this paper comes from Booth’s journals, which are kept in Special Collections at BYU’s Harold B. Lee Library.

The Latter-day Saint presence in the Middle East between 1884 and 1928 provides one of the few historical contexts with an extended, documented interaction between Latter-day Saints and Muslims. While some of the missionaries, especially those with little firsthand knowledge of Islam or its adherents, simply echoed the standard anti-Muslim rhetoric of the day, others, particularly Booth, showed a remarkable degree of curiosity, sympathy, and sensitivity when encountering and writing about Muslims and Islam. Booth’s journals (as well as his letters to the *Millennial Star*) are a significant, and hitherto untapped, source for the history of Mormon–Muslim interaction.

Booth’s missionary journals alone contain nearly 250 references to Muslims or Islam. These fall into four broad categories: descriptions of visits to mosques or Muslim homes; accounts of (mostly casual) conversations with Muslims; mention of Muslim investigators or friends; and more theological observations, especially on Muslim worship. Booth was by nature curious and inquisitive; he was intrigued by Islam from the beginning of his first mission. During the subsequent years, he read several books on the subject, including *Faith of Islam, Turkey in Europe, Among the Turks*, and the *Spirit of Islam.* Booth was so impressed by the last-mentioned work that he wrote a letter of thanks to its author, the Oxford scholar Syed Ameer Ali.4

Aside from his reading, Booth was an avid conversationalist who enjoyed both chance encounters and more formal gatherings. His door was open to all, and he prejudged no one on account of religion. On several occasions, Booth encouraged “love for others not of our faith.”5 His friends included members of almost every religion represented in the region. He enjoyed the honest exchange of opinions among believers of various backgrounds and often hosted such conversations at his own lodgings. “Talked to many people of various denominations,” he wrote in his journal during a visit to Marash; the discussion continued the following day:

In the evening a crowd of men came to talk on religion etc. There were Islam, Shapatji [i.e., Seventh-Day Adventists], Protestants, Armenians, Catholics, Jews and ‘Mormons’. The discussion was friendly and profitable. I read to them our Articles of Faith and from that we entered the discussion which lasted several hours. The Old Testament was used as all claimed to believe in it.5

The majority of Booth’s recorded encounters with Muslims were brief, informal conversations, often occurring during his extensive journeys. Travel was an arduous
and often lonely activity, and Booth appreciated the companionship of fellow travelers of whatever creed. He often visited mosques and showed great admiration for Islamic architecture. While staying in Sivas, for example, during the fall of 1901, he wished to examine some “old ruins” that had caught his attention during a previous visit. He and Elder Alma J. Holdaway requested, and were granted, access to the ruins, a pair of old minarets no longer in use. Booth described the experience itself and then drew a thoughtful lesson from it:

We asked if we might ascend one of them and looking up at the old dilapidated towers that seemed to press their tops almost against the clouds he smilingly asked “If they collapse while you are in them will you take responsibility?” “Of course,” said I “If it falls we shall be killed and the blame will not be yours.” We were shown about the ruins and when we saw the danger and difficulty of climbing the minaret (one of them was closed) we almost regretted that we had asked permission. Several ways were pointed out by which we could scale the walls to the entrance of the tower and finding one accessible route we ordered a ladder and began the ascent. The door about thirty-five or forty feet was quite easily reached and we entered the winding staircase and for sixty-seven steps up the dark and dirty spire we climbed with careful tread and fingers clinching and clutching every projecting obstacle as the stairs were covered with rubbish which for centuries, perhaps, have been accumulating there. We could see but little from the small opening at the top so taking a piece of the brick for a souvenir of the Seljuks 650 years ago we descended more than satisfied with the adventure. There was once a mosque stood by but nothing is left now but the magnificent old gate with chisel work in solid stones that teach the modern sculptor that by gone days have seen more skillful hands than his and the work till now defies both time and storm to mar its splendid face, and sends a silent challenge to the world to reproduce such art.7

Throughout his missionary service, Booth showed reverence and respect for the beliefs and sacred traditions of Islam. He was impressed by the seriousness and simplicity of Muslim devotion, both in individual worship and in group settings. This impression was especially strong during Booth’s visits to the Holy Land, where he observed—and compared—the rituals of each of the monotheistic religions. Muslims prayed at the Mosque of Omar, “bowing down to the floor in a most impressive form of worship,” while at the Holy Sepulchre “a confused form of worship is carried on daily.” “Christian” pilgrims, he continued, performed “superstitious acts,” in “striking contrast to the quiet, peaceful, simple prayer and adoration of the followers of Mohamed.” Eastern Christianity struck Booth and his fellow elders as excessively ritualistic, theatrical, and insincere.9 The iconography, elaborate vestments, and other features of Eastern Christian liturgy were strikingly unfamiliar and strange to the Latter-day Saint missionaries. Islam, by contrast, was perceived as being refreshingly simple, devoid of formalism, and sincere.

Full religious liberty and equality were never achieved under Ottoman rule, despite the series of reforms initiated in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Conversion to Christianity by Muslims could result in imprisonment or death. Most Christian missionaries were united in viewing this as a further indication of the inferior status of Islam and its benighted, backwards-facing, “fanatical” adherents.10 Latter-day Saints laboring in Ottoman Turkey were in a peculiar situation, as they were separate from other Christian missionary groups in their mission organization, their theology, and their legal status. All Western missionaries, including the Latter-day Saints, sought converts among the Armenians and other Eastern Christians, and most suffered similar restrictions and harassment from the government, but the relations between Latter-day Saints, other Christians, and Muslims formed a triangle of unusual religious interaction which entailed both friendship and cooperation as well as suspicion and hostility.

Fundamentally, Latter-day Saints and Muslims could peacefully coexist because of the lack of pressure from either side. Each was a relatively harmless curiosity to the other. Latter-day Saints were not allowed to convert Muslims, and the Latter-day Saint presence was too small ever to become a nuisance—the Church neither purchased land, nor constructed any buildings, nor operated any educational facilities large enough to pose a potential threat to Turkish rule. The Muslims, in turn, became curious who these outsiders among missionaries were, these “Mormons” who were reportedly, like some of their own, polygamous (a practice which other missionary groups found reprehensible and immoral, calling it “of the worst ethical errors of Muhammad”), who had different conceptions of godhood and the afterlife, and who believed in extra-Biblical scripture.11 Both Latter-day Saints and Muslims were characterized as heresies by the Protestant missionaries. The elders naturally sympathized with a group who had been as “wonderfully misrepresented” as they themselves had.12

At Aintab, a stronghold of the Protestant mission, the elders felt particularly besieged by opposition. Booth and his fellow missionaries desired a fair and open exchange of religious opinions. They felt that if every denomination was allowed to represent itself in an honest and forthright manner, the truth of Latter-day Saint doctrine would come to light and attract the honest in heart. But the Protestants crossed the line of fairness as they fiercely opposed the newcomers, using various means to influence the local population against them. At Aintab, one elder wrote, “The ministers in the different churches had preached against us ever since they heard of our coming.” Professors from the Protestant College, he continued, had authored a series of anti-Mormon leaflets, and “in the papers we were styled ‘wolves in sheep’s clothing.’” This was written in 1898, the year before the cemetery incident.

Amidst such an atmosphere of rivalry and agitation, Booth believed that Christian antagonism was a greater hindrance to missionary work than the lack of general religious liberty. He remarked that the Muslims were usually “much
more liberal-minded and tolerant than the Christians; and only when complaint is made by the latter on some false and bigoted pretence, do the [Turkish] officials interfere with us.”11 Around the same time, he summarized the Church’s relations with Muslims in very positive and optimistic terms, “The door to the great Mohammedan race is slightly ajar, and many of them have heard the Gospel. Some of our warmest friends are among those of Islam, and a few are holding high positions in the government.” Although Booth looked forward to the day when he could “[preach] the Gospel with more liberty,” the door would never fully open. It remained “slightly ajar,” forbidding outright proselytizing but allowing for warm friendships and “pleasant conversations” on Mormonism and Islam—“the two great systems of religion.”115

It is fitting, therefore, that one of Booth’s last letters to the Millennial Star before his death should mention one of these conversations. At the time he wrote the letter, Booth was in the process of moving the Church’s headquarters from Aleppo to Haifa. In a state of physical and emotional exhaustion, he departed on the long journey in the middle of the summer:

I left Aleppo, July 3rd, with a heavy heart . . . a drink of water was the last thing that passed my lips till I was in Damascus, nearly three hundred miles away . . . The hunger and thirst of that long ride through the burning sands and the hot sun and the torrid winds of Syria were a pleasure compared to the real soul suffering I underwent for the waywardness of the sheep entrusted to my care . . . after my simple evening meal, I sat until nearly midnight talking to and with some young Mohammedan college students who had invited me to be their guest that night.

In his journal, Booth added that the student who extended the invitation “is from Bagdad [sic] and has some splendid ideas of life.”116

Conclusion

At a time when one hears little good news out of Baghdad, Booth’s words are especially relevant. Just as significant is his example of sympathetic behavior towards followers of Islam. He built upon common ground, and, unlike missionary Jake, he was able to see how these two religions, Mormonism and Islam, complement each other.

Given the extensive range of the Muslim world, and the ever-expanding Latter-day Saint world, Booth’s invitation to contemplate, study, and appreciate the complex entity we call Islam could hardly be more timely.

Notes


8. Millennial Star [abbreviated as MS] 68, 21 June 1906: 388–91 and MS 68, 28 June 1906: 410–15. Similar sentiments were expressed by one of Booth’s predecessors, Don C. W. Musser, in 1893, “One of the best places to observe idolatrous worship in all its glory is in the ‘Church of the Holy Sepulchre.’ This church belongs to the Latins, Greeks, Armenians, and Copts, and is often the scene of disgraceful feuds between the rival sects. . . . In every part of the immense building were men and women lying prostrate before sacred places, of which this church is full, showering kisses on the cold marble floor. . . . There are thousand and one . . . traditions connected with this church, making it the headquarters of apostatized and idolatrous Christianity” (MS 55, 7 August 1893: 520–21).


11. Ibid., p. 27.


13. MS 60, 21 April 1898: pp. 241–44. It should be said that Booth’s “democratic” proselytizing tactics were themselves not always free of provocation. He often, for instance, distributed Latter-day Saint tracts to Protestants as they exited their church after a Sunday service.

14. MS 66, 6 October 1904: pp. 636. Right at the opening of Latter-day Saint missionary work in Constantinople, Jacob Spori even claimed—amid the polygamy-induced persecution of the Saints in America—that “in Turkey there is more religious liberty than in the boasted ‘land of freedom’” (MS 47, 17 August 1885: pp. 524).


Abraham: A Touchstone of Faith for Latter-day Saints and Muslims

by Brian M. Hauglid, assistant professor of ancient scripture, BYU

It is a pleasure to be a part of this conference on building bridges of faith between Latter-day Saints and Muslims. Although many conflicts identified with Islam are complex, and even unique from each other, I believe progress towards peace can, at least in part, be better facilitated through an increased effort to understand this major world religion. To begin with, I see Abraham as a touchstone of faith for Latter-day Saints and Muslims in three major ways.

First, Abraham is a revered figure in Islam and in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as in Judaism and Christianity. Muslims, in particular, hold Abraham in high esteem because of his presence in the Qur’an, along with other biblical prophets such as Adam, Noah, Moses, and Joseph of Egypt. Muslim sources indicate that Muhammad liked to compare himself with Abraham more than any other prophet mentioned in the Qur’an because he saw his prophetic mission as similar to Abraham’s. For example, Muhammad fought idolatry and wickedness in his day just as Abraham had in his.

Second, for both Muslims and Latter-day Saints, Abraham represents a model life to follow. Muslims look to Abraham as the figure who restored the true worship in his day just as Muhammad did later. In a sense, Muslims, like Latter-day Saints, can say “go ye, therefore, and do the works of Abraham” (Doctrine and Covenants 132:32). However, one major difference between Muhammad and Abraham, in the Muslim view, is that Abraham ultimately failed to completely rid his people of idolatry, so apostasy set in. Other prophets such as Ishmael, Jacob, Joseph, and Moses tried to cleanse their generation of idolatry, but again failed in the end. Muhammad, of course, is viewed as being the final prophet. This means there can be no other prophet after Muhammad because the revelation of Islam (the Qur’an) he received will, in the end, ultimately triumph over idolatry.

I would like to spend the remainder of the time on the third way in which Abraham is a touchstone of faith for Latter-day Saints and Muslims. The study of Abraham’s life has brought Later-day Saints and Muslims together in scholarship. Over the past twenty years, I have learned that an effective way to begin building bridges of understanding with Islam is to recognize and appreciate that Muslims, in general, have a healthy respect for scholarship. After Muhammad’s death in 632 C.E., Muslim scholars during the ninth to twelfth centuries hammered out much of what we see today as representing Islam in both principle and practice. These Islamic scholars produced seminal works in Islamic law, philosophy, theology, mathematics, astronomy, medicine, linguistics, etc., that still hold a valued position among Muslims today.1 Before focusing on Abraham, I’d like to give a brief explanation of the development of the Islamic traditions that contain stories of biblical and Qur’anic prophets. This will illustrate how important this type of material is to Islamic scholarship.

In a very Jewish and Christian environment, some Muslim scholars sought out and collected legends and folklore of prophets mentioned in the Qur’an. Muslims, of course, do not view the Qur’an as a book that borrows Jewish and Christian elements; rather, the Qur’an functions as the fulfillment or restoration of truths lost from apostate Judaism and Christianity. If there are any similarities (or differences) it is because the Qur’an is, for the Muslim, “The most correct (or corrective) book.” Most of the revelations in the Qur’an are situational, as in the Doctrine and Covenants, and not narrative, as in the Book of Mormon. Therefore, to fill in the gaps, so to speak, Muslim scholars gathered stories dealing with the lives of the prophets mentioned in the Qur’an. These Islamic stories of the prophets play an important role in providing devotional materials to inspire Muslims to live a good life.

Muslim stories of the prophets can be found in four major Islamic traditions that developed simultaneously during the ninth to twelfth centuries C.E.—world histories, sayings and acts of Muhammad (hadith), Qur’anic commentaries, and stories of the prophets: 1) Some Muslims wrote comprehensive histories of the world from the creation to Muhammad or up to the day in which they lived. These histories would of course be religious histories, for the most part containing many stories of biblical and Qur’anic prophets. One Islamic scholar, al-Tabari (d. 923), wrote a multivolume history that is still a standard work among Muslims today. 2) Islamic scholars also searched out every saying or act of Muhammad (hadith). This occurred as Muslims began to realize more and more that Muhammad’s life represented, in every way, the life of a model Muslim. Since early Islam, many Muslims try to pattern their lives after Muhammad. That is one reason so many Muslim men are named Muhammad. Of course, in these sayings, Muhammad referred to other biblical prophets, including Abraham. These sayings of Muhammad that deal with Abraham and other pre-Islamic prophets served to remind Muslims of the kind of life every Muslim should live, the kind of life Muhammad lived. 3) As Muslim scholars read the Qur’an some felt it necessary to write commentaries. Al-Tabari, for instance, wrote another thirty volumes in which he commented on every verse in the Qur’an. This was another opportunity to insert stories relating to the lives of the prophets. 4) Finally, some Muslims wrote works...
that dealt specifically with the prophets from Adam to Muhammad. These texts are called “Stories of the Prophets” and some written between the tenth and eleventh centuries are still very popular today, especially among the Arabic-speaking Muslims.

All four of these traditions contain stories or anecdotes about biblical and Qur’anic prophets. Muslims tried to give these stories as much authority as possible, therefore, many begin with a line of well respected transmitters, some going back to Muhammad and many going back to people contemporary with the prophet. Abraham, of course, is a prominent figure in these Islamic traditions and, as mentioned, a model Muslim with whom Muhammad liked to compare himself. Although some Latter-day Saint scholars are aware of this material and have used it to one degree or another, it is still a relatively untapped field of research. This is generally true even among scholars of Islamic studies.

For the past several years, the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies has sponsored a project that promotes research and publications related to the Book of Abraham. The first volume of this series is entitled, Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham, coedited by me and two colleagues, John Tvedtnes, and John Gee. Forthcoming volumes will address topics such as the Joseph Smith Papyri, historical backgrounds to the Book of Abraham, and a follow-up volume to the Traditions book that analyzes nonbiblical traditions related to the early life of Abraham in more detail. What is really exciting is discovering that, especially with the “Abraham traditions” project, Muslim texts have provided some wonderful insight into the study of Abraham. To give a better idea of what this project can mean to both Muslims and Latter-day Saints, let me give you a brief summary of the traditions project from its inception to publication, and then I’ll cite a few examples and insights on Abraham from notable Muslim texts. I hope to show that the study of Muslim scholarly material not only builds bridges with Islam, but also reciprocates by providing some very useful resources for Latter-day Saint scholars studying Abraham as well.

A question that may arise is how much did Joseph Smith know about Islam. It is difficult to determine, but his knowledge was probably very limited. Any evidence in support of the Book of Abraham as an ancient document from Muslim sources was very likely not available to the prophet. This is true for two primary reasons: the general anti-Islamic atmosphere of the nineteenth century and the paucity of English translations of important Muslim sources. In the nineteenth century, generally, “the Muslim East was still an enemy, but an enemy doomed to defeat.” During the prophet’s life, the American society’s prevailing view of Islam and Muhammad was less than complimentary. Joseph Smith, however, viewed other religions differently than the people of his day. He said, “While one portion of the human race is judging and condemning the other without mercy, the Great Parent of the universe looks upon the whole of the human family with a fatherly care and paternal regard. . . . He holds the reins of judgment in His hands; He is a wise lawgiver, and will judge all men, not according to the narrow, contracted notions of men, but, ‘according to the deeds done in the body whether they be good or evil,’ or whether the deeds were done in England, America, Spain, Turkey, or India.” However, there remains no historical evidence as yet that indicates that the Prophet ever looked at the Qur’an since his scholarly interests seemed to have been directed towards Hebrew studies.

The Abraham project has been going on for about six or seven years since John Tvedtnes first received a phone call from Wayne Ballantyne, who was looking for Abraham materials Hugh Nibley had referred to. John Tvedtnes noticed that the texts Wayne Ballantyne was interested in were in Hebrew or Arabic and had not yet been translated into English. John felt that these texts and many others should be made available to the non-specialist Latter-day Saints so that they could study and draw their own conclusions. John invited me to participate in the project in 1998 to help research the Arabic materials. Since 1998, many other people have helped to bring to light for the Latter-day Saints over 120 Abraham traditions primarily from Jewish, Christian, and Muslim sources. Some of these traditions were not even available to Nibley when he was writing about Abraham. Some of the English translations were reprinted in the book and many others, particularly the Muslim materials, were translated from their original languages such as Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Arabic.

John Tvedtnes was astute enough to notice that these traditions included unique motifs or elements found in the Book of Abraham but not in the biblical account of Abraham. John Tvedtnes created a list of over forty of these elements. Here is a sample:

1. Abraham’s father’s worshiped idols (Abr. 1: 5–6).
2. Terah, after repenting, returned to his idols (Abr. 2: 5).
3. Children were sacrificed (Abr. 1: 7–8, 10–11).
4. Abraham was brought to be sacrificed because he would not worship idols (Abr. 1: 7, 12, 15; Facs. 1, fig. 3).
5. An angel came to rescue Abraham (Abr. 1: 15; 2: 13; Facs. 1, fig. 1).
6. Abraham held the priesthood (Abr. 1: 15; 2: 9, 11; Facs. 2, fig. 1).
7. Abraham made converts in Haran (Abr. 2: 15)
8. Abraham taught astronomy to the Egyptians (Facs. 3).
9. Abraham left a record of his own (Abr. 1: 31).
10. There was a famine in Abraham’s homeland (Abr. 1: 29–30; 2: 1, 5).

Let me give you a couple of examples from the Book of Abraham to show how Muslim texts have played a part in studying the nonbiblical life of Abraham. From the book of Abraham, we know that Terah was an idolater, but the Genesis account does not give any indication of this. The only biblical verses that suggest Terah was an idolater and that the Lord directed Abraham to remove his family from Ur of the Chaldees are found in Joshua 24: 2–3. However, it is unlikely that these verses alone could have contributed to the vast amount of ancient and medieval traditions that support Terah as an idolater. Extra-biblical traditions from
Judaism, Christianity, and Islam provide much evidence that Terah was indeed an idolater. Islamic texts are replete with references to Terah as an idol worshiper. According to the Qur'an, Terah is called Azar, which al-Tarafi (d. 1065) defined as "the false one who distorts religion." In one verse of the Qur'an, we read "Lo! Abraham said to his father Azar: 'Takest thou idols for gods? For I see thee and thy people in manifest error.'"7

Some Muslim accounts also describe Terah as an owner of an idol manufacturing business. As this was family business, when old enough, Abraham was employed in selling Terah's idols. However, it appears from many of these texts that Abraham was not much of a salesman. For instance, one Muslim account relates:

Now Azar used to make the idols his people would worship.8 Then he would give them to Abraham to sell, and Abraham would go out with them and, according to what they assert, would say to him who bought one that it would not hurt him or help him. So no one would buy from him. When this activity proved unprofitable to him, he went to the river with the idols and immersed their heads in it.9 He said, Drink, mocking his people and their error so that his shameing them and mocking them spread among his people and the rest of the people of the city until it reached Nimrod, the king.

In some Muslim accounts, Abraham is invited to a feast honoring idols, but stays back and destroys the gods of wood and stone. As the story goes Abraham enters into King Nimrod's (Abraham's archrival) hall of the gods and sees the idols lined up against the wall from smallest to largest with food offerings on their outstretched hands. Abraham mocks them and takes an axe and smashes all of the idols except the biggest. When the people return from their feast, they suspect Abraham of destroying the idols, but when Nimrod questions him, he responds with something like the biggest god became angry at the smaller gods for fighting over the food so the largest god took the axe and destroyed the smaller gods.10 In the older Jewish stories, Abraham destroys Terah's idol gods instead of Nimrod's.11

For this crime, Nimrod orders that Abraham be burned to death. He commands all his people to gather firewood. Some Muslim stories say that the firewood was gathered for a year. Women who got sick would vow to continue to gather firewood if their idol gods would heal them. When the fire was ignited it burned so intensely that birds flying over were burned. No one could get close enough to the fire to toss Abraham into it without being instantly killed. So they built a catapult to propel Abraham into the fire. As Abraham was sailing towards the fire, Gabriel is said to have met him in the air, and asks, "Abraham, do you need anything?" Abraham responds, "No, not from you. I trust in God." Abraham then lands in the fire which immediately turns into a beautiful garden with all kinds of flowers and vegetation. God had commanded the fire to be cool and safe upon Abraham.12 According to one Muslim, "They say Abraham stayed in the fire for seven days. Al–Minhal ibn Umar said, Abraham, the friend of God, said, 'There were no more pleasurable days than the days I lived in the fire.'"13 The themes of Terah's idolatry and Abraham's life in peril are so frequently attested in this literature it would be impossible to give the many and varied sources that refer to them.

What does this type of Muslim material tell us? First, it gives us evidence that, although it is Islamicized, Islamic sources have retained the core of the story going back to the earliest Jewish accounts. Second, it tells us that Abrahamic themes must have been very pervasive to have been preserved into the later Muslim era. Third, these Muslim texts have preserved some themes that even Judaism and Christianity have not to the same degree. For instance, in two Muslim sources Abraham is allowed to sit on Pharaoh's throne.14

The Islamic retelling of Abraham's story underscores the need to take this material seriously. And until Western (including Latter-day Saint) scholars begin to do this, Muslim scholars can rightly be hesitant about whether intentions to learn about them are sincere. On the other hand, as Latter-day Saints we can see that these early Islamic texts can help us identify key elements that, in conjunction with other traditions such as Jewish and early Christian, support to one degree or another the antiquity of the Book of Abraham and demonstrate the inspiration of the Prophet Joseph Smith. The study of Abraham, then, is a unique opportunity for building bridges of understanding between Latter-day Saints and Muslims.

Notes
1. The Islamic Translation Series headed up by Dan Peterson, director of the Institute for the Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts at BYU, has made enormous strides in bringing to light important Islamic philosophical texts significant to Muslims but relatively unknown to the West. In addition, BYU Studies devoted its most recent issue to helping Latter-day Saints better understand Islam. My subject today is not as ambitious as these worthy endeavors. My purpose here is to give examples of how Abraham scholarship can build bridges between Muslims and Latter-day Saints.
6. “It is told that he had a double name, Azar Tarah, like Israel Jacob. According to other interpretations, Azar was instead an epithet that means ‘the false one who distorts religion,’ and it was the harshest word that Abraham directed at him. In fact, the word Azar is also read with the ending of the nominative of the interjection, as though it were written, when Abraham said to his father, ‘O you who distort religion, o false one, shall you take idols for gods?’”. Traditions About the Early Life of Abraham, p. 372.
11. Ibid., pp. 140–141
Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Approaches to the Holy City of Jerusalem

by Chad F. Emmett, associate professor of geography, BYU

It all began with Abraham. For an unknown reason he chose Mount Moriah to willingly sacrifice his son, Isaac. Centuries later, Solomon built a temple atop Moriah. Jesus ended his mortal ministry at Calvary on the northern end of Moriah. And Mohammed made his night journey into heaven from atop Moriah. Because of these sacred events, Moriah—known to Muslims as the Haram al-Sharif, or “noble sanctuary,” and to Jews as the Temple Mount—is now located at both the physical and spiritual heart of Jerusalem. It and other sacred sites in and around the old city of Jerusalem are at the center of a seemingly endless conflict in which members of the three Abrahamic faiths contend for control of the city.

The threefold devotion to the city has left a long legacy of varying approaches in terms of how to control the city. Some approaches have been peaceful, others not so. As Latter-day Saints, I think it is important to remember the counsel of Elder Howard W. Hunter, who admonished us not to take sides in the conflict. All three faiths have valid claims to the sanctity of the city, and we should respect those claims. In my opinion no one religion has the right to usurp exclusive control of the city or its religious sites. All have a place in Jerusalem.

Today, I want to present a brief overview of how Jews, Christians, and Muslims have dealt with their holy city and its peoples. Some of the approaches to the city show that there are ways for the city to be peacefully shared and for tolerance to prevail. Others show the terrible consequences that result when one group seeks sovereignty to the exclusion of others. Learning from the positive approaches can help in understanding what the best way might be for Abraham’s fold to peacefully share the “city of peace.”

When David became King of Israel, he first ruled from the Judean capital of Hebron. Later, however, he conquered the Jebusite city of Jebus or Jerusalem and there established his new capital (2 Samuel 5: 1–7, 1 Chronicles 11: 1–7). David may have had many reasons for establishing a new capital in Jerusalem. One of those reasons was probably a calculated compromise to gain favor with the northern tribes and thereby unite all of Israel. By selecting a conquered Jebusite city on the border between Judah and Benjamin, David showed that he was not going to favor Judah by keeping his capital in the heart of Judea. From his compromise capital in Jerusalem, David was in fact able to establish a peaceful united kingdom.

Centuries later, another conqueror sought peace over conflict in the sacred city. When Umar, the second caliph of the expanding Arab Islamic empire, conquered Christian Byzantine Jerusalem in 638 C.E., he sought not to destroy as had Babylonians, Romans, and Persians before him. Instead, he issued a covenant in which he promised the Christian residents of the city “the surety of their persons, their foods, their churches, their crosses . . . and the cult in general.” 1 Umar’s generosity was further demonstrated when he declined an offer from the patriarch to pray in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, knowing that if he did, it would most likely become a Muslim shrine. Instead, he walked out of the church to pray. Umar even issued a charter forbidding Muslims to pray on the steps of the church or to build a mosque there. 2 Today, a mosque commemorating Umar’s place of prayer stands adjacent to the courtyard of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

During his visit to Jerusalem, Umar also visited the abandoned Temple Mount, and in respect for its sanctity—due to its association with the Temple of Solomon—ordered that it be cleaned of its long accumulation of garbage. He then oversaw the building of a mosque, al-Aqsa, at the southern end of the platform. 3 Umar willingly allowed the Christian residents of the city to remain. Jews, who had been expelled by the Byzantines, were initially prevented from returning to the city, but then in a change of heart Umar invited seventy Jewish families from Tiberius to settle in the city. 4 Not all Muslims were as generous to the city. In 1009, al-Hakim, the Fatimid ruler of Egypt, ordered that the Church of the Holy Sepulchre be destroyed. Some have suggested that Hakim sought the destruction of the church to prove to Muslim accusers that, even though his mother was a Christian, he was a loyal Muslim. 5 Hakim’s violence and intolerance for the city and its people was far exceeded by the Christian Crusaders who ninety years later conquered the city and massacred its inhabitants—Muslims, Jews, and even Eastern Christians.

Now that our men had possession of the walls and towers, wonderful sights were to be seen. Some of our men—and this was the more merciful course—cut off the heads of their enemies; others shot them with arrows so that they fell from the towers; others tortured them longer by casting them into flames. Piles of heads, hands and feet were seen in the streets of the city. It was necessary to pick one’s way over the bodies of men and horses. But these were small matters compared to what happened in the Temple of Solomon [that is, the al-Aqsa Mosque] . . . [There] men rode in blood up to their knees and bridle reins. Indeed it was
Palestine Order-in-Council. Of Berlin, the 1919 Versailles Peace Treaty, and the 1922 the 1856 Paris Peace Convention Treaty, the 1878 Treaty Status Quo gained further legitimacy by being included in not to allow change in control for any of the holy sites. The cial status quo in which ruling powers found it advantageous Tomb in Bethlehem, also came to be included in an unoffi-

holy sites, such as the Western Wall, the Haram al-Sharif/Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Over time additional of Olives, the Tomb of the Virgin in Gethsemane, and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, its rooftop monastery of promoting Greek claims.

Stemming from the contentious nature of the holy places at both international and local levels, in 1852, the compromise and relative peace of the Status Quo gave way in the twentieth century to competing nationalist claims to the city that continue in a horrible cycle of tit for tat. When the British pulled out of their mandate of Palestine, the fledgling United Nations came in and proposed a partition of the land into a Jewish state and an Arab state with Jerusalem being designated an international zone beyond the control of either state. For understandable reasons, the Arabs rejected the partition, war broke out, and in the end Jerusalem became a partitioned city with Jordan controlling the Arab east and Israel the Jewish west.

As a partitioned city from 1948–1967, movement between the two parts of the city was severely limited. Israeli Jews could not cross over to worship at the Western Wall, and Palestinian Arabs, whether in Israel or Jordan, could not cross to visit family members on the other side. Exceptions included tourists, who could cross one way from east to west or west to east, but not both, and Israeli-Christian-Arabs, who were allowed to cross to East Jerusalem at Easter and to Bethlehem at Christmas.
As a divided city, parts of Jerusalem became, for many, a forbidden city.

During Jordanian rule over East Jerusalem, much of the Jewish quarter and its synagogues along with Jewish cemeteries on the Mount of Olives were either destroyed or neglected into disrepair. On the Israeli side, vacant Arab homes were turned over to Jewish immigrants, mosques were turned into secular establishments, and Muslim cemeteries became parks.

In 1967, Jerusalem ceased to be a divided city with Israel’s conquest of the West Bank and East Jerusalem. When Jewish soldiers reached the Muslim-controlled temple mount, they raised an Israeli flag over the sacred site. Then, in a Davidic act of compromise, General Moshe Dayan, ordered that the flag come down and that Israel relinquish control of the Haram al-Sharif. Dayan may have acted as a humanitarian wanting to show forth tolerance toward the Muslims, or perhaps he acted as a pragmatic general who did not want to further anger the Islamic world by taking over control of its third most holy site.

This one bright spot of tolerance was soon tarnished. In June 1967, just four days after the Israeli conquest of East Jerusalem, 650 Arab residents of the Maghrebi Quarter were evicted with only two hours notice, and their 135 houses were bulldozed to the ground by the Israeli government in order to open up access to the Western Wall. This act was the beginning of still ongoing policies established by the Israeli government that seek to weaken the Arab presence and strengthen the Jewish presence in East Jerusalem.

For example, since 1967, of the seventy-two square kilometers that make up East Jerusalem, thirty-four percent has been expropriated from Palestinians for the use of Jewish settlers (population now at 180,000) and an additional forty-four percent has been declared “unzoned” for Palestinian construction. The Muslim village of Isawiyya (on the northeast side of Mount Scopus), with a pre-1967 size of ten thousand dunams, has been gradually whittled down by the Israeli authorities to just 660 dunams. Since 1967, building permits in East Jerusalem to house Jews have far exceeded those allotted to Arabs. “On average, the total sum of housing unit permits made available to the Arab residents of Jerusalem over the entire twenty-seven-year period (not much exceeding seventy-five hundred), equals the annual rate of such permits made available for Jewish construction.” In addition to not being able to build homes, Palestinian homes are also destroyed. Between 1967–1987, 540 Arab homes in Jerusalem were demolished by Israeli Authorities and from the Oslo agreement in 1993 until 1999, another 101 homes have been destroyed.

I have witnessed this destruction first hand. In 1989, while staying with my aunt and uncle in their East Jerusalem home in the Jewish settlement of Pisgat Ze’ev, I went jogging one morning and happened upon the home of an Arab family on the outer edge of the neighboring Arab village of Hizma. The family told me of how they had gone to the Jerusalem municipality to get a building permit to add on to their small two room house so that their recently married son and his wife would have their own living quarters. The permit was denied, but the family went ahead and built the modest addition. That addition was soon demolished by the Israeli government. Meanwhile, up the hill in Pisgat Ze’ev, more and more homes for Israeli Jews were being constructed. I returned to the site of the home in 1995, and it had disappeared. Two years later, in 1997, the land of the Arab family was full of new homes for Pisgat Ze’ev.

Former Jerusalem mayor Teddy Kollek, when asked about Israel’s treatment of Jerusalem’s Arabs, admitted in a 1990 interview, “Never have we given them a feeling of being equal before the law. They were and remain second- and third-class citizens.” In reference to all the praise he receives for having helped the city’s Arabs, he explained, “For Jewish Jerusalem I did something in the past twenty-five years. For East Jerusalem? Nothing! . . . Yes, we installed a sewage system for them and improved the water supply. Do you know why? Do you think it was for their good, for their welfare? Forget it! There were some cases of cholera there, and the Jews were afraid that they would catch it so we installed a sewage and water system against cholera.” Similarly, a current member of the Jerusalem city council notes that “for every Palestinian dollar the city takes, it gives back five to ten cents” to its Arab residents (Hoffman 1995, 10). Meanwhile, in an acknowledgment of the disparity in services, Mayor Ehud Olmert established a committee in 1994 to determine how to improve services and infrastructure in East Jerusalem. Olmert warned that if the situation in Arab neighborhoods was not brought up to the level found in Jewish neighborhoods then “the capital would de facto become a divided city.”

The Arab presence in Jerusalem has also been threatened at the sacred level. Since 1967 there have been several attempts by Jews (sometimes with the support of Christians) to regain control of ancient Mount Moriah in hopes that a Jewish temple can be rebuilt and the Messiah can come. These efforts only seem to strengthen the resolve of Muslims to hold on to their sacred Haram al-Sharif. In 1982, Allan Goodman, a member of the extremist Kach group, opened fire in the Dome of the Rock in an attempt to “liberate” the Temple Mount from Muslim control. Two were killed in the shooting followed by riots in and around Jerusalem, in which at least 184 people were injured. In 1983, more than forty Jews were arrested in Jerusalem for planning to take over the Temple Mount. Four of the group were armed young men caught trying to break through an underground passage onto the Haram al-Sharif. The next year Israeli security forces thwarted another attempted assault on the Mount. They found a stash of grenades and explosives smuggled onto the Mount and more arms, including rockets and high explosives, hidden outside of the city. A Christian group from the United States paid the legal fees for the first group. One of the investigating officials explained the motive for the planned attacks as wanting “to obliterate the Muslim presence on the Mount so that the Messiah would arrive.” In 1984 members of the Jerusalem Temple Foundation (also supported by American Christians) planned another attack on the Haram al-Sharif so that, in the words of its leader, they could “help fulfill prophecy and thus hasten the coming of the Messiah.” One of the members of the group, an Israeli reserve pilot, had
even talked of bombing the Muslim mosques on the Mount so that war would break out with the Islamic world and then the Messiah would bring deliverance.\textsuperscript{17} It is indeed strange to see Jewish and Christian fundamentalists cooperating in an attempt to remove Muslim mosques from the Haram al-Sharif. Christians do it to hasten the day of the second coming and their rapture into heaven, while Jews do it with a desire to see the temple rebuilt.\textsuperscript{18}

Predicated on these previous incursions, Muslims strongly protested the 1998 expansion of an archeological tunnel extending from the Western Wall to the Via Dolorosa in a line parallel and adjacent to the Temple Mount. The tunnel, a water passage which filled temple era cisterns, runs under the Muslim quarter and many Muslim monuments. Muslim opposition to the tunnel has been based out of fear that the tunnel could be used for future attacks on the Mount and on the structural damage it has caused to historical buildings above.\textsuperscript{19}

In response to having their lands confiscated, homes demolished, access restricted, and sacred sties threatened by Israeli Jews, Palestinian Arabs have reacted first by throwing stones and now by detonating bombs.\textsuperscript{20}

For these children of Abraham to ever live in peace, they need to look back and learn from the past—at least from those in the past who sought for peace. They need to look to Abraham who was willing to sacrifice for a higher glory, to David who was willing to compromise in order to bring about unity, to Umar who was willing to accommodate peoples and shrines of other religions, to Saladin who was willing to not avenge, to the Ottomans who sought to facilitate peaceful coexistence, to Christians who begrudgingly agreed to share the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in a unique form of scattered sovereignty, and to Moshe Dayan who was willing to relinquish control of the Temple Mount for a greater good. In short, they need to look to those who practiced religious tolerance toward all who claim the city as holy.

They also need to listen to current voices—voices that condemn the violence, both the violence of suicide bombs as well as the violence of closures, confiscations, demolitions, detainments, and bombs fired from tanks and Apache helicopters. And to voices that call for a shared city, a city where Muslims, Christians, and Jews as descendants of Abraham can live together in peace in a city they all call holy.

Notes

13. At other times, Kollek has defended his administration’s treatment of the Arabs, noting work in the old city that included the restoration of the walls and gates, the installation of buried water and sewage pipes, power lines and telephone cables, replacing the many TV antennae with one common antenna, and the paving of roads and strengthening of old buildings. Outside the walls he mentioned the building of a library and medical center in the Seikh Jarrah neighborhood (Jerusalem Post, International Edition, 11 June 1994).
17. Ibid.
20. Palestinian Arab opposition to Israeli occupation is not just limited to Muslims. Christian Arabs have long been active participants in the Palestinian nationalist movement, both as politicians and as stone throwers.
It's only love that we seek To break the silence we speak To find a rhythm divine, So we can shine! For every teardrop that falls, For every question that calls, There is an answer out there, waiting somewhere! It's only for tonight we're building bridges No turning back, we're on our way Lighting up the sky, we're building bridges That we might yesterday. Building Bridges is a quest available in Kingdoms of Amalur: Reckoning. A Fae maiden has been attacked and is still clinging to life. The warden of Gorhart village, Herc Adwold, hopes to save her but he isn't sure how best to treat her wounds. He suggested that I speak to Aery, a Fae who spends her time watching the village from above. Speak to Aery the Fae. She can be found north of the town on a cliff. Get a Greater Healing Potion. Can be bought in Golden Age Alchemy from Nanne Hanri.