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The Paul Wattson Lecture, Halifax ISIS: An Ancient Controversy Resurrected

By Elias D. Mallon, SA

I would like to thank the Friars of the Atonement in the person of Fr. David Poirier, the Atlantic School of Theology and St. Mary's University for inviting me to present this Paul Wattson Lecture.¹ The Atlantic School of Theology has, over the decades, shown itself to be a leader in pluralism and interreligious dialogue on the practical level through the Paul Wattson Lectures and on the intellectual level through its curriculum and faculty.

I have been asked to speak on ISIS – a fascinating but daunting task. Like its purported Caliph, ISIS goes by many names: the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS); the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and lastly داعش (*da'ish*) for الدولة الإسلامية في العراق والشام sometimes simply “the Islamic State.” To remain consistent and to avoid being precious in overly using Arabic, I will throughout refer to it as ISIS.

At the outset, it must be entirely clear what the scope of this paper is. It is a paper on ISIS and not a paper on Islam. With the emergence of political Islam with the Iranian Revolution of 1979, the emergence of al-Qaeda most prominently on 11 September 2001 and the emergence of ISIS in its declaration of the restoration of the/a Caliphate in June 2014, there has been a great deal of talk, most of which I do not find helpful, about terrorism and Islamic extremism. We hear accusations of Islam being a religion of violence and counter accusations of Islamophobia, with exaggerations and outright misinformation on both sides. I have studied Islam and worked with Muslims – many dear friends and

colleagues – for forty years. My studies and experience of Islam as a phenomenon² indicate that Islam is no more inherently disposed to violence than any other religion, especially the monotheistic religions. On the other hand, I find that as a phenomenon Islam is also no more immune to abusing power than any other religion. That having been said, my paper is on ISIS as an Islamic movement – one among many – and not on Islam.

At the risk of some oversimplification I see two broad approaches to ISIS in the literature on it. One approach sees it as a purely political movement with a (rather shallow) veneer of religion. The other approach sees it as a modern, religious aberration that has suddenly appeared out of nowhere. In point of fact, I think that both approaches are mistaken. While, as will appear later, it is clear that members of the secular Ba'ath Party play significant roles in the administration, military strategy, etc., of ISIS, there is a genuine, if dangerously misguided, attempt on the part of ISIS to institute what it believes to be an Islamic state. The example of the burning to death of Moaz al-Kasabeh, the downed Jordanian pilot, is significant here. The response from Muslim scholars was immediate and condemnatory. Most were of the opinion that burning a person to death was

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Rev. Dr. Elias D. Mallon, SA, has been engaged in Ecumenical & Interreligious ministries for many years and is presently on the staff of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in New York.

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contrary to Islamic law. ISIS, however went to great lengths to prove that it was legal according to Sharī'a and issued a *fatwā* to that effect.³ Therefore, I take ISIS seriously when it says it attempts to be Islamic. Believing that it is successful in this attempt is quite another issue. However, I believe that, while analyzing a problem is not guarantee of solving it, not analyzing it or analyzing it inadequately is almost certainly a guarantee of not solving it. Thus, allowing ISIS to speak for itself, I see it as a viable, if pathological, *religious* ideology using Islamic sources and methodologies, which I must add are not the same as Islam.

I find it extremely important that, if the threat of ISIS to the world and to Islam is to be neutralized, ISIS must be correctly understood. Ideologies, and, most especially, ideologies based on belief, cannot be changed or eliminated by military means. While one can kill people, who hold to beliefs, the beliefs themselves cannot be killed, as has been proved again and again throughout history. For ideologies to be eliminated or changed, they must be replaced by other more convincing, more attractive ideologies. As mentioned above, I think that ISIS is a threat to the world, though not in the hysterical sense that one sometimes hears. However, I think that it is a greater threat to the future of Sunni Islam. Taking ISIS's religious convictions seriously, perverse though they may be, Sunni Muslim intellectuals are challenged to provide a credible alternative for Sunni Islam to live in a pluralistic, globalized world. I am personally convinced that contemporary Sunni Islam has the intellectual and theological resources to accomplish this and remain faithful to its religion.

I. History of ISIS as an Institution

Although ISIS seems to have appeared suddenly with the declaration of the/a⁴ Caliphate on 29 June 2014, its emergence was not a surprise to anyone who was paying attention. There are any number of studies available on the emergence of ISIS as an institution.⁵ In its earliest phases ISIS and/or its predecessors can be traced back to 1999. In that year Abū Musab al-Zarqāwī,⁶ a Jordanian petty criminal, was released from prison. He had been convicted of belonging to a terrorist group, *Bai'at al-Imām*, founded by Abū

Muḥammad al-Maḥdīsī, a person who would play an important and interesting role as religious ideologue and spokesperson for radical Islamic movements.⁷ Al-Zarqāwī worked closely with al-Maḥdīsī in the 1990s.

After his release from prison, al-Zarqāwī went to Afghanistan where he was in contact with al-Qaeda but never officially became a member of it. He set up a training camp in Afghanistan and named his followers *Jund al-Šām* or Soldiers of Greater Syria.⁸ He was later to rename the group *Jamā'at al-Tawhīd wa al-Jihād* after al-Maḥdīsī's website of the same name. After 11 September 2001, al-Zarqāwī left Afghanistan, spent time in Iraq and in what is now called Iraqi Kurdistan from which he launched attacks against American forces and against other Muslims. There were attacks on the Jordanian Embassy and UN representatives in Baghdad. Al-Zarqāwī held a special hatred for Shi'ites, which is still a characteristic of ISIS, and attacked the Shi'ite Imam Ali Mosque in the holy Shi'ite City of Najaf on 29 August 2003. Among the 95 casualties was Ayatollah Moḥammed Baqir al-Hakim, spiritual leader of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Revolution in Iraq.

Al-Zarqāwī's brutality led to his being rejected by his mentor al-Maḥdīsī in 2004. Al-Maḥdīsī was quite cautious with *takfīr*, the declaration that other Muslims are *kāfir*, "infidels" worthy of death. Al-Zarqāwī had no problem declaring all Shi'ites infidels worthy of death. The same year al-Zarqāwī swore the *bai'a*, or oath of allegiance, to al-Qaeda's bin Laden. The *Jamā'at* now became the Organization for the Basis of Jihad in Mesopotamia or, more commonly, al-Qaeda in Iraq (AQI). The group's wanton violence disturbed even al-Qaeda which considered it counterproductive. Al-Zarqāwī attempted to provoke a civil war between Iraqi Sunnis and Shi'ites by attacking the al-Askarī Mosque in Samarra, Iraq, on 22 February 2006. The mosque, which was the resting place of the tenth and eleventh Imams of Shi'ite Twelver Islam, is one of the holiest sites for Shi'ites.

Al-Zarqāwī was ultimately killed by an air attack on 7 June 2006 and was succeeded by Abū 'Omar al-Baghdādī⁹ and the name of the group was changed from al-Qaeda in

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Iraq to the Islamic State in Iraq (ISI). Abū 'Omar continued the brutality of his predecessor contrary to the advice of al-Qaeda. In a preview of what would follow under ISIS, Kahtanian and Jazeera, two Yazidi villages in northern Iraq, were attacked 14-15 August 2007 with casualty estimates between 500-800. The brutality, however, made ISI unpopular even among Iraqi Sunnis. *Al-Şahwa*, “the awakening,” was a Sunni resistance movement which, in concert with US troops, enjoyed considerable success in limiting the effectiveness of ISI. However, the removal of US troops, which began in mid-2009 and ended in December 2011, weakened local resistance to ISI and allowed Abū 'Omar to expand his operations. He was ultimately killed by a US air attack on 18 April 2010 and replaced by Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, who four years later was declared Caliph by the Shura Council of ISIS on 19 June (the first day of Ramadan in the Islamic calendar) 2014. The name of the Caliphate was changed to simply the Islamic State (IS) indicating that it recognized no borders. Al-Baghdādī then appeared in al-Nuri Mosque in Mosul and introduced himself a Caliph Ibrahim, Commander of the Faithful. ISIS was now full center on the world stage.

II. ISIS as a Multi-Layered Phenomenon

One of the unique characteristics of ISIS is its multi-layered infrastructure. I believe some of the reasons that ISIS is misunderstood is that too much – or even exclusive – attention is paid to only one of its levels. Because of this infrastructure ISIS show several characteristics generally not seen in terrorist groups. While ISIS is able to engage in “hit and run” terror tactics such as assassinations and car bombings, it also has a sophisticated strategy on the larger battlefield. Not limited to guerilla warfare, ISIS has engaged the Iraqi army head on with considerable success.

Early on it was noticed that ISIS had a very sophisticated program of communications. Videos of executions and atrocities were produced and distributed with a high level of expertise. The clearly articulated *Management of Savagery*¹⁰ is over 260 pages long and develops a highly sophisticated, if barbaric as the title might indicate, program of ISIS's strat-

egy on how to take over cities, from the initial infiltration to the final take over, listing things such as how to break down the town's sense of security and to initially assassinate its leaders secretly but ultimately to make such executions public. It is frequently noted that *Dabiq*, ISIS's magazine and major recruitment tool, is very professionally produced.

It has been noted that, although they would appear to be natural enemies, the arch-conservatively religious ISIS and members of the secular Ba'ath Party of Saddam Hussein have formed an unholy alliance. When Paul Bremer, the US Administrator of the Coalition Provisional Authority of Iraq, engaged in the “de-Ba'athification” of Iraq, thousands of educated bureaucrats, community leaders, politicians and military of all levels suddenly found themselves with neither job nor future. Many of them found their way to ISIS. This is especially the case with military personnel. Rainer Hermann, *Endstation islamischer Staat* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2015) and Christoph Reuter, *Die schwarze Macht* (München: Deutscher Verlags-Anstalt, 2015) contain lists of dozens of names of former Ba'athist leaders who are in leading positions in ISIS.

On top of this unusually efficient infrastructure is a religiously trained leadership. Abū Bakr al-Baghdādī, the presumptive caliph, unlike the leadership of al-Qaeda, is said to have religious credentials. He is reported to have received a doctorate in Islamic Studies at either Saddam University or the University of Baghdad. ISIS is unusually careful about providing Islamic “justification” for what it does, as can be seen from its attempts to justify the burning alive of the Jordanian pilot. The *fatwā* justifying the burning was issued by the Commission for Research and Legal Opinions¹¹ as can be seen on the letterhead. Reports coming out of the Islamic State indicate an extensive religious bureaucracy, which, while not requiring highest levels of theological education, does require bureaucrats with some religious training.

On top of this unusually efficient infrastructure is a religiously trained leadership.

Thus, ISIS is both a religious and a political organization and, as such, is different from other extremist groups. It is important to be aware of the complexity of this structure as both religious and political if an accurate analysis is to be made.

III. History of ISIS as a Theopolitical Ideology

a. The Period from the Death of the Prophet (632) to Ibn Taymīyya (d. 1328)

At the outset of the history of ISIS as a theopolitical

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ideology a note of caution is in order. In any attempt to analyze a complex phenomenon there is a temptation to get fascinated with the esthetics of the analysis. As a result, too many analyses are, to be honest, too perfect by half – clear connections are seen where they may not exist, influence and “cross pollination” may get confused with causality and possible trajectories made into straight lines of development. In dealing with what I see as one possible trajectory in a bundle of traditions, some of which are fourteen hundred years old, there is no way that one can speak of direct, linear causality. What I am attempting to do is to understand ISIS as closely as possible as to how it understands itself, though perhaps in a non-reflective way. While I believe that ISIS poses a challenge and indeed a threat to the rest of the world, I believe it poses a far greater challenge and threat to Sunni Islam. The challenge is to how Sunni Islam will live in a globalized world. To some extent, the very important document *A Common Word*,¹² a letter published on 13 October 2007 by 138 Muslim scholars from a broad spectrum of Islamic traditions and addressed to the world-wide Christian community, touches on this and does so admirably. However, I would suggest that Sunni Muslim scholars might delve the situation more deeply to provide the Sunni Muslim community with a response to the theopolitical ideology of ISIS by offering a (some?) more attractive and more credible options.

The Prophet Muhammad died in June of 632 CE¹³ without having left clear instructions as to who would be his successor. As Messenger of God and Seal of the Prophets Muḥammad could not be succeeded. However, he was also leader of the Muslim community and as such a replacement (in Arabic خليفة, *ḥalīfa* Caliph) was necessary. From the very beginning there was disagreement over who should succeed the prophet. One group of Muslims believed that the successor should be a member of the Prophet’s family and the logical candidate was ‘Alī ibn Abī Ṭālib, the cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet. However, other forces prevailed and Abū Bakr, one of the first converts to Islam, confident of Muḥammad and his father-in-law. Abū Bakr governed for two years (632-634), died and was replaced by ‘Umar ibn al-Ḥaṭṭāb, who in turn governed for ten years (634-644). During the time of the first two caliphs Islam expanded exponentially moving into the Levant, Iraq and Persia. The third caliph, ‘Uṭmān ibn ‘Affān, dealt with situations different from his predecessors. He was a member of the Umayyad clan of the Quraysh tribe. The Umayyads were to be the founders of a Caliphate, based in Damascus which would last until it fell to the Abbasids in 750. It was not long before there was powerful opposition to his caliphate. Without going into details which are extraneous to this paper, there was a revolt against ‘Uṭmān and he was assassinated on 20 July 654. Before ‘Uṭmān’s assassination the rebels had offered the caliphate to ‘Alī but he refused. However, after

the death of ‘Uṭmān ‘Alī was chosen as the fourth caliph, the last of the *ḥulafā’ al-rāsidūn*, the Rightly Guided Caliphs.

Opposition to ‘Alī was almost immediate and powerful. Among his opponents was ‘Ā’iṣa, the favorite wife of the Prophet. Some factions accused him of being part of the plot against ‘Uṭmān and he also did nothing to punish those who were involved in the revolt. Mu’awiyya, a member of the Umayyads, ‘Uṭmān’s clan, presented a counter claim to the caliphate and war ensued between the followers of ‘Alī and Mu’awiyya, which led to the crucial Battle of Ṣiffīn in 657. As the battle raged, Mu’awiyya had his soldiers place the Qur’ān on their spears and called for judgment between him and ‘Alī “according to the Word of God.” ‘Alī reluctantly agreed and was forced to choose Abū Mūsā al-‘Aṣ’arī as his representative. The fact that ‘Alī agreed to the arbitration alienated a group of his followers who claimed that “judgment belongs to God alone,” i.e. in battle, and abandoned ‘Alī. After the arbitration went against ‘Alī, more of his followers went out (Arabic: خرج, *ḥaraja*) from Kufa, the base of ‘Alī’s supporters, to join those who had abandoned him because of what they judged to be impious action in allowing human arbitration.

This group came to be known as the Kharijites (Arabic: خارج / خوارج, “one who/those who go out.”)¹⁴ ‘Alī did battle with the Kharijites at the Nahrawān canal near Baghdad in July 658. The sources indicate that ‘Alī inflicted a crushing defeat on them and many of the Kharijites were killed. However, the Kharijite movement not only survived the slaughter but went on to become more radicalized and localized revolts continued to spring up in southern Iraq. Ultimately ‘Alī was assassinated by ‘Abd ul-Raḥmān ibn Muljam al-Murādī, a Kharijite, on 27 January 661.

For our purposes, it is important to note that the Kharijites radically rejected the doctrine of faith without works. What this meant in practice for the Kharijites was that a major sin was the same as apostasy, rendering the sinful Muslim an apostate (*murtidd*) and unbeliever (*kāfir*) and worthy of death. In practice the Kharijites killed many Muslims in the early years of Islam. To declare a believer an unbeliever is *kaffara* and the nominal form of the verb is *تكفير*, *takfīr*, which, with its adjective *takfīrī*, is extremely important in the contemporary discussion. For the most extreme among the Kharijites both ‘Alī and Uṭmān were apostates and hence in hell.

What is important to note here is the Kharijite theology of faith and unbelief, which has been a recurring, though until recently minority, theme in Sunni Islam to this very day. In its most simple (simplistic?) form the issue is: what constitutes faith and what constitutes being an infidel. The question is not peripheral. Faith in Islam is connected to

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eternal salvation. The *kāfir*, the unbeliever/infidel, however one defines that, is condemned to eternal hell fire. However, Muslims were never naïve about the reality of Muslims sinning, even sinning grievously. The question, however, was: what sin, if any, constituted unbelief and condemned the sinner to eternal hell fire.

If the Kharijites represented the extreme puritanical and absolutist response to the question, the Murji'ites¹⁵ held a different position. Derived from the Arabic *أرجاء*, "to defer judgment" (Qur'ān 9:106), the Murji'ites argued that in the question of the faithfulness/sin of both 'Alī and Utmān that judgment should be left to God. While they were unanimous on the faithfulness of Abū Bakr and 'Umar, they reserved judgment on 'Alī and Utmān and held to the principle that such a judgment was obligatory for the past in which the state of a person could no longer be judged. While the early Murji'ites were aware of the Muslims sinning, they did not hold that Muslims lost their status as believers through sin but became rather misguided (*ḍallāl*) believers who may be punished by God or forgiven.

Murji'ism takes its classical form with Abū Ḥanīfa al-Nu'mān ibn Tābit (ca. 699-767), the founder of the Ḥanīfī School, one of the four Classical Schools (*مذاهب*) of Sunni Islam.¹⁶ Daniel Lav¹⁷ notes that Abū Ḥanīfa rejects the term Murji'i because of its association with anti-Murji'ite polemic. However, during the time of al-Ḥanīfa there were basically two Sunni attitudes toward the nature of faith. "One of these holds that faith is a function of belief in the heart, affirmation of the tongue and acts of the limbs. The other is that of Abū Ḥanīfa, whose central doctrine is the exclusion of acts from faith – or, in another formulation of the same doctrine, the definition of faith as belief in the heart and affirmation of the tongue."¹⁸ Although classical Murji'ism is condemned as heretical by classical Sunni Islam, this seems to be a judgment on the earliest period and one which does not include Abū Ḥanīfa. Lav notes that Abū Ḥanīfa's doctrine persisted in various forms. Thus, the Ash'arī School generally does not consider acts to be an essential part of faith. The famous philosopher/theologian al-Ghazzālī condemned Murji'ism but "concedes that 'the *salaf*'¹⁹ held that faith included acts, but asserts that they mean by this only

that acts are a perfection of faith, and not that they are a condition for being considered a believer."²⁰

In conclusion, there is an ambivalence in classical Sunni Islam. On the one hand, Murji'ism is condemned as a heresy. Nonetheless, according to Lav, the doctrine that acts are not a condition for faith was assimilated into the dominant Ash'arī and Māturīdī schools of Sunni theology.²¹

b. From Ibn Taymīyya to Sayyid Quṭb (d. 1966)

Ibn Taymīyya

Taqī al-Dīn ibn Taymīyya (1263-1398) is a pivotal figure in the development of Sunni thought which some scholars see as leading to the contemporary movement(s) which are referred to with differing degrees of accuracy and depth as *salafī-jihādī-takfīrī*.²² Ibn Taymīyya has had a profound impact on modern Sunni Islam and is often seen as the theologian upon whom Wahhābīsm, the official form of Sunni Islam in Saudi Arabia is based.

Living in the time of the devastating Mongol invasions of the Middle East in the 13th and 14th centuries, ibn Taymīyya has a great deal to say about faith and its manifestations. To some extent this is occasioned by the fact that some of the Mongol conquerors converted to Islam but continued to govern in a Mongol, i.e. non-Shari'a, non-Islamic fashion.²³

Ibn Taymīyya's role in the development of a theology which could contribute to the theopolitical ideology of ISIS is connected his treatment of the Murji'ites notion of faith. In his treatment of Murji'ism ibn Taymīyya differentiates between that of the jurisprudents (*مرجئة الفقهاء*) and that of "extremist Murji'ism" (*غلاة المرجئة*). For both groups the basic error for ibn Taymīyya is holding that faith is indivisible, that "if part of it (i.e. faith) disappeared, it would disappear in its entirety, and if part of it was established, it would be established in its entirety."²⁴ Ibn Taymīyya sees the Murji'ism of the jurisprudents to be merely semantically different from that of what he holds to be Sunni orthodoxy. This works itself out practically in the fact that "...although (Murji'ites) hold that the faith of sinners is equivalent to that of the angel Jibril (since faith is indivisible), they nonetheless agree with the other Sunnis that these sinners will enter hellfire. Likewise, they all agree that even Muslims who commit grave sins will not remain in hellfire for all eternity, and are not considered apostates."²⁵

Ibn Taymīyya's opposition to what he calls extreme Murji'ism is much stronger. He sees the difference between the two forms of Murji'ism in their definition of faith. The position which he attacks is that of Jahm ibn Ṣafwā (?-746) and his disciples, the Jahmites, who held that belief in God

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and his Prophet is to know them and thus faith (إيمان) and knowledge (علم) are identical. Ibn Taymīyya brings forth a list arguments from philosophy and the Qur'ān to show that one (e.g. the Jews, Pharaoh {Qur'ān 7:13-14} and Iblis {Satan}) can know that Allah is God but still not be a believer.

In terms of how theory and praxis come together in this issue, ibn Taymīyya states:

Whoever knows the interrelation of the manifest and the interior is not troubled by the spurious argument in this matter. He knows that the jurists who say: one who acknowledges an obligation and refrains from performing it should not be killed, or [who say that] he should be killed but that he remains a Muslim, have been influenced by the same spurious argument that influenced the Marji'a and the Jahmites....²⁶

Ibn Taymīyya, therefore, sees an external act as rendering a Muslim an apostate without necessarily requiring the internal dispositions of either rejection or permission.²⁷ While he does not make the connection, this opinion of ibn Taymīyya facilitates some modern theories of *takfīr*.

What is significant is that ibn Taymīyya believes most Ash'arī and Māturīdī Sunnis follow the Jahmite understanding of faith, which renders a Muslim an unbeliever.²⁸ This judgment is of major importance since the Ash'aris comprised the mainstream of Sunni Islam for a thousand years.

In terms of our study the importance of ibn Taymīyya is his attack on what he sees is the wide spread Murji'ism in Sunni Islam, with its concurrent reticence towards *takfīr*: By dismantling the notion of the univocal nature of faith, ibn Taymīyya places great a renewed stress on outward actions as an indication of whether one is a believer or an infidel worthy of death and eternal damnation. It is true that ibn Taymīyya was not, for a variety of reasons, nearly as extreme in the application of this theories than would be those who followed him.

Wahhābīyya

Ibn Taymīyya became a pivotal figure in Islam with the emergence of what is generally referred to as the Wahhābī²⁹ movement in Islam. Named after its founder, Muḥammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhāb (1703-1791), Wahhābīyah is what is often described as a puritanical movement in Islam. The

movement stresses six elements among which *tawḥīd*, the radical unity of God, and *takfīr*, mentioned above, concern us here.³⁰ For Wahhābīsm *tawḥīd* is pivotal and everything else revolves around it. The notion of *tawḥīd* includes: *tawḥīd al-rubūbīyya*, "unity of lordship; *tawḥīd al-asmā' wa-al-ṣifāt*, "unity of names and attributes;" and *tawḥīd al-ilāhīya*, "unity of divinity." It is the first and third of these which concern us here. Both *tawḥīd al-rubūbīyya* and *tawḥīd al-ilāhīya* stress the ultimate unicity and uniqueness of God, who alone is the creator, provider and ruler of all things and to whom alone all worship is due. Anything which compromises these principles is heresy and renders a Muslim an unbeliever, a *kāfir*, worthy of death and damnation.

Wahhābīsm began in the northeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula around 1746 and, in alliance with the Sa'ūd family. Over a period of two hundred years it took control of more and more of the peninsula until after WW I it took control of the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. The Sa'ūd family became the royal "Guardians of the Two Shrines (Mecca and Medina)" and Arabia became Saudi Arabia. With the discovery of oil in the first half of the twentieth century and its concomitant great wealth, Wahhābīsm has tried to exercise its influence, with varying success, throughout the Sunni world.

Sayyid Quṭb (1906-1966)

Sayyid Quṭb,³¹ a deeply pious Egyptian Muslim, began his professional life as a writer and educator. He wrote novels, poetry and literary criticism in addition to his work as an educator. From 1933-1951 he worked at the Egyptian Ministry of Education and was its director for several years. From 1948-1951 Quṭb went abroad to learn about modern methods of education. During that time, he spent two years in the US where he earned a Master's Degree in education. Quṭb's was deeply and negatively impressed by what he experienced in post-World War II America. He experienced American culture as racist, sexually promiscuous and Zionist. It was his experience in America that led him to deepen his commitment to Islam. After joining and leaving several organizations after his return to Egypt in 1951, Quṭb joined the Muslim Brotherhood in 1953 and became its director of propaganda.

The Muslim Brotherhood had mixed relations with the Egyptian government and was accused of complicity in an assassination attempt against Nasser in 1954 and was harshly critical of the Egyptian government. Between 1954 and 1966 he was in and out of Egyptian prisons, along with other members of the Muslim Brotherhood. Ultimately Quṭb was executed by the Egyptian government on 29 August 1966. In some circles, he is highly regarded as a martyr.

Quṭb's importance lies in his writings. Two of them, *Milestones* and *In the Shade of the Quran*³² have had a

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profound impact on contemporary Islamic thought both Sunni and Shi'ite.³³ Quṭb had an extremely harsh judgment of Islamic societies of his day. He looked upon Islam as a total way of life and sharply condemned anything which he saw as falling away from Islam. In Quṭb's judgment, most Islamic societies of his day did not meet his criteria and were therefore, in a state of *jāhiliyya*. The term means literally "foolishness" and is traditionally used to describe Arabian society and religion before the time of Muḥammad. For Quṭb to accuse Muslims societies of *jāhiliyya* is tantamount to judging them to be pagan and infidel. It is a type of global *takfīr* of Muslim societies. Quṭb found scriptural justification for his judgment via the concept of *ḥākīmīyya*, "sovereignty." In *In the Shade of the Quran* Quṭb wrote: Humanity has apostatized to

Servitude of humans and to the iniquity of the religions, and has retreated from "there is no god but Allah."

This is the case even if a party of them continues to repeat from atop the minarets "there is no god but Allah," without comprehending its meaning, and without having this meaning in mind as they say it, and without rejecting the legitimacy of the "*ḥākīmīyya*" that humans claim for themselves, and which is tantamount to divinity, whether this be claimed by individuals, legislative bodies or peoples."³⁴

Thus, basing himself on Qur'ān 5:44,³⁵ Quṭb sees Muslims societies as apostate. Quṭb accomplishes this by translating the Arabic *يَحْكُم* as "to govern," rather than the traditional "to judge." His reading of the verse is, therefore, "whoever does not govern according to that which God has revealed, they are the infidels."

In Islamic history theologians were generally reticent to apply *takfīr* especially to Islamic governments. There are several sayings, some attributed to ibn Taymīyya, to the effect that "sixty years of tyranny are better than one day of *fitna*."³⁶ Muslim thinkers were quite aware that Muslim governments often did not live up to the standards of the Medina of the Prophet. However, so great was the fear of *fitna*, that they could live with a corrupt Muslim government as the lesser of two evils. Quṭb clearly ended that tradition.

c. Quṭbism and Saudi Arabia

Quṭb was not an Islamic scholar in the traditional sense.

Quṭb's importance lies in his writings. Two of them, Milestones and In the Shade of the Quran have had a profound impact on contemporary Islamic thought both Sunni and Shi'ite.

While he did write a commentary of the Qur'ān, he was not educated in the traditional Islamic religious sciences. Quṭb's thought was influential in Saudi Arabia, where *salafī* scholars trained in the traditional Islamic sciences were able to ground his thought in the context of older scholars, controversies and ideas on which Quṭb did not rely to a great extent. One of the more prominent of these Saudi scholars is Safar ibn 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Ḥawālī, who was the head of the Department of Creed at the Umm al-Qurā University in Mecca. A leader in the Saudi *Ṣaḥwa* Movement,³⁷ al-Ḥawālī wrote his doctoral dissertation *The Phenomenon of Murji'ism in Islamic Thought* (1996) under Muḥammad Quṭb, the brother and disciple of Sayyid Quṭb. Lav believes it was the fusion of Saudi Salafism and Quṭbism that was the heart of the *Ṣaḥwa* movement. According to Lav, al-Ḥawālī can provide a deep underpinning in traditional Islamic thought for Quṭb's theories. Lav sees the importance of al-Ḥawālī's work in four areas: 1) he places neo-Ḥanbalī anti-Murji'ism, i.e. ibn Taymīyya, in the framework of Quṭb's understanding of Islam in the world; 2) he extends ibn Taymīyya's critique of the Ash'aris and Māturīdīs of his time to include those of later times and contemporary *ulamā'* as well; 3) he applies this to the *takfīr* of rulers; and 4) accuses other *salafī* of Murji'ism.³⁸

Al-Ḥawālī stresses both the inward and outward nature of faith. In my opinion his thought takes two different paths here. For him one of the worst effects of Murji'ism is that, by restricting faith to belief in the heart, it limits unbelief to acts of the heart, leading to the opinion that unbelief does not adhere in acts alone. In a reference to *ḥākīmīyya*, al-Ḥawālī "considers any acts of popular sovereignty – for example parliaments – to be the replacement of the *sharī'a* with infidel law;...even if these parliaments enact some laws that are identical to those of the *sharī'a*" because the validity of the law comes from parliament and not from God's command.³⁹ Yet al-Ḥawālī refrains from a call to *takfīr* legitimate Muslim governments who do not live up to Islamic standards, clearly an echo of the fear of *fitna*. However, it is not clear how al-Ḥawālī would describe the validity of such a government.

IV. Contemporary Salafism

It would be misleading to give the impression that what is referred as Salafism or *salafī/jihādī/takfīrī* is a single movement or has developed in a linear way from Islamic precedents. The reality is, in fact, far more complex. The Taliban, al-Qaeda, Boku Haram, Shabāb and ISIS are all self-described as *salafī/jihādī/takfīrī* but, while sharing many characteristics in general, differ considerably in important particular details. The commonality is that each of them would be in the Ḥanbalī or neo-Ḥanbalī movement and are concerned with what can make a Muslim a non-believer

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Pentecostalism and Spiritual Discernment

By Dale M. Coulter

Pentecostal notions of discernment function within the context of an enchanted view of the world in which the boundaries between the eternal and the temporal and the spiritual and the material remain permeable. The first implication of this position is that the Spirit continues to guide the church through inspired speech in the form of tongues, visions, dreams, impressions on the mind, and other forms of divine activity. Closely related is a second implication that the world is full of angelic beings and that the Christian life unfolds in terms of a struggle between the demonic and the divine. Even seemingly mundane events such as political or economic barriers flow through the prism of spiritual warfare. Writing to Charles Parham in the early days of the Azusa Street Revival, William Seymour noted that “Satan is working but God is mightier than Satan for he is a conquered foe and a defeated creature.”¹ For Pentecostals, discernment operates under the assumptions that humans exist in a cosmos in which the divine and the demonic are always present and persons must seek to move with the former while resisting the latter.

As a task that all Christians must engage in, Pentecostals understand discernment in terms of distinguishing the voice of the Spirit in the context of spiritual experiences and determining when other influences are at work. While one could classify this perspective as concerning the Pauline gift of “discernment of spirits,” it is better understood to be a genus underneath of which should be placed moral discernment, doctrinal discernment, and discernment of demonic activity. Spiritual discernment, then, serves as a broad designation of hearing and cooperating with the Spirit’s guidance amid the competing voices—demonic and worldliness—that seek to derail progress in the Christian life.

Such spiritual discernment occurs as a dance between the community and the individual in Pentecostal circles. On the one hand, the community together seeks to discern the Spirit’s guidance both in terms of the interpretation of scripture and in terms of distinguishing the counterfeit from the legitimate forms of Spirit-inspired teaching and living. On the other hand, the Pentecostal understanding of charismatic gifts as divinely-bestowed endowments elevates the prophetic role of individual believers and their capacity to discern what God is doing in the world. The tension between these two perspectives accounts for ongoing fractures within Pentecostalism as leaders emerge who claim to have discerned a new work that the Spirit is doing and break off from the communal context in order to pursue their own agendas. Spiritual discernment unfolds in the overlapping spheres of the communal and the personal, sometimes breaking the tension between the two.

From their origins in camp meetings and other forms of revival, Pentecostals have privileged corporate forms of

worship. As Albrecht has chronicled, Pentecostal worship prioritizes encountering God through a kind of liturgical performance designed to sensitize the congregation to the Spirit’s presence. Worship and praise, preaching, and altar response comprise three distinct rites that form this liturgical performance.² Within these rites, Pentecostals privilege spontaneous response through hand gestures, verbal shouts such as “Amen” or “Glory,” and the exercise of spiritual gifts. At its core, Pentecostal worship is always an embodied and corporate engagement as worshipers seek to move and flow with the Spirit.

Since worship concerns a corporate movement “in the Spirit” that privileges orality and spontaneity, discernment becomes key to its success or failure. Generally, Pentecostals express a desire to flow with the Spirit’s anointing by which they mean learning to sensitize their minds and emotions to divine activity. The presumption is that God is moving and Pentecostals seek to move with him. There can also be hindrances to moving with the Spirit, which many Pentecostals interpret as demonic efforts or forms of “worldly behavior” that keep the congregation from experiencing God’s presence. The emphasis is less on theological correctness and more on whether the worshiping community exhibits holy behaviors and resists efforts to stop the flow of the Spirit. “Breaking through” to an encounter with God can sometimes require that Pentecostals battle with hindrances such as the sound system not working properly, the congregants not being mentally focused on God, or even a form of demonic possession in a visitor. Pentecostals will describe these hindrances as the devil trying to keep the congregation from experiencing God. Because of this broader spiritual context, corporate worship requires that the worshiper cultivate discernment as an internal virtue that combines the cognitive and affective to render a judgment by which the person can flow with the Spirit.

Discernment is a dispositional trait acquired over the course of time as believers learn to interpret movements of emotion and desire within them as being Spirit-inspired or not. Asceticism and worship go together. There is an intuitive knowledge that Pentecostals claim the Spirit brings, which stems from conforming emotion and desire to the worship patterns of the community. This is what stands behind Pentecostal claims that “I didn’t feel right in my spirit” as a kind of criterion of discernment.³ Pentecostal worship retains a basic Augustinian thrust insofar as discernment becomes an aspect of forming holy dispositions

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Dr. Dale M. Coulter is the first vice president of the Society for Pentecostal Studies and associate professor at the Regent University School of Divinity in Virginia Beach, VA.

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that concern the right ordering of desire. Yet, this Augustinianism comes to Pentecostals through John Wesley's understanding that holiness concerns the cultivation of spiritual senses. Discernment is part of the spiritual capacity to see, hear, and taste the truth, which stems from the transformation of the affections into a new configuration. The corporate context constitutes the locus in which the formation of this new disposition becomes possible thereby enabling Pentecostal worshipers to continue to flow with the Spirit.

As Pentecostal worshipers acquire the virtue of discernment, they seek to apply it to their own personal lives. Just as corporate worship can unfold in terms of a spiritual battle, so Pentecostals think that Christian existence is a constant battle to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil. Like Athanasius's depiction of St. Antony, Pentecostals understand synergistic cooperation with the Spirit to be achieved by putting to death disordered desires and emotions, which demonic influences use to destroy the soul.⁴ Spiritual discernment becomes moral discernment as the Pentecostal seeks to bring every thought captive to Christ. There remains a connection between the formation of the virtue of discernment in communal worship and its ongoing formation as part of the battle to live a holy life. At this point, the Pentecostal understanding of discernment closely resembles Cassian's interpretation of Egyptian monastic practices in terms of the grace of discretion whereby the monk cultivates a capacity to discern the types of spirits that enter the mind.⁵

While corporate worship forms the virtue of spiritual discernment, it also can erupt with charismatic gifts, such as when a congregant utters a prophecy or a message in tongues coupled with the interpretation of the message. When this occurs, the congregation together moves into a time of discerning whether this event is a genuine expression of the Spirit's actions, an over-exuberant worshiper, or a person operating on his or her own. Pentecostals will describe false forms of the gifts as "getting in the flesh," by which they mean that a person is acting on his or her own rather than in concert with the Spirit. Since these "words from the Lord" concern a specific directive to the congregation or worshipers within the congregation, they both interpret scripture and must be interpreted within the theological and moral framework of the congregation. The early Pentecostal debate over

the Trinity began in part by a "word from the Lord" to baptize in the name of Jesus only according to Acts 2:38 ("Repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ"). In this context, discernment ceases to be merely an acquired virtue exercised by individual believers and, instead, becomes a communal decision grounded in whether the "word from the Lord" accords with the Pentecostal understanding of scripture.

Discernment as a communal exercise has become the basis for doctrinal development within Pentecostalism at the local and general levels of ecclesial life. Pentecostal scholars have attempted to ground this corporate model of discernment in the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15 in order to develop a Pentecostal hermeneutic. For example, Chris Thomas has offered a model of interpretation in which the community, the Spirit, and scripture form interlocking authorities by which doctrinal conclusions are obtained.⁶ In his work, Ken Archer expands this model by defining the community in terms of Pentecostal narrative convictions. What Archer means is that Pentecostal doctrinal tradition comes in the form of a corporate testimony or witness that the Pentecostal community transmits to individual believers in the context of worship.⁷ Thus, discernment as a communal exercise is dependent in part on the cultivation of the virtue, which integrates emotion, desire, and doctrine through theological narratives about God's work in the world. This understanding of discernment in relation to doctrinal development closely resembles the way in which Catholics understand the relationship between the *sensus fidei* and the *sensus fidelium*.

A Pentecostal understanding of spiritual discernment remains wedded to an enchanted view of the cosmos in which the Spirit continues to speak to believers and the church as a whole. The borders between time and eternity remain open so that Christ guides the church in and through the Spirit's continuous activity. The goal of discernment is to allow the believer to flow with the Spirit's work in the self, the church, and the world. To achieve this goal, however, discernment is first cultivated in the context of Pentecostal worship as the believer opens up to the work of the Spirit and learns to hear the Spirit's voice. Discernment is a feature of the spiritual senses, which are formed by the right ordering of emotion and desire. In this way, Pentecostals privilege spiritual experiences as part of interpreting scripture even as those experiences take on a communal shape.

As an acquired virtue, discernment enables the Pentecostal believer not only to flow with the Spirit in a worship service; it also helps form moral judgments. These judgments relate closely to Cassian's understanding of discretion as learning to distinguish between the kinds of spirits and the way those spirits use thoughts to generate disordered emotions and desires. Thus, moral discernment is part of spiritual warfare as a species of spiritual discernment.

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Discernment of Spirits in the Theology of John Cassian: A Potential Bridge for Dialogue

By C. Colt Anderson

There is a long tradition associated with the gift of discernment in Catholicism that closely correlates with the ways Charismatic Catholics and Pentecostals understand discernment; however, very few people are aware of this tradition in either community. Discernment of spirits is important if you affirm that human beings interact with a spiritual world. Charismatic Catholics in the United States, particularly in the Hispanic community, have strong beliefs in the interaction between the spiritual world and their lives. A slight majority of Hispanic Catholics identified themselves as Charismatics in a 2013 study done by the Pew Research. Forty six percent of Charismatic Hispanics reported having received a direct revelation and thirty-three percent claimed they have witnessed a demon being driven out.¹ A 2006 study found that forty-five percent of Hispanic Catholics and twenty-one percent of non-Hispanic Catholics report having witnessed a healing.² Many who have not had these experiences nevertheless affirm beliefs in demons, apparitions, visions, prophecy and other such phenomena on the basis of Scripture, the received tradition, and the rite of exorcism.

Given all of the interest on the part of the people it is unfortunate that *The Catechism for the Catholic Church* has little to say about discernment, and what it does say has a decidedly institutional and legal character. The *Catechism* explicitly links discernment to ecclesial authority. Speaking about charisms and gifts of the Holy Spirit, it states: “They are a wonderfully rich grace for the apostolic vitality and for the holiness of the entire Body of Christ, provided they really are genuine gifts of the Holy Spirit and are used in full conformity with authentic promptings of this same Spirit, that is, in keeping with charity, the true measure of all charisms.”³ Since the charisms and gifts are presented as questionable, the *Catechism* concludes that it is the role of the bishops to test spirits.⁴ The *Catechism* does not reflect that discernment was also a gift given to check improper teaching, behaviors, and claims to authority on the part of ecclesial leaders.⁵ Looking beyond questions of institutional authority, the *Catechism* also speaks of practical discernment, which comes with the grace received in baptism and from living as a Christian in community, and helps Christians to decide how to follow the will of God.⁶

Discernment is a complex or multifaceted reality in the Catholic Church. It is related to institutional authority and to moral decision making, but it is also related to the testing of spirits. This was a very important aspect of the gift prior to the Reformation because visions, prophecies, and other experiences were more common and played a public role. To explore the older tradition, we will consider the theology

of John Cassian, whose theology can serve as a bridge between Catholics and Pentecostals. Cassian was the seminal source for thought on discernment in the Latin West.

John Cassian on Discernment

John Cassian synthesized the teachings and practices of the Desert Fathers in his *Conferences*.⁷ Cassian’s *Conferences* were important in the formation of the culture of Catholicism. Discernment comes up in two places within the *Conferences*, reflecting how the gift can manifest itself in different ways. The first treats discernment as a universal gift for the baptized that guides Christians in their spiritual lives; and the second is in the more extraordinary gift of discernment of spirits. The former, though universal, is not given equally. It can be sharpened through instruction and practice. In this sense it has a communal dimension. There are some similarities with the way Pentecostals seek confirmation of a “word” or prophecy that they believe they have received from the Spirit, but it is also the source behind the idea of “practical discernment” in the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*. The latter, discernment of spirits, came up in the context of spiritual warfare.

Cassian’s understanding of the extraordinary form of discernment, the discernment of spirits, has many similarities to the way Pentecostals understand the gift. In this case, Cassian described the discernment of spirits as being able to know the relative strength, the degree of evil, and the special pursuit of various demons.⁸ This knowledge provides the key as to how to overcome and cast them out. Discernment of spirits helps us to scrutinize anything that enters our hearts, but it is most useful for scrutinizing any doctrine or teaching to see if it has been purified by the Holy Spirit or if it is the result of superstition and pride.⁹ In this way, we fulfill Paul’s command to test the spirits to see if they are from God. Cassian wanted to illustrate how the devil had deceived seemingly holy monks. One was tricked by the devil appearing as an angel of light who convinced him he had become immune to harm and that he should jump into a deep well.¹⁰ Another was deceived by a demon who urged the monk to sacrifice his son.¹¹ In these and other examples, he showed how the monks ultimately fell to presumption because they did not take these experiences to the community to help them discern whether or not they were from God by seeing how well they accord with Scripture and tradition.

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Dr. C. Colt Anderson is Dean of the Graduate School of Religion and Religious Education at Fordham University in Bronx, NY.

Cassian's understanding of the extraordinary form of discernment, the discernment of spirits, has many similarities to the way Pentecostals understand the gift.

Discernment is a two edged sword when it comes to authority and traditions. Cassian warned against placing too much trust in authorities:

Therefore we should not follow in the footprints of all the elders whose heads are covered with grey hair and whose long life is the only thing that recommends them, nor should we accept their traditions and counsel.... For there are some – and, more's the pity, they are the majority – who have grown old in the lukewarmness and idleness they learned in their youth and who claim authority for themselves based not on their mature behavior but on their many years.¹²

It is precisely because there are false teachers who rise to positions of authority in the Church that every doctrine, word, vision, and prophecy needs to be tested in this way. Cassian wrote that this is why St. Paul went to Ananias to discern the meaning of his experience on the road to Damascus. It is also why he submitted his teachings to the Apostles in Jerusalem for their discernment.¹³

Cassian handed down the tradition that there are many types of demons. He said that particular spirits are associated with specific vices that they brood over. Some delight in lust and impurity, others in blasphemy, and others still in anger. He described some of them as feeding off of people's sadness and others off of pride.¹⁴ Cassian maintained it is important to understand these spirits because St. Paul warned us that our struggle is not with flesh and blood but against "principalities, against powers, against the world rulers of darkness, against spirits of evil in heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12)."¹⁵ Discernment of spirits provides the knowledge necessary to drive out the more pernicious and harmful demons and Cassian provides an extensive discussion describing their various attributes in Conferences 7 and 8.

The idea that people can have a charismatic prophecy or extraordinary gift from the Holy Spirit became dangerous during and after the Protestant Reformation because it implied that they could legitimately critique Church authorities. Those who publicly shared these experiences became targets of the Inquisition, particularly in Spain. This had an impact on how most Catholics came to understand discernment due to the influence of two Spanish saints: Ignatius of Loyola and John of the Cross. Both affirmed that God granted prophecies and visions, but they reframed discern-

ment almost completely in terms of the practice of spiritual direction. By doing so they moved these experiences out of the public sphere and into the privileged space between a director and the one being directed. To some extent, this was simply a prudent course of action.

Ignatius certainly recognized that there were deceiving spirits. After a vision he received on the shore of the Cardoner in 1522 Ignatius said God gave him light so that he began "to see everything with different eyes, and to distinguish and experience good and evil spirits." One of the goals of his *Spiritual Exercises* was "to discover and recognize the scruples and insinuations of our enemy."¹⁶ While Ignatius came up with his *Exercises* prior to his formal training in theology, he recognized the need for such training to practice spiritual direction – primarily because the Church demanded it. His thoughts on discernment are reminiscent of Cassian, but they are adapted to providing individual spiritual direction outside of the monastery. However, Ignatius' interest in the discernment of spirits was not central for later Jesuits until the 1950s.¹⁷

John of the Cross did not so much so try to discern between various spirits as counsel people to ignore any extraordinary spiritual experience. He affirmed that people could have a variety of experiences ranging from spiritual sweetness to visions. The sources of these could be from God or from the devil, but John advised people to reject them all regardless of their source.¹⁸ Instead, he urged them to concentrate on the general revelation given in Scripture and tradition.¹⁹ John's advice became normative, with a few notable exceptions related to Marian apparitions, and the older tradition was largely ignored until Catholics began to engage in the new Pentecost in the late 1960s.

Sharing of Gifts

Pentecostals shared the gift of their experiences and reflections on life in the Spirit with Catholics, which fostered the Catholic Charismatic Renewal. Catholics did not have the experiential language or the Biblical knowledge to help them formulate their own categories in the new reform movement, which resulted in strong ecumenical interest in

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the members of the Charismatic Renewal. Earlier strands of the Catholic tradition like those preserved in Cassian's *Conferences*, which recognize that the Spirit speaks to the community through people who have been given gifts, can help to build bridges between Pentecostals and Catholics; but it is my hope that these resources could be a gift to Pentecostals. After all, the Holy Spirit has been active throughout human history; and there is a cloud of witnesses to offer all of us guidance as we run our race. 

Notes:

1. Pew Research Center, "The Shifting Religious Identity of Latinos in the United States" (May 7, 2014) available from <http://www.pewforum.org/2014/05/07/the-shifting-religious-identity-of-latinos-in-the-united-states/>, accessed July 21, 2016.
2. Pew Research Center, "A Portrait of American Catholics on the Eve of Pope Benedict's Visit to the U.S. (March 27, 2008), available from <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/03/27/a-portrait-of-american-catholics-on-the-eve-of-pope-benedicts-visit-to-the-us-2/>, accessed July 21, 2016.
3. *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Second Edition (Libreria Editrice Vaticana: Vatican City, 1997), #800. Herein cited as *Catechism*.
4. *Catechism*, #801; see also #1676.
5. There is a citation in the *Catechism* from CELAM, Third General Conference (Puebla, 1979), Final Document, #446 that recognizes the wisdom of the baptized that serves as a principle of discernment through which they can sense when the Gospel is not being served by the Church. See *Catechism*, #1676.
6. *Catechism*, #1780.
7. There are two English translations available. The first is *John Cassian: The Conferences*, trans. Boniface Ramsey, OP, *Ancient*

Christian Writers 57 (Newman: New York, 1997). The second is *John Cassian Conferences*, trans. Colm Luibheid (New York: Paulist Press, 1985); however this volume is abridged and does not contain the discussion of discernment of spirits. A critical edition of this text is available: John Cassian, *Conférences*, ed. Eugene Pichery, vol. 1-3 (Paris, 1959).

8. John Cassian, *Conferences*, 7.17

9. *Ibid.* 1.20.2

10. *Ibid.* 2.5.

11. *Ibid.* 2.7.

12. *Ibid.* 2.13

13. *Ibid.* 2.15.

14. *Ibid.* 7.17.

15. *Ibid.* 7.20.1.

16. Joseph Pegon, SJ, "The Modern Period," in *Discernment of Spirits*, trans. Sr. Innocentia Richards (The Liturgical Press: Collegeville, MN 1970), 80. This is a translation of the article "Discernement des Esprits," in *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité Ascétique et Mystique*, vol. 3 (Beauchesne et Ses Fils: Paris, 1957). Chapter three of Ignatius' *Autobiography* is about the testing of spirits.

17. *Ibid.* 89-91. According to Joseph Pegon, the commentators on the *Exercises* up to the 1950s largely ignored the discernment of spirits and the question of election and concentrated on contemplative prayer, affective states or feelings, or rational orthodoxy.

18. John of the Cross, *Ascent of Mount Carmel*, in *The Collected Works of St. John of the Cross*, trans. Kieran Kavanaugh, OCD and Otilio Rodriguez (ICS Publications: Washington, 1991) 2.112-8.

19. *Ibid.*, 2.22.3-7.

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Finally, discernment is a communal exercise to determine whether a claim to an inspired interpretation of scripture or to an inspired word from the Lord is legitimate. If deemed legitimate by the community, such claims become part of the narrative theological testimony of the community leading to a development in doctrine. Within this dynamic, there remains a tension between the acquired virtue of discernment, charismatic gifts, and communal discernment. Sometimes this tension is broken when on the basis of inspired interpretation or a word from the Lord, an individual rejects the communal discernment of the Pentecostal community and starts a new church or even a new denomination. One of the ongoing challenges of Pentecostal praxis is how to maintain the tension. 

Notes:

1. William J. Seymour, "Letter to Charles Fox Parham, August 27, 1906," in Gastón Espinosa, *William J. Seymour and the Origins of Global Pentecostalism: A Biography & Documentary History* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), 2014, 162.

2. Daniel Albrecht, "An Anatomy of Worship: A Pentecostal Analysis," in Wonsuk Ma and Robert P. Menzies (eds.), *The Spirit and Spirituality: Essays in Honour of Russell P. Spittler* (London: T & T Clark), 72-80.

3. The statement comes from Stephen Parker's ethnographic study of one Pentecostal congregation. See Stephen E. Parker, *Led by the Spirit: Toward a Practical Theology of Pentecostal Discernment and Decision Making* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 111.

4. For connections between monasticism and Pentecostalism, see Dale M. Coulter, "Pentecostals and Monasticism: A Common Spirituality?," in *Assemblies of God Heritage* 30 (2010): 42-49.

5. John Cassian, *The Conferences 2*, translated and annotated by Boniface Ramsey, O.P., *Ancient Christian Writers 57* (New York, NY: Newman Press, 1997), 77-112.

6. J. Christopher Thomas, "Women, Pentecostals and the Bible: An Experiment in Pentecostal Hermeneutics," *Journal of Pentecostal Theology* 5 (1994): 41-56.

7. Kenneth J. Archer, *A Pentecostal Hermeneutic for the Twenty-First Century: Spirit, Scripture and Community* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2004), 156-196.

The Path of Christian Unity

By David W. T. Brattston

What is Christian unity in the Biblical sense? Is it merely two neighboring congregations of the same denomination sponsoring a joint meal? Or two congregations of different denominations doing so? Intercommunion agreements? Cooperation in the World Council of Churches, and similar national and local organizations? Or did Jesus and His first followers imply nothing less than thoroughgoing structural union of two previously independent denominations? Does it matter whether they are both of Presbyterian heritage, or does Christian unity require a comprehensive merger from different confessional families, such as Presbyterian with Methodist?

Jesus called for unity among Christians, as indicated in John 10:16 and in His oft-cited prayer in John 17, but these do not tell us exactly what Christian unity is, or how we can know it exists in a particular situation or community.

The earliest Christian writings help us to understand what “unity” means and how Christians worked towards in the years when they could recall from living memory what Jesus and the apostles did in practice. To ascertain the full meaning of these scriptures, we must examine the Bible and the earliest non-Biblical Christian sources to see what “unity” means. They recall what Jesus and the apostles did in practice, before there was opportunity for the gospel to drift far from its roots. Such literature is the common inheritance of all Christendom. Consulting the earliest post-Biblical sources also enables us to ascertain how the apostles’ first followers practiced such unity, and what it constituted in the next few overlapping generations.

In John 17 Jesus prayed that Christians be united in the same way that He and the Father are united. Not knowing the way heaven is organized, we humans are little assisted by this statement in determining the quality and extent of unity, except to observe – important later in this article – that the Father and Son are persons in constant or perpetual contact with each other.

The essence of Christian unity later in the first century AD was the considerate treatment and mutual accommodation among Christ’s followers at the congregational level on a frequent basis: Romans 12:4f, 1 Corinthians 1:10, Ephesians 4:3 and Philippians 1:27 and 2:2. The contexts of all these Scriptures are a single local church in a single city.

Also in the first century, while some apostles were still alive, the congregation at Rome wrote to that at Corinth a long letter urging the Corinthians to reinstate congregational office bearers they had unjustifiably unseated, resulting in a rift in the congregation. The letter encouraged restoring the office holders in order to re-establish peace, love, and unity among Christians who were in at least weekly contact

with each other. In both Biblical and non-Biblical first-century letters, the contexts assume a single local church in a single city or town, and do not speak of relations between the addressees and Christians in other congregations, let alone other denominations, in the local community, so long as a dissident group did not press its beliefs and practices on others.

Shortly before his martyrdom in AD 107, Bishop Ignatius of Antioch encouraged Christians in three congregations to be united to God, but also to the apostles and their congregation’s clergy. In the early third century, a church manual stressed unity of clerics among themselves within a congregation. Both Ignatius and the manual pressed for greater consolidation and comity within the existing ecclesiastical or congregational structure to improve relations between Christians who had daily or weekly interactions with each other. In AD 197 the church father Tertullian wrote of Christian unity as being the gathering together of Christians in local public worship and sharing this world’s goods as a voluntary unity of property.

Preached about AD 249, Origen’s *Homilies on Joshua* saw effective unity in two or three Christians agreeing in prayer on a joint request (Matthew 18:9), and in the apostles praying with one accord in Acts 1:14. These examples are of persons in each other’s presence cooperating towards a common spiritual goal. Origen was the foremost Bible scholar, teacher, and preacher of his own time and for centuries afterwards.

The above authors classed unity with such other interpersonal traits as peace, love, gentleness, courtesy, meekness, longsuffering, forbearance, hospitality, and recognition of the spiritual gifts of others. The same authors believed that unity is incompatible with strife, jealousy, arrogance, repaying evil for evil, and snobbishness. All these are attitudes or modes of relating to people with whom one is in personal contact.

According to Scripture and tradition, unity is thus a pattern of mind and behavior, a mode of conducting one-to-one interpersonal relations, among Christians in frequent contact, and the fostering of peace, love, and harmony at the neighborhood level.

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Dr. David W. T. Brattston is a retired lawyer and judge on minor tribunals, living in Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, Canada. His five books and about three hundred and forty of his articles synthesizing early and modern Christianity have been published by a wide variety of denominations in every major English-language country.

(*kāfir*) and how, if at all, is that articulated, i.e. through *takfir* or not.

Though different terminologies are used, two types of *salafī/jihādī* are seen as existing. One is described as “quietist” and is characterized by attempting to transform an unfaithful Muslim society through inner change. Expressions such as “preachers not judges,” “purification and education” are often hallmarks of such movements which are also very reticent – as has been Sunni Islam during the centuries – to engage in *takfir* against individuals and especially rulers.⁴⁰

On the other hand, activist *salafī/jihādī* aggressively and often with violence attempt to transform what they see as infidel Muslim society into the ideal Muslim state. Abū Muḥammad al-Maqdisī, a Palestinian scholar and mentor and later opponent of al-Zarqāwī. Maqdisī clearly makes his task the grounding of Qutbism into a Neo-Ḥanbalī-Wahhābī framework. Maqdisī holds to the notion of *ḥākimīyya* and further develops the notion of *al-walā’ wa al-barā’*, “loyalty and disavowal.” This principle allows on to proclaim *takfir* on governments “over matters of foreign policy (e.g. a regime’s ‘loyalty’ to the United States) “as well as over domestic policies and well as those “actively support them (e.g. the army and intelligence agencies).”⁴¹ The *takfir* of rulers is a major part of al-Maqdisī’s program. Vis-à-vis *ḥākimīyya* governments can become infidel in several ways. For example, when a judge normally basis rulings on non-Sharī’a principles, it is apostasy. For many *salafī/jihādīs* this is the regular situation in Muslim countries, especially those with a constitution. With these criteria ISIS can easily see the Shi’ite government in Baghdad, any constitutional government as well as any attempt they deem as “not governing according to what God has revealed” (Qur’ān 4:45) as well as any supporters thereof as *kāfir* and worthy of death and damnation. Traditionally Sunni thought in its Ash’arī and Māturīdī forms with at very least their reluctance towards *takfir* exercised a moderating influence on more radical forms. Lav sees the present (complex) situation of *salafī/jihadism* as “...a minoritarian interpretation of a minoritarian Muslim tradition” and “one recent irruption of the belligerent potential inherent in every strong monotheism.” In closing Lav refers to Thomas Hobbes – normally not one of my favorite thinkers – who in his *Vitae Hobbiana Auctarium* wrote “Certainly, peace among citizens cannot endure while there is no consent about factors thought necessary for eternal salvation.” Lav suggests, “For this reason, the civil commonwealth must circumscribe the ambit of revelation and establish its {the civil commonwealth’s} moral priority over religious claims to authority...” To me this seems to be the challenge facing not only Sunni Muslims but facing everyone who believes in a divine revelation but lives in a pluralistic world with different, if not competing, revelations. As events in the Middle East shockingly show us, the challenge is not merely academic but existential. As the scholars in *A Common*

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Word wisely note: “With the terrible weaponry of the modern world; with Muslims and Christians intertwined everywhere as never before, no side can unilaterally win a conflict between more than half of the world’s inhabitants. Thus our common future is at stake. The very survival of the world itself is perhaps at stake.” 

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Notes:

1. Dedicated to Franz and Rosemarie Aicher, who are a constant source of encouragement and inspiration.
2. I use the word “phenomenon” here deliberately. I am not talking about Islam as a faith but as a societal, cultural, political system.
3. Cf. <http://16004-presscdn-0-50.pagely.netdna-cdn.com/wp-content/uploads/isis-doc-justify-torching-jpg>
4. Sunni scholars are virtually unanimous that ISIS is not a legitimate Caliphate. Cf. <http://www.americamagazine.org/issue/who-speaks-islam>
5. I found Rainer Hermann, *Endstation Islamischer Staat?* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 2105) and Christoph Reuter, *Die schwarze Macht: „Islamischer Staat“ und die Strategen des Terrors* (München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2015) to be helpful. A search of Amazon.com provides many good studies on the rise of ISIS.
6. Many of the operatives have more than one name: a civil name and a *nom de guerre*, or name they use as a fighter. Since they are mostly referred to in the media by their *nom de guerre*, that is the name I will use, unless there is a reason to do otherwise.
7. Cf. <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/abu-muhammad-al-maqdisi-a-counter-terrorism-asset>.
8. I.e. modern day Syria, Lebanon and parts of Turkey.
9. Not to be confused with ISIS’s purported caliph Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (born 28 July 1971 as Ibrahim Awad Ibrahim al-Badri

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THE PAUL WATTSON LECTURE, HALIFAX..., from page 14

al-Samarra'i. Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi is his *nom de guerre*, taking on the name of Abū Bakr, the first Rightly Guided Caliph. Recently he has gone by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi al-Husseini al-Qurayshi, the last two names being attempts to link his lineage with that of the Prophet and his tribe the Quraysh {membership in which has traditionally been a requirement for the caliph}. Most recently he is using The Commander of the Faithful Caliph Ibrahim, using the traditional and oldest title of the Caliph.

10. Cf. <https://counterjihadreport.com/the-management-of-savagery/>

11. هيئة البحوث والافتاء

12. Cf. www.acommonword.com

13. In what follows I will use the common calendar dates and not dates of the Islamic calendar.

14. Cf. *The Encyclopedia of Islam* (hereafter *IE*) Vol. IV (Leiden: Brill 1990), pp. 1074 ff.

15. Cf. *IE* Vol VII, pp. 605 ff.

16. The four being: Mālikī, Ḥanifī, Ḥanbalī and Šāfa'ī.

17. Daniel Lav, *Radical Islam and the Revival of Medieval Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

18. Lav, *op. cit.*, p. 24.

19. The earliest Muslims practicing the purest form of Islam.

20. Lav, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

21. *Ibid.*

22. There is a great deal of confusion about these terms, especially in the media. Rarely, if ever, does one find all three together, with *salafī-jihādī* being probably the most common usage with *taḳfīrī* appearing occasionally. They function primarily as synonyms for "terrorist" or "Islamic extremist" with little, if any, differentiation.

23. On 27-8 March 2010 Muslim scholars met at Artuklu University in Mardin Turkey to discuss one of Ibn Taymīyya's more famous *fatwas* Mardin, a city where Muslims, Christian and Jews lived under Mongol rule. Cf. <http://en.islamtoday.net/artshow-416-3601.htm>. A good deal of literature has been written about this *fatwa* and in response to the Mardin Conference. Cf. Yahya Michot, *Muslims under Non-Muslim Rule: Ibn Taymīyya* (Oxford: Interface Publications, 2006) and Yahya Michot, "Ibn Taymīyya's 'New Mardin Fetwa.' Is Genetically Modified Islam (GMI) Carcinogenic?" *Muslim World*, Vol 101 April 2011 pp. 130-181.

24. Lav, *op. cit.*, p. 32.

25. *Op. cit.*, p. 34 and Ibn Taymīyya, *Majmū'at al-fatāwā*, Vol 7, pp.186-187.

26. Lav, *op. cit.*, 38-39.

27. Jahmite theology would require such acts to be acts of **جدد** (*jahd*), rejection of the validity of a command, or **استحلال** (*istihlāl*), declaring something permitted which God has forbidden.

28. Lav, *op. cit.*, 35 and Ibn Taymīyya, *op. cit.*, p. 312.

29. The followers of this movement often reject the term Wahhabi as derogatory and prefer *salafī* from the *al-salaf al-sālih* (الصالح السلف), "the worthy ancestors."

30. In fact, Wahhabism stresses: *tawhīd*, the unity of God; *tawassul*, intercession; *ziyārat al-qubūr*, visiting/venerating graves; *taḳfīr*, declaring a Muslim to be an infidel; *bida'*, innovation or heresy; *'ijtihād and taqlid*, hermeneutic approaches to tradition and Sharī'a. Cf. John Exposito, ed., *The Oxford Encyclopedia of the Modern Islamic World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995) Vol 4, p. 307.

31. Esposito, *op. cit.*, Vol 3, pp. 400-404.

32. معالم في الطريق, "In the Shade of the Quran" and في ظلال القرآن, *Milestones*,

33. Ali Khamenei, the present Supreme Leader in (Shi'ite) Iran, translated parts of Qutb's *In the Shade of the Quran*.

34. Lav, *op. cit.*, pp.54-55.

35. ومن لم يحكم ن بما انزل الله فأولئك هم الكافرون

36. Qur'ān 2:191 والفتنة اشد من القتل, "fitna is worse than killing/fighting," although *fitna* here might have a slightly different meaning.

37. Not to be confused with the *Ṣaḥwa* Movement found among the Sunni tribes of al-Anbar Province in Iraq.

38. Lav, *op. cit.* p. 88.

39. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

40. Nāsīr al-Dīn al-Albānī is a representative of this stream of Salafism.

41. Lav, *op. cit.*, p. 134.

THE PATH OF CHRISTIAN UNITY, from page 13

Although Christianity had divided into different sects during the first century, the Bible does not deal with how they are to interact with each other. As regards unity, it paints most Christians with the same brush. There is no hint in the ancient literature of one set of congregations negotiating with another set to promote merger of organizations. They were more concerned with interpersonal contact within the bounds of one city or other confined locality. Judging by the way they interacted then, official interdenominational mergers today contribute to Christian unity only to the extent that they promote local objectives. The original meaning

of "Christian unity" entailed constant – at least weekly – interaction, not just formal annual meetings, nor scholarly discussions on doctrine in distant cities.

Interdenominational and interconfessional agreements for admitting members of the other's church to Holy Communion is one such local, continuing, purpose, for it enables us to accept each other as equals in Christ, and share together in a foretaste of heaven. In the same category are a week of prayer which brings together members of all churches in a local area, and local interchurch food banks.

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