

# ***Common Heritage, Uncommon Fear: Islamophobia in the United States and British India, 1687-1947***

**Peter Gottschalk**

*Wesleyan University*

**Gabriel Greenberg**

*University of California, Los Angeles*

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# *Common Heritage, Uncommon Fear: Islamophobia in the United States and British India, 1687-1947*

**Peter Gottschalk**

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When confronted with the commonality of Islamophobic themes of the fanatic Muslim man, the oppressed Muslim woman, and an intolerant Islamic religion, defenders of these views often respond that their prevalence must reflect their truth. After all, they argue, all stereotypes have some seed of truth. The ironclad quality of this tautology – that past repetition of an allegation is justification for its reiteration – recommends a different tack in refutation. An historical evaluation of these claims that demonstrates their persistence, despite historical changes, helps demonstrate how the core of American and British Islamophobia derives from received truisms that have established – and continue to establish – basic expectations about how Muslims behave. These expectations shape how information about Muslims is interpreted so that what fails to fit within this frame of reference (e.g., Muslim tolerance, nonviolent Muslim protest) often is overlooked:

*If a Mohammedan, Turk, Egyptian, Syrian or African commits a crime the newspaper reports do not tell us that it was committed by a Turk, an Egyptian, a Syrian or an African, but by a Mohammedan. If an Irishman, an Italian, a Spaniard or a German commits a crime in the United States we do not say that it was committed by a Catholic, a Methodist or a Baptist, nor even a Christian; we designate the man by his nationality.<sup>1</sup>*

Perhaps the only thing that exceeds the accuracy of Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb's observation is the surprise that this New Yorker made it more than a century ago. Such a comment would not seem out of place in the United States or Great Britain following the attacks of 9/11 and 7/7. Americans and Britons have struggled not only with domestic Islamist violence but also with the question of how to respond, in terms of both national defense and community engagement. Since the 2001 attacks, non-

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<sup>1</sup> John Wesley Hanson, *The World's Congress of Religions: The Addresses and Papers Delivered Before the Parliament, and an Abstract of the Congresses Held in the Art Institute, Chicago, Aug. 25 to Oct. 15, 1893, Under the Auspices of the World's Columbian Exposition*. Chicago: Monarch Book, 1894. pp. 523-524.

Muslim Americans have crowded classrooms to learn about Islam while churches and synagogues invite Muslim speakers to conversations. Nevertheless, Muslims have suffered heightened suspicion in both countries, drawing worried looks, enduring invasive scrutiny, and being removed from airliners. Efforts to combat anti-Muslim stereotypes are recent and commonly focus only on news and entertainment media representations. Indeed, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the term *Islamophobia* does not predate 1975. But the fact that Webb's criticism – too often, even if decreasingly, appropriate in the US and UK of today – dates from so long ago demonstrates that Anglo-American Islamophobia is not new.

An historical exploration of British and American literature between 1690 and 1947 demonstrates the roots and qualities of Islamophobia that Britons and Americans have shared. Meanwhile significant differences between the perspectives found in the two countries demonstrate how these were fashioned by differing concerns about their own societies. In order to emphasize this difference, we choose to compare American views of Muslims with those found among Britons who had lived in India. In the latter context, predominantly white Christian Britons found themselves a minority in a land once ruled by successive Muslim rulers who left impressive vestiges of their once mighty empires. As a ruling elite, Britons had to adapt their Islamophobic inheritance to the exigencies of governing tens of millions of Muslims. In the United States, engagements with Muslims appeared to be a matter of international affairs alone, "Mohammedans" representing an "other" far more distant than the Jews, Catholics, and other religious minorities who lived among the Protestant majority.

Before beginning, we need to outline the parameters of this study. First, by "Islamophobia" we refer to a largely unwarranted social anxiety about Islam and Muslims. Much more could be said about British and American stereotypes about Muslims. Other groups have also suffered negative stereotypes in these societies, but few communities have been perceived as so threatening. Hence, our argument here focuses only on the features of Muslims that have evoked such fear among the majority without exploring many of the other accusations about Muslims – such as their misogyny, their opposition to modernity, their commitment to a sensual religion, and their association with specific races. Other essays in this collection deal with these important issues, as does our previous work.<sup>2</sup>

Second, some might argue that American concerns about certain threats (e.g., the Barbary pirates) did not focus on Islam at all. We agree that, in certain confrontations, American representations may have fixed primarily on the race, ethnicity, and/or nation of an antagonistic group that happened to be Muslim. However, even such depictions almost invariably included Islamophobic inflections that proved Islam to be a damning quality

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<sup>2</sup> Peter Gottschalk and Gabriel Greenberg, *Islamophobia: Making Muslims the Enemy*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007.

of that group. For instance, the Barbary pirates might be “Arabs” but that included – if it was not exacerbated by – the unfortunate quality of being Muslim as well. Meanwhile, missionary literature continually reinforced the supposedly inherent conflict between Islam and Christianity. Third, we note that a focus on British perspectives in India should not suggest that South Asians did not have their own views, that they did not differ from Britons’, or that they simply subsumed their understandings to British ones. Earlier scholarship has demonstrated the significant and changing dynamics of interaction and representation between many of the myriad groups of the subcontinent both preceding and during British rule. However, our endeavor to track the shared heritage and divergent expressions of Anglo-American Islamophobia mandates the exclusion of these voices.

### THE ANGLO-AMERICAN HERITAGE

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, no one influenced British and American attitudes toward Islam more than Humphrey Prideaux. In 1697, this Anglican theologian published his seminal book on the topic, *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd in the Life of Mahomet*. The book’s popularity led to eight editions in twenty-five years with copies finding their way to the American colonies as early as 1746.<sup>3</sup> Although the volume’s central thesis that a self-serving Muhammad intentionally deceived his followers by masquerading as a prophet had long existed in Europe, his work made it commonplace.<sup>4</sup> Originally, Prideaux sought to write a history of Constantinople’s fall, but, overwhelmed by a concern for what he perceived as British indifference to religion, he narrated Muhammad’s biography instead. The author highlighted the so-called prophet’s fraud, tyranny, and fanaticism<sup>5</sup> in order to demonstrate the qualities of a *real* impostor and counter deist claims of Christianity’s imposture.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, a section addressing deist claims took up half the original book’s length. By the end of the eighteenth century, two American publishers released new editions to an audience shaped by revolution and religious schisms both at home and in France. The publisher of the second American edition sought to address the twin hazards of centralized government and oppressing dissent and omitted altogether the section devoted to the deist “apostacy” that so motivated Prideaux. To the editor, John Adams was the real threat, a

<sup>3</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, *American Christians and Islam: Evangelical Culture and Muslims from the Colonial Period to the Age of Terrorism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009. pp. 6, 9.

<sup>4</sup> Thomas S. Kidd, “‘Is It Worse to Follow Mahomet than the Devil?’ Early American Uses of Islam” in *Church History*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (December 2003), pp. 773.

<sup>5</sup> Robert J. Allison, *The Crescent Obscured: The United States and the Muslim World, 1776-1815*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1995. p. 37.

<sup>6</sup> Humphrey Prideaux, *The True Nature of Imposture Fully Display'd in the Life of Mahomet: With a Discourse Annex'd for the Vindication of Christianity from this Charge: Offered to the Consideration of the Deists of the Present Age*. 8th edition. London: E. Curll, 1723. pp. iii-viii.

modern Muhammad.<sup>7</sup> Thus, the same denigrations of Muhammad were adapted to critique different Anglo-American situations over the course of a century.

Continental views also influenced British and American perspectives. The French *philosophe* Voltaire intended his 1742 play, *Le fanatisme ou Mahomet le Prophete*, as both a warning against religious intolerance and praise of secular humanism. Clergyman James Miller translated Voltaire's work into English in a manner that supported the secular humanism theme while using the image of the lust-filled Mahomet to criticize fanaticism and the abuse of power. In England, it was reprinted annually between 1745 and 1777, while the play premiered in New York and Philadelphia in 1780 and 1796, respectively.<sup>8</sup>

These two early examples demonstrate three significant dimensions of Anglo-American Islamophobia that would be rehearsed repeatedly over succeeding centuries. First, depictions of Muslims and of the final Islamic prophet, in particular, often served as a foil serving social critiques of British and American domestic issues entirely unconnected to Islam. Just in the various editions of the two influential examples noted above, depictions of Muhammad's life aided endeavors to warn Britons and Americans against deism, federalism, political tyranny, religious apathy, and religious zealotry.

Second, the perception of Muslims and Islam as a threat pervaded so broadly that even the most ardent secularists and Christians (these groups were not mutually exclusive) could utilize them as foils serving quite divergent agendas. Prideaux saw Islam as the anti-Christian product of a power hungry imposter. Voltaire viewed Muhammad's excesses as a warning to governments that espoused religion. As we shall see, secularists like Thomas Jefferson often included Muslims as an extreme example marking the lengths to which toleration should be practiced. Simultaneously, Christians often viewed Islam as – if not the greatest threat to Christianity – the largest obstacle to its universal expansion.

The third and final dimension of Anglo-American Islamophobia demonstrated by the example of Prideaux and Voltaire's works is how certain lines of communication facilitated the transcontinental transmission of Islamophobic ideas. Given the popular authority of those with personal experience of Muslims and the British empire's involvement with Muslim communities across the world, information and opinions often flowed westward across the Atlantic. Clearly, Britain and the other European powers with a stake in North America contributed the seeds for the first sad blossoms of Islamophobia there. This current continued through the next century as evidenced in a variety of ways by the American Charles Godfrey Leland. In 1874 he concluded his satirical travelogue by quoting an article from London's *Daily Telegraph*:

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<sup>7</sup> Kidd 2003, p. 787.

<sup>8</sup> Allison, pp. 43-45.

*We are very glad to announce that the annual pilgrimage to Mecca has gone off this year with remarkable success. "Glad to announce!" we hear good Mrs. Grundy ejaculate; "why should a Christian newspaper rejoice over the happy conduct and termination of the rites and ceremonies of Mahound?" But the estimable lady in question ought to understand that this great custom of the Moslem world is no longer a matter of indifference to ourselves. The East and the West are nowadays so closely knit together by commerce and intercourse that, upon sanitary grounds alone, we have every reason to watch with the utmost interest the accounts from the holy cities of Arabia. Twice has Europe received the plague of cholera from the crowds that throng from all parts of the eastern world to Mecca and Medina.*<sup>9</sup>

Clearly, the journalist anticipated antagonistic Christian responses to his news item. He used a fictional reader's objections to argue his case regarding the increasing relevance of information about Muslims. At a minimum, they represented a pathogenic threat.<sup>10</sup>

Leland's inclusion of the article was more than incidental. Imperialism both quickened the spread of information about Muslims and produced authoritative Western commentators on Islam. British imperial officials often served as sources of information both in their own country and in the US. Although their experience with Muslims might be restricted to one region, others might extrapolate it to reflect on other or all Muslims. For instance, as the twentieth century opened, American James L. Barton prefaced his *Daybreak in Turkey* with a quote from Lord Cromer, the acerbic British agent and consul-general who served in Egypt for twenty-four years following duty in India.<sup>11</sup> Although many imperial officials and even some missionaries had a more nuanced view of Islam tempered by their direct experience of Muslim cultures, few attempted to dispel the popular perception regarding Islam's threat.

British and American experience of Muslims could diverge significantly. Throughout the two centuries of British rule in South Asia, Britons consistently differentiated Indians according to what they presumed to be mutually exclusionary, if not antagonistic, communities. Hence, Britons had constant contact with people they primarily described as Hindus and Muslims (ignoring the other identities individuals often held that defied this division) and their descriptions of India persistently included generalizations about these two groups. On the other hand, few Americans

<sup>9</sup> Charles Godfrey Leland, *The Egyptian Sketch Book*, New York: Hurd and Houghton, 1874. p. 326.

<sup>10</sup> In *The Satanic Verses* (1988), Salman Rushdie would recycle "Mahound" for English literature, noting its objectionable origins as a slur.

<sup>11</sup> James Levi Barton, *Daybreak in Turkey*. Boston: Pilgrim, 1908. p. 10.

other than sailors and missionaries encountered Muslims beyond the slaves who were not recognized as such. Only in episodic moments of crisis – notably the Tripolitan War (1801–05), the Philippine-American War (1899–1902), and the Turkish question preceding and following the First World War – did many Americans have a sense of engagement with people who happened to be Muslims. Even then (and in contrast with the British in India) they often characterized their opponents chiefly by “nation” or “race,” such as “Arab” or “Turk.” Nevertheless, an incipient Muslim quality pervaded these identifications, as evidenced in period representations. Given the lack of contact with Muslims except in moments of crisis and through missionaries, Americans often relied on British views to inform their apprehensions about Islam. Thus, Thomas S. Kidd has observed, “Although one should hesitate to describe early Americans as conversant with Islam, they certainly conversed about Islam regularly.”<sup>12</sup>

### THE THREAT OF ISLAM

For British and American audiences, the menace of Islam existed at a variety of different levels. Politically, socially, religiously, and theologically, Muslims and their religion were seen to threaten in varying degrees and in different ways Britain and America, secularism and Christianity.

The perception of threat to the state obviously differed between the United States and British India because of the disparity in the proximity of Muslims to the state. Very few Muslims lived in North America and those who did – enslaved African Muslims – seldom were recognized by European-Americans as such. Recent scholarship estimates that, among the millions of Africans forced into American servitude, perhaps one out of five were Muslim. Yet severely repressive conditions meant that Islamic practices and identities seldom passed to successive generations. Expressing the view shared by most of his contemporaries, Puritan leader Cotton Mather declared, “We are afar off, in a Land, which never had (that I ever heard of) one Mahometan breathing in it.”<sup>13</sup> Nevertheless, the currency of the inherited medieval view of Muslims as a twin peril – political and theological<sup>14</sup> – made Muslims an ideal hypothetical threat to be used in various political disputes within the early republic. Robert J. Allison and Denise Spellberg have demonstrated how Muslims figured into the political rhetoric of constitutional debates in various states. Muslims represented an outlier group whose objectionable character – particularly the tyranny associated with the Ottoman court – made them the ultimate test case in many debates.<sup>15</sup> For instance, during the North Carolina debates regarding

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<sup>12</sup> Kidd 2003, p. 766.

<sup>13</sup> Kidd 2003, p. 767.

<sup>14</sup> John L. Esposito, *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality?* New York: Oxford University Press, 1992. p. 45.

<sup>15</sup> However, Muslims did not serve as the ultimate outlier for all early Americans. In New Hampshire’s ratification convention, one delegate commented that “a Turk, a Jew, a

the requirement of a religious test for political candidates, delegates mentioned Muslims six times. Many references dealt with the issue of a Muslim becoming president.<sup>16</sup> Of course, such a possibility served only as a hypothetical, given that no delegate likely believed that Muslims existed in the new nation.

While controversies around new schemes of representation demonstrated how Muslims served as a worst-case scenario, disputes regarding governance provided opportunities to question whether fictive resident Muslims would be tolerated as Americans. For instance, a petition by citizens of Chesterfield County, Virginia to their state assembly argued in 1785, "It is mens [sic] labour in our Manufactories, their services by sea and land that aggrandize our Country and not their creeds...Let Jews, Mehometans, and Christians of every denomination find their advantage in living under your laws."<sup>17</sup> More famously, Thomas Jefferson rejected an effort to insert "Jesus Christ" into a Virginia bill for religious freedom. He noted, "The insertion was rejected by a great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mahometan, the Hindoo, and Infidel of every denomination."<sup>18</sup> Of course, before Americans adopted Jefferson as a model of toleration, he had taken John Locke as his ideal. Demonstrating again the cross-Atlantic flow of ideas, Locke's *Letter of Toleration* (1689) influenced many Americans besides Jefferson. In it he promoted the inclusion in public life of all Protestants – whatever their sect – before going a step further: "Nay, if we may openly speak the truth, and as becomes one man to another, neither pagan, nor Mahometan, nor Jew, ought to be excluded from the civil rights of the commonwealth, because of his religion. The Gospel commands no such thing."<sup>19</sup>

Locke and others used *fictive* Muslims to indicate the extremity of their inclusivity, knowing how acutely their audiences would view an *actual* Muslim presence as a threat. Each time statesmen took Muslims as an extreme example, they helped reinscribe the liminality of Muslims in the popular imagination. For instance, Locke declared in his *Letter* that toleration could not extend to those whose religion compels them to be faithful to a foreign prince. His one example was the Muslim who lives under a Christian magistrate "whilst at the same time he acknowledges

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Rom[an] Catholic and, what is worse than all, a Universal[ist], may be President of the United States." Spellberg, p. 492.

<sup>16</sup> Spellberg, p. 493.

<sup>17</sup> James H. Hutson, "Founding Fathers and Islam: Library Papers Show Early Tolerance for Muslim Faith" in *Library of Congress Information Bulletin*, vol. 61, no. 5 (May 2002) (<http://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/0205/tolerance.html>, accessed February 14, 2009).

<sup>18</sup> Thomas Jefferson, *Memoirs, Correspondence, and Private Papers of Thomas Jefferson: Late President of the United States*, volume I. Thomas Jefferson Randolph, ed. London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1829. pp. 38-39.

<sup>19</sup> John Locke, *John Locke: A Letter Concerning Toleration, in Focus*. John P. Horton and Susan Mendus, eds. London: Routledge, 1991. p. 35.

himself bound to yield blind obedience to the mufti of Constantinople; who himself is entirely obedient to the Ottoman emperor, and frames the famed oracles of that religion according to his pleasure.”<sup>20</sup> Islam, according to Locke, may incline a Muslim to unthinkingly obey a religion that ultimately sways at a tyrant’s whim. If such a Muslim lives in a non-Muslim country, she introduces this tyrannical, foreign jurisdiction there. Locke’s comments voiced three aspects of contemporary Anglo-American Islamophobia. First, that the Ottomans represented an exemplar of bad government and, second, that Muslims offered a nascent threat (of varying degrees according to the author) to every non-Muslim political order under whose jurisdiction they lived. Third, Locke, like Jefferson and the citizens of Chesterfield County, expressed the possibility that (at least some) Muslims *could* coexist under a non-Muslim government. Although such a threat remained in the abstract for Americans until the large-scale Muslim emigrations of the twentieth century, it haunted British administrators and others in British India following the uprising of 1857-1858. This wide-scale, virulent rebellion not only ushered in an end to the East India Company (EIC) as the British government assumed direct control over its Indian territories it also instilled an overall British distrust toward Muslims.

For perhaps three reasons, British publications – at least when not written by missionaries – demonstrated few Islamophobic tendencies before 1857. First, the Mughals’ precipitous decline meant that no Muslim group credibly challenged British domination. Despite the increasingly disruptive changes that the EIC made to the social and economic order, Muslims seldom questioned British ascendancy and few Islamic revivalists of the period openly contested British rule. Even Saiyad Ahmad Bareilwi, the founder of the militant Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah, sought primarily to purify Islamic practice, although some of his followers subsequently combatted the British.<sup>21</sup>

Second, inspiring Mughal architecture impressed many British observers even as it attested to Muslim decline. The Mughals may have been despotic – as seemed inevitable in the Anglo-American view of “oriental” and “Muslim” states – but the benefits of their governance could be appreciated too, now that they posed no threat. James Mill, whose *History of British India* (1817) represents one of the most influential and tartest British appraisals of South Asians, praised Muslims for their relative sophistication relative to Hindus. India’s “Mahomedan conquerors” manifested “an activity, a manliness, an independence, which rendered it less easy for despotism to sink, among them, to that disgusting state of weak

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<sup>20</sup> Locke, p. 32.

<sup>21</sup> P. Hardy, *The Muslims of British India*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972. p. 51.

and profligate barbarism, which is the natural condition of government among such a passive people as the Hindus."<sup>22</sup>

Mill demonstrates here a trait common among Britons in India: when assessing the two populations into which they divided the subcontinent, the presence of a specific characteristic might be the reason that one Briton *praised* Muslims relative to Hindus and the reason another *condemned* Muslims in favor of Hindus. The manliness that Mill saw curtailing despotism would be viewed as the very engine of Muslim tyranny by others. However, as with Mill, few Britons considered either community superior to their own. In this manner, Britons often positioned themselves as the normative middle ground between two extremes of human behavior and belief. If most Hindu men seemed passively effeminate and Muslim men fanatically violent, then the British man represented the proper poise of action and restraint. If Hinduism promoted a retrograde idolatry similar to Catholicism and Islam represented an apostate's arrogance similar to heresy, then the Church of England provided the truth of the only god.

The third aspect of pre-1857 conditions that mitigated British Islamophobia was the model of tolerance some Britons saw as instrumental to Mughal success. For instance, long after Mughal political power had evaporated, Anglican bishop Reginald Heber reported in his Indian travelogue (1828) that "the fierce Mohammadans" only had begun to question British control because Britons had disrespected the Mughal court.<sup>23</sup> The same year, Walter Hamilton in his gazetteer of India stumped for a respectful Mughal policy, "The most rational course appeared to be, to leave the king's authority exactly in the state in which it was found, and to afford the royal family the means of subsistence...not unsuitable to a fallen but illustrious race."<sup>24</sup> A quarter century later, Edward Thornton noted in his gazetteer, "The feelings of deference for the throne of Delhi extended to provinces very remote from the seat of its former grandeur, and to Hindoos not less than to Mahomedans. It was in fact universal."<sup>25</sup> Undoubtedly, this transcommunal respect must have struck some Britons in India as evidence of toleration's advantages, just as Locke and others promoted at home. Depictions of Aurangzeb's reign – characterized by temple destruction, Sikh oppression, and the *jizya* tax – conformed much more closely with the prevalent picture of the Ottomans, the exemplar of Muslim prejudice and tyranny. For most, though, this last great Mughal provided the exception

<sup>22</sup> James Mill, *The History of British India*. William Thomas, ed. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1975 (1817). p. 309.

<sup>23</sup> Hardy, pp. 33-34.

<sup>24</sup> Walter Hamilton, *East-India Gazetteer; Containing Particular Descriptions of the Empires, Kingdoms, Principalities, Provinces, Cities, Towns, Districts, Fortresses, Harbours, Rivers, Lakes, &c of Hindostan, and the Adjacent Countries, India Beyond the Ganges, and the Eastern Archipelago*. Volume I. Delhi: Low Price, 1993 (1828). p. 497.

<sup>25</sup> Edward Thornton, *A Gazetteer of the Territories under the Government of the East-India Company, and of the Native States on the Continent of India*. Delhi: Low Price Publications, 1993 (1858). pp. 264-265.

that proved the rule, his stereotypical Muslim intolerance for non-Muslims standing in welcome contrast with the remarkable inclusiveness of his predecessors Akbar, Jahangir, and Shah Jahan. This pre-1857 generosity towards the erstwhile Mughal empire would be significantly undermined by the mutiny of many of the Company's Indian soldiers, the uprising among parts of the population, and the slaughter of British civilians.

W.W. Hunter most infamously voiced this change in *The Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound by Conscience to Rebel against the Queen?* (1871). His initial chapter titles amply portray the volume's tenor: "The Standing Rebel Camp on Our Frontier" and "The Chronic Conspiracy within Our Territory." Although British authors often qualified their concerns about Muslims by reassuring their audiences of the loyalty of most Indian Muslims,<sup>26</sup> Hunter began his book with the assertion, "While the more fanatical of the Musalmans have thus engaged in overt sedition, the whole Muhammadan community has been openly deliberating on their obligation to rebel."<sup>27</sup> As a long-time officer in the Bengal Civil Service and member of numerous learned societies, Hunter was highly influential with his opinions. He reversed the formula found in other works in which Aurangzeb served as the intolerant outlier among Mughal emperors, demonstrating how even Akbar's tolerance was overshadowed by the pervasive religious chauvinism of his courtiers. Overall, however, Hunter said little about the dynasty, reflecting primarily on the positive sea change accomplished by British administration of India, especially in Bengal. For instance, Hunter characterized government under Muslims as "an engine for enriching the few, not for protecting the many"<sup>28</sup> (a characterization not ill-fitted to describe contemporary English conditions). Although the author dedicated a chapter to describing the wrongs Muslims alleged to have suffered under British domination, he mostly placed the onus for change on them, not the government.

The repetition of his claims by later authors reflects the persistent popularity of Hunter's perspectives. As W.A. Wilson, a Canadian missionary in Indore, made his own case for the distrustfulness of Muslims in 1911, he quoted Hunter, "The Mussulmans of India are and have been a source of chronic danger to the British power in India." Wilson went further, claiming obliquely that, "There are many who doubt the loyalty of the Mohammedan people as a whole." For evidence, Wilson followed Hunter by pointing to the Wahhabi conspiracies, Quranic injunctions to overthrow infidel rule, and Muslim resistance on the northwest frontier. But as with most Islamophobic authors in British India, Wilson viewed one event to hang particularly heavily over Muslim heads: "They remind us of

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<sup>26</sup> For instance, see W. Nassau Lees, *Indian Musalmans: Being Three Letters Reprinted from the "Times" with an Article on the Late Prince Consort, and Four Articles on Education, Reprinted from the "Calcutta Englishman."* London: Williams and Norgate, 1871.

<sup>27</sup> W.W. Hunter, *The Indian Musalmans*. 2nd edition. London: Trübner and Company, 1872. p. 10.

<sup>28</sup> Hunter, p. 164.

the part they played in the terrible mutiny, when they pressed to the front and through rivers of blood made a furious dash to seize the standard of empire."<sup>29</sup> As the terrible series of vengeful reprisals reaped immediately following the end of the rebellion demonstrated, Muslims took the brunt of British blame although they were no more seditious than Hindus and many Muslim soldiers and officials had remained loyal. However, at the revolt's height, the Mughal emperor had reluctantly sided with the mutineers who pressed for his support. In the later effort to explain the seemingly sudden reversal of reverence for British rule, many Britons described a resentful monarch leading disenfranchised nobles and sullen soldiers in a vain struggle to re-establish the decrepit former order of Muslim position and prestige. As Wilson's comment demonstrates, a half century later this view and the passion behind it had not dissipated much among Britons and many members of the colonies.

Meanwhile, at least one commentator in the United States drew a larger lesson from the rebellion. D.H. Wheeler, president of the Chautauqua Institution, despaired in 1885 that Britons had ignored "the religious source" of the uprising and continued their twin practices of arming some Muslims and slaughtering others. "[England] is uniting Islam, and teaching Islam how to make war...A Moslem victory is proclaimed in every Arab tent, and in every Indian village." While decrying the European atrocities, Wheeler preferred that Islam "should be locked fast in the iron arms of the British empire" for the sake of Christendom.<sup>30</sup>

Wheeler reflected yet another Islamophobic concern among many Britons and Americans: a global surge of Islamism meant to bring the world under singular Muslim domination. Much of this centered on Istanbul (or Constantinople, the name many commentators preferred), "the capital of Mohammedanism" as an American missionary there put it in 1835. In his overview of religions that went through at least five reprintings in the first half of the nineteenth century, John Haywood explained that Muslims' "spiritual head" lived in Turkey, a man equivalent to the "Roman Pontiff, or the Grecian Patriarch."<sup>31</sup> He was referring to the *khalifa* (caliph), an office of leadership of the entire Muslim community dating back to the successors of Muhammad. The Ottoman sultans had claimed it for themselves since 1517. In 1892, the American Catholic priest Charles C. Starbuck cautioned

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<sup>29</sup> W.A. Wilson. "The Situation in India" in *Islam and Missions: Being Papers Read at the Second Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World at Lucknow, January 23-28, 1911*. Elwood Morris Wherry, Samuel Marinus Zwemer, and C. G. Mylrea, eds. New York, London: Fleming H. Revell, 1911. pp. 144, 146.

<sup>30</sup> D.H. Wheeler, "England and Islam" in *The Chautauquan*. v.5 (October 1884-July 1885). pp. 402, 404.

<sup>31</sup> John Haywood, *The Book of Religions: Comprising the Views, Creeds, Sentiments, Or Opinions, of All the Principal Religious Sects in the World, Particularly of All Christian Denominations in Europe and America, to which are Added Church and Missionary Statistics, Together with Biographical Sketches*. 2nd edition. Boston: I.S. Boyd and E.W. Buswell, 1842. p. 229.

that this Muslim "Pope" might yet unite all Muslims whom he characterized as "simply a vast agglomeration of disconnected atoms, like its own sand-wastes," conflating Muslims with the people of the desert.<sup>32</sup> Wheeler did not seem to fear the caliph per se but believed that pan-Islamism awaited only for another Muhammad to galvanize the expectant Muslim masses. "When the Prophet is once crowned with the diadem of military success, there is an army of Mohammedans in India wearing the queen's uniform, there are vast resources at Constantinople ready to fall from the helpless hands of the Sultan...There are two hundred millions of Mohammedans waiting for a leader to restore the glories of Islam."<sup>33</sup>

In contrast with these American anxieties, Britons in India only became alarmed at the prospect of an Ottoman-oriented pan-Islamism as the nineteenth century concluded. Officials began to fear that Turkish agents were stirring discontent in India. Important intellectuals like Sir Muhammad Iqbal and Abul Kalam Azad promoted an Islamic identity that transcended national borders, a widespread sentiment among the *ulama*.<sup>34</sup> Pro-British Muslims such as Sir Saiyid Ahmad Khan and Mirza Ghulam Ahmad felt compelled to write tracts defending loyalty to the British government as popular support grew for the Turkish sultan.<sup>35</sup> However, no uprising ever pursued any Ottoman-oriented ends.

At the start of the First World War, when the Ottomans allied with Britain's enemies, British anxiety deepened. Immediately, the Government of India telegraphed all districts describing pan-Islamism to officials, directing them to warn certain Muslim preachers of the consequences of criticizing the government, and requiring all householders to report foreigners.<sup>36</sup> Despite such concerns, after the war some authorities aimed to use pan-Islamic thought to British advantage. In 1919, the Government of India sent to at least one provincial government a copy of a fatwa that called "upon all Muhammadans to oppose Bolshevism" and the central government sought to publicize it by feeding it to Muslim newspapers.<sup>37</sup> Independence leader Mohandas Gandhi saw advantage too in pan-Islamist sentiment and allied his Congress Party with the Khilafat movement that sought to prevent the victorious Allies from removing the caliph and dismembering the Ottoman empire. In 1924 the entire issue vanished when

<sup>32</sup> Rev. Charles C. Starbuck, "Missions and Civilization. II." *The Andover Review: A Religious and Theological Monthly*. vol. 18 (July-December 1892). pp. 69-70.

<sup>33</sup> Wheeler, p. 404.

<sup>34</sup> Francis Robinson, *Islam and Muslim History in South Asia*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000. pp. 192-194.

<sup>35</sup> Hardy, pp. 177-180.

<sup>36</sup> Telegram from H. LeMesurier, Government of India, Home Department, Simla, August 21, 1914. Public Special. No. 225 of 1914. State Archives of Bihar.

<sup>37</sup> Letter from Government of India, Home Department (Political), to G. Rainy, Chief Secretary, Bihar and Orissa. D.O. No. 1965, Simla, 17 September 1919. Political Department, Special Section. No. 345 of 1919. State Archives of Bihar.

the Turkish National Assembly eliminated the caliphate following the allotment of imperial lands among the European victors.

Although Americans and Britons shared a trepidation regarding a global Islamic movement that never emerged, the British continually fretted about local uprisings. The event that most inculcated this fear and, until 1857, served as the primary justification for it was the “Wahhabi movement.” As Hardy put it, “In thinking about Muslims after 1857, the so-called Wahhabis were for the British the great unthinkable that was always thought.” British belief in Indian-based Wahhabis originated in the 1820s, as Saiyid Ahmad Barelwi and his followers moved to the northwest territories to launch a jihad against the Sikhs who ruled there. Their Tariqah-i Muhammadi may have shared a notion of jihad with Arabia’s Wahhabis, but its efforts at reform drew much more from Sufi traditions. Saiyad Ahmad’s jihad failed, but some of his followers remained on the frontier into at least the 1870s. British concerns loomed more menacingly than the actual threat, the *mujahidin* numbering perhaps six hundred in 1852.<sup>38</sup>

Although this so-called “conspiracy” began twice as long ago as the 1857 rebellion – which had far more immediate effect on Britons – Hunter’s *The Indian Musalmans* includes far more references to the former. Hunter, like many other Britons, collapsed diverse Muslim movements seeking divergent goals in disparate parts of India into the category “Wahhabi.” This phantasmal conspiracy thus ranged across a great swath of territory over a long period of time. Britons erroneously conflated a wide range of Muslim political endeavors with “Wahhibism,” such as Bengal’s Faraizi movement, a coup attempt by the Nizam of Hyderabad’s brother, and the assassinations of a viceroy and chief justice.<sup>39</sup> In fact, no such unity existed among Islamist groups, and a puny proportion of Muslims evinced interest in any of them. In fact, the popular Muslim movements of the nineteenth century primarily focused on Islamic reform and revival.<sup>40</sup> Yet, as late as 1937, the Government of India could not be certain that the Wahhabi threat had entirely dissipated.<sup>41</sup> Sir Saiyid blamed three factors for the recent public scrutiny of Muslim loyalty: trials of supposed Wahhabis, the murder of the chief justice, and Hunter’s book to which he wrote a rejoinder.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, the final act of Muslim anti-imperialism would be the Pakistan movement. Initiated in 1930 with Iqbal’s call for a separate Muslim homeland, it culminated with the partition of the subcontinent’s

<sup>38</sup> Hardy, pp. 53-55, 60.

<sup>39</sup> Hunter, pp. 42, 100. Hardy, p. 79. Rafiuddin Ahmed, *The Bengal Muslims 1871-1906: A Quest for Identity*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1996 (1981). pp. 40-41.

<sup>40</sup> Harlan O. Pearson, *Islamic Reform and Revival in Nineteenth-century India: The Tariqah-i Muhammadiyah*. New Delhi: Yoda, 2008. p. 173.

<sup>41</sup> T.C. Hodson, *India. Census Ethnography, 1901-1931*. New Delhi: Government of India Press, 1937. p. 111.

<sup>42</sup> Syed Ahmad Khan Bahadur, *Review on Dr. Hunter's Indian Musalmans: Are They Bound in Conscience to Rebel Against the Queen?* Benares: Medical Hall Press, 1872. p. 5.

British held territories and semi-independent states into an independent India and Pakistan at the very moment when Britain relinquished its control in 1947. For many Pakistan proponents – certainly for its ultimate leader, Muhammad Ali Jinnah – separatism represented less an anti-imperial and anti-Hindu agenda than a political threat to obtain minority concessions from the British-led government and Hindu-dominated Congress Party. Indeed, once the endgame had played out and the sought concessions failed to materialize, Jinnah steered the movement into close alliance with the British during the Second World War in order to best obtain his objectives even as Gandhi and the rest of the Congress leadership sat imprisoned for their wartime efforts to undermine British rule.

Although Britons in India differed from Americans because of the active (if exaggerated) threat to their political order, both shared a conviction regarding two alleged qualities of Islam that made it a perennial menace: the proclivity of Muslims to spread their religion and to do so violently. In their reflections on the proselytizing power of Muslims – an issue among Europeans since at least the eighth century when predominantly Christian north Africa and Spain converted almost entirely to Islam – Americans and Britons almost universally explained mass conversion as the result of coercion. In the preface to his book on Muhammad's "imposture," Prideaux emphasized how the eastern churches abdicated Christianity with "the Sword at their Throats."<sup>43</sup> Such sentiments persisted throughout ensuing centuries, not being limited to publications by Christian apologists. In 1872, the British government in Calcutta (Kolkata) published Edward Tuite Dalton's ethnology of Bengal, which argued that Muslim rulers had forced or induced "aborigines" and Hindus to accept Islam.<sup>44</sup> Some warned that coercive conversions did not belong just to the past but may again menace Christians. For instance, in 1835 Eli Smith, an American missionary in Turkey, imagined for his audience in a Boston magazine that the dead ancient Christians of Western Asia warned American Christians today, "Hereafter, upon the fair face of your beloved America, as now upon that glory of all lands which was once our country, a night of apostacy may settle down, and hordes of yet unnamed barbarian invaders fasten deep the blight of some new Mohammedanism" [sic]. Smith shamed his coreligionists by contrasting their lack of ardor with Muslim zealotry: "Is a mere *handful* of missionaries all that enlightened Christian benevolence can send forth, where the superstition of the dark ages sent forth *armies*?"<sup>45</sup>

Smith's reference to the armies of Islam reflected a troubling question: Why had the armies of Christendom been unable to halt the rapid

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<sup>43</sup> Prideaux, pp. viii-ix.

<sup>44</sup> Edward Tuite Dalton, *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*. Calcutta: Office of the Superintendent of Government Printing, 1872. p. 2.

<sup>45</sup> Eli Smith, "Present Attitude of Mohammedanism, in Reference to the Spread of the Gospel" in *The American Quarterly Observer*, v. 1 (July-Oct. 1833). p. 114.

Muslim expansion? Why were current missionaries unable to convert Muslims today? After all, many Christians considered the steady global advance of their religion as a testament to its truth. How to explain yesterday's setbacks and today's stalemate? One answer that most Americans and Britons seemingly accepted was that the inherent fanaticism of (male) Muslims produced their violent success. According to the well respected and widely read Briton Claudius Buchanan (1807), Muslims were a "dagger-drawing people" who maintained a "vindictive spirit."<sup>46</sup> Smith, in 1835, opined that religious fanaticism was "the strongest principle of obedience in the Turkish citizen, and of bravery in the Turkish soldier."<sup>47</sup> Meanwhile, their concerns for the chaos of revolutionary France and the march of Napoleon's armies gave Americans opportunities to demonstrate how "fanatic" and "Muslim" seemed almost synonymous. In 1814, Thomas Jefferson likened the "military Fanatic" Napoleon to Achilles, Alexander, Caesar, and "Mahomet."<sup>48</sup> Five decades later, a Boston literary journal published an article that reflected on the extreme fanaticism once seen in France: "The only historical phenomenon to which this transformation of France can be compared is that of the rise of such a religion as Mahometanism...The fanatical Frenchman believes in the ideas of '89 very much as the Mahometan believes in the Koran. He hates a noble or a priest as a Mahometan hates a Ginour."<sup>49</sup> Early in the next century, President Theodore Roosevelt compared Muslims with a more domestic model of fanaticism when answering critics of his policies toward a rebellious minority in the Philippines: "To abandon the Moro country as our opponents propose in their platform, would be precisely as if twenty-five years ago we had withdrawn the Army and the civil agents from within and around the Indian reservations in the West, at a time when the Sioux and the Apache were still the terror of our settlers."<sup>50</sup> Popular portrayals of Muslim Arabs, Turks, and Moros demonstrated the near universal association of fanaticism with Muslim men and helped to explain the initial expansion and contemporary entrenchedness of Islam.

When commentators did not attribute coercion as the cause of conversion, they blamed Muslim success on some negative quality of the proselytized. In his review of world religions (1842), Haywood blamed Islam's early gains not only on "the terror of Mahomet's arms" but also Islamic law, which suited "the manners and opinions of the Eastern nations." Islam's few doctrines were simple, its duties easy, and nothing was "incompatible with the empire of appetites and passions" that

<sup>46</sup> Claudius Buchanan, *An Apology for Promoting Christianity in India*. Boston: Nathaniel Willis, 1814. p. 86.

<sup>47</sup> Smith, 106.

<sup>48</sup> James H. Hutson, ed. *The Founders on Religion: A Book of Quotations*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007. p. 116.

<sup>49</sup> "The Hatred of Priests." *Littell's Living Age*. v.79 (Oct-Dec1863). p. 165.

<sup>50</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, *Presidential Addresses and State Papers, Volume III: April 7, 1904, to May 9, 1905*. New York: Review of Reviews, 1910. pp. 88-89.

characterized Arabs and most Easterners.<sup>51</sup> In 1892, a publication of the Church of England's Church Missionary Society (CMS) credited the prophet's success to a combined strategy of carrot and stick, arguing that Muhammad took a decrepit form of Judaism and Christianity and "added to it elements of worldliness and sensuality which rendered it acceptable to the natural mind, and by establishing the principle of enforcing his tenets by the sword, he ensured their zealous propagation."<sup>52</sup> While these Americans and Britons avoided any suggestion that someone, drawn by a positive characteristic of the religion, might willingly accept Islam, others argued that, if there had been a good reason for South Asians to convert, it reflected less the value of Islam than the deficits of Hinduism, specifically caste prejudice and the proscription of widow remarriage. Reverend John Takle – a New Zealander working as a missionary in Bengal – used the most recent "scientific" evidence that tracked intermarriage between Muslim and native races to supposedly prove a long-standing conclusion. In 1911 he stated, "The anthropometric survey made by government proves conclusively that the vast majority of the Mohammedans in India are converts from among the depressed Hindu communities."<sup>53</sup>

The "scientific" dimension of European imperialism not only seemed to affirm existing views about Muslims and Islam it also helped deepen fears by proving how many Muslims existed. Anglo-American literature about Muslims repeatedly stressed their considerable population. Recall that in Smith's essay on Turkey, he warned Americans of "hordes of yet unnamed barbarian invaders" that might sweep the US if enough missionaries did not meet the Islamic threat. In 1842 Hayward indicated a world population of 140 million Muslims.<sup>54</sup> An 1850 letter in the *Missionary Herald* by a "Mr. Hume" began with a reckoning of the relative numbers of Muslims and Hindus in Bombay, drawing on data derived from the recently instituted census there.<sup>55</sup> Although some European states had begun to develop demographic tools to better understand their populations by this time, the British were creating a more thorough and expansive census for its Indian territories than they exercised at home. The first all-India census (1872) and the several city and provincial counts that preceded it each required those polled to give their religion. The resulting numbers alarmed Britons because the population of Muslims exceeded their expectations. But, more than statistics on the *overall* Muslim population, those tracking its *growth* only

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<sup>51</sup> Haywood, p. 229.

<sup>52</sup> Anonymous. "Islam and Christian Missions" in *The Church Missionary Gleaner*. volume 19 (May 1892). p. 68.

<sup>53</sup> John Takle, "Moslem Advance in India" in *Islam and Missions: Being Papers Read at the Second Missionary Conference on Behalf of the Mohammedan World at Lucknow, January 23-28, 1911*. Elwood Morris Wherry, Samuel Marinus Zwemer, and C. G. Mylrea, eds. New York, London: Fleming H. Revell, 1911. p. 211.

<sup>54</sup> Hayward, p. 221.

<sup>55</sup> Hume, "Letter from Mr. Hume, June 22, 1850" in *The Missionary Herald*. vol. 46 (1850). p. 349.

worsened Anglo-American fears. Muslims appeared to out-proliferate Hindus and Christians. For instance, two authors detailing the missionary work of the United Free Church of Scotland opened their 1910 book with a quote from the census commissioner followed by their own prognostication:

*“In East Bengal two-thirds of the inhabitants and in North Bengal nearly three-fifths are followers of the Prophet.” As the Mohammedans in those regions increase faster than Hindus, it is quite possible that within a few decades Hinduism may be banished from those parts of Bengal...The influence of Islam is the most powerful engine destroying Hinduism in North and East Bengal at the present day.*<sup>56</sup>

The next year Takle cited U.N. Mukherjee of the Indian Medical Services whose pamphlet “A Dying Race?” made much the same argument. Official demography added to the stream of knowledge about Muslims that imperialism made available to Britons and Americans.<sup>57</sup>

Reflecting on the overall expansion of Islam, the American missionary Samuel M. Zwemer, a recognized authority who published repeatedly on Islam, declared of “the Moslem Peril,” “It is now or never; it is Islam or Christ!”<sup>58</sup> Zwemer’s sentiment signals the last quality of Islamophobia that featured prominently in Anglo-American discourse: Islam as Christianity’s inherent and inexorable nemesis. In his deliberations on the demographic eclipse of Hinduism in India, Takle approvingly quoted another author who claimed, “India, unless all is changed by the intervention of some new force, must become a Mohammedan country...The intervening spiritual force which ought to prevent this is, of course, Christianity.”<sup>59</sup> The most prominent qualities of Muslims that threatened Christians included their universal resistance to conversion, consistent success in proselytization, and their flawed belief in Jesus Christ that denied his divinity. The latter claim often meant that Western Christians considered Muslims as heretics or apostates, a threat to the doctrinal orthodoxy central to many churches.

Christians feared Muslims both as a radically other religious competitor *and* a despoiled fraction of Christians. Deprecating Muslims often served efforts to police the doctrinal boundary circumscribing “true Christianity,” as seen in Roger Williams’ answer to Quaker founder George Fox in *G. Fox Digg’d out of His Burrows* (1676). Although he tolerated

<sup>56</sup> Alexander Tomory and K.S. Macdonald, “Bengal” in *Our Church’s Work in India*. Alexander Tomory, et. al., eds. Edinburgh: Oliphant, Anderson & Co., 1910. p. 13.

<sup>57</sup> Takle, pp. 212-214.

<sup>58</sup> Samuel Marinus Zwemer, *Islam, a Challenge to Faith: Studies on the Mohammedan Religion and the Needs and Opportunities of the Mohammedan World from the Standpoint of Christian Missions*. 2nd edition. New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1907. pp. 233, 244.

<sup>59</sup> Takle, p. 214.

Quakers in his colony of Rhode Island, Williams distrusted their theology. So, when Fox claimed that the growth of the Quaker community demonstrated its credibility, Williams retorted that Islam and Roman Catholicism had grown equally as quickly. Elsewhere, Williams wrote of his anticipation that the destruction of Islam and Catholicism would coincide, along with the mass conversion of the Jews, with the apocalypse. Contemporaneously, Cotton Mather reflected on the eschatological promise both of Protestant royal power ascending in England over Catholicism and of the perhaps imminent fall of Rome and the Turkish sultan.<sup>60</sup> In 1912, Bruce Kinney wrote *Mormonism: The Islam of America*, the book's title stemming from the perceived similarities between the two religions in terms of topics such as polygamy and ideas on heaven. The resemblance was not intended to be a salutary one, as the book written by a former superintendent of Baptist missions in Utah dealt with "the Mormon problem."<sup>61</sup> Jews, too, featured in this Christian boundary policing, and it is not incidental that some of the authors whose books on Muslims we have considered also published on Jews: Prideaux wrote on the Bible and Jewish history (1725), Buchanan described the Jews of south India (early 1800s), and Starbuck penned "The Jew in Europe: Christianity's Antagonist" (1900).

Many authors portrayed Muslims as more dangerous than just misled Christians: Islam and Christianity had locked into (im)mortal combat. When John Dickinson, delegate to both the Continental Congress and Constitutional Convention, described the advancement of nations, he (mistakenly) noted that the Portuguese arrival in India disrupted the advent of Muslim power. This proved providential since "there [is] the least reason to question, that they would have strenuously employed the increase of wealth and power in their favourite design of reducing all *Christendom* to the same miserable slavery, with which by their oppressive superstition, so many celebrated parts of it, including the Birthplace of its religion, have already been overwhelmed."<sup>62</sup> Muslims had "contempt towards the gospel," as Smith said in 1835, drawing on his experience in Turkey. Starbuck concluded in 1892, "Christendom and Mohammedanism have been misled by no false instinct in their unconquerable and deadly antipathy to each other."<sup>63</sup> "The Gospel in the Mission Field has no more powerful or bitter foe than Islam, or the religion of the false prophet Mohammed," as a CMS article reported the same year. In its competition with Islam in West Asia, Christianity "was driven to the wall and lost nearly everything."<sup>64</sup>

<sup>60</sup> Kidd 2003, pp. 777-778.

<sup>61</sup> Bruce Kinney, *Mormonism: The Islam of America*. Revised edition. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1912. p. 5, 7.

<sup>62</sup> John Dickinson, *The Political Writings of John Dickinson, Esquire: The Address of Congress to the Inhabitants of Quebec. Dated October 26th, 1774*, Volume 2. Wilmington, Delaware: Bonsal and Niles, 1801. p. 303.

<sup>63</sup> Starbuck, p 66.

<sup>64</sup> Barton, p. 105.

The successful resistance of Muslims to conversion and flourishing Islamic proselytizing seemed twin roadblocks to the cherished goal of Christianizing humanity. Without any apparent sense of irony, Hume wrote, "We are well aware that Mohammedans, wherever found, constitute a difficult, and hitherto a comparatively unfruitful field...They regard themselves as God's peculiar people, and look with feelings of hatred and contempt upon all opposing religions."<sup>65</sup> Although Anglican missionary James Long referred in 1875 to both "the Brahmanical pride and Moslem arrogance" that consigned Bengali children "to the dungeons of ignorance and degradation,"<sup>66</sup> most missionaries equated only Muslims with stubbornness and resistance. Notably, Long did not refer to "Hindu pride" as an obstacle to conversion, indicating that his frustration extended only to Brahmans, not all Hindus. Christian missionaries in India tended to have the most success among the very groups they alleged Muslims to have converted: the lowest ranking castes and most impoverished classes. The view of this inherent, ultimate conflict persisted into the twentieth century (and longer), especially in British India where missionaries from throughout the Anglo-American world labored. The Canadian Presbyterian missionary Wilson believed "There is ground for the opinion that the final struggle for the religious conquest of Eastern nations will be between Christianity and Islam."<sup>67</sup>

Many Americans and Britons drew the ultimate conclusion to this Christian Islamophobia: Islam had to be destroyed. Muslims needed to be converted for the sake of their souls. As Hume had asked, "Shall we be content to leave the followers of the false prophet to perish in their pride and unbelief? No, surely. Mohammedans, as well as the heathen, have been given to Christ for his inheritance; and for their conversion the church of Christ must labor and pray."<sup>68</sup> Many agreed with Wilson that without redemptive power, Islam could only ever thwart salvation.<sup>69</sup> Some imagined the struggle more cosmologically. As we have seen, Williams and Mather expected an eschatological conclusion to the battle. John Prentiss Kewley Henshaw, an American evangelical who later became Episcopal bishop of Rhode Island, used the book of Revelation to anticipate the destruction of anti-Christian powers, including Muslims and the "Papal Apostacy." He expected that before long Islam will "be overthrown, and sunk in the pit whence it emanated."<sup>70</sup> Such convictions connected Muslims with Satan and/or the Antichrist. Comparing the Quran with the Gospels, Leupolt

<sup>65</sup> Hume, p. 350.

<sup>66</sup> J. Long, *How I Taught the Bible to Bengal Peasant-Boys*. London: Gilbert & Rivington, 1875. p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Wilson, p. 141.

<sup>68</sup> Hume, p. 350.

<sup>69</sup> Wilson, pp. 141-142.

<sup>70</sup> John Prentiss Kewley Henshaw, *An Inquiry Into the Meaning of the Prophecies Relating to the Second Advent of Our Lord Jesus Christ: In a Course of Lectures, Delivered in St. Peter's Church, Baltimore*. Baltimore: Daniel Brunner, 1842. pp. 51, 57.

found "The former is calculated to lead me daily farther away from God, and unite them closer to the prince of darkness."<sup>71</sup> Even the sober Benjamin Franklin made this association among the maxims penned for *Poor Richard's Almanack* in 1741:

*Turn Turk Tim, and renounce thy Faith  
in Words as well as Actions:  
Is it worse to follow Mahomet than the Devil?*<sup>72</sup>

In colonial America, many Protestants associated Islam and Catholicism with the Antichrist.<sup>73</sup> Indeed, Prideaux related the rise of Muhammad and the bishop of Rome's claim to reign over all churches. Hence, the "*Antichrist* seems at this time to have set both his Feet upon *Christendom* together, the one in the *East*, and the other in the *West*."<sup>74</sup> As already seen, many authors viewed Christian division and degradation as the cause of the successful rise of Islam. How better to reconcile the triumphant truth of Christianity with its historical setbacks beginning in the seventh century than to portray the conquered churches as corrupted? Prideaux viewed Muslims as a tool used by god to punish the sinful eastern churches. God raised "the *Saracens* to be the Instruments of his Wrath, to punish them for it."<sup>75</sup> Simultaneously such an explanation chastised contemporary dissenting Christians with the threat of god's possible punishment and explained the loss of Christendom's heartland while denigrating Islam.

Despite the shared conviction among many Britons and Americans that Islam stood in inherent antagonism to Christianity and the sentiment among some that it should be destroyed, Britons in India – especially those serving the government – remained conflicted about how to proceed. Although some of its servants viewed Muslims as antithetical to Company aims, the EIC preferred to minimize Christian missionary activity, concerned that resulting antagonisms might disrupt commerce. Detecting this, Buchanan wrote in 1807 to the governor-general of India and alleged that the Company was "hostile to the progress of Christianity." The Bengal government justified itself to the Court of Directors through allusion to the principles of toleration practiced in England toward minorities, notably Jews and Catholics. The directors initially both supported the government's strictures on missionaries and warned against restrictions on "the British faith, on which [Indians] rely for the free exercise of their religion." Buchanan responded that, because Muslims were violent and vindictive, he expected that peace could be achieved only by educating Muslim children

<sup>71</sup> Leupolt, p. 16.

<sup>72</sup> Benjamin Franklin, *Poor Richard's Almanack*. New York: Barnes & Noble Publishing, 2004. p. 88.

<sup>73</sup> Kidd 2003, p. 774.

<sup>74</sup> Prideaux, p. 13.

<sup>75</sup> Prideaux, pp. iii-viii.

in Christian schools, Christianizing them even as their parents resisted.<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile James Owen of the British and Foreign Bible Society contended that government should promote the Bible because “the sooner it **supersedes the Shaster and the Koran**, the sooner will the happiness of India be consummated.”<sup>77</sup> Others objected. Thomas Twining, a senior merchant for the Company in Bengal, argued that either the conversion of India’s people should be left to god or British efforts would be met with unrelenting hostility.<sup>78</sup> In the end, Buchanan’s publications proved particularly consequential (as did the efforts of William Wilberforce), and when Parliament renewed the Company’s charter, they included greater latitude for missionary work.

The rising tide of British evangelicalism ensured the persistence of the issue. William Buyers, a twenty-year veteran of the London Missionary Society in north India, sought greater government attention on “the destruction of Hinduism and Muhammadanism, and on the speedy extension of Christianity.”<sup>79</sup> Nearly a century later, a government publication reflecting on this period celebrated the support government had provided to missionaries in India as part of the effort by which “Christian Europe is spreading the Light of the World from the north to the south pole.”<sup>80</sup> If the successful conversion of Muslims had not shown god’s favor on Christianity, then the success of Christian Europe’s empires did. Samuel M. Zwemer, one of the most famous – and perhaps the most well published – missionaries to Muslims summed up this view: “In India and Malaysia God’s favor has given us an open door to 100,000,000 Mohammedans. Under Queen Wilhelmina, the Christian Queen of Holland and under George V, the Christian Emperor of India, 100,000,000 Mohammedans are enjoying the blessings of Protestant Christian rule.”<sup>81</sup> Robert Stewart, United Presbyterian missionary from the US, put the overall matter succinctly in 1896 when he declared of the British empire that “its motto, like that of the

<sup>76</sup> Buchanan, pp. 49, 86-88, 103, 127-128.

<sup>77</sup> John Owen, “An Address to the Chairman of the East India Company Occasioned by Mr. Twining’s Letter to that Gentleman, on the Danger of Interfering in the Religious Opinions of the Natives of India, and on the Views of the British and Foreign Bible Society, as Directed to India.” London: Black and Parry, 1807. pp. 24-27.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Twining, *A Letter to the Chairman of the East India Company, on the Danger of Interfering in the Religious Opinions of the Natives of India; and on the Views of the British and Foreign Bible Society as Directed to India*. Second edition. London: Hazard and Carthew, 1807. p. 30.

<sup>79</sup> W[illiam] B[uyers], *Travels in India: Comprising Sketches of Madras, Calcutta, Benares, and the Principal Places on the Ganges;--Also of the Church of England, Baptist, London Society, and Other Missionary Stations*. London: James Blackwood, 1852. p. 539.

<sup>80</sup> R. Hand, *Early English Administration of Bihar, 1781-85*. Calcutta: Bengal Secretariat Press, 1894. p. 83.

<sup>81</sup> Samuel M. Zwemer, “The Fulness of Time in the Moslem World” in *Students and the World-wide Expansion of Christianity: Addresses Delivered Before the Seventh International Convention of the Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, Kansas City, Missouri, December 31, 1913 to January 4, 1914*. Fennell Parrish Turner, ed. New York: Student Volunteer Movement for Foreign Missions, 1914. p. 74.

old Romans, can be nothing else than this, *Carthago delenda est*, 'Carthage must be destroyed.'" <sup>82</sup>

### CONCLUSION

It must be reemphasized that not all Americans or Britons shared extreme Islamophobic sentiments. Some positively valued the religion and the cultures associated with it. Some converted, as apparently had the New Yorker Mohammed Alexander Russell Webb. However, the preponderance of publications from the late eighteenth to the middle of the twentieth century demonstrate recurring themes of fear and threat beyond the sentiments of disapproval and loathing also present. Leupolt found some beautiful Quranic passages and Muslim traditions, even if – as he stressed – these were ones that Muslims never mentioned. <sup>83</sup>

Americans and those Britons serving in India often differed in their perception of Muslims. Few Americans benefited from actual contact with Muslims that many Britons experienced occasionally, if not daily. However, after 1857 Britons in India eyed Muslims more warily as a source for potential rebellion. In both the American and British cases, European imperialism made more known about Islam than ever before although such information was often inflected by administrative anxieties and Christian concerns. Zwemer explained, "We know to-day something of the true horror of Islam. Our women are no longer ignorant of the unspeakable degradation to womanhood in Mohammedanism. We know that this religion is inadequate intellectually, socially, morally." Islam was Christianity's "competitor." <sup>84</sup>

Such convictions presumed a singular Islam that required all adherents to act in prescribed ways. This helped make a pan-Indian conspiracy plausible in many British imaginations. The stereotype of the inherently intolerant, aggressive jihadi which helped convince Britons of a potentially India-wide Wahhabi conspiracy rested on a reified understanding of Islam that pictured the religion as a self-motivating agent. For instance, a government ethnography of Indians (1937) stated, "Islam is a unity in which there is no distinction and this unity is secured by making men believe two simple propositions, viz., the unity of God and the mission of the Prophet," even as it went on to describe Muslim "sects." <sup>85</sup> Missionaries, too, often referred to an essentialized Islam, as Zwemer demonstrated thirty years earlier, "In India Islam has abandoned, as untenable, controversial positions which were once thought impregnable."

<sup>82</sup> Robert Stewart, *Life and Work in India: An Account of the Conditions, Methods, Difficulties, Results, Future Prospects and Reflex Influence of Missionary Labor in India, Especially in the Punjab Mission of the United Presbyterian Church of North America*. Philadelphia: Pearl Publishing, 1896. p. 356.

<sup>83</sup> Leupolt, pp. 16-17.

<sup>84</sup> Zwemer, 1914. p. 73.

<sup>85</sup> Hodson, p. 110. The passage is quoted in this source from the Census of India report for Punjab, 1911. p. 162.

<sup>86</sup> Again, others dissented. For instance, in response to the anti-Muslim sentiment he observed filling a newspaper's columns following the Muslim assassination of a British chief justice, the Orientalist W. Nassau Lees portrayed the multi-vocality of Islamic law, emphasizing how most Islamic jurists had ruled that Muslims could live under a Christian government, although some groups – such as Wahhabis – would not.<sup>87</sup>

Our essay began with a century-old contention about the accuracy of media portrayals of Muslims that appears pertinent today. Many of the Islamophobic allegations described still reverberate, especially in conversations, websites, blogs, and viral emails in the US, UK, and India. On the governmental level, the Bush administration endeavored to foster pan-Islamic anxiety by imagining al-Qaeda's ambition to establish, in the president's words (2005), "a totalitarian Islamic empire that reaches from Indonesia to Spain."<sup>88</sup> Meanwhile popular book titles reflect past themes: *Religion of Peace? Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn't*; *Islam Unveiled: Disturbing Questions about the World's Fastest-Growing Faith*; *Antichrist: Islam's Awaited Messiah*; *While Europe Slept: How Radical Islam is Destroying the West from Within*.

Some volumes more than echo past perspectives: *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross* (1993, 2006), for instance, begins by citing Zwemer. This book's goal of providing Christians with counterarguments to Islamic beliefs – "preparing you with strong apologetic answers"<sup>89</sup> – reflects how the perpetuation of Islamophobia often represents more of an effort to positively define those making the allegations than accurately describe Muslims or Islam. The American Catholic priest Starbuck recognized this when he observed in the nineteenth century, "We know Mohammedanism better and worse than Hinduism or Confucianism or Buddhism. It has been implicated inextricably with Christianity as a tremendously aggressive and intensely hostile force during all the twelve centuries of its existence. This, until our own day, has made objective study of it almost impossible."<sup>90</sup>

The globalization and democratization of the flow of information allow Muslims nearly everywhere to take note of the currency of Islamophobic sentiments. Most recently, in the Pakistani film *Khuda Kay Liye* (2007) a sadistic American official begins his abusive interrogation of a Muslim by declaring, "Not all Muslims are terrorists but all terrorists are Muslims." The film thus connects this truism – regularly repeated in the US

<sup>86</sup> Zwemer, 1907. p. 248.

<sup>87</sup> Lees, pp. 9-11.

<sup>88</sup> Elisabeth Bumiller, "Watchword of the Day: Beware the Caliphate; White House Letter" in *The International Herald Tribune*. December 12, 2005. p. 2.

<sup>89</sup> Norman Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, *Answering Islam: The Crescent in Light of the Cross*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker, 2006 (1993). p. 1, back cover.

<sup>90</sup> Starbuck, p. 58.

and UK – with state-sanctioned violence against Muslims. It is precisely through such a dynamic that Samuel Huntington's thesis regarding a clash of civilizations – perhaps more extreme in its reception than its author intended – becomes perceived, if not actuated, reality.

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