

DISPENSATIONALISM, ISLAMOPHOBIA, AND THE MASS MEDIA IN AMERICA

BY

CHRISTOPHER CAMERON SMITH

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of

WAKE FOREST UNIVERSITY GRADUATE SCHOOL OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

Religion

May 2014

Winston-Salem, North Carolina

Approved By:

Nelly van Doorn-Harder, Ph.D., Advisor

Mary F. Foskett, Ph.D., Chair

Bill J. Leonard, Ph.D.

# Table of Contents

Abbreviations.....	iii
Abstract.....	iv
Chapter 1 – Introduction: Islamophobia, Othering, and Media Theory.....	1
Chapter 2 – The History, Influence, and Fluidity of Dispensationalism.....	23
Chapter 3 – “Ex-Muslims” Warn America: Rhetoric and Reality.....	48
Chapter 4 – Dispersing Islamophobia throughout the Mass Media.....	70
Conclusion.....	87
Bibliography.....	90
Curriculum Vitae.....	97

## Abbreviations

- CAIR – Council on American-Islamic Relations
- CBN – Christian Broadcasting Network
- CUFI – Christians United for Israel
- EU – European Union
- KJV – King James Version
- NIV – New International Version
- NRSV – New Revised Standard Version
- PLO – Palestinian Liberation Organization
- TBN – Trinity Broadcasting Network
- UK – United Kingdom
- UN – United Nations
- VNR – video news release
- WND – World Net Daily

## **Abstract**

This thesis argues that Christian dispensationalist theology has played a major role in promoting and sustaining the anti-Islam discourse, often referred to as Islamophobia, in the media and among the mainstream American populace. Islamophobia is best understood as an othering discourse which creates a stark “us/them” dichotomy in which Muslims represent “them.” Othering is also a major component of Christian dispensationalism since it too produces an extreme dualistic worldview. Dispensationalists typically read current geo-political events into the Bible aiming to identify a group of people or region from which the Antichrist and his allies will emerge, thus providing the primary “other.” The attacks of 9/11 have served as a catalyst in shifting the focus from the Soviet Union and communism to Islam and the Middle East. Since 9/11, dispensationalists have established themselves as credible “experts” and “insiders” in the media and have subsequently been instrumental in promoting anti-Islam ideology. This study examines the ways in which this has been accomplished.

## Chapter 1

### Introduction: Islamophobia, Othering, and Media Theory

On the July 13, 2013 episode of Fox News' "Your World with Neil Cavuto," the host of the show Eric Bolling, filling in for Neil Cavuto, interviewed someone he referred to as an expert on terrorism and militant Muslim groups – Erick Stakelbeck. This was in the midst of the controversy surrounding *Rolling Stone* Magazine's decision to feature Dzhokhar Tsarnaev, one of the Boston Marathon bombers, on the cover. Tsarnaev was pictured hip and stylish, not disheveled and injured as he was the night of his arrest, which drew the ire of many Americans. Stakelbeck lambasted the article for the way in which it humanized Dzhokhar and portrayed him as just another young hipster immersed in American pop culture. The article thoroughly examined the life of Tsarnaev seeking an explanation as to what could have possibly led him to terrorism.<sup>1</sup> For Stakelbeck, no in-depth analysis or investigation was necessary – the fact that Dzhokhar and his brother were Muslim was the only explanation he needed.<sup>2</sup>

After watching this clip, I decided to research the background of Eric Stakelbeck since much of his discussion seemed strikingly similar to the rhetoric often described as Islamophobia. Upon further research, I discovered that Erick Stakelbeck has no formal training in Islamic studies or terrorism analysis. Stakelbeck, citing 9/11 as a catalyst, left a career as a sports reporter and reached out to anti-Muslim activist David Horowitz. After getting his start from Horowitz, another anti-Islam propagandist, Steven Emerson,

---

<sup>1</sup> Janet Reitman, "Jahar's World," *Rolling Stone*, July 17, 2013, <<http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/jahars-world-20130717>> (accessed January 2, 2014).

<sup>2</sup> "Your World with Neil Cavuto," *Fox News*, July 13, 2013.

began collaborating with him before Stakelbeck eventually earned a gig hosting his own show on CBN, originally “Stakelbeck on Terror” but now called “The Watchmen.”<sup>3</sup> His show combines pro-Israel rhetoric and anti-Islam propaganda which he promotes as “politically incorrect” analysis. On more than one occasion Stakelbeck has claimed that the so-called “leftists” are working with Muslim extremists because they have a common enemy in “Judeo-Christian Western civilization.”<sup>4</sup> At this point, one could easily dismiss Stakelbeck as a far-right wing Christian fundamentalist; yet doing so would represent a major analytical error.

In an interview for Daystar,<sup>5</sup> Stakelbeck referenced Isaiah 17:1, which says “Damascus will cease to be a city, and will become a heap of ruins” (NRSV), to explain the ongoing conflict in Syria and express his belief that that destruction there represents the fulfilling of biblical prophecy.<sup>6</sup> In fact, biblical prophecy features prominently in his analysis of Islam and foreign policy.<sup>7</sup> In this lies the key to understanding the worldview of those such as Stakelbeck who attempt to find explanations for contemporary political events and global conflicts in the prophetic writings of the Christian canon. Stakelbeck’s beliefs are rooted in a particular Christian eschatological orientation known as

---

<sup>3</sup> Jim Fletcher, “Erick Stakelbeck: Fighting Islamist Terror with the Pen,” *World Net Daily*, December 25, 2011, <<http://www.wnd.com/2011/12/380909/>> (accessed January 8, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> Brian Tashman, “Stakelbeck: Gays And Liberals Work With Radical Islamists Because They Hate America, Jesus,” *Right Wing Watch*, September 9, 2013, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/stakelbeck-gays-and-liberals-work-radical-islamists-because-they-hate-america-jesus>> (accessed April 7, 2014); and Brian Tashman, “Robertson Wonders if Obama is a Crypto-Muslim,” *Right Wing Watch*, July 16, 2013, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/robertson-wonders-if-obama-crypto-muslim>> (accessed April 7, 2014).

<sup>5</sup> Daystar is a conservative evangelical television channel founded by Marcus Lamb in 1997. The channel regularly runs programs hosted by prominent dispensationalists including John Hagee and Hal Lindsey. See <<http://www.daystar.com/>>.

<sup>6</sup> Brian Tashman, “CBN's Erick Stakelbeck Mixes 'Terrorism Analysis' with Biblical Prophecy,” *Right Wing Watch*, March 12, 2012, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/cbns-erick-stakelbeck-mixes-terrorism-analysis-biblical-prophecy>> (accessed April 7, 2014).

<sup>7</sup> An entire episode of his show “Stakelbeck on Terror,” was dedicated to discussing biblical prophecy and the Middle East. See <<http://www.cbn.com/tv/1686263151001>>.

premillennial dispensationalism, which will be explained in-depth in the second chapter of this study. Dispensationalism is a form of futurist premillennialism based on two theological innovations of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), the concept of a secret rapture and the idea that God has two separate and distinct plans for the church and for the Jews, and which divides history into major eras of biblical history, called dispensations. Some of the most popular preachers in America, including John Hagee, Rod Parsley, and Mark Driscoll, are dispensationalists. Dispensationalists are highly active in US politics and especially in promoting pro-Israel causes. But most importantly, dispensationalists are highly effective promoters of Islamophobia. In fact, their efforts have been so effective that American attitudes towards Islam are actually worse today than in the year following the September 11 attacks.<sup>8</sup>

This study will examine the ways in which dispensationalists have affected the discourse about Islam through their utilization of the mass media in America. Here, I will utilize media theory, including the Propaganda Model outlined by Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky, as well as Edward Said and Stuart Hall, two scholars who have thoroughly analyzed the inner workings of othering discourses. This study will be guided by the questions of how dispensationalists are able to other Muslims, and then disseminate this message to a broad audience that does not necessarily adhere to their interpretation of Christianity. Dispensationalists who find their way onto American television sets through 24/7 news networks or onto their computer screens through right-

---

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 3; Mohamed Nimer, "Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism: Measurements, Dynamics, and Consequences," *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 79; and "Public Remains Conflicted over Islam," August 24, 2010, *Pew Research Center*, <<http://www.pewforum.org/2010/08/24/public-remains-conflicted-over-islam/>> (accessed April 3, 2014).

leaning internet blogs are taken as legitimate experts often without disclosing their own “religious”<sup>9</sup> beliefs. This means that many of those who hear dispensationalists speak on cable news or read their articles on popular right-wing websites such as WND or Townhall have not properly understood how these writers filter their view of Islam through the lens of bible prophecy. Furthermore, dispensationalists have impacted the views of non-dispensationalist Christians and secular Americans especially, for example, through books written by those claiming to be ex-Muslims who have converted to Christianity. The third chapter will examine the problematic accounts of these “ex-Muslims.” It is this author’s contention that dispensationalism is one of the primary factors helping to sustain the Islamophobic discourse in America today and one that has not been given the scholarly attention it deserves. Moreover, the Islamophobia promoted by Christian dispensationalists today effectively merges centuries-old stereotypes and constructions of Islam and Muslims, what Edward Said called Orientalism, with their own particular interpretations of biblical prophecy, which is facilitated by the stark dualistic worldview created by dispensationalist biblical exegesis.

Before moving on, it is necessary to make some clarifications regarding the terminology used in this study. It has become commonplace in the American political discourse, especially in the media, to use “evangelical” as a blanket term for all conservative Christians. This is, however, an inaccurate use of the term. Evangelicalism is a broad movement within Protestant Christianity that is often characterized by a “born-

---

<sup>9</sup> Acknowledging the problems inherent in the terms “religion” and “religious” as outlined by scholars such as J.Z. Smith, Russell McCutcheon, and Timothy Fitzgerald, I nevertheless deploy these terms due to their pervasiveness in the English discourse on both Christianity and Islam.

again” experience in which a person comes to “truly” know Jesus as their savior.<sup>10</sup>

Evangelicals typically place a strong emphasis on evangelizing and stress the authority of the Bible over human intermediaries. While evangelicals are very active in politics and many are also conservatives and/or Republican voters, a significant portion of evangelicals are also progressive/liberal-minded Christians. Although many, if not most, dispensationalists would also fall into the category of Christian fundamentalism, the term “fundamentalist” is also not precise enough for my purposes either since there are Christians that could be classified as fundamentalist, but not dispensationalist. Therefore, dispensationalism is the most accurate term for describing the specific type of Christian discourse that will be focused upon here.

### *Defining Islamophobia*

In the most literal sense, Islamophobia could be defined simply as the irrational fear of Muslims, yet the term has come to signify an entire discourse of othering for which scholars have differed on how to define it as well as debated its usefulness as an academic concept. Some scholars see the Islamophobia prevalent in the US as a product of imperialism and an interventionist foreign policy while others view it as similar to racism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of xenophobia. According to Yasemin Shooman

---

<sup>10</sup> Although there have been recent trends towards establishing evangelical movements within or with links to Catholicism and the Orthodox tradition, evangelicalism is still a predominantly Protestant-based movement. See “An Evangelical Manifesto: A Declaration of Evangelical Identity and Public Commitment,” May 7, 2008 (Washington, D.C.), <[http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/docs/Evangelical\\_Manifesto.pdf](http://www.anevangelicalmanifesto.com/docs/Evangelical_Manifesto.pdf)>; and this PBS interview with Mark Knoll, April 16, 2004, <<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/2004/04/16/april-16-2004-mark-noll-extended-interview/11416/>>.

and Riem Spielhaus, the term “Islamophobia” was first coined during the 1990s.<sup>11</sup> Still, the term did not enter the mainstream American discourse until after 9/11 and with the body of anti-Islamic literature and media propaganda that followed. Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali says that while “Islamophobia did not start in the wake of 9/11...the phenomena has substantially increased [since then]” and has “evolved to become an explicit, almost anti-Semitic style criticism of Islam and Muslims without in fact being acknowledged as such.”<sup>12</sup> Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg see the term as appropriate since it does indeed reflect a social anxiety toward Muslims.<sup>13</sup> Stephen Sheehi argues that Islamophobia is an ideological formation that has been embedded into the American psyche through imperialism and nationalism.<sup>14</sup> Jocelyne Cesari calls Islamophobia a “modern and secular anti-Islamic discourse”<sup>15</sup> and thus does not acknowledge the impact of certain Christian discourses about Islam in her analysis, although Cesari focuses primarily on the European context. Sunaina Maira sees the phenomenon as much more than just a discourse about cultural differences and argues for a stronger understanding of the political forces of imperialism behind it.<sup>16</sup> Chris Allen sees Islamophobia as a multi-layered discourse heavily influenced by Europe’s deep tradition of anti-Islam polemics

---

<sup>11</sup> Yasemin Shooman and Riem Spielhaus, “The concept of the Muslim enemy in the public discourse,” *Muslims in the West after 9/11: Religion, Politics, and Law*, ed. Jocelyne Cesari (New York: Routledge, 2010), 199.

<sup>12</sup> Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali, “Islamophobic Discourse Masquerading as Art and Literature: Combatting Myth Through Progressive Education,” *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 144.

<sup>13</sup> Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy* (New York: Rowan & Littlefield, 2008), 5.

<sup>14</sup> Stephen Sheehi, *Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign against Muslims* (Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2011), 31, 141.

<sup>15</sup> Jocelyne Cesari, “Islamophobia in the West: A Comparison between Europe and the United States,” *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 21.

<sup>16</sup> Sunaina Maira, “Islamophobia and the War on Terror: Youth, Citizenship, and Dissent,” *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 109.

and its strenuous history of interaction with Muslims living along its borders.<sup>17</sup> Allen also criticizes the term for its inclusion of “phobia” which, according to him, transforms the phenomenon into a sort of “disease” or “illness” and thus masks the deliberateness of those who produce and transmit anti-Islamic ideology.<sup>18</sup> Allen ultimately settles on a definition of Islamophobia as an ideology which functions similar to racism by formulating a negative image of Islam and Muslims.<sup>19</sup> Allen’s definition offers an insightful comparison that helps to clarify what the anti-Islam discourse seeks to do in its construction of Islam. Marcel Maussen argues that the term is problematic because it “conflates various forms of discourses and acts of violence suggesting that they all emanate from an identical ideological core.”<sup>20</sup> On this point, I tend to agree with Maussen. Some promote anti-Islam ideology from a secular perspective while others anti-Muslim activists come from a Christian perspective; however, as I will show, many of those in the United States who adopt Islamophobic ideology get their information from dispensationalist sources disguised as “experts” or “insiders.”

Erik Bleich’s article “Defining and Researching Islamophobia” summarizes the many definitions put forth by scholars for the phenomenon while also critiquing the problems inherent with the term such as its ambiguity as well as its highly-contested and politically-charged nature. He also critiques how scholars deploy the term in such a manner as to render identifying instances of Islamophobia difficult. Bleich ultimately offers a definition of Islamophobia as “indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims,” and like Allen, sees Islamophobia as a discourse which

---

<sup>17</sup> Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 134.

<sup>18</sup> Allen, *Islamophobia*, 135.

<sup>19</sup> Allen, *Islamophobia*, 190.

<sup>20</sup> Shooman and Spielhaus, “The concept of the Muslim enemy in the public discourse,” 199.

functions similar to racism.<sup>21</sup> Thus, the term “Islamophobia” has been deployed by scholars in a multitude of ways with little agreement as to its causes, history, and definition.

Following Allen and Bleich, I define Islamophobia as an othering discourse which functions similarly to racism by creating an “us/them” dualism that defines “them” in negative terms that are the opposite of what “we” or “us” are (eg. “they” are barbaric, “we” are civilized). I will use the term Islamophobia to refer specifically to the discourse promoted by anti-Islam activists, scholars, politicians, political pundits, as well as television and talk radio hosts who knowingly and willingly advance negative stereotypes and broad sweeping generalizations about Islam and Muslims. Ordinary Americans or Christians who consume and subsequently retransmit Islamophobic rhetoric should not be referred to as Islamophobes since they may not be fully aware of the political and religious motivations of those who create and promote such rhetoric, thus taking Islamophobic analyses as objective. I reserve the term “Islamophobe” for those who dedicate their lives to spreading anti-Islam propaganda due to their own ideological biases against Islam and Muslims. Anxiety about terrorism or fear of Muslims due to constant exposure to news stories about violent Muslim extremists or militant attacks is not, in itself, Islamophobia. Likewise, as Mohamed Nimer accurately points out,<sup>22</sup> critically examining the beliefs and practices of certain Muslims, especially those that promote fundamentalism and the denial of rights to women, religious minorities, and others, is not Islamophobia either, just as critically examining dispensationalism is not

---

<sup>21</sup> Erik Bleich, “Defining and Researching Islamophobia,” *Review of Middle East Studies* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Winter 2012), 182.

<sup>22</sup> Mohamed Nimer, “Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism,” 77.

anti-Christian nor should refuting certain aspects of US history or foreign policy be considered anti-American.

An examination of some of the available scholarly literature on Islamophobia will demonstrate the need for the type of analysis being undertaken here. While much excellent scholarship has been produced in recent years examining anti-Islam rhetoric from a wide-range of perspectives, to-date there has been no in-depth study focusing on dispensationalism and its influence on American perceptions of Islam. *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, edited by John Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin, contains articles examining Islamophobia from both the European and the American contexts. This work also looks at this issue from a wide-range of perspectives including art, media, politics, race, foreign affairs, among others. Still, while this volume represents a superb resource for studying Islamophobia, the role of politically right-leaning Christians, including dispensationalism, is not given much attention. Another work titled *Islamophobia*, by Chris Allen, examines this phenomenon mainly from the European context and provides an in-depth analysis of the term “Islamophobia” as it has been discussed in the UK and throughout Europe. This work focuses more upon the discourse surrounding the term “Islamophobia” itself and less upon its manifestations, causes, and consequences. A third work titled *Islamophobia* (subtitled *Making Muslims the Enemy*) by Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg examines Western conceptions of Islam through political cartoons. This book includes a chapter summarizing the many hostile encounters the West has had with Muslim societies (eg. the Crusades, Reconquista, Zionism, terrorism, etc.) before placing anti-Muslim political cartoons in their proper socio-historical context. Stephen Sheehi’s book *Islamophobia: The Ideological*

*Campaign against Muslims* analyzes Islamophobia primarily through American neo-conservatism and focuses heavily upon two major figures, Bernard Lewis and Fareed Zakaria. One serious flaw in this work is its claim that the most popular proponents of anti-Islam ideology such as Pamela Geller, Glenn Beck, and Robert Spencer can be easily dismissed as representing a radical minority.<sup>23</sup> While these pundits and pseudo-experts can be considered radical, their influence and ability to disseminate ideas to a wide audience cannot be overlooked. Scott Shane, writing for the *New York Times*, points out that Anders Breivik, who killed seventy-seven people in Norway in 2011, was heavily influenced by American Islamophobic bloggers and cited anti-Islam blogger Robert Spencer sixty-four times.<sup>24</sup>

Two excellent works on Islamophobia are Deepa Kumar's *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* and Nathan Lean's *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*. In Kumar's book, she provides the historical context necessary for understanding the contemporary Islamophobic discourse. Kumar provides a chapter briefly examining the pre-modern history of Muslim-Christian interactions and two chapters on colonialism and Orientalism before moving on to sections analyzing the relationship between the Islamophobic discourse and American foreign policy. She identifies four interconnected groups which work together to demonize Muslims in America – neoconservatives promoting a highly interventionist foreign policy, Zionists (both Christian and Jewish) dedicated to promoting pro-Israel policies, the Christian Right, and former Muslims who have found lucrative careers promoting anti-Islam

---

<sup>23</sup> Sheehi, *Islamophobia*, 140-141.

<sup>24</sup> Scott Shane, "Killings in Norway Spotlight Anti-Muslim Thought in US," *New York Times*, July 24, 2011, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/us/25debate.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/us/25debate.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)> (accessed April 6, 2014).

rhetoric.<sup>25</sup> Dispensationalists can be found among all four groups. Lean's book is a meticulously researched overview of the network propagating anti-Islam propaganda in the US since 9/11. His work documents the rise of Muslim-bashing internet bloggers like Pamela Geller and pseudo-scholars like Robert Spencer while also giving considerable attention to pro-Israel groups, conservative media outlets, and the Christian Right. Lean's book, unlike other works on Islamophobia, does provide a few pages dealing with the link between anti-Islam ideology and Christian end-times prophecy while also providing some pertinent details about fake ex-Muslims such as Walid Shoebat and Ergun Caner. The work of Kumar and Lean shows that the othering of Muslims taking place today in the US is mostly due to the efforts of a small network of elite activists. They also correctly demonstrate the way in which this network of Islamophobes utilizes right-wing media sources to disseminate their ideology, yet both authors, despite writing excellent books, do not fully distinguish dispensationalists from the broader Christian Right.

### ***Islamophobia as an Othering Discourse***

According to Edward Said, the contemporary trend of anti-Muslim thought pervasive throughout the media is a continuation of what he called Orientalism in his seminal work of the same name. This is the focus of Said's *Covering Islam: How the Media Determines How We See the Rest of the World*, where he states that "a corps of experts on the Islamic world has risen to prominence, and during a crisis they are brought out to pontificate on formulaic ideas about Islam on news programs or talk shows" where

---

<sup>25</sup> Deepa Kumar, *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012), 176.

they spread “previously discredited, Orientalist ideas.”<sup>26</sup> Islamophobia, just like its earlier manifestation of Orientalism, should be understood as an othering discourse – one that creates a stark dichotomy between “us” and “them.” One that describes the other in terms of what “we” are not. Islamophobia, similar to other discourses such as racism, xenophobia, and extreme nationalism, creates an image of the other that does not correspond to reality, but is socially constructed by a particular group of elites with an adequate level of power and resources necessary to diffuse their propaganda to a broad audience. Othering discourses achieve their power by becoming so dominant that they go unrecognized representing an “unconscious ideology.”<sup>27</sup> Those promoting Islamophobia do so with the confidence and conviction that the information they are providing to the public is truthful and objective, lacking awareness of the role played by ethnocentrism, religion, and American foreign policy in shaping their views.

A direct line of descent can be found beginning with the Christian anti-Islam polemics of the medieval period, continuing with the Orientalism of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and finally culminating in what is today called Islamophobia. “Lurking behind all of these images is the menace of jihad” and “a fear that Muslims (or Arabs) will take over the world” says Said.<sup>28</sup> Dispensationalists who promote Islamophobia focus heavily on the concept of *jihad* and conspiracy theories involving a united Muslim empire seeking world domination. Said also argues that “all of this can be traced, not to Islam, but to aspects of society in the West and to the media which this idea

---

<sup>26</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xi.

<sup>27</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, 49.

<sup>28</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 287.

of “Islam” reflects and serves.”<sup>29</sup> As this study will show, these images of Islam provide dispensationalism with the enemy needed to fill the void left behind after the fall of communism.

The work of Stuart Hall is helpful to shed some light upon the inner workings of othering discourses. One important concept is naturalization, which Hall defines as “a representational strategy designed to fix difference, and thus secure it “forever” or “to secure discursive or ideological closure.”<sup>30</sup> The Islamophobic discourse seeks to *naturalize* its definitions and interpretations of Islamic concepts, thereby fixing the way Americans view Muslims. In this way, an Islamic concept like *shari’a* becomes fixed as a rigid system of laws requiring stoning and the subjugation of women in the minds of Westerners making it impossible for it to be seen as the somewhat innocuous and relatively flexible legal and ethical code of conduct practiced by many Muslims around the world.<sup>31</sup> Related to naturalization is the concept of stereotyping which “symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything that does not belong” thereby setting up strong dualisms (normal/abnormal, us/them, etc.) and, according to Hall, “tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power.”<sup>32</sup> Those promoting anti-Islam propaganda typically deploy the term “Judeo-Christian” as a means of establishing a boundary cutting off Islam from the other two Abrahamic faiths. “Judeo-Christian” then becomes synonymous with Western civilization which, in turn, becomes synonymous with the positive values

---

<sup>29</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, 44.

<sup>30</sup> Stuart Hall ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 245.

<sup>31</sup> *Shari’a* as described by Islamophobes does exist in some regions, especially those under the control of extremist groups like the Taliban and al-Shabaab. The problem is the way in which anti-Islam commentators define *shari’a* in the same strict and narrow manner as these extremist groups. In reality, *shari’a* is a discourse in itself. It is a broad and flexible system of ethics and law practiced in different ways and methods throughout the *umma* (worldwide Muslim community).

<sup>32</sup> Hall, *Representation*, 258.

of freedom, peace, and civilization, while “Islamic” becomes synonymous with the negative values of tyranny, barbaric, violent, and so on. It is through these principles that othering discourses operate.

### ***Media Theory and Propaganda***

Understanding how the media works is crucial to understanding the way in which those promoting Islamophobia have been able to promote their propaganda virtually unchecked. As W. James Potter points out, “each of us holds beliefs about the existence of a great many things that we have never seen directly in our real lives; many of these beliefs have come from media messages.”<sup>33</sup> This point becomes highly important in the case of Islam and Muslims considering most Americans have never travelled to a Muslim-majority country nor have Muslims as friends, neighbors, or coworkers.”<sup>34</sup> Therefore, our collective image of Islam is based almost entirely on media images.

The mass media in America, and especially television news, must be understood as a profit-seeking enterprise seeking to sell a product – that product being entertainment.<sup>35</sup> Unfortunately, conspiracy theories and sensationalism sell much better than in-depth, balanced journalism. Edward Said comments that “the market for representations of a monolithic, enraged, threatening, and conspiratorially spreading Islam is much greater, more useful, and capable of generating more excitement, whether for the purposes of entertainment or of mobilizing passions against a new foreign

---

<sup>33</sup> W. James Potter, *Media Effects* (Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012), 41.

<sup>34</sup> Nimer, “Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism,” 79.

<sup>35</sup> See Neil Postman and Steve Powers, *How to Watch TV News* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008).

devil.”<sup>36</sup> To this point, if the American media airs a story about a Muslim doctor who develops an effective new treatment for a disease, the role of Islam in his or her life would most likely not be emphasized in the piece, yet if a Muslim is involved in an act of violence, Islam would be thoroughly analyzed as a contributing factor.

Reinforcement is another crucial component of media coverage that often goes unrecognized by the public. In discussing how the media reinforces ideas and concepts, Potter states that:

Through repeated exposure, the media gradually and continually add greater weight to something already existing in a person, thus making that something more fixed and harder to change...When the media continually present the same people and events in the news over and over, individuals’ knowledge structures about those people and events become more rigid and less likely to open to change later.<sup>37</sup>

This is closely related to naturalization. As Gottschalk and Greenberg point out in their book *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*, whenever Muslims are featured in Western news stories, it is almost always in the context of terrorism or violence, which has led to the perception among many Americans that the association of Islam with violence is justifiable.<sup>38</sup> When Muslims are repeatedly presented in the media as terrorists, never as heroes or active citizens, it serves as reinforcement making it nearly impossible for consumers of media images to see Muslims in any other manner.

The concept of framing is another important aspect of media coverage. Potter says that “the frame of news stories is constructed by journalists in the way they select certain bits of information while ignoring others and by how they structure their stories to direct attention toward certain facts. The frame is the way the story is presented; that is, “the

---

<sup>36</sup> Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xxviii.

<sup>37</sup> Potter, *Media Effects*, 44.

<sup>38</sup> See Gottschalk and Greenberg, *Islamophobia*, 3, 10, and 143.

point of view from which the story is told.”<sup>39</sup> Framing imposes meaning onto a news story. According to James Brian MacPherson, framing can have the result of removing the broader context of an issue such that “levees collapse because of hurricanes, not because governments and corporations have for decades stripped away protective natural buffers while neglecting to inspect or maintain the levees.”<sup>40</sup> Media stories about militant Muslim groups might only draw attention to quotes from the Qur’an or other religious statements made by a group’s leader while choosing to ignore other statements which might lead to a more political analysis of the group’s motivations. This would frame the story in such a way as to lead viewers to draw the conclusion that religion, and not political ideology, is the primary factor motivating the militant organization.

Yet another important strategy deployed by the media is agenda setting. The media can set the agenda on certain issues by the proportion of time given to a particular issue. This can affect public policy since issues that are given extended and continuous coverage in the media are pushed to the forefront while those issues that are passed-over tend to be forgotten and ignored by both the public and policy makers. An excellent example of this can be found in Fox News’ treatment of the Affordable Care Act (ACA), otherwise known as “Obamacare.” The Pew Research Center documented the amount of coverage given to both Obamacare and the devastation caused by Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines on the 24-hour news networks by sampling equal blocks of time for each of the channels during the period of November 11-15, 2013; they found that while CNN, MSNBC, and Al-Jazeera America spent over three hours discussing the typhoon, Fox News discussed it for only six minutes. The reverse is true with regards to the ACA.

---

<sup>39</sup> Potter, *Media Effects*, 77.

<sup>40</sup> James Brian McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press: The Media’s Role in the Rise of the Right* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008), 201-202.

While CNN, MSNBC, and Al-Jazeera America spent anywhere from an hour and a half to three hours discussing Obamacare, Fox News spent nearly eight hours on the topic. This means that Fox News spend nearly eighty times more time on Obamacare than the typhoon.<sup>41</sup> This can be seen as an obviously attempt by Fox News to set the agenda on the ACA by filling their airwaves with negative stories designed to garner opposition to the healthcare reform law and thus assist right-leaning politicians in dismantling it.

The previous represents an example of direct agenda setting by a media agency; however, setting the agenda can also be done indirectly through the subsidizing of the media. As a profit-seeking enterprise, media companies like other businesses need to manage costs and one way of doing this is by airing “video news releases,” or VNRs for short. These are complete news stories fully edited and packaged for airing with any local or national broadcast. As Neil Postman and Steve Powers point out, while broadcasters are fully aware of the organizations that manufacture each VNR, nothing in the actual video discloses this information to the viewer meaning the audience may take the information to be objective journalism produced by the news agency itself.<sup>42</sup> According to Nielson Media Research, by the mid-1990s, VNR use was widespread through the media.<sup>43</sup> Partisan think-tanks and other special interest groups, including the government, have used VNRs to present their own programs or policy positions in a positive light. Local TV stations particularly welcome VNRs since their cost has already been absorbed by the group producing them and due to smaller budgets for local broadcasters.

---

<sup>41</sup> Monica Anderson, Mark Jurkowitz, Paul Hitlin, and Nancy Vogt, “Obamacare v. Philippines Typhoon: How cable covered two big stories,” *Pew Research Center*, November 20, 2013, <<http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/20/obamacare-v-philippines-typhoon-how-cable-covered-two-big-stories/>> (accessed January 17, 2014).

<sup>42</sup> Postman and Powers, *How to Watch TV News*, 79.

<sup>43</sup> Postman and Powers, *How to Watch TV News*, 81.

Perhaps the most important aspect of the contemporary media which must be recognized is the dramatic political polarization that has occurred over in recent decades effectively dividing the media between right-wing and left-wing, at least in the eyes of media consumers. In his book *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press*, McPherson argues that the media has been reshaped to the point that:

Every issue and event must be reported as though it has two sides and only two sides: the hard-right Republicans and the liberals (a category including all non-ideologically conservative journalists). This polarizing technique systematically destroys journalistic objectivity, the responsibility to determine fact, and substitutes a distorted pseudo-reality in which the extremist fringe has an exaggerated purchase on the truth.<sup>44</sup>

In other words, this situation has created a false dichotomy in which every issue is either left or right and never both or neither. In this way, viewing Islam in any manner other than that the far-right position becomes the “liberal” side while their view, which states that al-Qaeda and other militant Muslim groups practice “true and authentic” Islam, is the conservative position. Political and religious issues are, indeed, frequently much more complex than this.

Because of the power of contemporary media coverage, some religious leaders have viewed the mass media as a useful tool for disseminating their message to a wide audience, including those in government.<sup>45</sup> Dispensationalists, in particular, have found that right-leaning media outlets like Fox News and talk radio are much more receptive to their anti-Islam message. They have also found employment at think tanks formed by professional Islamophobes, for example, Steven Emerson’s Investigative Project on Terrorism and Daniel Pipes’s Middle East Forum. These outlets, along with other mainstream media sources such as CNN and local TV stations and newspapers, have

---

<sup>44</sup> McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press*, xii.

<sup>45</sup> Potter, *Media Effects*, 273.

given dispensationalists promoting Islamophobia the outlet needed to disseminate their message to a wide audience.

### ***The Propaganda Model***

The best lens by which to understand how dispensationalists have been able to inject themselves and their interpretation of Islam into the media structures of the US is the Propaganda Model put forth by Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman in their book *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. They argue that the media, rather than serving as an objective messenger, actually represents and promotes the interests of the powerful elite. Herman and Chomsky offer five elements, which they call “filters,” that work together to effectively control the information that is presented to the public. These are 1) the size, ownership, and profit orientation of the media, 2) the interests of the advertisers, 3) the reliance of the media on government officials and agencies, businesses and corporations, and/or think tanks and “experts” funded by elite interests, 4) “flak,” and 5) “anticommunism.”<sup>46</sup> Of course, the last element should be updated to “anti-terrorism” to reflect the shift in the focus of American foreign policy. The “anti-terrorism” trope is often used to justify harsh anti-Islam rhetoric.

The first filter demonstrates that ownership of the media outlets is generally limited to those wealthy enough to have the power to establish new outlets and while this has always been the case, this fact has been exacerbated by corporate consolidation in recent decades leaving a few large corporations in control of virtually all the media

---

<sup>46</sup> Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 2.

structures in the United States.<sup>47</sup> The shift from older business models to publically traded companies has meant that media outlets focus less on the art of journalism and more upon satisfying shareholders through constant growth and cost-cutting or, in other words, enhancing their profitability. Thus, the media outlets are owned and operated by those wealthy and powerful enough to establish them and the journalism produced will necessarily reflect the values and interests of the owners.

The second filter shows how advertisers also influence what the media produces. Since mediums like television, radio, and print make their money by selling advertising space to companies, the advertisers exert a major influence on the media and will generally choose to advertise with mediums that share, at least moderately, their values. As Herman and Chomsky note, ever since the advent of the newspaper, “working-class and radical papers have been at a serious disadvantage” because those readers are generally much poorer than readers of major papers, a factor that has worked to repel advertisers.<sup>48</sup> Advertisers can, and often do, choose to run ads with media outlets that share their political views, and vice versa, remove their business from those that challenge or contradict their values. This filter appears to be less relevant for my purposes and will thus be ignored in this work.

The third filter focuses on the way that governments and businesses influence news coverage directly through means such as press conferences or news releases. Herman and Chomsky argue that information from governmental or corporate sources is often taken as credible due to the status of the agency releasing it and that media outlets are more than willing to promote the material provided by these sources since it reduces

---

<sup>47</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 4-5.

<sup>48</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 14-15.

the costs absorbed by the media agency for undertaking research or putting together stories.<sup>49</sup> This enables the powerful elite to enhance their relationship to media outlets since they effectively subsidize them and reduce their costs.<sup>50</sup>

Herman and Chomsky's fourth filter, "flak," refers to criticism of media statements or reports. They argue that "the ability to produce flak...is related to power" and "if it is produced on a large scale, or by individuals or groups with substantial resources, it can be uncomfortable and costly to the media" since "positions have to be defended within the organization" and "sometimes before legislatures and possibly even in courts."<sup>51</sup> Right-wing media outlets such as Fox News have mastered the art of producing flak through the use of terms such as "liberal bias" and "leftist agenda" to discredit otherwise respectable news agencies such as *NPR* or *The New York Times*.

The final filter is perhaps the most important – anticommunism or anti-terrorism. This simply refers to the dominant othering discourse of the day. When Herman and Chomsky's study was first published during the end of the Cold War, communism was the primary foe of the US. Today, with the global communist movement no longer a threat, that enemy has switched to global terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda. The following statement by Herman and Chomsky helps to illuminate why the terms "anticommunism" and "anti-terrorism" are interchangeable as the fifth filter: "this ideology helps mobilize the populace against an enemy, and because this concept is fuzzy it can be used against anybody advocating policies that threaten property interests or support accommodation with communist states and radicalism."<sup>52</sup> The "anticommunism" trope is still being used

---

<sup>49</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 19.

<sup>50</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 22.

<sup>51</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 26.

<sup>52</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 29.

today by right-wing commentators as can be seen in the way that they refer to social programs such as Medicare and food stamps as “socialism.” The distinction between providing a minimal social safety net and full-blown Marxist-style socialism is blurred purposefully in order to demonize the opposition. The same strategy is used to demonize Muslims by blurring the distinction between the extremist ideology promoted by al-Qaeda or the Taliban and the mainstream forms of Islam practiced by the majority of Muslims around the world.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary, Islamophobia is best understood as an othering discourse in the same tradition as Orientalism. Islamophobic ideology operates similarly to racism or anti-Semitism in the way in which it constructs an image of Islam and Muslims as the “other” that does not correspond to reality. Othering is also a major component of dispensationalism, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model offers the best lens by which to examine how the Islamophobic ideology promoted by dispensationalists is filtered to the public.

One final introductory comment should be made. Nothing in this study is meant to detract from or diminish the real threat posed by terrorist groups such as al-Qaeda, a serious threat for which there are many legitimate scholars and NGOs analyzing this issue every day. This study is not about them; it is about a particular group of dispensationalists who promote themselves as “experts” despite having no credible reason to do so. It is about the way that they have affected the discourse about Islam in America and the way in which their particular religious worldview affects the way they see others.

## Chapter 2

### The History, Influence, and Fluidity of Dispensationalism

Many Americans may not be familiar with the term “dispensationalism,” but upon hearing the term “rapture” or mention of the *Left Behind* novels or films, they will instantly recognize at least the basics of this theological orientation including predictions about a coming Antichrist and the Battle of Armageddon. Some in academia avoid scholarship in this area due to the fundamentalist and staunchly right-wing political leanings of many dispensationalists. I would argue that this is a misguided attitude given the prominent influence dispensationalism has had upon American politics, both foreign and domestic.<sup>53</sup> Dispensationalists have held virtually every major political office including the presidency and work at think tanks shaping public policy. This chapter will examine the historical roots and continuing influence of Christian dispensationalism while also analyzing the integration of Islam into its eschatological framework. It is my contention that othering is a major component of dispensationalism which, in turn, helps in its dovetailing with the contemporary phenomenon of Islamophobia. Since dispensationalist readings of biblical prophecy are based on the major geopolitical concerns of the day, it is only naturally that once those concerns transitioned from containing communism to fighting militant Muslim groups, the primary other in dispensationalist thought would also switch from Marxism and communism to Islam and Muslims.

---

<sup>53</sup> See Gershom Gorenberg, *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?* (London: IVP Academic, 2005); and Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

### ***The Historical Roots of Dispensationalism***

The theological framework referred to as premillennial dispensationalism is primarily concerned with eschatology, the study of the end times.<sup>54</sup> The fascination with biblical prophecy among many American Christians is a relatively recent phenomenon. As Timothy Weber states, “once considered the preoccupation of relatively few fanatics, eschatology has come close to reaching cult status in American society, or at least in a significant part of it.”<sup>55</sup> The dramatic rise in the popularity of dispensationalism during the latter half of the twentieth century can be traced to the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel in 1948 and the retaking of Jerusalem and the West Bank by Israeli forces during the Six-Day War of 1967, both of which are seen by dispensationalists as predicted in the Bible. The publication of Hal Lindsey’s *The Late Great Planet Earth* and the *Left Behind* novels of Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins has further accelerated the spread of dispensationalism in American churches.

The roots of Christian dispensationalism are found in the theological innovations of John Nelson Darby (1800-1882). The term “dispensationalism” is derived from the term “dispensation” which refers to major epochs in the biblical timeline, for instance, from creation to the Fall of Man would constitute the first dispensation. While dividing biblical history into dispensations and reading current events into biblical prophecy has been done throughout the history of Christianity, Darby’s theology offered two novelties that cannot be found before the nineteenth century. These are the concept of a secret rapture of the church and also the idea that God has two separate and distinct plans for history, one for Israel, His earthly people, and one for the church, God’s heavenly people.

---

<sup>54</sup> Throughout this work I will use the shorter terms “dispensationalism” and “dispensationalist” for brevity.

<sup>55</sup> Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), 4.

These two concepts will be given further attention in the next section. Darby, ordained in the Church of Ireland in 1825, began his ministry as a member of the Plymouth Brethren, a movement which broke away from the Church of England during the early 1800s and placed a strong emphasis on an intense study of the Bible, especially its prophetic writings.<sup>56</sup> The Brethren did, however, find Darby's idea of two separate divine plans to be quite strange and problematic.<sup>57</sup> Darby imported his new theological system to America during several visits made during the 1870s.<sup>58</sup> According to Weber, many conservative-minded Christians became accepting of Darby's dispensationalism due to its seemingly rational and systematic method of biblical interpretation at a time when Darwinism and the historical critical method of exegesis were taking hold.<sup>59</sup>

William E. Blackstone's efforts also played a crucial role in spreading dispensationalism among American Christians while also helping to garner support for Zionism.<sup>60</sup> Blackstone's book, *Jesus is Coming* (1887), was the most popular work on biblical prophecy in the US until Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970).<sup>61</sup> Blackstone's efforts to restore the Jewish people to Palestine, as part of God's plan for the second coming of Christ, culminated in an 1891 petition presented to President Benjamin Harrison and signed by over four hundred notable Americans including the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, J.P. Morgan, John D. Rockefeller, the mayors of

---

<sup>56</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 50.

<sup>57</sup> Timothy P. Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 20-21.

<sup>58</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 13.

<sup>59</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 26.

<sup>60</sup> Zionism began in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century as a movement seeking the establishment of a Jewish state. Theodor Herzl is considered the father of the movement and his book *The Jewish State* helped popularize the idea. While several locations were considered, including Argentina and Uganda, Palestine was the preferred choice given its historical relationship with Hebraic religion and culture.

<sup>61</sup> Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 71.

Boston, Chicago, and New York, the Secretary of State, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and several senators and congressmen.<sup>62</sup> The petition demonstrates that dispensationalists found powerful allies early on.

Perhaps no single person can claim as much credit for converting Americans to dispensationalism as Cyrus I. Scofield (1843-1921), since his *Scofield Reference Bible*, first published in 1909, became the bestselling version of the Bible in America for several decades selling more than ten million copies during the early twentieth century.<sup>63</sup> His annotated King James Version contained footnotes interpreting various prophetic passages according to the dispensationalist framework. Weber says that “many people were first introduced to premillennialism through its notes.”<sup>64</sup> Scofield’s notes are designed to interpret the Bible for the reader, thus compelling them to the dispensationalist viewpoint.

Two events involving the modern nation-state of Israel have been monumental in the spread of dispensationalism in America. The first was the founding of the modern nation-state of Israel in 1948 and the other was the retaking of Jerusalem and the West Bank during the Six-Day War in 1967. “That for the first time in more than 2,000 years Jerusalem is now in the hands of the Jews gives a student of the Bible a thrill and a renewed faith in the accuracy and validity of the Bible” remarked Nelson Bell, the father-in-law of Billy Graham, following the Six-Day War.<sup>65</sup> Jerry Falwell called May 19, 1948 (the day of Israel’s independence) the “most important date since Jesus’ ascension to

---

<sup>62</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 104.

<sup>63</sup> Jonathan Kirsch, *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization* (New York: Harper Collins, 2006), 192.

<sup>64</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 39.

<sup>65</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 99.

heaven.”<sup>66</sup> These events were taken by dispensationalists to be the fullest and clearest evidence that their reading of the Bible was accurate and that the prophetic writings were meant to represent contemporary events. In the next section, the theological framework of dispensationalism will be explained in greater detail.

### ***The Theology of Dispensationalism***

Before examining some of the specifics of dispensationalism, it is first necessary to understand how this system fits into the broader eschatological schema of Christianity. Christians fall into three main categories regarding the end times – amillennialism, premillennialism, and postmillennialism. These three orientations differ as to how they interpret biblical references to the thousand year reign of Christ on earth, called the millennium. Amillennialists take an ambivalent or apathetic approach preferring to read the scriptural passages discussing the millennium in an allegorical fashion, focusing neither on the timing of the Second Coming nor establishing the millennium themselves through the actions of the church. Postmillennialists believe that Jesus’ Second Coming will not take place until after the millennium has been fully established on earth and thus take an activist approach to ushering in God’s kingdom. Premillennialists believe that Jesus will return before the millennium and will play a key role in establishing it. Some scholars argue that premillennialism leads to a more pessimistic and fatalistic worldview that sees humanity as helpless to solve the world’s problems making them less likely to

---

<sup>66</sup> Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 27.

work for poverty reduction and improving environmental conditions.<sup>67</sup> It is from within this last category of premillennialism that dispensationalism emerges.

Premillennialist interpreters of the Bible fall into two subcategories, historicist and futurist, differing on the issue of whether some of the end time prophecies have been fulfilled during the history of the church. Historicists believe that predictions found in the prophetic writings of the Christian canon are to be played out during the era of the church and see Revelation as a “prophetic overview of the entire sweep of church history.”<sup>68</sup> Futurists, on the other hand, believe that biblical prophecies pertaining to the end times will come to fruition at the very end of the church age. Dispensationalism holds to the futurist perspective.

A further subdivision can be found among futurist Premillennialists differing as to when the rapture will occur in relation to the tribulation period. These are pre-tribulationists, mid-tribulationists, and post-tribulationists. Post-tribulationists argue that the rapture will occur after the church suffers through the Great Tribulation, mid-tribulationists envision the rapture occurring at the midpoint of the Tribulation, and pre-tribulationists say that the rapture will occur prior to the Tribulation meaning the “true” church will not be required to suffer through this turmoil. The idea that the church will not suffer through the Tribulation and will get a free pass to heaven without death or suffering via the rapture has been criticized by several Christian scholars and theologians including Barbara Rossing<sup>69</sup> and John Dominic Crossan, who, in stating that the term “rapture” never appears in the Bible, argues that “neither does the idea, the theme, or the

---

<sup>67</sup> See Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation* (New York: Basic Books, 2004) and Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*.

<sup>68</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 10.

<sup>69</sup> See Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*.

concept.”<sup>70</sup> It is within this last category, the pre-tribulationists, that we find dispensationalism.<sup>71</sup> Thus, in summary, dispensationalism follows a pre-tribulationist, futurist premillennial eschatology. This means that they believe Jesus will return *prior* to the millennium, they believe that the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation have not been completely fulfilled and that their fulfillment will come *at the end of the church age*, and they believe that a secret rapture of the church will occur *prior* to the period known as the Great Tribulation. Next, the two major theological innovations of John Nelson Darby will be examined.

The first original innovation of Darby is the concept of a “secret” rapture of the church. According to dispensationalism, at the moment of the rapture all living “born-again” Christians will be swept away from the earth instantaneously and taken to watch the end of this world unfold from heaven. Dispensationalists find the basis for their belief in a secret rapture of the church, which for them refers only to those considered to be the true and authentic members of the church – conservative evangelicals, on a modern interpretation of Paul’s First Letter to the Thessalonians (4:16-17) which states:

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. (KJV)

For dispensationalists, the phrase “caught up...in the air” describes what they call the rapture. Crossan argues that the Greek terms *parousia* (translated as “coming” in reference to the second coming) and *apantesis* (“meet”) found in 1 Thess. 4:16-17 often

---

<sup>70</sup> John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus against Rome, Then and Now* (New York: Harper One, 2007), 202.

<sup>71</sup> I must recognize Timothy P. Weber’s excellent work, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979), for providing a clear and concise explanation of the various eschatological positions found within Christianity.

had a more specialized usage in ancient Greek in reference to a delegation going out to receive an important dignitary, such as an emperor or other imperial figure, and bringing them back to their home. In this way, according to Crossan, the passage seems to imply that Christians will meet and greet Jesus during his return to this world, not the reverse as dispensationalists claim.<sup>72</sup> This view is also shared by N.T. Wright.<sup>73</sup> Many theologians, including Crossan and Rossing, also argue that the Apostle Paul was attempting to comfort his fellow Christians who were concerned about the salvation of those that had already died and feared they might be “left behind” when Jesus returns.<sup>74</sup> Thus, they claim that dispensationalists do not properly appreciate the context of Paul’s message in this passage.

One point should be clarified at this point. The concept of a secret rapture is not synonymous with the second coming and actually introduces the idea that Jesus will return not only for a second time, but also for a third. The second will be the secret sweeping of the church from this world and the third during the battle of Armageddon. Thus, Darby’s innovation makes him the first Christian in history to teach that Jesus will return in two stages. British evangelical pastor Stephen Sizer argues that no such two-stage return is suggested by Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians.<sup>75</sup> Other theologians have also criticized this idea including Bernard McGinn who points out that throughout the history of the church, traditional apocalyptic thought has insisted that “only real suffering could lead to glory” and argues that the view that believers can escape the wrath of the

---

<sup>72</sup> Crossan, *God and Empire*, 203-206. This reading of 1 Thess. 4:16-17 is also supported by J. Nelson Kraybill in his book, *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation* (Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010), 174-175.

<sup>73</sup> N.T. Wright and Marcus J. Borg, *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions* (New York: HarperOne, 1999), 203.

<sup>74</sup> Crossan, *God and Empire*, 207; and Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 175.

<sup>75</sup> Stephen Sizer, *Zion’s Christian Soldiers?* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 134-135.

end-times can be seen as “cheap grace.”<sup>76</sup> Likewise, Rossing says that the message of Revelation is that “Jesus walks with us through the fire” to help Christians through their hardships and suffering.<sup>77</sup>

It is the concept of the rapture that is central to the othering discourse produced by dispensationalist theology. According to dispensationalist thought, only conservative evangelicals will be raptured. This means that Catholics, Orthodox Christians, liberal Christians, mainline Protestants, and all non-Christians will be “left behind” on earth to suffer through the perils of the Tribulation. The rapture serves to separate the “true” Christians from the “false” ones and creates an “us versus them” dualism that strangely lumps together a greatly diverse and large span of the earth’s population, including Muslims, Hindus, secularists, atheists, and many Christians into one category, nonbelievers, who will all become tools of the Antichrist once the church has been removed from the earth.

Another controversial aspect of dispensationalism, and Darby’s other major innovation, is the view that God has two separate plans for two distinct peoples (and religions). This feature seems to stem from the desire to prove the “literal truth” of every single biblical verse by explaining away certain contradictions in the Hebrew Bible regarding the Jewish Messiah. In *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Hal Lindsey writes that “two completely different portraits of a coming Messiah were described by the Old Testament prophets,” one that he calls the “Suffering Messiah” who will be a “humble servant” who suffers for others and is “rejected by his own people” based on Isaiah 53, and the other, the “Reigning Messiah” of Isaiah 9 and Zechariah 14, is described by

---

<sup>76</sup> Bernard McGinn, *Anti-Christ: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 254.

<sup>77</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 10.

Lindsey as a “conquering king with unlimited power.”<sup>78</sup> Darby’s “two divine plans” concept helps to reconcile these different images of the Messiah by positing that one plan, representing the “Suffering Messiah,” was fulfilled for the church by the death and resurrection of Jesus on the cross and the other plan, representing the “Reigning Messiah,” is to be fulfilled in the future with Israel and the Jewish people, of which all but 144,000 newly converted evangelists will perish, playing a central role. This interpretation is made by claiming that the “prophetic clock” stopped for a nearly two thousand year period and will restart at the time of the rapture.

The idea that the “prophetic clock” stopped for the church dispensation comes from a questionable interpretation of the Book of Daniel. Lindsey takes Daniel 12:9, which says that “the words are closed up and sealed till the end of time” (KJV), as proof that God’s prophecies “would not be clearly understood until the end times” and says that the “key that would unlock the prophetic book would be the current events that would begin to fit into the predicted pattern.”<sup>79</sup> In other words, all those before did not “clearly” understand the meaning, but Lindsey and other contemporary dispensationalists do since they have uncovered the “predicted pattern.” Another passage used to justify this interpretation is Daniel 9:25-27:

Know therefore and understand: from the time that the word went out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the time of an anointed prince, there shall be seven weeks; and for sixty-two weeks it shall be built again with streets and moat, built in a troubled time. After sixty-two weeks, an anointed one shall be cut off and shall have nothing, and the troops of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war. Desolations are decreed. (NRSV)

---

<sup>78</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 28-29.

<sup>79</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 181.

Note 2 to verse 25 in *The Scofield Study Bible* states that “between the sixty-ninth week, after which Messiah was cut off, and the seventieth week...intervenes this entire Church-age.”<sup>80</sup> Thus, according to Scofield, the time between the sixty-ninth week and the seventh week is actually the church age or “time of the Gentiles” which covers a time span that is now nearly two thousand years and will not end until the rapture. The phrase “Messiah was cut off” refers to the rejection of Jesus as the Messiah by the Jews, according to dispensationalists, which led to God’s suspension of prophecy for a time. A “week” in this passage is said to represent seven years, therefore seventy weeks is seventy periods of seven years or 490 years, except for the nearly two millennia long week that we are now experiencing. For dispensationalists, 483 of these, or sixty nine weeks, have passed and the last week, or period of seven years, represents the Tribulation that will occur between the rapture and the Battle of Armageddon.

Darby’s “two divine plans” innovation has been questioned by scholars and theologians alike for its strange idea that God abruptly took a two thousand year break with regards to fulfilling prophecy. Bernard McGinn comments on this major peculiarity by noting that it is built upon the notion that “after predicting ancient history quite fully for many centuries, biblical prophecy took a holiday for almost two thousand years.”<sup>81</sup> Rossing writes that the claims of dispensationalists are based on “dubious gaps of thousands of years” and “their biblical chronology must combine bits and pieces of the Bible written many centuries apart and under very different circumstances into one overarching narrative.”<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>80</sup> *The Scofield Study Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1917), 915.

<sup>81</sup> McGinn, *Anti-Christ*, 253.

<sup>82</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 41.

Dispensationalists, aside from the “two divine plans” and the concept of the rapture, have devised an elaborate outline for the end times. Of course, the catalyst for this is the return of the Jewish people to the holy land, an event that Mark Hitchcock calls “the most prophesied event in end-time passages.”<sup>83</sup> Following the rapture, a seven-year period of tremendous turmoil (the Tribulation) is envisioned that will include earthquakes, warfare, and famine. It is during this period that the Antichrist will emerge. Many believe he will be the head of the EU although some contemporary dispensationalists believe he will be Muslim. He is to give humanity hope by establishing a false peace with Israel. Following this will be a global war that will kill much of the earth’s population. This aspect of dispensationalist thought has led to a peculiar distrust of all peace efforts and of the UN. Dispensationalists further believe that a third Jewish Temple must be constructed on the Temple Mount<sup>84</sup> in order to be desecrated by the Antichrist. These events will culminate, according to dispensationalists, in the Battle of Armageddon where Christ will return triumphantly to defeat the forces of the Antichrist and establish the millennium. Dispensationalists read contemporary events into the vivid apocalyptic imagery of Daniel and Revelation, but due to the fluid nature of international politics these interpretations are constantly reformulated.<sup>85</sup>

---

<sup>83</sup> Mark Hitchcock, *Middle East Burning* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2012), 34.

<sup>84</sup> The third holiest site in Islam, the Dome of the Rock, currently occupies this space and most dispensationalists believe that it must be destroyed before a third Jewish temple can be built.

<sup>85</sup> Going in-depth into the various Bible verses and how dispensationalists relate them to current events is beyond the scope of this study and would take considerable time. Entire books have been written on this subject. For this reason, I have decided to give the most attention to the two main innovations of Darby – the rapture and the “two divine plans” theory – while providing a short summary of the main predictions of contemporary dispensationalism.

### *Cold War Dispensationalism*

The founding of modern Israel and the Six-Day War provided the catalyst for bringing dispensationalism to an even broader Christian audience. Dispensationalists believe that those events were clear and undeniable signs that the end of days were upon us. With a renewed confidence in the ability to decipher biblical prophecy using contemporary events, a new generation of prophecy experts began their quest attempt to uncover the rest of the puzzle and convert more Americans to their particular brand of Christianity.

The first of these new prophecy pundits to gain a large following was Hal Lindsey. With the Cold War in full steam, his work naturally focused heavily on Russia and Eastern Europe. His book, *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970), became the best-selling supposed “non-fiction” book of the decade.<sup>86</sup> As Weber notes, what made Lindsey’s book remarkable was the way in which it reached audiences not typically concerned with eschatology as his book was sold outside Christian-based bookstores in supermarkets and drug stores.<sup>87</sup> Lindsey’s predictions include: the African continent will become communist,<sup>88</sup> an alliance will be formed between the Arab nations and the countries of sub-Saharan Africa in order to invade Israel from the south,<sup>89</sup> and the European Common Market, now the European Union (EU), will represent the “ten-nation confederacy predicted by Daniel and Revelation.<sup>90</sup> Of course, all of these predictions seem highly unlikely today with communism virtually dead as a global political force, the EU now at twenty eight members, and evangelical Christianity growing dramatically in sub-Saharan

---

<sup>86</sup> McGinn, *Antichrist*, 258.

<sup>87</sup> Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 68.

<sup>89</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 72.

<sup>90</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 94.

Africa.<sup>91</sup> Recently, Lindsey penned *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad* (2011), which contains much less biblical prophecy and represents a crude and highly polemical attempt at writing about Muslim history and the doctrine of *jihad*.<sup>92</sup> In the book, he uses Genesis 16:12, which states that Ishmael “will be a wild ass of a man” and “his hand will be against everyone” (NIV), to justify his belief that the Arabs, as descendants of Ishmael, have the “genetic characteristics” that make them inherently savage and violent.<sup>93</sup> This biblically-justified racism is shared by fellow dispensationalist Grant Jeffrey.<sup>94</sup> Instead of addressing the problems with the predictions in *The Late Great Planet Earth*, Lindsey’s newer writings shy away from precision in favor of more ambiguity and he makes new predictions without every acknowledging his previous blunders.<sup>95</sup>

Dispensationalism gained tremendous influence in the American political sphere beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s when conservative evangelicals organized around men like Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell to push back against the cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s, especially in regards to moral issues such as abortion. Many dispensationalists served in the Reagan administration and President Reagan himself was a strong proponent of dispensationalism.<sup>96</sup>

In the 1990s, Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins dwarfed the success of *The Late Great Planet Earth* with their *Left Behind* novels. More than fifty million books have

---

<sup>91</sup> Philip Jenkins, *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity* 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (New York: Oxford University, 2011), 104-115.

<sup>92</sup> For thorough and balanced academic analyses on *jihad*, see David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

<sup>93</sup> Hal Lindsey, *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad* (Washington: WND Books, 2011), 60.

<sup>94</sup> Grant R. Jeffrey, *The Next World War: What Prophecy Reveals About Extreme Islam and the West* (Colorado Springs: WaterBrook Press, 2006), 11.

<sup>95</sup> Lindsey’s changes are well-documented by Stephen Sizer in his *Christian Zionism*, see Chapter 2.

<sup>96</sup> Sizer, *Christian Zionism*, 86-89.

been sold in the series to date demonstrating the expansive influence of the series.<sup>97</sup> These novels brilliantly took dispensationalist predictions about current events and applied them to highly readable fictional prose. Much of the theology outlined in the *Left Behind* books is identical to that of Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth*. *Left Behind* spawned an entire Christian subculture that includes rapture plays, movies, and even video games. The 2006 release of one of those games caused quite a stir in some circles. Interestingly enough, the blog site for the *Left Behind* video game series complains about the lack of family-friendly gaming options for children and the "prevalence of raunchy, violent games with graphic bloodshed and sexual content" and lists *Grand Theft Auto* as one of these troublesome games,<sup>98</sup> yet some reviewers have pointed to the way that bodies remain on the streets continuing to accumulate in the *Left Behind: Eternal Forces* game while they disappear in *Grand Theft Auto* and the way that Christians join militias to fight and kill "global peacekeepers" to show that the *Left Behind* games are just as, if not more, violent.<sup>99</sup> This game demonstrates the extreme dualistic worldview of dispensationalism, one in which even peacekeepers are considered enemies.

### ***Post-9/11 Dispensationalism: A Muslim Antichrist?***

The rapid end to the Cold War meant that many dispensationalist predictions would have to be reformulated or else the whole system would fall apart. The brutal

---

<sup>97</sup> Although this claim comes from the authors and the website for the series, there is no reason to doubt this claim given the popularity and attention the *Left Behind* series has received as well as the visibility of the books in places like Wal-Mart and used book stores. See [http://www.leftbehind.com/05\\_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=447&channelID=17](http://www.leftbehind.com/05_news/viewNews.asp?pageid=447&channelID=17).

<sup>98</sup> Troy Lyndon, "Christian Video Games: Virtuous Alternative to Worldly Values," June 11, 2010, <<http://www.leftbehindgames.com/blog/?p=17>> (accessed April 8, 2014).

<sup>99</sup> James W. Jones, "Eternal Warfare: Violence on the Mind of American Apocalyptic Christianity," *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, ed. Charles B. Strozier, David M. Terman, and James W. Jones (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 101.

attacks of September 11, 2001 by al-Qaeda propelled this revamping towards Islam. Some prominent preachers from the older generation of dispensationalists, like Lindsey and Hagee, still adhere to the old predictions of a European Antichrist even if they give Islam a larger role in their eschatology. Yet, several more recent prophecy speculators are now predicting a Muslim Antichrist that is to emerge from a Middle Eastern nation. These include Perry Stone, Joel Richardson, James Stone, and Walid Shoebat. Shoebat will be discussed in detail in the next chapter. The writings of these men make a number of speculative leaps that utilize Islamic eschatology to prove their own claims regarding biblical prophecy.<sup>100</sup>

Probably the most popular of these writers is Joel Richardson, who has published several books claiming that the Antichrist will be Muslim and that Islam represents the false religion that will be promoted by the Antichrist during the last days.<sup>101</sup> In *The Islamic Antichrist* (2009), Richardson begins with a common rhetorical technique used in dispensationalist writings about Islam – he claims that he has a number of Muslim friends, that many Muslims are good people, and that his book is not meant to bash Muslims, though he does go on to admit that his work is polemical.<sup>102</sup> Then he proceeds to link Islam to every ounce of evil predicted in dispensationalist eschatology. Richardson’s thesis is that Islam is “the primary vehicle that will be used by Satan to fulfill the

---

<sup>100</sup> For in-depth analyses of Islamic eschatology and the way in which 9/11 and the subsequent US wars in Afghanistan and Iraq have fueled a new wave of apocalyptic speculations throughout the Middle East, see Jean-Pierre Filiu, *Apocalypse in Islam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011) and David Cook, *Contemporary Muslim Apocalyptic Literature* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005). It must be noted that, like their American counterparts, Muslim apocalyptic writers lie outside the mainstream theological discourse and, unlike their American counterparts, these Muslim end times speculators have yet to exert any substantial influence on the political structures of their respective nations.

<sup>101</sup> Richardson’s real name is unknown. He writes under this pseudonym due to alleged threats from Muslim extremists.

<sup>102</sup> Joel Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast* (Los Angeles: WND Books, 2009), *cclxxxiv-cclxxxvi*.

prophecies of the Bible about the future political/religious/military system of the Antichrist that will overwhelm the entire world prior to the second coming of Jesus Christ.”<sup>103</sup> Richardson scours sources on Islamic eschatology to support his theory that the Islamic Mahdi is the Christian Antichrist and that Muslim descriptions of Jesus (Isa) match Christian descriptions of the False Prophet of Revelation. To support his claim about the Mahdi, Richardson finds Islamic sources stating that the Mahdi will rule from Jerusalem, establish a seven-year peace deal, and that he will ride a white horse.<sup>104</sup> He then compares vague descriptions of both figures as great spiritual leaders that will be loved by all to further advance his case. Richardson’s selection of Muslim sources is severely limited in his choosing of only those which appear to support his claims and he ignores the immense diversity of opinions found in Islamic eschatological writings.<sup>105</sup>

After making the link between the Mahdi and the Antichrist, Richardson moves on to argue that the Jesus of Islam is actually the False Prophet of Revelation. His argument is based on the idea that in Islam Jesus returns as a “radical Muslim.”<sup>106</sup> To support this claim, he quotes Muslim sources that state that Jesus will lead Muslims in prayer, perform the *haji*, and institute the Islamic legal and ethical code know as *shari’a* throughout the world.<sup>107</sup> He then compares his selected Islamic sources with common dispensationalist descriptions of these figures to finalize his connection.

In a similar work, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist* (2012), Richardson focuses almost exclusively on biblical passages and moves away from Islamic sources. Richardson begins this work forcefully stating the he is “firmly

---

<sup>103</sup> Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist*, 12.

<sup>104</sup> Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist*, 27-29.

<sup>105</sup> See footnote 97.

<sup>106</sup> Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist*, 52.

<sup>107</sup> Richardson, *The Islamic Antichrist*, 53-54.

convinced that Islam is the single greatest challenge that the Church will face before the return of Jesus” and that “Islam is anti-Christ to its very core.”<sup>108</sup> Throughout this book, he goes through every passage typically read by dispensationalists as referring to contemporary events and links them to Islam and the Middle East. One particularly weak historical analysis involves the fourth beast/kingdom from the passage in Daniel where the prophet interprets the dream of Nebuchadnezzar (Dan. 2:31-35). As Richardson notes, most throughout church history have identified this kingdom as the Roman Empire, yet he believes that interpretation is faulty based on Daniel 7:23 which states that the fourth kingdom will “different from all other kingdoms, it shall devour the whole earth, and trample it down, and break into pieces” (NRSV). According to Richardson, this passage cannot refer to the Roman Empire since the Romans were “tolerant” of other religions and cultures when they conquered. The passage can only be speaking of the Islamic caliphate since Islam is a “totalitarian ideology” that has always “crushed and erased the cultures and religions of the peoples it conquered.”<sup>109</sup> Naturally, any respected historian of Islam would balk at such a haphazard and oversimplified analysis, yet it is easy to see the othering discourse at work here. The next to last chapter of this book, called “Loving Muslims,” again stresses the need to love Muslims as neighbors just as Jesus instructed, however, a few pages into this chapter one finds a subsection titled “The Doctrines of Islam: The Doctrines of Antichrist,”<sup>110</sup> which again reiterates the dominant theme found in both of Richardson’s books – that everything Islam says about the end of days is exactly what Christianity says about the Antichrist and his followers. It is, indeed, strange

---

<sup>108</sup> Joel Richardson, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist* (Washington: WND Books, 2012), iii.

<sup>109</sup> Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 60-61.

<sup>110</sup> Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 252.

to claim that Christians should love Muslims and then link their entire religion to all the future evils predicted in the Bible.

Another work predicting a Muslim Antichrist is *Unleashing the Beast: The Coming Fanatical Dictator and His Ten-Nation Coalition* by evangelist Perry Stone. This work follows much of the same arguments as those made by Richardson. Stone also links sources stating that the Islamic Mahdi will ride a white horse and will rule for seven years to biblical prophecy about the Antichrist.<sup>111</sup> He also believes that the uprisings of the Arab Spring represent the beginnings of the “formation of the kingdom of the beast” – in other words, a new Islamic caliphate – “where the Antichrist will set up his final empire as prophesied.”<sup>112</sup> Mark Hitchcock also sees the recent Mideast uprisings as a sign of a coming caliphate stating that “we are naïve if we fail to recognize that the real impetus behind the so-called Arab Spring could be much deeper and much more sinister.”<sup>113</sup> A renewed Islamic caliphate is central to the thought of post-9/11 dispensationalism. Many believe belief that the ten-nation coalition, formerly believed to be the EU, will be a Muslim empire with the Antichrist as its leader. Unfortunately, dispensationalists overlook the historical fact that Islamic unity was very short lived and gloss over the enmity between Shi’ism and Sunni Islam that has been around for nearly as long as Islam itself. While it is true that some fundamentalist Muslim groups seek a restored caliphate, the likelihood of a renewed Muslim empire in the age of nationalism and nation-states seems highly doubtful.

---

<sup>111</sup> Perry Stone, *Unleashing the Beast: The Coming Fanatical Dictator and His Ten-Nation Coalition* (Lake Mary: FrontLine, 2011), 134 and 136.

<sup>112</sup> Stone, *Unleashing the Beast*, 95.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Hitchcock, *Middle East Burning* (Eugene: Harvest House, 2012), 13.

In Grant Jeffrey's book, *The Next World War: What Prophecy Reveals about Extreme Islam and the West*, the author dedicates an entire chapter to arguing that *jihad* is the sixth pillar of Islam. A strange claim to any learned scholar of Islam, indeed, this claim would sound strange to many Muslims themselves.<sup>114</sup> A glance at the notes for the chapter demonstrates that not a single respected scholar of Islam was cited for this claim. Instead, Jeffrey uses neoconservative heavyweights such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington, the very outdated work of Edward Gibbon, and professional polemicist Stephen Emerson.<sup>115</sup> Jeffrey's book stops short of connecting the Islamic Mahdi to the biblical Antichrist, but he does use Islamic eschatology to bolster dispensationalism by claiming that Islam predicts many of the same things as the Bible.<sup>116</sup> In an earlier book, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (1997), Jeffrey barely mentions Islam or the Arabs except briefly in relation to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. Instead, an entire chapter (Ch. 7) is dedicated to a prophesized war between Israel and Russia<sup>117</sup> providing yet another example of the dramatic shift in dispensationalist thought following 9/11.

One work, *Islamic Apocalypse: How Islam will Fulfill End Time Prophecy*, is rife with falsehoods and distortions. This title follows similar arguments as those made by Richardson and Stone, though they are made with much less research and sophistication. The book's author, James Stone, falsely states that the Qur'an has 666 verses in order to justify the claim that the number is representative of the Qur'an and what he calls the "false trinity of the Antichrist, the false prophet, and Satan." In reality, the Qur'an

---

<sup>114</sup> See footnote 86.

<sup>115</sup> Jeffrey, *The Next World War*, 55-68, 192.

<sup>116</sup> See Chapter 3 "Koranic Prophecies of Islam's Defeat" from Jeffrey, *The Next World War*.

<sup>117</sup> Grant R. Jeffrey, *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny* (Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1997).

contains over six thousand verses.<sup>118</sup> His logic is that seven is the number of God according to the Bible and that six is the number of man since God created man on the sixth day. Stone also claims that the “mark of the best” will be a tattoo that men and women will be forced to wear to show allegiance to Islam. Moreover, Stone appears to have no awareness that the permissibility of tattoos in Islam is controversial and debatable.<sup>119</sup> No evidence is provided for these claims other than the feelings of the author.

Most of the works examined here are not obscure titles; they are books available for purchase today at major American booksellers including Barnes & Nobles. Moreover, the rise of online booksellers like Amazon.com means that works can even be self-published and still reach a wide audience. In addition, the most prominent of these dispensationalist writers have written numerous articles for popular right-wing news sites such as World Net Daily (WND) and The Blaze, which is owned and operated by conservative firebrand Glenn Beck. It has also been noted that Richardson provides much of the end-times prophecy promoted by Beck on his programs.<sup>120</sup>

### *Dispensationalism as an othering discourse*

There is a great deal of othering involved in dispensationalism. As noted earlier, the event known as the rapture will serve as a boundary separating the “true” Christians from those who are only “nominally” Christian. It is precisely this othering that allows

---

<sup>118</sup> Anna M. Gade, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (New York: Oneworld, 2010), 1.

<sup>119</sup> This work has no page numbers, no biographical information for the author, no publishing information, and no bibliography. The book appears to be self-published. I include this work because it is readily available through Amazon.com and because it fits with other similar literature. To find this book, search for “Islamic Apocalypse” on Amazon’s webpage.

<sup>120</sup> Ben Dimiero and Terry Krepel, “Who is Joel Richardson, Beck’s End Times Prophet?” February 17, 2011, *Media Matters for America*, <<http://mediamatters.org/research/2011/02/17/who-is-joel-richardson-becks-end-times-prophet/176590>> (accessed April 8, 2014).

those like Erick Stakelbeck to lump gays, progressives, and Muslim extremists together and make the preposterous claim that they are actively working to “destroy Judeo-Christian civilization.” All non-dispensationalist, non-conservative, non-evangelical Christians will be “left behind” and become “tools of the Antichrist.” The worldview of dispensationalists like Hal Lindsey and Joel Richardson envisions a stark black-and-white worldview with no room for gray. One is either with Christ or the Antichrist. No one is allowed to sit on the sidelines without choosing a team. There must be a Battle of Armageddon pitting the forces of Christ against the forces of the Antichrist, therefore, there must be an enemy or an “other,” which dispensationalists are constantly attempting to identify.

The use of biblical prophecy to explain current world events, or the reverse – using current world events to validate biblical prophecy, is a power recruiting tool for dispensationalists, which facilitates their converting of other Christians, and even some non-Christians, to their worldview. Linking the Bible’s passages to current events gives the Christian canon a seemingly logical contemporary relevance. When a dispensationalist theologian connects Islam in any way to the prophecies of the Bible, and this is combined with the overwhelmingly negative portrayals of Muslims in the media, it becomes very easy for their claims about Muslims and the Bible to become credible with a widespread audience.

A look at a few of the comments made by dispensationalists about Islam will shed some light upon the way in which Muslims are presented as the “other.” Franklin Graham has called Islam a “very evil and wicked religion,” and Pat Robertson has said that

Muslims are “motivated by demonic power.”<sup>121</sup> Former General William G. Boykin said, in reference to a Somali Muslim warlord who claimed Allah would prevent his capture before being eventually taken, “I knew my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was real and his was an idol.”<sup>122</sup> Spector argues that these are nothing less than “expressions of a theology of cosmic war.”<sup>123</sup> Othering can also be found in the way that some dispensationalist writers use one particular bible verse, Gen. 16:12, to justify anti-Arab racism. This verse states that Ishmael will be a “wild ass of a man with his hand against everyone” (NRSV). Richardson, Jeffrey, and Lindsey all cite this verse to explain the supposed “war-loving, violent” nature of the Arab people.<sup>124</sup> These examples show how the rigid dualistic worldview of dispensationalism merges almost seamlessly with Islamophobic ideology.

### ***Conclusion***

In summary, for much of American history and continuing through today, dispensationalism has had a dramatic impact on American culture and politics. The widespread popularity of *The Late Great Planet Earth* and *Left Behind*, combined with the many dispensationalists serving in powerful government positions, has allowed dispensationalist ideas to disseminate beyond Christian circles. Othering is a major component of dispensationalist thought since there must be an Antichrist to oppose Christ. Dispensationalist biblical interpreters adapt their attempts to identify this enemy in relation to the geopolitical climate of the day, which is always fluid. This fluidity has led

---

<sup>121</sup> Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, 76-77.

<sup>122</sup> Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, 78.

<sup>123</sup> Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel*, 76.

<sup>124</sup> See Jeffrey, *The Next World War*, 11; Lindsey, *The Everlasting Hatred*, 60; and Richardson, *Mideast Beast*, 249.

to a shift in dispensationalist thought regarding from where and from which group of people the Antichrist will emerge. As the primary focus of American foreign policy has shifted from communism to terrorism, so has the primary enemy of dispensationalism. Yet, dispensationalists fail to distinguish militant Muslim extremists from Islam as a whole.

Today, dispensationalist teachings are mainly found in non-denominational evangelical, Pentecostal, some Baptist and other charismatic churches. Catholic, Orthodox, Lutheran, Presbyterian, Methodists, Episcopal, and other mainline denominations do not teach dispensationalism. According to Timothy Weber, roughly a third of American evangelicals are followers of dispensationalism.<sup>125</sup> *The Left Behind* franchise has produced a number of bestselling novels and video games. A high profile Hollywood film starring Nicholas Cage is set for release in 2014. This fact alone should serve as a reminder of the tremendous influence of dispensationalism in American culture. Weber also argues that following the rebirth of Israel, dispensation-alists stopped merely observing and predicting and “became important players in their own game” believing that they could “make sure the game ended according to the divine script.”<sup>126</sup> While preachers like John Hagee vehemently deny such motives, his organization, Christians United for Israel (CUFI), and his lobbying efforts aimed at starting a war with Iran based on biblical prophecy<sup>127</sup> is strong evidence that Weber may be correct.

It should also be noted that while many Americans may believe in the rapture and a coming Antichrist figure, many do not necessarily follow in lockstep with dispensation-

---

<sup>125</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 9.

<sup>126</sup> Weber, *On the Road to Armageddon*, 15.

<sup>127</sup> Sarah Posner, “Pastor Strangelove,” May 21, 2006, *The American Prospect*, <<http://prospect.org/article/pastor-strangelove>> (accessed April 8, 2014).

alist preacher such as John Hagee, Hal Lindsey, and others. In fact, some dispensationalists and Christian Zionists,<sup>128</sup> including former US president Jimmy Carter,<sup>129</sup> have worked tirelessly on behalf of the Palestinian people and do not adhere to all of the beliefs outlined in this chapter. Yaakov Ariel points out that some conservative Christians from Southern Baptist and Assemblies of God congregations have performed charitable services on behalf of the Palestinians.<sup>130</sup> Likewise, this study is not focused upon every American that believes in the rapture nor do I make any claim that those quoted in this study automatically represent the millions of dispensationalists in America. This study is about a particular group of dispensationalists promoting a viral form of Islamophobia through their books, websites, and appearances on TV and radio. It is about how the influence of those dispensationalists extends far beyond Christian circles. Many conspiracies involving the UN and world government originate from dispensationalist thought. Many secular-minded libertarians find their way onto sites such as The Blaze and WND and read articles about Islam written by dispensationalists posing as experts on the subjects they are writing about. The next chapter will discuss a group of self-proclaimed “ex-Muslim extremists” who claim that they converted to evangelical Christianity and are now trying to warn the world about the “evils” of Islam.

---

<sup>128</sup> Christian Zionism refers to Christian support for Zionism and the state of Israel. Most dispensationalists are also Christian Zionists, but Christian Zionists are not automatically considered dispensationalists since a Christian can support Israel and the Jewish people based on a verse such as Gen. 12:3 without believing in dispensationalist ideas such as the rapture.

<sup>129</sup> Jimmy Carter has written several books on this issue including *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007) and *We Can Have Peace in the Holy Land: A Plan that Will Work* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2010).

<sup>130</sup> Yaakov S. Ariel, “An Unexpected Alliance: Christian Zionism and its Historical Significance,” *Modern Judaism* Vol. 26, No. 1 (Feb 2006): 81.

## Chapter 3

### “Ex-Muslims” Warn America: Rhetoric and Reality

In recent years several Christians of Middle Eastern descent have entered the public discourse on Islam claiming to be “ex-Muslim extremists” who have converted to evangelical Christianity. They claim that the God of Christianity has filled the void that Allah could not fill and that they are now on a mission to warn America about the “evils” of Islam. Their stories reflect a black-and-white worldview in which Islam represents everything “wicked” and “evil” in this world while Christianity represents everything “good” and “pure.” The rhetoric they use is strikingly similar to that used by professional anti-Islam propagandists and this group has a close relationship to Christian dispensationalism. This chapter will examine the biographies and rhetoric of these “ex-Muslim radicals” through their own writings and appearances in the media. As the stories of these figures have undergone scrutiny, many of their claims have been found to be outright falsehoods or at least highly problematic. It is this author’s belief that these people have used their Middle Eastern ethnicities to their advantage economically as well as to the advantage of dispensationalism through their othering of Muslims. According to Herman and Chomsky, “former radicals who have come to “see the light” represent a “class of experts whose prominence is largely a function of serviceability to power.”<sup>131</sup> Their stories serve a powerful rhetorical function in the service of Islamophobia.

In order to illustrate this rhetorical function more clearly, it is necessary to refer back to the early modern period for an example which offers some strong parallels, that

---

<sup>131</sup> Herman and Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent*, 24.

of Barbary captivity narratives written by British subjects. These narratives purport to describe the events surrounding the capture of Englishmen by pirates from Muslim lands and claim to provide insider information about Islamic culture. There were some authentic tales of Barbary captivity and many accounts did, indeed, contain some factual information about Muslim culture. Despite this, many also were filled with anti-Muslim bias and overt falsehoods.

### *Barbary Captivity Narratives*

During the early modern period, the British began to interact with Muslims and learn about Islamic culture on a relatively widespread basis. According to Maxime Rodinson, during this period many Europeans began to develop a more objective view of Islam and Muslims due to increased interactions in the diplomatic and economic spheres as well as a dramatic increase in travel to Muslim lands.<sup>132</sup> This period in Europe also witnessed the establishment of Arabic chairs at universities while printing presses began to translate Arabic works into European languages.<sup>133</sup> This was no doubt troubling to the Protestant establishment in England, which helps to explain the popularity of Barbary captivity narratives in church circles. Many captivity narratives were written at this time as the increase in trade between England and North Africa also brought about a dramatic increase in piracy and the capture of English subjects for ransom or trade. Estimates for the number of British captives taken by Barbary pirates vary, but evidence suggests

---

<sup>132</sup> Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 37.

<sup>133</sup> Richard Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Dramatic Story of the Earliest Encounters between Christians and Muslims* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 155.

thousands.<sup>134</sup> Because of the poor economic conditions back home, according to Nabil Matar, many captives converted to Islam and integrated into Muslim culture where opportunity was plentiful.<sup>135</sup> Daniel Vitkus notes that adult conversions to Islam were rarely forced upon the captives,<sup>136</sup> so claims to that effect often found in the captivity narratives are most likely false and should be considered sensationalism. Many captives were even given a degree of freedom to move about cities and start businesses under certain circumstances.<sup>137</sup>

Church leaders in England played a crucial role in getting captives released and returned to England through fundraising campaigns which, according to Linda Colley, were instrumental in shaping public opinions about Muslims since audiences were exposed to sermons and speeches about encountering the other.<sup>138</sup> Captivity narratives were most likely read at these events to draw sympathy for British prisoners held in “strange” lands by “strange” people. “Faced with the worrying reality that Islam strongly appealed to many Christians, English readers turned for comfort to a series of captivity narratives that testified against the allure of Islam and promised that the Protestant deity would deliver English slaves from bondage, if only they kept the faith” says Vitkus.<sup>139</sup>

There is strong evidence that the rhetoric of the Barbary captivity narratives worked. Matar argues that during this period Englishmen created a dominant negative

---

<sup>134</sup> See Robert C. Davis, *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2003) and Nabil Matar, *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

<sup>135</sup> Daniel J. Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 2.

<sup>136</sup> Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 111.

<sup>137</sup> Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

<sup>138</sup> Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 75.

<sup>139</sup> Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 111.

image of Muslims primarily within the contexts of popular literature and Christian theology since government and commercial documents do not show the same level of anti-Muslim bigotry and stereotyping.<sup>140</sup> G.A. Starr argues that the captivity narratives helped to create an image of the Barbary republics as a “hell on earth.”<sup>141</sup> Joe Snader says that the captivity narratives played a major role in Protestant propaganda from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.<sup>142</sup> Historian Norman Daniel, in analyzing the way in which Islam was imagined in Europe, says that polemics were written primarily to uphold faith and were meant to scare those at a distance from Muslim lands, but also protect those Christians who found themselves in their domain from becoming infected by the culture.<sup>143</sup> The captivity narratives of this period should be understood as an effort to dramatically alter the discourse about Islam and prevent Englishmen from being lured into their realm.

These narratives themselves routinely portray non-Protestant groups, for example, Jews, Moors, Negroes, Turks, and Catholics, as the other in opposition to the “virtuous, pious, and freedom-loving” Protestant Englishmen. Many of these narratives contain strong anti-Muslim/anti-Turk sentiments. Sodomy is a frequent charge hurled against the Muslim people encountered by the British captives. These narratives represent an othering discourse in which the Protestant Englishmen are the “us” and everyone else, especially Muslims, are the “them.”

---

<sup>140</sup> Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen*, 13.

<sup>141</sup> Starr, G.A. "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1, November 1965: 35.

<sup>142</sup> Joe Snader, *Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 19.

<sup>143</sup> Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (London: Oneworld, 1993), 295.

Here are but a few examples from these narratives. In John Rawlins' *The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Algiers* (1622), whenever the author describes the Turks doing something positive, they are described as "Christian-like."<sup>144</sup> But more often than not, they are described as cruel and barbaric. The writer also says that the reader should not be surprised by the "inhumanity" of the Turks and Moors since they "hate all Christians and Christianity."<sup>145</sup>

William Okeley's *Ebenezer; or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley* (1675) contains a great deal of biblical references and portrays Muhammad as a cobbler who simply threw together different elements from various religions to create his own faith. When the author attributes positive traits to Muslims, he does so in a way that reverses the positive back to negative. For instance, in describing mosques the text says that "their temples are also very magnificent and much too good for their religion, whose practice and conversation speaks them to say, there is no God."<sup>146</sup> Here the author plays on the *shahada*, or statement of faith, said by Muslims. The author conveniently leaves out the rest of the phrase which in full says "there is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger." In describing their method of picking slaves to buy from the market, he refers to his captors as "rational creatures," an odd mix of terminology that combines a positive trait with a word suggesting them to be animals.<sup>147</sup>

---

<sup>144</sup> Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 102.

<sup>145</sup> Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 119.

<sup>146</sup> Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 149.

<sup>147</sup> Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 151.

In Joseph Pitts' *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans, with an Account of the Author's Being Taken Captive* (1704), the author charges Muslims with sodomy claiming that they are not pleased with the "natural" use of women.<sup>148</sup> The author also describes the Moors as lazy, belligerent, uncivilized, and dirty. Pitts writes that he converted to Islam and performed the *hajj*, giving him access to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. His conversion to Islam gives him credibility as an insider. Near the end of his account he attributes his conversion to the devil working inside him and says that it was God's providence that brought him back into the Christian fold.

The account titled *The Adventures of (Mr. T.S.) An English Merchant, Taken Prisoner by the Turks of Algiers* (1670), "offers a narrative pattern remarkably suited to the nationalist fantasies of its historical moment," according to Gerald MacLean.<sup>149</sup> In this narrative, the charge of sodomy is once again leveled against the Moors.<sup>150</sup> The protagonist reflects on his past freedom that was robbed from him by the Muslims of North Africa and continually presents them as a sexually promiscuous people, even going so far as to claim that he became a sex slave of one of the king's wives, a claim that must be considered sensational.<sup>151</sup>

There are, indeed, numerous examples from which to choose; however, this brief sampling will suffice for our purpose here. The majority of captivity narratives from this period contain clear religious rhetoric designed to elevate Protestant Christianity and warn readers about the "evils" of Islam and the "barbaric" nature of Muslims. Othering is

---

<sup>148</sup> Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 236.

<sup>149</sup> Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 182.

<sup>150</sup> MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 196.

<sup>151</sup> MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 196-199.

a central element to these texts. The religious rhetoric and sensationalization is readily apparent because so many other travel accounts from this period take a vastly different tone.<sup>152</sup> The captivity narratives served as powerful tools for religious leaders seeking to undermine the appeal of Islam found in other literature and for those Britons seeking better opportunities abroad. It will be apparent after examining the stories of these self-proclaimed “ex-Muslim extremists” that the same rhetorical strategies are used. They create a strong anti-Muslim othering discourse while also using their Middle Eastern backgrounds to gain credibility as insiders similarly to the way the writers of captivity narratives used the trope of captivity to legitimize their “insider” status.

The rhetoric from these captivity narratives played an instrumental role in creating an image of Islam and Muslims as the other for American Christians even during the colonial period. According to Thomas Kidd, Barbary captivity narratives were a main source of information on Islam for the early Americans and these stories were “so common that alms-seekers among the urban poor in colonial America occasionally used them to curry favor.”<sup>153</sup> In his book *American Christians and Islam*, Kidd posits that Islam is especially threatening to evangelical Christians since Islam is also “aggressively evangelistic” and the only other major competitor on the world stage, thus leading many to believe that if Muslims cannot be converted, they must be defeated during the end times.<sup>154</sup> As Kidd’s book demonstrates, the failure of Christian missionary efforts in the Middle East, combined with a dramatic rise in the popularity of dispensationalism, has led many to believe the latter.

---

<sup>152</sup> See MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel* and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

<sup>153</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 2-3.

<sup>154</sup> Kidd, *American Christians and Islam*, xxii.

### ***“Ex-Muslims” Sound the Alarm***

Since 9/11 a particular group of Christians with Middle Eastern names has gained notoriety in American churches and in the media with lofty stories about their upbringing in “radical Islam.” This group includes Reza Safa, Walid Shoebat, Kamal Saleem, Ergun and Emir Caner. The stories and rhetorical techniques deployed by them are all strikingly similar. Each of them has been promoted by dispensationalists with some openly advocating those beliefs themselves. A look at some of their writings will demonstrate both their connection with dispensationalism and the othering inherent in their narratives.

One of the first of these “ex-radicals” to emerge was Reza Safa. His book *Inside Islam: Exposing and Reaching the World of Islam* focuses mainly on converting Muslims to Christianity and demonstrating that Christianity is the superior faith, yet it still contains strong polemical language. His dispensationalist leanings are found only in a single passage late in the book where he states that God has separate plans for each the church, the Gentile nations, and the Jewish people which “must be fulfilled before the end of time.”<sup>155</sup> Safa’s anti-Muslim ideology is less concealed. Very early in the book, he writes that “by creating terror and death, Islam has been able to control and bind some one billion people around the world”<sup>156</sup> and “the spirit that advocated Islam is a bloodthirsty spirit” whose “purpose is to create hate, sorrows, mourning, and confusion.”<sup>157</sup> Safa also states that “true Islam is militant” and that Shiites believe that the only way to establish justice is “through bloodshed.”<sup>158</sup> He deploys the common Islamophobic strategy of linking the Arabic/Muslim name for God (Allah) with the polytheism attacked in the

---

<sup>155</sup> Reza F. Safa, *Inside Islam: Exposing and Reaching the World of Islam* (Lake Mary: FrontLine, 1996), 140.

<sup>156</sup> Safa, *Inside Islam*, 48-49.

<sup>157</sup> Safa, *Inside Islam*, 36.

<sup>158</sup> Safa, *Inside Islam*, 40 and 42.

Hebrew Bible (eg. the deity called Baal) in an attempt to discredit the idea that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.<sup>159</sup> Of course, Safa’s discussion fails to realize that the term “Allah” is simply formed by combining the definite particle *al* meaning “the” to the term *ilah* meaning “god” to produce the definitive *Allah* meaning “The God.” This is similar to the indefinite “god” versus the definite “God” used in English. Safa also seems to ignore that Christians have used the term “Allah” to refer to the Abrahamic God for centuries.<sup>160</sup>

Ergun and Emir Caner present an interesting case since they are the only ones among this group who have definitively never lived in a Muslim-majority country, despite telling public audiences that they were raised in Turkey and indoctrinated in “radical Islam” – a story they told evangelical audiences until 2010.<sup>161</sup> In their coauthored book, *Unveiling Islam*, the brothers write that Ergun was born in Sweden while Emir was born in Ohio after the family moved to America.<sup>162</sup> The profile for Emir Caner found on the website for Truett-McConnell College, where he has served as president since 2008, says that Emir was born in 1970.<sup>163</sup> One YouTube video documents the various dates that Ergun has given for his arrival in America despite evidence that he emigrated here at a very young age.<sup>164</sup> While he has claimed on various occasions that he did not arrive until 1978 or 1979, naturalization paperwork for his father shows that he entered the US in

---

<sup>159</sup> Safa, *Inside Islam*, 21-23.

<sup>160</sup> Christian theologian Miroslav Volf provides an excellent analysis of the debate on whether Christians and Muslims worship the same God in his book *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

<sup>161</sup> William Wan and Michelle Boorstein, “Liberty U. removing Ergun Caner as seminary dean over contradictory statements,” *The Washington Post*, June 30, 2010, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/29/AR2010062905331.html>> (accessed December 10, 2012).

<sup>162</sup> Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 17.

<sup>163</sup> See <<http://www.truett.edu/abouttmc/meet-dr-caner.html>> (accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>164</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vv2blb8Dq28>> (accessed March 29, 2014).

1969.<sup>165</sup> And since Ergun graduated from high school in 1984,<sup>166</sup> that would mean he arrived at a very young age and thus would not remember any culture other than American.

After 9/11, the brothers realized they could make a lucrative career by altering their own biography and claiming they were raised in a fundamentalist environment. They have published several books about Islam and have given speeches at universities, churches, and in front of law enforcement and military personnel. Nathan Lean writes about several of these speeches in his book *The Islamophobia Industry*. According to Lean, Ergun Caner's speeches were filled with tales of how he and his brother were raised to hate all Jews, Christians, and the West. His speaking engagements also harshly rebuked the idea that "Allah" and "Jehovah" is the same God. Lean notes that their book *Unveiling Islam* sold nearly 200,000 copies due to its popularity among evangelical Christians.<sup>167</sup> The notoriety of the brothers helped propel Ergun to the position of dean at the Liberty University Baptist Theological Seminary in 2005, a job he held until 2010 when his fraudulent story began to crumble under further scrutiny.

Much of the credit for exposing Ergun's bogus persona belongs to another evangelical leader critical of Islam,<sup>168</sup> James White, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries. White worked with a native speaker of Arabic to examine the speeches of Ergun and found that many of the supposed Arabic phrase uttered during his talks were

---

<sup>165</sup> See <[http://www.witnessesuntome.com/caner/Acar\\_Caner\\_Naturalization\\_duplicate-compressed.PDF](http://www.witnessesuntome.com/caner/Acar_Caner_Naturalization_duplicate-compressed.PDF)>.

<sup>166</sup> Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry*, 89.

<sup>167</sup> Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry*, 84-86.

<sup>168</sup> Although White is critical of Islam and speaks as a Christian apologist, he does so in a seemingly more honest manner and refrains from engaging in the harsh polemics of those such as Caner, whom he believes does a disservice to the gospel of Jesus Christ with his dishonesty.

simply gibberish.<sup>169</sup> This revelation along with other discrepancies in his story led to his firing from Liberty University in 2010.<sup>170</sup> The websites of these men no longer tell tales of former Muslim radicalism or of being raised in Turkey, only mentioning that they converted to Christianity as teenagers and were called to the ministry shortly thereafter.

The othering of Islam promoted by the Caner brothers is readily apparent in the titles of their books – *Out of the Crescent Shadows: Leading Muslim Women into the Light of Christ* and *Voices behind the Veil: The World of Islam through the Eyes of Women*. In the first title, the word “shadow” representative of darkness is associated with Islam and “light” with Christianity implying the “good/evil” dualism presented in their works. The second title seems to utilize the veil as a symbol of the supposed “imprisonment” or “oppression” of women in Islamic society.

Their most popular book is *Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs*. The book, like their talks, presents a strong othering discourse of Islam and Muslims. In describing their Christian mother’s marriage to a Muslim father, they state that it was “doomed from the beginning, a clash of cultures” implying that Christian and Muslim culture are completely and utterly incompatible with one another.<sup>171</sup> They claim that their father was forced to disown his sons after converting to Christianity due to Islamic teachings.<sup>172</sup> At several points in the book, the authors make statements aimed at convincing the reader that their view is “objective.” For example, on page 171 they state “to think of Muslims as a homogenous group is erroneous and fails to do justice to the

---

<sup>169</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZYaFU9EDUEI>> (accessed April 27, 2014); and Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry*, 88-90.

<sup>170</sup> See Wan and Boorstein, *Washington Post*.

<sup>171</sup> Ergun and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider’s Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 17.

<sup>172</sup> Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 15.

diversity of beliefs embraced within the religion” and on page 176 they write “to equate all of Islam with religious persecution...would be an incredible overstatement.” Despite these accurate and balanced statements, their book still deploys sensationalized titles and subtitles such as “Muhammad: The Militant Messenger” (Chapter Two), “The First Revelation: Divine or Demonic?” and “The Story of Islam: A Trail of Blood” (Chapter Three). The third chapter, designed to be a broad survey of Islamic history, conveniently turns a violent period in the history of Christianity into an Islamic concept stating that “the Crusades arose because Christians adopted the Islamic doctrine of jihad.”<sup>173</sup> In their conclusion to this chapter, they make several problematic claims and overly broad generalizations with regards to the concept of *jihad* and the role of war in expanding Islam, topics which have been given ample attention by many excellent scholars.<sup>174</sup>

The Caner brothers make no mention of biblical prophecy anywhere in this book or in their public speeches, yet their dispensationalist leanings can be gleaned from a short passage where they attack the Christians who critique their “adamant stand with Israel” and their belief that the Jews represent “God’s chosen Priest Nation” by calling them “replacement theologians.”<sup>175</sup> Dispensationalists use the term “replacement theology” pejoratively to attack the view that has been the traditional mainstream Christian teaching throughout church history – that the promise God made to Abraham and the Jewish people was fulfilled by Jesus. They reject those Christians that do not give the Jews and the state of Israel a central role to play in the end times. The term “replacement theology” is only used by dispensationalist Christians.

---

<sup>173</sup> Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 72.

<sup>174</sup> Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 77. See footnote 89.

<sup>175</sup> Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 242-243.

Kamal Saleem is another self-proclaimed ex-terrorist turned evangelist. Saleem's alleged biography is so outrageous that a columnist for the *Kansas City Star* dubbed him the "Forrest Gump of the Middle East."<sup>176</sup> His personal website provides the following outline of his life:

Born in 1957 into a large Sunni Muslim Lebanese family... Kamal Saleem was breastfed Islamic radicalism by his mother, and taught to hate Jews and Christians by his father. His cousin was the Grand Mufti of Beirut. Recruited by the Muslim Brotherhood for jihadi militancy as a small child, he completed his first bloody terror mission into Israel for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at the age of 7. Kamal ran important terror operations as a young man in the service of Yassir Arafat, under the coaching Abu Yussif and Abu Zayed (PLO/Fatah). He has worked for, and dined with, Muhamar Kaddafi (Libya). He has "carried the ball" for Baath Party leaders and military attaches of Saddam Hussein and Hafez al Assad (dictator of Syria), for Saudi Arabian sheikhs and princes, and for Abdul Rahman (Muslim Brotherhood). Kamal Saleem fought with the Afghan Mujahadeen for victory against the Soviets... before he and his patrons turned their attention to the destruction of the West – and Western freedoms – through Islamicization. Above all, Kamal thirsted for jihadic death to America.<sup>177</sup>

The first thing noticeable about Saleem's biography is the way it reads like a cheesy 1980s action movie. Indeed, much of his tale is deeply problematic. He claims to have carried out his first terror mission for the PLO at age seven. Since Saleem was born in 1957, this would have been sometime in 1964 or 1965. The PLO was only founded in 1964. Furthermore, it is well-known that terrorism did not become a major strategy for Palestinian liberation until after the 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel took control of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. Another strange aspect of his story is the vast array of organizations and causes he claims to have worked for – including Qaddafi, the Ba'ath Parties in Iraq and Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood, the

---

<sup>176</sup> Tim Murphy, "I was a Terrorist...Seriously!" *Mother Jones*, March/April 2012, <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/03/kamal-saleem-former-terrorist-islamophobia>> (accessed March 29, 2014).

<sup>177</sup> See the website of Kamal Saleem at <<http://www.kamalsaleem.com/>>.

PLO, and the mujahedeen in Afghanistan – which are all very different groups with different goals, groups that are often hostile to each other. One of the most humorous claims made by Saleem was that he is a descendant of the “grand wazir of Islam.” This was until it was pointed out that no such thing existed and that it was similar to calling someone the “governor of Christianity.”<sup>178</sup> It would seem that men like Saleem could come up with better and more plausible stories, but instead, they make life easy for those looking to debunk their claims.

Saleem has appeared on numerous evangelical shows promoting dispensationalist teachings and biblical prophecy. On one of these shows called *Jewish Voice*, a Messianic Jewish program,<sup>179</sup> Saleem proclaimed that Allah, the God of Islam, was mentioned in Isaiah 14:13-14 when God was speaking to Satan. In other words, Satan and Allah are one and the same. This statement was made in order to suggest that Muslims worships a complete different deity than Judaism and Christianity. According to Saleem, the “God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob” (an oft-repeated phrase used to contrast the “Judeo-Christian” God from “Allah”) is the God of love and forgiveness while Allah, the God of Islam, is one of hate and anger again demonstrating the us/them dualism present in dispensationalism.<sup>180</sup> In this video, Saleem claims that he was recruited into the Muslim Brotherhood when he was five years old, yet in his own book, *The Blood of Lambs*, he writes that he

---

<sup>178</sup> Omar Sacirbey, “Skeptics challenge life stories offered by high-profile Muslim converts to Christianity,” *Washington Post*, June 26, 2010, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/25/AR2010062504435.html>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>179</sup> Messianic Judaism is a subset of dispensationalist Christianity that merges those beliefs with some elements of Judaism and holds that salvation is achieved by accepting *Yeshua* (the Hebrew name for Jesus) as one’s savior. The movement emerged only in the past half century and their efforts to be recognized as a form of Judaism have been rejected by the Supreme Court of Israel.

<sup>180</sup> The complete episode of *Jewish Voice* is available under the title “Kamal Saleem: How Islam is Advancing in the West” on *Vimeo* here: <<http://vimeo.com/72673854>> (accessed April 27, 2014).

was recruited at age seven.<sup>181</sup> To make matters worse, on the back cover of the book it says that Saleem “went on his first mission, smuggling weapons into Israel as a child soldier for Yasser Arafat.” The main problem with these claims is that the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood, a group based in fundamentalist Islam, and the Palestinian-based PLO, a secular nationalist organization, are opposed to each other meaning he could not have possibly worked for both at the same time or been involved in a collaborative effort between the two.

In *The Blood of Lambs*, Saleem interlaces his own alleged biography with the story of his speaking tour with two other “ex-Muslim extremists” – Walid Shoebat and Zakariah Anani.<sup>182</sup> As is common with some strains of fundamentalist Christianity in America, Saleem critiques American pluralism and the First Amendment early in his book stating that he “came to realize that the strength of the American people is also its weakness. An open society with constitutionally protected freedom of speech and religion, which prides itself on its embrace of foreign cultures, was the perfect place to teach a message of hatred in broad daylight.” He further states that he helped recruit people to radical Islam by finding jobs for poor men and then turning “them over to the imams at small “apartment mosques” to be radicalized.” Saleem then turns to a common metaphor used in dispensationalist discussions about Islam writing that “the human body does not

---

<sup>181</sup> Kamal Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist’s Memoir of Death and Redemption* (New York: Howard Books, 2009), 2.

<sup>182</sup> I am unable to locate any written work by Zakariah Anani, but he has toured with Shoebat and Saleem telling a similar story of leaving militant Islam to become Christian and his story has also been scrutinized by reporters who have uncovered problems with his alleged biography as well. See <<http://www.canada.com/windsorstar/news/story.html?id=4a479502-4490-408e-bdb5-f2638619a62c&p=1>> (accessed April 27, 2014).

know when a cancer is growing within.”<sup>183</sup> He repeats his attack on American “tolerance” later in the book writing:

No matter how many terrorist acts are carried out by young Middle Eastern men, it is a cultural taboo for an American to sit in an airport and wonder whether the young Middle Eastern men they see are terrorists. This is why radical Islamists love America: she has replaced her generosity toward all cultures and religions with an unquestioning embrace of “multiculturalism.”<sup>184</sup>

Of course, most Americans would consider America’s “generosity toward all cultures and religions” as the definition of “multiculturalism,” yet Saleem means something very different here. In the minds of dispensationalists, as well as some other groups of fundamentalist Christians, terms like “pluralism” and “multiculturalism” have become ideological concepts synonymous with left-wing politics and secular humanism.

In discussing his childhood, he states that his mother taught him that “even the most sinful man is able to redeem himself with one drop of an infidel’s blood” and that “the more infidels we killed, the better our chances to move quickly from punishment to paradise.”<sup>185</sup> Saleem wants his reader to believe that the basis for salvation in Islam is killing non-Muslims, a strange idea for which he provides no Islamic sources as evidence. Saleem also claims that in order to be a “true” Muslims, one must work towards the establishment of a global caliphate, practice *taqqiya*,<sup>186</sup> and work to implement *shari’a* in every country.<sup>187</sup> Here Saleem attributes the goals of fundamentalist Muslims to all Muslims and follows the common Islamophobic tactic of claiming that these goals

---

<sup>183</sup> Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 7.

<sup>184</sup> Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 71.

<sup>185</sup> Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 11 and 22.

<sup>186</sup> The concept of *taqqiya* is only found in Shi’ism and not in Sunni Islam. The concept was developed by Shi’i theologians to protect followers from persecution at the hands of Sunni authorities by concealing their Shi’i identity. This concept has been distorted to serve the purposes of professional Islamophobes who argue that any “moderate” or “liberal” Muslim is practicing *taqqiya* to hide their “true” intentions of promoting radical Islam – or in other words, their lying is sanctioned by Islamic teachings. The word *taqqiya* or the concept it describes cannot be found in any Sunni legal sources.

<sup>187</sup> Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 82.

represent the “true and authentic” teachings of Islam and that any Muslim that does not adhere to these tenets are simply “liberal” or not “real” Muslims.

It was later uncovered that Saleem’s real name is Khodor Shami and that he worked for Pat Robertson-owned CBN for sixteen years and has been working for James Dobson’s Focus on the Family since 2003.<sup>188</sup> This would mean that he began working for CBN sometime around 1987, a fact conveniently missing from the section of his book titled “America 1985-1991.” While it is certainly not clear when Shami immigrated to the US, when he converted to Christianity if he was truly a Muslim, or if he was simply raised Christian, the blatant falsehoods and Islamophobic rhetoric he deploys is readily apparent.

Walid Shoebat is by far the most extreme and controversial of the lot. Moreover, he is also the most well-known of those examined here. The rhetoric found in his books is nothing short of the far-right vitriol synonymous with the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, or Pat Robertson. In his writings, he vehemently attacks secularism, environmentalism, “political correctness,” along with every other pet peeve of right-wing politics. According to Shoebat’s website, his story goes as follows. He was a Muslim extremist for many years, he spent three years in an Israeli prison during the 1970s for his activities, and while in jail he was recruited to bomb a bank in Bethlehem, a plot he claims to have acted upon after his release. Shoebat’s American mother and his Palestinian father sent him to live in the United States in 1978 where he continued his Muslim extremism until converting to Christianity in 1994.<sup>189</sup> According to a Jerusalem

---

<sup>188</sup> Reza Aslan, “Apparently, terrorism pays. It pays very well.” *Anderson Cooper 360 CNN blog*, February 27, 2008, <<http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2008/02/27/apparently-terrorism-pays-it-pays-very-well/>> (accessed March 28, 2014).

<sup>189</sup> See the webpage of Walid Shoebat at <[shoebat.com](http://shoebat.com)>.

Post article, he claimed that he had a change of heart after seeing children near the bank he was recruited to bomb, so he threw the bomb onto the roof instead. However, there are many problems with this narrative. No records can be found of any bombing at the bank Shoebat claims to have attacked. According to an investigative report conducted for CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, the Israeli government has no prison record under the name Walid Shoebat at all. In addition, several of Shoebat's relatives have been located and all of them state that Shoebat's education was moderate, that religion was not a major part of his upbringing, and that there was no bank bombing at all.<sup>190</sup> Shoebat's story has changed several times. When confronted about the lack of evidence about the bank bombing by the Jerusalem Post in 2008, he claimed it was not newsworthy at the time, but in 2004 Shoebat told the Telegraph "I was terribly relieved when I heard on the news later that evening that no one had been hurt or killed by my bomb."<sup>191</sup> The biography on his website is now very vague on details, probably to avoid giving too much information which could be used to prove his story false. That same CNN report details the healthy sum that Shoebat makes for giving speeches and writing books. According to tax records, Shoebat made over five hundred thousand dollars in 2009. He was also paid five thousand for an appearance sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security.<sup>192</sup> Shoebat has much to gain from selling his "story."<sup>193</sup>

In his book *Why I Left Jihad*, Shoebat states that "the enemy's primary goal isn't the land. That's secondary. The enemy wants all Jews dead and Israel eliminated from the

---

<sup>190</sup> Jorg Luyken, "The Palestinian 'terrorist' turned Zionist," *The Jerusalem Post*, June 6, 2012, <<http://www.jpost.com/Features/Article.aspx?id=96502>> (accessed December 10, 2012).

<sup>191</sup> See Omar Sacirbey, "Skeptics challenge life stories offered by high-profile Muslim converts to Christianity."

<sup>192</sup> Drew Griffin and Kathleen Johnston, "Ex-terrorist rakes in homeland security bucks," *CNN* (July 13, 2011) <<http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/07/11/terrorism.expert/index.html>> (accessed December 10, 2012).

<sup>193</sup> Walid Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad* (Top Executive Media, 2005), 13. This work is self-published.

face of the earth.” Shoebat also repeats the cancer metaphor writing “some estimate that Islamism is only 15% of the Muslim world, but a cancer starts small.”<sup>194</sup> Throughout the book, he repeats the claim that as a Muslim he hated Jews and wanted them all dead while drawing sharp contrasts between Jewish and Muslim culture. He makes the highly problematic claim that “most assessments reveal that honor killings constitute a large percentage of murders in Muslim nations” yet provides no sources for this claim before writing that “never will you see a Jewish community performing such a barbaric act.”<sup>195</sup> He writes that Palestine is a “fiction of the Islamists” and that “we never wanted a Palestinian state” since the “real issue” is “the destruction of the Jews.”<sup>196</sup> This rhetoric is designed to peel Christians away from attempting to solve the century old Palestinian-Israeli conflict by diverting the issue from land, the main source of conflict, to religion, an issue that cannot be resolved. By claiming that all Muslims really want to “destroy all Jews,” Shoebat and other dispensationalists can “other” Muslims while at the same time fight peace efforts, something that cannot happen in their eyes. There must be war and destruction in the Middle East leading up to the Battle of Armageddon or else dispensationalism falls apart.

Shoebat further attempts to discredit liberal-progressive and mainstream Muslims stating “there are Muslims who reject many of the classical sources and truly focus on the peaceful verses of the Qur’an, seeking to re-interpret the verses because they truly do not want to engage in violence. These “liberal” Muslims seem to “re-write” Islam rather than correctly interpret it. They are peaceful *despite* Islam, not because of it.”<sup>197</sup> Here again,

---

<sup>194</sup> Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 23.

<sup>195</sup> Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 25-26.

<sup>196</sup> Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 27.

<sup>197</sup> Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 36.

like so many other dispensationalists opining about Islam, Shoebat attempts to define Islam in favor of Muslim fundamentalists and extremists. A common tactic of Islamophobes is to appeal to the doctrine of abrogation, or *naskh*, which some Muslim interpreters use to argue that the seemingly more militant qur'anic verses of the Medinan period of Muhammad's life cancel out the earlier, more pacifist and pluralistic verses of the Meccan period. This concept is, however, deeply controversial and disputed. There are no established or agreed upon criteria for deciding which verses are abrogating (*nasikh*) and which are abrogated (*mansukh*).<sup>198</sup>

The latter section of his book is dedicated to biblical prophecy and here he makes many of the same claims with regards to Islam's role in the end times as Joel Richardson, who was mentioned in the previous chapter. The two men even co-authored another work titled *God's War on Terror: Islam, Prophecy and the Bible*. This work is not just a book on prophecy though; it is nothing short of a diatribe against "tree-huggers," "leftists," "secularists," and of course, Islam and Muslims, combined with extreme pro-Israel propaganda. Much of the information found in *God's War on Terror* is repeated from *Why I Left Jihad* and both books are very poorly written and highly disorganized, but since they were both self-published by Shoebat, there were no publishing or editorial standards to be met.

Shoebat is very active in dispensationalist circles and has spoken at prophecy conferences. He has been interviewed on CNN and Fox News, and he has spoken in front of active-duty military personnel and law enforcement agencies. He has attained a sort of

---

<sup>198</sup> See Louay Fatoohi, *Abrogation in the Qur'an and Islamic Law: A Critical Study of the Concept of "Naskh" and its Impact* (New York: Routledge, 2013); John Burton, *The Sources of Islamic Law: Islamic Theories of Abrogation* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1990); Anna M. Gade, *The Qur'an: An Introduction* (New York: Oneworld, 2010), 138; and Ingrid Mattson, *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life* (Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008), 203.

“rock star” status among politically conservative evangelicals. He is cited as a source in the books of many dispensationalists including John Hagee and Joel Rosenberg.

### *Conclusion*

My suspicion is that these men were never Muslim at all, that they were either raised Christian or in a secular environment and converted to Christianity later in life. Following 9/11, these men found an opportunity to make money and to convert others to their form of dispensationalist Christianity through exotic tales of terror and mayhem. Much like the Barbary captivity narratives of the early modern period, these “ex-Muslim radicals” and their stories serve a powerful rhetorical function to both Islamophobia and dispensationalism. In both examples, those telling the stories establish their credibility by claiming “insider” status. Once their credibility is established they proceed to create an othering discourse that demonizes Islam and Muslims. In both cases, one finds a touch of factual information sprinkled into a smorgasbord of harsh anti-Islam propaganda.

The “ex-Muslims” discussed here have acquired a huge following in conservative Christian circles and especially among dispensationalists. They have written books, produced documentaries, appeared on TV news, and have given speeches in front of critical audiences including law enforcement, military, and other government personnel. What ties these men together is biblical prophecy and pro-Israel groups. The ideas they present and the theology they teach may not necessarily represent the mainstream of American Christianity, however, these men have a much wider influence. Several of their books have sold several hundreds of thousands of copies thanks in part to their utilization

of the mass media. Even non-Christians may read one of their books attempting to learn about Islam and Muslims and subsequently retransmit this rhetoric.

It is worth noting that besides these problematic “ex-Muslims,” there are other former Muslims who have converted to Christianity, another religion, or no religion at all. Some of these people have also written books and have legitimate stories. There is also most certainly more problematic narratives which have not been examined here. The goal here was to point out those whose rhetoric has been most useful to dispensationalists for the propagation of Islamophobia. Those “ex-Muslims” analyzed here all have clear links to dispensationalist thought. Those attempting to fight anti-Muslim bigotry must learn about these men and their worldview in order to refute the propaganda they disseminate. The next chapter will examine the media institutions, politicians, and think tanks that have been crucial in assisting dispensationalists in dispersing their anti-Islam ideology to a wide audience.

## Chapter 4

### Dispersing Islamophobia throughout the Mass Media

So far in this study we have seen how dispensationalism works as an othering discourse. We have also seen how this othering discourse has shifted its focus onto Islam and Muslims since 9/11, how dispensationalist writers have begun to give Islam a greater role in the end times, even promoting the idea that the Antichrist will be Muslim, and how a small group of self-proclaimed “ex-Muslim radicals” have utilized their Middle Eastern ethnicities to promote Islamophobia. This chapter will examine the various media institutions and political structures that have been crucial in assisting dispensationalists to disperse their Islamophobic message to the American populace. This is done using all forms of mass media ranging from books and films to appearances on TV and radio. Dispensationalists also utilize politicians and think tanks to echo their message to the public.

One example related to the recent war in Iraq excellently illuminates the role the media can play in shaping public opinion, which in turn, has a dramatic effect on public policy. Russell McCutcheon demonstrates this in Chapter Four of his book, *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent*, where he examines polling data from the first year of the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Several polls from late 2003 and early 2004 showed that a majority of Americans believed that Saddam Hussein was involved, or linked in some way, to al-Qaeda and the September 11, 2001 attack on America, despite no credible evidence to

support such a claim and the Bush administration themselves denying such claims.<sup>199</sup> The question then remains how so many Americans came to believe this falsehood. McCutcheon quotes an MSNBC story that attributes “a deep and enduring distrust of Hussein that makes him a likely suspect in anything related to Middle Eastern violence.”<sup>200</sup> For over a decade following the first war with Iraq in 1991, the American media focused more upon Hussein and Iraq than any other Middle Eastern figure. As an American serving in the United States Air Force during the late 1990s, I frequently overheard rumors about another war with Iraq. This constant fixation on Hussein made him central to any discussions on terrorism and totalitarianism. McCutcheon argues that “consumers of daytime television and newspapers therefore seem to come by this “deep and enduring distrust” honestly, insomuch as they are simply answering questionnaires based on the information that had consistently been presented to them over the preceding year.”<sup>201</sup> A subsequent study conducted by the University of Maryland’s Program on International Policy Attitudes found that three main misconceptions led to significantly higher support for the U.S. operation in Iraq – the link between al-Qaeda, 9/11, and Saddam; the belief that WMDs had been found; and the belief that world opinion favored war in Iraq. The study found that 60% of people had at least one of those misperceptions, but only 23% of those that held none of those misperceptions supported the war while 86% of those with all three misperceptions supported the war. Furthermore, 77% of the people with no misperceptions cited NPR as their main news source while 80% of those with at

---

<sup>199</sup> Russell T. McCutcheon, *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent: Or, How to Live in a Less than Perfect Nation* (Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2005), 48-49.

<sup>200</sup> McCutcheon, *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent*, 49.

<sup>201</sup> McCutcheon, *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent*, 49.

least one misperception cited Fox News as their favorite news source.<sup>202</sup> This is of course not the only study to conclude that NPR listeners are among the most informed while Fox News viewers are among the least.<sup>203</sup> But the overarching point is that partisan media sources tend to skew public opinion in favor of their own ideological position and, as mentioned in the first chapter, the media has become much more polarized, and thus ideological, in recent years. This example also shows just how powerful the media can be since without generating a significant amount of support for the war in Iraq, the Bush administration would have had no choice but to abandon those plans with the 2004 election cycle approaching.

### ***Fox News***

One of the most important media institutions for dispensationalists is the Fox News Channel due to its massive audience. Fox News promotes itself as a “fair and balanced” alternative to the “liberal” bias of the mainstream media, yet Fox News is as much a part of the “mainstream” media as CNN or MSNBC given that Fox has been the highest rated cable news network for over a decade.<sup>204</sup> Fox News is, however, also a major component of the right-wing media apparatus and no reasonable observer could fail to notice the strong ideological leanings of the network. This fact makes Fox News an excellent vehicle for dispensationalists seeking to spread an anti-Islam message.

Dispensationists frequently appear on the network to opine about Islam, terrorism, and

---

<sup>202</sup> McCutcheon, *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent*, 51-52.

<sup>203</sup> Kenneth Rapoza, “Fox News Viewers Uninformed, NPR Listeners Not, Poll Suggests,” *Forbes*, November 21, 2011, <<http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2011/11/21/fox-news-viewers-uninformed-npr-listeners-not-poll-suggests/>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>204</sup> Bill Carter, “Fox News Marks a Decade at No. 1 in Cable News,” *New York Times*, January 31, 2012, <[http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0)> (accessed April 11, 2014).

national security. One commonly used dispensationalist posing as an “expert” has already been mentioned – Erick Stakelbeck.

Another dispensationalist “expert” on terrorism and Islam frequently used by Fox News is Ryan Mauro. Mauro, like Stakelbeck, has no formal training in either Islamic studies or international relations. He holds a master’s degree in political science and a bachelor’s degree in intelligence studies from the American Military University, an online for-profit school with little credibility.<sup>205</sup> Mauro is currently employed by the Clarion Project,<sup>206</sup> an anti-Islam organization with strong ties to the Zionist movement which has produced several propaganda films including *Obsession: Radical Islam’s War against the West* and *The Third Jihad*. A simple Google search for “Ryan Mauro bible prophecy” reveals that his articles are routinely found on websites ran by dispensationalists promoting end times prophecy. Mauro’s commentary on terrorism often focuses more upon conspiracy theories than legitimate national security threats.<sup>207</sup>

When dispensationalists such as these two men appear on Fox News as “experts,” their legitimacy is often established by promoting a book they have written on the subject, books that are often published by presses with no peer review process or are reviewed only by those with similar ideological leanings. In addition to hosting these dispensationalists who portray themselves as legitimate experts without disclosing their religious leanings, Fox also has used dispensationalist preachers themselves as

---

<sup>205</sup> Daniel Golden, “For Profit Colleges Target the Military,” *Bloomberg Business Week*, December 30, 2009, <[http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10\\_02/b4162036095366.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_02/b4162036095366.htm)> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>206</sup> For details on the Clarion Project’s anti-Islam activities, see the study *Fear, Inc.* published by the Center for American Progress, which is downloadable here: <<http://www.americanprogress.org/wp-content/uploads/issues/2011/08/pdf/islamophobia.pdf>>.

<sup>207</sup> Michelle Leung, “Meet Fox’s New Anti-Muslim “National Security Analyst,” *Media Matters for America*, February 20, 2014, <<http://mediamatters.org/blog/2014/02/20/meet-foxs-new-anti-muslim-national-security-ana/198148>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

commentators on Islam and terrorism. Joel Rosenberg, writer of prophecy novels which often focus on Iran, has made numerous appearances on Fox News to comment on Islam. Fox News has also brought on dispensationalist politicians such as Allen West to speak about Islam. In doing this, Fox News has only further legitimized these voices by giving them the platform to speak about issues for which they are not trained to do so.

Referring back to the media theory introduced in the first chapter, the way in which Fox News only airs stories about Muslims as extremists and terrorists tends to *reinforce* and *naturalize* the idea that Islam teaches violence and that Arabs and Muslims are prone to extremism, making it nearly impossible for Americans to see them in any other manner. For instance, in 2011 as the Arab Spring was unfolding in Egypt, Fox News gave extensive TV airtime to the burning of several Coptic churches by militant Muslims, yet they completely ignored a later event in which Muslims acted as human shields to protect Coptic Christians as they celebrated their Christmas mass.<sup>208</sup> Applying the first filter from Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model will show how the anti-Islam ideology frequently promoted on the Fox News Channel matches that of the ownership and leadership of the network as well as that of the audience and advertisers of Fox News. Rupert Murdoch, founder of Fox's parent company News Corp., is known for championing right-wing political causes as well as harboring anti-Islamic feelings. In August 2013, Murdoch tweeted the following: "Let's put multiculturalism behind us! Societies have to integrate. Muslims find it hardest."<sup>209</sup> In other words, Muslims find it

---

<sup>208</sup> See Yasmine El-Rashidi, "Egypt's Muslims attend Coptic Christmas mass, serving as 'human shields,'" *Ahram Online*, January 7, 2011, <<http://english.ahram.org.eg/News/3365.aspx>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>209</sup> Oliver Laughland, "Rupert Murdoch attacked for 'irresponsible' tweets about Muslims," *The Guardian*, August 20, 2013, <<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/aug/20/rupert-murdoch-twitter-attack-muslims>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

hard to integrate into Western culture since Islamic values “clash” or are “incompatible” with liberal democracy. A look at the average Fox News viewer shows that they are in their late sixties, white, and politically conservative.<sup>210</sup> Gallup polling data shows that Republicans, more than any other political group, harbor negative feelings towards Muslims.<sup>211</sup> An argument can be made that this is a result of the coverage in conservative media sources, but it also stands to reason that any positive coverage of Muslims could anger and possibly turn away Fox’s core viewership, which is already stagnant and aging.

### ***Talk Radio***

Talk radio, which is predominantly right-leaning, is another outlet for dispensationalist to espouse anti-Islam propaganda. Rush Limbaugh, who has held the highest-rated talk radio program for decades, has many documented anti-Islam statements including accusing Egyptian men of having sex with their dead wives.<sup>212</sup> Joel Rosenberg worked as a researcher for Limbaugh’s program shortly after graduating from college in the late 1980s and has been interviewed as a guest on Sean Hannity’s radio show as well.<sup>213</sup> Another widely popular talk radio host is Michael Savage, who holds the fifth highest-rated show in America as of March 2014.<sup>214</sup> Savage is also known for harsh diatribes against Islam and Muslims with one particularly angry rant calling for the

---

<sup>210</sup> Frank Rich, “Stop Beating a Dead Fox,” *New York Magazine*, January 26, 2014, <<http://nymag.com/news/frank-rich/fox-news-2014-2/>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>211</sup> See <<http://www.gallup.com/poll/157082/islamophobia-understanding-anti-muslim-sentiment-west.aspx>>.

<sup>212</sup> Richard Myers, “Rush Limbaugh’s Many Muslim Smears,” *Daily Kos*, October 1, 2012, <<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/10/01/1138358/-Rush-Limbaugh-s-Many-Muslim-Smears#>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>213</sup> See <[http://www.raptureready.com/who/joel\\_rosenberg.html](http://www.raptureready.com/who/joel_rosenberg.html)>.

<sup>214</sup> See <<http://www.politico.com/blogs/media/2013/03/limbaugh-hannity-lead-talkers-top-159206.html>>.

deportation of all Muslims.<sup>215</sup> Savage has hosted Walid Shoebat on his radio show.<sup>216</sup>

Along with these popular shows reaching millions of Americans everyday are Christian radio programs. Dispensationalist theologians and politicians have wide access to these programs and are frequently asked to comment about Islam and terrorism. Herman and Chomsky's first filter applies similarly to talk radio as it does to Fox News given the similar audience demographics and ideological leanings.

### ***Blogosphere and Conservative Websites***

Another major outlet for dispensationalists seeking to promote anti-Islam ideology is right-wing news sites and blogs. Some of the most popular of these sites, including WND, Front Page Magazine, and The Blaze, have posted articles by dispensationalists including Joel Richardson, Joel Rosenberg, and Walid Shoebat. The unregulated nature of the internet allows these dispensationalists to peddle conspiracy theories based on the weakest of evidence without the burden of journalistic standards.

The Blaze, owned and operated by Glenn Beck, is a multimedia empire that operates a cable channel available in limited locations throughout the country and online as well as Beck's own radio program. While Beck defines himself as a Mormon, he should be considered a dispensationalist based on his promotion of biblical prophecy and preachers such as Joel Richardson and John Hagee. Media Matters for America has noted that Beck has given substantial coverage to the ideas of Joel Richardson and has openly

---

<sup>215</sup> See <[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDYy\\_LF4iE4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FDYy_LF4iE4)> (accessed April 27, 2014).

<sup>216</sup> See [http://www.rapturewatch.net/apps/videos/videos/view/18161745-michael-savage-interviews-walid-shoebat-august-22-2013-latest-concerns-about-barack-obama?profile\\_tab%5Bposter\\_id%5D=42617538&profile\\_tab%5Btab\\_count%5D=4657](http://www.rapturewatch.net/apps/videos/videos/view/18161745-michael-savage-interviews-walid-shoebat-august-22-2013-latest-concerns-about-barack-obama?profile_tab%5Bposter_id%5D=42617538&profile_tab%5Btab_count%5D=4657) (accessed April 27, 2014).

promoted conspiracy theories about a renewed caliphate and a Muslim Antichrist.<sup>217</sup>

Beck has also hosted Hagee and Rosenberg on many occasions.

### ***Dispensationalists in Government***

Retired Three Star General William G. “Jerry” Boykin, the former commander of the Delta Force who now works for the Family Research Council, recently made headlines with his comment at an event organized by pseudo-historian David Barton that when Jesus comes back he will carry an assault rifle and will be covered in the “blood of his enemies” and carrying an AR-15.<sup>218</sup> This comment stems from Hal Lindsey’s distinction between the “Suffering Messiah” and the “Reigning Messiah” mentioned in Chapter Two. Many dispensationalists seem to be embarrassed by the image of Jesus as the sacrificial lamb of God. In describing the “Reigning Messiah,” Lindsey says that “it is easy to see why this would be the most popular portrait.”<sup>219</sup> The books and sermons of those like Hagee and Lindsey speak very little of the Jesus who suffered on the cross instead preferring a militant warrior Jesus. While still serving as a general during the Bush administration, Boykin was admonished by Pres. Bush for speaking about the war on terror as a struggle against “Satan” and accusing Muslims of worshipping an idol or a false god.<sup>220</sup> Boykin has also suggested that Islam should not be protected under the First

---

<sup>217</sup> Dimiero and Krepel, “Who is Joel Richardson, Beck’s End Times Prophet?”

<sup>218</sup> Kyle Mantyla, “Boykin: When Jesus Comes Back, He’ll be Carrying an AR-15 Assault Rifle,” *Right Wing Watch*, February 19, 2014, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-when-jesus-comes-back-hell-be-carrying-ar-15-assault-rifle>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>219</sup> Lindsey, *The Late Great Planet Earth*, 29.

<sup>220</sup> Douglas Jehl, “Bush Says He Disagrees with General’s Remarks on Religion,” *The New York Times*, October 23, 2003, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/23/world/bush-says-he-disagrees-with-general-s-remarks-on-religion.html>> (accessed March 31, 2014).

Amendment and that mosques should not be allowed in America since Islam is a totalitarian ideology and not a religion.<sup>221</sup>

Michelle Bachmann is another dispensationalist politician well-known for Islamophobic rhetoric. Congresswoman Bachman has represented Minnesota's Sixth Congressional District in the US House of Representatives since 2007. In October 2013 Bachmann went on the Christian radio show "Understanding the Times" and claimed that the Obama administration was arming terrorists in Syria and that, according to her, was a sign that we are living in the end times.<sup>222</sup> While running for the GOP presidential nomination, Bachmann initiated what some called a Muslim "witch hunt" when she sent letters to national security agencies asking for surveillance and investigations of Muslim groups in the US for alleged ties to extremism, a move for which she earned a great deal of criticism from her congressional colleagues.<sup>223</sup>

Recently, on the floor of the House of Representatives, Congressman Louie Gohmert (R-TX) said that "some of us believe that the Bible is accurate, certainly been so many prophecies fulfilled" while attacking the Obama administration's alleged "anti-Israel" policy.<sup>224</sup> In 2011, Congressman Gohmert presented a copy of the novel *Damascus Countdown*, written by prominent dispensationalist Joel Rosenberg, to Israeli

---

<sup>221</sup> Kyle Mantyla, "Boykin: Islam "Should Not Be Protected under the First Amendment," *Right Wing Watch*, December 6, 2010, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-islam-should-not-be-protected-under-first-amendment>>, (accessed April 11, 2014); and Brian Tashman, "Boykin: "No Mosques in America," *Right Wing Watch*, September 7, 2011, <<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-no-mosques-america>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>222</sup> See <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/07/michele-bachmann-end-times\\_n\\_4060063.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/10/07/michele-bachmann-end-times_n_4060063.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>223</sup> Haris Tarin, "Michelle Bachmann and Muslim witch hunts," *CNN*, July 30, 2012, <<http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/30/opinion/tarin-bachmann-muslims/>> (accessed March 31, 2014).

<sup>224</sup> See <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/14/louie-gohmert-israel\\_n\\_4277142.html?utm\\_hp\\_ref=tw](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/11/14/louie-gohmert-israel_n_4277142.html?utm_hp_ref=tw)>.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.<sup>225</sup> Rosenberg is, in fact, so popular among dispensationalist politicians that he was personally invited to discuss the novel at the Kansas state capitol by Governor Sam Brownback, who also served as a US Senator representing Kansas from 1996 to 2011.<sup>226</sup> Gohmert has claimed that the Obama administration is flooded with Muslim Brotherhood members<sup>227</sup> and that “radical Islamists are being trained to act Hispanic”<sup>228</sup> after sneaking across the border to infiltrated America. Perhaps his strangest claim is that pregnant Muslim women might come to America and have their children in the US so that they would be guaranteed citizenship and could then raise their children to become terrorists – the “terror baby” plot.<sup>229</sup> Here, politicians like Gohmert link their anti-Islam ideology with their anti-immigrant sentiments in a strategy designed to halt progress on immigration reform.

Former Congressman Allen West remains immensely popular star amongst the far-right wing of American politics. West rode the Tea Party wave and won election as representative for Florida’s Twenty-Second Congressional District in 2010, but was subsequently voted out of office in 2012 presumably due to his harsh partisan rhetoric that independent voters found less than palatable. While running for Congress in 2010,

---

<sup>225</sup> Tim Murphy, “Oh Magog! Why End Times Buffs are Freaking out about Syria” *Mother Jones*, September 4, 2013, <<http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/09/syria-joel-rosenberg-damascus-countdown-magog>> (accessed March 31, 2014).

<sup>226</sup> Joel C. Rosenberg, “Kansas Governor Brownback has invited me to Topeka to speak about “Damascus Countdown.” Please join us at the State Capitol on Sept. 7.” *Joel C. Rosenberg’s Blog*, August 21, 2013, <<http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2013/08/31/kansas-governor-brownback-has-invited-me-to-topeka-to-speak-about-damascus-countdown-please-join-us-at-the-state-capitol-on-sept-7/>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>227</sup> Greg Corombos, “Congressman: Team Obama Botched Bombing Probe,” *World Net Daily*, April 25, 2013, <<http://www.wnd.com/2013/04/congressman-team-obama-botched-bombing-probe/>> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>228</sup> Luke Johnson, “Louie Gohmert: Radical Islamists Being Trained to 'Act like Hispanic',” *Huffington Post*, April 17, 2013, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/louie-gohmert-radical-islamist\\_n\\_3100254.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/louie-gohmert-radical-islamist_n_3100254.html)> (accessed April 11, 2014).

<sup>229</sup> Daniel Schulman, “Rep. Louie Gohmert’s “Terror Baby” Meltdown,” *Mother Jones*, August 13, 2010, <<http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2010/08/rep-louie-gohmerts-terror-baby-meltdown>> (accessed March 31, 2014).

West spoke at an anti-Islam event organized by Pamela Geller and Robert Spencer, two thoroughly discredited Islamophobes,<sup>230</sup> where he stated that “we are against something that is a totalitarian theocratic political ideology and it is called Islam” and argued that Islam seeks to take over the world and destroy the West.<sup>231</sup> At another event sponsored by the Hudson Institute, a conservative think tank, West said that Muslim terrorists were not perverting Islam, but were doing exactly what the Qur’an tells them to.<sup>232</sup> On another occasion West said, referring to Congressman Keith Ellison’s (D-MN) Muslim faith, that he “represents the antithesis of the principles upon which this country was founded ”<sup>233</sup> West has appeared many times as a guest on Fox News and has appeared on dispensationalist TV programs such as Erick Stakelbeck’s “Stakelbeck on Terror.”

Other notable dispensationalist politicians include Oklahoma Senator James Inhofe, former Alaska Governor Sarah Palin, and former Republican House Majority Leader Tom Delay. These politicians, as representatives of the federal government, can garner significant credibility in the eyes of their constituents and in front of TV and radio audiences. This makes it all the more important that their dispensationalist leanings are acknowledged when these men and women offer an analysis of issues pertaining to Islam and terrorism. These government officials can serve as the third filter in Herman and Chomsky’s Propaganda Model. Their official status allows them to speak with an important level of authority and their press releases and congressional reports are often taken by news agencies as credible sources of information.

---

<sup>230</sup> These two people are not themselves dispensationalist, Spencer is Catholic and Geller is Jewish, therefore I will not spend much time discussing them here. Their activities and books have been thoroughly analyzed and discredited in many books and articles, especially some cited in the first chapter.

<sup>231</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pgZppLvjaE>>.

<sup>232</sup> See <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNPJiF-vPhY>>.

<sup>233</sup> Nick Wing, “Allen West: Keith Ellison 'The Antithesis of Principles' Upon Which Country Was Founded,” *Huffington Post*, May 25, 2011, <[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/24/allen-west-keith-ellison\\_n\\_813159.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/24/allen-west-keith-ellison_n_813159.html)> (accessed April 11, 2014).

### ***Right-leaning Think Tanks***

Much Islamophobia goes under the radar disguised as anti-terrorism, the last filter in Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model. This is definitely the case with certain think tanks and 501(c) (3) charity organizations which promote themselves as agencies studying terrorism and national security. One of these organizations is the David Horowitz Freedom Center which funds and assists in the operation of notorious anti-Islam website Jihad Watch and right-wing news site Front Page Magazine.<sup>234</sup> Another is the Investigative Project on Terrorism founded by Steven Emerson, who mistakenly claimed that a Saudi man spotted near the scene was involved in the Boston Marathon bombing, despite never being taken into custody and no evidence to suggest his involvement, and also that Muslim extremists were responsible for the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995.<sup>235</sup> The Middle East Forum led by Daniel Pipes owns the distinction of being the only anti-Islam propaganda outfit led by an expert with a doctorate degree in Islamic studies. Despite that, Pipes has discredited himself with his ardent neo-conservative foreign policy analysis and by promoting ideas that border on anti-Arab racism. In an article for *National Review*, Pipes suggested that US policy in Syria "should guide enemies to stalemate by helping whichever side is losing, so as to prolong the conflict," thus ensuring that the slaughter continues.<sup>236</sup> In a recent *Washington Times* article, Pipes claimed that the practice of Islam leads to environmental degradation and

---

<sup>234</sup> See <[http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org/ongoing\\_programs](http://www.horowitzfreedomcenter.org/ongoing_programs)>.

<sup>235</sup> Solange Uwimana, "Fox Amplifies Discredited Anti-Islamic Activist Steve Emerson during Boston Coverage," *Media Matters for America*, April 19, 2013, <<http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/04/19/fox-amplifies-discredited-anti-islamic-activist/193701>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>236</sup> Daniel Pipes, "The Case for Supporting Assad," *National Review*, April 12, 2013, <<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/345338/case-supporting-assad-daniel-pipes>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

health problems.<sup>237</sup> Few outside of right-wing political circles consider Pipes to be a serious scholar of Islam or terrorism. James McPherson points out that when tanks are used as sources by the media, the ideological biases of these institutions often go unrecognized.<sup>238</sup>

### ***Flak: Herman and Chomsky's Fourth Filter***

The fourth filter of the Propaganda Model, flak, deserves special attention here. Flak is defined by Chomsky and Herman as criticism of media reports or statements. This criticism usually comes in the form of accusations of bias. In terms of the Islamophobic discourse, any balanced and nuanced treatment of Islam and the origins of Muslim extremism is dismissed as “politically correct” or “liberal bias.” On the dispensationalist TV programs which air on evangelical Christian networks, whenever someone like Joel Richardson or Kamal Saleem is interviewed, it is common to hear the host say “what you are about to hear is not politically correct.” For the dispensationalists and other professional Islamophobes, “politically correct” is presented as the opposite of “truth” or “objectivity.” By establishing this dichotomy, they are able to discredit any attempt to portray Muslims in a positive light or link militant Muslim groups to anything other than the Islamic tradition itself. Deploying flak also enables those promoting an Islamophobic message to force their position into the debate as a “legitimate” alternative perspective. This is one of the main reasons that credible scholars of Islamic studies have refused invitations to debate Robert Spencer, operator of the propaganda website Jihad Watch.

---

<sup>237</sup> Daniel Pipes, “Islam’s inadvertent adverse effects on adherents,” *Washington Times*, March 7, 2014, <<http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/7/pipes-islams-inadvertent-effects/>> (accessed April 1, 2014).

<sup>238</sup> McPherson, *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press*, 200.

Debating him would help to legitimize his ideas by giving him an equal platform with established scholars.

### ***Ramifications for Foreign Policy***

Barbara Rossing states, in her book *The Rapture Exposed*, that “peace and peace plans in the Middle East are a bad thing, in the view of fundamentalist Christians, because they delay the countdown to Christ’s return. Israel must not compromise by giving back any occupied territory to the Palestinians. New Israeli settlements and a rebuilt third temple are God’s will for Israel, no matter how violent the consequences.”<sup>239</sup> The consistent demonization of Islam and Muslims in the media and in dispensationalist literature works to harden the belief that Arabs and Muslims do not want peace. This, in turn, leads to apathy in terms of promoting peace. When the general populace does not care about peace and views Muslims as the enemy, then dispensationalists can continue to steer the government of the United States towards a strident pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian policy. Without serious and substantial pressure from the most influential nation in the world, the “peace” process becomes nothing more than empty, meaningless meetings. Palestinian liberation and anti-Israel sentiments have long served as a rallying cry for fundamentalist Muslims like Ayatollah Khomeini and extremist groups like al-Qaeda to recruit new members. With this, the conflict is prolonged and any violence from either side only serves to harden opinions in both camps, exacerbating anti-Semitism in Muslim-majority countries and Islamophobia in Western nations.

Also related is the way in which dispensationalist thought fuels an overly hawkish foreign policy agenda. John Hagee has not been shy about using his organization, CUFI,

---

<sup>239</sup> Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, 46.

to lobby the federal government to unilaterally strike Iran's nuclear facilities, an idea that he claims is prophesized in the Book of Esther.<sup>240</sup> Many dispensationalists also supported military action in Iraq based on the notion that ancient Babylon (present-day Iraq) will play a role in the end times.<sup>241</sup> Recently, dispensationalists have argued that the current civil war in Syria was prophesized in Isaiah 17,<sup>242</sup> which leads to the belief that America and other foreign powers should allow the bloodshed continue unabated. Sarah Palin has even stated that we should "let Allah sort it out."<sup>243</sup> Dispensationalists have had a real and substantial impact on US foreign policy; therefore, their ideology and influence should continue to be studied intensely by scholars and policy makers alike.

### ***Conclusion***

Right-leaning media outlets, think tanks, and politicians have all been instrumental in assisting dispensationalists to disperse their anti-Islam message to a wide audience. Herman and Chomsky's Propaganda Model is helpful for understanding why this message has gone virtually unchecked. A look at the first filter shows how the ownership and audience of many media outlets, especially those that lean to the right of the political spectrum, are sympathetic to Islamophobia. The third filter demonstrates how dispensationalist policy makers, both in government and working for think tanks, can utilize their "official" status to promote Islamophobic ideas in the name of national

---

<sup>240</sup> Posner, "Pastor Strangelove."

<sup>241</sup> Charles Marsh, "Wayward Christian Soldiers," *New York Times*, January 20, 2006, <[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html?_r=0)> (accessed April 2, 2014).

<sup>242</sup> See Drew Zahn, "Biblical doom of Damascus 'right before our eyes'," *WND*, August 31, 2013, <<http://www.wnd.com/2013/08/biblical-doom-of-damascus-right-before-our-eyes/#KPK7lF5a2xmWF3Ft.99>> (accessed April 2, 2014); and Tina Sfondeles, "Bible prophecy links Damascus destruction, Second Coming, some say," *Chicago Sun Times*, August 30, 2013, <<http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/22237215-418/turmoil-in-syria.html>> (accessed April 2, 2014).

<sup>243</sup> See <<https://www.facebook.com/photo.php?fbid=10151832583113588&l=9dad685d2e>> (accessed April 27, 2014).

security. The fourth filter shows how those promoting Islamophobia have effectively used rhetorical tropes such as “political correctness” and “liberal bias” (also known as flak) to discredit media sources not sharing their view. The fifth filter is useful for examining how “anti-terrorism” can be used to deflect criticism and promote Islamophobia in the name of keeping America safe. The second filter, the interests of the advertisers, seems much less relevant than the other four and for that reason has been ignored in this study. Combined these filter prevent an alternative image of Islam and Muslims from taking hold.

Another factor preventing Americans from recognizing the Islamophobic discourse as propaganda is the lack of a major Muslim presence in the US. Most Americans do not know a Muslim personally and there are too few Muslims in the US to have any powerful lobbying organizations. The most notable Muslim lobbying organization, CAIR, has been thoroughly demonized by the discourse of Islamophobia. In addition, many popular Muslim celebrities including Dave Chappelle and Ice Cube do not go out of their way to display their faith in public, in contrast to their Jewish and Christian counterparts. When this is combined with the overwhelming negative coverage of Muslims in the media, the result is that the negative image sticks and positive images are not allowed to enter the discourse.

One particular critique that might be leveled against this study is that it unfairly singles out conservative groups and individuals for criticism. That is certainly not my intention with the argument and the evidence presented here. Unfortunately, while anti-Muslim sentiments continue to be a problem through America, Islamophobia as an ideological system is primarily promoted in conservative/right-leaning circles. It is

certainly true that dispensationalists have been interviewed by non-conservative media outlets such as CNN and local TV stations; however, it is primarily right-wing media outlets that have given them the most access to spread their message. That does not mean that all conservatives are anti-Islam. Certain Republican and conservative leaders have been critical of overt anti-Muslim bigotry. Arizona Senator John McCain sharply rebuked Congresswoman Michelle Bachmann for her “witch hunts” and Texas Governor Rick Perry continues to have a cordial relationship with the Aga Khan, spiritual leader of the world’s Isma’ili Muslims.<sup>244</sup> While serving as Speaker of the House, Newt Gingrich assisted Muslims working as House staffers in finding an adequate prayer space in the Capitol.<sup>245</sup> This was, of course, before jumping on the anti-Islam bandwagon while running for GOP presidential nomination in 2008. Despite these exceptions, combatting Islamophobia will require an acknowledgment of the role that dispensationalist thought has played in sustaining and promoting the anti-Islam discourse in America. This cannot be done until a substantial number of Republicans and conservatives expunge their movement of radical figures like Joel Richardson and Walid Shoebat.

---

<sup>244</sup> Rick Perry, “Commemorating the Aga Khan’s Visit,” *Office of the Governor Rick Perry*, April 12, 2008, <<http://governor.state.tx.us/news/speech/5156/>> (accessed April 10, 2014).

<sup>245</sup> Eboo Patel, *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2012), 26-29.

## Conclusion

This study has attempted to shed some light upon a particular group of dispensationalists who have helped to promote and sustain the Islamophobic discourse in America since 9/11. They have done this by establishing themselves as “experts” in the media, through books on biblical prophecy predicting that Islam will align with the forces of the Antichrist during the end times, through the narratives of self-proclaimed “ex-Muslim extremists,” and by taking advantage of right-leaning media sources. The effect that dispensationalists have had on American attitudes toward Muslims is not limited to those who share their worldview as many non-dispensationalist Christians and secular Americans read their books and articles as well as view their interviews in the media.

This study is by no means exhaustive and a more expansive work is definitely needed in this understudied area. A more in-depth study might further examine the ways in which dispensationalist writers like Joel Richardson link the Islamic Mahdi to the Christian Antichrist. It might also compare the narratives of the “ex-Muslims” described in Chapter Three to those of other ex-Muslims who are not dispensationalist and/or do not promote Islamophobia. While much work has been done in exposing the financial and political motives of the Islamophobia network, there remains much work to be done in examining the role of Christian eschatology in the anti-Islam discourse.

As Edward Said points out, “what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussions about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians.”<sup>246</sup> The current anti-Islam discourse may be

---

<sup>246</sup> Said, *Covering Islam*, xii.

the last form of bigotry still widely accepted in American society. Muslims and Arabs continue to be portrayed in the media and in films as villains. While Jews and Muslims are found in similar numbers in America, bigotry against the former is no longer widely accepted in the way that it is against the latter. Dispensationalism has played a major role in this. Probably the biggest positive contribution dispensationalism has made in American society is promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding between Christians and Jews. Even many non-dispensationalist Christians support the idea of blessing the Jewish people based on Gen. 12:3. Yet the notion of “Judeo-Christian” civilization has also served as a wall blocking off the other major Abrahamic faith – Islam. To a large extent, dispensationalist thought has succeeded in promoting a Judeo-Christian/Islamic “clash of civilizations” mentality in the West.<sup>247</sup> As has been routinely stated, roughly half of humanity is either an adherent of Islam or Christianity making it imperative that all talk of an “Islam versus the West” clash of civilizations be put to rest. Both religions are here to stay and continue to grow exponentially. As Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently put it, “we still have a choice today, nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation.”

One of the rhetorical strategies deployed time and time again by dispensationalists to attack Islam is that of arguing that Muslims and Christians worship different gods – the God “they” (Muslims) worship hates while the God “we” worship loves. Miroslav Volf points out the end game of this strategy by stating that “since both Christians and Muslims are monotheists, if they worship different gods, they will rightly accuse each other of worshipping a false god, which is the worst of sins in both of these traditions.

---

<sup>247</sup> Historian Richard Bulliet critiques this dichotomy in his book *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

The love that Muslims and Christians have for the God they worship will pull them apart rather than bring them together.”<sup>248</sup> That is precisely what some seek to do, pull them apart by separating or othering Muslims and the God “they” worship. Such actions not only pull Muslims and Christians apart, they pull humanity apart.

Unfortunately, there is a strong disconnect between those scholars producing quality and balanced work in the field of Islamic studies and the consumers of information about Islam in the mainstream American populace. Part of the problem is due to the media and their refusal to give legitimate experts a voice. It is rare to hear a respected scholar on Islam speak on CNN or Fox News, the two most watched cable news channels. When true scholars are given a voice in the media, it is usually on NPR or Al-Jazeera America, excellent media outlets that are unfortunately not as popular. Yet another part of the problem is the nature of academic scholarship. As Carl Ernst points out, the writing style of academics combined with the disdain many scholars have for “popular” writing has created a strong disconnect between academia and mainstream America.<sup>249</sup> Scholars studying issues relating to Islam and Muslim civilization, as well as activists seeking to promote better relations between Muslims and Christians, must develop better methods aimed at reaching public audiences and not just other academics.

---

<sup>248</sup> Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: HarperOne, 2011), 35.

<sup>249</sup> Carl W. Ernst, “It’s Not Just Academic – Writing Public Scholarship in Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies,” *Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 45, No. 2 (Winter 2011): 165.

## Bibliography

- Allen, Chris. *Islamophobia*. Burlington: Ashgate, 2010.
- Anderson, Monica, Mark Jurkowitz, Paul Hitlin, and Nancy Vogt. "Obamacare v. Philippines Typhoon: How cable covered two big stories." *Pew Research Center*. November 20, 2013. <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2013/11/20/obamacare-v-philippines-typhoon-how-cable-covered-two-big-stories/> (accessed January 17, 2014).
- Ariel, Yaakov S. "An Unexpected Alliance: Christian Zionism and its Historical Significance." *Modern Judaism Vol. 26, No. 1*, February 2006: 74-100.
- Aslan, Reza. "Apparently terrorism pays. It pays very well." *Anderson Cooper 360*. February 27, 2008. <http://ac360.blogs.cnn.com/2008/02/27/apparently-terrorism-pays-it-pays-very-well/> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Bleich, Erik. "Defining and Researching Islamophobia." *Review of Middle East Vol. 46, No. 2*, Winter 2013: 180-189.
- Bulliet, Richard. *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Caner, Ergun, and Emir Caner. *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs 2nd ed.* Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2009.
- Carter, Bill. "Fox News Marks a Decade at No. 1 in Cable News." *New York Times*. January 31, 2012. [http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/?\\_php=true&\\_type=blogs&\\_r=0](http://mediadecoder.blogs.nytimes.com/2012/01/31/fox-news-marks-a-decade-at-no-1-in-cable-news/?_php=true&_type=blogs&_r=0) (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Colley, Linda. *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850*. New York: Anchor Books, 2002.
- Corombos, Greg. "Congressman: Team Obama Botched Bombing Probe." *World Net Daily*. April 25, 2013. <http://www.wnd.com/2013/04/congressman-team-obama-botched-bombing-probe/> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Crossan, John Dominic. *God and Empire: Jesus Against Rome, Then and Now*. New York: Harper One, 2007.
- Daniel, Norman. *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image*. London: Oneworld, 1993.
- Davis, Robert C. *Christian Slaves, Muslim Masters: White Slavery in the Mediterranean, the Barbary Coast, and Italy, 1500-1800*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Dimiero, Ben, and Terry Krepel. "Who is Joel Richardson, Beck's End Times Prophet?" *Media Matters for America*. February 17, 2011. <http://mediamatters.org/research/2011/02/17/who-is-joel-richardson-becks-end-times-prophet/176590> (accessed March 20, 2014).
- Ernst, Carl W. "It's Not Just Academic - Writing Public Scholarship in Middle East and Islamic Studies." *Review of Middle East Studies*, Vol 45, No. 2 (Winter 2011): 164-171.
- Esposito, John L., and Ibrahim Kalin. *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Fletcher, Jim. "Erick Stakelbeck: Fighting Islamist Terror with the Pen." *World Net Daily*. December 25, 2011. <http://www.wnd.com/2011/12/380909/> (accessed January 8, 2014).

- Fletcher, Richard. *The Cross and the Crescent: The Dramatic Story of the Earliest Encounters between Christians and Muslims*. New York: Penguin Books, 2003.
- Gade, Anna M. *The Qur'an: An Introduction*. New York: Oneworld, 2010.
- Golden, Daniel. "For-Profit Colleges Target the Military." *Bloomberg Business Weekly*. December 30, 2009. [http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10\\_02/b4162036095366.htm](http://www.businessweek.com/magazine/content/10_02/b4162036095366.htm) (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Gorenberg, Gershom. *The End of Days: Fundamentalism and the Struggle for the Temple Mount*. New York : Oxford University Press, 2000.
- Gottschalk, Peter, and Gabriel Greenberg. *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2008.
- Griffin, Drew, and Kathleen Johnston. "'Ex-terrorist' rakes in homeland security bucks." *CNN*. July 14, 2011. <http://www.cnn.com/2011/US/07/11/terrorism.expert/> (accessed December 10, 2012).
- Hagee, John. *Jerusalem Countdown: A Warning to the World*. Lake Mary: FrontLine, 2006.
- Hall, Stuart. *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997.
- Herman, Edward S., and Noam Chomsky. *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media*. New York: Pantheon Books, 2002.
- Hitchcock, Mark. *Middle East Burning: Is the Spreading Unrest a Sign of the End Times?* Eugene: Harvest House Publishers, 2012.
- Jeffrey, Grant R. *Armageddon: Appointment with Destiny*. Toronto: Frontier Research Publications, 1997.
- . *The Next World War: What Prophecy Reveals about Extreme Islam and the West*. Colorado Springs: Water Brook Press, 2006.
- Jehl, Douglas. "Bush Says He Disagrees with General's Remarks on Religion." *The New York Times*. October 23, 2003. <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/23/world/bush-says-he-disagrees-with-general-s-remarks-on-religion.html> (accessed March 31, 2014).
- Jenkins, Philip. *The Next Christendom: The Coming of Global Christianity 3rd ed* . New York: Oxford University Press, 2011.
- Johnson, Luke. "Louie Gohmert: Radical Islamists Being Trained To 'Act Like Hispanic' ." *Huffington Post*. April 17, 2013. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/louie-gohmert-radical-islamist\\_n\\_3100254.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/04/17/louie-gohmert-radical-islamist_n_3100254.html) (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Jones, James W. "Eternal Warfare: Violence on the Mind of American Apocalyptic Christianity." In *The Fundamentalist Mindset: Psychological Perspectives on Religion, Violence, and History*, edited by Charles B. Strozier, David M. Terman and James W. Jones, 91-103. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Kidd, Thomas S. *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009.
- Kirsch, Jonathan. *A History of the End of the World: How the Most Controversial Book in the Bible Changed the Course of Western Civilization*. New York: HarperCollins, 2006.

- Kraybill, J. Nelson. *Apocalypse and Allegiance: Worship, Politics, and Devotion in the Book of Revelation*. Grand Rapids: Brazos Press, 2010.
- Kumar, Deepa. *Islamophobia and the Politics of Empire*. Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2012.
- Laughland, Oliver. "Rupert Murdoch attacked for 'irresponsible' tweets about Muslims." *The Guardian*. August 20, 2013.  
<http://www.theguardian.com/media/2013/aug/20/rupert-murdoch-twitter-attack-muslims> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Lean, Nathan. *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims*. London: Pluto Press, 2012.
- Leung, Michelle. "Meet Fox's New Anti-Muslim 'National Security Analyst.'" *Media Matters for America*. February 20, 2014.  
<http://mediamatters.org/blog/2014/02/20/meet-foxs-new-anti-muslim-national-security-ana/198148> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Lindsey, Hal. *The Everlasting Hatred: The Roots of Jihad*. Washington: WND Books, 2011.
- . *The Late Great Planet Earth*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970.
- Luyken, Jorg. "The Palestinian 'terrorist' turned Zionist." *The Jerusalem Post*. March 30, 2008. <http://www.jpost.com/Features/The-Palestinian-terrorist-turned-Zionist> (accessed December 10, 2012).
- MacLean, Gerald. *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire 1580-1720*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.
- Mantyla, Kyle. "Boykin: Islam 'Should Not Be Protected Under the First Amendment.'" *Right Wing Watch*. December 6, 2010.  
<http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-islam-should-not-be-protected-under-first-amendment> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- . "Boykin: When Jesus Comes Back, He'll Be Carrying An AR-15 Assault Rifle - See more at: <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-when-jesus-comes-back-hell-be-carrying-ar-15-assault-rifle#sthash.sPMPYUYA.dpuf>." *Right Wing Watch*. February 19, 2014. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-when-jesus-comes-back-hell-be-carrying-ar-15-assault-rifle> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Marsh, Charles. "Wayward Christian Soldiers." *New York Times*. January 20, 2006.  
[http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/01/20/opinion/20marsh.html?_r=0) (accessed April 2, 2014).
- Matar, Nabil. *Islam in Britain, 1558-1685*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.
- . *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.
- Mattson, Ingrid. *The Story of the Qur'an: Its History and Place in Muslim Life*. Malden: Blackwell Publishing, 2008.
- McCombs, Maxwell. *Setting the Agenda: The Mass Media and Public Opinion*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004.
- McCutcheon, Russell. *Religion and the Domestication of Dissent: Or, How to Live in a Less Than Perfect Nation*. Oakville: Equinox Publishing, 2005.
- McGinn, Bernard. *Antichrist: Two Thousand Years of the Human Fascination with Evil*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2000.

- McPherson, James Brian. *The Conservative Resurgence and the Press: The Media's Role in the Rise of the Right*. Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2008.
- Murphy, Tim. "I Was a Terrorist...Seriously!" *Mother Jones*. March/April 2012. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2012/03/kamal-saleem-former-terrorist-islamophobia> (accessed March 29, 2014).
- . "Oh Magog! Why End Times Buffs are Freaking Out About Syria." *Mother Jones*. September 4, 2013. <http://www.motherjones.com/politics/2013/09/syria-joel-rosenberg-damascus-countdown-magog> (accessed March 31, 2014).
- Myers, Richard. "Rush Limbaugh's Many Muslim Smears." *Daily Kos*. October 1, 2012. <http://www.dailykos.com/story/2012/10/01/1138358/-Rush-Limbaugh-s-Many-Muslim-Smeared> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Patel, Eboo. *Sacred Ground: Pluralism, Prejudice, and the Promise of America*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2012.
- Perry, Rick. "Commemorating the Aga Khan's Visit." *Office of the Governor Rick Perry*. April 12, 2008. <http://governor.state.tx.us/news/speech/5156/> (accessed April 10, 2014).
- Pipes, Daniel. "Islam's inadvertent adverse effects on adherents." *Washington Times*. March 7, 2014. <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2014/mar/7/pipes-islams-inadvertent-effects/> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- . "The Case for Supporting Assad." *National Review*. April 12, 2013. <http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/345338/case-supporting-assad-daniel-pipes> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Posner, Sarah. "Pastor Strangelove." *The American Prospect*. May 21, 2006. <http://prospect.org/article/pastor-strangelove> (accessed April 8, 2014).
- Postman, Neil, and Steve Powers. *How to Watch TV News*. New York: Penguin Books, 2008.
- Potter, W. James. *Media Effects*. Los Angeles: Sage Publications, 2012.
- Rapoza, Kenneth. "Fox News Viewers Uninformed, NPR Listeners Not, Poll Suggests." *Forbes*. November 21, 2011. <http://www.forbes.com/sites/kenrapoza/2011/11/21/fox-news-viewers-uninformed-npr-listeners-not-poll-suggests/> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Reitman, Janet. "Jahar's World." *Rolling Stone*. July 17, 2013. <http://www.rollingstone.com/culture/news/jahars-world-20130717> (accessed January 2, 2014).
- Rich, Frank. "Stop Beating a Dead Fox." *New York Magazine*. January 26, 2014. <http://nymag.com/news/frank-rich/fox-news-2014-2/> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Richardson, Joel. *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist*. Washington: WND Books, 2012.
- . *The Islamic Antichrist: The Shocking Truth about the Real Nature of the Beast*. Washington : WND Books, 2009.
- Rodinson, Maxime. *Europe and the Mystique of Islam*. New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002.
- Rosenberg, Joel C. "Kansas Governor Brownback has invited me to Topeka to speak about "Damascus Countdown." Please join us at the State Capitol on Sept. 7." *Joel C. Rosenberg's Blog*. August 31, 2013. <http://flashtrafficblog.wordpress.com/2013/08/31/kansas-governor-brownback->

- has-invited-me-to-topeka-to-speak-about-damascus-countdown-please-join-us-at-the-state-capitol-on-sept-7/ (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Rossing, Barbara R. *The Rapture Exposed: The Message of Hope in the Book of Revelation*. New York: Basic Books, 2004.
- Sacirbey, Omar. "Skeptics challenge life stories offered by high-profile Muslim converts to Christianity." *The Washington Post*. June 26, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/25/AR2010062504435.html> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- Safa, Reza F. *Inside Islam: Exposing and Reaching the World of Islam*. Lake Mary: FrontLine, 1996.
- Said, Edward W. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1997.
- . *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.
- Saleem, Kamal. *The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist's Memoir of Death and Redemption*. New York: Howard Books, 2009.
- Schulman, Daniel. "Rep. Louie Gohmert's "Terror Baby" Meltdown." *Mother Jones*. August 13, 2010. <http://www.motherjones.com/mojo/2010/08/rep-louie-gohmerts-terror-baby-meltdown> (accessed March 31, 2014).
- Sfondeles, Tina. "Bible prophecy links Damascus destruction, Second Coming, some say." *Chicago Sun Times*. August 30, 2013. <http://www.suntimes.com/news/metro/22237215-418/turmoil-in-syria.html> (accessed April 2, 2014).
- Shane, Scott. "Killings in Norway Spotlight Anti-Muslim Thought in U.S." *New York Times*. July 24, 2011. [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/us/25debate.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/07/25/us/25debate.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) (accessed April 6, 2014).
- Sheehi, Stephen. *Islamophobia: The Ideological Campaign Against Muslims*. Atlanta: Clarity Press, 2011.
- Shoebat, Walid. *Why I Left Jihad: The Root of Terrorism and the Rise of Islam*. Top Executive Media (self-published), 2005.
- Shoebat, Walid, and Joel Richardson. *God's War on Terror*. Top Executive Media (self-published), 2008.
- Shooman, Yasemin, and Riem Spielhaus. "The concept of the Muslim enemy in the public discourse." In *Muslims in the West after 9/11: Religion, Politics, and Law*, Edited by Jocelyne Cesari, 198-228. New York: Routledge, 2010.
- Sizer, Stephen. *Christian Zionism: Road-map to Armageddon?* Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004.
- . *Zion's Christian Soldiers?: The Bible, Israel, and the Church*. Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 2007.
- Snader, Joe. *Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction*. Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2000.
- Spector, Stephen. *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2009.
- Starr, G.A. "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre." *Huntington Library Quarterly*, Vol. 29, No. 1, November 1965: 35-52.

- Stone, James. *Islamic Apocalypse: How Islam will Fulfill End Time Prophecy*. CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform (self-published), 2012.
- Stone, Perry. *Unleashing the Beast: The Coming Fanatical Dictator and His Ten-Nation Coalition*. Lake Mary: FrontLine, 2009.
- Strozier, Charles B., James W. Jones, and David M. Terman. *The Fundamentalist Mindset*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- Tarin, Haris. "Michelle Bachmann and Muslim witch hunts." *CNN*. July 30, 2012. <http://www.cnn.com/2012/07/30/opinion/tarin-bachmann-muslims/> (accessed March 31, 2014).
- Tashman, Brian. "Boykin: 'No Mosques in America.'" *Right Wing Watch*. September 7, 2011. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/boykin-no-mosques-america> (accessed April 11, 2014).
- . "CBN's Erick Stakelbeck Mixes 'Terrorism Analysis' with Biblical Prophecy." *Right Wing Watch*. March 12, 2012. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/cbns-erick-stakelbeck-mixes-terrorism-analysis-biblical-prophecy> (accessed April 7, 2014).
- . "Robertson Wonders If Obama Is A 'Crypto-Muslim'." *Right Wing Watch*. July 16, 2013. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/robertson-wonders-if-obama-crypto-muslim> (accessed April 7, 2014).
- . "Stakelbeck: Gays And Liberals Work With Radical Islamists Because They Hate America, Jesus." *Right Wing Watch*. September 17, 2013. <http://www.rightwingwatch.org/content/stakelbeck-gays-and-liberals-work-radical-islamists-because-they-hate-america-jesus> (accessed April 7, 2014).
- The Scofield Study Bible*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1917.
- Uwimana, Solange. "Fox Amplifies Discredited Anti-Islamic Activist Steve Emerson During Boston Coverage." *Media Matters for America*. April 19, 2013. <http://mediamatters.org/blog/2013/04/19/fox-amplifies-discredited-anti-islamic-activist/193701> (accessed April 1, 2014).
- Vitkus, Daniel. *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2001.
- . *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003.
- Volf, Miroslav. *Allah: A Christian Response*. New York: HarperOne, 2011.
- Wan, William, and Michelle Boorstein. "Liberty U. removing Ergun Caner as seminary dean over contradictory statements." *The Washington Post*. June 30, 2010. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2010/06/29/AR2010062905331.html> (accessed December 2012, 2012).
- Weber, Timothy P. *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1925*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1979.
- . *On the Road to Armageddon: How Evangelicals Became Israel's Best Friend*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004.
- Wing, Nick. "Allen West: Keith Ellison 'The Antithesis Of Principles' Upon Which Country Was Founded." *Huffington Post*. May 25, 2011. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/24/allen-west-keith-ellison\\_n\\_813159.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/01/24/allen-west-keith-ellison_n_813159.html) (accessed April 11, 2014).

Wright, N.T., and Marcus J. Borg. *The Meaning of Jesus: Two Visions*. New York: HarperOne, 1999.

Zahn, Drew. "Biblical doom of Damascus 'right before our eyes'." *WND*. August 31, 2013. <http://www.wnd.com/2013/08/biblical-doom-of-damascus-right-before-our-eyes/> (accessed April 2, 2014).

# Curriculum Vitae

## **EDUCATION**

- Wake Forest University* 2014
- Master of Arts in Religion
- University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill* 2012
- Bachelor of Arts in Global Studies, Religious Studies; History minor

## **RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Muslim-Christian relations; Orientalism, Islamophobia; Islamic ethics, especially biomedical and environmental ethics; religion, science, and medicine

## **LANGUAGE SKILLS**

- Arabic – Intermediate proficiency
- German – Reading knowledge w/ dictionary
- Turkish – Intermediate proficiency

## **PUBLICATIONS**

- Encyclopedia entry on “Abu Bakr Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Razi” in *The Islamic World: An Encyclopedia of History, Culture, and Society*, edited by James Ciment and Gordon Newby (forthcoming from M.E. Sharpe)

## **INVITED PRESENTATIONS**

- Eboo Patel’s *Acts of Faith* (November 6, 2012) for REL 390: Interreligious Encounters and Engagements, taught by Dr. Nelly van Doorn-Harder at Wake Forest University

## **EXTRACURRICULAR & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT**

- The Hill Political Review*, UNC-Chapel Hill 2011 – 2012
- Writer for non-partisan political magazine
- Turkish Student Association*, UNC-Chapel Hill 2010 – 2012
- Vice President during 2011-2012 academic year
  - Organized Turkish movie nights and other cultural events
- Triangle Wildlife Clinic*, Durham, NC 2009 – 2011
- Volunteered at local wildlife rehabilitation clinic