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No God but Allah: *Muslim Radicalism and the New Islamic Sects*

“One wife? One God, that I can understand. But one wife? That is uncivilized.”

— Sheik Iriad, in *Ben Hur* (1959)

The major rival to Christianity among all the world’s religions is without a doubt Islam. The youngest of all the major world religions, Islam is the second largest, numbering roughly a billion people worldwide. The major mission fields proving most resistant to the gospel of Jesus Christ are almost all in Muslim-dominated areas, especially in North Africa, the Middle East (excluding Israel), and parts of Southeast Asia. In many of these nations Christianity represents less than one per cent of the population (e.g., Iran, Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Yemen, Turkey, Somalia, and Morocco).

Significant and growing Muslim populations can also be found in Western Europe and North America. In the United States alone, the number of Muslims is variously

estimated at three to four million and growing rapidly through both immigration and conversion. In addition, various Islam-based sects (such as the Sikhs and the Baha'is) have relatively large constituencies in the United States, possibly adding another half million or more Americans to this general religious orientation.

Despite the growing numbers of Muslims worldwide and in the West, and the increasing importance of Islam in world politics, many Christians in the West know little about Islam. We have reached a point where all Christians need to know about this major religious challenge to Christianity.

Muhammad: Prophet of God?

The figure of Muhammad (c. 570-632), the founder of Islam, towers head and shoulders above almost every other major figure in human history in the sheer impact he made in world history and civilization. Probably only Jesus Christ himself has had a greater impact overall. In 22 short years Muhammad changed Arabian culture from a largely polytheistic and fragmented society into a monotheistic, unified society driven by a clear sense of purpose and destiny.

The Life of Muhammad

Muhammad was born and raised in Mecca, a trade center in Arabia famed for its pagan shrine known as the *Ka'ba*. Arabs from all over the peninsula would make an annual pilgrimage (*hajj*) to the shrine to pray to one or more of the gods there and to kiss a black meteorite stone housed there. Judaism and, to a lesser extent, Christianity had made some

inroads into the area, evidently leading some Arabs to honor one of the gods of the Ka'ba as *Allah* (literally, “the God”) and to identify the God of the shrine as the God of Abraham. Abraham, in fact, was believed to have built the Ka'ba.

Into this religiously mixed environment Muhammad was born. Orphaned at a very early age, he was raised by his grandfather and then his uncle. Through his family's caravan trading he was exposed to Judaism and likely to Christianity as well, but probably not to any churches or to the Bible itself. At about 25 years of age he married Khadijah, a older and wealthy widow.

As midlife approached, Muhammad gave much of his time to solitary prayer. It was while he was praying on a night in about the year 610, in the month of Ramadan (a sacred month in Arab polytheistic culture), that Muhammad had his first vision, known as “the Night of Power and Excellence.” A heavenly being appeared in the sky and came down to within about two bow-shots of Muhammad. His first word is believed to have been “Recite!” (*iqra'*), a word related to the word *Qur'an* (which literally means “recitation”). At first Muhammad had severe doubts about the divine origin of the being. He worried that he might be possessed by an evil *jinn* (genie). Ironically, Khadijah's cousin, who professed to be a Christian, endorsed the vision as from God, along with Khadijah. Encouraged by them to believe that God had called him to be his prophet, Muhammad eventually began receiving repeated visitations or inner experiences in which he felt himself prompted to “recite” the words of God (*Allah*). The being in his first vision was at first identified as Allah himself, but Muhammad's more developed view of God as utterly transcendent led him to identify the being with the angel Gabriel.

Muhammad's message developed over time into a thoroughgoing monotheism with distinctively Arabic and Meccan elements. Allah was identified as "the Lord of this House" (Qur'an 106:3), that is, the God of the Ka'ba. Early in his Meccan ministry, Muhammad recited verses permitting devotion to the "daughters of Allah" (three goddesses enshrined in the Ka'ba along with Allah), but later recited new verses to replace the earlier ones, which were rejected as having been recited by Satan. The rejected verses hence became known as "the satanic verses" — a phrase made familiar in recent years as the title of Salmon Rushdie's infamous book which was condemned by Muslims as a blasphemous portrayal of Muhammad.¹ In any case, Muhammad eventually came to a consistently monotheistic doctrine of Allah as the one and only God.

Muhammad gained some followers in Mecca, but he was generally not well received there. When the Meccans learned that a city to the north named Yathrib had invited Muhammad to bring his prophetic message there, his opponents in Mecca tried to kill him before he could leave. Muhammad's flight to safety on June 16, 622, is known as the *Hijrah* ("emigration"), and is marked as the beginning of the Muslim calendar (with AD 622 termed 1 AH, or *Anno Hegirae*, "the year of the *Hijrah*" in Latin). It is the most sacred event in Islam.

Yathrib welcomed Muhammad with open arms and renamed itself *Madinat al-Rasul* ("city of the Prophet"), now known more simply as Medina. At first Muhammad adopted a fairly "Judaized" religious system, hoping to win the support of a sizable Jewish population living in Medina. He instituted a Friday worship service and required prayers to be said facing Jerusalem. The Jews rejected Muhammad, though, and he had them expelled from

the city and later led a massacre of a Jewish community. Muhammad then reinstated his earlier practice of having prayers said facing the Ka'ba in Mecca. He cemented his ties with the most influential Arab families in Medina by marrying some ten to fifteen wives.

In 630 Muhammad led an army of 10,000 men from Medina and other supporters to Mecca and conquered the city. With the economic and religious center of Arabia under his control, Muhammad was able to sweep through most of the peninsula and unify it under his leadership within two years, dying suddenly in 632.

The Claims of Muhammad

Was Muhammad a true prophet of God? In Islamic thought, to denigrate Muhammad is the worst sin possible (as the fury over Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* illustrates). The early 20th-century Indian Muslim thinker Iqbal asserted, "You can deny God, but you cannot deny Muhammad!" While the Christian cannot let Muhammad's claim to be an infallible and final prophet of God go unchallenged, it is not necessary to attack his character or sincerity. There are good reasons to deny that Muhammad was an inspired prophet, even granting that his doctrine of monotheism was a radical improvement over the polytheism of the culture in which he had lived.

First of all, Muhammad really offered no good evidence for his claim to be a prophet. And since he claimed to be the last and the greatest prophet, the standard of evidence ought to be high. Certainly it should not be lower than for the prophets of the Bible, or for Jesus. Yet Muhammad offers no evidence or proof for his claims. He fulfilled no prophecies of the Bible, although Muslim apologists have tried to argue

otherwise. For example, they point out that Moses said that a prophet like him would arise at a later time, but fail to deal with the fact that Moses, speaking to the Jewish people, said that the prophet would be one of their own countrymen (Deut. 18:15-18). Muhammad also did no miracles comparable to anything we can find in the Bible: he healed no one, raised no one from the dead, and provided no supernatural deliverance for his people (like Moses' parting of the Red Sea or the manna from heaven). All we really have are Muhammad's apparent mystical or spiritual experiences, his belief that they came from God, and the words he recited as revelations from God (later compiled as the *Qur'an* after his death).

Second, Muhammad's teachings flatly contradicted the teachings of the Old and New Testaments. We are not talking here about changes in ritual obligations, a loftier moral ethic, or deeper insight into the nature and purposes of God (changes which Christians typically find in the New Testament as compared to the Old). Muhammad rejected what is without a doubt the central historical and theological point of the New Testament — the death and resurrection of Jesus. According to Muhammad, Jesus did not die at all (he was taken bodily into Paradise), and the idea of a blood atonement for sin by Jesus' death was firmly rejected as insulting to Allah.

Thus, we cannot accept Muhammad's claim to be a prophet of God unless we are willing to reject the prophetic, revelatory character of the Bible. But again, this does not mean that we should view Muhammad as an evil schemer or a deliberate deceiver.

Muhammad was almost certainly a very sincere, very pious man who made a monumental contribution to civilization by his impassioned preaching of the truth that there is one all-powerful, all-merciful God who created the world. He evidently learned this truth from

Judaism (with perhaps some Christian influence), which itself was rooted in God's authentic revelation in the Old Testament. So, ultimately the heart of Muhammad's message originated from divine revelation, even though as Christians we are convinced that the words which Muhammad spoke were not themselves revelations from God.

The Qur'an: God's Last Words to Man?

Muslims would, of course, take strong exception to our claim that the Qur'an represents Muhammad's fallible expression of his own understanding of the revelation of God which had been given to the Jews. They regard the Qur'an as the chief and greatest proof of Muhammad's divine call, and as the final and superior revelation of God, displacing the Bible.

As we mentioned earlier, the Qur'an was compiled after Muhammad's death from his recitations which had been memorized or written down by his disciples on whatever was handy (usually bark or other objects, not paper). It is a collection of highly poetic pronouncements arranged in chapters or *suras* by order of length (basically longest to shortest). The arrangement is so haphazard from a thematic or historical perspective that the most popular English translation completely rearranges them.²

Ironically, the main evidence offered by Muslims for the inspiration of the Qur'an is its literary beauty. The Qur'an itself claims that no one could produce a writing with its magnificent style, which is attributed to its being literally dictated by God (2:23; 10:37-38; 17:88). Non-Arabic readers find this claim puzzling, but Muslims assure us that the literary quality of the Qur'an (and therefore its divine inspiration) can be appreciated only by

reading it in Arabic. This is not exactly a claim that is designed to commend the Qur'an to people of all nations and languages! While non-Muslim scholars generally agree that the poetry in the Qur'an is generally excellent, there simply is no evidence here of divine origin. Literary beauty is, after all, to some extent a culturally conditioned and even subjective judgment.

Lacking more objective evidences such as fulfilled prophecies or miracles, the Qur'an simple does not compare with the Bible. Again, this is not to detract from the powerful presentation of belief in one God and the high moral ideals and values often expressed in the Qur'an. The Qur'an is an Arabic masterpiece and one of the greatest, most influential books in the history of humanity. It is not, though, a divine revelation like the Bible, much less superior to the Bible.

Islam and Jesus

Islam acknowledges Jesus to have been a great prophet. Indeed, Islam honors Jesus as the greatest of all prophets other than Muhammad. However, Muslims flatly deny the two central claims of Jesus as understood by Christians.

First, Muslims deny that Jesus is the Son of God or deity in any sense. The unqualified, simple monotheism of Muhammad left no room for God to have “partners,” as the Qur'an puts it. Of course, in Christianity Jesus is not a divine “partner” of God — he *is* God, in the person of the Son. But to Muhammad's mind, raised in a polytheistic culture and with only a limited exposure to Judaism and even less to Christianity, the doctrine of the Trinity sounded like three Gods. Muhammad could not even accept the designation

“Son of God” for Jesus, since he took this literally to mean that Jesus was procreated by God. Muhammad rightly rejected such an idea, unfortunately not realizing that this was not the Christian position.

Second, Islam rejects the Christian belief that Jesus had died on the cross as an atonement for sins and rose from the dead. Having demoted Jesus to a merely human prophet, Muhammad could not very well retain the Christian concept of Jesus as a divine Savior from sin. Moreover, in Muhammad’s conception a prophet is a glorious, victorious figure; he reasoned that God would certainly never allow his prophet to suffer such an ignominious death. Muhammad concluded that Jesus never died at all, but had been taken up bodily into Paradise. The Romans probably crucified someone else by mistake, most likely Judas Iscariot (although Simon of Cyrene, whom the Gospels say carried Jesus’ cross, is sometimes suggested).

The claim that Jesus did not die on the cross is arguably the weakest link in the Muslim religious system. As a matter of simple historical fact the execution of Jesus by the Romans is on the firmest ground possible. The Jewish leaders had seen Jesus in the Temple and around Jerusalem for several days prior to his death, and they would certainly have known (and objected) if the Romans were crucifying the wrong man. We have at least two independent accounts informing us that various friends and family members of Jesus (including his mother) witnessed his death and buried his body (Luke 23:49-56; John 19:25-27, 38-42). Small wonder that all non-Muslim historians, whether Jewish, Christian, or skeptic, agree that Jesus was crucified.

Another difficulty facing the Muslim view ought to be mentioned. On their view Jesus never died at all and was taken up bodily into Paradise. While Jesus' enemies might be confused as to what happened, it is hard to imagine why his disciples would remain confused. Surely Jesus explained it to them before he ascended! How, then, did the idea originate among Jesus' followers (that is, in the church) that Jesus had died? No follower of Jesus would have made up such an idea, for the very reason Muhammad seven centuries later could not accept it — because death by crucifixion was universally regarded as the most shameful death possible.³

While rejecting the deity of Jesus and his death and resurrection, Muslims do have high regard for Jesus. Whatever traditional Christian beliefs about Jesus that did not contradict or undermine Muhammad's strict unitarian monotheism were accepted by him and are acknowledged by Islam to this day. So, Muslims have no trouble agreeing that Jesus was born of a virgin, that he performed miracles, that he ascended into heaven, and even that he will return to the earth at some future time. What they cannot allow is that any of these ideas be interpreted in a way that would imply Jesus' deity or undermine Muhammad's claim to be a prophet of God.

Not surprisingly, Islam regards Muhammad as the last of the prophets. As such, it is natural that Islam should claim that Muhammad's teaching supersedes that of Jesus and of Christianity. Muslims have traditionally argued that Jesus was a Jewish prophet sent to his people, whereas Muhammad was a prophet for the whole world. This claim obviously depends on the claim, already discussed, that Jesus was a mere prophet and not the divine Savior from sin. But there are other problems with the Muslim claim that Muhammad was a

more universal prophet than Jesus. Although Jesus was a Jew, he commissioned his disciples to take the gospel to all nations (Matt. 28:19-20), which they did. Already by Muhammad's time Christianity was predominantly Gentile, and Christians could be found throughout Europe, Western Asia, and North Africa — essentially the whole known world.

Today Jesus is acknowledged by a larger number and a greater diversity of ethnic and cultural peoples than any other religious leader in history. Nearly every major world religion (including Islam) finds it necessary to assign some place of honor to Jesus. Muslims regard Jesus as a prophet, Hindus regard him as a holy teacher or even an avatar (human manifestation of the Divine), and Buddhists regard him as an enlightened one or “Buddha” for the West. The people of the world religions do not, on the other hand, find it necessary to come to terms with Muhammad.

Our point here is not that the greater attraction of Jesus among people of all religions proves that Jesus was the Son of God and the Savior. It is, rather, that the evidence does not support the Muslim claim that Jesus was a lesser prophet with only local appeal as compared to Muhammad. If anything, the evidence shows that Jesus is the one person in human history who has the potential to transcend all cultural boundaries and unite people of every tribe and language and nation (Rev. 5:9).

Islam and World Powers

On the basis of its claim that Muhammad was the final and greatest prophet of God, Islam has sought to bring all people into “submission” to the will of Allah. The word *Islam* means “submission,” and a *Muslim* is “one who submits.” Although Islam has had its

philosophers and apologists who have sought to persuade people to convert to the Muslim faith, in general Islam has from its very beginning under Muhammad himself made its major advances around the world through military force. By contrast, while Christianity has on occasion also been imposed by force, its initial cultural success in Europe came by the blood of Christian martyrs, and the most important means of spreading Christianity during the past four centuries has been the work of missionaries who have also in many cases died as martyrs to further the gospel.

The Rise and Fall of the Muslim Empires

During the decades immediately following the death of Muhammad, the Muslims consolidated their hold on Arabia and gained control of Palestine and parts of North Africa and the Mesopotamian region. About the year 700 the Dome of the Rock was built in Jerusalem at the site where Muhammad was believed to have had a vision of (or journey to) heaven. By 711 the Muslim empire covered all of North Africa and had conquered Spain (where the Muslims became known as the Moors). By the year 1000 Muslim power covered essentially the entire Middle East and was rising in India and Southeast Asia.

At this point Christian Europe felt it had to answer the political and military threat of the Islamic empire. It concentrated its efforts on taking control of Jerusalem and on driving the Moors from Spain. Jerusalem changed hands a couple of times and ended up in control of the Muslims, where it remained (under different ethnic powers) from the thirteenth to the twentieth century. The Europeans were more successful in Spain, eventually expelling the Moors in 1492 (the same year as Columbus's first expedition).

It was the British empire which would eventually contain the expansion of the Islamic powers worldwide. In 1600 the British established the East India Company, establishing economic interests in a part of the world which was increasingly under Muslim control. By the time of the American Revolution the Muslim Ottoman Empire was breaking up gradually, due in large part to British (and French) colonialism in India, Africa, and Southeast Asia. In 1858 India became part of the British empire, and between 1880 and 1918 the British gained control of both Egypt and Palestine. The Ottoman Empire disappeared completely after World War I, and during the 1920s several independent states emerged, typically with the British or French lending support. These included Turkey, established as a secular state, and several Arab monarchies with only partially Islamic systems of law (e.g., Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Syria).

The British intent in taking control of Palestine all along was to open the way for Jews to establish a homeland there, an intention formally declared in the Balfour Declaration (1917). Already in 1881 Jewish immigrants had begun building new settlements in Palestine, still largely Arab Muslim in population. The Jewish population grew in Palestine after World War I and increased dramatically during the Nazi regime in the 1930s and throughout World War II, as Jews sought to escape the Holocaust. After the war ended, in 1947 the United Nations partitioned Palestine into Jewish and Arab states, giving Jews 52 percent of the land, and in 1948 the nation of Israel began its modern existence. The Arab Palestinians rejected this plan and in 1948 Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, Egypt, and Iraq launched war against Israel. In less than a year Israel had won the war and enlarged its borders to encompass some 77 percent of the former Palestine.

Meanwhile, in India the British-educated Mohandas K. (“Mahatma”) Gandhi led a nonviolent resistance movement to pressure the British for Indian independence. Although the British did grant India its independence, Gandhi’s hope that Indian Muslims and Hindus would live together in peace was not realized. The Muslim-dominated areas in the east and west wings of the Indian subcontinent became an independent Pakistan⁴ in 1947, and Gandhi was himself assassinated in 1948.

Muslim Radicalism and the Middle East

The main flashpoints in the world involving Muslim powers in the last half of the twentieth century have been in the Middle East. In the Six-Day War (1967) Israel took control of all of Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Golan Heights, refusing to comply with a United Nations resolution calling for its withdrawal from these “Occupied Territories.” Modern Arab-Israeli peace negotiations throughout the rest of the century focused on these disputed areas and the disposition of cities, especially Jerusalem, considered holy by both sides. The negotiations were complicated by Arab Palestinian terrorism (orchestrated in the 1970s and 1980s especially by the Palestinian Liberation Organization, or PLO, headed by Yassir Arafat) and by Israeli attacks against Lebanon where PLO forces were based. Even the historic peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians in 1994 did not resolve these issues or bring the violence to an end.

The militant Palestinian resistance against Israel is a small but crucial part of the larger movement known as Muslim “fundamentalism”⁵ but perhaps better termed Muslim radicalism. This movement represents a backlash against the Westernization and

secularization of Muslim countries. In 1978-79 the Ayatollah Khomeini led a revolt in Iran in which he deposed the Shah (who had been supported by the West), instituted a state governed by Islamic law, and held American hostages for over a year. In 1981 members of a radical Muslim group named Jihad (the Arabic word meaning “struggle” and often translated “holy war”) assassinated Anwar Sadat, whose visit to Jerusalem in 1977 had opened peace negotiations between Egypt and Israel. Similar groups emerged during the 1980s among the Palestinians, notably Hizbullah and Hamas, as the PLO became less radical.

Meanwhile, throughout the 1980s the neighboring nations Iran and Iraq fought a long and bloody war. The West was inclined during this period to look more favorably on Iraq because of its secular government (ruled by dictator Saddam Hussein), which seemed more open to the West than Iran’s militant Islamic government. This perception was undone when Iraq invaded Kuwait, leading to the Gulf War (1990-91) in which a U.S.-led coalition of nations — including some of the Muslim nations of the Middle East — drove the Iraqi army out of Kuwait.

Muslim Sects

Islam is known in the West, and especially in the United States, as much or more through certain Islamic sects than through the traditional forms of Islam. We will briefly consider four of them here — the Sufis, the Sikhs, the Baha’is, and the Nation of Islam.

The Sufis were a medieval movement within Islam which reacted against the formalism and materialism of the growing Muslim empires. Sufis sought to develop a

simple lifestyle and to cultivate a deep spiritual experience of Allah, generally following a mystical path in order to find such an experience. The interest in mysticism in the West in the twentieth century led to rapid growth of Sufism in Europe and the United States.

The Sikhs were founded around 1500 by Nanak, a Hindu in Punjab during the Muslim rule there of the Moguls. Nanak, who is regarded as the first of ten founding gurus, sought to integrate the form of Hinduism which expressed devotion to a personal deity (known as bhakti) with the mystical Sufi tradition in Islam. In Sikh belief God is the immortal Creator who has many names, including Allah, Rama (a Hindu divine name), and Sahib (“sir,” “master”). The Sikhs are well known for their martial philosophy and garb (notably the turban and the dagger), a tradition which stems from their persecution in Punjab by Muslim authorities in the 1600s. Outside their original home the largest populations of the Sikhs are to be found in the United Kingdom, which has close to half a million Sikhs, and the United States, which has over a quarter of a million Sikhs.

The Baha’i World Faith was founded by Baha’u’llah, a Muslim in Persia (modern-day Iran) in the nineteenth century. He took the name Baha’u’llah (“the glory of Allah”) because he claimed to be the last in a series of prophets, each of whom had provided a new and more complete manifestation of God to the world. Baha’i teaches that Jesus was the sixth of these prophets, Muhammad was the seventh, a Persian prophet called the Bab (whom Baha’u’llah had followed) was the eighth, and Baha’u’llah himself was the ninth, last, and greatest of these prophets. As might be expected, the Baha’is were persecuted by the Muslim authorities in Persia, and Baha’u’llah died in a Turkish prison in Palestine in 1892.

His son, 'Abdu'l-Baha', brought the Baha'i religion to America, where it has flourished and grown throughout the twentieth century.

The Nation of Islam is undoubtedly the most culturally significant sect of Islam in the United States. Popularly known in earlier years as Black Muslims, the Nation of Islam is an African-American cult that reinterprets Islam as a religion for the oppressed Blacks. The original vision of its founder, Wali Fard Muhammad, was of a separate and autonomous Black nation within the United States. African Americans were urged to renounce their U.S. citizenship and to reject their last names (which were their "slave names"), using only "X" in their place. The most famous member of the Nation of Islam, Malcolm X, was killed in 1965 by angry Nation members after Malcolm had disavowed the group in favor of pursuing a more traditional Muslim path. The Nation of Islam⁶ has been led since the late 1970s by Louis Farrakhan, who emerged as the most controversial African-American leader in the 1990s. Under Farrakhan, the Nation of Islam seeks economic independence from the white establishment ("Buy Black") rather than political independence from the United States. He has provoked outrage over the years for his rhetoric of hate, especially against the Jews. Still, for many African-Americans Farrakhan's message, especially his emphasis on self-reliance, personal responsibility, and the importance of restoring young Black men in America to their place in the home, strikes some important and valid themes.

Christians and the Challenge of Islam

No religion poses a more formidable challenge to Christianity as we enter the third millennium than Islam. It is the dominant religion in many parts of the Third World, and its

appeal as the religion of the oppressed, the religion for those who resent their treatment at the hands of the white European and American establishments, has considerable force.

Islamic civilization boasts numerous and impressive accomplishments in architecture, mathematics, philosophy, and law, just to name a few of the areas in which Islamic culture has shined. Now Islam, in both traditional and sectarian forms, is growing in Europe and America, as well as throughout the world. How should Christians respond to this challenge?

First of all, it is important for Christians to acknowledge that there is much in Islam that is good. Certainly the monotheistic religion of Islam is far superior to the paganism that gripped Arabia and much of the surrounding lands before Muhammad. The cultural contributions of Islamic civilization to the rest of the world should be appreciated and commended. On the other hand, it does no good to perpetuate stereotypes of Arab or other Muslim peoples. Many Muslims are sincere, kind people, who simply care about their families and the future of their people.

Second, we ought to recognize that much of the conflict between the West and the Islamic nations of the Middle East and North Africa is the result, at least in part, of Western policies and practices. This is not to place all or even most of the blame on the West, but it is to say that the West has contributed to the problem. To cite just one example, the treatment of Jews in Europe throughout the modern era, but especially in the twentieth century, in large measure led to the creation of a Jewish state right in the middle of a region long dominated by Muslim peoples. The whole matter of Israel and its relations with the Palestinians and the surrounding Muslim nations is exceedingly complex, but the point here is that the West cannot deny all culpability for the problem.

Third, Christians need to support efforts to bring peace between Muslims and Jews in the Middle East and to foster understanding and acceptance between themselves and Muslims. Christian efforts to evangelize Muslims have so far had only marginal success, and this might not change unless and until the climate of mutual suspicion between people of these two largest world religions changes.

Finally, Christians need to continue efforts to evangelize Muslims with the good news of Jesus Christ. We can and should work toward mutual understanding and acceptance while at the same time taking every opportunity to present the gospel to Muslims. This will require gaining a fair and accurate understanding of Islam as well as an ability to explain and defend the Christian truth claims over against the errors of Islam. Surely this largest of mission fields deserves the greatest of efforts and commitments of the Christian church as we enter the third millennium.

Notes to Chapter 6: No God But Allah

¹Salmon Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Viking, 1989).

²N. J. Dawood, trans., *The Koran*, 4th rev. ed. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1974); see p. 11.

³On Jewish and Greco-Roman attitudes toward crucifixion in the time of Jesus, see Martin Hengel's classic little study, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1977).

⁴The eastern part of Pakistan became Bangladesh in 1971.

⁵The term is of debatable accuracy. Insofar as Muslim and Christian fundamentalists both decry the secularization of their societies and believe that the culture and nation should return to complete adherence to their Scripture (the Qur'an or the Bible), the comparison has merit. However, the use of force to impose Islamic law is an essential part of the radical Muslim agenda, whereas only a very small and extreme segment of Christian fundamentalism has even suggested resorting to violence.

⁶Or to be more precise, a splinter group of the Nation of Islam; the original group went through various name changes and was absorbed into the world religion of (Sunni) Islam in 1985.