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## The Mystery of Islam

By

Abraham Kuyper

1907

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With a Preface

By Translator-Editor

Dr. Jan H. Boer

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1. [www.lulu.com](http://www.lulu.com). Punch in the name < jan h boer >.
2. <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/kuyper/islam.html>

It is also available on a CD-Rom along with additional Kuyper and Boer writings, including thousands of articles on Islam and Christianity. You can order the CD from Boer at [boerjf@hotmail.com](mailto:boerjf@hotmail.com)

## Translator-Editor Preface

Dr. Jan H. Boer<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For Boer see his website < [www.SocialTheology.com](http://www.SocialTheology.com) >.

It is the year 2010. We are in the middle of a period in which Islam forms the central focus for much of the world. It is possible that we stand at the door of an entirely new era of world history in which Islam will be much more dominant than it has in the immediate past centuries. Only time will tell.

For the West, this is not the first time Islam has claimed so much attention. There were the Crusades. There was the Andalusian Muslim civilization from AD 711 AD till 1492, at one time covering almost the entire Iberian peninsula. This meant the Western heartland was confronted with the Muslim challenge at its very doorstep for almost eight centuries, a force they could not afford to ignore and which became an important stimulant for Western cultural development. But then the challenge receded into the distance. Kuyper's book on Muslim civilizations around the Mediterranean was written during another transition period, namely the time of the collapse of the Turkish Caliphate or Sultanate in 1923.

As Kuyper's Introduction shows, this work became very popular in its country of origin, The Netherlands. This material is translated from a copious work of two massive volumes. They were expensive in a time of limited wealth. Kuyper was delighted that, in spite of general poverty and the limitations of a small Dutch-language market, the first 5000 copies sold immediately and within two months two more prints appeared. What especially enthralled him was that a young lady almost immediately prepared a Braille version of this entire two-volume set! Clearly this was a subject of major interest to the Dutch populace. A popular Dutch writer, J. W. Schulte Nordholt, wrote almost a century later, "We can learn much from this book. Though the main theme of this work is not altogether clear to me, it contains much interesting random data. A traveler around the Mediterranean

today will still find much enjoyment from reading these century-old Kuyper books and is sure to appreciate them.”<sup>2</sup>

Of course, there may have been additional reasons for the popularity of this work. Kuyper himself was a Dutch icon. Since the 1870s he had been at the centre of a battle for Christian liberation of the Dutch Calvinist masses from the tyranny of a state-church alliance that was dominated by modernist liberalism, today described as secularism. The battle was waged organizationally, spiritually, politically and in print at every major cultural front in the country. The end product was a host of Christian organizations, including a new denomination, and a new sense of power among the people he championed. They took over the government with Kuyper and, later, succeeding leaders of the movement serving off and on as Prime Ministers till this day. Until well into 2010, the Dutch Prime Minister, J. P. Balkenende, described himself as a Kuyperian.<sup>3</sup> Due to the triple influence of secularism, Barthian theology and stultifying traditionalism that requires new oxygen for rejuvenation, the resulting social structures based on religion and worldview are currently lamented by some Dutch citizens as “*verzuiling*.” However, the system is lauded in other quarters, including and especially foreigners, as the most effective guarantee for the freedom of all religions and worldviews.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>*Trouw*, July 8, 1994.

<sup>3</sup>Balkenende stated, “In case any of you should still doubt this: I am a Kuyperian in heart and soul. That is due to my upbringing, my education and the path of my career. But I am especially a Kuyperian from conviction.” J. P. Balkenende, “Speech by Prime Minister J.-P. Balkenende on the occasion of the unveiling of the statue of Abraham Kuyper in the town of Maassluis on 5 November, 2008.” Princeton Theological Seminary, Abraham Kuyper Center for Public Theology, *The Kuyper Center Review*, Vol. 1, 2010.

<sup>4</sup>H. ten Napel, pp. 93, 97-102.. J. Boer, 2009, pp. 82, 416.

While engaged in this whirlpool of re-organizing society, Kuyper also wrote an entire library that includes massive tomes of heavy academic and philosophic treatises as well as many volumes of meditations marked by a wholistic *piety*—in distinction from *pietism*, which is *not* wholistic!<sup>5</sup>-- and innumerable articles in the newspapers he himself established, one of which, *Trouw*, still exists as a daily and is now part of an international publishing conglomerate. This entire body of Kuyperiana was very popular in his day. In the course of these writings, Kuyper led his people in the development of a new worldview that was orthodox but hardly “conservative” as that term is popularly used today, and significantly different from existing Christian traditions and philosophies, even though borrowing heavily from them. It can be said that he re-arranged or re-combined existing philosophical and theological concepts into a dynamic new Christian worldview that features a heavy emphasis on this world and society without losing sight of the spiritual and eternal sides of creation.

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<sup>5</sup>J. Boer, 1979, pp. 446-449.

I have introduced elements of this new school of thought in Volumes 1, 5 and 8 of my series *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations* as well as some other publications.<sup>6</sup> It goes by various names, such as Neo-Calvinism, Kuyperianism, Neo-Kuyperian even, and Reformational. Succeeding generations strove to produce a more or less full-fledged Christian philosophical system that is matched among modern orthodox Christians only by Roman Catholics.<sup>7</sup> It is widely sought after by Christians throughout the world today who are seeking to develop a Christian worldview that can responsibly counter secularism and Islam. Unfortunately, they are hampered by language problems, since many of the core publications exist only in Dutch, a language not widely understood. Fortunately, the movement is spawning an increasing number of English publications, to which this translation is a small contribution. I have only recently learned about the exciting and ambitious hopes of the Kuyper Center at Princeton Theological Seminary to translate all or most Kuyperiana into English.

I am offering this English translation of Kuyper's discussion on Islam not because he was an expert on the subject nor because I agree with all his opinions, allegations or predictions. In fact, I don't. My reason is that it is interesting for his 21<sup>st</sup>-century heirs to learn how Kuyper, the pioneer of an emerging international school of philosophy and social action, interpreted the Islamic movement of a century ago, the same movement that today is once again at the centre of the world's attention. How did this pioneer of wholistic Christianity and assailant of an intolerant secularism a century ago interpret Islamic wholism and *its* resistance to secularism? I leave potential implications for today for you to ponder.

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<sup>6</sup>See also the introduction to Kuyper in my Essay One in this book. For other introductions to Kuyper see my website < [www.SocialTheology.com/kuyperiana](http://www.SocialTheology.com/kuyperiana) >.

<sup>7</sup>To pre-empt criticism of this statement, I hasten to explain that Kuyper and his allies made grateful use of existing Western philosophy, but they fused these various philosophical concepts into a unique combination.

Kuyper was a reformer or, in more contemporary language, a social transformer, a *radical* transformer in the sense that he went to the root of things he tackled, to their *radix*. He was not a radical in the popular modern sense in that he sought to overthrow existing structures and replace them with others that had no basis in history, as is the tendency of liberal secularism. He constantly sought to base his claims and efforts on both the Bible, the deep historical roots of his own country, as well as on various strands of existing philosophies. But, prophetic as he was, he could hardly be expected to transform an entire society in one lifetime. He remained a child of his time and, while tackling important cultural sectors, left others in their traditional state, often embracing the popular notions of his day that may be rejected today. He is faulted for that and, sometimes, deeply resented and criticized, especially by some Christians involved in the feminist movement. Sometimes he is said to have unwittingly prepared the foundations of South African apartheid. However, I have listened to a Black South African<sup>8</sup> speaking at a Kuyper centennial celebration at Princeton Theological Seminary in 1998, who stated that he stood before this international forum of scholars precisely *because* he was a product of the Kuyperian liberation movement. In short, no man, woman or even movement can do it all in one generation. It is sufficient that descendants continue the transformation over succeeding generations in areas not touched by “Father Abraham.” He *did* lay the foundations for expanding the entire Christian horizon, worldview and range of social action, even if he did not apply it as fully as some demand today, a century later. Will expecting more of one man or movement be fair or reasonable? Kuyper had to leave some things for us to do!

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<sup>8</sup>I regret not knowing the brother’s name. My file of the conference is incomplete and he is one of its unfortunate casualties.



Kuyper leaves us with an intriguing question. Interwoven throughout the article is the reality of Western imperialism that then as now rattles the Muslim world as well as myself. Being a politician of note, even Prime Minister of his country, as well as a pioneering liberation theologian of orthodox vintage, one would think that Kuyper might have had some sympathy for the Muslim community's political plight and indicate at least some misgivings about Western aggression. One detects none of that in this publication, even though he was aware of Muslims' chaving under this yoke.

My comment, I hasten to say, is not mere cheap hindsight. The ecumenical movement of the day was acutely aware of the un-Christian behaviour of the West vis a vis its colonies and did not hide its dismay.<sup>9</sup> Similarly, Kuyper was painfully aware of the parallel problems caused by *laissez faire* capitalism in his *home* country and railed against them in radical terms: "The law of the animal world, dog eat dog, became the basic law for every social relationship."<sup>10</sup> And, yes, he did also recognize similar dynamics in colonialism and had a certain ambivalence towards it.<sup>11</sup> It does not appear that he ever overcame this ambivalence. However, I would argue that if the *main* contours of Kuyper's predilection as a liberation theologian/politician had been allowed to work themselves out, Kuyper would have ended up on the side of Johannes Verkuyl, a Kuyperian missionary of a later generation. He was imprisoned by the Dutch for siding with the Indonesians in their struggle for independence. It was another point on which Kuyper and most of his successors did not achieve clarity.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>J. Boer, 1979, pp. 103-105; 1984, p. 114.

<sup>10</sup>A. Kuyper, 1950, pp. 22, 35-36, 16. J. Boer, 1979, pp. 16, 47; 1984, pp. 31, 137-138.

<sup>11</sup>J. Boer, 1979, pp. 47, 466-467, 469, 471-472.

<sup>12</sup>This ambivalence continued to characterize Kuyper's political party for decades and kept it from developing the radical stance to which the Kuyperian perspective really should drive its heirs. This ambivalence among Kuyperians eventually drove the American Kuyperian philosopher Nicholas Wolterstorff, retired Yale professor, to near despair. He cried it out about his church, the Christian Reformed Church in North America (CRC), being so proud of its Kuyperian heritage but having become so "quiescently—sometimes even oppressively—conservative." (N. Wolterstorff, 1983, p. ix. J. Boer, 1992, pp. 187-188.) Why did that happen? How could this happen? I believe it has to do with the constituency

An explanatory note: There are many references throughout the article to events, persons and place names that are not immediately clear to most 21<sup>st</sup>-century readers. I considered inserting explanatory footnotes. Then I realized that almost all of them can be found on the internet and have only to be “googled.” So, for those who want all those details, I refer you to the internet. I could not find any information about some names or events on the internet, neither about their meaning nor their English spelling. Those I marked with a star (\*). For those who are interested only in the general perspective Kuyper offers, the article will suffice for a starter as it stands.<sup>13</sup>

A cautionary note: Be it understood that translating it all does not translate into agreeing with it all.

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climbing the socio-economic ladder from working class and low middle to middle, high middle and managerial class. Marx was correct about our worldviews and religions tending to follow changes in our economic conditions more than following the authority of our Holy Book, not infrequently *regardless* of that Holy Book. We may not consciously turn away from the Book, but our interpretation gradually and unnoticeably changes to conform to the new situation. The CRC constituency in West Michigan that spawned the Christian Labour Association in the USA during the 1930s, rejected all overtures made by that body during the 1990s. During the transition of its constituency from a largely labour community to one of owners and managers, it also changed from pro-union (Christian) to anti-union, including Christian. Well, that’s a whole story in itself—and a lucid example of Marx’s thesis.

<sup>13</sup>I encourage you to google the original title of this book, *Om de Oude Wereldzee*, for further introductions to and discussions about this work.

## Introduction

By Abraham Kuyper

I can only be grateful for the reception this book has enjoyed. It is encouraging that the first print of 5,000 copies of a work of this format—[remember: the whole was a voluminous two-tome job--translator]—and that was available only at a rather steep price, enjoyed two reprints within two months! Even more so, given the restrictions of the small Dutch-language market. But I derived the greatest satisfaction from the young lady who had such love for the blind that she had the patience to promptly produce a Braille edition of this work! It forms a gigantic tome that can be seen at the Library for the Blind in The Hague.

Originally I was at a loss as to how to explain such humbling interest in this project. It did not pretend to be scholarly. Neither could it be regarded as a great literary work or a captivating travel journal. Market research later revealed that readers were attracted by the great amount of highly compact information about a region in which there is wide-spread interest but little knowledge. To be sure, during the 1890s a couple of major books on the region were published in French (1891) and German (1895), but the French one became too voluminous with its nine heavy tomes, while the German one was simply too broad in compass without showing the interwoven nature of developments around the Mediterranean. Thus a great need was felt for a work in compact format that would provide information about the peoples around that sea.<sup>14</sup> Encouraged by the initial popularity of this work, I thus decided to proceed with a condensed description of some of the less familiar Mediterranean countries not covered so far. I included Spain and Portugal mainly because of the residue of Muslim civilization and culture that still marks these countries.

History does not stand still. In several of the countries I visited, significant changes were underway. I took careful note of these changes in the awareness that a book that is in progress for two years cannot possibly be up to date in its first chapters. This applies especially to Turkey with the revolution that took place there and that totally changed the issues surrounding the Balkan question. Allow me therefore briefly to draw your attention to this revolution.

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<sup>14</sup>Given his own verbosity that resulted in multi-volume tomes, it is almost humorous for Kuyper to present his as compact!

Although Abdul Hamid remained Sultan, one must regard the change in government there as nothing less than a wholesale revolution. A groups known as “The Young Turks” had quietly blanketed the country with a network of Committees or cells that were obviously copied from the French Revolution. These Committees constitute the government, not only in Constantinople but also in the more remote villages. Government officials are totally dependent on these Committees. Even the Sultan has no choice but to go by their policies. They depose ministers and other officials at will. Even the judiciary is subject to their policies. This arrangement had since long been planned by a central committee in Paris. Actually it was Sultan Abdul Hamid with his carelessness and reckless expenditures who empowered them to suddenly carry out their plot without bloodshed.

They availed themselves of the same instrument that had upheld the regime of the Sultan, namely the army. The army had been neglected, not in terms of weaponry or training, but in salaries and promotions. Even among the troops that the Sultan had sent to Yemen to squelch a rebellion there, repeated mutiny took place. Government and the corrupt civil service slurped up all the available funds. Hence, the troops were not paid and promotions were intentionally delayed to avoid paying higher salaries. Dissatisfaction was rife and that was the weapon the Young Turks used to draw army officers to their side. The rank and file soldiers followed suit. The confusing state of affairs in Macedonia, which was close enough to Constantinople, allowed them space and time to organize themselves properly and then, from that vantage point, to dare an attack on Constantinople. They did so by raising the same slogan that already had been used by Abdul Hamid to checkmate the Western powers in the region, namely restoration of the Constitution.

The constitutional cry by itself did not raise any Muslim hackles, for it is in keeping with the Muslim spirit. Hence, even the Sultan supported the call for the retrieval of the Constitution. Islam is democratic by nature. It was accepted in Algeria, and long ago in Spanish Cordova a Muslim republic had been established. The new issue here was only the attempt to create a Turkish *nation* in which all inhabitants, regardless of origin or religion, would be accorded full rights. Christians cheered at the prospect, for it could spell the end of their centuries-long oppression. The neighbouring Greeks cheered, because they expected that the new situation would ensure their influence over the government. Even the Bulgarian army withdrew from the country, for now they would be able to achieve their national political aims without bloodshed.

The people themselves, including some groups within the palace, were convinced that finally the heavy pressure of the Western powers upon them would come to an end. From now on, the Sultan could defend himself against the demands of the West by pointing to the refusal of Parliament. Thus, when the West hastened to withdraw their political representatives from Macedonia, the Turkish people imagined they had already won the game.

That myth soon dissolved. Bulgaria understood that it was now possible and, in fact, imperative for her to take immediate action, for once the Turkish Parliament would have its affairs in order, all chances for regaining her independence from Turkey would slip through her fingers. Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina with great speed. Crete also made use of the interim period to finalize her attachment to Greece. Thus, instead of gaining or profiting from internal developments, even before the Parliament was fully established, Turkey lost the greater part of her nominal European possessions and was left only with Macedonia, Albania and the Sanjak of Novi Pazar, along with the area immediately surrounding Constantinople, now known as Istanbul. The greatest disappointment was that the West began their interference again, interference for which Turkey itself now needed to invite them. The hope was that Turkey would finally become great, free and independent. Instead, it was greatly reduced so that it is no longer a threat to anyone. A war would have put a sudden end to the new regime of the Young Turks.

Thus, though the restoration of the Constitution itself was a matter of general rejoicing, it immediately evoked bitter disappointment. That disappointment became more intense as soon as Parliament settled down to its work. Due to the power the Young Turks wielded throughout Turkey, they quickly succeeded in cobbling together a Parliament that meekly carried out their designs, but it did not take long for that Parliament to become the source of division. The Young Turks were real Occidentalists, oriented to Western culture, that wanted a constitutional atmosphere that was not rooted in the East, but was wholly to be based on the radical French model. Even in Austria that is united by the bond of a common religion, the possibility of different nationalities to live together under one constitution is visibly evaporating. How much more will Turkey have problems with its varied nationalities in addition to the division caused by its three religions? Currently, it is being realized in Hungary that under such conditions it is impossible for one nationality to place its stamp on the entire population for any length of time without even greater failure. Like the Magyars in Hungary, so do the Turks want to have *their*

language and *their* religion declared the language and religion of the State. Everyone can sense ahead of time where this will lead. It is still an open question how the current crisis will develop, but we can be sure that this first crisis will be little more than prelude to a much more serious struggle. Those who dream that the Young Turks have solved the Eastern question are not familiar with Mediterranean cultures. The Turkish people are not a nation and never will be.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup>For a relevant brief modern or current discussion of the “Young Turks” and of their long-range success compared to that of other Muslim nations, see Gwynne Dyer, “Turkey, Islam and the ‘Idiotic Autocrats,’” *Georgia Straight*, September 6-13, 2007. See also my *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*, Volume 9—*Companion CD*, 2009, file < Miscellaneous Articles/Other Countries/Asia/Turkey/2007-09-06 Turkey Islam Democracy >. These “Young Turks” were more successful than Kuyper predicted. Today, their descendants are serious contenders for membership in the European Union. The very movement that initially resisted European colonization, today is applying for absorption into Europe! Who says history is boring or without humour? There is a difference, of course. Today it is in terms of so-called equal partnership. Today the question is whether a Muslim country that has not experienced the Western Enlightenment movement fits in an Enlightenment-Christian-Postmodern alliance.

## The Mystery of Islam

More than in Asia, when you move over to Africa you will be impressed not only by the power of Islam but by its mystery. It is in Africa, more than in Asia, that Islam is spreading rapidly. Mahdi after Mahdi has demonstrated how easily and powerfully the flames of fanaticism can light up. The mystical orders are making their influence felt in the spiritual soil from Khartoum to Rabat. *Al Azhar*, the university in Cairo, is the most prestigious and most influential of all Muslim schools. I do not wish to belittle the serious influence Islam still holds along the long route from Hayderabad in India to Bosnia on the Adriatic Sea, or along the long line that runs from Orenburg to Batavia. However, in Asia, Islam merely maintains the position she long ago achieved during its heyday. In contrast, in North Africa, Islam is visibly on the march. Even among the Negro people that fill Africa's interior, Islam continues to win converts.

In the first part of this work I have sufficiently shown that I do not regard Asian Islam a spent force or an exhausted autumn plant. Saudi Arabia, India and Indonesia demonstrate the contrary. However, if you want to learn about the conquering force of Islam, then you must turn to Africa. In this "dark" continent of almost 30 million square kilometers, an area three times the size of Europe, there live 170 million people who, with the exception of Ethiopia and South Africa, increasingly are turning away from Christianity to seek their salvation in Islam. Sixteen centuries ago, the entire northern coast of the Mediterranean and its east coast from Port Said to deep into Sudan was won for the Christian faith, but this has all disappeared. Islam has triumphed along the entire coast. And it now appears that the Crescent is seriously poised to conquer the interior as well.

As it suddenly lit up the sky like a meteor in the seventh century and began its miraculous triumphal march from Mecca, Islam is one of the most difficult

phenomena in world history to explain, especially psychologically. Till this day it has still not fully revealed its enigmatic nature. Oh, yes, Christianity also spread very rapidly. Already by its fourth century it had penetrated deep into the heart of Asia, had conquered the entire north coast of Africa and southern Europe. It practically covered the entire width and breath of the once mighty Roman Empire and exercised spiritual authority over this entire area. But what was this Christian expansion compared to the gigantic triumph of Islam that within a century after the *Hijira*, with the exception of the bulk of Europe, subjected the same expansive territories in Asia and Africa, not merely to its spiritual influence but simultaneously to its sword?

This is psychologically all the more amazing when you consider that Christianity conquered a series of weak, primitive religions, while Islam burrowed its way into country after country where the higher religion of the Cross had blossomed with such unexpected richness. Islam broke through with a force to which no one offered resistance, drove out everything in its path and subdued it. It transformed the reigning spirit of the day by imposing its own. It imposed its stamp on the conquered peoples so thoroughly and deeply that today, fourteen centuries later, all these nations live out of the spirit of Islam, adhere to its traditions and stubbornly resist all other cultures, even the higher, more developed, ones. Wherever train tracks cut through field and farm and telegraph lines snake their way through farms and along modern roadways, everyone, Bedouin as well as sedentary populations, is marked by that ancient unchanging stamp that Muhammad, that mysterious son of Abdullah and Amina with his powerful personality, was able to impress on his followers in Mecca in the seventh century in both their spiritual and cultural makeup.

What actually was this magic wand with which Muhammad won this unprecedented loyalty and brought about this unique turn in the history of the



world? It cannot possibly be attributed to conscious deceit. A deceiver lives on basis of his lies and can produce no more than pseudo events that can only control restricted circles and are short-lived. Undoubtedly Muhammad had ecstatic visionary instincts, but such instincts are both quickly enflamed and equally quickly extinguished. Such a person is not likely to possess sustaining power through the centuries. A spiritual power of the first order must have dwelt in Muhammad that, regardless of other factors of lower rank, supplied the essential driving force from which his creativity emerged and that retains its vitality till this day. *That driving force undoubtedly was his inspired and resilient call for Monotheism.*

Mohammad had a weak moment once in Mecca. Under pressure of a threat to his life, he recited a verse still found in the Qur'an, Sura 53:19-21—"Have you seen Lata and 'Uzza, and another, the third (goddess), Manat? What! For you the male sex, and for Him, the female?"<sup>16</sup> This was weakness. Uzza and Manat were well-known idols. Since then he has with relentless severity preached Allah, the god of the ancient Hanifites, as the only true God and held up this as Allah, the All Compassionate and All Merciful, as the exclusive object of worship for his adherents.

Religion in general stirs us in the deepest of our being; it is more powerful than any other factor in our personal lives as well as in the history of nations. Among religions, it is Monotheism that does this most powerfully, because it reduces all things to their single origin, propels them along a single consistent line and guides all things towards their destiny or end where it unites them in one elevated focus. The courage that welled up from all this to break with all forms of Polytheism and everything associated with it, reached so deeply into the existing regime, that the glow it emitted consumed nearly all resistance and called up a

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<sup>16</sup>I use the translation of the Qur'an by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, p. 495.

totally new life motif or worldview. The courage of such a heroic spirit evokes enthusiasm, and elevated enthusiasm transports the masses, propels them along and raises them to heights and powers far above their normal levels.

The spiritual centre of Muhammad was embedded in both his deep conviction of the evil of Polytheism and in his bold confession of Monotheism. However, his purely spiritual power would never have guaranteed him his triumph if the effects of his principle had not opened the way for the ongoing penetration of his spiritual message. This penetration was due not so much to clever manipulation as to the expression of his personality in relation to both his own local and international environments at the time. Muhammad did not develop his confession next to or outside of daily life. His religion was not a mystery suitable only for the inner chamber. Rather, he was so deeply and ideologically convinced of the all-encompassing rule of Allah's omnipotence, that he spread his confession of Allah as a net over the full range of human culture, and demanded its dominance over the personal and family as well as economic and political life. Religion as a private affair was unthinkable for him.<sup>17</sup> Monotheism did not only exclude all rival gods but Allah, but just as much every other commanding or deciding power whether in the human will, in established cultural customs or in the power of the State. Allah alone rules and controls everything. The universe is like a gigantic clock designed by Allah, artfully assembled by Him, wound up by Him, and operating according to His fixed rules. Allah's will and law alone apply and decide the direction of all of life and of all existence. This is not only currently the case, but has been so in the past and will be so in the farthest reaches of the future.

That is the reason Muhammad connected to earlier revelations of Monotheism. He did not consider his a new religion. Neither was it a religion that syncretistically was cobbled together by mixing existing religions. Allah had

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<sup>17</sup> See J. Boer, 2005, pp. 61-76, for a fuller discussion of Muslim wholism.

always reigned, had all the while revealed His will and had from the beginning counted in history. It is just that mankind was not capable of comprehending the full mystery of Allah's rule all at once. Hence Allah revealed Himself gradually, progressively, step by step. The prophets of all the ages were the vehicles for these revelations. They numbered in the thousands, but most of them were of minor significance. Some were mere sparks that flamed up quickly but extinguished just as quickly. A few among them became leading vehicles in this development of the service of Allah. Adam was the first in that series. The series includes Noah and Shem. After them, especially Abraham, Moses and Jesus Christ. All of these not only struggle zealously for Monotheism and proclaimed the majesty of Allah, but in their successive appearances they formed an unbroken chain, a continuous progressive revelation from Allah. Jesus was the last among them before Muhammad, and the highest. However, even Jesus Christ was merely one of the many prophets, the latest in order and the highest, but no higher than Moses and other predecessors in rank and kind. That is why even in Jesus, divine revelation had not yet come to a close. Did the Gospels themselves not predict that after Jesus there would be another Comforter? That final closure to revelation came in the person of Muhammad. He completed what was begun with Adam, Abraham, Moses and Jesus. Muhammad received the closing revelation. At the eschaton, that is, the end of all things, at the closure of world history, there will be more appearances, but these will no longer belong to history, for that history will also have come to its close. From now until that ending, that is, during this present dispensation, there will not come any further, higher or more complete revelation after Muhammad. What began with Adam or, if you prefer, with Abraham, is one single unified process that found its finale in Muhammad. That is why all faith comes down to two articles: first, the confession that Allah controls all things; second, that Muhammad represents His full and closing revelation.

But now, according to Muhammad, that revelation is complete. That is to say, that revelation, being the final revelation of God's will, must have priority over the law and rule over all other things. Here is where the Qur'an came in and then, next to it, a variety of sources of orthodoxy. There are the *Hadith* [the Traditions or record of individual actions and sayings by the Prophet as reported by his Companions], the *Sunnah* [the sacred collection of the *Hadiths*, the second highest Islamic authority next to the Qur'an] and the *Ijima* as the *vox populi* [the voice of the people] comprising the entire body of learned Islamic scholars and their output. The last is associated with the *Ijtihad*, a controversial method of logical deduction that may lead to innovation within Islam.<sup>18</sup> Nothing could be left to human initiative. Everything had to be arranged according to higher ordinances. Allah had to govern the life of his true worshippers in all its breadth and depth. Here you have the origin of the rigorous Nomism or legalism that has penetrated all of Islam as a yeast. Later, a struggle arose about the freedom of the will, but this had to do only with moral responsibility. Every Muslim was convinced that all laws for human life derived from Allah, a factor that created that all-encompassing focus for all of Muslim life, the source of the power of their solidarity. The worship of Allah and the subjection of everything to Him were not two components of the faith, but one.

We have here the root of both the pride of the Muslim and the command to holy war. Only those who bow before Allah and honour His highest Prophet were considered genuine human beings, Allah's allies<sup>19</sup> and Allah's protected. Because Allah rules everything, only His true worshippers can rule on earth. They are the only ones to carry out His holy will and honour Him; all others are opponents and

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<sup>18</sup>Kuyper knew the terminology he is using here, but I am not sure he understood the relations between them accurately. I have not tried to upgrade him here, except that I have inserted in the text brief explanations of these Arabic terms so important to Islam.

<sup>19</sup>I am not sure Islam allows this terminology. It is Kuyper's.

enemies. Consequently and logically, all individuals and all nations that are not part of the Muslim community either partially or wholly, are in a state of resistance to Allah, fail to honour Him and go against His ordinances. Should mankind raise the sword on behalf of worldly interests but not for the highest of interests, namely the honour of Allah? Should we shed blood for minor misdeeds but not when human beings assault the majesty of Allah, especially if people purposely persist in this evil?

This rigorous concept of holy war would not have gone further than did Israel's campaign in Canaan, if Muhammad had brought them a *national* religion as Moses has done. Such a national idea was totally foreign to Muhammad. His religion was to be an absolute religion, the religion of the world, the only religion. The Muslim community was therefore to encompass and rule the entire world. Allah is not a national god. Neither is He a god whose revelation is merely temporary or for a time as in the case of his temporary arrangements with Israel. That was possible at the time of Moses, but no longer, for in Muhammad the final revelation appeared. That revelation made high demands of all humanity. Islam crossed all borders and where there were still idols or where Allah was not acknowledged, people were considered to be in a mode of rebellion, of scorn, and of provocation of the Almighty. Therefore, the *jihad*,<sup>20</sup> the holy war against unbelievers, is not an incidental matter in the Qur'an, but an obligation that flows directly out of the principle of absolute Monotheism, at least, in its Nomistic form. The Qur'an states it in a harsh and relentless tone in Sura 9:5—"*But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the Pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent and establish regular prayers and pay Zakat, then open the*

*way for them, for Allah is Oft-Forgiving, Most Merciful.*” That this harsh commandment was later re-interpreted and attributed a “softer” meaning by Muslim authorities does not change anything in principle. The Hanifites later declared that as long as someone, somewhere, was waging a holy war, the rest of the faithful would be relieved of this duty, but the principle itself has never been relinquished and, in fact, cannot be renounced. To disobey Allah is the greatest of all misdeeds, in fact, the only misdeed. All who call upon Allah have the duty to break such resistance and to punish that repugnant misdeed.

Such strict nomistic/legalistic Monotheism is the natural friend of democracy and freedom. A clerical class could easily have usurped power by inserting itself between the faithful and Allah—thus a power over the people next to or in addition to Allah, but this could not be tolerated. Even though such a class did arise in the form of the Khalif and the Ulama, who did in fact serve as intermediaries, the principle that “all people are like the teeth of a comb” as Muhammad used to put it, was maintained. There is no central authority that ties the Muslim community together. Islam depends on the confession of the faithful. That is the only force that keeps it together. Hence the endless splinter groups within Islam into sects and cults, almost worse than in Christianity. This freedom is inherent to Islam. But in the end, no matter how adherents differ from each other, all those who call upon Allah and follow the Prophet see themselves as one body, regardless of their country of origin.

Out of this situation an all-pervasive power emerges that is far above any hierarchical power. It is exactly this sense of freedom that provides every Muslim with a deep consciousness of obligation and responsibility for the honour of Allah. Not even the practice of circumcision unites them, for which reason it is sometimes grossly neglected. Only the confession of Allah and His Prophet unites them. Even negligence in worship and failure to adhere to the ordinances of the Qur’an and the

*Sunna* can be tolerated and forgiven, as long as the believer boldly and openly resists all opposition to Islam and calls loudly on Allah and His Prophet. No matter the differences over the Caliphate or issues of succession or anything else, even, as is done in Zanzibar, supporting a different Sheriphate from that of Mecca, still every believer in Islam feels himself one with all his fellow believers, as members of the same holy *ummah* or community. Islam finds its unconquerable strength not in some pseudo organization but in the personal confession of each Muslim. For that reason, Muhammed neither founded a Caliphate dynasty nor appointed a successor. Upon his death, the Muslim community itself had to appoint its next leader.

But there is a darker side to Islam that also flows out of its nomistic character, namely its lack of spiritual depth. It knows nothing about regeneration or being born again; it does not realize the deeper reality of sin and evil; it is short on soteriology or doctrine of salvation that goes beyond mere formal declaration of reconciliation. This does not mean that it has renounced all higher moral principles. To the contrary, if you compare the moral standards in vogue in the Arabia of Muhammad's day with his principles, then Islam clearly represented progress and higher purpose. His declaration concerning marriage and alcohol pointedly collided with the traditional immoral standards in the areas of sex and alcohol. But this was no more than a repositioning of the principal line that indicated the new norm. Muhammad himself was infatuated with sex.<sup>21</sup> By breaching his own prohibition of having more than four wives he reduced the seriousness of this restriction. The provision of concubinage of female slaves further lowered his ethical and moral standards.

It is therefore impossible to develop a higher level of domestic life under Islam: It prevents women from reaching their full potential. The loose and easy

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<sup>21</sup>This is a strong statement that I am not sure can stand scrutiny.

divorce introduced by Muhammad may have been an improvement over the customs of the day, but it, too, served to keep the ethical level of Islam low. As soon as you compare the moral standards of Christendom with those of Islam, you will immediately note the profound difference. On the moral side, Islam is a system of accommodation, a partial elevation of the low level he found on the ground, but definitely not a return to first [creational] principles. His self-presentation as the last and final divine ambassador constituted a serious obstacle, for that forever cut off the possibility of developing a higher ethical standard in the future. This ethical norm may have been progress over the existing moral level, but it was still at a low principial level and so it has remained ever since among Muslims. It has served to weaken the seriousness of their moral life.<sup>22</sup>

All of this can only be explained by the nomism or legalism of Islam and the absence of any attempt to raise the moral life through regeneration or being born again. The Christian emphasis on the contrast between the old and the new born-again person is completely foreign to Islam. This situation has not prevented the rise of revivals, as for example the Wahabis, that represented a return to more puritanical attitudes, or the various Mahdi movements with similar goals. But such movements never elevated themselves morally beyond the standards of the Qur'an. Whenever moral standards sunk below those of the Qur'an, Muslims were called upon to return to its standards, but it never came to a process of ethical development that welled up from the ethical principle itself.<sup>23</sup> That did not and could not happen.

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<sup>22</sup>Remember that Kuyper is comparing the two religions a century ago. Since then, Christendom has disappeared, secularism has taken over with its very loose moral standards that have even affected Christians in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Had he written this comparison today, he undoubtedly would have been more nuanced. Comparing and contrasting today's Christian moral standards with those of Islam is tricky. Both will win some and lose others.

<sup>23</sup>Kuyperian thought emphasizes creation ordinances, including moral ordinances, that are out there and can be discovered in rough outline through experience, but for which fallen man needs the Bible to understand them in their full depth..



Christendom has its three pillars on which it rests: faith, hope and love. Or, if you prefer: regeneration, faith and sanctification. In contrast, Islam has five pillars that support the religion: faith in Allah and His Prophet; prayer; fasting in the month of *Ramadan*; alms giving; pilgrimage to Mecca. Nothing demonstrates the external character that so disfigures Islam more than this row of pillars when set side by side. Even Muhammad's expectation for the afterlife betrays a similar lack of ethical elevation. To be sure, Muslim scholars have repeatedly sought to allegorize the rough outlines of the Paradise image Muhammed held up before his followers, but it remains a fact that most Muslims understand Paradise in a purely sensual sense. Muhammad's language was purposefully designed to imprint that sensual image permanently.

It was only the mystics, in their ascetic as well as their ecstatic strains, who provided a more holy glow for this barren ethical scheme. It would be doing Islam an injustice if we were to regard this mysticism as a totally foreign implant in the garden of Islam. Mysticism is an indispensable component of all legalistic religions, but it is not for everyone. The lifestyle of the masses is too superficial for this approach. Mysticism requires a special aptitude and a unique orientation of the spirit, so that it always is the monopoly of a small group. You do not find much of mysticism in the Qur'an, for it addresses the masses. Neither would it need to be in the Qur'an, for regardless of which form the religion were to adopt, mysticism develops spontaneously as soon as its seed is present. Even though it does not win over the masses, it always commands respect, especially in nomistic or legalistic circles. Thus it can be said that this spontaneously-erupted mysticism, though always behind the veil of officialdom, has deepened and intensified the emotional and spiritual life of the people. Without the mystical movements such as the Dervishes, Sufism and other forms, Islam would definitely not have retained the spiritual power that millions and millions of Allah worshippers continue to

exude, especially not after the cessation of holy wars. Without this glow of mysticism, Pan-Islam would simply be unthinkable.

It is possible to debate the question whether the more rigid form of asceticism did not emerge long after Muhammad. It is generally agreed that the Qur'an excludes rather than encourages the mystical version of asceticism. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the ecstatic visionary founder of Islam himself found part of his powers in mysticism. Besides, mysticism is such an integral part of the Semitic worldview that it is impossible to imagine a Semitic religion—and Islam is and will always remain that—without this mysterious background of mysticism.

But even if we accept mysticism as an inseparable ingredient of Islam, this will never serve to elevate its ethical standard. All mysticism is religion-specific and as such never adopts an imposed ethical character. Even in its ascetic form it merely aims either to achieve communion with the Divine Being or to insure its salvation after death. It normally does not have any influence on moral life in society. Rather, history teaches that all mysticism throughout the ages tends to end up “in the flesh,” that is to say, become “worldly,” even though it begins “in the spirit.”

If Islam had spread exclusively in regions where idolatry and Polytheism constituted the traditional religion, as in Arabia itself or in parts of Persia, we would be able to understand how the higher religion of Islam without great difficulty would have pushed out these lower religions. The riddle that the rapid rise of Islam confronts us with is that it almost exclusively spread in fully Christianized nations and that in these higher cultures this even higher Christianity disappeared almost without a trace after only a short struggle. I have already done full justice to the inspiration inherent in Monotheism. I have expressed full appreciation for the enthusiasm instilled in the emotions by the command for holy

war, while I also have fully accounted for the enthusiasm generated by the consciousness that the faithful were to dominate the entire world. To all these factors we must also add that the militant spirit and the lust for booty, so native to the Arab, were among the less noble factors that led to the triumph of Islam.

***Reasons for Rapid Muslim Subjugation of Christianity*** XXXX

But none of this explains the painfully rapid subjugation of the Christian religion in Asia and Africa. When Islam suddenly raised its head in the seventh century, Christianity had been the state religion in the eastern regions of the Roman Empire of Byzantium for well over three centuries. It had penetrated Asia as far as Arabia, Persia and Indonesia, and the greater part of North Africa, including Egypt. North Africa had already hosted Christian synods of more than 500 bishops. Men with the highest talents that are till this day highly revered in the Church, served in Egypt and Carthage. Origenes, Athanasius, Cyprianus, Augustine and, before him, Tertullian, had taught there. There may have been an element of pseudo-Christianity, but the most severe and most cruel persecutions that took place in these regions caused the holy courage of the martyrs, both men and women, to shine even brighter. The most splendid cathedrals had arisen and the most famous schools for the training of the clergy had been established throughout Byzantine Asia and along the entire north coast of Africa. The Christian Church was not only tolerated, but she was the supreme power, while all traces of the earlier Paganism had been exterminated, mostly by imperial command. The Church existed there in a state of unprecedented bloom and was fully intending to penetrate Asia and Africa still deeper, all the way to Ethiopia and Sudan. Furthermore, the Christian religion did not merely float on the surface as a drop of oil on water, but it shaped the cultures of peoples in their deepest

dimensions. Wherever struggles arose in the Church, entire *nations* would get involved.

If you were to visit these regions today, you would hardly find a trace of this Christian history in Africa, with the exception of Ethiopia and half a million Coptics in Egypt. In Asia, you would find here and there a few residual groups of Greeks, Marionites and Armenians as pitiful remnants of the once magnificent Byzantine State Church. And then realize that Islam conquered these peoples not after a struggle of many centuries, but as it were with one fell swoop. This series of facts confronts us today as an almost inexplicable problem, the solution to which must be found in two factors, namely, the internal condition of the church at the time and the style of Islamic propaganda. It is on these that we will now focus.

Originally, the Christian Church in the East tried to spread its tentacles by means of quiet evangelism. As long as she retained this mode, she retained her internal health. However, before long, Christianity began to penetrate wider circles. It was among them that Greek and Eastern philosophies in their many varieties re-interpreted the mysteries of the Gospel and distorted them according to their own philosophies. History teaches us about the struggles of the Church during the second century to wrestle itself loose from the embrace of Gnosticism, Doceticism and, later, Manicheism. A spirit of dissatisfaction arose in the East with respect to their own heritage. This led to a tendency to welcome and incorporate every new religion into a new syncretism. This process meant that such new religions were distorted and then smothered. True, the silent majority of the masses continued in the faith, but they did not determine the direction of things. In contrast, the educated upper crust who propagated their theoretical concoctions in writing and taught in the academies, increasingly sought their inspiration and power in a philosophical frame on which they elegantly embroidered the flowers of the Christian religion—as they saw them. This process caused an increasing

distance from the roots of the faith and led to attempts to seek the essence of Christianity in various philosophical and dogmatic systems that found their strength not in spiritual inspiration but in arid, scholastic dialectics. Worse, some undermined the structure of Christian truth by replacing its foundation with that of Pagan philosophy. Since these systems and schools of thought began to oppose each other, before she realized what was happening, the Church became enmeshed in bitter arguments and divisions. Most of the debates focused on the centre of the Christian religion, i.e. on the person of Christ Himself. They no longer gratefully accepted in faith the incomprehensible mystery of the incarnation, that is, of God becoming man, but began to dissect and sift the mysteries of the faith in a rationalistic way. One philosophical explanation of this mystery was pitted against another, all of them claiming for themselves the inspired faith of the masses and uttering warnings to their opponents that they were shortchanging the majesty of Christ. The Church had no choice but to intervene in these controversies by way of a series of Conciliar Councils [meetings of the church's hierarchy] in order to discern the truth or otherwise of these philosophical and dogmatic schools of thought. Arians, Nestorians, Monophysites and Monotheletes were successively declared heretics and pushed beyond the pale of the Church.

The ordinary people participated in these struggles. Frequently they even resorted to violence and came to physical blows. The sad outcome of all of this was that the entire Body of Christ was torn and members confronted each other in hostile camps. This did not only destroy the unity of the Church but also its strength, because the zeal of the Christian religion for the mysteries of the holy faith diminished in favour of dialectic skirmishes. Gradually what was to be a religion of the heart and which was to bloom in faith, hope and love, became rigid and arid in a mode of thought in which the heart went cold and froze up. While Byzantine scholars engrossed themselves restlessly in dogmas *about* Christ, the

love *for* Christ in their hearts dampened, while the mystical union of the believer with his Christ slowly faded away and dissolved.

And then, as if all this philosophical stupor, dialectical confusion and Byzantine dampening of the spirit were not enough, there appeared on the horizon a second force that would undermine genuine Christianity, namely the Ceasaropapism introduced by Emperor Constantine the Great. Now it was not a case of the State seeking a deep alliance with the Church of Christ, but, rather, of the Church being placed under the guardianship of the State. This new relationship lead to unprecedented external flowering of the Church in two ways. First, entire tribes were “converted” by force, as later was the case also with Charlemagne and in the provinces around the Baltic Sea. Paganism was rejected. Its temples were either demolished or turned into churches, its altars crushed and its schools closed by imperial order. Secondly, there were those among the powerbrokers and elite who used to engage in sun worship, but who, now that the Christian religion was part of the establishment, bowed their knees before the Cross in order to achieve high prestige in the State. These two elements spelled numerical increase for the church, but it weakened her internally, spiritually. None of this added anything to Christ’s glory in a spiritual way. People draped themselves in Christian garb, but no change occurred in their hearts. This made the Church appear a soulless entity.<sup>24</sup>

The story is not yet finished. After the State had turned the Church into an attachment, church affairs became affairs of state. The Emperor and his lackeys interfered in all church affairs. Originally Constantine announced that he would concern himself only with the externals of the Church, while the internals were left to the Church itself. This was a healthy principle, but it was soon suppressed

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<sup>24</sup>For a similar explanation of how African Christian ethnic groups can fight each other to death, see J. Boer, “Old Wine in New Skins: An Old African Worldview in a New Church.” In *Studies in Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol 5, Appendix 7. Also *Christian Courier*, June 5, 1998, pp. 10-11.

when ecclesiastical infighting threatened the peace and power of the State. The Emperor had no choice but to interfere, take sides and exercise attempts to create division. Hence, time and again he applied the weight of the State to ecclesiastical life. This in turn led each of the opposing parties to give priority to currying the favour of the imperial Court. It was common knowledge that the side favoured by the Emperor and supported by the Court was assured of victory. The great Conciliar Councils continued to protect the terrain and power of the church. We have good reason to admire the courage and resilience with which these leaders tried to maintain the independence of the Church. However, after the decisions had been made and the delegates returned to their dioceses, the decisions had to be turned into actions—and this was in the hands of the Emperor. And so politics joined philosophy and dialectics to undermine the Church.

The spiritual condition of the Church deteriorated seriously. It harboured too many false elements and was constantly pulled farther away from its roots. Finally, exhausted from all her controversies, it lost its resistance to becoming a mere tool in the hands of nitpicking scholars, power-hungry princes of the Church and sly politicians. Warnings against such developments already appeared in the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor in the New Testament book of Revelations, chapters 2-3. There it was predicted that the hour would come that the candlestick would be taken away from them and false philosophies devastate the Church. Christ would come like a thief in the night to undo her and spit her out of His mouth because of her lukewarm state.

It was while the Christian Church was in the above pitiful condition that Islam arose, suddenly attacked her, made her shake on her foundations and saw to the demise of almost all her splendid cathedrals. Of course, God not only allowed this all to happen, but He willed it. *Anyone who believes in the royal reign of Christ over His Church must recognize the hand of God in this destruction of the*

*Church by the Muslims as a justified penalty for her unfaithfulness.*<sup>25</sup> It was in the West that the Christian religion was to triumph, not in the East. The East was exhausted. Only in the West, under the instigation of the Germanic peoples, would the church bloom. In the East, only little remnants would remain in order to remind us of the great Church of Christ that once was. Nothing touches the emotions of faith of the traveler through these lands of Asia and Africa more than to see how in all these countries the Church not only suffered fearful devastation but totally disappeared. The slowly corroding ruins of churches in which once the Halleluiah was raised, are all that reminds the traveler of the ancient glory of Christendom in these regions. Apart from the Arabs who came from elsewhere, all the ancestors of the Muslims who surround the traveler were once baptized Christians. Our martyrs who astounded the world with their stalwart courage, came from those generations. It was Christian in a much more intimate way than what you find in much of today's European Christendom. And all of this Christianity is eradicated lock, stock and barrel, so that we are left without a trace. Even customs and traditions that once marked domestic and social life as well as the religious and moral life of these nations—not a trace of that can be found today. At the same time, you will find that under Islam, Pagan influences that were thought to have been forgotten, returned to the surface, especially among the Berbers, but of the Christian religion you will find nothing. Even the holy symbol of the Cross is no more to be seen in even a single monument. There is nothing, absolutely nothing that remains to remind you of the ancient Christian confession of their forefathers. We do recognize that the small remnants of the Church of Christ in Egypt, Syria and Asia Minor have been influenced by Islam in their morals, customs and even in their mode of worship, while among the great populations of Islam you will find no trace, however faint, of the former

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<sup>25</sup>Italics by translator.



Christianity. This hurts immensely. This situation is spiritually depressing and must lead to somber reflection. You constantly hope you will come across some reminder somewhere, but you find nothing. No name, no sign, no sound. The ruins tell you that this was once the land of Christians, but provide no clue about that past. As a swarm of locusts descends on an orchard and devours all the leaves and blossoms to leave only bare branches, so has Islam in those countries totally devoured and dissected the Christian orchard till nothing was left.

And now, how did it go with the Muslim mission that caused such a destructive ending for Christendom? I am not now speaking of the harsh manner with which Muhammad himself and the Caliphs after him turned against the Arab Pagans and against the numerous Jews in Medina and surroundings. These idolaters and Jews simply had the sword put to their throat. They had to adopt Islam or pay the supreme price. But this is not where the riddle I am talking about is to be found. These Jews were also among the lower cultures whose Cabalism had caused them to wither spiritually and who later sided with Muslims against Christians. The puzzling question is what enabled Islam to so relentlessly pursue its unprecedented success without interruption when it confronted the Christian Church that was so powerful at the time and ranked spiritually and morally so much higher than Muhammad's religion. Of course, the violence of the sword terrified the people, but we make a mistake if we imagine that the horsemen that turned up in Syria, Persia and Egypt from Arabia simply put to the sword all who refused to convert to Islam. Instead, they occupied their lands, they evicted those in power and replaced them. They presented themselves as the rulers and, since nothing could withstand the power of their sword, they behaved as lords and masters of the land.

But this is very different from actually conquering the spirit, even though that is what eventually happened. With the exception of a few small remnants, all

the descendants of former Christians are today Muslim in heart and soul. This result was not and could not have been reached by violence and force alone. Rather, this spiritual transformation took place very gradually. However, in contrast to Asia and Africa, in the European part of Turkey, including all its former Balkan vassal states, by far the majority have remained Christian till this day.

### ***Contours of the Early Muslim Jihad***   xxxx

Muhammad and his followers definitely did not place Christians and Pagans on the same level. They distinguished sharply between those who bowed before idols and those who stood by the revelations of Moses and Jesus. After all, according to Islam, Moses and Jesus also honoured Islam. Their revelations are all recognized as being of divine origin, the difference between them being that the revelation to Muhammad was higher, came later and went further. Thus Christians were viewed as knowing Allah at an earlier period and were walking the right path. They only went wrong when they refused to accept the *later* and *higher* revelation. This and this only was their offence. It is similar to the way Christians honour the Jews in so far as they follow Moses, but we fault them only for being blind towards the later and fuller revelation that came in Christ. So Muslims judge that Christians did indeed obey the revelation that till that point was the highest, but they willfully closed their eyes to the even higher light that came with Muhammad. Here they determined the limits of the *Holy Book*. Jews had the Holy Book of the Old Testament; Christians honoured the Holy Book of the Old and New Testament, but both rejected the even holier Book of the Qur'an. But even though, according to Muhammad's judgement, the others were at a lower level, they could be tolerated as backward or deficient kindred. That is why all Christians were not only tolerated but were given a degree of freedom of worship, on condition that they

acknowledge the authority of the Muslim ruler, if not in religion, at least in politics.

From the beginning this demand for nations and non-Muslims to acknowledge the superiority of Islam governed their relationship. Since Allah is omnipotent over the entire world, His faithful warriors are automatically entitled to control that entire world. Strictly speaking, only the followers of Islam have a right to exist or human rights. Allah is the Lord of lords, while the supreme leader of Islam is His representative on earth. With this high sense of calling, in 629 AD or thereabouts, thus only five years after the *hijira*, before his power was secure in Mecca, Muhammad wrote a letter to all neighbouring rulers, even to the King of Persia and the Emperor at Constantinople, in which he called upon all these rulers to convert to Islam and to subject their lands and peoples to the Prophet of Mecca.<sup>26</sup> These letters were marked by his seal that read, “Muhammad the Representative of Allah.” It may seem strange, but these letters written by the head of a new, unknown, cult actually made a deep impression. In Arabia, the rulers of Yemen and Bahrain submitted immediately. The response of the Christian ruler of Ethiopia was friendly. The Byzantine viceroy of Egypt demonstrated his cowardice by sending Muhammad two young Coptic girls for his harem. Last but not least, Emperor Heraclius of Constantinople responded in very courteous terms. Only Khosrau II, King of Persia, in quick-tempered fashion, tore up the letter in the presence of the messenger and instructed his general to find Muhammad, attack him and take him prisoner forthwith. If nothing else, these letters demonstrated the position of Islam from its early inception. How strong must his conviction of his own exalted position have been, to dare to make such a bold demand for total subjection to the most powerful rulers around him, even the

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<sup>26</sup>In a fine modern touch and, I suspect, in imitation of these letters from the Prophet, Khomeini wrote a similar letter to Gorbachov during their days in power (*The Pen*, a discontinued Nigerian Muslim bi-weekly, 27 January, 1989, p. 8).

prestigious Emperor of Constantinople, while his own domain was no more than a small strip of territory.<sup>27</sup> But it is precisely to this strong consciousness of divine calling and of his God-given supremacy over the entire world that Islam owes its inextinguishable enthusiasm and the indomitable courage of its horsemen by which he simultaneously pursued the strongest propaganda and overtook the mightiest of spirits by surprise. Islam did not negotiate with any earthly power on basis of equality but demanded that everyone simply capitulate, that is, that everyone recognize the supremacy of the Commander of Islam and accept all conditions of peace from him as grace or favour. The “capitulations” in vogue those days were treaties of subjugation in which the victorious sovereign would grant certain privileges to his new vassal only as a free privilege. The same situation obtained when it came to tolerance granted to Jews and Christians in any country militarily occupied by Muslims. They would find favour in the eyes of a conqueror only on condition that they recognize his right to rule over them and, if necessary, to force them to accept Islam, with violence even. The tolerance awarded Christians was also such a “capitulation.” Under whatever conditions they capitulated, granting them tolerance was pure grace.

### ***Christian Dhimmi Status xxx***

Christians in a land militarily occupied by Muslims have only three choices. The first is to adopt Islam so as to be absorbed into the faithful. The second is to pay the special tax known as *jizya*, which turns them into *dhimmi* or second-class citizens. The third is simply to be killed by the sword. Choosing to pay the tax is in effect to submit and thereby to accept conditions of tolerance that were painful

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<sup>27</sup>We read the following about the Prophet’s letter campaign in the Wikipedia article “Khosrau II:” [Leone Caetani](#), in his ten-volume book [Annali dell’ Islam](#) that was based on the research presented by German scholar [Hubert Grimme](#) in [Das Leben Muhammed](#), dismisses the notion that Muhammad ever sent any envoys to rulers of neighboring kingdoms, much less received any responses; Caetani also refutes that whatever is told or written in this regard is merely a myth fabricated by the [Islamic Caliphate](#) many years after Muhammad’s death.

and humiliating. These treaties or, as they are sometimes called, “covenants” were all designed to socially oppress and humiliate. When Omar conquered Jerusalem, he included the following conditions in the decree of capitulation often referred to as the “Covenant of Umar:”<sup>28</sup> (1) Christians are free to worship in their churches, but Muslims are allowed to attend at any time, day or night; (2) they will never perform their worship services on the street; (3) they will not teach the Qur’an to their children; (4) they will not convert anyone to their religion; (5) they will not hinder anyone from becoming Muslim; (6) they will always give Muslims the highest seat of honour in their meetings; (7) they will not dress like Muslims (8) they will never write in Arabic, the glorious language of Islam; (9) they will not adopt Muslim names; (10) they will not ride on large saddles; (11) they will never carry weapons; (12) they will shave their beards; (13) they will never place crosses on their churches; (14) they will never play their carillons; (15) they will bury their dead without public display; (16) they will never harbour a slave that belongs to a Muslim; (17) they will never peek into Muslim houses; (18) they will never raise a hand against a Muslim. These conditions were to be accepted at the time of the capitulation for themselves and their descendants. Should they ever fail to strictly observe any of these conditions, they would in effect concede to Omar the right to apply any penalty against them that is due to a sovereign over against rebel subjects.

In Egypt, these conditions were made even heavier. Christians were obligated to carry a wooden cross of considerable weight around the neck, while they also were forced to wear very dark and almost dishonourable clothes. Every Christian was made to feel deeply that every Muslim was of higher status, that in

public life only Muslims counted for full and that they were in fact marginalized from society. *It soon became clear that this harsh treatment of a subjugated people was less inspired by Islam than by a lust for spoils.*<sup>29</sup> The *Khalif* wanted to see money at every turn. The more the head tax yielded, the happier he was. When that tax began to shrink because the payers converted to Islam, this conversion was greeted at the Court in Baghdad with some misgiving. In Egypt the yield of the tax diminished within a few years from ten to three million dinars, a painful statistic of Christian apostasy. Amr bin Al-As, the general who conquered Egypt but who did not send enough money from this rich country to the *Khalif's* Court or for the construction of the large mosque in Jerusalem, was eventually even recalled and replaced by Abdullah, who was a more willing tool.

Even though Muslims exerted little pressure on Christians to convert, the social humiliation inflicted on them in the long run proved to be unbearable. Persecution steels and stimulates; it fires up a holy enthusiasm and revives heroism, but never-ending social humiliation depletes energy and leads eventually to total collapse. Imagine being excluded from everything prestigious and honourable, constantly to be treated like an inferior, to be held back at all fronts, to see your family move about with oppressive inferiority, your children robbed of any future improvement, to be walking around in shameful clothes day after day. And then, on the contrary, to see everyone who accepts Islam crowned with honour, helped to advance and gain in power. This contrast constitutes life-long torture that at the end becomes too heavy to bear. And then to realize that with only *one* word it is possible to throw off this yoke, to be free from the head tax, and to open for yourself and for your children the path to honour and power. And come to think of it, Islam did not demand a lot. The kiss [of peace] was offered as soon as you call upon Allah and His Prophet. This is the temptation for which

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<sup>29</sup>Italics by translator.

entire Christian families, century after century, have fallen. To be sure, there has also been courageous resistance and energetic opposition so that whoever digs deeply into this sad history of nameless suffering will experience profound admiration for the toughness and the unyielding spirit with which numerous families preferred this harsh humiliation to denying Christ. But this fire of holy faith could only glow where faith had sunk deeply into the heart—and that was exactly where the masses were lacking. For this reason, the masses gradually moved over to Islam, family after family. As the number of Christian families in the cities and villages gradually diminished, it became increasingly difficult for the remnant to hold out. As apostasy of others became the pattern, your own apostasy seemed less sinful. And so it was that, with the exception of small remnants, everywhere in Asia and Africa entire nations were converted to Islam.

### ***The Muslim Cultural Expansion (Al-Azhar University) xxx***

Nevertheless, it would be a mistake to imagine that actual missionary propaganda played only a minor role in these developments. During its initial period of bloom, Islam developed a high level of intellectual life. It is well known how the Arabs were the pioneers of scholarship and science in much of Asia, Africa and even in Europe for four centuries. Islam wanted to rule all of life, not only the religious but also the social, juridical and political aspects. The more Muslims wanted to dominate a cultural sector, the stronger the impulse to work out the consequences of Islam. Every principle of the Qur'an in all its consequences and applications had to be thought through theologically, politically and juridically. In this process, various differences of opinion cropped up that had to be solved by way of debate and dialogue. Schools of thought arose, one after the other, each offering its own perspective on life. Greek philosophy was translated and called in to help, so that it once again became accessible, even for Europe.

This access stimulated interest in studying. First rate brilliant minds competed with each other for the highest laurels. So it happened that, while Christian Europe hardly bestirred itself at the level of scholarship, in the land of Islam a high level of scholarship prevailed century after century, that even today demands the highest respect and assured its domination over the minds of the peoples of Asia and Africa. The public opinion of the ruling classes, who by their higher development controlled the spirit of the populace, leaned increasingly on Islam, while Christians, bereft of their schools, sunk into obscurity and hung on to a tradition that was no longer understood and thus marginalized.

The Muslim tradition, as much as it was able, constantly tried to attach schools to mosques. From the beginning it was bent on spreading knowledge. Our pedagogy is different from theirs. That of Islam concentrates on memory and on imprinting strong conviction more than on developing your own thinking. The influence of these primary schools and, especially, of their *madrakah* or higher schools was most profound. Every degree of skepticism was excluded. Incised deeply, the mind received the imprint of the Islamic spirit so that, because of the very strong development of the memory, what was received in school stayed with them throughout life and controlled thought decisively. Muslims therefore were never at a loss when they confronted other opinions. They were saturated with what they advocated; their strong memory never disappointed them when it came to arguing their convictions. Furthermore, that conviction was simple in content. Over against Christians they always had the argument ready at hand that the former actually placed a second god next to Allah and thus by their own confession of Christ did violence to the purity of Monotheism. They did not reject Jesus. In fact, they honoured Him above Moses, but they did so in a manner purer and better than Christians, for Islam freed their picture of Christ from all the dogmatic reconstructions with which the falsification of the original Gospel had surrounded



Him. This actually was the same type of argument that causes so many people today to forsake their confession of Christ. This was the thrust of the dominant public propaganda that pulled public opinion with it in its wake and over against which Christians were helpless.

But there was more to it. Especially the University of Al-Azhar in Cairo played an important pioneering role. This grand institution at its zenith had up to 20,000 registered students and, even though it suffered a period of decline, is currently once again the spiritual and scholarly centre for Islam. It was founded in 975 AD by Djawhar al-Katib al-Sikilli in the city of Cairo that itself had only recently been established by the Fatimids.<sup>30</sup> The Fatimid *Khalifs*, who rebelled against the *Khalifs* of Baghdad, were originally Shi'ites and as such honoured Ali. They followed the rites of the Shafites, not those of the school of the Hanifites. There was tension between the Baghdad schools and them. In fact, the *Khalifs* of Baghdad pronounced them heretics. This created the need for the Fatimids to establish their own centre for scholarship. The University of Al-Azhar can trace its beginning to this need. The Fatimids did all they could to lure the most famous Arab scholars with high salaries and high prestige. It did not take long for the new school to achieve a high reputation. Students from all over the Muslim world came to Cairo to follow the lectures. In the endless disputes between Baghdad and Cairo that continued for two centuries, Cairo usually had the last word.

The first to put an end to all this disunity in the bosom of Islam was Salah al-Din, more commonly known as Saladin, after he conquered Egypt. He began by restoring recognition of the authority of the *Khalifs* of Baghdad and joining the Sunnis. However, not wanting the Egyptian scholars to oppose him, he decided that the Shafites could stay, but that from that point on, the other recognized Sunni

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<sup>30</sup>Gibb and Kramers associate Djawhar with founding the Al-Azhar *Mosque* with which the university is associated, not the university as such, p. 50.

schools of thought, namely the Hanifites, Malakites and Hanbalites, should also be represented on the faculty, each enjoying complete freedom to teach theology and jurisprudence in their own way. This only served to increase the reputation of Al-Azhar. Now scholars from all the schools came to curry the favour of the Egyptian ruler. And so it happened that from the time of Saladin, Al-Azhar became the great centre of Islamic scholarship. Lectures were offered in literature, theology and jurisprudence; sometimes also in astronomy, mathematics and science.

The Turkish capture of Egypt closed the University's first blossoming chapter. They were characterized by a different spirit. In addition, their entry into Egypt coincided with a natural turn of the tide in Arabic scholarship. This scholarship had as good as reached its goals completely. In spite of much struggle and in-fighting, the grammatical studies, as well as those in theology and jurisprudence, had matured, resulting in research having come to a close. This stage of scholarship was completed. Differences of opinion had disappeared. In each area a kind of common mind had been achieved so that from now on there was no need for any further study, except to defend that which had already been established or agreed upon. This snapped the resilience of Islamic scholarship in the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century and left her with nothing but a bare, conservative character that it has retained till this day. But as the authority of this conservative tradition preserved Islamic scholarship, so does the Al-Azhar of today [1907] serve as a significant agent for the preservation of Islam, more even than it did during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries,

The very expansive building in which the lectures are presented is very close to the graves of the *Khalifs* and borders on one of the first mosques of Cairo. If the weather is suitable, and that is almost always the case in Cairo, the lectures are held out in the open in an outside courtyard surrounded by a porch with pillars. You will find no trace here of stiff scholastic forms. Every lecturer surrounds

himself in this open air space with whoever wants to listen, while the students contribute to their own education by fielding questions and comments. If they do not approve of the lecturer's line of reasoning, they will interrupt him so that he has to explain himself further. Each of the four schools has at its head a sheikh or doctor, while the entire school has a rector as head sheikh. During the days of Muhammad Ali, this head sheikh would position himself as the *Sheikh-ul-Islam* to compete with the *Khalif* of Constantinople in prestige. This rector is practically always of the Shafite school, as a continuation of the old Fatimid tradition. Only once, during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, did a Hanifite by the name El-Mahdin El-Abassi occupy the position, but in 1887 he was again succeeded by a Shafite.

The rector, sheiks and lecturers are all chosen by the entire academic corps. Only the Hanifite who interrupted the line of Shafites was appointed by Viceroy Ishmael Pacha. Foreigners are often given preference, because they will draw students from their own country and thus help Al-Azhar to develop a more international Islamic character. There is no entrance exam; anyone may follow the lectures. I even found little boys there and, what I had expected even less, there were even a few little girls. These children learned reading, writing and Arabic grammar and with that they are taught to memorize some of the easier chapters of the Qur'an. This study, or, rather, memorization, and the ability to write Qur'anic passages, continues throughout the entire initial period. After that, they move on to the study of commentaries, logic, rhetoric, dialectic and of the art of poetry. During the final period, time is devoted to the higher studies of Islamic theology and jurisprudence. An average student requires fifteen to sixteen years for this entire course of studies. If someone begins at age six, he will have completed all these lower and higher studies at twenty-two. Even then there are no final examinations, nor is there any official declaration of graduation, but, on basis of all the courses he followed, the graduate can claim the title "Sheikh." By far the

greatest number break off their studies after they have completed the lower phase, usually around age fourteen. Only those who have given evidence of superior intelligence continue their studies at the higher level.

It should be noted that most foreigners enroll at a much later age. You find people there thirty years of age and older. For example, I found a number of adult Javanese, whom I invited to my hotel and with whom I had an interesting discussion with the help of our consul as interpreter. They had gone to Mecca and from there were sent on to Cairo, because of their special religious zeal and their great intelligence. They had taken on prestigious names like Muhammad and Omar and appeared rather pleased with themselves.

The University has a boarding facility that has rooms large enough for up to 40 students to live together, usually from the same area. Each student has a locker. Once a year, needy students are given a free outfit. They can also avail themselves of free, simple meals of dry bread and vegetables cooked in water. There are always water carriers with their leather bags, walking around for the thirsty. Order is preserved by security guards, burly men with respect-inducing clubs. I observed a little rascal teasing a nearly-blind female lecturer. (In Egypt some people are almost completely blinded by an indigenous eye disease.) This lady had so memorized the Qur'an that she could continue her teaching of the Qur'an. The only problem she had was to point to the correct words with her fingers on the printed page. Now this rascal thought it fun to push the page upward without her noticing it, so that she pointed to the wrong line that said something else, while the boy laughingly observed her. But it did not take long for a security man to notice. He gave him a sharp blow and immediately ended this ignoble scene.

The numerous needy young men studying at Al-Azhar live off gifts and small earnings. The old system of "*bettelstudent*" or beggar student still operates here. Quite a few students even work during the day as doorkeeper, load carrier,

peddler or clerk. During the evening they ask other students to inform them about the day's lectures.

Students have vacation for three months, during which time they return home to raise money, engage in small business and, wherever possible, spread knowledge about the Qur'an or lead unbelievers to Islam. Thus it is that Islam, not just recently but through the centuries, constantly, without letup and bit by bit, proceeds with its mission work. To be sure, there are more wealthy Muslims who devote their wealth to send missionaries to isolated regions, but this is not where the great influence of Islamic mission is to be found. That influence comes mostly through ordinary students, who during their travels and wanderings ply their trades but quietly and unobtrusively win unbelievers for Islam, especially in Pagan areas. The same process is at work in the Dutch Indonesian Archipelago, where most people are slowly won for Islam by the same method. These former students of Al-Azhar remain zealots for their faith throughout their lives and, totally on their own without any stipend, conduct their propaganda in a quiet manner.<sup>31</sup>

In addition, most *khadis* and imams graduate from Al-Azhar, as well as the fakirs, a class of poor and often ascetic mendicants and dervishes, who are generally hired by wealthy Muslims as governors or nannies to teach the children and to lead in daily family prayers. By this arrangement the influence of this University spread throughout the land and far beyond, while the sheikhs serve governments with advice in all things religious. For example, recently they published an extensive public declaration condemning the Mahdi in Sudan. Thanks to this prestigious religious authority of Al-Azhar, every itinerant teacher-pupil who engages in mission comes with a letter of recommendation in hand.

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<sup>31</sup>Most scholars of the spread of Islam, including Westerners, attribute the spread of Islam more to traders than to students.

### ***Additional Reasons for Christian Capitulation xxx***

Nevertheless, even in this kind of mission, the main point of attraction Islam exudes lies in the notion that when you join Islam, you will be taken up into the religious aristocracy of this world. This is the ancient Jewish idea of the chosen people that, shed by Islam of all its nationalistic baggage, morphed into the notion of world supremacy. The entire world belongs to Islam and all those converted to Islam have both the right and the calling to carry out this world supremacy. Muslims have turned upside-down Jesus' comment to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this world, otherwise my servants would fight." Their kingdom is of *this* world and they may [Translator: "must"?] fight over it with the sword. This raises their self-image to a whole new and higher level. By becoming Muslim, you are incorporated into the aristocracy, not merely of a country, but of the entire world. This gratifies human pride and especially works magic on the lower classes. As I have explained earlier, this prominent feeling is by no means the least of the factors that have helped Muslims triumph over collapsed and internally divided Christian communities.

And then, not to forget, Christians suppressed by non-Muslim regimes not infrequently embraced the approaching Muslims as liberators. The Byzantine State Church persecuted dissenting sects harshly and so these sects owed the regaining of their freedom to the arrival of the Arabs. As the French Protestants cheered the Revolution of 1779, because it delivered them from almost three centuries of oppression by the Roman Catholic Church, so did the suppressed Christian sects not infrequently welcome the Arabs as liberators and join them in common cause.<sup>32</sup>

Finally, medieval Europe experienced a deep sense of divine judgment, even in its legal system. This was not like the kind of fatalism with which Muslims

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<sup>32</sup>Such incidents are widely attested to in T. W. Arnold's tome, a book very popular with Muslims till this day.

accept temporary occupation of their territories by non-Muslims. Rather, it meant that in the struggle between Christianity and Islam, the outcome seemed to prove that Muhammad was right and that his mission would triumph over that of Jesus. You should keep in mind that changing religion was nothing unusual in Asia or Egypt. Whenever a new ruler took over, he would either recommend the idols of his home domain or force them on the subjugated people. Usually they would meekly follow. People had become accustomed to such transitions. If you now remember that Islam does not completely reject Christ but honours Him above all prophets except Muhammad, then you can understand how an exhausted Eastern Christian community could succumb more easily than would Western Christians of 1907. After all the quarreling over scholastic dogmatic questions into which the Christians of that time entrapped themselves, Islam presented itself as a simple, sensually pleasing and steadfast religion. The prayers were all prescribed. All behaviour in family and society was guided by clearly defined laws. In spite of these laws, many questionable types of behaviour were allowed to pass; there was freedom and latitude so that they could continue to observe many marginal practices from their own traditions. The spider of Islam only gradually spun its web around the fly, but once the fly was in its web, it would slowly be totally enveloped. That new spirit would impress itself on his heart so that it would rule his entire life and he slowly develop into a Muslim, heart and soul, bone and marrow.

Nevertheless, it remains a mystery how the higher Christian religion in all these countries could give up so helplessly in such a short time that it was reduced to a mere residue. But though under the rule of God this almost total disappearance of the Eastern Church remains a dark spot, there are also a few light beams that help us somewhat understand and that should temper our judgement over the lack of faithfulness of those Christians. Their divisions broke their back;

*the mass conversions to Christ under the political influence of emperors was more illusory than real* [italics by translator]; the superior power of Islam was imposing; their social humiliation wore down all resistance; Islam pleased the instincts of the sensual and lust for power; the superiority of Islam in its high scholarly developments soon became nearly irresistible. Islam put itself in line with the Christian tradition and replaced it with a form of religion that was simple in its conceptions, gave solid norms for life and was powerfully disseminated in nation after nation through the conviction of its adherents. Even today (1907) we can observe in Africa and in our own Dutch Archipelago of Indonesia how Islam, once it has entered a nation, tends to spread spontaneously and gradually until it has captured the spirit of the nation as a whole.

### ***Muslim Tenacity Versus Political Disintegration* xxxx**

The tenacity with which Islam has held its own for almost fourteen centuries and continues to do so is just as important as the great speed with which it spread. The period of its scholarly climax is past. Everything open to exploration and conclusions was explored and concluded. It was the Sunnis, especially the Hanifites among them, who managed to imprint their system and insights as *the* orthodoxy on Islam to its fullest extent. Scholarship turned into defense of tradition; their schools largely lost their earlier relevance; their art collapsed-- but the spirit of Islam continued to govern the emotions with undiminished fervor. Western unbelief penetrated the educated elite in the cities. Their attending European schools and, no less critical, their visiting Paris lead in many cases to a change in spirit. The Young Turks and the young Egyptians even dream of a revolution that will separate state and religion. They want to leave the religion of the people as is but reshape Government into the mould of Western constitutionality. These modern concepts are a mere drop of oil on the water. The



ordinary masses of people have not changed and hold tenaciously on to their tradition. In fact, it would take very little to have the flame of the old fanaticism suddenly arise again. This happened repeatedly during the last decades in Egypt, where the European influence was especially advocated by Mehemet Ali.

Islam has definitely weakened. As disunity once broke the back of Christians, so has it also caused the radiance of Islam to grow pale. Even the Caliphate has split time and again. And what especially attacked the nerve of Islam's power is that the unity of Islam as a ruling world power was broken. Islam was no longer one single world power; ruler attacked ruler. To be sure, the Turks restored that powerful unity for a considerable time. With the exception of Persia, India and Central Asia, they managed to reunite almost all the Muslim people. Even Eastern Europe was threatened with recapture. But after the battle of Lepanto in 1571 this unity was once again broken up. Even though the Sultan of Turkey commands a well disciplined army of more than half a million soldiers, after Turkey lost marine supremacy, a process that started at Lepanto and was completed at Navarino, the Sultan could no longer exert his authority beyond his narrow borders. No power can maintain itself around the Mediterranean Sea unless it controls that Sea itself. The Carthaginians perished when their navy was defeated during the Punic Wars with Rome near Mylae and Ecnomus in 263-265 B.C., just as even earlier the Persians were defeated by the Greeks after the battle of Salamis in 480 B.C. Again as the defeat of Antonius in 31 B.C. at Actium led to his demise, so did defeat of the Turks at Lepanto and Navarino lead to their downfall. The land route is simply too long to rule the distant regions of such an empire. And since the United Kingdom became master of the Mediterranean Sea after the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805, the Sultan does not have sufficient means to resist the pressure that is constantly exerted on him and to which he must constantly succumb. Thereto must be added the consideration that the Muslim is

basically a warrior at heart and lacks the capacity for effective administration. Conqueror by birth, he has been deprived of the special qualities needed for civil administration. Even though Islam always reserved its most capable for the higher positions, the Turkish government depended mostly on the Greeks and Armenians and, in Egypt, on the Coptics for financial and general administration as well as for the lower ranks in diplomacy. These distorted relationships caused welfare to reduce, trade to shrink and the country to be impoverished, so that financial crises presented themselves repeatedly.

But none of these developments could disturb the Muslim community in the depth of its soul. Throughout the length and breadth of the entire Muslim world the spirit of the people remained unflinched. Their entire territory everywhere is still fully Muslim. In spite of its tolerance for national traditions, its patience with the residue of previous religions, its recognition of native customary law, it always remained faithful to Allah and His Prophet.

### ***The Contemporary State of Islam***    xxxx

The population of Islamic regions has not greatly increased. Many wars have taken their toll. Infant mortality was high. A variety of epidemics reaped tens of thousands of souls. At one time, Sudan had a population of over eight million, but because of the Mahdi war and a terrible measles epidemic, now (1907) has no more than two million. Nevertheless, Wagner estimates the total Muslim world population in the year 1900 to be no less than 245 million. That amounts to 15.4 percent of the total world population. This mass of people just sits there as an unmovable block as Islam steadily spreads further in India, in Indonesia and, especially, in Africa. Others present us with different statistics. Exact figures are not really available. The lowest numbers available give us 145 million for

mainland Asia, 50 million for Africa, almost 12 million for Europe and almost 30 million for Indonesia and a few other islands.

Among all the Muslim nations, Persia has adopted the most independent position but also the most isolated one, by which it weakened the power of Islam rather than strengthened it. Of its over nine million inhabitants, only two million belong to the Sunni sect, while the remainder follow the Shi'ites. From the beginning, Persia chose a hereditary monarchical government over against the democratic ideals of the Arabs. Therefore, they rejected the elected Caliphs Abubakar, Uthman and Omar and stood behind Ali, who should have succeeded Muhammad according to hereditary rights. In fact, they pushed their support for Ali so far that they attributed a divine incarnation to him, a notion that he himself declined but that nevertheless took increasing root among them. By this break with orthodox Islam, the high sense of nationalism that still characterizes Persia maintained itself, while the Arian spirit, that never allowed itself to be fully erased, sought to survive through philosophical contemplation and pantheistic speculation. This was the reason for the rise of new sects, among which some even replaced Muhammad with Ali. Not the least among these new sects were the Sufis and, in the nineteenth century, the Baha'i faith, which gained adherents in all circles. Voltaire's spirit was also welcome in Persia, as seen among the Baha'i. It led to increasing estrangement between the official state religion and the spirit of the people. In some isolated areas one still finds some Guebres or fire worshippers and in one remote corner a remnant of the ancient Christian church, but the dominant atmosphere is provided by philosophy and poetry. So little support for Islam can be expected from Persia, that it is constantly at loggerheads with Turkey and tends to draw more of its inspiration from Western Europe. In this sense, Islam never conquered the Persian spirit so that the official Shi'a rule, even more today than previously, exists more in name than in actuality.

Five million Muslims live in Afghanistan. In the cities, they speak mostly Farsi (Persian) and are Shi'ites. But in the rural areas they hold on to their Afghani language and consider themselves Sunnis, with the exception of the Shi'ite Khazars. However, this country is too much of a buffer state between British and Russian interests to have any significance for Muslim power. Spiritual life hardly exists there, while it is unable to follow an independent political agenda.

Then we have at a still much lower level the country of Baluchistan with less than a million inhabitants. They claim to be Sunni, but they are so wild and uncivilized that they have as an expression, "Anyone who has not murdered a neighbour and seduced his wife is not a real Baluchi." It hardly needs saying that this country carries no weight in the scale of Muslim power.

Persia separates these lands too far from Turkey, while an alliance with India is too difficult to motivate both Afghanistan and Baluchistan to do anything for Islam beyond serving as an isolated and superfluous reserve. That especially in Afghanistan the spirit of Islam still motivates a few individuals powerfully, is demonstrated by Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani, whose attempts at reformation at the University of Al-Azhar were even amenable to the movement of Arabi Pasha. But such were totally isolated phenomena that had little following among the people.

The situation is totally different when you cross the Himalayas into India, where the Muslims are not less than 63 million in number and thus make the United Kingdom, India's colonial ruler, the largest Muslim power. Muslims first entered India from Ghazni, an Afghani province, some three centuries after the *Hijira*, i.e., around the year 1,000 A.D. They remained in the northwest without making much progress initially. It was not till the middle of the seventeenth century that Aurangzeb, one of the great Moghul kings, who did not hesitate to use violence, exerted powerful propaganda and thus initiated the spread of Islam over a wide area. The Hindu caste system favoured conversions. The oppressed and

despised untouchables were powerfully attracted to the position of equality that Islam offered. This process is still going on. The greatest concentration of Muslims is found in Punjabi. They also have a powerful presence in a part of Bengal, that was split in two to please Muslims. The rest live mainly in the coastal cities, where they maintain contact with Arab marine traffic from across the water.

The vast majority of Indian Muslims are Sunnis of the Hanifite school. There is also movement of sects from Persia, while the Hindus who convert to Islam continue to cling to many features of their former religion. Still, on the whole, Indian Islam is of an orthodox character. The Sultan of Turkey is acknowledged as the legitimate head of Islam. The atmosphere is increasingly open to mystical influences of the spiritual orders. Even in the area of scholarship new life is beginning to stir among them. They surpass the Hindus in courage, resilience and pride, while in the moral sphere they have shown themselves to be carriers of a higher culture. Because of their growing numbers and increasing influence, the British government increasingly favours them. All indications are that Muslims in British India will assert themselves more than they have in the past.

At first glance, the Islam of Indonesia appears to be of far greater significance in so far as it has been adopted by almost the entire community, especially on the main island of Java. The number of Muslims in Indonesia is about half of those in India. On the island of Sumatra it is sharply delineated, but this is not the case to the same degree on Java. Here much of the traditional religion with its many traditions and local customs lives on in the shadow of the crescent. The character of the Javanese is much less fanatic.

During recent years even here a more decisive tone has penetrated from Al-Azhar University. Sometimes the pilgrimage to Mecca produces fanaticism. Arab immigrants goad them into action. In these so-called dependencies, Muslim

propaganda goes on relentlessly but mostly under the radar. The Netherlands government must thus keep a watchful eye on the situation, for the strength of the more than 30 million Muslims who find their home in this Archipelago can be ignored only at the expense of Dutch power.<sup>33</sup> Pan-Islam has its secret agents everywhere, while Constantinople is also interested in every aspect of this island nation.

The number of Muslims under Russian control in southern Russia, the Caucasus and in Central Asia is smaller but by no means insignificant. Statistical data put the number of the combined adherents of Islam under the authority of the Czar at well over seventeen million—eight million in Europe and the Caucasus, and a good nine million in Central Asia. Quite a few have left the Caucasus for Turkey, but the unique way in which Russia treats its Muslims soon put a stop to this exodus. The government does not touch their religion. It grants them every freedom to conduct their social life according to their own tradition. It operates a strong regime to maintain peace and order. It establishes schools for Muslims and has even given them their own Sheikh-ul-Islam who, as their own spiritual leader, keeps them from developing close relations with Constantinople. The extreme manner in which the authority of the Czar was originally established has cultivated resignation with respect to their subjugation. While Russia continued in a state of war with its Jewish population, it managed to establish complete supremacy over its Muslims, especially after the destruction of the Tscherkessen people, so that there is little to be concerned about from that side. Also the balance of the Slavic colonization in Central Asia is changing so that the preponderance of Muslims in those regions is gradually reducing.

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<sup>33</sup>I find it striking that Kuyper seems to accept the colonial status without any qualms, while my published critique of colonialism is the product of the Kuyperian worldview (See J. Boer, 1979, throughout).

In China, the number of Muslims is estimated at over twenty-three million. Some authorities even estimate thirty-three million. They already started penetrating here in the eighth century. It is said that *Khalif* Abu Giefer sent 4000 Arabs to China to help the ruling dynasty against a rebellious population.<sup>34</sup> For this reason, the emperors have had special regard for Muslims and even entrusted them with high posts and honours. The community increased by marrying Chinese women and by buying up children, which they then would bring up as Muslims.<sup>35</sup> But it was exactly this privileged position of theirs, combined with their excessive pride of character and sense of moral superiority, that tempted them often to armed resistance. In the province of Yunnan and neighbouring areas where they were greatest in number, a civil war broke out between them and the indigenous Chinese in 1855 over a mine dispute that was squashed by imperial troops with unprecedented cruelty. This was not altogether undeserved, for Maheen, the leader of the rebels, boasted that he personally had killed no less than a million Chinese! In 1877, a new rebellion broke out under Yakub Bey. This was repeated in Chinese Turkestan, while simultaneously numerous Muslims joined the Boxers. However, the Chinese government managed every time to retain control over their territories. Even though Muslims constitute little more than five percent of the population and have adopted much of the dominant religion and customs in order

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<sup>34</sup>Translator's note: I could not find anything about Khalif Abu Giefar to confirm this history. However, I did find the following quote about the incident: "An Lu-shan, a favorite of Emperor Hsuan Tsung, rebelled against the T'ang Dynasty. Of mixed Sogdian and Turkish descent, the enormously fat An Lu-shan, a skilled military commander and governor of three provinces, led an uprising in 755 after Hsuan Tsung abdicated in favor of Su Tsung. When An Lu-shan captured and occupied Ch'ang-an, Su Tsung, apparently influenced by the Muslim success at the Battle of Talas, wrote to A-p'u ch'a-fo - rather a good rendition of the Arabic name of the second Abbasid caliph Abu Ja'far al-Mansur - asking him to send troops to help him recapture Ch'ang-an. The caliph responded by sending 4,000 men - who did help Su Tsung retake the capital, but who also settled in China, took Chinese wives and, in effect, established the first Muslim community in China" (Chinahistoryforum.com).

<sup>35</sup>These and similar or parallel practices are still common among Muslims in various countries even today in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. (J. Boer, vol. 7, 2008, pp. 61-62, 155, 161-162.)

to find acceptance, they nevertheless represent a power that must be taken into account in China. We will likely hear more about them in the future.<sup>36</sup>

Outside of Russia and the Turkish Empire, the number of Muslims in Europe is negligible. In Bosnia and Herzogovenia that are currently Austrian protectorates, as in Bulgaria, Muslims are little more than half million strong. In addition, a hundred thousand live in Romania, Greece, Servia and Montenegro. But even if you add European Turkey to all this, this would give all of Europe, apart from Russia, no more than three million. In European Turkey, the figure hardly surpasses two million. But Turkey as a whole remains an Islamic superpower for two reasons. First, it is the seat of the Sultan. Second, it is the only independent power of considerable significance because of its extensive territory, the size of its population and the availability of a significant army. We may as well disregard the nominal sovereignty of the Sultan over Egypt, but even then, taking everything together, including Tripoli, Turkey still has a Muslim population of two million in Europe, controls well over fourteen million in Asia and one and a quarter million in Africa. Put together, a total of eighteen million along with a military force that, together with a reserve, amounts to about one million. Of course, this is a low number compared to the total figure of 245 million Muslims over the entire world, but Turkey is and remains the historic continuation of the original Muslim world power. The Islamic world as a whole wants the Sultan to continue to serve as sovereign, but within Turkey the original power of the *Khalifate* has been transferred to the Turkish Government, for it alone knew how to maintain it all. This is the reason that almost all Muslims look upon Turkey as the actual world centre for Islam. In almost every mosque prayers are offered for the Sultan of Turkey. Even in Egypt the national party backs Turkey.

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<sup>36</sup>Kuyper's prediction came true. A century later, during the very months this article is being translated (July-September, 2009), the struggle has again revived and is indeed again in the news.



However, new pockets of resistance are constantly emerging from Arabia, usually from the Wahabis, that receive their strength from the traditional Arab resentment of the Mongols. But now that the railway line from Damascus to Medina is near completion, the chances of the Sultan to retain control over this area by the rapid transportation of troops are greatly increased. The difficulties always arise from independent tribes in Arabia that even now still form a power of over three million, but the main thing is that the Sultan will not allow Mecca to slip out of his hands and that the Upper Sherif remains faithful to him. For this reason, the Turkish government strongly encourages the construction of railways. It is very aware that nothing is more effective for the maintenance of her supremacy over such a wide area. Whoever has access to well-trained troops and an extensive railway system can easily retain control over such a wide area, especially when the people are deeply divided and lack all national cohesion, even if other conditions are unfavourable.

It remains to be seen whether the railway system will not cause an internal weakening of Islam by encouraging the penetration of a foreign higher culture. At this point, it can only be said that in Egypt, where the influence of Western culture has penetrated the farthest, already since the time of Mehemet Ali, and even more after the establishment of British rule, one detects few traces of a radical change in the hearts of the people. In Algeria and Tunisia the experience is the same. Morocco with its population of eight to nine million people is totally independent in spirit. The Sultan there, who boasts of being a descendant of Muhammad's family, is an independent *Khalif* and has no relations with Turkey as a political power or with the Sultan of Turkey. Nevertheless, this country remains Muslim through and through. The contempt for death that the tribes from the interior exhibited against the French troops around Casablanca demonstrated clearly that

here also the spirit of Islam is still capable of generating a fanatic defiance. The Islamic fire is far from extinguished.

Islam along the coast of Africa and in its interior is, with the exception of Tripoli, almost totally under European control. This is important on two counts. First, because at the moment Islam exerts its strongest propaganda in Africa and, second, the African continent is beginning to count more and more in world affairs. Of its population of 170 million, almost 60 million have already converted to Islam, among them the 24 million of the northern coastal states, including Egypt, while the rest live in the interior and along the east coast. All the attempts since the sixteenth century to convert the Sub-Saharan Black peoples to Christianity have failed, while Muslims, who penetrated deep into the interior, succeeded to win one ethnic group after another without meeting strong resistance anywhere.<sup>37</sup> The Sahara and Sudan have as good as been won over; the propaganda among the Bantu peoples from central Africa, the Zulus and other Black populations has already been started with great energy. If it is not possible to stem this tide by putting up a dam,<sup>38</sup> then it can be foreseen that the day is coming that, with the exception of Ethiopia, Madagascar and the British colonies in South Africa, this

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<sup>37</sup>Kuyper clearly was not familiar with the situation in the region that the British turned into Northern Nigeria. Here Traditionalist ethnic groups throughout the nineteenth century resisted this Muslim encroachment. Their resistance lost its force only under British colonialists who, under the “Pax Britannica,” in many ways favoured Islam at the expense of Traditionalists, one of the ways being the imposition of Muslim emirs on Traditionalist-Christian tribes. What Muslims could not achieve on their own during the nineteenth century was given to them on a silver platter by the British during the twentieth. (J. H. Boer, 1979, pp. 71-74, 101, 141-143, 211-213, 500-506; 1984, pp. 60-63; 2004, vol. 3, pp. 86-88, 203-204, 214, 286-287; 2005, pp. 101-102; 2008, pp. 194, 286-287, Appendices 8-10--p. 422.

<sup>38</sup>The idea of a “mission wall” was, perhaps unbeknown to Kuyper, already close to a century old. Allow me to cite a paragraph from my 1979 dissertation. “Already in the 1820s men began to dream about an ‘Apostle Street,’ a route that was yet to be determined, along which would enter the King of Glory. A station was to be established every 100 miles along the route for the spread of the Gospel. This idea was adapted later by the German missionary Krapf, who devised a complete plan for an east-west chain of stations. He envisioned a total distance of some 2700 miles that would be divided into sections of 300 miles, each with its own station manned by four missionaries. The entire cost would be between L4,000 to L5,000 annually. The project was to be called the ‘Equatorial Mission Chain’ and it was to be completed within a dozen years” (p. 101).

entire continent will fall into the lap of Islam.<sup>39</sup> We should not lose sight of the fact that all these newly-won lands border on each other, so that, if the above scenario is realized, eventually this entire contiguous land mass from the Mediterranean to Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) with its population close to 100 million, will belong to Islam. In Asia, Muslim groups exist in isolated pockets among other large world religions. In Africa, to the contrary, one huge mass of intermingled peoples will hold the banner of Islam high. No matter how divided they may be among European colonies, they will find their unity in Islam. Blacks once converted, regardless of their current status, become brothers to the adherents of the religion to which they convert. The enthusiasm displayed in the Sudanese Mahdi uprisings indicates that Africa is susceptible to strong religious upheavals.

There is no need to make special mention about the small group of Muslims in Siam (Thailand), Indochina and a few Portuguese and Spanish possessions. Their total number probably does not exceed three million. What is important to realize about the power of Islam is that of the 245 million Muslims more than 180 million are under European control; only 65 million are independent. Great Britain leads the pack with 72 million. China is next with its 33 million, after which follow The Netherlands with 30 million, France with 22 million and Russia with 17 million. The statistics for the other European countries are negligible: Germany, two and a half million; Italy, one and a half; the rest, from half a million down to a few thousand. The largest groups of Muslims are under European sovereignty—Great Britain, The Netherlands and France—and number a total of

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<sup>39</sup>That was, in fact, a consuming fear of the Western missionary movement of the day to the point of it being a missionary crisis that was felt throughout the ecumenical church. The milestone Edinburgh Missionary Conference of 1910 spoke of “the most critical missionary problem in Africa” (J. H. Boer, 1979, pp. 101-102). Here Kuyper had his finger on the missionary pulse of his day. It is perhaps unfair to have expected these missionaries and Kuyper to have foreseen the tremendous explosion of the African church, especially since independence. Today, in Nigeria, the most populous African nation, Muslims find themselves confronted with a Christian community equal in number, some 65 million of each! There are entire African countries that consider themselves “Christian.”

135 million and thus constitute more than half of the entire world Muslim population.

Leaving aside its government, I doubt that the people of my own country, The Netherlands, are conscious of this fact. They do not give much thought to Islam. Certainly, the Dutch missionary movement is not sufficiently aware of the kind of battle with which it needs to approach Islam. From the scholarship point of view, we can hold our heads high. We have several missionaries of international repute, such as Veth, Dozy, De Goeje, Snouck Hurgronje and Houtsma, but our people do not pay attention and fail to sense the significance of the problem with which Islam confronts little The Netherlands. Hence the Dutch missionary thrust in Indonesia lacks the necessary persistence and the specific kind of approach that is necessary for all missions to Islam.

From the above data about the distribution of Muslim power in Asia and Africa, it is clear that Islam does not constitute a serious political challenge. Islam, more than any other worldview, demands unity of spiritual and political power, but only one quarter of the total Muslim community in the world live under Muslim sovereignty. Turkey is supposed to represent the unified power of Islam, but the Sultan has only a little over 18 million subjects that probably cannot all be considered Muslims. That is such a tiny fraction of the whole that the unity of spiritual and political power really does not exist anywhere. When only a quarter of all Muslims live under Muslim sovereignty and even that one quarter is so bitterly divided that the power of the Sultan extends to little over one third of that one quarter, Islam is not only doomed as a political power but is also undermined in its foundations. *Islam requires that Muslims rule other nations. That, in fact, is their privilege and calling. But they themselves may not be subjected to foreign rule. Where the latter does happen, Muslims will patiently accept the situation temporarily, but deep in its soul Islam will eventually come to resist it and*

*constantly look forward to the glorious day that it will regain its freedom and restore its own sovereignty.*<sup>40</sup> Islam depends for such a turn of events on supernatural help, because it fully realizes its military weakness. Even Turkey, in the absence of a navy, is in no position to buttress its claims with any authority. Everywhere, Muslims have had the painful experience that their fierce heroism and fanatic devotion are no match for modern European weaponry.

Pan-Islam was born out of this awareness of Muslim political and military powerlessness, combined with their unimpaired faith and relentless heroism. Every now and then some independent Mahdi would attempt to hasten that day of victory, but, while these morning stars would emerge with sudden speed, they would invariably with equal speed sink back into oblivion. The consciousness that this Mahdi route was not the way to restore the prestige of Islam grew deeper and deeper. Islam became powerless through its scattered constellation; only the revival of spiritual unity could promise better days.

### ***Pan-Islam, Spiritual Orders and Revivalism*   xxxx**

That spiritual unity was still a potent factor. The Shi'ites counted few adherents, while other smaller sects were of no significance, but the large majority still stood firm in the orthodoxy of the Sunni faith. Even the struggle between the four major schools was basically decided in favour of the Hanifites almost everywhere. This spiritual unity was a reality. It only needed to be re-energized with new life to revive the *consciousness* of unity.

This task was taken on by the spiritual orders. As their adherents gradually increased in number, they impressed the masses with their superior morality.

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<sup>40</sup>Italics by translator. Translator's note: Wanting to rule over other nations is, of course, not unique to Muslims. It is called imperialism, a disease that has long afflicted the West as well. Much of the religious, political and cultural revival of Islam at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century is in reaction to Western imperialism over them. Kuyper foresaw this scenario already in his own day.

Islam provided them with fixed forms for living and for communal worship, forms that were observed almost everywhere. However, these forms were too external, did not touch the heart, and could not inspire them enough. It was the spiritual orders that were to cultivate this spirituality of the heart. They spread their tentacles in short time throughout the Muslim community.

Initially, the Turkish Government did not favour this movement. She saw danger lurking in the attempt to replace the unity provided by the Turkish regime with another higher type of unity. The Muftis and Ulama also were jealous of a movement that threatened to supercede the external worship service by a deeper spiritual disposition, whose source was to be found not in the mosque but in the monastery. This opposition had its parallel in the Christian Church where the established clergy resisted free mystical fellowships. However, over time the opposition petered out. The Sultan correctly observed that, provided his spiritual Caliphate was left untouched, eventually the fruit of this movement would fall into his lap. The plan of the reforming party to appoint the Sherif of Mecca pope of Islam would undermine the Sultan's authority, but this new movement of spiritual orders worked in his favour. Hence, he eventually gave it his blessing.

Attempts to equate this Pan-Islam movement with the Pan-Slavic and Pan-German movements are definitely misguided. These latter movements derive their strength from a racial base and are associated with nationalism. Pan-Islam, on the other hand, is based exclusively on the religious motif. Every time Muslims play the racist card, as happened between the Turks and Arabs, Islam loses terrain, for such issues are not core to Islam.<sup>41</sup> Outside of Persia and Egypt, Islam has no nationalist impulses and even in Arabia, where such movements constantly arise, it is always

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<sup>41</sup>Translator's note: There are plenty more examples of Muslim racism. In Mauritania, the relations between Berbers and Blacks are bedeviled by racism. When I talk to North African and Asian Muslims about Nigerian Muslims, they invariably shrug their shoulders with indifference for their Black Nigerian counterparts. In Nigeria itself racism is rife between the northern Muslim Hausa-Fulani and their neighbours. As in Christianity, the standard is one thing; the practice, another.

based on the primacy of the spiritual. Arab Islam, more than any other, is regarded by Arabs as their own. They especially long for Islam in its original purity and they are deeply troubled by the fact that a Mongul tribe has taken over the Caliphate. But even though nationalism plays a role here, the spiritual factor provides even here the *leitmotif*. In Arabia the Crescent comes first and only after the Arab banner. *Pan-Islam found its origin in the painful manner in which the great powers of Christian Europe imposed their superior power upon the Muslim states and tribes.*<sup>42</sup> An awareness arose that all of Islam was endangered, that its disunity, its dampened and petrified faith, condemned Islam to powerlessness.

It was high time for Islam to pursue three things if it were to maintain any position of power at all. First, the band of unity of all who raise the Crescent high had to be restored. Secondly, Islam had to be purified of all the foreign accretions that had crept in. Thirdly, the withered faith must be re-animated with a fresh enthusiasm. That this three-fold urgency was indeed the badly needed response to the situation on the ground was demonstrated by the surprising speed with which Pan-Islam took hold. Already it had its interpreters and supporters throughout the Muslim world, from Hyderabad in Pakistan to Tangier and Fes in Morocco. It was as if Muslims had been waiting for just such a movement and as if the sun of Pan-Islam had only to rise over the horizon for them to embrace it with enthusiasm. It had more the dynamics of a sudden fire than of the organization of an artificial movement. Yet, it did not lack all organization, even though some scholars attributed disproportionate weight to it. Abu Al-Huda, a sheikh of the Rafai order,\* leads the movement from Constantinople, while the Great Sherif of Mecca, a member of this powerful order, has the consummate skills to utilize the

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<sup>42</sup>Italics by translator. Translator's note: A century later, the same dynamic is still/again at work. Would that the West would recognize the effects of its own secular, religious and imperialistic provocation of Islam through the centuries as an important factor in the current tension between Islam and the West. And then, of course, factor this into their response to the challenge they are facing. It does not appear that Kuyper took this second step. He merely observed the first.

pilgrimage to the Ka'aba as propaganda for this communal movement. It has even succeeded to unite different orders under a degree of administrative unity through the person of Sheikh El-Troeg.\* Under the powerful leadership of this administrator, throngs of missionaries penetrated Asia and Africa to declare an Islamic revival. Sheikh Jafer, head of the Tripoli-based Madaniya order, has a powerful influence as court chaplain to the Sultan, and leads the movement in North Africa. This artificial dispersion of Pan-Islam is by no means insignificant, but it would be far too weak to reach its goal if the general consciousness of a European threat were not found in all Muslim countries. It is only out of necessity that Islam tolerates foreign domination, especially now that even the land of the Sultan is losing province after province and the Sultan himself has to submit constantly in his own country to the demands of Western powers. In the meantime, resentment builds up and people ask themselves whether Islam with its more than fifteen percent of the population of the world, should not be able to muster the power to put an end to this foreign oppression. Politically speaking, the goal of Pan-Islam is undoubtedly the return of all Muslims under the rule of the Sultan, but this goal is only the last step on a long journey.

For the moment, the main agenda is two-fold. First, Islam must purify itself from the accretions it has absorbed from the earlier religions of the people it has absorbed. Secondly, it must raise the general awareness that all who live under the Crescent must wake up and work towards unification in preparation for a new gigantic struggle. Often the movement expresses itself in minor explosions of fanaticism, but these are suppressed too quickly to make a lasting impression. It is realized that this phase of the action must first be completed with limitless patience and spiritual tenacity, if the end goal is ever to be reached. That is why there is a heavy emphasis on sending out agents, on the distribution of literature and the continuation of the ongoing triumphal march among Africa's Blacks.



Undoubtedly, this never-ceasing propaganda has already considerably strengthened the position of Islam. The foreign rulers in India and Pakistan, in Indonesia and Africa are forced increasingly to take the sensitivities of Islam into consideration. Sirdar Kitchener was even forced to strongly forbid all Christian mission activities in Egyptian Sudan.<sup>43</sup> In India and Pakistan the British Viceroy tried to make more and more contact with Muslims. The French Government in Tunis approached Islam very differently from what it did earlier in Algeria. In Egypt the British tried to avoid anything that might annoy Muslims.

### ***Muslim Reactions towards the West and Missions* xxx**

At the beginning of this document I described the high speed with which Islam had not only established its military superiority in Asia and Africa, but also succeeded in capturing the hearts of the people into the net of Islam. This still portrays the power over the spirit that emanates from Islam. And if we remember that Pan-Islam succeeded in inspiring its 245 million adherents with this ancient religious zealotry, then it is impossible to predict what power can emanate from it in the future. It is not as if the military superiority of Western powers would not be able to crush all forms of resistance, but this would only be due to technical power. Military superiority does not break spiritual resistance, but, rather, tends to strengthen it. Neither must we put much hope in the widespread expectation that our higher culture will eventually tame the spirit of Islam. Muslim populations are very adept at profiting from the fruits of our higher civilization that we introduce or from the improvements in administration and judiciary that lead to the elevated welfare of the nations, but this is all external to the heart. Furthermore, these developments only serve to tempt a small group to fall away, become indifferent to

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<sup>43</sup>Translator's note: The same prohibition was put into effect by the British in the Muslim-dominated areas of Northern Nigeria. J. Boer, 1979, p. 69; 2004, p. 19; 2007, pp. 58-59, 61.

the faith and replace it with atheism. But this does not touch the masses. They continue in their unchanging traditional life and remain Muslim in their hearts. And even among the elite the motto, "For Muhammad and against Christ," retains its attraction.

In another chapter in this series of mine I told the story of a highly placed and fully modernized woman who declared she would thoroughly enjoy beheading all Christian missionaries. I now add the story of a highly regarded man who could hardly pass a British sentry without feeling a deep desire welling up to wring his neck with his own hands. With our railways, our irrigation systems, our advanced administration and our industrial enterprises we can improve the economic situation of Muslim countries, but we do not win over the people with such improvements. Muslims everywhere to a man will bless the day they see us leave and they are searching for ways to make this happen.

There is only *one* means to win over the people, namely if we could get the masses motivated to trade in their religion for Christianity, but for this there is not a chance. Since long, Christian missions have concentrated their efforts on toughest of all countries, namely those of the Sultan. First, the French. After them, the Italians and the Greeks. Still later, British and American missions competed with each other for the crown of victory with unusual resilience and warm zeal for the faith, but the only fruit they could show for their efforts consists exclusively of encouraging the Christian remnants still found in scattered places in Turkey.

Without these extensive missionary efforts, these remnants would most likely have been wholly absorbed into Islam. Now, however, they do not only still exist, thanks to their expansive school systems, but they have been upgraded to a new level of Christian life. But everywhere the number of converts from Islam were few and, when placed in the context of the entire nation, hardly worthy of mention. They did lure Muslim youth to their schools and the Muslim sick to their hospitals.

They also contributed to the development of the community, but they could not win the hearts of the people anywhere.

Similarly, in Dutch Indonesia, where Islam has a much more superficial character, all missions testify to the extreme difficulty of changing the hearts of the people. I leave aside the question whether missions understood the people adequately or whether they had the requisite skills. Dutch missionaries treated the indigenous Indonesian Christian missionary, Kyai Sadrach, who preached a unique kind of Javanese Christianity, with great impatience. While admitting that missions have made serious mistakes, the result of their work in Muslim countries is so disappointing and painfully sad, that only self-deceit can still harbour hope that there is a chance for the conversion of Muslims on a large scale.<sup>44</sup> Rather, we must acknowledge that the Pan-Islamic revival has further considerably reduced the chances of Christian victory among Muslims. Certainly, during the last half century in Dutch Indonesia, Islam has gained many more converts from the Traditionalist tribes on Java and a few other islands than have Christians.

This is the experience of missions everywhere. For the Muslim to convert to Christianity is from their point of view to descend to a lower level. Islam came *after* Christ. Islam has a later and higher revelation. Who wants to go back from the latest and highest to an earlier and lower? A convert from Islam is a traitor in the eyes of Muslims. As far as Muslims are concerned, such a person has died morally and the entire Muslim neighbourhood works together towards his reversion under the weight of contempt and of social deprivation.

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<sup>44</sup>Translator's note: Nigeria always seems different from most other nations. Kuyper would have been surprised at the great number of Muslim converts to Christ in Nigeria during the last half of the twentieth century. I personally know many of them. The churches there have every reason for optimism in this regard. Some Christian leaders, including the late Haruna Dandaura, who was highly respected by Muslim leaders, claim that the number of Northern converts runs into the millions (J. Boer, 2008, pp. 179-182).

Added to the above is the problem that we tend to bring Christianity to the East in an almost exclusively Western format, while the Easterner, not feeling comfortable with that format, is much more attracted to the Eastern format of Islam. Islam with its Eastern format is better oriented to his needs and speaks to him, while Christianity with its Western format feels repugnant. The end result is that Christian missions usually plow on rocks and gain very few people, while Islam continues its victorious march in both Indonesia and Africa. Islam hardly loses any people, except in Persia, where it is weakened by internal instability. But as a world power, Islam continues to grow steadily. Even during the centuries of its cultural heyday, the number of Muslims was smaller than it is now. Sometimes Islam exerts such an irresistible charm or temptation to baptized Christians, that we repeatedly hear of Christians who have denied the Cross and converted to Islam. Islam flatters the tendency in the human heart to pride and sensuousness. It is clear, simple and easily understood in its major lines and fixed forms. It not only shapes your religious life, but also governs the totality of the rest of your life. It is capable of adapting itself to a wide range of circumstances. It allows a high degree of freedom of movement.<sup>45</sup> During its first cycle, Islam proved amenable to high scholarly development and had at its disposal a very rich body of literature. To the eye of the fanatic it holds up a sparkling ideal of might and greatness that can still inflame the deepest passions. So I have no more expectation from Christian subjugation of Islam than I do from the technical and economic aspects of the West. Even now the wheels are in motion to develop a higher culture in India that will match the highest cultural developments of Christian Europe.

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<sup>45</sup>This claim may surprise readers of the 21st century who are accustomed to hearing or reading the media about rigid Muslim arguments regarding a strict sharia, strict fashions, strict everything. Kuiper observed Islam during a more relaxed period, when it was more its normal self. It is in the current crisis that everything grey has been turned into black and white and everything fluid into rigid forms.

I am fully aware that it is emotionally very hard for us Christians to acknowledge this development. Even if Islam endlessly echoes the call to Allah, the All-Merciful and the All-Compassionate, in its mosques and from its minarets, this call does not emerge from a deep consciousness of sin or from a thirst for reconciliation. Allah is and remains for Muslims a mighty Sovereign who regards His faithful servants with grace and favour. But Islam does not know of a Father in heaven who comes to His children with the invitation to be reconciled to Him. In Islam, the Almighty exercises mercy, but there is no Holy One who overcomes our internal separation through reconciliation. Therefore the ideal of a Holy Loving God *must* be totally lacking, even in Allah Himself.<sup>46</sup>

Thus, we must accept the fact that this mighty group of Muslims that stretches all the way across Asia and Africa, blocks the way of Christianity and of our higher culture. Islam itself represents a culture that is much higher than the Paganism it replaced and that did indeed develop a higher culture from the seventh to thirteenth centuries. However, today it has consolidated its achievements at an intermediary level that resists every attempt to climb to higher ideals.

### ***Muslim Morality* xxx**

Islam is a religion for men; women look in from the outside. In contrast to France, where church attendance consists almost exclusively of women, in Islam, women hardly play any role in their worship services. Islam totally lacks female input to social life and culture. Isabelle Bird-Bishop had the opportunity to

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<sup>46</sup>To make such absolute claims about another religion is very dangerous. My extensive reading of and research in Nigerian Muslim literature has made me very cautious not to make absolutist claims or denials about the Muslim experience of Allah on basis of logical conclusions from Muslim doctrine. The following paragraphs are similarly weakened by absolutist claims. Whenever Muslims draw logical conclusions from some Christian doctrine, I never recognize myself in their conclusion, for it is usually based on a distorted or partial version of a doctrine taken out of context. Do Christians understand Islam more than the other way around? Are they not liable to similar errors? At the very least, we should usually avoid words like “all,” “every,” “never,” “always” and “totally” when talking about other religions, especially in critical comments.

penetrate deeply into the life of Muslim women. She witnessed the indescribable in the presence of young harem girls. She could only comment that it would be impossible for anything more demonic, dirty and demeaning to be called up in the polluted imagination of a sick man than was displayed before the eyes of women and young girls or said in their presence. Another lady, Mrs. Stanley Pool-Lane, testifies that during the course of succeeding generations, life in harems gradually sank so low that it would be impossible to sink to a lower level of brutality and animalism.<sup>47</sup>

Undoubtedly, this almost exclusively male character gives Islam its strength. It enables Islam to retain its position in higher circles. But the total lack of female influence means Islam is bereft of that tenderness and warmth that women contribute so generously to the Christian religion. The Muslim, according to ancient Bedouin tradition, is hospitable and protective of strangers. He is famous for his charitable treatment of the poor. However, Tenney, in his recent book *Contrasts of Social Progress*, comments that everything done in Constantinople for the poor and needy, through voluntary gifts and foundations, is not even close to one tenth of the philanthropy practiced in London. The Muslim is honest in his commerce and traffic and shines here compared to Greeks and Armenians, not to speak of Asian Jews, but this honesty is rooted more in his pride than in his moral standard. Provided extremes are avoided, Muslim ethics makes light of moderate levels of evil. That is expressed in so many words in Surah 4, where we are told that Allah does not demand too much from us, for He knows that we are weak. If we keep ourselves from committing the offences that are explicitly forbidden, He will overlook your wrongs and ensure your entry into Paradise. These sentiments

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<sup>47</sup>Today, in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Muslims contemptuously dismiss primitive Western displays of nudity, scant clothing, every form of bestial sex, with prostitution presented as a respectable occupation. Sometimes they identify such sub-human practices with Christianity, a link Christians would strongly reject. Faithful Muslims similarly reject such links and regard such practices as un-Islamic. It is not acceptable to compare the best of one religion with the worst practices of adherents of another.

appear to be borrowed from the Old Testament, but they are distorted by nominalism with its rough attack on the ethical ideal. A culture based on such a low ethical foundation cannot possibly develop beyond a mediocre level. Islam has risen a few rungs up the ethical ladder, but then remained at that level and could make no further progress. And even though this mediocre culture is often disguised in European dress to appeal to the higher classes, in their hearts and in their worldview the spirituality inherent to Islam maintains its control. All progressive development is cut off. Occasionally, puritan movements arise that protest against this legalistic deviation from the Qur'an, but even these revivals never aim higher than a return to the ethical standards of the Qur'an.

### ***A Prognosis***

The fact is that Islam's *political* power has been undermined by European superiority. There are no signs of change in this regard. However, Islam fully maintains its *spiritual* power and resists all attempts at change at this front. To the contrary, it gained consciously in its dynamic energy and, thanks to the movement of Pan-Islam, even enjoys gradual expansion. Due to its method of peaceful penetration, Islam is left undisturbed to itself, precisely because it is realized that internally it is unconquerable. A declaration of holy war or *jihad* could cause a simultaneous bloodbath in different places, but it would not be able to return world sovereignty to Islam. *But even if Islam for the time being has no chance for world dominion, it will never let go of this ideal. The earthly character of this ideal has put its stamp on all its adherents*<sup>48</sup> that can never rise above its contradiction with our culture that is marked by a heavenly ideal. This core contradiction also blocks any attempt at fusing the two into a higher unity. Islam will either remain as it is or it will cease to exist. That it has been able to maintain itself with such tenacity for

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<sup>48</sup>Italics by translator.

over thirteen centuries in spite of unfavourable times, is a testimony to its inner dynamic that still moves it. The Crescent is far from its demise. As long as it retains its successful rule over the hearts of its mass of 245 million people, it will be a bad mistake for anyone to dismiss Islam as a negligible factor. As in the past, Islam retains its strong position of power, especially in Africa, but even Europe cannot afford to ignore it. Do not forget the following remarkable contrast. *The millions of Christians who came under the rule of the Sultan during the seventh and eighth centuries, have almost all converted to Islam. To the contrary, Muslims who currently are ruled by Christian powers have fully persevered in their faith.*<sup>49</sup>

(December 24, 1907)

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<sup>49</sup>Italics by translator.



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<sup>50</sup>The footnotes and this bibliography are Boer's, not Kuyper's.

