

[PCS 1 (2016) 31–76]

IS “POST-CHRISTENDOM” A RELEVANT HERMENEUTICAL
FRAMEWORK TO THE SITUATION OF THE CHRISTIANS IN
GREATER SYRIA? TOWARDS A CRITICAL APPRAISAL

Najib George Awad
Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT, USA

Introduction

In his monograph, *The Distinctive Identity of the Church*, Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen introduces his study of post-modernist theology with the following lines:

Due to significant cultural and religious changes in the Western world, an intriguing discussion has emerged within this classic theological debate. An increasing number of theologians assert that the Western world has moved from, or is currently in transition from, an era of Christendom to one of post-Christendom, the magnitude and significance of which has been discussed in a number of books.¹

There are Christians in the West and in the Middle East alike who seem to believe that, if Nikolajsen highlights a new and alarming condition that the western world has just started to face, post-Christendom is a condition that Christians of the Middle Eastern, Arab–Islamic world know very well. Driven by a culturalist approach that tends always to sharply divide the world and human entities into never-ending differences and clashes,² this group of thinkers opines that the Christians in the Middle East have been living in such a situation not only since the “Arab Spring” and its aftermath wreaked havoc, but ever since the Christians in Greater Syria encountered Islam for the first time in

1. Nikolajsen, *Distinctive Identity*, 3.
2. See, as one example of such a culturalist approach, the reading of Islam’s relation to the Christian West in Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*

the seventh century AD. By their invasion of the Fertile Crescent, starting from AD 632, and their establishment of a new rule in Damascus-Syria, the Muslim Umayyad Caliphate ushered in a new historical epoch, wherein the Eastern Christian indigenous inhabitants of that land found themselves transformed from a dominant religious cultural and societal majority into a minority. The Christians who believe in this view conclude that, if post-Christendom is a few decades old in the West, it is over 1400 years old in the Middle East. The presumption behind this view is that Christianity is a “western” phenomenon (over-against Islam as the “eastern” one), and since the cultural context in the orient is not “western,” a clash of culture/civilization is deemed to be inevitable, and the cultural condition of the church is an ongoing post-Christendom experience.

Until very recently, very few studies have been produced by oriental Arab-speaking Christians on their life experience as a post-Christendom *Sitz im Leben*. More significantly, no study has yet tackled the relevance of “post-Christendom” in the context of the Christian Middle East from the angle of the following inquiry: is a “post-Christendom” situation a natural or direct expression of the Christians’ situation in the Middle East, and, if “post-Christendom” is applicable to Christian life in the Middle Eastern context, is such a situation a natural or direct expression of a “post-Christianity” situation? In this article, I argue that “post-Christendom” and “post-Christianity” are not conceptually or contextually synonymous concepts for understanding the situation of Christians in the Middle East. My argument is an attempt at responding to the following particular and contextual question: If, for the sake of argument, we accept that “post-Christendom” is historically traceable in the Arab world (which I will demonstrate it is not), how do the contemporary Middle Eastern Christians survive and exist in such a presumed “post-Christendom” Islamic-Arab world without being pushed toward falling into a “post-Christianity” fate? In other words, how can these Christians deal with their real challenge, namely, surviving not merely in post-Christendom but in a post-Christian Middle East/Arab world?

In this study, I first address these questions by looking briefly at the notion of “post-Christendom” and its conceptual variations and potential presence outside the western world. This overview grounds my ensuing examination of its relevance in the context of Middle Eastern Christianity. Second, I go back in history to the first moment of Christian–Muslim encounters to scrutinize how the Christians of Greater Syria reacted to the prevalence of Islam in their homeland during AD 600–800. Third, I move to present Greater Syria and see if Christians’ attitudes today reflect a “post-Christendom” perspective and whether or not this notion matches their *Sitz im Leben*. I end this study with some concluding remarks on the relevance and validity of reading the Arab Christians’ context from a “post-Christendom” perspective. My thesis is that reading the Middle East’s *Sitz im Leben* from a “Christendom/Post-Christendom” perspective (1) fails to perceive the factual nature and complexity of that context and (2) does not offer a useful solution for understanding the situation of Middle Eastern Christians and their effort to survive in the Arab world.

What is “Post-Christendom”? Some Definitions

During the past couple of decades, some theologians from Europe and the United States (e.g. Jeppe Bach Nikolajsen, Stuart Murray, Alan Kreider, John Howard Yoder, Stanley Hauerwas, Lesslie Newbigin, etc.) started to speak about a substantial transformation of western societies from “Christendom” into “post-Christendom.” These scholars ponder seriously over the fact that “ignorance of Christianity is increasing and Church buildings [in all western states] are becoming as alien as mosques and gurudwaras.”³ Many western Christians believe that it is becoming almost wishful thinking to assume that they live in “a ‘Christian society’ where most are latent Christians and lapsed churchgoers.”⁴ Such an assumption, it is believed, no

3. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 2. See also Hall, *End of Christendom*; and Hauerwas, *After Christendom?*

4. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 3.

longer has any roots in today's western reality because Christianity is no more the means "by which men and women, as individuals, construct their identities and their sense of 'self'."⁵

The decline of Christianity in western societies is called "post-Christendom." The western scholars who promote this notion believe that the situation called "post-Christendom" is both global and broadly historical in nature. According to them, it permeates and characterizes every geographical, societal, or cultural context of human existence, where Christendom never existed or was eradicated and degenerated. Christianity, these scholars suggest, has similarly "been eradicated before in places [like] the Middle East and North Africa [i.e., the Arab world] that were once Christian heartlands," thus driving the indigenous followers of Christ in these territories into living in a state of "post-Christendom," as Europeans do today.⁶

In their study of "post-Christendom," scholars tend to conjure up its fully-fledged meaning by comparing and contrasting it with an opposite state, which they call "Christendom." In *The Distinctive Identity of the Church*, Nikolajsen follows this comparison/contrast approach to interpret the "post-Christendom" phenomenon. "Post-Christendom," accordingly, becomes a state that emanated from the collapse of a "Christendom" era. Whereas, according to Nikolajsen, Christianity became a state of "Christendom" when:

The Church moved from a marginal position to a dominant institution in society; from being socially, politically and intellectually inferior to being in a position of power and superiority; from being economically weak and poor to being in a position of immense wealth, from being an oppressed minority to being the oppressive majority; from being a *religio illicita* to becoming the only religion in the civic community; from being resident aliens in a pagan

5. Ibid., 5. See also Brown, *Death of Christian Britain*, 1–15; and McLeod and Ustorf, eds., *Decline of Christendom*.

6. Ibid., 8.

environment to being an established Church in a professedly Christian state.⁷

From a similar comparative perspective, Stuart Murray also approaches “post-Christendom” by contrasting it with “Christendom.” This latter term, Murray maintains, was coined in ninth-century England, yet the historical birth of the state of “Christendom” can be traced back to fourth-century Rome, when the emperor Constantine adopted the Christian faith and turned Christianity into the central and definitive religious and cultural constituent of the empire.⁸ Murray argues that this imperial move initially bestowed societal privileges upon Christianity, granted it political influence, and salvaged its members from being a persecuted religious community. However, Murray suggests that turning Christianity into Christendom generated a radical and dangerous transformation in the nature of Christian religious belief. Rather than just deeming it mere “faith,” people started to view Christendom as a religious *civilization* and life-shaping referential system that “provided a framework for political, economic, social, military and cultural life.”⁹ Murray opines that this identification of Christianity with western civilization, consequentially, made Christendom evolve into a “society that excluded or marginalized other religious options, where almost everyone regarded themselves as Christians and accepted without question a Christian worldview.”¹⁰ That is, “Christendom” turned Christianity into “a totalitarian culture: anyone challenging its beliefs or causing dissension was perceived as undermining society and dealt with severely.”¹¹

7. Nikolajsen, *Distinctive Identity*, 6; cited from Goheen, *As the Father Has Sent Me*, 2–3.

8. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 23–46. On the historical origin of “Christendom,” see also Kreider, *Change of Conversion*; and Brown, *Rise of Western Christendom*.

9. *Ibid.*, 66.

10. *Ibid.*

11. *Ibid.*, 68. “Christendom,” Murray further says, “became more oppressive, a totalitarian religious system, in which the church became phenomenally wealthy and seriously corrupt” (Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 110).

If the above is the meaning of Christianity in a state of “Christendom,” Christianity in a state of “post-Christendom” is exactly the opposite. Murray describes the shift from “Christendom” into “post-Christendom” in terms of a transformation “from the center to margins . . . from majority to minority . . . from [Christians as] settlers to sojourners . . . from privilege to plurality . . . from control to witness . . . from maintenance to mission . . . [and] from institution to movement.”¹² In sum, “post-Christendom,” as Nikolajsen explains, means that

The larger societal institutions, the most important cultural, political and educational institutions no longer consider themselves to be Christian . . . [and] the church gradually loses its central and influential position in society, and . . . Christianity can no longer be considered as a mainstay in . . . society.¹³

One of the most interesting aspects worth pondering in the above-mentioned explanation of “Christendom” and “post-Christendom” is the fact that the former designates what is believed to be a Christian *world*, where Christian religion dominates over everything else, not just by virtue of the majority status of its followers in a specific land. It primarily enjoys this supremacy by means of the fact that the land it inhabits is governed by Christian institutions and where power, authority, and influence on every level are in the hands of Christian figures.

In this regard, particularly foundational to such understanding is the suffix “dom,” for its meaning is central to the precise connotations of “Christen-dom” and “post-Christen-dom” alike. In its English linguistic denotation, “dom” *per se* connotes power, dominion, supremacy, and hierarchy in terms of order, social class, and jurisdictional authority. It was used in history as a title given to nobility in society and to the pope and churchly dignitaries, so as to mark their worldly, public dominion and ecclesial status. Be that as it may, it is valid to conclude that the notions of “power,” “dominion,” and “supremacy,” as well as institutional, jurisdictional, and political control, are all equally

12. Ibid., 21.

13. Nikolajsen, *Distinctive Identity*, 8.

fundamental and inherent constituents of the notions of "Christendom" and "post-Christendom" alike. This implies that the Christians' mere privilege to exist safely, to worship and practice their faith freely, and to co-exist as a social-cultural community in secure, peaceful, and protected conditions with other communities in one land or state, are not, as such, sufficient prerogatives to allow them to enjoy a "Christendom" status. "Dom" implies that the criterion here is not related to life setting. It circles, instead, around autonomy and political power. Had this not been the case, the Christians in the Muslim-Arab world, or even in Europe—where Christians can practice their faith freely and securely, and are not necessarily persecuted (though maybe exposed to difficult life conditions, as in the Middle East)—would not have been deemed to be living in a "post-Christendom" situation. The "Christendom/post-Christendom" equation, therefore, is not necessarily applicable to or assessed by religious presumptions and appraisals but rather by political ones, and it is based on authoritarianism.

It is because of these implied connotations that the scholar needs to differentiate "post-Christendom" from "post-Christianity." These two are not synonymous in terms of denotation, and they are not mutually inclusive. "Post-Christianity" denotes Christianity in a state of religious persecution and communal obliteration, when being in a non-Christian context threatens the sheer existence of Christian belief and the life of the Christian community as such. Murray is plausibly persuasive in conjecturing that "post-Christendom need not mean post-Christian," for the "post-Christian" state lies in "[w]hether we can re-imagine Christianity in a world [the Christians] no longer control."¹⁴ Murray elaborates on this in the following way:

In societies where churches have flourished and declined, where the Christian story has been told and has influenced individuals and even the culture as a whole, but where other stories have had a definitive or equivalent influence alongside the Christian story, "post-

14. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 8.

Christendom” is not an appropriate term to describe the diminished influence of the churches or the story they tell.¹⁵

In turn, Stefan Paas concurs with Murray in his distinction between “post-Christendom” and “post-Christianity,” opining that sometimes the meaning of these notions is mistakenly “blurred by the tendency of writers to use them more or less as synonymous, weakening their analytical power.”¹⁶ Paas convincingly reminds us that there was Christianity long before “Christendom” appeared, and “in many countries today there is a very lively Christian presence without the assumptions of Christian theocracy or a Christian culture.”¹⁷ Sometimes in the history of Christianity, as Douglas John Hall once invited us to remember, it was the lack of “the securities and certitudes that [“Christendom”] acquired” that enabled the Christians to experience anew the essential faith and nature that define their Christianity.¹⁸

I side with Murray’s and Paas’s subtle distinction and call to avoid conflating “post-Christendom” with “post-Christianity,” or even totally identifying “the fear-from” and “the reaction-against” each. In the ensuing sections of this essay, I endeavor to demonstrate that such a conceptual distinction is crucial for accurately perceiving and interpreting the state of the Christians in the Middle East, not only in the past, but also in the present. I seek to uncover the nature of the Christians’ stance on their existence in a dominantly Muslim *Sitz im Leben*. I propose that, far from facing a threat of “post-Christendom”—a community suffering from losing political, jurisdictional, and institutional supremacy, Eastern Christians face the threat of “post-Christianity”—they were and still are a community whose concern is about not falling into a “post-Christianity” destiny. I shall restrict my analysis to the *Sitz im Leben* of the Christians of Greater Syria. By “Greater Syria,” I mean the Christians who live within the territories of the geographical land known as the “Fertile

15. Ibid., 19.

16. Paas, “Post-Christian,” 5.

17. Ibid.

18. Hall, *End of Christendom*, 98.

Crescent," which is divided today (until now, at least) into the following contemporary states: Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, Jordan, Palestinian Territories (West Bank and Gaza Strip), and Israel.

*"Post-Christendom" and the Christians in Early-Muslim
Greater Syria*

One of the connotations of a "post-Christendom" situation is that the Christian community no longer enjoys the position of power and superiority. To the contrary, the church is now an oppressed minority, *religion illicita*, resident alien and, to say the least, no longer construed a mainstay in its societal context. Does post-Christendom characterize the *Sitz im Leben* of the Christians of Greater Syria during and within the boundaries of the Umayyad and early Abbasid Islamic caliphates (AD 600–800)? In other words, were the Christians' encounter with, and their life setting in, the Muslim world a "clash of civilizations"?

There is a considerable extent of truth in the scholarly belief that "the most common modern understanding of Christian–Muslim interactions" in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries supports interpreting this interaction and overarchingly categorizing it as "a relationship [expressive of] . . . clash of civilizations."¹⁹ There are quite a few studies of Christian–Muslim encounters that tend to reconstruct these in a reductionist manner, namely, as an oppositional clash between two totally antagonistic, separate entities who try to survive by reciprocally excluding and banishing each other. Impelled by the "clash-of-civilizations" model, a number of late antiquity historians emphasized that "the Muslim world was very different from its predecessors," and these historians also claim that Greater Syria was already culturally "cut off from Late Antiquity before the

19. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 1–2. Samuel Huntington first developed the "clash of civilizations" theory, which became a popular thesis in the West. See Huntington, *Clash of Civilization*; and Huntington, "Clash of Civilizations?" 22–49. For some critical discussions of this theory in relation to Christian–Muslim encounter, see Bulliet, *Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization*; and Qureshi and Sells, "Introduction," 1–47.

emergence of Islam.” These historians end up “seeing [Islam] as the straw that broke Late Antiquity’s back and pushed the Middle East into the medieval age.”²⁰

In 2015, Michael Penn published a book titled, *Envisioning Islam*, wherein he deconstructed the reductionist reading of the Christian–Muslim encounter in the Greater Syria of AD 600–800 as an example of an “oppositional, clash-of-civilizations model of interreligious encounter.”²¹ Conspicuously inspired by Daniel Boyarin’s emphasis on continuity and rejection of separation in his reading of early Christianity’s relation to Judaism, Penn applies the same emphasis on continuity to the relation between Christianity and Islam during the late antiquity/early medieval era. Penn even describes that relationship by quoting Boyarin:

A reevaluation of early Christianity and early Islam . . . strongly suggests that, throughout much of the seventh, eighth and ninth centuries, the boundaries between Christianity and Islam were often “so fuzzy that one could hardly say precisely at what point one stopped and the other began.”²²

Focusing specifically on the Syriac-speaking Christians of the region and their seventh-to-ninth centuries’ extant literature, Penn proposes that there is evidence of a “much more substantial and long-lasting overlap between Christianity and Islam than the standard narrative [of opposition and segregation] allows.”²³ These texts advocate continuity and fluid boundaries between the Christians of Greater Syria and their Muslim rulers and dominating neighbors, rather than support the pre-constructed view of clash, separation, and antagonism, which is implied in the modern, rather anachronistic, assumptions of clearly defined confessional communities. “The fuzziness of seventh- through ninth-century religious boundaries,” Penn argues, “not only

20. Hoyland, “Early Islam,” 1055. As two examples of the adoption of the “clash of civilizations” model in late antiquity studies, Hoyland points to Heather, *Fall of the Roman Empire*; and Ward-Perkins, *Fall of Rome*.

21. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 2.

22. Ibid. Here Penn cites Boyarin, *Dying for God*, 11. See also Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

23. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 10–11.

depict an environment in which Christians and Muslims had substantial interactions, but they also contain numerous figures who violated modern norms of exclusive religious identity."²⁴ Rather than crudely dissociated and narrowly defined "Muslim" and "Christian" members in society, that early *Sitz im Leben* contained many citizens who were "Christian-like" Muslims, and others who were "Muslim-like" Christians.²⁵

The extant texts of the Syriac Christian community, as Penn extensively demonstrates, depict Muslims who funded Christian institutions, consulted Christian clergy for spiritual aid, practiced some Christian rituals and used Christian holy water, as if these people did not fear that such practices could estrange them from the normal life setting of the Muslim caliphate in the seventh-to-ninth centuries.²⁶ On the other hand, Christians were still at home in their churches even when they followed the Muslims' belief that Muḥammad is God's messenger and concurred with the Muslims in saying that Jesus is a prophet like Muḥammad.²⁷ One of the outcomes of this fuzzy-boundaries situation is the fact that "in the first two and a half centuries of Islamic rule, the actual number of converts from Christianity to Islam did not threaten the survival of Syriac Christianity."²⁸ Several Islamic and Christian texts speak about the members of these two religions jointly worshiping in churches and mosques, co-using them as almost adjoining congregational facilities.²⁹ They also record stories of Christians and Muslims intermarrying, and of Christian women who married Muslim men without eventually

24. Ibid., 12.

25. Ibid., 155–67.

26. Ibid., 157.

27. Ibid., 163.

28. Ibid., 168. Penn maintains that, at that time, churches were equally gaining converts to Christianity from other communities in the caliphate. Because of this, for example, the Patriarch Timothy I of the Church of the East ordered the establishment of six new ecclesiastical parishes and promoted missionary work to India, China, Turkestan, Yemen, and Tibet. See also Baum and Winkler, *Die apostolische Kirche*; and Young, *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph*.

29. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 144.

converting to Islam.³⁰ And these texts additionally narrate that, their ability and right to resort to Christian courts notwithstanding, some Christians did not mind appealing to Islamic courts and judges to deal legally with their domestic affairs. The Islamic caliphate, which Christians and Muslims belonged to during the seventh-to-ninth centuries, was a pluralistic world, as Penn emphatically surmises, where both people and objects exhibited “border crossings so fluent that the borders themselves sometimes are hard to distinguish.”³¹

Lest my above discussion is misinterpreted, neither I nor Penn is suggesting that the Christians and Muslims during this time were living together in a utopian, platonic *Politeia*. I fully concur with Penn’s affirmation that, if the “clash-of-civilizations” theory fails to properly portray the Christian–Muslim relationships of that epoch, an idealist portrayal of a “universally tolerant *convivencia*” does not do it either.³² Scholars of early Islam agree that a new phase in the development of the Islamic history started with the rule of the Umayyad caliph ‘Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (r. 685–705). This caliph exerted on his empire a systematic, strict, and uncompromising policy of Islamization and Arabization.³³ Such an ideological policy placed the lives and status of many loyal Christian followers and servants of the Muslim rule (*mawālī*) in serious peril, as they were forced out of the caliphal court and governing body, and turned into marginal and underprivileged members in the state where they had once been the caliphs’ primary human assets for running the Muslim empire.

An ideal example of such a drastic outcome of the Islamization-Arabization policy is the Syrian Melkite Christian, John of Damascus (Yannah ad-Dimashqī b. Sarjūn b. Manṣūr ar-Rūmī), who served the caliphal court like his grandfather and

30. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 150–54.

31. *Ibid.*, 145; also inspired by Boyarin’s view in *Dying for God*, 97.

32. *Ibid.*, 185.

33. *Ibid.*, 25. See also Donner, *Muḥammad and the Believers*, 194–211; Hawting, *First Dynasty*; Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 58–64; Cook, “Syria and the Arabs,” 467–78; Ohlig and Puin, *Hidden Origins*; Crone and Cook, *Hagarism*; and Nevo and Kronen, *Crossroads to Islam*, part 3.

father before him, and who eventually found himself expelled from the court, spending the rest of his life as a monk and church servant and theologian due to the Islamization-Arabization policy.³⁴ Prior to this period, the Christians of Greater Syria, Syriac- and Greek-speaking alike, did not welcome the Muslims' invasion of their homeland, and they did not actually embrace the defeat of Byzantine and Persian rules from the hand of the troops of Muḥammad as a positive and golden chance for Christianity and its prosperity. The extant seven-to-ninth centuries' Christian texts that speak about the Hagarenes, the Ishmaelites, and *ḥanpē* (Muslims) do transmit to us numerous hostile expressions that describe these invaders with bluntly insulting, dehumanizing, and inimical terms.³⁵ For people like John of Damascus, such a change in the Muslim caliphs' policy meant that they had to imitate the Byzantine Empire and try to turn Islam into "Islam-dom," that is, into a totalitarian culture and belief system similar to the one in which Byzantium metamorphosed to Christianity. As the local Christians were against Byzantium's "Christen-dom," they were also very concerned and apprehensive about the late Umayyad and Abbasid Islam-dom. They were afraid that this might lead to a situation of suppression and corruption similar to the one they conflicted with under the Byzantine rule.

Most interestingly still, history tells us that these local Syrian Christians did not long for the return of a Byzantine "Christendom" as their liberating instrument from the yoke of Islam-

34. I am in the process of writing a monograph on this period and on the socio-cultural *Sitz im Leben* that originated from John Damascene's stance on Islam in his *De Haeresibus*, chapter 100/101 and that drove the Christians of Greater Syria to go through a transformative Umayyad identity-formation process. The provisional title of the volume is *Umayyad Christianity: John of Damascus as a Contextual Example of Identity-Formation in Early Islam*. I plan to finish writing this project by the end of 2016.

35. For such texts, see, for example, Hoyland, *Seeing Islam*; and Palmer, Brock, and Hoyland, *Seventh Century*. For assessments and analyses of the Christians' attitude toward the Muslim invasion, see, for example, Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 15–101; Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 23–57; Griffith, *Church in the Shadow*, 23–44; and van Ginkel, "Perception and Presentation".

dom. Had the local Christians been seeking another form of Christian “dom-like” entity to fight for them against the newly established “dom-like” situation by Islam, they would have been more positive and welcoming toward the Crusaders’ campaigns, since they represented military power of an alternative—this time, Latin—“Christian-dom.” Historical evidences say that this was far from the case. Until this very day, the local Christians of Greater Syria emphasize that their ancestors were afraid that the Crusaders’ “Christendom” would become, as Islam-dom, the cause of their falling into a “post-Christianity” situation.³⁶ This tension and negative appraisal notwithstanding, it is entirely a different question whether or not, in their negative and hostile speech on the Muslim invasion, the Christians were expressing their outrageous irritation from a “post-Christendom” deep hole, into which the Muslims were about to throw the church.

The emphasis on continuity and the fuzzy-boundaries relationship between Christians and Muslims in the early Islamic/late antiquity era aims actually at showing that the Christians of Syria were not inimical to Islam and the Muslims (despite their apprehension and weariness from the Muslim invasion) because their priority was not the malady of a “post-Christendom” situation, which Islam politically originated. They were, rather, primarily concerned with ascertaining that such an impending “post-Christendom” situation would not generate a state of “post-Christianity.” The concern about losing the position of authority, control, and superiority at the political, societal, and statehood levels was certainly the primary premonition of political “Christendom.” This concern was personified in Byzantium and its serving state-church and prelates, which were based in Constantinople and Asia Minor. However, this concern about “Christendom” was not influential during the effective occupation in the first Byzantine, and later on Muslim, territories of Greater Syria. For the “Christendom” of Byzantium and the Byzantine emperor’s politically-patronized ecclesial crew, Islam was the horrible and evil cause of the

36. On Eastern Christians’ reactions to the Crusades campaigns, see, for example, Moosa, “Crusades”; and MacEvitt, *Crusades*.

Christians' falling into a "post-Christendom" fate. This stance, nevertheless, was not the characteristic view of the local Syriac- and Greek-speaking Christians of Greater Syria. The local Christians of Greater Syria were not at all happy with the state of "Christendom" that was associated with and created by the Byzantine-Constantinopolitan royal, lay, and clerical elitists' society.

The local Syrian Christians did not hesitate during the sixth and seventh centuries, for instance, to reveal their indignation and ecclesial and theological objection to the Byzantine rulers' interference in ecclesial and theological affairs.³⁷ The challenge of imperial interference in church affairs that was raised against Emperor Leo III by John of Damascus,³⁸ and against Emperor Constans II by Maximus the Confessor,³⁹ are two reflective, exemplary cases in hand of this Syrian Christian public rejection and criticism of the "Christendom" imaged by Byzantine authority and its ruling system.⁴⁰ For these local Christians, Byzantium does not necessarily represent true Christianity, or at least the Christian identity they believe in and by which they define themselves religiously, socially, culturally, or even politically. We do know that starting from the late seventh century onwards, even the Christian, Greek-speaking, Melkite community of Syria (which used to be deemed a Byzantine transplant within the territories of the Muslim world) started to develop a particular local identity. It pursued this by distancing itself from the Greek-Hellenic cultural, ecclesial, and theological milieu of Byzantine Christianity, and merging, instead, deeper and in a more evidently committed manner into the Arabic-

37. On this matter, see, for example, Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 58–64; Olster, "Ideological Transformation"; Olster, "Justinian, Rhetoric and the Church"; and Dvornik, *Early Christian*, vol. 2.

38. John of Damascus, *Three Treatises*, II.12 (68–69); II.16 (72–73).

39. Allen and Neit, *Maximus the Confessor*.

40. Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 62–63; Wood, 'We Have No King but Christ'; Haldon, *Byzantium in the Seventh Century*; and Hussey, *Orthodox Church*.

Islamic *Sitz in Leben* of its living context.⁴¹ For these indigenous, Arabized Christians, Byzantium's loss of authority and superiority in the Islamic world was not symptomatic of "post-Christendom." The prevalence of Islam probably bred "post-Christendom" in the eyes of the people of Byzantium and its church. For the local Syrian Christians, however, the dawn of the Muslim era was not a threat because it did not wreak "post-Christian" havoc in their lives. For them, "Christendom," especially the Byzantine one, was not truly equal to Christianity.

In the eyes of the Christians of Greater Syria, Islam was not a sign of the genesis of a "post-Christendom" phase, neither politically, nor socially or ecclesially. At the political level, the Syrian Christians did not enjoy independence and autonomy before the advent of Islam. They were, rather, always ruled by other surrounding powers. Within only the first thirty years of the seventh century, for example, the Christians of Greater Syria, as Penn reminds us, "experienced no fewer than four changes of governance—Byzantine to Persian to Byzantine to Arab."⁴² Regime-change was habitual and frequent to such an extent that it made these Christians, who did not care about strife over power, look to the Muslim new rule as yet another player in the arena of empire, which might last or might collapse as fast as other players. They did not actually pay much attention to the religious or non-Christian identity of this new ruling entity and never truly deemed themselves as falling into a political or religious "post-Christendom." This was because the new ruler did not try to push the region toward a "post-Christianity" situation that would have stripped the locals of their religious or cultural identity or presence.⁴³

41. Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 74–88, 421–29; Griffith, *Arabic Christianity*; Griffith, "Byzantium"; Griffith, "Church of Jerusalem"; Griffith, "Monks"; and Griffith, "Constantinople".

42. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 24.

43. *Ibid.*, 25. Penn detects this in the fact that "Islam generally did not proselytize non-Arabs . . . and even the *jizya* (poll tax) seems to have been more a gradual expansion of previous revenue structures than a radically new burden" (25). See also Robinson, *Empire and Elites*.

At the religious level, one can also glean that the "post-Christendom" situation that Byzantium Christianity faced was not experienced by the Christians of Syria, and it did not lead their theologians to necessarily and categorically villainize the Muslims and their prophet. Penn's study of the Syriac Christians' texts from the seventh-to-ninth centuries demonstrates instead that these Christians "did not so much villainize Muḥammad as Christianize him," and they did not reject the Qur'ān, but construed it "a derivative text that, however warped its current form, ultimately stemmed from Christian truth."⁴⁴ They believed that embracing Islamic faith would protect their own beliefs from the consequences of any "post-Christianity" outcome that could emanate from any inimical stance on Islam. The Christians of Greater Syria did not reckon to be obligated by any religious duty to resist the "post-Christendom" situation to which Byzantium and its Christianity were exposed. Thus, they did not imitate the Greek-Byzantine figures, like George the Monk and Nicetas of Byzantium, in speaking about Muslims as "incurably sick, slaves of error and God's enemies."⁴⁵ They probably did not want to pay the excessively high price of defending and salvaging such "Christendom." They believed that the latter was "corrupt [and its] excessive wealth and use of coercion were contrary to the Gospel."⁴⁶

Finally, dissociating from a reactionary attitude that portrays people as suffering from consequences of "post-Christendom" plausibly applies to the local Syrian Christians' social and cultural approach to the Muslims in the caliphate. The Syrian Christians refused to live in hermetically sealed, canton-like situations or a parallel *Sitz im Leben* with the Muslims. This encouraged the Muslims to embrace them in return and treat them as co-members in the empire. Fred Donner is not far from truth when he notes that "the earliest *umma* included not only

44. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 115.

45. *Ibid.*, 119.

46. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 21.

people whom we would characterize as Muslims but also Christians and Jews.”⁴⁷

The history of the Syrian Christians’ *Sitz im Leben* in the heart of the early Islamic age is far from utopian or exemplary *convivencia*. However, the previous exposition proposes that, in their life with Muslims in seventh-to-ninth centuries’ Greater Syria, the local Christians did not deem the arrival of Islam as the beginning of their collapsing into the negative, insufferable conditions of a “post-Christendom” situation. These Christians did not live, behave, or think as people in such a situation. Their obsession was not with helping Byzantium (the ostensibly Christian power and Christendom culture) retrieve its superiority in their homeland. For them, Byzantium was just one occupying ruler among others, who came, ruled, and then tumbled down. “Post-Christendom” for these Christians was not an issue. Their concern had been substantially directed towards guaranteeing that their new Muslim rulers and prevailing neighbors were not going to pull Syria’s *Sitz im Leben* towards a “post-Christianity” situation, wherein Christianity would vanish totally from the land.

The concern of the Syrian Christians about protecting themselves from a “post-Christianity,” not “post-Christendom,” fate explains why, in their extant texts, these Christians, as Penn perceptively notices, were not challenged by how to co-exist as Christians with/in Islam, but rather by how to maintain their distinction as Christians, who were present and tangibly active in the midst of the newly Muslim-dominant *Sitz im Leben*.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the concern about maintaining their distinction did not lead the Eastern Christians into opting for a policy of proselytism in their relation to Islam. Contrary to Western Christianity, where the idea of Christian mission to Muslims originated in the fifteenth century, Eastern Christians, as Hugh Goddard once accurately noted, “do not seem to have entertained any idea of undertaking any missionary activity among

47. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 180. See also Donner, “From Believers to Muslims,” 9.

48. Penn, *Envisioning Islam*, 185. See also Awad, *Orthodoxy*, 411–29.

Muslims.”⁴⁹ The Christians of the East always maintained a particular and conspicuously different view of and stance toward Islam from the Christians of the West, which, at a crucial and drastic point of their history, made the Crusaders of Europe make these Christians pay as high and exacting a price for this stance as the one paid by the Muslims.

“Post-Christendom” and the Christians of Greater Syria Today

On the eve of the Muslim occupation of the Middle East and the establishment of the Islamic empire, the Christians of Greater Syria did not react to Islam from a “post-Christendom” mentality or perspective. They opted, rather, for continuity and intermingling to such an extent that they kept the boundaries between Christianity and Islam in that *Sitz im Leben* conspicuously indistinct and far from indicative of a clash of civilizations. The Christians of Greater Syria opted for this stance because they did not feel that they were under any obligation to fight for the protection of the Byzantine Christendom from Islam. They did not, in the first place, have keen appreciation of or affiliation with Byzantine “Christendom.” Nevertheless, this is not to say that these Christians’ lives with Muslims were always a life of ideal *convivencia*; rather, their concern about their life with Muslims circled around their fear of finding themselves disintegrating into a “post-Christianity” life setting that could have resulted from some Muslim caliphs’ (e.g. ‘Abd al-Malik and al-Walīd b. ‘Abd al-Malik) or Muslim dynasties’ (e.g. the Mamluks) dreams of establishing an “Islam-dom” in the region.

This concern about Christianity (not “Christendom”) loomed large in the life of the Christians in Greater Syria in the succeeding centuries and up until today. However, the manner of these Christians’ dealings with this concern about Christianity in the Middle East varies according to diverse historical and contextual factors and challenges. In this section, I propose that the dominant Christian attitude towards the fear of falling into a “post-Christianity” situation during the era before the

49. Goddard, *History*, 113.

contemporary “Arab Spring” phenomenon is different from the one that Christians opt for after the occurrence of the “Arab Spring.”

Before the “Arab Spring,” the Christians in Greater Syria, especially the Protestants among them (to whom I personally belong), tended predominantly to look at their Muslim-majority societies and to preempt any possibility of “post-Christianity” that could emanate from living in an Islamic context, from a missiological-evangelistic approach: How can we Christianize this Middle Eastern context we belong to, not just religiously but also culturally and socially? I am not trying to suggest that this was the one and only stance the Protestants held toward their mostly Muslim context; I have elsewhere already demonstrated that some other Protestants opted for integration and continuous cultural and historical relations, both with Islam and with Eastern Christianity.⁵⁰ Any stereotypical assessment notwithstanding, one can still validly opine that the dominant Protestant stance on the Christians’ situation in a Muslim context circled around evangelistic and mission-founded views and visions. This perspective, especially during the last quarter of the twentieth century, was shaped by a conviction that, while Christians and Muslims co-exist geographically, they abide in two parallel worlds religiously, culturally, and sociologically, as two starkly distinguished (if not segregated) communities. If the Christians sometimes crossed the sharply dividing social and cultural (sometimes demographic) boundaries between these two communities, it is primarily because they have the duty of following Paul the Apostle’s strategy of becoming everything to everyone in order to win them to Christ (1 Cor 9:20–22). Co-existence is reduced in their case to a mere missiological role. The hope that lingered in the back of the minds of such boundary-crossing Protestants would be shaped from the belief that to protect Middle Eastern Christians from a “post-Christianity” fate, they must try to turn their Muslim neighbors into Christians and re-Christianize their living context.

50. See on this Awad, “Identity”; and Awad, “Where is the Gospel?” 288–306.

The above-mentioned evangelistic stance can easily be understood when studied in relation to the history of the Protestant Western missionaries to the Middle East during the nineteenth century. These missionaries, especially the Americans, who came from the West to the Levant during that time, viewed "the gospel-culture relationship *primarily* in relation to evangelism. Evangelism was the criterion for assessing the success or the failure of the missionary work. The most important question in relation to mission was how influential, lively and persuasive [the missionaries'] evangelistic preaching and teaching were in the [Middle Eastern] context?"⁵¹ It would not be implausible to say that, loaded with "the Great Awakening" spiritual zeal and worldview, these missionaries came to the Middle East armed with a "Christendom" worldview that deemed every setting where other religious beliefs were dominant as not just "post-Christendom," but even "post-Christian" or "non-Christian." Such a revival of the "Christendom" dream definitely placed their task and purpose in a place like Greater Syria on the track of prioritizing evangelism and aiding the local Christians in facing their presumed "post-Christendom" context, even endeavoring to salvage them from what these missionaries believed to be a "non/post-Christian" world. A few decades before the eruption of the "Arab Spring" in Greater Syria, one could validly suggest that this psychological and existential "post/non-Christian" imagination was symptomatic of the stance of a substantial portion of the conservative Protestant Christians.

This is, nevertheless, merely one side of the coin of this evangelistic-missionary stance. The other side of the coin demonstrates that the non-evangelizing Christians of Greater Syria (the local Arab and Syriac Orthodox and Catholics) never embraced this missionary-evangelistic stance within their dominantly Muslim *Sitz im Leben*. They did not truly deem this stance, nor its "Christendom" worldview and its "post-Christian"

51. Ibid., 289–90. On Protestant missions to the Middle East, see also Badr, "Origin"; Badr, "Protestant Evangelical Community"; Hubers, "Reasonable Mission"; and Awad, "Understanding the Other from-Within".

methods, as an accurate expression of their own factual situation in, or reading of, their homeland. The non-Protestant Christians did not consider themselves until then as a community living in a “post-Christianity” or even “no-Christianity” world. They did not imagine themselves living in two parallel worlds alongside the Muslims. The most common stance on living in the shadow of Islam was that Christianity was a central co-creator of Islamic civilization and that this latter never caused, or even facilitated, the obliteration of Christianity from the Muslim sphere of existence. The evidence of this is the fact that the Christians managed to continue existing through 1400 years of Muslim rule in the Middle East. Edward Jurji eloquently echoed this when he once stated

It is an inspiring, though extremely sobering fact that of the several titanic forces now swaying the Middle East, Christianity alone lays a just claim to historic antecedent and continuity in that important region hallowed by so many sacred memories . . . Christianity . . . exerts a formidable influence on the Middle East. Preceding the birth of Muḥammad, this influence was woven into the inner texture of the Qur’ān . . . Christianity constituted, as it does today, a vital force creative in the lives of countless Muslim generations and in the total effort of Islamic peoples.⁵²

In other words, the majority of the local Orthodox and Eastern Christians maintained, until the breakout of the “Arab Spring,” the same stance on Islam, and on living in its shadow, which we detected in the extant seventh-to-ninth centuries’ Christian texts on Islam. They also refused to perform as though a community living in either a “post-Christendom” or a “post-Christianity” situation, and they did not long for any “Christendom” because they did not consider themselves as living under any state of “Islam-dom.” No wonder that the attitude of these oriental Christians toward the evangelistic, “post-Christendom” approach of the Western missionaries and Middle Eastern Protestants was often condemnatory and highly

52. Jurji, “Impact of Christianity,” 55–56.

indicting.⁵³ For them, their homeland has never ceased to be Christian during the past fourteen hundred centuries (though it has never been predominantly Christian either).

Indeed, during the Ottoman Muslim era that lasted for four hundred years, Christians enjoyed an epoch of reasonable stability. "The Ottomans officially recognized the various Christian confessions, gave them a certain measure of autonomy, and provided them with state protection."⁵⁴ This encouraged the Christians of Greater Syria to dispense with any desperate urge for Christianizing their *Sitz im Leben* by means of an evangelistic-missionary ambition that characterizes the manner of those who live in a "post-Christian" or "non-Christian" situation. They opted instead for integration with their dominantly Muslim-Arab context, adopting its identity, and even playing the pioneering role in helping this context develop its own indigenous Arab national identity.⁵⁵ This is not to negate that the Christians were exposed to a hierarchical and discriminatory system (*Millet* system), wherein they always had to be second-rate citizens after the Muslims in the empire. The Christians were looked at as a marginalized, ineffective, and minor community that was more often treated with mercy and tolerance than with respect, or as an equal component in Muslim society. This situation notwithstanding, these Christians' stance on their Muslim-Arab context was far from reactionary and protectionist. They decided instead to be proactive and creative in that they endeavored to establish with the Muslims a new, encompassing and supra-sectarian "Arab-dom" in Greater Syria, and never sought foreign allies that would have enabled them to incubate themselves in a cocoon-like "Christendom."

This "evangelism-versus-adaptation" framework forms my reading of the Christians' situation in Greater Syria before the

53. On such attitude, see, for example, Sabra, "Protestants in the Middle East"; and Makdisi, *Artillery of Heaven*. On some recent western Protestant re-evaluation of the validity of evangelism in the Middle East, read, for example, Sharkey, "Arabic Anti-Missionary Treatises"; Kerr, "Mission and Proselytism"; Chapman, "Time to Give Up"; and Bonk, "Following Jesus."

54. Sabra, "Christian Mission," 115.

55. Masters, *Christians and Jews*, 1–15, 171–88.

“Arab Spring.” My reading of their situation in the light of the “Arab Spring’s” breakout and ramifications generates noticeably different contextual possibilities and challenges. In 2011, the “Arab Spring” phenomenon wreaked havoc in the Arab world. Separate individual incidents in Tunisia and Egypt inflamed the souls of millions of Arabs and energized them with a revolutionary storm that demolished long-standing dictatorships, leading unfortunately to drastic and immeasurably violent, bloody carnage and destruction in countries like Yemen, Libya, and, most horribly, in the heart of this study, Syria.⁵⁶

In the light of the unimaginable scale of death, destruction, and annihilation exerted on the Syrian and Iraqi publics (the Christians included) by today’s *jihadi*, Islamist terrorist thugs, like ISIS, Jabhat an-Nuṣra, and others,⁵⁷ the main focus of Greater Syria’s Christian concern in relation to their Muslim *Sitz im Leben* is neither evangelism nor even adaptation and integration but survival. Gone, inarguably, by now, is the time when the Christians would busy themselves with co-existence in, and embrace of, their Muslim-majority society by finding active and influential methods of participation in the progress, prosperity, and ascendancy of their countries. Gone also is the time when Christians would satisfy themselves by merely boasting that they *alone* are the people of the land, who existed in it long before Islam, and who are called to bring Christianity back into the center of the cultural, religious, societal, economic or even political stage in the region. In the light of the transformation of the “Syrian Spring” into a horrific tragedy and shocking human calamity, and in the light of the drastic public human bleeding of Syria (almost half of Syria’s 22 million citizens are now immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, and casualties of war), the Christians’ primary concern is no longer co-existence, but rather sheer existence *per se*; it is no longer

56. On the “Arabic Spring” and its Syrian version in relation to Christians and non-Christians alike, see Awad, *Freedom*; Awad, “Das Ziel”; and Awad, “al-Masīhiyyūn wal-Thawra fī Sūryā.”

57. On the nature of ISIS, see Awad, “Wa-Lakin Mā Hūa Dā’ish?” 12. On Jabhat an-Nusra, see Awad, “Kaī Yakhtār as-Sūriyyūn Ahūan ash-Sharayyn,” 11.

“Christendom,” “post-Christendom,” or “post-Christianity,” but rather two challenges. On the one hand, they suffer from a tyrannical, violent “dom-like” ruling regime in Syria, which destroys the entire country and exterminates everyone rebelling against it. On the other hand, the Christians suffer evenly from a “dom-like” *jihadi* and fanatically monstrous and religious sectarian forces, which savagely oppress and terrorize the public in the name of the third indigenous Abrahamic faith of the land. No longer are the questions “How can we maintain our religious particularity in relation to our Muslim context?” or “How can we convey Christianity to our non-Christian neighbors?” Syrian Christians’ main question is “How can we survive and remain alive in the face of ISIS-like Islamdom and in the midst of a Muslim–Muslim (Sunnite–Shi’ite) conflict?”⁵⁸

What the Christians of Greater Syria face today, in other words, is not a “post-Christendom” situation. They rather find themselves infected by fear from a possible “post-Islam” situation that might result from the unruly, lunatic, and futile dreams of “Islamdom,” which deconstructs Islam itself and eliminates its followers in the first place, and leads to a “post-Christianity” or even “post-everything” outcome in the region. For these Christians, such an excessively violent longing for “dom-ness” will definitely lead to a “post-Christianity” fate, because it seems to be driving the Muslims themselves into a “post-Islam” destination. The question, then, is not “How should the Christians of Greater Syria deal with the ‘post-Christendom’ situation in their context?” The question is rather “How should these Christians aid their Muslim compatriots in facing the tsunami of fanatic “Islamdom” and the danger of “post-Islam” that stems from it?” It is my belief that, since the Christians and Muslims of Greater Syria are standing right now in the midst of the catastrophic attempt of establishing a grossly destructive “Islamdom,” it is more plausible to propose potential answers to

58. On the fear from political Islam and its Islamdom project in the Arab World, see Awad, *Freedom*, 224–38; and Awad, “‘ar-Rabī’ al-‘Arabī’ wal-Hurriyyah al-latī lam Taṣīr Sāḥah ‘Ammah,” 11.

the above question by suggesting what the Christians *should not* do and how they *must not* act.

(1) I believe that the Christians must not at all consider themselves a totally different and particularly segregated community living in a parallel-like world that is separate from the one of Islam. They must, rather, conceive their symbiosis with the Muslims by looking at the crises in the region as a dark time in which, and from which, they and the Muslims alike suffer. There is no sharply defined “criminal-victim” situation in the Greater Syrian *Sitz im Leben*: the Christians are not the victims of the criminal actions of their Muslim neighbors. They and these Muslim neighbors are evenly victims of a criminal dream of hegemony and totalitarian “dom-like” ambition. Instead of “save the Christians in the Arab world,” Christians need to call the international society to “save all the humans in the Arab world.”

When in the past the Crusaders and the sweeping troops from Central Asia (e.g., Tamerlane and Hulagu) swarmed over the Middle East, they demonstrated an evenly inimical and bloody grudge toward the locals from all backgrounds. Similarly, in today’s dark phase in the region, ISIS and Jabhat an-Nuṣrā, as well as the Iran-endorsed militia, on the one hand, and the Saudi Arabia-, Qatar-, and Turkey-sponsored phalanxes, on the other, killed, persecuted, and uprooted many thousands of Christians since the Syrian conflict started. But they also caused the death, persecution, torture, and displacement of hundreds of thousands of Muslims in Syria and Iraq. Finally, when the Muslim Brotherhood (the ideological and doctrinal fountain of ISIS and Jabhat an-Nuṣrā)⁵⁹ endeavored to establish an “Islam-dom” in Egypt, they did not only pave the way for the continuation of the suppression of the Copts and the intensification of the crimes of burning and vandalizing of their churches, businesses, and houses. They equally exerted an aggressive and oppressive policy of persecution upon every Egyptian who dissented against

59. On some of these doctrinal and ideological thoughts in the Muslim Brotherhood’s political agenda, see, for example, Awad, “Is Secularity by Any Means Imaginable?” 105–24.

their "Islam-dom;" and they still do so against the country's citizens and state using the most violent means they can devise.

(2) The Christians must not fall into a self-minoritization complex due to their numerical inferiority in the Middle East. During the past 1400 years, the Christians have often been numerically fewer than the Muslims in the Middle East. Yet this numerical status never detained them from contributing to the life and situation of their homeland. They always reconciled and compensated for their numbers with their belief in a plural, non-monolithic society. Thus, living under Islam, and away from the boundaries of a political and cultural "Christendom" (like Byzantium), did not push them into becoming a secluded minority in a clash-of-civilizations, or even clash-of-beliefs, with Islam.

In 2013, the Middle East Council of Churches (MECC), in collaboration with the World Council of Churches (WCC), issued an official statement on Christian presence and witness in the Middle East. In this statement, the Middle Eastern Christians' representatives declared the following:

Christians in the Middle East have a long history of living in plural societies that respect all diversities, understanding that all people are created by God . . . Christians living in the lands of the Middle East reject being labeled "minority" since they reject being understood as a lesser people (*aqalliyya*) . . . numerical proportion historically has not limited the contribution and role of Christians in the East.⁶⁰

Self-minoritization is a dangerous, indiscrete, and counter-productive path that leads to self-dhimmitudization. If the

60. "Statement on Christian Presence and Witness," 295. The meaning of "minority" in the case of pre-revolution Syria is not actually to be discerned in terms of communal size or religious affiliation. Far from numerical standards and religiosity-confessionalism, al-Assaad's Syria had a hegemonic, politically- and socially-shaped policy of "minoritization" that follows a "with us (regime) versus against us" criterion. Those who were against the regime were systematically minoritized on the basis of this criterion, regardless of their religious, confessional, societal, or communal background. So the connotations of "minority" in the minds of the West do not truly apply to the realistic contextual minoritization policy in Syria. On this, see Awad, "Ḥimāyat al-Aqalliyyāt' wal-Massīhiyyīn fī al-Mas'alah as-Sūriyya," 9.

Christians do not want to be marginalized and undermined as members in the broader society, they should not, then, push the Muslims toward treating them as a helpless and dependent community in need of protection (*dhimmis*) by driving these Muslims into regarding the Christians as inferior.⁶¹ When the Christians focus on their low numerical status, they indirectly drive others to reinforce their (flawed) perspective. More dangerous than the minority status and *dhimmitude* are the mistaken tendencies toward *self*-minoritization and *self*-dhimmitudization.

(3) The Christians must not react to the lethal danger of radically and fanatically exclusivist Islamdom by resorting to Islamophobia. Islamophobia is by all means a serious phenomenon in Europe, the U.S.A., and the U.K.; and the intellectual, societal, academic, religious, and political circles in these corners of the globe have been deeply occupied and

61. I use dhimmah and dhimmitude in the public understanding of them that is proliferated by the Arab public, Christians and Muslims alike, today. In this public preconception, the state of dhimma is associated with the collective public memory of the Middle Eastern Christians with negative connotations and status. Such a negative and overtly pejorative interpretation of dhimma permeates the overall imagination and appraisal of the Christians and the Jews who live in the Middle East today. On this negative, publicist reading of dhimmitude in the Middle East, see, for example, Ye'or, *Dhimmi*; and Ye'or, *Decline of Eastern Christianity*. In its historical origin, nevertheless, dhimma status may not have meant a discriminative and suppressive stance on the non-Muslims by their Muslim society, although this status has sometimes been abused by some Muslim rulers for different reasons. Once, Tariq Mitri, the Lebanese scholar, eloquently expressed the original historical meaning and rationale behind deeming Christians dhimmies when he states that “the guiding principle of the dhimmi pact stated: ‘to them belongs whatever belongs to us, and incumbent upon them whatever is incumbent upon us.’” Mitri maintains that the originally non-offensive or non-abusive intentions and prejudices behind dhimmitude status appear in the fact that this latter did not prevent the Christians from having “the opportunity to influence the self-definition of the dominant community. They were instrumental, through transmission—but also creation—in the various fields of human knowledge, in the construction of a religiously rationalized non-Christian order” (Mitri, “Christians and Muslims,” 19).

painstakingly challenged by it for over the last three decades.⁶² This phenomenon stems in the West from a complicated plethora of contextual and intellectual factors, among which is the orientalist tendency in Western intellectual and scholarly, and even public circles to reduce Islam to one, single, statically monolithic giant entity. And eventually as the Lebanese scholar and statesman, Tarik Mitri, perceptively notes, this leads to explaining "terrorist violence in the light of what they perceive to be distinctive about Islam." By falling into such a reductionist trap, westerners, Mitri continues, "fail to see that such violence is not grounded in traditional Islamic values, but, quite the contrary, it is provoked by the loss of such values without a genuine compensation offered by modernity, often unaccomplished or imposed."⁶³

Such preconceptions, like the one Tarik Mitri unearths, are central generators of Islamophobia. Notwithstanding this, Islamophobia is one of the consequences of "post-Christendom" and "clash-of-civilizations" theories that are developed in the West (as a concept) to attend to contextually particular *Sitz im Leben* characteristics of that part of the globe in particular. What may interpret the Christians' situation in the European and American contexts, and what might guarantee relevant policies and practices in Europe and America, is not necessarily the source of relevant and productive working policies in the context of the Middle East. Islamophobia is, I believe, a very counter-productive instrument in the contemporary context of the Christians in Greater Syria. There is no doubt, and it is fully expected and natural, that these Christians are profoundly apprehensive about what could emanate from the Islamdom project of ISIS and its confederates (e.g. *Jabhat an-Nuṣra*) in the region. However, this apprehension should not evolve into a phobia towards Muslims, a total rupture with the Muslim-

62. On an analysis of Islamophobia in Europe, see, for example, Awad, "Religiophobia," 433–47; Helbling, *Islamophobia in the West*; Baran and Tuohy, *Citizen Islam*; Lorente, "Discrepancies"; and López, "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia".

63. Mitri, "Christians and Muslims," 22.

majority context, and a demonization of Islam *per se*. In their statement on the Christians in the Middle East, the MECC and WCC delegates affirm that

Christians must reject Islamophobia, which mischaracterizes Islam as an undifferentiated whole, and undermines decades of cultivation of co-operation with Muslims, and must refuse the temptation to amalgamation, generalization and sensationalization of our Muslim brothers and sisters.⁶⁴

In an essay published in 2007, the Canadian missiologist, Jonathan Bonk, bravely and prophetically opines that Christianity suffered from “Christendom” more than any other non-Christian faith. “Christendom,” Bonk states, is “the religious-political mutant conceived when the body of the *self-giving Christ* became conjoined with the power of the self-serving state.”⁶⁵ “Christendom” becomes a mutation of Christianity, Bonk continues, because the former promotes a “civilization in which Christian religious dominance was achieved by social, legal and violent compulsions.”⁶⁶ A very similar, even more hideous, violence can infect Islam when some Muslim sides opt for mutating Islam into “Islam-dom” as well. Yet condemning such a mutation must not lead into demonizing Islam itself.

(4) Finally, the Christians of Greater Syria cannot really help their Muslim context in facing the danger of fanatical “Islamdom,” if they opt for a secluding “alliance of minorities” strategy. It is very unfortunate that, due to their phobic reaction to the bloody execution methods of violent and fundamentalist “Islamdom” (ISIS and its duplicates), there are Christians who now divide the scene into non-Muslim minority groups systematically victimized and persecuted by a criminal Muslim majority (some even call this majority exclusively Sunnite). They invite all the non-Muslim (and non-Sunnite) minorities to form one united coalition and to fight for gaining political, legislative, economic, social, and state power and autonomy

64. “Statement on Christian Presence and Witness,” 297.

65. Bonk, “Following Jesus,” 342.

66. *Ibid.*, 343.

equal to the one of the Muslims (and Sunnites). I have observed for a few years now that such an “alliance of minorities” permeates the public scene in Iraq and Lebanon, and that some Christian voices started slowly, at least since three years ago, to propagate this scheme and promote it in Syria in support of al-Assad regime’s propaganda that falsely images this regime as the protector of minorities. The logic that underpins the promotion of this scheme states that, as the call for “Islamdom” is founded on the belief that Islam is “religion and state,” Christianity too must re-create its own “Christendom” upon a similar belief that Christianity was, at various epochs of its history, “religion and state” as well, and it needs to become so again to survive the dark epoch in its homeland. This logic then proceeds into justifying this move by emphasizing that the future of the Christians is organically segregated from the one of the Muslims in the region; Muslims and Christians can no longer co-exist. They must now find ways to live in parallel, in two hermetically-sealed, autonomous “dom-like” entities, if they want to remain on the same piece of land. There is a need for the creation of two separate, religiously-identified states for each community to exist.

It is my conviction that this orientation is one of the most afflictive outcomes of the calamitous situation in Greater Syria. The Christians must remember that, if Islam is by nature “religion and state” (*dīn wa-dawlah*), Christianity is not so by nature or definition. What Emperor Constantine once committed, when he made Christianity the religion of the state and his rule representative of a particular religion, as Christian theologians consensually concede, is not founded on the core principle of the Christian faith that stemmed from the life and ministry of Jesus Christ, or at least the biblical teaching in Matt 22:15–22. Any attempt at involving Christianity in an ambitious agenda of creating a “Christendom” would be falling into what the Swiss theologian, Emil Brunner, once eloquently and perceptively described as a “gradual process . . . [of] progressive deformation . . .

[and] an ever-increasing self-misunderstanding of the *ekklesia*” or of the entire Christian faith.⁶⁷

On the other hand, viewing their existence in the Middle East as a separate minority in a hermetically-sealed state of incubated existence over and against the existing entity of the Muslim-majority defies the Middle Eastern Christians’ common and habitually perpetuated claim that they are the land’s indigenous people and co-founders of Muslim-Arab civilization. The Christians of the region need to defeat this tendency towards a “minorities’ alliance,” and start to consolidate and advocate the genuine Eastern Christian belief in the common destiny that combines them with Islam ever since they existed together. During the twentieth century, the Christians were at various historical moments wise and perspicacious enough to “shake loose their minority identity,” to consider it “retrogressive and artificially divisive,” and to emphasize, instead, “their common ethno-cultural identity with Muslims,” deeming this their means of salvage from the Ottoman rule and “the basis of independence and modern nation building” in the region.⁶⁸ Unless Christians do the same today, there is no future for them, any form of future, in the Muslim Middle East. Instead of retreating toward self-enclosure and self-centeredness, the Christians must liberate themselves from a “minority complex” and start to realize that in the post-Arab Spring’s Greater Syria, the challenge, as the Lebanese theologian, George Sabra, accurately conjectures, is

how the different and differing religions and religious groups perceive one another, how they relate to one another, how they envisage living with one another, how they relate to power and authority—in other words, how their worldviews can coexist with one another.⁶⁹

Sabra accurately affirms that, if the Christians remember always that “they have been under Islam in one form or another since the seventh century,” they will thus be unable to deny that

67. Brunner, *Christian Doctrine*, 59. See also Hall, “Discipleship.”

68. Mitri, “Christians and Muslims,” 21.

69. Sabra, “Christian Mission,” 116.

"their future is inextricably linked with the future of Islam."⁷⁰ The fate of the Muslims, as Sabra's view accurately entails, is to a substantial extent the central influential factor on the fate of the Christians in the region, and the future of Christianity in the region depends on that of Islam. Sabra is not naïve, and he knows very well that mere tolerance towards the Christians will not secure their future in the region. Therefore, he plausibly warns that the Christians at this crucial moment in the history of the area need to work hard to cease the "Christian bleeding" from the land, so that we do not one day reach a stage when "the Christians' existence in the region becomes of interest only to historians and archaeologists."⁷¹

The question here, nevertheless, is how can this bleeding be stopped? I have tried in this essay to propose that this does not happen by opting for establishing a sort-of "Christendom." Nor does it happen by Christians' living and acting as if under "post-Christendom," haunted by a psychological longing for a dreamy evangelistic or sectarian glory. It rather lies, as Sabra correctly discovers, in Middle Eastern Christians apprehending that, if they have a mission to conduct in their homeland, it is a mission *in* their Muslim *Sitz im Leben*, not a mission *to* it. They have to *participate* in the future of Islam and ask themselves seriously how they can be "partners *from within* the change and transformation of Arab and Islamic societies, not as subversive or mistrusted elements, but as genuine partners working together with Muslims for a better quality of human life on all levels."⁷² Tarik Mitri articulates the same conviction in such fluent words that merit full citation:

Many of the interests of the Christian minorities cannot be safeguarded and promoted unless in conjunction with those of the Muslim majorities amongst whom they live. Upholding the rights of Christians in the Muslim world in a way that suggests, or is looked upon as, a form of foreign intervention for the sake of protection,

70. Ibid. Sabra here is inspired by the same logic related by Malik, "The Near East," 255; and Cragg, *Arab Christians*, 280.

71. Sabra, "Christian Mission," 117.

72. Ibid., 118.

reinforces the perception that they are alien in their own countries or disloyal to them. Defending the rights of Christians in opposition to their Muslim co-citizens and neighbors with whom they share culture and national identity, aggravates the suspicion of majorities towards minorities seen as an instrument of a real or potential threat instigated by foreign and powerful forces.⁷³

Conclusion

The attempt at reading the situation of Christianity in Greater Syria (if not the entire Arab world) from the perspective of “Christendom/post-Christendom” terminates with a serious intellectual and practical impasse in the light of the factual contextual *Sitz im Leben* of the Middle East. “Christendom” and “post-Christendom” hermeneutical notions alike are the production of European scholarship and the children of its specific historical and religious contexts, and maybe also of America. It speaks about *that* Christianity and *to* it almost alone and only. It does not plausibly serve the purpose of interpreting the nature of the *Sitz im Leben* of the Christians in the Arab world, nor does it offer meaningful and effective solutions to the Christians of the region in their existential, fateful strife to survive the deadly tsunami in the region at this pivotal historical moment. Murray is absolutely right in his admission that “post-Christendom is not the experience of all Christians. It is the experience of Christians in Western Europe and other societies with roots in this culture.”⁷⁴ However, and in frank disagreement with him, I believe that understanding what “post-Christendom” means does not make it a widely accepted and applicable “framework for explaining changes many have perceived but not analyzed, and for interpreting strong but confusing feelings,” as Murray surmises.⁷⁵ I do not believe that there is a single hermeneutical concept and method that can interpret the pluralist and diverse manifestations of Christianity’s multi-faceted

73. Mitri, “Christians and Muslims,” 30.

74. Murray, *Post-Christendom*, 14.

75. Ibid.

historical and contextual identities around the world. The "Christendom/post-Christendom" perspective might speak relevantly to the history of Christianity in Europe and the "Western world" (if there is such an entity still!). It is not, however, helpful for understanding either the history or the current struggle for existence of the Christian communities in Greater Syria. "Post-Christendom" is the product of a Western cultural context and, as such, it is an irrelevant and unacceptable framework for explaining and analyzing, let alone curing, the feelings and challenges of the Christians' *Sitz im Leben* in Greater Syria.

One of the main presumptive strategies "post-Christendom" offers for dealing with the decentralization and degeneration of Christianity in society is revising, remodeling, and modernizing the Christians' evangelizing and Christianizing methods and visions. This strategy does not help the Christians in Greater Syria. It may, rather, increase these Christians' perilous situation, because it will alienate them from their Muslim-majority societies and force the Muslims to treat Christianity as an external adversary, rather than an indigenous partner. It will, eventually, be doomed to failure because it will militate against the principle of co-existence and cultural and social unity. Sabra indirectly supports my reservation when he critically observes how Western missionaries insist on approaching the Middle East as a "post-Christian" and even "non-Christian" context where "Christendom" needs to be revived:

Western mission to the region has not really learned the lessons of history, for its adherents still go there and attempt to convert Muslims, totally oblivious of the Christian presence and role there, or even viewing Middle Eastern Christians as though they too were just a field of mission.⁷⁶

This is a strategy conjured up after presuming that Middle Eastern Christians are occupied with and afflicted by a "post-Christendom" situation, which probably troubles the Western context that was once the cradle of "Christendom." In that context, such a strategy probably makes sense and enjoys

76. Sabra, "Christian Mission," 117.

relevance. However, evangelism or “clash-of-civilizations” approaches are not useful or accurate frameworks for explaining how the Christians of Greater Syria thought and still think of their *Sitz im Leben* in the shadow of Islam. Nor does it offer them practical means to address it.

Bibliography

Allen, Pauline, and Bronwen Neit, eds. *Maximus the Confessor and His Companions: Documents for Exile*. Translated by Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neit. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.

Awad, Najib G. “al-Masīhiyyūn wal-Thawra fī Sūriyyā: Ayyat Makhāwif min al-Thawra?” (“The Christians and the Syrian Revolution: Which Fears from the Rebellion? Which Political System in the Future?”). In *Ar-Rabī’ al-‘Arabī wa Masīhiyyū ash-Sharq al-Awsaṭ* (“The Arabic Spring and the Christians of the Middle East”), edited by Mitrī Rāhib, 113–27. Bethlehem: Diyar, 2012.

———. *And Freedom Became a Public Square: Political, Sociological and Religious Overviews on the Arab Christians and the Arabic Spring*. Berlin: LIT, 2012.

———. “‘ar-Rabī’ al-‘Arabī’ wal-Ḥurriyyah al-latī lam Taṣir Sāḥah ‘Ammah” (“The ‘Arab Spring’ and the Freedom Which Did Not Become a Public Square”), *Nawafiz, al-Mustaqbal Newspaper* 5043 (25 May 2014). 11. Online: <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=NP&ArticleID=618516>.

———. “Das Ziel ist noch fern—Zwischenbilanz des Aufbruchs in der arabischen Welt.” In *Naher Osten: Christen in der Minderheit (Jahrbuch Mission)*, edited by Bettina von Clausewitz, 14–21. Hamburg: Missionshilfe, 2012.

- . "‘Himāyat al-Aqalliyyāt’ wal-Massīḥiyyīn fī al-Mas’alah as-Sūriyya" ("On the ‘Protection of the Minorities’ and the Christians in the Syrian Case"). *Nawafiz, al-Mustaqbal Newspaper* 4937 (2 February 2014). 9. Online: <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=np&Articleid=604364>.
- . "Is Secularity by Any Means Imaginable? A Reading of the Idea of ‘Civil State’ in the Syrian Muslim Brotherhood’s Contemporary Political Project for the Syria of the Future." *Islamochristiana* 40 (2014) 105–24.
- . "Kaī Yakhtār as-Sūriyyūn Ahūan ash-Sharayyn: Mā al-Lazī Taf’aluhu ‘Jabhat an-Nuṣrā’ fī Sūriyyā?" ("So that the Syrians Would Opt for the Lesser of Two Evils: What Does ‘Jabhat an-Nuṣrā’ Do in Syria?"). *Nawafiz, al-Mustaqbal Newspaper* 4613 (24 February 2013). 11. Online: <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=np&Articleid=560311>.
- . *Orthodoxy in Arabic Terms: A Study of Theodore Abū Qurrah’s Theology in Its Islamic Context*. Boston: De Gruyter, 2015.
- . "Religiophobia: Western Islam, Social Integration and the Resurgence of Religiosity in Europe." *The Muslim World* 103.4 (2014) 433–47.
- . "‘Understanding the Other from-Within’: The Muslim Near East in the Eyes of Duncan Black Macdonald." *The Muslim World* (Fall 2015/Spring 2016), forthcoming.
- . "Wa-Lakin Mā Hūa Dā’ish?" ("But What is ISIS?"), *Nawafiz, al-Mustaqbal Newspaper* 5392 (31 May 2015). 12. Online: <http://www.almustaqbal.com/v4/Article.aspx?Type=NP&ArticleID=662836>.

- . “When Identity is Constructed on a Procrustean Bed: ‘Arab-Christianity’ and the Missionary-Planted Churches in the Eyes of Muslim Authors.” In *Zur situation der Christen in der Türkei und in Syrien: Exemplarische Einsichten*, edited by Martin Tamcke, 201–14. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013.
- . “Where is the Gospel, What Happened to Culture? The Reformed Church in Syria and Lebanon.” *Journal of Reformed Theology* 3.3 (2009) 288–306.
- Badr, Habib. “The Origin of American Protestant Interest in the Middle East: 1780–1823.” *Theological Review* 13.2 (1992) 79–106.
- . “The Protestant Evangelical Community in the Middle East: Impact on Cultural and Societal Developments.” *International Review of Mission* 89.352 (2000) 60–69.
- Baran, Aeyno, and Emmet Tuohy. *Citizen Islam: The Future of Muslim Integration in the West*. London: Continuum, 2011.
- Baum, Wilhelm, and Dietmar W. Winkler. *Die apostolische Kirche des Ostens: Geschichte der sogenannten Nestorianer*. Klagenfurt: Kitab, 2000.
- Bonk, Jonathan. “Following Jesus in Contexts of Power and Violence.” *Evangelical Review of Theology* 31.4 (2007) 342–57.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004.
- . *Dying for God: Martyrdom and the Making of Christianity and Judaism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999.

- Brown, Callum G. *The Death of Christian Britain: Understanding Secularization 1800–2000*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2001.
- Brown, Peter. *The Rise of Western Christendom: Triumph and Diversity AD 200–1000*. Oxford: Blackwell, 2003.
- Brunner, Emil. *The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation*. Translated by David Cairns and T. H. L. Parker. London: Lutterworth, 1962.
- Bulliet, Richard W. *The Case for Islamo–Christian Civilization*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.
- Chapman, Colin. "Time to Give Up the Idea of Christian Mission to Muslims? Some Reflections from the Middle East." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28.3 (2004) 112–17.
- Cook, David. "Syria and the Arabs." In *A Companion to Late Antiquity*, edited by Philip Rousseau, 467–78. Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.
- Cragg, Kenneth. *The Arab Christians: A History in the Middle East*. London: Mowbray, 1992.
- Crone, Patricia, and Michael Cook, *Hagarism: The Making of the Islamic World*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977.
- Donner, Fred. "From Believers to Muslims: Confessional Self-Identity in the Early Islamic Community." *Al-Abhāth* 50/51 (2002–2003) 9–54.
- . *Muḥammad and the Believers: At the Origins of Islam*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Dvornik, F. *Early Christian and Byzantine Political Philosophy: Origins and Backgrounds*. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Studies, 1966.

Goddard, Hugh. *A History of Christian–Muslim Relations*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000.

Goheen, Michael W. *As the Father Has Sent Me, I Am Sending You: J. E. Lesslie Newbigin's Missionary Ecclesiology*. Zoetermeer, Netherlands: Uitgeverij, Boekencentrum, 2000.

Griffith, Sidney H. *Arabic Christianity in the Monasteries of Ninth-Century Palestine*. Aldershot: Ashgate, 1992.

———. “Byzantium and the Christians in the World of Islam: Constantinople and the Church in the Holy Land in the Ninth Century.” *Medieval Encounters* 3 (1997) 231–65.

———. *The Church in the Shadow of the Mosque: Christians and Muslims in the World of Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008.

———. “The Church of Jerusalem and the ‘Melkites’: The Making of an ‘Arab Orthodox’ Christian Identity in the World of Islam, 750–1050 CE.” In *Christians and Christianity in the Holy Land: From the Origin to the Latin Kingdom*, edited by Ora Limor and Guy Stroumsa, 173–202. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols, 2006.

———. “What Has Constantinople to Do with Jerusalem? Palestine in the Ninth Century: Byzantine Orthodoxy in the World of Islam.” In *Byzantium in the Ninth Century: Dead or Alive?*, edited by Leslie Brubaker, 181–95. Aldershot: Variorum, 1998.

———. “The Monks of Palestine and the Growth of Christian Literature in Arabic.” *The Muslim World* 78 (1988) 1–28.

Haldon, John F. *Byzantium in the Seventh Century: The Transformation of a Culture*. Rev. ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997.

Hall, Douglas J. *The End of Christendom and the Future of Christianity*. Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 1996.

———. "Discipleship in a Post-Christendom Context: Contemplating the Proclamation of the Gospel for the Salvation of Humankind." *Church & Society* 88.6 (1998) 93–105.

Hauerwas, Stanley. *After Christendom? How the Church is to Behave if Freedom, Justice, and a Christian Nation are Bad Ideas*. Nashville: Abingdon, 1991.

Hawting, G. R. *The First Dynasty of Islam: The Umayyad Caliphate AD 661–750*. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, 2005.

Heather, Peter. *The Fall of the Roman Empire: A New History of Rome and the Barbarians*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006.

Helbling, Marc, ed. *Islamophobia in the West: Measuring and Explaining Individual Attitudes*. New York: Routledge, 2012.

Hoyland, Robert G. "Early Islam as a Late Antiquity Religion." In *The Oxford Handbook of Late Antiquity*, edited by Scott F. Johnson, 1053–77. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012.

———. *Seeing Islam as Others Saw It: A Survey and Evaluation of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian Writings on Early Islam*. Princeton, NJ: Darwin, 1997.

- Hubers, John. "A Reasonable Mission in an Unreasonable World: The Encounter of the Rev. Pliny Fisk, First American Missionary to the Middle East, with the Ottoman Religious Other." PhD diss., Lutheran School of Theology, Chicago, IL, U.S.A., 2013.
- Huntington, Samuel. *The Clash of Civilization and the Remaking of World Order*. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996.
- . "The Clash of Civilizations?" *Foreign Affairs* 72.3 (1993) 22–49.
- Hussey, John M. *The Orthodox Church in the Byzantine Empire*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.
- John of Damascus. *Three Treatises on the Divine Images*. 1st ed. Translated by Andrew Louth. Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2003.
- Jurji, Edward J. "The Impact of Christianity upon the Middle East." *Theology Today* 8.1 (1951) 55–69.
- Kerr, David A. "Mission and Proselytism: A Middle East Perspective." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 20.1 (1996) 12–22.
- Kreider, Alan. *The Change of Conversion and the Origin of Christendom*. Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2007.
- Lewis, Bernard. *What Went Wrong? The Clash between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002.
- López, Fernando B. "Towards a Definition of Islamophobia: Approximations of the Early Twentieth Century." *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 34.4 (2011) 556–73.

- Lorente, Javier R. "Discrepancies around the Use of the Term 'Islamophobia'." *Human Architecture* 8.2 (2010) 115–28.
- MacEvitt, Christopher. *The Crusades and the Christian World of the East: Rough Tolerance*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008.
- Makdisi, Ussama. *Artillery of Heaven: American Missionaries and the Failed Conversion of the Middle East*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008.
- Malik, Charles. "The Near East: The Search for Truth." *Foreign Affairs* 30 (1952) 231–64.
- Masters, Bruce. *Christians and Jews in the Ottoman Arab World: The Roots of Sectarianism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.
- McLeod, Hugh, and Werner Ustorf, eds. *The Decline of Christendom in Western Europe 1750–2000*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011.
- Mitri, Tarik. "Christians and Muslims: Memory, Amity and Enmities." In *Islam in Europe: Diversity, Identity and Influence*, edited by Aziz al-Azmeh and Effie Fokas, 16–33. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007.
- Moosa, Matti. "The Crusades: An Eastern Perspective, with Emphasis on Syriac Sources." *The Muslim World* 93.2 (2003) 249–90.
- Murray, Stuart. *Post-Christendom: Church and Mission in a Strange New World*. Milton Keynes: Paternoster, 2014.
- Nevo, Y. D., and J. Kronen. *Crossroads to Islam: The Origins of the Arab Religion and the Arab State*. New York: Prometheus, 2003.

- Nikolajsen, Jeppe Bach. *The Distinctive Identity of the Church: A Constructive Study of the Post-Christendom Theologies of Lesslie Newbigin and John Howard Yoder*. Eugene, OR: Pickwick, 2015.
- Ohlig, Karl-Heinz, and Gerd-R Puin, eds. *The Hidden Origins of Islam: New Research into Its Earliest History*. New York: Prometheus, 2010.
- Olster, David. "Ideological Transformation and the Evolution of Imperial Presentation in the Wake of Islam's Victory." In *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, edited by E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, and D. Thomas, 45–72. Leiden: Brill, 2006.
- . "Justinian, Rhetoric and the Church." *Byzantinoslovanica* 50 (1989) 65–76.
- Paas, Stefan. "Post-Christian, Post-Christendom and Post-Modern Europe: Towards the Interaction of Missiology and the Social Sciences." *Mission Studies* 28 (2011) 3–25.
- Palmer, Andrew, Sebastian Brock, and R. Hoyland. *The Seventh Century in the West-Syrian Chronicles*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1993.
- Penn, Michael Philip. *Envisioning Islam: Syriac Christians and the Early Muslim World*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2015.
- Robinson, Chase F. *Empire and Elites after the Muslim Conquest: The Transformation of Northern Mesopotamia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Sabra, George. "Christian Mission in the Wake of the Arab Spring." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 38.3 (2014) 115–18.

———. "Protestants in the Middle East: Colonial Phenomenon? Western Transplant? or Something Else?" *Theological Review* 14.1 (1993) 22–39.

Sharkey, Heather J. "Arabic Anti-Missionary Treatises: Muslim Responses to Christian Evangelism in the Modern Middle East." *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 28.3 (2004) 98–104.

"Statement on Christian Presence and Witness in the Middle East by the World Council of Churches and the Middle East Council of Churches, Notre-Dame du Mont Monastery, Lebanon, May 21–25, 2013." *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 58.1–4 (2013) 293–301.

Qureshi, Emran, and Michael A. Sells. "Introduction: Constructing the Muslim Enemy." In *The New Crusades: Constructing the Muslim Enemy*, edited by E. Qureshi and M. Sells, 1–47. New York: Columbia University Press, 2003.

van Ginkel, Jan J. "The Perception and Presentation of the Arab Conquest in Syriac Historiography: How Did the Changing Social Position of the Syrian Orthodox Community Influence the Account of their Historiographers?" In *The Encounter of Eastern Christianity with Early Islam*, edited by E. Grypeou, M. Swanson, and D. Thomas, 171–84. Leiden: Brill, 2006.

Ward-Perkins, Brian. *The Fall of Rome and the End of Civilization*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005.

Wood, Philip. *'We Have No King but Christ': Christian Political Thought in Greater Syria on the Eve of the Arab Conquest (c. 400–585)*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010.

Ye'or, Bat. *The Decline of Eastern Christianity under Islam: From Jihad to Dhimmitude, Seventh–Twentieth Century*. Translated by Mariam Kochan and David Littman. Madison, NJ: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996.

———. *The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians under Islam*. Translated by David Maisel, Paul Fenton, and David Littman. Cranbury, NJ: Associated University Presses, 1985.

Young, William G. *Patriarch, Shah and Caliph: A Study of the Relationships of the Church of the East with the Sassanid Empire and the Early Caliphates Up to 820 AD*. Rowalpindi: Christian Study Center, 1974.