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Philosophical Considerations for Fruitful Dialogue between Christians and Muslims

This essay expresses an attempt to go beyond the study of the history of Islamic philosophy, a study which in Western circles was largely initiated in the context of the study of the history of medieval Christian philosophy, to the larger theme of religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims. To explore this broader issue, I propose to explore first some of the conditions that might be required for any successful conversation. After that, I should like to turn to some of the central issues specific to dialogue between Christians and Muslims. In addressing these themes I should like to point to resources that could be particularly useful to those trying to teach introductory courses on this complex matter, and to give students an inkling of where they might look for further training to embark upon more advanced types of dialogue. By way of conclusion, I propose to return to our starting point and consider various levels at which dialogue can be begun, even at an elementary stage.

What, in General, Might Be Needed for Any Successful Conversation?

First, the title, as I originally proposed it, offered something of a straw man: "Christianity and Islam in Dialogue."[1] There can be no dia-

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logue between abstractions.[2] Dialogue or conversation is possible only between persons. An insufficiently noticed prerequisite of conversation is that both parties need to use a common language. More is hidden in this presupposition than is immediately obvious. In a conversation or dialogue, in general, there must be at least two interlocutors, but they cannot both be talking at the same time. One must be listening while the other talks, but both should be willing to talk with each other, and, correspondingly, both must be willing to listen to each other. In the conversation we propose, one of the participants should be somehow recognizable as a Christian and the other should somehow be identifiable as a Muslim.

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[1] A version of this paper was presented at Rockhurst University (Kansas City, Mo., USA) as the LaCroix Memorial Lecture delivered on Apr. 18, 2018. I should like to thank Professor Brendan Sweetman, the Chairman of their Department of Philosophy, for the invitation and the audience for their valuable questions. In revising the lecture for publication I have changed the original title from "Dialogue between Christianity and Islam" to the more precise "Philosophical Considerations for Fruitful Dialogue between Christians and Muslims." In the notes, I have provided pointers to further study both of the challenges and of some promising efforts in such dialogue. I owe an important debt to Mrs. Jane Schuele, our interlibrary loan specialist at Benedictine College, and to the cooperating libraries and librarians.

[2] For some of the hazards of "the spirit of abstraction," see Etienne Gilson, *Elements of Christian Philosophy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1960), 229–230: "In speculative matters, it invites the substitution of the definition for the defined, which is a sure way to render definitions sterile. It also invites the illusion that one can increase knowledge by merely deducing consequences from already coined definitions, instead of frequently returning to the very things from which essences and definitions were first abstracted. In the practical order the spirit of abstraction probably is the greatest single source of political and social disorders, of intolerance and of fanaticism. Nothing is more uncompromising than an essence, its quiddity and its definition. The reason for this fact lies in a characteristic common to all abstract notions and remarkably described by Thomas Aquinas in the second chapter of his commentary on the *De Hebdomadibus* of Boethius; namely, that the characteristics of the abstract are exactly opposed to those of the concrete. Now reality is concrete, and this is the reason that abstract descriptions of it are liable to deform it." This does not mean that definitions are useless or unhelpful, as we shall see later, but that we need always to return to that which exists concretely to stay well-grounded.

Second, we need something to talk about. Tourists might just want to buy a plane ticket or take a tour. Travellers could talk about the weather or their families. Businessmen could talk to try to make a deal. Mathematicians might talk about geometry. Historians can talk about what happened in the past. Educators could talk about curriculum. Statesmen can talk about international relations, war, peace, or trade. In such transactions, there is a certain give and take, a certain reciprocity. What happens when the topic of conversation is something very dear to us, something we are committed to? Is there not a virtue of piety in religion something like the virtue of patriotism in politics? This is the situation in dialogue between those who profess themselves to be Christian and those who profess to be Muslim, especially when each is talking about how he or she is committed to God.

Third, we need to be willing to learn from each other. This third point is particularly important: for if each party had nothing in common, they could at best talk past each other without mutual understanding; indeed, could they even disagree? Again, if each of the two parties already understood everything identically, there would be little to say. If there are differences with each other, it might be possible at least to identify precisely where, and if there are points of agreement, what exactly are they?[3]

Fourth, one historical complication in the relation between Muslims and Christians has been military hostility and, on occasion, conquest.[4] In such transactions, there is always a tacit threat and a tendency

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[3] Exemplifying an effort in this direction, *Theoria ⇨Praxis: How Jews, Christians, and Muslims Can Together Move from Theory to Practice*, ed. Leonard Swidler (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), includes papers on notions of the good in Judaism (chapter 8), among Christians (chapter 10), and in Islamic sources (chapter 11), with an effort at a "synthesis" (chapter 12).

[4] In his Easter 1991 "Urbi et Orbi" address Pope John Paul II alludes to "men: when they have chosen aggression and the violation of international law; when it was purported to resolve the tensions between peoples with war, a sower of death." For Ugo Villani's scholarly discussion of the Bush doctrine of "preemptive action" or "anticipa-

for a background relationship of commanding and obeying, of mastership and slavery. Those who are aware of history will know something about coercion, conquest, or various forms of imperialism[5] or colonialism.[6] Most of us Americans, however, will not have tasted the fear, anger, or bitterness of having been conquered or occupied by foreigners.

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tory action" in the light of international law, see his "Il disarmo dell'Iraq e l'uso della forza nel diritto internazionale," *Jura Gentium* (2003), available online (see the section: References), and the discussion paper by Carlos Corral Salvador, "Actitud y acciones de la Santa Sede y Juan Pablo II ante la guerra de Iraq," *UNISCI Discussion Papers* (Mayo de 2003), available online (see the section: References). See also "Crusades," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References), and for more recent events: "2003 Invasion of Iraq," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References), "Jus ad bellum," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References), "Investment in post-2003 Iraq," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). *La Civiltà Cattolica*, no. 154 (18 gennaio 2003): 107–117, published "No a una Guerra 'preventiva' contro l'Iraq," rejecting as immoral the proposal of the younger President George W. Bush to engage in a *preventive* war against Iraq. Interestingly, as of May 2018, there is no Wikipedia article on the devastation in "Post-invasion Iraq, 2003–2011." The missing years are discussed in the final chapter of Fernando Cardinal Filoni's *The Church in Iraq*, trans. Edward Condon (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 2017), which gives a bird's-eye view of the history of the Church in Mesopotamia from Apostolic times. More recently, see "Syria," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). On the other hand, see the 759-page compendium edited by Andrew G. Bostom, *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of Non-Muslims* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books, 2005). So far, I have found no Muslim scholarship corresponding to the Christian doctrine of just warfare. Though versions of just war doctrine seem to have entered international law, it is not always clear that even Western attackers have taken this teaching seriously.

[5] Cf. Thucydides, *History of the Pelopennesian War*, available online (see the section: References).

[6] See *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today: Experiences and Expectations*, ed. Jacques Waardenburg (Leuven: Peeters, 2000), with a valuable bibliography organized under 10 headings (*ibid*., 305–323). Karel Steenbrink's essay "The Small Talk of Muslims and Christians in the Netherlands" (*ibid*., 201–231) begins by recalling the Netherlands' trade mission in 1596 to the Indonesian archipelago and concludes that "[t]he great aspirations of the colonial empire to found a cohesive and solid society, also by including a majority of Muslims in a modern and Westernized state, are dreams of the past" (*ibid*., 230).

Fifth, most readers of this paper are probably Christians, and for most Christians in the Americas Islam is hardly more than a word. Most of us would have had this horizon of ignorance broken open only recently, if at all, and chiefly in a negative way.[7] Nor, if we read only domestic sources, are we likely to be aware of how others perceive what we do.

Sixth, most of us, Catholic Christians included, have been born and bred within a largely secular liberal horizon. Many people operating within this horizon still regard the Middle Ages as what Gibbon called "the triumph of barbarism and religion."[8] I wonder, therefore, whether today our own intellectual horizon is more effectively Catholic or more effectively secular. Over the past century or so, however, greater awareness has arisen in academic circles of the philosophical and cultural achievements of the Middle Ages, first in the Christian, and then in Jewish and Islamic thought.[9]

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[7] But the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon shocked public opinion in the United States at a level probably not felt since the attack of Japanese forces on the American Navy in Pearl Harbor on 7 December 1941.

[8] Edward Gibbon, *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. 12, ed. J. B. Bury with an introduction by W. E. H. Lecky (New York: Fred de Fau and Co., 1906), Chapter 71, available online (see the section: References).

[9] Even the task of getting accurate information offers challenges. I'd like to start by surveying a few books in English within the field of philosophy, since that has marked my own entry-point to the discussion. Once upon a time, in a second-hand bookshop I chanced upon Will and Ariel Durant's 1926 book *The Story of Philosophy: The Lives and Opinions of the Greater Philosphers*. In this story, philosophy falls unconscious with the death of Aristotle and, after a blank page, re-awakens with the thought of Francis Bacon some two millennia later. Was this an intellectual coma? What miracle brought about the sudden change? A generation later, Etienne Gilson's 1955 *History of Christian Philosophy in the Middle Ages* runs over 800 pages, spanning from St. Justin Martyr in the first century to Nicholas of Cusa in the fifteenth century. Again, H. A. Wolfson takes medieval philosophy to begin with Philo Judaeus (d. ca 50 CE) ending with Spinoza (d. 1677). Clearly, the criteria of definition are important to deciding the question whether Jewish or Christian thought counts as philosophy. We might wonder whether the rationalist criterion excluding religious thinkers from the realm of philosophy might not have been mistaken: 1500 to 2000 years of human thought seem to have been reclaimed for philosophy. Since the official end of the Soviet empire in 1991, we

        If it is not inappropriate for me to make a personal remark, my
entry into the study of the Middle Ages began through philosophy. As
an undergraduate, I heard the exchange of reminiscences between two
Jewish scholars, Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss. Strauss called my atten-
tion to a Persian philosopher named Avicenna, who turned out to be the
counter-point figure in my doctoral dissertation comparing Avicenna
with Aquinas on the origin of the world from the stand point of the di-
vine simplicity.[10] The philosophical vocabulary of medieval Jews,
Christians, and Muslims developed out of an Aristotelian tradition.[11]
One key lesson to be learned from Aristotle is the importance of defin-
ing the topic to further good discussion.

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have seen the collapse of a powerful regime based upon collectivist materialism; it
remains to be seen whether individualist materialism or something else will serve as a
basis for current globalization.

For our purposes, Gilson devotes Part V of his *History of Christian Philosophy in the
Middle Ages* to "Arabian and Jewish philosophy" (*ibid.*, 179–231; notes on 637–655),
totaling around 70 pages, including notes.

In 1996, Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman edited a two-part *History of Islamic
Philosophy* containing more than 1200 pages. It would appear, then, that over the last
three generations, philosophy within the explicitly religious context of Judaism, Chris-
tianity, and Islam has established itself as academic discipline in English-speaking
universities.

A look at the bibliographies of these histories is illuminating: for Gilson, almost all the
primary sources are in Greek or Latin. What about the secondary literature? Let's sam-
ple just Gilson's sources for the single author Avicenna (Ibn Sina) starting on page 641
footnote #11; I count 18 items in French, 6 in Latin, 3 in Arabic, 5 in English, 6 in
German, and 1 in Spanish. In Shams Inati's chapter 16 on Ibn Sina, I count 13 items in
Arabic, 3 in English, 1 in Persian, and a book-length annotated bibliography on Ibn
Sina by Janssens (1991).

[10] "A Giving of Accounts: Jacob Klein and Leo Strauss," St. John's College, Annapolis,
Maryland (30 January 1970), available online (see the section: References).

[11] See Francis E. Peters, *Aristotle and the Arabs: The Aristotelian Tradition in Islam*
(New York: New York University Press; London: University of London Press, 1968)
and *idem*, *Aristoteles Arabus: The Oriental Translations and Commentaries of the
Aristotelian Corpus* (Leiden: Brill, 1968). It is worth remembering that the expressions
Arabic and *Islamic* are not co-extensive terms. There are Christian Arab-speakers, for
example, and Persian-speaking Muslims.

Can We Provide a Definition of
Jews, Christians and Muslims?

To delimit the scope of our discussion, we should provide some sort of a definition,[12] while bearing in mind the hazards of the "spirit of abstraction" that we mentioned above. I propose to consider three generic features that these three "religions"[13] have in common: (1) they all

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[12] Here are five types of definition, drawn from a standard textbook by John Oesterle, *Logic: The Art of Defining and Reasoning* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 2nd ed., 1963), 64–71, applied to the current topic: (1) Ideally, to do that we should present the proximate genus and specific difference(s) of what we are concerned with if we are to isolate the *essence* of Judaism, Christianity, or Islam. Today, however, we will probably need to be satisfied with something looser than an essential or real definition. Let me explain. A real definition of man, without being complete, tells us what its basic nature is: an animal that talks. (2) A looser definition would be in terms of some feature that belongs only, necessarily, and always to a nature. Such a definition would be by property. Since, however, the same thing can have several properties, man could be defined as an animal with a sense of humor, or an animal that can laugh. (3) Another way to differentiate man from the other animals might be in terms of one of its intrinsic or extrinsic causes, as an animal created to know, love and serve God in this life and to share with Him eternal happiness in heaven. (4) Still looser is definition by accident, e.g., taking man as the animal that wears clothing. Since the incidental features a thing can possess can be almost infinite, it often requires a basket-load of accidents to distinguish the thing even for purposes of discussion. (5) Even looser is definition by name: here we examine what a dictionary would say about the word *man*—its meaning, usage, and etymology. Though loose, nominal definitions can be useful to point us in the right direction to find the nature of the thing we want to understand. Furthermore, nominal or dictionary definitions are the ones most familiar to most of us even before we aim for philosophical precision of the things we try to talk about. They have one unfortunate limitation, however: if we had only nominal definitions, each dictionary entry would lead us to another, and to another, till eventually we might end up merely where we began. Some dictionaries help us to escape this circle by providing a picture of the thing we need to identify. In any case, we need to keep words, thoughts, and things properly coordinated.

[13] The very task of defining what counts as a religion is difficult and complex. Some, like Timothy Fitzgerald, *The Ideology of Religious Studies* (Oxford: University Press, 2000), claim that "the word as used in modern departments of religious studies is really the basis of a modern form of theology, which I will call liberal ecumenical theology, but some attempt has been made to disguise this fact by claiming that religion is a natural and/or a supernatural reality in the nature of things that all human idividuals have a capacity for, regardless of their cultural context" (*ibid.*, 4–5); the author focuses on the

profess monotheism; (2) they all claim, in one fashion or another, to be related to the Patriarch Abraham; (3) they all claim to have been revealed to man in some fashion or other by God. You will doubtless have noticed that this description fits Judaism as well as Christianity and Islam. Even these general observations call for further clarification. One important difficulty in this conversation is that some people claiming to be Christians claim also that the New Christian Covenant simply supercedes the Old Covenant. Another difficulty is that Muslims claim not only that the prophetic revelation of Islam supercedes those of Judaism and Christianity, but also that the Christians and the Jews engaged

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uselessness of the notion of *religion* as an analytic category especially in the setting of Japan and India. Others, like Zofia J. Zdybicka, in "Man and Religion," which appears as Chapter X of Mieczysław A. Krąpiec, O.P., *I-Man: An Outline of Philosophical Anthropolog*y (New Britain, Conn.: Mariel Publications, 1983), 271–312, are less pessimistic, holding that "the 'religiousness' of man (religious dimension of the human person as a manner of 'being-toward-God') is not a variable, accidental and historically conditioned trait, but it constitutes a property rooted in the very nature of the personal being, viewed both in itself and in relation to God" (*ibid*., 311–312). See Michael L. Fitzgerald and John Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue: A Catholic View* (London: SPCK; Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2006); Archbishop Fitzgerald was one of the Missionaries of Africa, whilst Dr. Borelli provides the perspective of a lay theologian. A tidy English summary of Massignon's article on the three prayers of Abraham can be found *ibid*., 231–232. See also *Mission in Dialogue: Essays in Honour of Michael L. Fitzgerald*, ed. Catarina Belo and Jean-Jacques Pérennes (Louvain & Paris: Peeters, 2012), with bibliography *ibid*., xxi–xli.

Timothy Fitzgerald is certainly correct that the term *religion* has many meanings, but I wonder whether trying to clarify that problem by appealing to a notion of *ideology* may prove even more problematic: might this method not involve the fallacy of *ignotum per ignotius*? The multiple meanings of *religio* are explored in the multi-volume survey by Ernst Feil (Göttingen 1986ff), cited by Peter Henrici, "The Concept of Religion from Cicero to Schleiermacher: Origins, History, and Problems with the Term," in *Catholic Engagement with World Religions: A Comprehensive Study*, ed. Karl Josef Becker & Ilaria Maorali, with the collaboration of Maurice Borrmans & Gavin D'Costa (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2010), 1–22, and ch. 24 by Maurice Borrmans, "Islam as It Understands Itself," *ibid*., 487–508. Part 3 presents "the grounding for why this Catholic-Christian *theology of religions* is necessary" (*ibid*., xxix; the author's own italics; note the plural and the unabashedly theological character of the project). See the bibliography of Borrmans's works in the *Recueil d'articles offert Maurice Borrmans par ses collègues et amis* (Rome: P.I.S.A.I., 1996), 1–10.

in altering their original scriptures; this allegation of alteration or *taḥrīf* complicates hermeneutical discussions based upon the authority of scripture.[14] Still another important problem is that the terms used in the

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[14] "Tahrif," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). Thomas Aquinas (1224/5–1274) gives two reasons why it is hard "to proceed against individual errors." (1) "The sacrilegious remarks of individual men are not so well known to us so that we may use what they say as the basis of proceeding to a refutation of their errors" (*Summa contra Gentiles* I, 2, 3, trans. Anton C. Pegis [Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975], 62). (2) "Some of them, such as the Mohammedans and the pagans, do not agree with us in accepting the authority of any Scripture, by which they may be convinced of their error" (*ibid.*, I, 9, 1, 77). Aquinas divides his treatise into books corresponding to the distinction between the divine truth that "the reason is competent to reach" (Books I–III) and the divine truth that "surpasses every effort of the reason" (Book IV). For a recent survey, see James Waltz, "Muḥammad and the Muslims in St. Thomas Aquinas," in *The Routledge Reader in Christian-Muslim Relations*, ed. Mona Siddiqui (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 112–121.

Note that Aquinas calls *Mohammedans* those who prefer to call themselves *Muslims*; if the term *Mohammedan* is taken as strictly symmetrical with *Christian*, it might lead people erroneously to think that Mohammad is claimed as a divine person, which neither Christians nor Muslims would ever admit, or that Jesus Christ is merely a prophet, which Muslims hold but Christian believers would never admit. If the words *Christian* and *Mohammadan* are taken generally to designate any sort of following a leader, the words tend to lose any specific religious content, like *Kantian* as the name of someone who follows the philosophical principles of Immanuel Kant. Followers of the prophetic authority of Mohammad call themselves *Muslim*, an Arabic word meaning one who submits (to God). The verbal noun from which this adjective is drawn is *Islām*. The Arabic root for the word is SLM (i.e., peace); the form is causative: to bring about peace. Ironically, the 1961 English translation of Louis Gardet's valuable little book *Connaître l'Islam* (1958), which literally means *Getting to Know Islam*, appeared in English under the still polemical title *Mohammedanism*. Gardet teamed up with Chikh Bouamrane and published another effort of high-level popularization under the title *Panorama de la pensée islamique* (Paris: Sindbad, 1984).

For a survey of scholarly and polemical engagement of Christians with the Islamic Scriptures, see Thomas E. Burman, *Reading the Qur'ān in Latin Christendom, 1140-1560* (Philadelphia, Pa.: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007). The chief translators under consideration were Robert of Ketton (active mid-12th century), Mark of Toledo (late 12th–early 13th century), Juan de Segovia (d. ca. 1458), Flavius Mithridates (fl. 1475–1485), and Egidio da Viterbo (1472–1532). Robert was the first to render the Qur'an into Latin; it was subsequently published by Theodore Bibliander in 1543. The acts of one conference commemorating the tercentenary of the publication of the Latin version of the Coran by Ludovico Marracci were edited by Giuliano Zatti as *Il Corano: Traduzioni, traduttori et lettori in Italia* (Milan: IPL, 2000). For more recent work, see Ulisse Cecini, *Alcoranus latinus: Eine sprachliche und kulturwissenschaftliche Analyse*

early councils on the Incarnation and other discussions of Christology
in Greek and Syrian communities were hard for Christians speaking the
Arabic of their conquerers to translate into Arabic terms that had not
already been pre-empted with settled Islamic meanings.[15] Most recent-
ly, in the wake of the 2003 American invasion of Iraq, Syrian Chris-
tians, who have, since the time of the Apostles, been living in what we,

der Koranübersetzengen von Robert von Ketton und Marcus von Toledo (Berlin: LIT
Verlag, 2012). And for current research on Latin versions of the Qur'ān, see *Islamolat-
ina. La percepcion del Islam en la Europa latina*, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona,
available online (see the section: References).

The Maronite Bishop Nematallah Carame, O.A.M. (1851–1931) was one of the pio-
neers in laying down a foundation for philosophical dialogue: he translated from Arabic
into Latin the metaphysical portion of Avicenna's *Kitāb an-Najāt* and from Latin into
Arabic the first book of Aquinas's *Summa contra Gentiles*, which has been reprinted
(Beirut: Dār wa Maktabah Byblion, 2005), including long quotations from Arabic phil-
osophical sources.

[15] On the important role of the Syrian Christians, see Sydney H. Griffith, *The Church in
the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam* (Princeton
and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2008), 94–95: "Special efforts were expended
to find an appropriate Arabic vocabulary in terms of which to translate the technical
expressions of Christian theology as they had been deployed earlier in Greek and Syri-
ac. This enterprise often involved the further effort to define certain Arabic terms in a
technical way for the purpose of theological discussion, even when the ordinary conno-
tations of the terms in common Arabic-speaking usage militated against the senses
intended in doctrinal contexts. This was to remain a major problem for Christian theol-
ogy in Arabic; by the time of the earliest Arabic-speaking Christian apologists, all of
the religious vocabulary in Arabic had already been co-opted by Islamic religious dis-
course, which often systematically excluded the very meanings wanted by Christians,
or at the very least Muslims islamicized the terms in a way contrary to Christian teach-
ing." In note 68, Griffith observes that the Greek word *ousia* (substance) was rendered
into Arabic as *jawhar* (i.e., a concrete nugget like a jewel, or an atom); the Arabic
jawhar is transliterated from the Persian *gawhar*.

Even in recent times, problems with common vocabulary persist. For example, though
the Arabic word *Allāh* is related to Hebrew and other Semitic languages in the sense of
God, and had been used in Arabic translations of the Bible and for some four centuries
by Malayan Christians in that sense, the secular government of peninsular Malaysia in
2007 outlawed the use of the term except in explicitly Muslim contexts (see "Allah," in
Wikipedia, available online [see the section: References]). Other discriminatory policies
of civil governments impede dialogue in other ways; see for example "Jerusalem: Latin
Patriarchate Issues Statement About New Israeli Nation-State Law," *Zenit. The World
Seen from Rome* (July 30, 2018), available online (see the section: References).

using a 19th-century European imperial term, call "the Middle East,"[16] are being driven out of their homes by radicalized elements of the dominant Muslim majority.[17] In short, there are many challenges to fruitful dialogue.

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[16] The "name for the region between the 'Near East', based on Turkey, and the 'Far East', based on China" seems to have been coined in British military circles and popularized by an American naval strategist. See Clayton R. Koppes, "Captain Mahan, General Gordon, and the Origins of the Term 'Middle East'," *Middle East Studies* 12, no. 1 (1976): 95–98. See "Near East," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). Similar ambiguities are found in the earlier geographic term *the Levant*. For background on the concept of geopolitics, see my "Geopolitics and the Persian Gulf: Some Philosophical Reflections," in *Sztuka i realizm. Art and Reality*, ed. T. Duma, A. Maryniarczyk, P. Sulenta (Lublin: PTTA & KUL, 2014), 691–702. Iranians designate the Gulf *Persian*, whereas the Arabs call it *Arabian*.

[17] For a brief survey, see *Syriac Churches Encountering Islam: Past Experiences and Future Perspectives*, ed. Dietmar W. Winkler (Piscataway, N.J.: Gorgias Press, 2010). The first essay on "Islam in Syriac Sources" is by Mar Louis Sako, whom Pope Francis I created a cardinal on June 28, 2018. Professor Winkler is the Research Director of the *Pro Oriente* Studies of the Syriac Tradition in Salzburg. Joseph Yacoub's "Christian Minorities in the Countries of the Middle East: A Glimpse to the the Present Situation and Future Perspectives" (*ibid.*, 172–218) provides a sober description of the aftermath in Iraq after the American invasion: "Christianity faced with daily violence" (*ibid.*, 184), "Massive Exodus and Resettlement" (*ibid.*, 186), "bloody persecutions of Iraqi Christians" (*ibid.*, 191). Alleging a close cooperation between fundamentalist Protestants, the Republican party, and the U.S. Congress, he claims that "A neo-evangelical American Christianity, radical and ultraconservative, has has taken hold in this country, backed by the military support of Washington" (*ibid.*, 191–192). That groups of fundamentalist American Christian missionaries receive protection from the invading American forces while native Christians are driven from their homes, suffer the destruction of their churches, and have no security, must be reminiscent of the First Crusade, when the invaders killed Christians along with Muslims. See Richard Cimino, "'No God in Common': American Evangelical Discourse on Islam after 9/11," *Review of Religious Research* 47, no. 2 (December 2005): 162–174. Archbishop Sako's concluding statement (Winkler [ed.], 219–221) sees the November 2007 visit of His Majesty King Abdullah of Saʿudi Arabia to the Holy See as a hopeful sign. For details, see "Apostolic Vicar in Arabia: affinity and convergence between Pope and Saudi King," *AsiaNews.it* (Aug. 11, 2007), available online (see the section: References). More recently, His Majesty King Abdullah II Ben Al Hussein of Jordan is conferring with Pope Francis; see Fr. Rifʾat Bader, "This is why His Majesty King Abdullah II is heading to the Vatican," *Vatican Insider* (Dec. 18, 2017), available online (see the section: References).

As to point #1 (monotheism), each of these religions professes the being and unity of God. The Hebrew Torah presents the prayer *Shema' Yisra'el YHWH 'eloheinu YHWH 'ehad*—"Hear, o Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is one" (Deut. 6:4). The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed (A.D. 325) of the Christians reads: "I believe in one God, the Father . . . one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only begotten from the Father, i.e. from the essence (*ek tes ousias*) of the Father . . . the same in essence (*homoousion*) with the Father . . . and in the Holy Spirit." The *shahāda* or Muslim profession of faith[18] consists of two basic claims: *lā ilāha illā allāh* ("there is no god but God")[19] and *muḥammadun rasūlu-llāh* ("Muhammad is the messenger

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[18] "Shahada," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). The *shahāda* is the first of the five pillars of Islam, the others being prayer, alms-giving, fasting, and making a pilgrimage to Mecca. There is some variation amongst adherents of Shi'ite Islam. See "Five Pillars of Islam," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References).

[19] One central point of comparison is addressed in a collection of studies at the Centre d'Études des Religions du Livre: *Dieu et l'être: Exégèses d'Exode 3,14 et de Coran 20,11-24* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1978). The Hebrew text of Exodus 3:14 offers a response to Moses's question about the identity of the Speaker from the Burning Bush: *'ehyeh 'asher 'ehyeh.* Two grammatically possible, but distinct Greek versions have been offered: the Septuagint *egō eimi ho ōn* (i.e., I am the [masculine, singular, nominative] being); the other is the version of Aquila: *esomai hos esomai* (i.e., I shall be Who I shall be), or Theodotion's *esomai* (i.e., I shall be). See K. J. Cronin, "The Name of God as Revealed in Exodus 3:14. An Explanation of Its Meaning," A webside dedicated to the interpretation of Exodus 3:14, available online (see the section: References). The Latin Vulgate of St. Jerome follows the Septuagint: *ego sum qui sum* (I AM WHO AM). The former interpretation can be taken as a kataphatic answer giving the Divine Name to Moses; the latter, can be taken as an apophatic refusal: "I am going to be Who or What I am going to be" (so make the best of it). In the New Testament at John 8:58, when Jesus is asked how he, being less than 50 years old, could claim to have known Abraham, He responds: *prin Abraám genésthai, egō eimí* (i.e., "before Abraham came-to-be [or was born] I AM"). The reaction of the crowd was to pick up stones to stone him to death. As for the Qur'ān, Sura Ṭā Hā (20), verse 14, it reads *innani anā-llāhu lā ilāha illā anā* (i.e., "Verily, I am Allah: There is no god but I," trans. 'Abdullah Yūsuf 'Alī).

of God"). Shi'ite Muslims add a third claim: *wa 'alīyyu walīyyu-llāh* ("and 'Alī is God's friend").[20]

Even this point of convergence, however, is not free from controversy. In Arabic, the profession of God's unity is called *tawḥīd*. This is a causal verb form derived from the root *wḥd* meaning 'one'. How would one describe the profession of the Trinity of Persons within the unity of essence? The analogous form *tathlīth*, derived from the root *thlth* 'three', would be heard as professing a triplicity of gods. When the Arabic-speaking Christians began conversation with the Muslims, one problem they faced is that the language had already been preempted with terms weighted with Islamic theology.[21] Thus, too, there is

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[20] For a brief but authoritative introduction, see Allamah Sayyid Muhammad Husayn Tabatabai, *Shi'ite Islam*, trans. Sayyid Husayn Nasr (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1975). Over 98% of Iranians are Shi'ite. A useful survey featuring the turn from the policy of "dialogue amongst civilizations" pursued under President Khatemi toward a more polemical attitude after the 2009 election of President Ahmadinejad can be found in the work of Presbyterian scholar Sasan Tavassoli, *Christian Encounters with Iran: Engaging Muslim Thinkers after the Revolution* (London and New York: I. B. Tauris, 2011). See the "Annexe: L'Institut d'Études iraniennes," in *Louis Massignon et le Dialogue des Cultures*, Actes du colloque organisé par l'Organisation des Nations unies pour l'Éducation, la Science et la Culture, l'Association des amis de Louis Massignon et l'Institut international de recherches sur Louis Massignon (Maison de l'UNESCO, 17 et 18 décembre 1992) à l'occasion du 30ᵉ anniversaire de la mort de Louis Massignon (1882–1962) (Paris: Cerf, 1996), 331–339; the tributes in this volume, however, exhibit a vast range of Massignon's accomplishments in intercultural and interreligious dialogue. During my studies in Iran in 1976–1977 under Seyyid Hussain Nasr, Henri Corbin, and Toshihiko Izutsu at the then-Imperial Iranian Academy of Philosophy, I had occasion to visit the superb library at the Franco-Iranian Institute housed in the French Embassy. Through the good offices of a certain Mr. Rahbar, I had the privilege of having an audience with the illustrious 'Allameh Tabatabai in Qom, a holy city devoted to the education of thousands of Shi'ite clergy in Iran. The continuing importance of philosophy in Iran with Shi'ite Muslims was underscored through the 1999 World Congress on Mulla Sadra.

[21] See Ida Zilio-Grandi, "Le opere di controversia islamo-cristiana nella formazione della letteratura filosofica araba," in *Storia della filosofia nell'Islam medievale*, vol. I, ed. Cristina D'Ancona (Torino: Einaudi, 2016), 101–179 (esp. 126ff), on problems of language and logic: "In lingua araba, Trinità è triteismo, non triplicità" (*ibid.*, 127), i.e., "In Arabic, Trinity means not threefoldness, but tritheism." See, more generally, Risto

a veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary shared by Muslims and Christians, albeit with divergent interpretations.[22]

As to point #2 (the *Abrahamic*[23] character of the three religions), Jews, Christians, and Muslims all claim Abraham as somehow their father.[24] Though each claims him as their own, each group does so in its own way.[25] This has not only spiritual and religious implications, but also involves matters of justice. Failure at the level of political settlements can degenerate into attempts at military efforts, whose unintended consequences are often not improvements. Let's merely mention the complexity involved in the geo-politically neuralgic piece of real estate

Jukko, *Trinity in Unity in Christian-Muslim Relations: The Work of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2007).

For a study of apologetics, see Diego R. Sarrió Cucarella, *Muslim-Christian Polemics across the Mediterranean: The Splendid Replies of Shihāb al-Dīn al-Qarāfī* (Leiden & Boston: Brill, 2015). For a sampling of six important Muslims engaged in contemporary dialogue, see Ataullah Siddiqui, *Christian-Muslim Dialogue in the Twentieth Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

[22] See the beautiful plates in Luigi Bressan, *Maria nella Devozione e nella Pittura dell'Islam* (Milan: Jaca Book, 2011). Key points of comparison and contrast are tabulated in parallel columns with scriptural references.

[23] Louis Massignon seems to have coined the expression "Abrahamic religion" (in *Dieu vivant*, 1949). It rapidly won currency in ecumenical religious efforts. For example, St. Abraham's Church in Tehran, where I was a parishioner from 1976–1977, run by the Irish Dominicans, addressed the spiritual needs of English-speaking Roman Catholics living in Iran in a very low-key manner. Under Archbishop William Barden, O.P., the celebration of the main weekly Eucharist was shifted from Sundays to Fridays, the day when Muslims have off from work to gather for public prayer.

[24] For example, see "Abraham in Islam," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References).

[25] For a general overview, see Francis E. Peters, *The Children of Abraham: Judaism, Christianity, Islam* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press 2010), with rich notes (*ibid.*, 173–212) and basic glossary (*ibid.*, 213–225), and David B. Burrell, *Towards a Jewish-Christian-Muslim Theology* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011). For one specific topic, see *The Sacrifice of Isaac in the Three Monotheistic Religions*, proceedings of a Symposium on the Interpretation of the Scriptures Held in Jerusalem, March 16–17, 1995, ed. Frédéric Manns (Jerusalem: Franciscan Printing Press, 1995).

today known as the city of Jerusalem[26] or the neighborhood of the Sinai peninsula, providing a land bridge between Africa and Asia and sea links via the Suez Canal between the Americas and Europe with Asia. Who gets to collect the tolls?

As to point #3 (the revelatory claims of the three religions), each tradition claims that God has somehow communicated His message to man through prophecy. Jews speak of the *Dabar* of God, Christians of the *Logos*, and Muslims of the *Qur'ān.* In each of these religious traditions there are theological disputes about whether and, if so, how the divine word is or is not eternal or temporal, how it is communicated to men, and so on.

Permit me to make some general remarks about some key similarities and differences in the way in which these three religions understand the content of what is revealed. To speak plainly, Judaism and Islam agree in claiming that God revealed a Law to guide human action. The Hebrew *Torah* and the Muslim *Sharī'a* are expressions of this Law. Catholic Christianity tries

> to read the sacred Scriptures within the Apostolic Tradition, while reading holy Scriptures with the scholarly tools of modern historical-critical method, to read the Scripture as diffusely pointing to one central reality, the divine Person of Jesus Christ, using the many *logoi* of its many inspired human authors under the principal authorship of its divine Author to help us be joined to the condensed *Logos* Who is being eternally uttered by the Father and has been made incarnate in Mary through the power of the

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[26] For an accessible survey on this city, which is claimed as a holy site by Jews, Christians, and Muslims, see "Jerusalem," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References). Among the many controversies over Jerusalem is the recent one between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Here is a sketch of one proposed solution: "Two-state solution," in *Wikipedia*, available online (see the section: References).

Holy Spirit, and to accept the mission, going forth to teach all peoples what we have seen and heard.[27]

This understanding assigns the primary reference of the Word of God not to the text of Scripture, but to the divine Person of Jesus Christ. The Muslim understanding of Jews, Christians, and other "people of the book" (*ahlu-l-kitāb*) would seem to put the primary reference on the written text rather than the Person, and then to take the written text often in a strongly literalist sense.

Why might these tedious preliminary remarks be important? Well, for a successful conversation, both parties need to be talking about the same thing. Why is that? Let's consider two situations, one where we are hunting for animals and the other where we are hunting for dates. Let's consider the *first* situation. Someone brings you a snake and asks 'Is it an animal?' If you say 'Yes' and the donor is intellectually curious, he might ask 'Why do you say that?' You might say 'Since it's alive'. If the donor brought you a tulip, however, you would probably say 'No'. 'Why not? It's alive, isn't it?' 'Yes', you might admit, 'but it doesn't move when I touch it'. It would probably not take too much effort for both parties to agree that snakes, worms, birds, butterflies, cats, and even humans deserve the name animal, but that tulips do not. When several things are called by the same name and have the same characteristic, let's call them *univocal*. Now let's turn to the *second* situation. Has any of you ever taken a date to the dinner table? Was the date sweet? Was the date animal, vegetable, or mineral? If you were bringing your girl-friend to the table, she was an animal. If you were bringing the fruit of a palm tree to the table, it was a vegetable. If you brought a stone dodecahedron with a month on each face, each calendar

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[27] See the conclusion of my essay "Go Teach All Nations: Some Reflections on the Role of St. Thomas Aquinas in the New Evangelization," in *Thomas Aquinas: Teacher of Humanity*, ed. John P. Hittinger and Daniel C. Wagner (London, U.K.: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 466–477.

date would be inscribed in a mineral. If the calendar entry were on your smart phone, it would not even be a mineral. Where several things are called by the same name but do not have the same essential characteristic, let's call those things *equivocal*. In this situation, if someone said 'Please hand over your date', would you surrender the stone calendar, the sticky fruit, or your girl friend? This comic example shows, on a small scale, the dangers of misunderstanding between Christians and Muslims trying to have a conversation about religion.

At this point, I should like to call attention to a philosopher known in the Middle Ages to Jews, Christians, and Muslims. This philosopher drew an important distinction that can, I believe, be helpful to advance more fruitful conversation between philosophically educated Jews, Christians, and Muslims. Let's consider the three dates in relation to each other. Can you learn anything about the human date by studying the nature of palm trees? I think not; nor do you learn much about the fruit of palm trees by examining a human date. Such efforts at comparison are useless, because not only are the natures in question distinct, but also they have no clear relationship to each other. Let's call things of this sort, *pure equivocals*. On the other hand, when you have a date with your friend, do you not take your bearings by the calendar? To be sure, you do not care whether your calendar is made of stone, paper, or plastic, but you can at least know when and perhaps even where to meet. Where one nature is primary, we can say that the other meanings or natures are related to that primary nature. In this way, we could call a degree, an instrument, a condition, a person, a habit of mind, and a diploma all by the same name *medical*; the medical art, the habit of mind, would be the central nature toward which all the other equivocals would be related. This single nature would provide the point of unity toward which the other focally related equivocals would look. *Such focally related equivocals* can provide at least limited information about the things related to them, and so, in contrast to pure equivocals, are not

utterly worthless from a scientific point of view. Thus, what is called *healthy* in the primary sense is an animal in good condition; a urine sample or a cup of apple juice would be called *healthy* if it is a sign of health or a cause of health in a healthy animal. In Latin scholasticism, terms designating focally related equivocals came to be called *analogous terms*.[28] I believe that these preliminary distinctions can prove helpful to advancing fruitful conversation between Christians and Muslims as we advance to touch upon our main question.[29]

Let me now review these three issues in reverse order, calling attention to a few of the more important topics calling for discussion, identifying some resources that address the points in question. Then, I propose to call attention to some of the key players in the dialogue between Catholic Christians and Muslims, with special attention to opening the door to further research and discussion.

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[28] For a fuller discussion, see Joseph Owens, *The Doctrine of Being in the Aristotelian Metaphysics*, 3rd ed. (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1978), 107–131, "the Aristotelian equivocals," especially *ibid.*, 123–125, differentiating Aristotelian "*pros hen* equivocals" from what the Scholastics later call "analogous terms." More generally, consider the statement of the American Catholic Philosophical Association of 1 June 2018 on "The Integral Place of Philosophy in Catholic Higher Education," available online (see the section: References).

[29] There is a massive literature on the topic; e.g., in general, see *The Wiley-Blackwell Companion to Inter-Religious Dialogue*, ed. Catherine Cornille (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), and more specifically, see High Goddards, *A History of Christian-Muslim Relations* (Chicago, Ill.: New Amsterdam, 2000).
Documentary collections include: Jean-Marie Gaudeul, *Encounters and Clashes: Islam and Christianity in History*, 2 vols. [vol. I: Survey; vol. II: Texts] (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, 2000), the English rendition of *Disputes? Ou rencontres? L'islam et le christianisme au fil des siècles* (Rome 1998); N. A. Newman, *The Early Christian-Muslim Dialogue: A Collection of Documents from the First Three Islamic Centuries (632-900 A.D.): Translations with Commentary* (Hatfield, Pa.: Interdisciplinary Biblical Research Institute, 1993); Cardinal Franz König, *Open to God, Open to the World*, ed. Christa Pongratz-Lippitt (London & New York: Burns & Oats, 2005); Fitzgerald and Borelli, *Interfaith Dialogue*; *Muslim-Christian Perceptions of Dialogue Today: Experiences and Expectations*, ed. Waardenburg. From the perspective of communication studies, see *Interfaith Dialogue in Practice: Christian, Muslim, Jew*, ed. Daniel S. Brown, Jr. (Kansas City, Mo.: Rockhurst University Press, 2013).

Judaism and Islam seem to understand revelation principally as a law (#3.1), whereas the Christian view that Christ fulfills the Law may leave more room for alternative political systems than classical Islam.[30]

Further complicating factors in the theopolitical revelatory claims of Islam (#3.2) have to do with the internal juridical differences between Sunni and Shi'i Islam and external differences with Jews, Christians, and members of non-monotheistic traditions. As to the internal divisions within Islam (#3.2.1), one may ask who has charge of the Muslim community? Does it derive from the consensus of Muslims or is it especially and mystically conveyed through the tradition of an Imamate? As to the external divisions (#3.2.2), we might begin with the Second Vatican Council's *Nostra Aetate*, paragraph 3:

> The Church regards with esteem also the Moslems. They adore the one God, living and subsisting in Himself; merciful and all-powerful, the Creator of heaven and earth,(5) who has spoken to men; they take pains to submit wholeheartedly to even His inscrutable decrees, just as Abraham, with whom the faith of Islam takes pleasure in linking itself, submitted to God. Though they do not acknowledge Jesus as God, they revere Him as a prophet. They also honor Mary, His virgin Mother; at times they even call on her with devotion. In addition, they await the day of judgment when God will render their deserts to all those who have been raised up from the dead. Finally, they value the moral life and worship God especially through prayer, almsgiving and fasting.

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[30] As political philosopher Leo Strauss noted, though Plato's political writings seem to have been available in Arabic to medieval Muslims and Jews, Aristotle's *Politics* was not; in the medieval Latin West, the situation was the reverse: Plato's *Republic* was not available in Latin till the Renaissance, but Aristotle's *Politics* was available to Aquinas. As an example of the difficulties involved in empathic dialogue, we might wonder how contemporary secular political liberals would be able to take seriously the political claims of what is perhaps the only regime on earth where the leaders might plausibly claim to be philosopher-kings: the Shi'ite Islamic Republic of Iran. On the other hand, from an Iranian point of view, the post-Soviet neo-Orthodox Russia might look more attractive than the materialism found in either Soviet communism or in contemporary individualistic capitalism.

> Since in the course of centuries not a few quarrels and hostilities
> have arisen between Christians and Moslems, this sacred synod
> urges all to forget the past and to work sincerely for mutual un-
> derstanding and to preserve as well as to promote together for the
> benefit of all mankind social justice and moral welfare, as well as
> peace and freedom.[31]

The challenge of *Nostra Aetate* has been addressed in various ways,
some extraordinarily irenic.[32] It is one thing "to forget the past" and

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[31] *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to non-Christian Religions
(proclaimed by Pope Paul VI on Oct. 28, 1965), available online (see the section: Ref-
erences).

[32] Georgetown University Professor of Religion and International Affairs John L. Es-
posito's *Islam: The Straight Path* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998)
declares: "Five centuries of peaceful coexistence elapsed before political events and an
imperial-papal power play led to centuries-long series of so-called holy wars that pitted
Christendom against Islam and left an enduring legacy of misunderstanding and dis-
trust" (*ibid.*, 58). One might wonder whether this retrojection of the Soviet category of
"Peaceful Coexistence" (in *Wikipedia*, available online [see the section: References])
might be at least anachronistic and the description of the first five centuries of Islam as
"peaceful" un-historical. That, at least, is the contention of the 759-page compendium
edited by Andrew G. Bostom, *The Legacy of Jihad: Islamic Holy War and the Fate of
Non-Muslims* (Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Press, 2005). Similar doubts might arise
independently from reading the Winter 2006–2007 issue of *Parameters: Journal of the
U.S. Army War College* (*ibid.*, 108–121), Joseph C. Myers reviews Pakistani Army
Brigadier General S. K. Malik's 1979 book *The Quranic Concept of War*. In my view,
much work needs to be done by Muslim scholars to articulate anything corresponding
to the Christian doctrine of *jus ad bellum* or *jus in bello*.
The first part of Bostom's study "Jihad Conquests and the Imposition of *Dhimmitude*"
(Bostom, *The Legacy of Jihad*, 24–124) surveys actions in those first five centuries that
would seem to deserve a description quite different from *peaceful*. Thus, Bostom sees
dhimmitude only in terms of a juridical status imposed by the conquerers who allowed
Jews and Christians who did not convert to Islam not to be killed in exchange for a
payment called *jizya*, sometimes characterized as a *poll tax* or, by opponents, as *protec-
tion money*.
On the other hand, see Mahmoud Ayoub's "*Dhimma* in the Qur'an and Hadith," in *A
Muslim View of Christianity: Essays on Dialogue by Mahmoud Ayoub*, ed. Irfan A.
Omar (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 2007), 98–107, which sketches the shift from
"the divine *dhimmah*, which must not be violated" to the lower "human *dhimmah*,"
where, "as the term became reified into a technical legal concept, it lost its dimension
of transcendence" (*ibid.*, 105); this shift had "complex" implications for "how well or
badly the Muslims treated their Jewish and Christian subjects," a question to "be an-

quite another to misconstrue it; even the Council Fathers recognize that there really have been "not a few quarrels and hostilities."

Continuing our count-down (#2), let us turn our attention to Aaron W. Hughes's book *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History*,[33] which calls attention to "the tensions between the so-called historical and the theological" presentations of the three religions.[34] If the expression *Abrahamic religions* is taken as designating some univocal essence, it runs the risk of leveling the differences in an ecumenical syncretism: "the term flattens and levels numerous and important differences between not just three discrete religions, but also . . . *within* these three traditions;"[35] if, on the other hand, each of the three claimants to Abrahamic authority is taken historically, the risk seems to be disintegration into at least three equivocally named *Abrahamic religions*, a fourth being used "to denote a liberal essence" that one Georgetown scholar then uses as the yardstick by which to measure the "other, less savory, Islams" that "can be compared."[36]

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swered from within the historical realities of all three communities" (*ibid.*, 106). This important collection of essays addresses many of the most important topics of controversy between Muslims and Christians from the standpoint of a serious Muslim scholar.

[33] Aaron W. Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions: On the Uses and Abuses of History* (Oxford: U. Pr., 2012). Note the allusion to Nietzsche. See Friedrich Wilhelm Nietzsche's *Complete Works. The First Complete and Authorised English Translation*, ed. Oscar Levy (New York: Russell & Russell, 1909–1911). Adrian Collins's English version of Nietzsche's essay *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil der Historie für das Leben* was reprinted by Hackett in 1957 under the title *The Use and Abuse of History*, and subsequently reissued with a translation and introduction by Peter Preuss in 1980 (Indianapolis, Ind.: Hackett Publishing Company) under the correct title *On the Advantage and Disadvantage of History for Life*. Nietzsche offers two "antidotes to history . . . the 'unhistorical' and the 'superhistorical'. . . . By the word 'unhistorical' I mean the power, the art, of *forgetting* and drawing a limited horizon round oneself. I call the power 'superhistorical' which turns the eyes from the process of becoming to that which gives existence an eternal and stable character—to art and religion" (*ibid.*, 69). These descriptions seem to describe the "forgetting" mentioned in *Nostra Aetate*, n. 3.

[34] Hughes, *Abrahamic Religions*, 95.

[35] *Ibid.*, 98.

[36] *Ibid.*, 109.

Though we grant that all three religions claim that God is one and that all three, in one fashion or another, claim Abraham as their founder, and though I have been shaped in the Socratic tradition that seeks to define whatever it is that we are talking about, I must admit that artefacts and other products of human activity are notoriously hard to define, except perhaps extrinsically in terms of cause or accident. I have already pointed to the massive development of scholarship just in the field of philosophy. Let's now close in on our specific charge: to consider Christianity and Islam in dialogue.

Conclusion

I should make a few comments about the activity of dialogue. As mentioned at the beginning, the key element in a fruitful dialogue is conversation between persons. To that end, it is important to become a good person and seriously committed to living as best we can in the path to God. What this means, at an elementary level, is not only to take seriously the religious and spiritual tradition in which we find ourselves, but also to become knowledgeable and well-informed about it. Most of the readers here will be Roman Catholics, and that means not only normal practice of the faith, but also careful efforts to become better informed about the truths of the faith. It goes without saying that a serious Catholic should at least be familiar with the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. Uninformed chatter is not dialogue. Through dialogue with a committed Muslim, one can come to appreciate other serious efforts to walk in the path of God. This requires a certain intellectual and spiritual hospitality, or even almost an exchange of places, or— even more, a mystical substitution of oneself for the good of the other, what the Arabs might call *badaliyyah*.[37]

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[37] On the Badaliyyah prayer movement, see Dorothy C. Buck, "A Model of Hope," available online (see the section: References). On one of its founders, see *Louis Mas-*

We have named a few of the modern pioneers in Christian-Muslim dialogue and have given a few hints where those who want to learn more about it might do so. Here let me call attention to concrete features to bear in mind. To start with, it might be helpful to seek out some guidelines for formal dialogue. Here are a handful of issues to consider: Who are the partners? There are diverse Christian churches and communities. There are also Muslims of the working class, those of various modes of religious training, the modernists, fundamentalists. What places, times, attitudes are suitable? Do we recognize the values of others? What are the present obstacles to dialogue? How do we address them? Are there areas of cooperation available? If so, what are they, and how can we cooperate with each other? Can we identify potential areas of religious agreement? Such was an agenda of Father Maurice Borrmans,[38] whose many books provide a useful orientation

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signon: A Pioneer of Interfaith Dialogue, ed. Dorothy C. Buck (Clifton, N.J.: Blue Dome Press, 2017). See Massignon's letters to members of the Badaliya in the original French and in English: Louis Massignon, *Badaliya: au nom de l'autre (1947-1962)*, ed. Maurice Borrmans and Françoise Jacquin (Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 2011).

[38] Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Interreligious Documents I: Guidelines for Dialogue between Christians and Muslims*, prep. Maurice Borrmans, trans. R. Marston Speight (New York; Mahwah, N.J.: Paulist Press, 1981). In 1964 Pope Paul VI set up a Secretariat for Non-Christians, which in 1970 issued a first edition of the guidelines. In 1974, he established a special Commission for Religious Relations with Muslims. After many consultations, Fr. Borrmans prepared this 1981 edition. See also *Evangile, moralité et lois civiles. Gospel, Morality, and Civil Law*, proceedings of the Colloquia at Bologna (2012) and Klingenthal (2014), ed. Joseph Famerée, Pierr Gisel, Hervé Legrand (Vienna: LIT Verlag, 2016), for Borrmans's papers, "Éthique, Loi divine et lois civiles en pays d'Islam" (*ibid.*, 147–165) and "Sharī'a et lois civiles en cohabitation: tensions ou conflits?" (*ibid.*, 287–306), with English abstracts (*ibid.*, 9–10). It is often very useful to get a cross-section of who teaches what and to whom: Kenneth Cragg, "Islamic Teaching and the Muslim Teacher," *Studia Missionalia* 37 (1988: *Teachers of Religion: Christianity and Other Religions*): 77–102, and Maurice Borrmans, "L'Islam de certains manuels et catéchismes contemporains," *ibid.*, 103–140. See also the juxtaposed articles on legal issues in *Studia Missionalia* 39 (1990: *Human Rights*): M. Borrmans, "Les Droits de l'Homme en milieu musulman" (*ibid.*, 253–276), and his literal French translation of the "Déclaration universelle des droits de l'homme en Islam" issued by the Islamic Council of Europe (*ibid.*, 277–302).

for those undertaking serious dialogue.[39] Scholarship is important, but not enough. Let me close by mentioning a center of study that has been active in this field for almost three generations: The Pontifical Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies in Rome,[40] which has been operated by the White Fathers (Society of the Missionaries of Africa). What to me looks like the most promising approach is to combine spirituality and scholarship, trusting in the God of Mercy.

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Philosophical Considerations for Fruitful Dialogue between Christians and Muslims

SUMMARY

The author attempts to go beyond the study of the history of Islamic philosophy to the larger theme of religious dialogue between Christians and Muslims. He explores first some of the conditions that are required for any successful Christian-Muslim conversation. Next, he turns to some of the central issues specific to dialogue between Christians and Muslims. In addressing these themes he points to resources that are particularly

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[39] Maurice Borrmans, *Prophètes du dialogue islamo-chrétien: Louis Massignon, Jean-Mohammad Abd-el-Jalil, Louis Gardet, Georges C. Anawati* (Paris: Cerf, 2009), provides not only a biographical sketch of these figures, but also bibliographies (*ibid.*, 147–248) of their work. See also Roger Arnaldez, *Aspects de la pensée musulmane*, 2ème éd. (Paris: J. Vrin, 2015), with preface by M. Borrmans, and Maurice Borrmans, *Louis Gardet: Philosophe chrétien des cultures et témoin du dialogue islamo-chrétien, 1904-1986* (Paris: Cerf, 2010). Other notable figures are mentioned in Christian W. Troll and C. T. R. Hewer, *Christian Lives Given to the Study of Islam* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2012).

[40] For the 50-year report of their work, see *Le PISAI: Cinquante ans au sevice du dialogue* (Rome: Pontificio Istituto di Studi Arabi e d'Islamistica, 2000). This 161-page survey includes lists of the topics for licentiate theses and doctoral dissertations, as well as descriptions of their publications and research library. Their website is http://en.pisai.it/. Among the more recent studies in the Collection "Studi arabo-islamici del PISAI" is no. 18—Michel Younès, *Révélation(s) et Parole(s): La science du "kalām" à la jonction du judaïsme, du christianisme et de l'islam* (Rome: PISAI, 2008)—focusing on three major figures in dialectical theology (*kalām*), St. John of Damascus, al-Ash'ari, and Moses Maimonides.

useful to those trying to teach introductory courses on this complex matter, and to give students an inkling of where they might look for further training to embark upon more advanced types of dialogue. In conclusion, the author returns to his starting point and considers various levels at which dialogue can be begun, even at an elementary stage.

KEYWORDS

Christians, Muslims, Christianity, Islam, religion, Christian-Muslim dialogue, interfaith dialogue, interreligious dialogue, philosophy of religion.

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