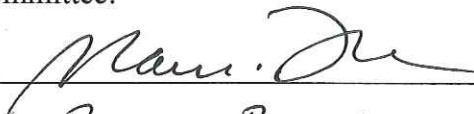



MUHAMMAD AND THE OTHER: ISLAM AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS


by

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A Thesis
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ABSTRACT

Muhammad and the Other: Islam and International Relations

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This thesis describes both the political and social relations of Judaism, Christianity, the polytheists, and Islam during the time of Muhammad. Specifically, it focuses on how the historical Muhammad interacted with these other religions during both the Meccan and Medinan period of his lifetime. Researching this specific time period allows the author to examine if a foreign policy model can be illustrated by the actions of the historical Muhammad. In the process of researching and writing this thesis, the author conducted a literature review of the earliest possible sources regarding the historical Muhammad and his community at Medina. This thesis is slated to be a reference and a resource for both students and faculty who seek a better understanding of Muhammad's political and social relations with the other religions that he came into contact with during his prophetic career.

I. Introduction

1.1 Genesis of the Thesis

It is safe to argue that September 11, 2001 was one of the defining events of the first decade following the new millennium. Furthermore, it is highly probable that the attacks will be remembered as one of the most significant events of this century. In the simplest terms, September 11 changed the world that we live in. The attacks redefined American foreign policy, resulted in subsequent wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and has spawned an ongoing debate concerning religion and radicalism. Personally, I knew little to nothing about Islam prior to September 11. I was completely ignorant of the faith, and I remember that I struggled greatly with the concept of terrorism and how it could possibly be connected with any of the world religions. Looking back, I would say that these inner struggles were the origins of the thesis laid out in this paper. Following September 11, I was determined to investigate the questions that I wanted answered concerning religion, terrorism, and international relations. Subsequently, my efforts in both my undergraduate and graduate studies were fueled by these ideas.

So much has been said about Islam in the wake of September 11 that it is often hard to separate fact from fiction. Therefore, I decided to focus my research on the time period in which Muhammad actually lived. Specifically, I wanted to investigate the historical Muhammad, how he lived and interacted with other religious communities, and what sort of religious and social message he preached during his lifetime primarily as he is remembered in Islamic sources.

I was not so much concerned with what other commentators or religious fundamentalists deemed as the true Islam, but what the historical Muhammad defined as Islam. In addition, my investigation focused on the political Muhammad, the man who reigned as head of state over the first Islamic community. These questions of politics and religion needed to be answered in order to approach my broader thesis topic: Did the historical Muhammad leave behind some type of foreign policy model in regards to other religions and if he did, what was it? Also, was there a paradigm that Muhammad exhibited regarding foreign policy and relations with the political "Other?" While researching this topic, examples of both diplomacy and warfare during Muhammad's lifetime were revealed. Evidence concerning relationships between the early Muslim community, the Jews, and the Christians began to form and take shape. Also, the political example that Muhammad demonstrated during his time as a head of state began to emerge. Following the conclusion of my research, the political Muhammad and his relations with Judaism, Christianity, and the polytheists of Mecca began to become clearer.

It is important to note that my research mainly focused on Muhammad the statesman, not Muhammad the prophet. Other scholars have also taken this approach concerning the research of Muhammad the statesman. Although Muhammad was a man who frequently merged both politics and religion, I wanted to delve into his actions as a head of state to investigate his attitudes and actions towards other religions and communities. The most prominent example concerning this merging of politics and religion followed Muhammad's emigration to Medina. This move led to Muhammad presiding over the first Muslim community, a community that existed alongside Jewish tribes. Therefore, I was interested in uncovering both the political and social relations Muhammad had with the other religions already residing in Medina. In addition, I wanted to uncover if Muhammad preached an Islam

that provided an ideological basis that would allow for such violent acts like September 11 to take place. In other words, were there examples of Muhammad's own political and military actions that would justify a terrorist attack like September 11? While I at first began by researching Muhammad's relationship with other monotheistic religions, I quickly realized that this was not sufficient if I was going to completely answer my thesis. It was important that I address the polytheists of Mecca who heavily influenced Muhammad's ideas on politics and shaped his subsequent foreign policy in the same fashion as the Jews and Christians did. In essence, it was his almost life long struggle with pagan Mecca that influenced not only his actions concerning politics and a foreign policy, but Islam's later relations with Judaism and Christianity as it spread beyond the borders of Arabia.

1.2 Themes of the Thesis

The aim of this paper is to examine the political example of Muhammad in order to discern if there is a foreign policy model that can be derived from his actions towards other religious communities. Although it is nearly impossible to separate Muhammad the statesman from Muhammad the prophet, this paper mainly focuses on the political Muhammad and his attitudes towards other faiths. Although there are serious scholarly questions regarding the factual basis of Muhammad's life and the reliability of the Islamic accounts concerning the history of Muhammad, the aim of this thesis does not attempt to resolve these issues. Rather, this thesis looks at how Muslims remember and understand Muhammad in order to see if a paradigm for relations with the religious and political "Other" exists. Therefore, the thesis needs to be grounded in the sources Muslims themselves use and understand concerning the life of Muhammad. The project is divided into chapters that center on themes regarding Muhammad and his foreign policy towards the Jews, the Christians, and the pagan Arabs.

Chapter 1 offers a brief history of Muhammad, the Jews, the Christians, and the polytheists prior to the rise of Islam in Arabia. It outlines the status of Judaism, Christianity, and polytheism in Arabia just before the coming of Muhammad and also provides a small history of his life. Chapter 1 also discusses the Emigration to Medina and its importance regarding the shaping of a political Islam.

Chapter 2 delves into the essential scriptural sources of Islam, the Qur'an and the *Hadith*. Examining these two sources is imperative for understanding Islam's attitudes towards Judaism, Christianity, and polytheists. The chapter also heavily engages the work of Fred Donner regarding his idea of a "Believers" movement during the lifetime of Muhammad. The characteristics of this movement are analyzed in order to examine how the early Jews, Christians, and followers of Muhammad formed a coalition with one another based on the shared adherence of monotheism. The subsequent shift from a Believers movement to a distinct Islam separate from both Judaism and Christianity is also addressed.

Chapter 3 of the paper delves into the lineage of the monotheistic prophets. The prophetic bond and genealogical importance that Islam places on the monotheistic prophets is imperative to understanding how Islam views itself in relation to Judaism and Christianity. Muhammad placed a great emphasis on his role in the lineage of monotheistic prophets and argued that his message of monotheism was the same message revealed by the other monotheistic prophets who came before him. An understanding of this lineage helps flesh out the attitudes Muhammad expressed towards the other monotheistic faiths concerning political affairs.

Chapter 4 focuses on Muhammad and his use of diplomacy. This chapter is one of the key parts of the paper in that it examines Muhammad's interactions with other religious

communities. Specifically, the chapter examines two key pieces of diplomatic resolve: The Constitution of Medina and the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya. Both of these documents are extraordinary pieces of evidence and are closely analyzed as examples of Muhammad's practice of diplomacy with other religions. These documents are utilized to illustrate Muhammad's relations with the Other within, specifically his own community at Medina, and the Other without, mainly his relations with the Meccans. In essence, this chapter asks whether Muhammad's actions point toward a model regarding foreign and domestic policy or if his actions illustrate a distinct separation between them.

Chapter 5 concludes the paper with an examination of Muhammad and the use of warfare. In essence, the chapter addresses issues regarding ethics and warfare and the example that Muhammad left concerning when violence was permissible and when it was not. In addition, the chapter spends a great deal of time addressing the conflict between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of Medina. The origin of the conflict, the events surrounding it, and their resolution is essential in understanding the issue of violence and warfare during Muhammad's lifetime.

1.3 Literature Review

When examining the issue of Muhammad, politics, and an early foreign policy with other religions there are numerous source materials available. The earliest sources that we have are in Arabic, and all scholars of Islam utilize these sources as the basis of early Islamic studies. The foundational work that is drawn upon most often when researching questions of political Islam and the example left by Muhammad is Ibn-Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*. Ishaq's biography is one of the earliest historical accounts that we have concerning the life of Muhammad. Ishaq died between 761-770 CE. This extensive biography covers every detail of

Muhammad's life, beginning with his genealogy and ending with his death in Medina. It is referenced in almost all subsequent research concerning the life of Muhammad. Some scholars question its reliability by arguing that Ishaq's original text was edited over time. Specifically, some argue that the accounts regarding Muhammad and the Jews should be questioned. Nevertheless, it serves as a landmark text regarding the life of Muhammad. The earliest European scholars of Islam made great use of the work, and Alfred Guillaume's translation of the text in 1955 still serves as one of the best means of access to this biography for the Western scholar.

Using Ibn-Ishaq's biography as a foundation, European scholars were the first to research the question of Muhammad as a statesman. One of the leading 20th century scholars in this area was W. Montgomery Watt, who published *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* in 1955. Watt's work serves as a benchmark in the scholarship concerning Muhammad as both a religious and political leader. In essence, Watt was one of the first scholars to utilize the earliest primary sources in order to analyze Muhammad as both a prophet and a statesman. Specifically, his research focused on Muhammad at Medina. Watt analyzed the merging of religion and politics in Muhammad's Islamic polity. Watt's research also examined Muhammad's relations with Jewish and Christian communities during his lifetime, particularly his dealings with the Jewish clans of Medina.

Following in the same trend as Watt, Martin Lings published *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* in 1983. This exhaustive work encompasses the entire life of Muhammad, but again focuses heavily on his prophetic and political career. However, Lings' work differs from that of Watt in that Lings' also writes heavily of the prophetic Muhammad. Lings' does not seek to separate the prophetic Muhammad from the political Muhammad. In

essence, Ling's work serves as more of a religious history. Finally, Lings' research attempts to paint an overall portrait of the historical Muhammad by examining the major events in his lifetime. The division of the chapters of his book coincides with these various events.

September 11, 2001, greatly impacted the scholarship concerning politics and Islam. The event heavily influenced the research that emerged surrounding the historical Muhammad and his views concerning other religions. In the wake of the attacks many scholars re-examined the life of Muhammad for a western audience and sought to illustrate political and ethical values that were consistent with the West. In addition, many Muslim scholars and intellectuals had to defend Islam against charges that it is a violent and repressive religion. This is illustrated particularly with the essays that began to be published following September 11, as whole books began to come out in which various Muslims scholars addressed important ethical issues in Islam. Two of the most detailed collections that attempt to defend Islam are Jonathan Brockopp's *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, and Joseph Lombard's *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition*. The essays contained in these collections largely seek to defend Islam against charges of violence and militancy. Two such essays are David Dakake's *The Myth of a Militant Islam* and Reza Shah-Kazemi's *From the Spirituality of Jihad to the Ideology of Jihadism*. Both essays use Qur'anic teachings and biographical accounts of Muhammad to defend Islam against charges of violent radicalism.

Many western scholars also began to publish books that sought to re-examine the historical Muhammad, particularly regarding how he lived his life and how he viewed other religious traditions. This focus in the scholarship was again influenced by the new political climate after September 11 and certain polemical Western views of Islam following the attacks. One of the most important of these Western scholars is Carl Ernst, who published *Following*

Muhammad: Rethinking Islam in the Contemporary World. Ernst's work sought to educate a western audience about Muhammad by providing a fresh analysis of his life and legacy. The work of Ernst illustrates the western scholar's attempt at re-visiting the historical Muhammad in order to draw fresh conclusions about his role as a political and religious authority.

In addition to the collection of essays and the scholarly books that emerged following September 11, a new wave of biographies about Muhammad were published that also sought to defend Islam and illustrate his example of tolerance. These biographies again drew on the earliest sources but wove in personal stories about Muhammad to illustrate how Muslims understand these narratives in relation to their own lives. In essence, they are biographies of Muhammad for a modern audience and they emphasize the political and ethical examples left by him that reflect a Western understanding of the topics. Two of the most important biographies that exemplify this trend in the scholarship are Tariq Ramadan's *In the Footsteps of the Prophet: Lessons from the Life of Muhammad* and Omid Safi's *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters*. These two biographies, published in 2007 and 2009, offer a fresh outlook on the traditional sources of Muhammad's life. Rather than only follow the previous trends of arguing Islam's tolerance and virtue, the biographies by Ramadan and Safi identify the moral principles of Muhammad's leadership and remind Muslims of his general character. In addition, like Ibn-Ishaq and Lings, these authors focus on important historical events during the lifetime of Muhammad and describe how he interacted with Jews, Christians, and polytheists. These biographies, like the essays that were published containing the same themes, illustrate the importance of Muhammad's example as a precedent for some kind of foreign policy, and demonstrate that the nature of this example is still very influential and relevant.

In 2010, Fred Donner published *Muhammad and the Believers*. Donner's work is extremely important concerning the question of Muhammad and his relations with other religions. In the book, Donner argues that Muhammad initially set out to consolidate the monotheistic believers into a single community. Therefore, Muhammad's religious movement sought to incorporate both Jews and Christians into a community based on the shared adherence of monotheistic principles and values. Donner argues that this consolidation of monotheists was formed in order to challenge the rule of the polytheists residing in Mecca. In addition, he argues that it was only after Muhammad's death that the Islam we know today, completely distinct from Judaism and Christianity, began to emerge. Donner's evidence is extremely intriguing and his work is heavily referenced in this paper.

My research into Muhammad as a political statesman will seek to not only offer fresh insight into the multiple scholarly sources already published, but attempt to fill a gap in the field concerning Muhammad's understanding and relationship with other religions through the prism of international relations. Utilizing the earliest sources, my thesis will focus specifically on how the historical Muhammad understood and interacted with the polytheists in Mecca, the Jewish tribes of Medina, and the various Christian populations living in Arabia. This research will heavily involve the Medinan period of Islamic history so that there can be an analysis of the warfare that was waged during Muhammad's lifetime. By analyzing the research of such a diverse selection of sources, I will then be able to flesh out the political aspects of Muhammad's movement and the foreign policy relationships that emerged with the other religions. Questions surrounding Islam and its teachings regarding other religious traditions are essential in today's globalized world. The research presented in my thesis will seek to offer some new

insight concerning Muhammad and an engagement of a foreign policy with the other religions that he came into contact with during his lifetime.

1.4 The Essential Sources of Islam: Understanding the Qur'an and the Hadith

We know more about the life of Muhammad than we do about any other monotheistic prophet in history. However, the sources that scholars rely on concerning the study of the life and teachings of Muhammad are often problematic. First, the events of Muhammad's life are taken from sources that were compiled years after his death. In fact, some of these sources were not published until centuries after his lifetime. The Qur'an, which was compiled into an official version by a committee appointed by the third caliph of Islam, is believed by Muslims to be the verbatim word of God. It was revealed through Muhammad over a period of about 23 years. In essence, the Qur'an is the ultimate source for Muslims to turn to concerning the tenets of their faith. No other source trumps the Qur'an or has more authority in Islam. During the lifetime of Muhammad the Qur'an was never compiled into a written form. Rather, it was taught and passed on to others orally. The Qur'an is first and foremost a text that is meant to be recited aloud. For a Muslim, reciting the chapters of the Qur'an is to repeat both the words and the language of God.

There are different accounts concerning when the Qur'an was compiled into a written text. Most historians believe that the Qur'an was not put into book form until the rule of 'Uthman, the third caliph of the Islamic empire. The main reason for its formation into an official version is that many of those who had memorized the Qur'an during Muhammad's lifetime were dying off. In addition, small nuances in the pronunciation of certain verses were popping up in different regions of the empire. During the lifetime of Muhammad, Islam was contained to the Arabian Peninsula and had not yet spread into the new territories of the

Middle East. Therefore, an official version was essential for keeping God's word unaltered and the religious doctrine brought by Muhammad preserved forever as it spread beyond Arabia. The earliest surviving copy of the Qur'an dates back to the 9th century. The text has not been altered at least since that time.

Although the consensus is that the Qur'an was compiled by 'Uthman, some scholars challenge this view. For example, John Wansbrough argues that the "fragmentary character" of the Qur'an is evidence that there was not a single author who compiled the text. Rather, the evidence seems to point to the Qur'an being compiled from a large pool of independent traditions.¹ Wansbrough also challenges the date of the Qur'an's compilation. He argues that the canonical version of the Qur'an was compiled no earlier than the third/ninth century.² In essence, Wansbrough submits that the Qur'an was compiled through the use of many literary traditions over a long period of time. Wansbrough is not the only scholar to raise questions about the Qur'an's compilation. Gunter Luling, for example, argues that the Qur'an went through many stages of textual revision. The earliest of these stages was heavily influenced by Jewish and Christian models that wished to create an Arab monotheism independent of both Judaism and Christianity.³ Overall, the competing accounts of the Qur'an's compilation illustrates why the sources can often be problematic. It is therefore up to the scholar to use the evidence carefully and allow for competing accounts to help shape his or her work. Although the Qur'an is the most essential source for understanding Islam, it does not tell the story of Muhammad or his community, and when it does discuss these issues it is with little detail.

¹ Harold Motzki, *Alternative Accounts of the Qur'an's Formation*, in [The Cambridge Companion to the Qur'an](#), eds. Jane Dammen McAuliffe (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 60

² Ibid, 61

³ Ibid, 67

Therefore, many scholars rely on the second most important source of Islamic teachings, the compilation of *Hadith*.

In essence, the *Hadith* are a compilation of the sayings and actions of Muhammad. These sayings are sectioned into different categories and serve as an aid to those who seek to understand the manner in which Muhammad lived his life. Although the *Hadith* accounts are believed to be the words of Muhammad, they are not in the same category as the Qur'an. The Qur'an is believed to be divinely revealed by God and spoken through Muhammad. The *Hadith*, on the other hand, are the sayings of Muhammad regarding various social and political issues and are independent from the Qur'anic text. The *Hadith* are believed by Muslims to have been authenticated through various transmission tests. However, these tests have been heavily critiqued. The *Hadith* accounts are an essential source in fleshing out who Muhammad the man really was, how he lived his life, and what his beliefs were concerning living a pious life.

The *Hadith*, just like the Qur'an, are not universally accepted by all scholars as being completely authentic. Specifically, some scholars argue that many of the *Hadith* serve political purposes in order to show an Islam open to other religions and peoples.⁴ Many scholars argue that political motivations influenced the sayings found in the *Hadith*, such as painting Muhammad as being completely accepting of the teachings of Judaism and Christianity. Furthermore, some scholars even go so far as to say that none of the *Hadith* can be trusted because they were compiled years after Muhammad's death and because there is no way to verify their contents. In addition, there are sayings that Sunni Muslims accept and that Shi'a

⁴ For further reading concerning western debates and the authenticity of the *Hadith* accounts see Jonathan Brown's chapter entitled *The Authenticity Question: Western Debates over the Historical Reliability of Prophetic Traditions* found in [Hadith: Muhammad's Legacy in the Medieval and Modern World](#).

Muslims reject and vice versa. This illustrates the *Hadith's* problematic nature even among practicing Muslims. Although the *Hadith* are not without controversy this does not mean that the entire collection should be discarded as completely fabricated. Rather, the *Hadith* should be utilized as a useful tool to help illustrate the historical Muhammad but scrutinized in the same way as the Qur'an.

The Qur'an and the *Hadith* accounts go into great detail concerning Judaism, Christianity, and polytheism. Specifically, these sources provide a general view of how Muslims understand and relate to the other religions. We will use the term "Other" throughout this work to define the religions outside of Islam that Muhammad and his followers came into contact with. The purpose of using the term "Other" is to group the different religions under a single heading in order to uncover political and diplomatic dimensions that Muhammad and his followers had with them. In order to reach a conclusion regarding Muhammad's view of the "Other," it is important to first briefly examine the key events of Muhammad's life and the characteristics of his early monotheistic movement.

II. A History of Muhammad, the Jews, the Christians, and the Polytheists Prior to the Rise of Islam

2.1 The Political and Social Landscape of Pre-Islamic Arabia

Prior to the birth of Muhammad and the rise of Islam, pre-Islamic Arabia was dominated by a centuries old social and political system that was largely established in response to the harsh environment of the region. In addition, pre-Islamic Arabia was surrounded by two powerful empires that sought to extend their influence into the region both economically and militarily. The first of these empires was the Byzantine Empire. In the late sixth century, the Byzantine Empire controlled the eastern and southern shores of the Mediterranean basin. The rulers of this vast empire exerted their influence from the capital city of Constantinople. This hallowed city had preserved a lineage that stretched all the way back to the Roman Empire. When Emperor Constantine I declared Christianity a legal religion in the Roman Empire, it not only established the religion throughout the empire but also laid the foundation for its later rise. In addition, after Emperor Theodosius I declared Christianity the official religion of the empire, subsequent emperors sought to achieve a shared vision of a unified empire that flourished under the banner of Christianity.⁵ This dream later proved to be futile, largely due to the diversity of other religions and cultures that resided within the empire. Furthermore, the many

⁵ Fred Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2010), 9

Christian sects made it difficult for even Christians to reach a consensus regarding what the standard should be concerning the official religious doctrine of the empire.

The other dominant empire that existed prior to the rise of Islam was the Sassanians, who ruled from the Iranian plateau and parts of what is today southern Iraq.⁶ The Sassanians emerged from an imperial heritage that had its roots in ancient Persia. Like the Byzantines, the Sassanians also ruled over a diverse group of religions. These religions included Zoroastrianism, which, like the Christians, had various sects, some Jewish populations situated in Iraq, and even some Christian sects. Although Zoroastrianism was the state religion, such a variety of religions illustrates the diversity of peoples residing in the empire. Neither the Sassanians nor the Byzantines ever sought to take outright control of the Arabian Peninsula, but they both had a vested interest in keeping a presence in the region. In essence, the influence by both empires is what maintained a balance of power between the two. Specifically, control was maintained by making alliances with the chiefs of the powerful Arabian tribes who resided throughout the peninsula. This course of action proved to be the best option available for the two empires to take. A direct and permanent control over Arabia through the use of military force would prove to be impossible for reasons we will now turn to.

As described above, Arabia during the late sixth-century was situated right between two great empires. Its borders extended into modern day Jordan, Syria, and Iraq. The climate of Arabia is harsh to say the least. It is mostly comprised of dry, sandy lands engulfed by extreme temperatures. Although it does contain some small oases, especially in the northern regions, the harsh environment greatly impacted the social and political order that existed during the

⁶ Ibid, 18

time. In essence, Arabia was tied together through family and tribes. Nothing was more important than the protection offered by one's tribe. It was impossible to survive in Arabia without belonging to a tribe. Tribes functioned to bind people together in mutual defense, both against the arid climate and potential enemies. A family alone could not survive without the larger protection of a tribe. A tribe was like a large family, where everyone was offered mutual protection from outside danger. An attack on a member of a specific tribe was comparable to an attack on the entire tribe itself.

Pre-Islamic Arabia did not have any codified "law" as we know it today.⁷ Security was provided only through one's own family and tribe. If someone was attacked by a member of another tribe, the tribe itself was responsible to restore honor and would make it a mission to seek revenge for the offense. Failure to act in the face of such an offense would have been seen as a sign of cowardice. The very idea of cowardice was a concept that was deemed dishonorable in tribal society. Therefore, blood feuds could go on for years between warring tribes. The concept of honor is something that was also extremely important during the pre-Islamic period. Honor was held dear by everyone. Strength, courage, and bravery were important virtues and the standard used to measure the value of both an individual and a tribe as a whole. An insult, for example, would not be left unchallenged out of fear of losing one's honor. This fact extended into battle as well. If one tribe was attacked by another, it was considered an attack on their honor. It was therefore incumbent upon the tribe to then bring retribution against the attacker in order to protect their honor. In other words, the difficult environmental dimensions that exist in Arabia directly impacted the nature of the people living in the region. One had to be both mentally and physically strong in order to survive.

⁷ Ibid, 29

Finally, the religious dimensions of pre-Islamic Arabia were diverse as well according to Islamic sources. The traditional religion of the time was polytheism. Each tribe had their own set of idols that they revered and offered their prayers to. In fact, certain tribes established allegiance with one another through the reverence of a shared idol. Although pre-Islamic Arabia was often violent, there were strict rules forbidding violence of any kind at local shrines where idols were worshipped. These rules made it possible for families from different tribes to converse or trade with one another at local shrines without fear of an attack. However, just prior to the birth of Muhammad, monotheism was beginning to spread throughout Arabia. Pockets of Judaism had existed from very early on. In fact, it is possible that Jews had arrived as early as 70 CE, right after the fall of the Second Temple in Jerusalem. Christianity was also prevalent in the area, especially in the southern part of the region. Therefore, many in Arabia were familiar with the religious doctrine and narratives found in both Judaism and Christianity. Interestingly, local Jews and Christians spoke Arabic, and would refer to God using the word, *Allah*, also one of the words that Muslims use to refer to God.⁸

2.2 The Life of Muhammad: The Early Years

Muhammad ibn 'Abd Allah was born in Mecca in the year 570 CE. He was part of the clan of Hashim, which belonged to the Quraysh, the dominant tribe in Mecca. Muhammad was introduced to hardship at a very young age. He was orphaned by the time he was eight years old, and was placed in the care of his uncle, Abu Talib, who at the time was the chief of Hashim. Muhammad was protected by his uncle but exposed to the many hardships of being a young

⁸ Omid Safi, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2009), 81

orphan in a tribal society. It was most likely that his experiences as an orphan at this early age influenced his efforts towards protecting the disenfranchised of society later on in his life.

According to Islamic sources, during Muhammad's early years, the city of Mecca was a powerful and influential center for commerce and religion.⁹ The Quraysh, being the most dominant tribe in the city, oversaw the commercial and religious affairs of Mecca. Mecca was sacred to many tribes and peoples, not just to those within the city itself but throughout Arabia. In essence, it served as a religious hub for people seeking to make spiritual pilgrimages. Its religious significance was the result of the central and most important building of the city, the *Ka'bah*, or cube. The *Ka'bah* is believed by Muslims to have been built by the Prophet Abraham and his son, Ishmael, as a site of reverence to the one true God. However, over the centuries the *Ka'bah* had lost its monotheistic foundations. By the time of Muhammad's birth it had been filled with numerous idols and had become a place of pilgrimage for various polytheistic tribes, and possibly Jewish and Christian Arabs, throughout Arabia. These idols were sacred deities for the pilgrims who came to Mecca on religious journeys, and the city itself benefited from having so many people from different parts of the region traveling to pay homage to their gods. Its location provided a huge economic advantage for the Quraysh since all of the pilgrims had to travel and stay in Mecca to reach the *Ka'bah*.

Islamic sources say that as Muhammad grew into his teenage years, he began a life of trade and quickly gained a reputation as an honest and trustworthy businessman. Many people who knew Muhammad referred to him as *al-Amin*, or the trustworthy one. Islamic accounts report that after Muhammad managed a caravan trade for a prosperous widow named Khadija,

⁹ For an alternative view regarding the status of Mecca during the early years of Muhammad see Patricia Crone's *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam*.

he so impressed her that she proposed marriage to him. Even though Khadija was significantly older than Muhammad, he accepted the proposal and they shared a happy, devoted relationship with each other until her death. Although Muhammad married numerous times after her death, Khadija is believed to be his most beloved wife, and also the first person to convert to Islam.

2.3 The Life of Muhammad: Muhammad and the Qur'an

Although Muhammad was successful in his business ventures, he was also a very spiritual individual. Islamic sources maintain that he was one of the few practicing monotheists in a society dominated by polytheism. Muhammad would often embark on spiritual retreats into the mountains to both meditate and contemplate his life. In the year 610 CE, when Muhammad was forty years old, his life changed forever. It is said that Muhammad was on one of his routine spiritual retreats when he began to receive divine revelations from God, transmitted to him through the Archangel Gabriel. The first of these revelations is recounted in Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*:

"When it was the night when God honoured him with his mission and showed mercy on His servants thereby, Gabriel brought him the command of God. 'He came to me,' said the apostle of God, 'while I was asleep, with a coverlet of brocade whereon was some writing, and said, "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it so tightly that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said, "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it again so that I thought it was death; then he let me go and said "Read!" I said, "What shall I read?" He pressed me with it the third time so that I thought it was death and said "Read!" I said, "What then shall I read?" - and this I said only to deliver myself from him, lest he should do

*the same to me again. He said: "Read in the name of thy Lord who created, Who created man of blood coagulated. Read! Thy Lord is the most beneficent, Who taught by the pen, Taught that which they knew not unto men."*¹⁰

When the revelations first came to Muhammad they terrified him and he believed that he was possessed by demons. However, it was his wife Khadija who comforted him and told him that these were indeed signs from God. The revelation that Muhammad received that day was the first of many revelations that would span the rest of his life. The revelations themselves often sent Muhammad to the ground in a kind of seizure, and he would often break out into a sweat when they came to him. When they passed, the sources say that the verses of the Qur'an were etched into his memory. The revelation of the Qur'an lasted for twenty-three years, and the verses themselves were transmitted and spread orally throughout Muhammad's lifetime.

At first, Muhammad was scared to tell people what was happening to him. Therefore, he only recited the verses of the Qur'an to his closest family members. In fact, the earliest converts to Islam were his wife Khadija, his cousin 'Ali, son of his uncle and eventual clan protector Abu Talib, and Sa'd ibn Abi Waqqas, a relative of Muhammad's deceased mother. However, he eventually began reciting his religious message throughout Mecca, which caused significant tension with the Quraysh. In essence, the message that Muhammad brought not only criticized but outright contradicted the social and religious norms that dominated Mecca. For example, the earliest revelations were concerned with issues of social morality such as the protection of widows and orphans. These revelations were intended to directly critique the Meccan way of life. Later on in Muhammad's prophetic career the revelations also critiqued the

¹⁰ Alfred Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 106

Meccan polytheists and urged them to believe in the oneness of God. Muhammad's message resonated greatly with the poor and disenfranchised of Mecca. In essence, his message challenged the political and social establishment that had long took advantage of the poor and of the weak.

Muhammad's life is traditionally divided into two distinct time periods: The Meccan period and the Medinan period. The Meccan period, which focuses on the early years of his prophetic career, was difficult to say the least. Not only did he greatly upset the Quraysh, he was not able to attract many converts during his time in Mecca. Many people were skeptical of Muhammad's claims of religious prophecy and urged him to provide them with miracles from God like Jesus had done. Nevertheless, Muhammad was not deterred and the Quraysh soon lost patience with him and his attacks on polytheism. The sources argue that the Quraysh were actually content at letting Muhammad preach his message until he openly attacked their gods: "When the apostle openly displayed Islam as God ordered him his people did not withdraw or turn against him, so far as I have heard, until he spoke disparagingly of their gods. When he did that they took great offence and resolved unanimously to treat him as an enemy, except those whom God had protected by Islam from such evil, but they were a despised minority."¹¹ The Quraysh decided to draft a document which issued a boycott of the entire clan of Hashim. The document specified that the other clans of Quraysh "should not marry their women nor give women to them to marry; and that they should neither buy from them nor sell to them..."¹² However, even faced with severe economic struggle, Muhammad's uncle did not bow to the pressure or abandon his protection of him.

¹¹ Ibid, 118

¹² Ibid, 158

In addition to the boycott, many of the earliest converts to Islam were harassed, attacked, and even tortured and killed for their beliefs. The Quraysh were adamant that this start of a monotheistic movement be crushed at once. The boycott and the attacks on the early converts were hard blows to receive. Not only did many suffer from starvation since they were unable to trade with other clans, Muhammad's followers were not allowed to retaliate or use violence against those who were attacking them. It is important to remember that during the Meccan period of Muhammad's life there was no verse of the Qur'an that gave permission for Muhammad to use any type of violence, even in self-defense. Therefore, Muhammad instructed non-violence in the face of the attacks. Things reached their lowest point when both Abu Talib, Muhammad's only source of protection, and Khadija, his beloved wife, died. The sources illustrate that these two deaths were significant blows to Muhammad both personally and concerning his prophetic career in Mecca:

"Khadija and Abu Talib died in the same year, and with Khadija's death troubles followed fast on each other's heels, for she had been a faithful support to him in Islam, and he used to tell her of his troubles. With the death of Abu Talib he lost a strength and stay in his personal life and a defence and protection against his tribe. Abu Talib died some three years before he migrated to Medina, and it was then that Quraysh began to treat him in an offensive way which they would not have dared to follow in his uncle's lifetime."¹³

Martin Lings, a historical scholar of Muhammad, called this time the "Year of Sadness." In fact, some sources indicate that Khadija may have died from malnutrition due to the boycott of Hashim. When Abu Lahab took control over Hashim in place of Muhammad's uncle, he did

¹³ Ibid, 191

not pledge his support to Muhammad as Abu Talib had done for so many years, and the vital protection that Muhammad had previously enjoyed under his uncle was now gone.

2.4 The Life of Muhammad: The Emigration to Medina

When the situation for Muhammad and his followers seemed to be at the breaking point, Muhammad was contacted by a small group of men from a neighboring city called Yathrib. Yathrib, unlike Mecca, was an oasis city located 200 miles north of Mecca. The men from Yathrib "were impressed by [Muhammad's] personality and his message, and they thought that he might be able to help them to overcome the difficulties which were then besetting [Yathrib]."¹⁴ Specifically, they wished that Muhammad would come to the city in order to serve as an arbitrator between disputes that were occurring between local clans. Realizing the danger that he and his followers were in and the alluring prospects of an emigration to a far friendlier city, Muhammad decided that an emigration to Yathrib was his best option at continuing his prophetic career and building a community of monotheistic believers. On the "24th [of] September, 622, [Muhammad] reached the settlement of Quba on the edge of the Medinan oasis."¹⁵ Upon his arrival, the city was renamed *Madinat al-Nabawi*, or "City of the Prophet." The emigration, known as the *hijrah*, is one of the most important dates in Islamic history, and marks the beginning of the Islamic calendar. In addition, the *hijrah* served as the foundation for the first Islamic community.

The Medinan period of Muhammad's life was completely different than his time spent in Mecca. First, Muhammad was able to create an independent community for himself in Medina. This community was bound together through the establishment of legal principles and

¹⁴ W. Montgomery Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), 83

¹⁵ *Ibid*, 91

social guidelines. Muhammad was eventually able to consolidate both political and religious power in Medina and create the first Islamic state. This consolidation of power, however, was not completed without tension. There was much opposition from those who the Qur'an calls the *munafiqun*, or hypocrites, of Medina. In essence, the hypocrites claimed to support Muhammad but in reality sought to undermine him at every turn. The Qur'an references the hypocrites in several verses: "*[Believers], why are you divided in two about the hypocrites, when God Himself has rejected them because of what they have done? Do you want to guide those God has left to stray? If God leaves anyone to stray, you [Prophet] will never find the way for him. They would dearly like you to reject faith, as they themselves have done, to be like them. So do not take them as allies until they migrate [to Medina] for God's cause*" (Q: 4:88-89). Chapter four, verse 142 also references the hypocrites: "*The hypocrites try to deceive God, but it is He who causes them to be deceived. When they stand up to pray, they do so sluggishly, showing off in front of people, and remember God only a little, wavering all the time between this and that, belonging neither to one side nor the other. If God leaves someone to stray, you [Prophet] will never find a way for him* (Q: 4:142-143). There was also considerable tension with many of the Jewish clans already living in Medina. Muhammad had expected to win over many of the Jewish tribes with his message of monotheism and his preaching of the revival of the religion of Abraham. However, most were unreceptive of his message and wished him out of the city.

Although Muhammad and his followers found themselves in a much more hospitable location at Medina, they still struggled to adjust to the way of life in an oasis. Most were not accustomed to living in such conditions and they found tending the land difficult. As a result, much hardship spread as resources dwindled. Furthermore, violence soon erupted when

Meccan trading caravans loaded with goods were attacked by Muhammad's followers. These expeditions against Meccan caravans began in 623 and at first accomplished nothing. However, as W. Montgomery Watt notes, "simple as these events are in the telling, they involved momentous decision for the whole future of the Islamic community, and it is worth while trying to understand them."¹⁶

The attacks on Meccan caravans are significant for two reasons. First, it is the first time that violence was used against the Meccans. Up to this point Muhammad had used non-violence because no revelation had come to him that permitted him to fight. The sources say that "when Quraysh became insolent towards God and rejected His gracious purpose, accused His prophet of lying, and ill treated and exiled those who served Him and proclaimed His unity, believed in His prophet, and held fast to His religion, He gave permission to his apostle to fight and to protect himself against those who wronged them and treated them badly."¹⁷ The Qur'anic verse that gave permission to fight can be found in Chapter 22: "*Those who have been attacked are permitted to take up arms because they have been wronged - God has the power to help them - those who have been driven unjustly from their homes only for saying, 'Our Lord is God.' If God did not repel some people by means of others, many monasteries, churches, synagogues, and mosques, where God's name is much invoked, would have been destroyed...*" (Q: 22:39-40). Second, it sparked a series of battles between the Meccans and Muhammad that eventually culminated with Muhammad and his followers capturing Mecca years later. The details of a few of these battles will be discussed in subsequent chapters. However, the use of violence illustrates the new power that Muhammad's position in Medina gave him. Unlike in

¹⁶ Ibid, 104

¹⁷ Guillaume, The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah*, 212

Mecca, where Muhammad and his followers struggled to survive, the emigration to Medina allowed Muhammad to begin building a new community that eventually was able to challenge the domination of the Quraysh in Arabia.

2.5 The Life of Muhammad: The Final Years

The crowning achievement regarding the final years of Muhammad's lifetime was the capturing of Mecca in 630 CE. Watt illustrates its importance by arguing that "Mecca had long since been chosen as the geographical focus of Islam, and so it was necessary for the Muslims to have freedom of access to it. Could Mecca be brought under his sway, his prestige and power would have been greatly increased; without Mecca his position was comparatively weak. Moreover, as the affairs of the Islamic community grew in volume, Muhammad had need of the military and administrative abilities of the Meccans, and he had been working for some time to gain their willing cooperation."¹⁸ In addition, this takeover of the city not only cemented Islam throughout Arabia but also allowed the *Ka'bah* to return to what Muslims consider to be its original status as a sacred site of monotheistic worship. In essence, the capture of the city was precipitated when a treaty signed by Muhammad and members of the Quraysh was violated by the Meccans. In response, Muhammad organized a large force and marched on the city. His position and number of followers had expanded greatly since his arrival in Medina, and the Meccans were tired of fighting and not willing to mount any further resistance to this formidable foe. As a result, Muhammad was able to march into the city unopposed. Many in Mecca feared that Muhammad would use this opportunity to seek vengeance for years of bloody warfare and attacks on his community. However, Muhammad chose diplomacy and

¹⁸ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 204

granted a general amnesty to the city. In fact, many of the leading members of Quraysh were appointed important positions in Muhammad's political group, much to the dismay of his closest advisors. It is important to understand that "the capture of Mecca was not an end in itself for Muhammad, since...he was already thinking of an expansion beyond Arabia northwards."¹⁹ In essence, Muhammad wished to reconcile with his enemies and strengthen his position throughout Arabia. Right after his return and takeover of Mecca, Muhammad ordered that "the *Ka'bah* and the private houses [be] cleansed of idols."²⁰ The age of polytheism in Mecca was over. Interestingly, some texts report that Muhammad ordered that a picture of the Virgin Mary holding baby Jesus be left untouched. This account is found in some of the earliest sources but has been contested by many scholars as having been added in order to illustrate a more positive view of Christianity.

Following the conquest of Mecca, Muhammad was now the dominant figure throughout all of Arabia. What began as a small group of followers on the brink of annihilation in Mecca had grown into the most powerful religious and political movement that had ever emerged on the Arabian Peninsula. Muhammad's movement revolutionized the social and political structure of not only Mecca but Arabia as a whole. Numerous delegations from the various tribal groups met with Muhammad to pledge their support to him. Muhammad accepted anyone who wished to join him except those who still adhered to polytheism. He adopted a policy of non-cooperation with those who still clung to the polytheism of the old Arabia. In addition, polytheists could be attacked for their failure to recognize the oneness of God. While on the one hand Muhammad had sought to eliminate the dominance of polytheism that had grown

¹⁹ Ibid, 205

²⁰ Ibid, 205-206

throughout Mecca, he on the other hand reached out to the Other in an attempt to establish relations with the various religious communities throughout Arabia.

III. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Interfaith Community

3.1 A Religion of Believers: New Evidence of Interfaith Community

Recent trends in scholarship regarding the coexistence of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam have shown that there was much more cooperation between Islam and the Other than previously believed. Specifically, scholarship that has emerged within the last decade has shed new light concerning both the origins of Muhammad's religious movement and those that joined it. One of the most important authors regarding this new understanding of cooperation and coexistence between Islam and the Other is Fred Donner. Donner's work in *Muhammad and the Believers* argues that during Muhammad's lifetime, both Jews and Christians were incorporated into Muhammad's religious movement. Furthermore, Donner coins the term "Believers Movement" in his book in order to identify a monotheistic movement that constituted Jews, Christians, and Muslims. In essence, Donner argues that Muhammad did not initially set out to build a religion distinct from Judaism and Christianity. On the contrary, he set out to consolidate a monotheistic movement of believers that could challenge the pagan worship that had taken hold of Mecca. His movement thus recruited both Jews and Christians, who while still adhering to certain principles of their faith, worked alongside other monotheistic believers towards building a new community. In addition, Donner argues that it was not until after Muhammad's death and the rise of the Islamic Caliphate that the Islam that we know

today came into being. In other words, an Islam that exists in distinction from both Judaism and Christianity.

The Qur'an is the most important source that we have for purposes of analyzing the origins of Muhammad's religious movement. The Qur'an is roughly organized by the length of its chapters. Generally, the Medinan verses of the Qur'an are longer in length and discuss social and political matters concerning Islam. The Meccan verses are generally shorter in length and discuss the importance of the belief in one God, the need for equality and charity for the disenfranchised, and the belief in the Last Day. It is therefore important to begin by analyzing many of the Meccan verses of the Qur'an in order to illustrate how the people following Muhammad's religion identified themselves. In essence, the Qur'an has different names that it attributes to those who followed Muhammad's early movement and it is the use of these names that illustrates a distinction concerning who exactly belonged to the early religious community that Muhammad was building.

The Qur'an often identifies the followers of Muhammad's religion as *mu'minun*, or Believers. It is important to understand that the term Believer is different from the word Muslim. The word Believer and the word Muslim are both used throughout the Qur'an. Interestingly, the term Believer is used much more frequently when compared with the use of the word Muslim.²¹ The difference between the word Believer and the word Muslim is illustrated in the Qur'an itself. For example, in verse 49:14, the Qur'an states: "*The desert Arabs say, 'We have faith (aman-na).' [Prophet], tell them, 'You do not have faith. What you should say instead is, 'we have submitted (aslam-na),' for faith has not yet entered your hearts.'*" Here, the term belief obviously has a different meaning than the term submit. This verse of the

²¹ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 57

Qur'an emphasizes that belief is in fact a higher form of piety than submission alone. The Qur'an frequently references the Believers and often begins verses with the phrase "O you who Believe." This early reference to Muhammad and his community shows an identity with the term Believer rather than with the term Muslim.²²

The term Believer, as mentioned above, is not the same as the term Muslim in that the term Muslim distinguishes the Islamic faith from all other monotheistic religions. A Believer, on the other hand, was a person who first and foremost recognized and believed in the oneness of God. However, this is also true of a Muslim. What differentiates the two terms is that a Muslim strictly follows Islamic law while a Believer may follow the law of the Torah or the teachings of the Gospels.²³ Although this point is intriguing, the Qur'an at times uses both words to identify Muslims. For example, Abraham and his sons, Jesus, and the Disciples are also called Muslims in the Qur'an. Therefore, it is important to note that the Qur'an does not make an exact distinction between the two terms throughout the entire text. It does, however, make use of the term Believer to identify one who believes in the oneness of God. The tenet of the belief in the oneness of God is essential to the revelation that Muhammad brought to Arabia.²⁴ Polytheism, or *shirk*, on the other hand, is one of the gravest of sins. Polytheism is unforgivable and it is the worst kind of unbelief, or *kufr*.

The early movement of Believers all shared certain principles that tied them together communally. For example, they all recognized the coming of the Day of Judgment (*yawm al-din*). The Qur'an often warns of the end of days and urges the Believers to repent and prepare for its arrival. In addition, the Believers movement was not only tied to belief in the revelation

²² Ibid, 58

²³ See *Qur'an* 5:40 - 5:48 for a discussion of this point.

²⁴ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 58

brought by Muhammad. Rather, they accepted the idea of a tradition of revelation throughout history. This tradition of revelation was always under the banner of monotheism and was brought by numerous prophets throughout time. Regarding prophecy, the Qur'an says that revelatory texts, such as the Bible and the Qur'an, were brought by messengers (*rasul*).²⁵ Jesus was the bringer of the Gospels, and Muhammad the bringer of the Qur'an.

3.2 The Characteristics of the Early Believer's Movement

In *Muhammad and the Believers*, Donner outlines the religious characteristics that members of Muhammad's early community adhered to. The essential characteristics of the movement were the belief in one God, a belief in the Day of Judgment, a belief in God's messengers, and a recognition of divine scripture. In addition to following these basic principles, a Believer was required to try and model their life on a strict moral code. Specifically, a true Believer strived to live a pious life every day, and also sought to build a lasting relationship with God based on inward devotion. Believers were always supposed to be humble and remember their place in this world. Self-importance, or *takabbur*, was a sign of forgetting God's power over you and the gifts that he bestowed upon you.²⁶ Also, charity was vital for a Believer. The Qur'an describes its importance in verse 2:177, saying "*Goodness does not consist in turning your face towards East or West.*"²⁷ *The truly good are those who believe in God and the Last Day, in the angels, the Scripture, and the prophets; who give away some of their wealth, however much they cherish it...*" In essence, charity was a way of sharing God's blessings with the less fortunate in society.

²⁵ Ibid, 60

²⁶ Ibid, 61

²⁷ In other words, being a good follower of the monotheistic tradition does not simply mean adhering to ritual alone. Rather, instead of only facing "east or west" in prayer, outward signs of charity and a sharing of what God has bestowed upon you is essential in winning God's favor.

Another important characteristic of the early community of Believers was the performance of religious pilgrimage. Two of the most essential of these pilgrimages were the lesser pilgrimage, or *'umra*, and the greater pilgrimage, or *hajj*.²⁸ Both of these pilgrimages were performed at the *Ka'bah* in Mecca. Although the *hajj* was strictly an Islamic ritual and came relatively late in the life of Muhammad, forms of religious pilgrimage were also important for both Judaism and Christianity. Therefore, the shared adherence to pilgrimage is another characteristic that bonded the community of Believers together. Since the *Ka'bah* is believed by Muslims to have been constructed by Abraham and Ishmael, a pilgrimage to the site built by one of the first monotheists is something that all three faiths could adopt. Sharing a familiar pilgrimage site thus allowed for an incorporation of both Jews and Christians into the Believers movement.

A belief in the construction of the *Ka'bah* by Abraham and Ishmael served to connect Muhammad's movement to the earlier monotheistic faiths of Judaism and Christianity through a genealogy going all the way back to Abraham. Muhammad argued that during his lifetime he was only reviving the religion of Abraham, the first monotheist. Two verses of the Qur'an illustrate this point: "*Say [Muhammad], 'We [Muslims] believe in God and in what has been sent down to us and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes. We believe in what has been given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets from their Lord. We do not make a distinction between any of the [prophets]. It is to Him that we devote ourselves'* (Q: 3:84). The Qur'an is arguing not only in the validity of the revelations that came before Muhammad but also in the belief of these scriptures beginning with Abraham. Chapter 3 also urges Muslims to follow the religion of Abraham: "*[Prophet], say, 'God speaks the truth, so follow Abraham's religion: he had true faith*

²⁸ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 64

and he was never an idolater.' The first House [of worship] to be established for people was the one at Mecca. It is a blessed place; a source of guidance for all people; there are clear signs in it; it is the place where Abraham stood to pray; whoever enters it is safe..."(Q: 3:95-97).

Another characteristic of the Believers movement is that they saw themselves as living in a world full of corruption and sin.²⁹ Muhammad's message of justice and equality for all, in addition to the practice of charity and pious living, resonated with all monotheists living during this time. What they saw as the degradation of the *Ka'bah* through polytheism and the horrible treatment of the less fortunate of society bonded them together in both their religion and their social politics. Therefore, their movement was also based on a life of piety. This life of piety is illustrated in certain restrictions and guidelines that the Qur'an imposes on the Believers, and again illustrates the separation of the Believers into a distinct group. Medinan verses also bonded the Believers together, such as through the restriction of certain foods and alcohol. Also, the Qur'an urged modesty among the Believers, which is illustrated in verse 24:30-31: *"[Prophet], tell believing men to lower their glances and guard their private parts: that is purer for them. God is well aware of everything they do. And tell believing women that they should lower their glances, guard their private parts, and not display their charms beyond what [it is acceptable] to reveal..."*³⁰ Also, verse 60:12 bans a wide range of practices that were common place throughout Arabian society during this time period: *"Prophet, when believing women come and pledge to you that they will not ascribe any partner to God, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor lie about who has fathered their children, nor disobey you in*

²⁹ Ibid, 66

³⁰ There are a couple of translations concerning the word "charms." In essence, Islam teaches that both men and women should be modest and protect the beauty that God has bestowed upon them. Not displaying their "charms" means for women to simply be modest regarding both their clothing and their behavior. In addition, they should conduct themselves in a manner which observes modesty and respect specifically in regards to wearing clothing that is loose and not overly revealing.

*any righteous thing, then you should accept their pledge of allegiance and pray to God to forgive them: God is most forgiving and merciful" (Q: 60:12).*³¹

Donner also argues that the characteristics that made up Muhammad's religious teachings were not unique in the Near East. Monotheism and teachings concerning the Last Day were well known during Muhammad's lifetime and had spread throughout the Jewish and Christian populations. As mentioned earlier, Donner argues that Muhammad's teachings were more of a reaction against the polytheism that was widespread throughout Mecca than a foundation of a new and unique religion. In fact, there are passages of the Qur'an that illustrate that Muhammad's teachings were no different than those brought by earlier prophets. In verse 46:9, the Qur'an says "*Say [Muhammad] 'I am nothing new among God's messengers. I do not know what will be done with me or you; I only follow what is revealed to me; I only warn plainly.'"* Shortly thereafter, the Qur'an challenges those who believed in the Torah yet rejected Muhammad's religious message: "*Yet the scripture of Moses was revealed before it as a guide and a mercy, and this is a scripture confirming it in the Arabic language to warn those who do evil and bring good news for those who do good"* (Q: 46:12). These verses suggest that pious Jews and Christians could have easily been accepted into Muhammad's movement because they were both monotheistic faiths.

The Qur'an often makes reference to both Jews and Christians by calling them the "People of the Book" (*ahl al-kitab*). This term, however, can be ambiguous. Although it is used in the Qur'an to identify those monotheistic religions that were revealed by God and thus protected, it is also used in criticizing some of these religions' practices, such as the Christian

³¹ It was common practice in pre-Islamic Arabia for women to bury their infant daughters in fear of not being able to provide for them in an environment where resources were scarce. Infanticide is clearly banned in the Qur'an and in Muhammad's teachings.

belief in the Trinity.³² Nevertheless, there are various passages in the Qur'an that illustrate the validity of both Judaism and Christianity and how their followers will receive their reward for their belief. For example, verse 2:26 states "*the [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Christians, and the Sabians - all those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good - will have their rewards with their Lord.*" Verse 5:69 echoes a similar message, stating "*For the [Muslim] believers, the Jews, the Sabians, and the Christians - those who believe in God and the Last Day and do good deeds - there is no fear: they will not grieve.*" Finally, verses 3:113-116 states "*...There are some among the People of the Book [Jews and Christians] who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous and they will not be denied [the reward] for whatever good deeds they do: God knows exactly who is conscious of Him.*" In other words, if a Jew or a Christian followed the principles that Muhammad established for his community of Believers, they most certainly could have been included in his religious movement. Verses like these are important in illustrating the characteristics of Muhammad's religious following. Whether one was a Jew, a Christian, or a new convert to Muhammad's religious revelations, they were expected to live by the law established in the Torah, the teachings of the Gospels, or Islamic law found the Qur'an. In other words, the religious law is what made each religion distinct, but the adherence to monotheism and pious living is what bonded them together and allowed them to co-exist as a community of Believers.

³² See Qur'an 5:73

3.3 Muhammad's Successors and a Shift in the Believer's Movement

Donner argues that it was not until after Muhammad's death that the early Believers movement evolved into the Islam that we know today. He makes the interesting point that Muhammad's political successors at first took the title of *amir al-mu'minin*, or "commander of the Believers." Interestingly, they did not call themselves the commander of Islam or the commander of the Muslims. Therefore, even after Muhammad's death, members of his religious movement still identified themselves as Believers. In addition, many of the war parties of the early Believer's community consisted of Christians.³³ Donner cites the example of Isho'yahb III, a patriarch writing out of Iraq after it was taken over by the early Muslims, who wrote that the new rulers of his land did not fight Christianity at all.³⁴ On the contrary, they approved of Christianity and showed respect to the various Christian monasteries and churches that already existed there. Furthermore, an Armenian bishop named Sebeos wrote that the community of Believers appointed a Jew as their first governor of Jerusalem.³⁵ These examples illustrate that even after Muhammad's death the community still remained close together on the basis of their shared belief in one God.

Most scholars of early Islamic history recognize that following the arrival of the Muslims, Jews and Christians became *ahl al-dhimma*, or protected peoples. They were, however, required to pay a tax to the state and were often viewed as having a lower social status than Muslims. However, the evidence described above illustrates how some Jews and Christians fully integrated into Muhammad's religious movement and rose to prominent positions within the local governments. There is little to no evidence that the early movement established by

³³ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 192

³⁴ *Ibid*, 114

³⁵ *Ibid*, 114

Muhammad destroyed any Jewish or Christian communities that they moved into. After all, monotheism was the essential principle that bonded the Believers together. Interestingly, an excavation of a Byzantine-era church revealed that during its final phase of construction a *mihrab*³⁶, or prayer niche, was added to accommodate followers of Muhammad while the rest of the building was utilized as a church. It is possible, therefore, that Christians and Muslims prayed alongside one another in the same religious space before the construction of mosques that separated the two groups.

Although there is much evidence to support that early Jews and Christians were accepted into Muhammad's religious movement, there was an eventual split into a distinct Islam that we have today. Donner argues that the most significant figure that influenced the distinction of Islam from both Judaism and Christianity was 'Abd al-Malik, one of the leaders of the Umayyad dynasty. The shift began following over a decade of civil war which had fragmented the community. Al-Malik recognized that he needed something to bring unity back to the movement. Therefore, Donner argues that the Qur'anic term Believer, which had previously incorporated all followers of a monotheistic religion, now began to identify only those who followed Qur'anic teachings, rituals, and modes of worship established in the Qur'an and by the Prophet Muhammad.

The distinction established by Al-Malik through the use of Islamic law began to draw a line between Jewish believers, Christian believers, and Muslim believers. Furthermore, al-Malik began to emphasize Muhammad's status as a prophet and as the one who put a final seal on the

³⁶ When Muslims perform their daily prayers they are required to face in the direction of Mecca. Therefore, every mosque has a prayer niche located inside of it so Muslims know which direction to face when they perform their prayers.

monotheistic line of prophecy.³⁷ Many Jews and Christians were not willing to accept this and thus found it difficult to remain a part of the movement. In essence, the Umayyad dynasty placed a great emphasis on Muhammad as the last prophet of God and on Qur'anic law, which therefore led to the separation of Islam from both Judaism and Christianity. These actions undertaken by al-Malik thus resulted in the breakdown of the early Believers movement into distinct religious groups.

Overall, the historical development of early Islam must be viewed within two distinct time periods. First, it is important to look at the example of Muhammad and the actions that he took towards building his community and incorporating members of other faiths. Second, it is important to look at how Muhammad's successors influenced the development of the community and how they understood Islam's place in relation to both Judaism and Christianity. When Muhammad first began his prophetic career, he sought to consolidate a religious group of monotheists that could challenge the polytheistic tradition of Mecca. His revelations, although clearly aimed at building a new kind of religious movement, still sought to incorporate Jews and Christians into his community. His goal of spreading monotheism throughout Arabia and challenging the ruling establishment of Mecca made it necessary to incorporate other religions. During his time in Mecca the situation was dire and he did not have the strength to challenge both the Meccans and the other monotheistic traditions. Certainly, Muhammad wished to have Jewish and Christian converts who followed not only monotheistic principles but the laws established in the Qur'an. However, numerous verses of the Qur'an indicate a protection of both Judaism and Christianity as valid religions. Therefore, it was not at all problematic to build a community that included members of the Other with those who followed Islamic law.

³⁷ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 204

Following Muhammad's death, the politics of the ruling establishment came into play. Muhammad left no plans for how his community should be run or governed following his death. Therefore, the development of the movement could have moved in a variety of different directions. 'Abd al-Malik and the Umayyads not only sought to solidify Islam as the final monotheistic religion, but also emphasized both Islamic law and Muhammad's role as a prophet to separate Islam from Judaism and Christianity. This of course would strengthen al-Malik's position as a leader of a distinct religious faith and allow for a spreading of the Islamic conquests which commenced following the death of Muhammad. In essence, the movement that was started by Muhammad sought an incorporation of the Other based on a belief in one God and a resistance to polytheism, whereas his successors sought to solidify the movement by establishing Islam as a distinct monotheistic faith separate from Judaism and Christianity.

IV. Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and the Lineage of the Prophets

4.1 Islam, the Other, and the Universality of Monotheism

The beginnings of Muhammad's monotheistic movement sought to incorporate the Other into his political and social community. In fact, the Qur'an actually illustrates this point in Chapter 3: "*Say, 'People of the Book, let us arrive at a statement that is common to us all: we worship God alone, we ascribe no partner to Him, and none of us takes others beside God as lords.' If they turn away, say, 'Witness our devotion to Him'* (Q: 3:64). Although Jews and Christians still followed the principles of their own religious scriptures, the shared adherence to monotheism is what Muhammad believed tied them together. In fact, the sayings of Muhammad and the teachings of the Qur'an reveal a lineage that the monotheistic religions all share with one another. For example, the religions all have their roots planted with the Prophet Abraham, whom Muslims believe was the primordial monotheist who practiced an early version of Islam. Chapter 3 of the Qur'an talks about the religion of Abraham, saying that "*Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian. He was upright and devoted to God, never an idolater, and the people who are closest to him are those who truly follow his ways, this Prophet, and [true] believers - God is close to [true] believers*" (Q: 3:67-68). An analysis of this passage illustrates how both Jews and Christians argued that Abraham was universally tied to their respective religions. However, the passage clearly argues that Abraham was neither a practicing Jew nor a

practicing Christian. Rather, he was the archetypal monotheist who practiced the worship of one God during a time when polytheism was widespread and prevalent.

It is easy to understand why Muhammad identified so closely with Abraham. Both men lived during a time when polytheism was the norm and both were in a minority when it came to the adherence to monotheism. Muhammad often made reference to the Prophet Abraham and his adherence to monotheism, arguing that he was only preaching the same message that Abraham preached during his lifetime. In other words, Muslims see Judaism, Christianity, and Islam as three monotheistic faiths that all originated from the same source. However, the differences between the three rest with the Muslim belief that Islam is the final, or perfected, version of monotheism. Muslims believe that God sent his final word through Muhammad in order to correct the message of Judaism and Christianity, which Muslims believe was altered by man over time. In essence, the prophecy of Muhammad put a final seal on the long line of monotheistic revelation.³⁸

The relationship between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam begins with the foundation of Muhammad's monotheistic movement. During Muhammad's lifetime, some of the sources say that many in the Arabian Peninsula believed that the coming of a new prophet was imminent.³⁹ This prophet would not only help re-establish the monotheistic tradition in the Arab world but he would also bring a "corrected" version of monotheism to replace the one which had been corrupted by mankind over time. However, this does not mean that Muslims believe that the Torah or the Gospels are not authentic or divinely inspired. On the contrary, the Qur'an references the divine inspiration for both of the revealed scriptures of Judaism and Christianity.

³⁸ Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur'an* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2009), 80

³⁹ *Ibid*, 162

Furthermore, the Qur'an often makes reference to a single source, or ultimate book, from which all of the divine revelations originated. For example, verse 56:78 talks about a "protected Record," while verse 43:4 references an ultimate scripture: "*By the Scripture that makes things clear, We have made it a Qur'an in Arabic so that you [people] may understand. It is truly exalted in the Source of Scripture kept with Us, and full of wisdom*" (Q: 43:2-4). This single, universal scripture is what Muslims believe provided the basis for all of the monotheistic faiths throughout history.

Since all of the monotheistic prophets brought the various peoples of the earth a message that was born from a single source, it is unacceptable for Muslims to say that they do not believe in the divine origin of Judaism or Christianity. It is also unacceptable for a Muslim to argue that prophets such as Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus were not rightly guided prophets of God.⁴⁰ A Muslim must recognize the history of the monotheistic tradition, including the various prophets of the Other who brought a universal message of a belief in one God. In fact, the Qur'an orders Muhammad to tell the Believers that they must recognize the revealed scriptures of the monotheistic traditions which came before Islam: "*So [Prophet] call people to that faith and follow the straight path as you have been commanded. Do not go by what they desire, but say, 'I believe in whatever Scripture God has sent down. God is our Lord and your Lord - to us our deeds and to you yours, so let there be no argument between us and you - God will gather us together, and to Him shall we return*" (Q: 42:15). In other words, God has sent down a universal scripture through various prophets. Each of these prophets carried the same divine message. Whether one follows the message of Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad, the

⁴⁰ Ibid, 163

monotheistic tradition holds that all human beings will inevitably return to God at the end of time and will be judged by the laws that they followed.

It is not uncommon for Jews, Christians, or Muslims to argue that they are the only people practicing the true religion of God and that they alone will have their reward in heaven. Verse 2:113 of the Qur'an illustrates this point: "*The Jews say, 'The Christians have no ground whatsoever to stand on,' and the Christians say, 'The Jews have no ground whatsoever to stand on,' though they both read the Scripture, and those who have no knowledge say the same; God will judge between them on the Day of Resurrection concerning their differences*" (Q: 2:113). However, both Muhammad and the Qur'an are clear in the universality of the monotheistic message. God's guidance and message for mankind does not only pertain to a certain nation or to a certain group of people. In Chapter 35 of the Qur'an, it says "*We have sent you with the Truth as a bearer of good news and warning - every community has been sent a warner*" (Q: 35:24). Chapter 13 also bears a similar message, stating that "*The disbelievers say, 'Why has no miracle been sent down to him from Lord? But you are only there to give warning: [earlier] communities each had their guide*" (Q: 13:7). Both of these verses indicate that there have been numerous prophets throughout history that have been sent to all peoples of the earth. Chapter 2 illustrates this point: "*So [you believers], say, 'We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Issac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him'*" (Q: 2:136). Therefore, all communities have been sent a prophet by God to reveal the teachings of monotheism. Again, there can be no distinction or cherry-picking of prophets for Muslims. Chapter 4 of the Qur'an says "*But God will give [due] rewards to those who believe in Him and His messengers and make no distinction between any*

of them. God is most forgiving and merciful" (Q: 4:152). There must be a belief in all of the prophets throughout the various communities. In other words, disbelief in certain prophets would be unacceptable because all of the prophets carried with them the same divine teachings from God.

4.2 Judaism, Christianity, and the Conflict with Muhammad

There are a few main reasons why both Jews and Christians rejected the message brought by Muhammad. First, Jews had expected their prophet to be of the Hebrew or Israelite heritage. Even though Muhammad traced his lineage back to Abraham, he was not Jewish and therefore ineligible for prophethood. For Christians, they would of course take issue with Muhammad and the Qur'an's challenge of the central tenet of the Christian faith: the divinity of Jesus Christ and the Holy Trinity. The Qur'an argues that although Jesus was a special prophet who was capable of performing miracles, he was in no way divine. He was not the son of God as Christians believe. Rather, he was only a man just as all of the other prophets were. In addition, the oneness of God is an absolute in Islam. The concept of a Holy Trinity is extremely problematic in regards to Islamic teaching and is outright rejected in the Qur'an: "*Those who say, 'God is the Messiah, son of Mary,' have defied God. The Messiah himself said, 'Children of Israel, worship God, my Lord, and your Lord.' If anyone associates others with God, God will forbid him from the garden, and Hell will be his home. No one will help such evildoers"* (Q: 5:72). Regardless of the similarities between the three faiths, these examples of the differences between the Torah, the Gospels, and the Qur'an illustrate the basis for the Jewish and Christian rejection of Muhammad's message.

Although the differences between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam concerning the central teachings of each are clear, the Qur'an states that there is a purpose behind it. One of

the most important verses that acknowledges the differences between the religions is found in Chapter 2, which states that "*Mankind was a single community, then God sent prophets to bring good news and warning, and with them He sent the Scripture with the Truth, to judge between people in their disagreements. It was only those to whom it was given who disagreed about it after clear signs had come to them, because of rivalry between them. So by His leave God guided the believers to the truth they had differed about: God guides whoever He will to a straight path*" (Q: 2:213). In other words, God allowed the world to be split up into differing communities. Although the message was the same, the various prophets throughout the world resulted in different monotheistic religions being established.

The Qur'an also addresses those Jews and Christians who urged followers of Muhammad to convert to Judaism or Christianity in order to be saved. The Qur'an tells a Muslim to give an answer which again reiterates the theme regarding the line of prophet hood that began with Abraham: "*They say, 'Become Jews or Christians, and you will be rightly guided. 'Say [Prophet], 'No, [ours is] the religion of Abraham, the upright, who did not worship any god besides God. So [you believers] say, 'We believe in God and in what was sent down to us and what was sent down to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and what was given to Moses, Jesus, and all the prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction between any of them, and we devote ourselves to Him'*" Q: 2:135-136). Again, the message remained the same through all of the monotheistic prophets. Furthermore, the listing of the various prophets in this passage validates them as being prophets of God and therefore respected in Islam.

Not only did the example of Muhammad and the verses of the Qur'an protect Judaism and Christianity as divine religions from God, there is no mandate that tells a Jew or a Christian that they must convert to Islam in order to receive salvation in the afterlife. Rather, the Qur'an

indicates a protection of the right for Jews and Christians to practice and keep their faith and argues that they too will receive their reward should they live a life of piety and service to God. In addition, the Qur'an actually challenges all of the monotheistic faiths to compete with each other in acts of charity and goodwill instead of arguing over whose faith is right or wrong. The Qur'an also tells all of the monotheists the reasons behind the multi-cultural and religions world that we all live in: "*We sent to you [Muhammad] the Scripture with the truth, confirming the Scriptures that came before it, and with final authority over them: so judge between them according to what God has sent down. Do not follow your whims, which deviate from the truth that has come to you. We have assigned a law and a path to each of you. If God has so willed, He would have made you one community, but He wanted to test you through that which He has given you, so race to do good; you will all return to God and He will make clear to you the matters you differed about*" (Q: 5:48). From a Qur'anic point of view it was God's will that the world was comprised of different religions and cultures.

An analysis of verse 5:48 brings up two important points. First, the word "Scripture" illustrates the theme of monotheistic revelation coming to the various prophets throughout history. The single source is unalterable and was only changed by mankind over time. Next, the verse says that God has "assigned a law and a path" to each community. This law likely references the Jewish law of the Torah, the Christian teachings in the Gospels, and the Islamic laws found in the Qur'an. Each is distinct yet revealed through divine inspiration. Finally, the theme of competing with one another through good works is illustrated. The verse suggests that it was God's intention to have a multi-religious world.⁴¹ Rather than squabble over that which is different, "race to do good" and use this life to be an example of morality regardless of

⁴¹ Ibid, 164

what faith you follow. Finally, the questions over religious dogma and the variances of the divine scriptures will all be answered by God following the resurrection of all peoples back to their Creator. In other words, the totality of religious truth can only be revealed in the Hereafter, not in this world.

4.3 Muhammad's Appeal to the Other: The Importance of the Prophet Abraham

It is clear that most Jews and Christians refused to accept Muhammad as a prophet of God, although many had no objections to having him serve as a political leader. Muhammad could have easily given up trying to recruit the Other into his religious movement and simply look for converts who had not followed any form of monotheism as of yet. However, he believed that Jews and Christians were an essential part of his religious calling, and he began to appeal to the past prophets in order to try and change their hearts towards his message. As discussed earlier, in order to attract both Jews and Christians to his religious movement, Muhammad focused on the prophet Abraham, the most important monotheistic prophet in Islam other than Muhammad himself.⁴² The Qur'an identifies Abraham as a *hanif*, or a true monotheist. Abraham is credited as having brought the religion of pure monotheism to this world in order to challenge the pagan worship that was widespread during his lifetime. In this respect, Abraham's mission was very similar to that of Muhammad's. In essence, Abraham serves as an archetype for monotheism, a model in which Muhammad claimed to be both reviving and following.

Muhammad tried to distinguish the prophet Abraham in order to illustrate his unique qualities as one of God's first monotheistic prophets. Muhammad argued that Abraham was the first to practice a primordial form of Islam, and that he was the defining link that held Islam and

⁴² Ibid, 143

the Other together. In Mecca, Muhammad was under the impression that he was preaching the exact same message to the pagan Arabs as Abraham had done when he began challenging the pagan worship of his time. In addition, the Qur'an makes reference to the fact that many pagan Arabs were yearning for a new religion that was similar to that of Judaism and Christianity: "*[The disbelievers] used to say, 'If only we had a scripture like previous people, we would be true servants of God,' yet now they reject [the Qur'an]. They will soon realize. Our word has already been given to Our servants the messengers: it is they who will be helped, and the ones who support Our cause will be the winners*" (Q: 37:168-170). Clearly, many monotheists on the Arabian Peninsula yearned for a prophet to come and solidify the teachings of monotheism in their own language. The significance of such a prophet would therefore cement the legacy of monotheism in a part of the world that had not yet been brought the monotheistic teachings by one of their own people. Muhammad served as this person. According to the Islamic tradition, Muhammad located his message in the Arab and Meccan tradition as well since Abraham is connected to the Ka'bah by the Qur'an.⁴³ Therefore, Muhammad's teachings stemmed directly from the example of Abraham, which cemented his message in the long line of monotheistic prophets.

The Qur'an also criticizes the polytheists who desired a new prophet yet rejected the message of Muhammad once he arrived: "*[The idolaters] swore their most solemn oath that, if someone came to warn them, they would be more rightly guided than any [other] community, but when someone did come they turned yet further away, became more arrogant in the land, and intensified their plotting of evil - the plotting of evil only rebounds on those who plot*" (Q: 35:42-43). In other words, the pagan Arabs had been accustomed to the monotheistic narrative

⁴³ See Qur'an 3: 96-97

of the Other and were simply awaiting the arrival of their own monotheistic prophet. However, when Muhammad arrived and began preaching a return to monotheism, they challenged his religious calling. In essence, the teachings of Judaism and Christianity had already seeped into the Arab culture, yet they had not yet been codified into a single religious dogma. Therefore, Muhammad saw it as his mission to bring about a final version of monotheism to the Arabian Peninsula.

Although Muhammad appealed in numerous ways to the Other, it is unclear the exact number of converts that he was able to attract to his religious calling. However, it is clear that he never allowed for forced submission of any monotheistic faith. It is important to understand that although Muhammad incorporated the Other into his religious movement and allowed the Other to keep their religious practices, the Qur'an makes it clear that it is best for all monotheists to follow Muhammad's religious teachings. This is largely due to the fact that both Muhammad and the Qur'an's claim that Islam is the perfected form of monotheism, and that it was specifically revealed to end the line of monotheistic revelation in this world. The Qur'an identifies and often commemorates the communities of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, yet it identifies Islam as the best of the communities, or the *khair ummatin*: "*[Believers], you are the best community singled out for people: you order what is right, forbid what is wrong, and believe in God. If the People of the Book had also believed, it would have been better for them...*" (Q: 3:110). In other words, Jews and Christians are protected and allowed to practice their religion under Islam, yet they are practicing an imperfect form of monotheism according to the Qur'an. In order to practice the perfected form of monotheism they must accept the message of Muhammad, the bringer of the final monotheistic revelation.

V. Muhammad and Diplomacy with the Other: Examples of Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy

5.1 The Constitution of Medina: Muhammad and Domestic Policy with the Other

One of the most essential documents that illustrates Muhammad's cooperative engagement with the religious Other is the *Sahifat al-Madina*, or the Constitution of Medina.⁴⁴ Although the sources differ on the exact date that the document was drafted, it was most likely signed during the time period between the *hijrah* in 622 and the Battle of Badr in 624. Islamic scholar Asma Afsaruddin argues that a general dating of the document can be determined from two key pieces of evidence. First, the use of the word *al-mu'minun*, or Believers, within the document itself and second, the archaic language that it uses dates the document sometime after Muhammad made the *hijrah*.⁴⁵ Furthermore, Montgomery Watt states that "No later falsifier, writing under the Umayyads or 'Abbasids, would have included non-Muslims in the ummah, would have retained the articles against Quraysh, and would have given Muhammad so insignificant a place."⁴⁶ In other words, the evidence shows that it must have been drawn up during the early Medinan period. As discussed earlier, the use of the word Believer is what characterized the early period of Muhammad's religious movement. The Constitution of

⁴⁴ See Appendix for a complete translation of the document.

⁴⁵ Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (New York: One World Publications, 2007), 5

⁴⁶ As quoted in Asma Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory* (New York: One World Publications, 2007), 5

Medina is extraordinary for a number of reasons and it is unique in that it was the first of its kind to emerge in Arabia. It is the first document of its kind to define citizenship within a written constitution. In fact, this unique social contract established a citizenship that did not take hold in Europe for another thousand years.⁴⁷

Specifically, the Constitution of Medina was constructed in an effort to bind the Medinan community together following the emigration by Muhammad and his followers to the city. The document begins by saying "*In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is a document from Muhammad the prophet [governing the relations] between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and laboured with them. They are one community (umma) to the exclusion of all men. The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice among believers.*" Interestingly, the opening begins with an address to both Believers and Muslims, indicating a mutual coexistence with the Other. In addition, the document argues that the Believers and the Muslims are distinct from all others and that there will be a mutual help and support among all of them. These facts clearly represent a policy of not only mutual protection and cooperation with the Other by Muhammad but also a bonding with the Other into a distinct political community.

The Constitution of Medina also outlines the political relations that were to exist between the *Muhajirun*, or migrant Muslims from Mecca, the *Ansar*, or helpers in Medina, and the Jews who already resided in the city.⁴⁸ The document guaranteed that the Jews could continue to practice their religion and keep their property. However, it also bonded the Jews

⁴⁷ Safi, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters*, 127

⁴⁸ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 94

together with Muhammad and his followers into a single *umma*, or community, where each clan would come to another's aid if threatened or attacked. Therefore, the Constitution of Medina made it a duty for any group to come to another group's defense should they be attacked from outside forces. This bonding together and sharing of a mutual protection established the Jews as equal members within Muhammad's community on a political level. It is also important to recognize that the Jews living in Medina were not a single entity. Rather, they were divided up into different clans, which resulted in both a co-existence and a tension with Muhammad, both of which will be discussed later. However, the Jewish clans were recognized as a part of the community of Believers that Muhammad sought to establish in Medina.

The Constitution of Medina names the people of Medina as a single community distinct from other people. It then follows with nine articles that name nine clans. The first group mentioned is the Emigrants of Quraysh, or Muhammad's followers who emigrated with him from Mecca. The other eight clans mentioned are Arab clans, three from the Aws tribe and five from the Khazraj tribe. One passage from the document reads "*The Jews of the tribe of 'Awf are a people with the Believers; the Jews have their law and the muslimun have their law. [This applies to] their clients and to themselves, expecting anyone who acts wrongfully and acts treacherously, for he only slays himself and the people of his house.*" This passage is significant in that it clearly illustrates that some of the Jews living in Medina who signed this agreement with Muhammad were recognized as part of his community of Believers. Also, the naming of the clans is significant in that the document is adhering to the tribe and clan system that had already been established in Arabia. However, it expanded on that system by creating a federation among the clans with Muhammad serving as the political leader.

Although Muhammad emigrated to Medina at the request of the Medinan clans to serve as chief arbitrator among them he was not the only chief in the early part of the Medinan period. Muhammad was named the chief of the Emigrants, who were treated as a clan, but the other eight clans all had chiefs of their own. Should any dispute arise, Muhammad would serve as an arbitrator among them. Therefore, in the early months of the Medinan period, Muhammad was probably not the most powerful chief in Medina when it came to the political power of those residing in the city. Again, both his religious and political career was still very young at this time and his position in Medina was far from being firmly established. It was not until the great triumph at the Battle of Badr that his position as a political and military leader began to take hold.

There are a few other key pieces of information from the Constitution of Medina that illustrate its goal of unifying the people of Medina into an *umma wahida*, or single community comprised of different ethnicities and religions.⁴⁹ First, the use of the word *jihad* in the document is worth noting. The use of the word in this context actually referenced all peoples willing to fight alongside the Muslims against the polytheists.⁵⁰ This not only included the *Muhajirun* but the Jews and the *Ansar* as well. The *Ansar* were residents of Medina who joined Muhammad's movement upon his arrival and aided the emigrating Muslims as they established a new life in Medina. Second, membership in the community was based on honor and friendship between the different tribes and ethnicities. The community would ideally respect and honor one another especially in matters of religion. The Jewish-Muslim relations, although strained in later parts of the Medinan period, were supposed to be grounded in a mutual

⁴⁹ Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, 6

⁵⁰ David Dakake, *The Myth of a Militant Islam*, in *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition*, eds. Joseph E.B. Lumbard (Bloomington: World Wisdom, Inc., 2009), 20-21

respect for one another. Furthermore, Muhammad was not the ruler over Medina alone.⁵¹

During times of crisis, the two groups were ideally supposed to share counsel together.

Specifically, whenever the community was threatened from outside forces or internal problems arose, the various clans were supposed to come together and resolve the situation together. In essence, no one clan or religious group was supposed to dominate the other through force.

The freedom of the Jewish clans to practice their religion was protected so long as they adhered to the terms of the treaty. If the terms of the treaty were violated by any of the various clans, Muhammad and his followers had the right to intervene, by force if necessary, to quell any of those who broke it. Nevertheless, the Jewish clans and Muhammad and his followers shared bond as one community is not only outlined in the pages of the Constitution of Medina but within various passages of the Qur'an itself. For example, righteous Jews and Christians are identified as being a part of the *umma muqtasida*, or balanced community. In 3:113, the Qur'an states "*...There are some among the People of the Book who are upright, who recite God's revelations during the night, who bow down in worship, who believe in God and the Last Day, who order what is right and forbid what is wrong, who are quick to do good deeds. These people are among the righteous and they will not be denied [the reward] for whatever good deeds they do: God knows exactly who is conscious of Him*" (Q: 3:113-115). The respect that the Qur'an exhibits towards Jews and Christians in this passage reflects the kind of community that Muhammad likely envisioned as thriving in Medina. Furthermore, the Constitution of Medina emulates the virtue of righteousness that the Qur'an also describes towards the Other overall.

⁵¹ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 94

The closing passage of the document illustrates God's favor on those who do good: "God is the protector of the good and God-fearing man and Muhammad is the apostle of God."⁵²

Although the community in Medina was multi-ethnic and multi-religious and each tribe had a chief that represented them and their interests, Muhammad's claim as God's messenger and his authority of acting on behalf of God was also clearly established in the document. In addition, although he is identified as an arbitrator, his power swiftly rose after the victory at the Battle of Badr.⁵³ With this increase of political power, tensions rose between Muhammad and his followers and many of the Jewish tribes who were skeptical not only of Muhammad's religious message but his claim to political leadership over Medina. Specifically, there were conflicts with the Jewish tribes of Qaynuqa, Nadir, and Qurayza that will be addressed in detail later. What is interesting, however, is that none of these clans are mentioned in the Constitution of Medina. Their absence in the document is puzzling and could illustrate a level of tension that they had with Muhammad as early as his arrival into the city. However, Muhammad did make non-belligerency treaties with these tribes even though they were not a part of the Constitution itself.⁵⁴ Finally, it was not until after the series of battles with the Meccans that things began to turn hostile between these Jewish tribes and Muhammad.

The Constitution of Medina represents one of the earliest examples of Muhammad's attempt at creating a domestic policy with the Other. Muhammad's move to Medina brought him into an environment where he encountered peoples of another distinct religion. He understood that it was important to try and coexist with these peoples in order to build a lasting

⁵² See Appendix.

⁵³ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 96

⁵⁴ Michael Lecker, "Glimpses of Muhammad's Medinan Decade," from *The Cambridge Companion to Muhammad*, eds. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 68

community. The Constitution of Medina exemplifies his attempt at a mutual coexistence with the Jewish tribes already living in Medina. Although it is most likely that Muhammad expected a much warmer reception by the Jewish tribes living in Medina than he received, the document is clear that the Jewish tribes listed were equal members of the community on a political level.⁵⁵ It was only when many of the Jews did not convert and became annoyed with Muhammad's growing political power that tension arose. Regardless of these conflicts, the Constitution of Medina represents an early effort at consolidating the monotheistic believers, whether Jews or followers of Muhammad, into a unified state. The falling out between Muhammad and the Jews only resulted after political events changed the power dynamic in Medina. Initially, Muhammad did not intend to uproot the Jews from Medina and allowed them to practice their own religion, illustrating his belief in a coexistence with the Other within through a use of domestic policy.

5.2 The Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya: Muhammad and Foreign Policy with the Other

The Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya, which was signed by Muhammad and the leaders of Quraysh on March 13, 628 C.E., represents one of the most successful uses of negotiation and diplomacy in Muhammad's lifetime. Interestingly, this example of foreign policy came during his engagement with a group of people whose religion Muhammad had strongly opposed while residing in Mecca. In addition, the treaty represents an example of Muhammad's foreign policy with the Other without, the Quraysh of Mecca. The events surrounding the eventual signing of the treaty began with a dream that Muhammad is said to have had in which he and his followers made a religious pilgrimage to Mecca. Believing that this dream was a sign from God, Muhammad set out from Medina with an estimated 1,400 to 1,600 of his followers in order to perform the lesser pilgrimage, or *'umra*, even though hostilities were still high between

⁵⁵ Safi, *Memories of Muhammad: Why the Prophet Matters*, 128

Muhammad and the Quraysh.⁵⁶ Along the route, seventy camels were to be purchased and eventually sacrificed as part of the *'umra* ritual and used to alleviate the suffering of the poor living in Mecca. When the Meccans learned of the march they were unsure of the motives behind it. They quickly convened and began to debate how they should respond. The Quraysh were in a difficult predicament. On the one hand, they could stop Muhammad and his followers from entering the city to perform the pilgrimage but in doing so they would violate the laws that were established regarding religious rites. On the other hand, they could allow Muhammad and his party to enter Mecca unmolested and thus grant Muhammad a moral triumph over his adversary. In essence, allowing Muhammad to proceed could further strengthen his religious message and give rise to more converts to join his ranks.

The leading officials of Mecca ultimately decided to dispatch 200 cavalymen to intercept Muhammad before he could reach the city. When Muhammad realized that the Meccans had moved to intercept him and his followers, he decided to make camp at *al-Hudaybiyya*, which was an open tract of land below Mecca located just outside of the sacred territory. It is clear that both sides wished to avoid a battle at this time. The Meccans dispatched emissaries and told Muhammad that he was not allowed to enter the city at least for that year. Muhammad commenced negotiations with the emissaries and they agreed that Muhammad and his party could not make the pilgrimage that year but could return to Mecca the following year instead.⁵⁷ They also agreed that when Muhammad and his followers entered the city the Meccans would evacuate for three days to allow for the pilgrimage to take place. In addition, both sides agreed that they would cease all hostilities for a period of ten years.

⁵⁶ Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, 10

⁵⁷ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 66

The treaty had certain provisions in it that were quite unfavorable to Muhammad, illustrating both his ability to compromise but through strategic means.⁵⁸ For example, according to the treaty, any member of Quraysh who attempted to flee to Medina and join Muhammad's community without the permission of a guardian was to be immediately sent back. However, if any Muslim defected and wished to return to Mecca they would not be sent back to Medina. Muhammad later made an exception for Qurayshi women and allowed them to stay in Medina. This exception to the treaty is mentioned in the Qur'an: "*You who believe, test the believing women when they come to you as emigrants - God knows best about their faith - and if you are sure of their belief, do not send them back to the disbelievers: they are not lawful wives for them, nor are the disbelievers their lawful husbands...Prophet, when believing women come and pledge to you that they will not ascribe any partner to God, nor steal, nor commit adultery, nor kill their children, nor life about who has fathered their children, nor disobey you in any righteous thing, then you should accept their pledge of allegiance and pray to God to forgive them: God is most forgiving and merciful*" (Q: 60:10-12).

Muhammad also agreed to lift a blockade that he had imposed on Meccan trade into Syria. The treaty also stipulated that if any tribe or individual wished to make an alliance with either Muhammad or the Meccans they would be allowed to do so. Although the treaty was unfavorable in many ways, Muhammad used the art of diplomacy in order to secure a peaceful outcome. In fact, the diplomatic compromises that he made at *al-Hudaybiyya* proved to be very beneficial when it came to securing the surrender of Mecca two years later.

Another interesting point that illustrates Muhammad's diplomatic resolve is his response to the reaction of his closest followers concerning the treaty. Many of his closest

⁵⁸ Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, 10

companions were disappointed with the treaty. They expressed feelings of anger and disappointment since they could not fulfill the religious pilgrimage. One of Muhammad's closest companions, 'Umar, openly expressed his anger to Muhammad regarding the treaty. Many saw it as a kind of defeat since they were unable to reach the city and had to return to Medina without making the pilgrimage. However, even in the face of these protests, Muhammad remained steadfast. He was able to convince his followers that diplomacy was the best option in this situation, and even 'Umar ultimately signed the treaty. In addition, Muhammad still ordered that the camels be sacrificed and the rites be performed outside of the city before returning to Medina. A year later, Muhammad and his followers returned to Mecca and were allowed to make the pilgrimage as promised in the treaty. The Islamic sources place great emphasis on this diplomatic victory by Muhammad and his companions: "No previous victory in Islam was greater than this. There was nothing but battle when men met; but when there was an armistice and war was abolished and men met in safety and consulted together none talked about Islam intelligently without entering it. In those two years double as many or more than double as many entered Islam as ever before (754)."⁵⁹

When analyzing Muhammad's decision to make peace with the Meccans at this point in time a number of key points can be discerned. First, Muhammad must have realized that militarily he was in no position to conquer Mecca. Although the Meccans had been defeated in the past, their spirits were still relatively high and Muhammad's force of about 1,500 men was nowhere near sufficient to take the city. In fact, not only did his forces not have the numbers they also had made the pilgrimage unarmed.⁶⁰ Therefore, when setting out from Medina,

⁵⁹ Guillaume, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah*, 507

⁶⁰ Donner, *Muhammad and the Believers*, 47-48

Muhammad's objective must have been to either make the pilgrimage or force a treaty with the Meccans. Second, by attempting to make the pilgrimage, Muhammad aimed at strengthening his religious message not only with his own followers but with those who still resided in Mecca. By exposing Mecca to Islam, the religious hub in Arabia, he would demonstrate that his religion had a legitimate place on the continent. It also demonstrated that Mecca would remain a city of central importance under Islam. Lastly, it is possible that Muhammad could have been preparing Mecca for an eventual takeover of the city and a new rule under Islam. In other words, he was softening up the city by showing his diplomatic prowess to gain favorability.

Whether or not diplomacy was forced upon him, Muhammad illustrated that he was at least willing to garner friendlier relations with the Quraysh during this time even though polytheism was condemned by both himself and the Qur'an. This example of foreign policy with the Other outside of Medina illustrates Muhammad's willingness to use diplomacy even with his enemies. Furthermore, its reference in some of the earliest sources as a great diplomatic victory illustrates Muhammad's willingness to engage the Other through diplomatic means. Ultimately, Muhammad and his followers got what they wished without having to resort to bloodshed. The diplomatic nature that Muhammad expressed at *al-Hudaybiyya* is comparable to the Constitution of Medina that he had signed years earlier. Clearly, Muhammad understood the benefits of using diplomacy with the Other outside of Medina. One could go so far as to argue that Muhammad saw them as ideals and strove to use diplomacy over violence. However, diplomacy did not always work. In the next chapter, the issue of warfare will be discussed and analyzed in order to discern when Muhammad saw violence with the Other as legitimate.

VI. Muhammad and Warfare with the Other

6.1 Muhammad and the Ethics of War: When is Violence Permissible?

Many Islamic radicals who push a platform of violence and terror against those who do not follow their strict interpretation of the Qur'an often argue that they are trying to re-establish the community that Muhammad established at Medina. In addition, they frequently claim that they are following the historical example left by Muhammad and that their actions reflect his true teachings. Therefore, it is important to re-examine what the Qur'an tells us about the nature of warfare, specifically what it constitutes as legitimate warfare. In addition, it is also important to examine the historical example left by Muhammad concerning when and why he engaged in warfare. An article by Sohail Hashmi entitled "Saving and Taking Life in War" provides an excellent overview of warfare and the ethics that the Qur'an and the *Hadith* discuss regarding it. First, it is essential to identify whom the Qur'an and Muhammad deemed as combatants and non-combatants when waging war.

In essence, the overall principle that Muhammad followed when waging warfare was that Muslims and their allies should only fight those who sought to fight them. Although it is clear that both the Qur'an and Muhammad deemed warfare permissible, one central Qur'anic verse that discusses warfare tells Muhammad and his followers to "*Fight in God's cause those who fight you, but do not overstep the limits: God does not love those who overstep the*

limits"(Q: 2:190). Muhammad forbade his followers from killing women and children in battle, which seems to reinforce the second part of the verse that warns against "over-stepping the limits." Muhammad identified both women and children as non-combatants in that they did not openly seek to attack Muhammad or his followers. Furthermore, Hashmi points out that Islamic law divides those who are deemed to be against Islam into two main categories. First, it identifies the *ahl-i-qital*, or legitimate enemy combatants. Second, it identifies the *ghayr ahl-i-qital*, or non-combatants who were not permitted to be killed in war.⁶¹ In essence, the combatants were those who took up arms in the fighting against Muhammad and his followers. Non-combatants could be members of an enemy tribe or army who were not willing or able to take up arms against the Muslims even if they chose not to join them. This included women, children, the elderly, the sick, the wounded, the blind, or the insane.⁶²

Although verse 2:190 seems to be straightforward regarding the issue of combatants and non-combatants, different passages within the Qur'an seem to argue different points regarding the issue of warfare overall. Hashmi tackles this issue by analyzing verse 2:190 in relation to verse 9:5. Although verse 2:190 of the Qur'an seems to both allow for the use of violence and limit its reach, there still left some debate regarding exactly who could be a target of violence. For example, later scholars who lived after the death of Muhammad argued that verse 9:5 abrogated verse 2:190. Verse 9:5 states "*When the [four] forbidden months are over, wherever you encounter the idolaters, kill them, seize them, besiege them, wait for them at every lookout post; but if they turn [to God], maintain the prayer, and pay the prescribed alms, let them go on their way, for God is most forgiving and merciful*" (Q: 9:5). Some scholars suggest

⁶¹ Sohail H. Hashmi, "Saving and Taking Life in War," from *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, eds. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 139

⁶² Ibid, 139

that this verse illustrates that polytheism is a legitimate basis for killing in Islam. However, it is important to understand the historical context of this verse.⁶³ The idolaters that the verse references specifically targets the pagan Arabs of Mecca. It is important to remember that the Meccan ruling establishment had persecuted, tortured, and even killed anyone who accepted Muhammad's call to monotheism. They were openly hostile and sought to eliminate Muhammad's religious movement in its infancy. Therefore, this verse is giving permission for the Muslims to fight back. In addition, like other verses that reference violence, the verse begins with a harsh and militant undertone but then cautions the follower to show mercy as well. A good summation of both the Qur'an and Muhammad's attitude towards warfare is given by Muslim scholar Abu al-A'la Mawdudi who said that "in war, only that much force that is necessary to repel evil should be used, and this force should be used only against those who are engaged in fighting or at the most those who are connected to the offense. All others should be safeguarded from the effects of war..."⁶⁴ This was written by Mawdudi after he analyzed the Qur'an and *Hadith* passages regarding warfare. Interestingly, Mawdudi is often referenced by many Muslim fundamentalists, thus illustrating that some of today's extremists have radicalized Mawdudi's positions on certain issues.

The example of Muhammad and the Qur'an also discusses the issue of providing *aman*, or quarter, and how to justly deal with prisoners of war. Specifically, Hashmi argues that quarter is something that went beyond merely providing shelter to those wounded on the battlefield. In fact, quarter is something that is necessary for a practicing Muslim to provide to

⁶³ See David Dakake's *The Myth of a Militant Islam*, in *Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition: Revised and Expanded*, eds. Joseph E.B. Lumbard (Bloomington: World Wisdom, Inc., 2009) for an analysis of controversial Qur'anic passages and their historical context.

⁶⁴ As quoted in Sohail H. Hashmi, "Saving and Taking Life in War," from *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, eds. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 139

any foreigner from any country of the world.⁶⁵ Therefore, quarter is incumbent upon anyone seeking shelter. In addition, if a soldier lays down his arms in the heat of battle and offers his surrender a Muslim must provide him quarter. This example is backed by verses of the Qur'an and by Muhammad who forbade slaughtering those who surrendered during battle. For example, verse 4:94 tells the believer *"So, you who believe, be careful when you go to fight in God's way, and do not say to someone who offers you a greeting of peace, 'You are not a believer,' out of desire for the chance gains of this life - God has plenty of gains for you. You yourself were in the same position [once], but God was gracious to you, so be careful: God is fully aware of what you do"* (Q: 4:94). This verse was reportedly revealed after some Muslims killed their enemies on the battlefield even after they uttered greetings of peace when they surrendered. Specifically, these Muslims believed that their enemies were not sincere in their acts and were only trying to save their lives. However, Muhammad argued against this practice, and it is said in one account that Muhammad questioned a believer who reportedly had killed someone even after the enemy had uttered a profession of faith. Muhammad asked the follower *"Did you split open his heart and see if he was truthful or a liar?"*⁶⁶ In other words, Muhammad was teaching that no one can tell what is truly in a man's heart. The enemy's profession of faith, whether sincere or just an attempt to save his life, is between him and God and not for the believer to decide.

When it comes to the handling of prisoners of war the Qur'an and the example left by Muhammad illustrate that any prisoner who surrenders on the field of battle is not to be executed. However, many prisoners were enslaved or ransomed back to the enemy. In

⁶⁵ Ibid, 142

⁶⁶ Ibid, 143

addition, some were simply released from custody. The Qur'an makes reference to prisoners of war in verse 47:4, which states "*When you meet the disbelievers in battle, strike them in the neck, and once they are defeated, bind any captives firmly - later you can release them by grace or by ransom - until the toils of war have ended. That [is the way]*" (Q: 47:4). Some commentators argue that since the phrase "by grace" comes before "by ransom" it is the preferred way to handle prisoners. However, another verse of the Qur'an seems to contradict verse 47:4 concerning the taking of prisoners of war.

Following the Battle of Badr, the first engagement between Muhammad and his followers and the Meccans, a verse was revealed that indicates prisoners of war should not be taken in battle. The verse reads "*It is not right for a prophet to take captives before he has conquered the battlefield. You [people] desire the transient goods of this world, but God desires the Hereafter [for you] - God is mighty and wise - and had it not been preordained by God, a severe punishment would have come upon you for what you have taken. So enjoy in a good and lawful manner the things you have gained in war and be mindful of God: He is forgiving and merciful*" (Q: 8:67-69). First, it is important to note that this verse specifically references the seventy prisoners of war taken by Muhammad and his followers after the Battle of Badr. Second, the severity of the verse likely results from the dire situation that the young Muslim community was facing during this time. The Meccans did not want to see Muhammad and his community be successful and they most certainly did not wish to see the community grow large enough to challenge their authority throughout Arabia. The Meccans desired a complete annihilation of Muhammad and his followers. In addition, the early years of the Medinan emigration were difficult to say the least. Many Muslims were starving and were not accustomed to living in an oasis. In the wake of these factors, this could indicate why the verse

seems to denounce the taking of prisoners of war. It seems to follow the example of verse 2:194, which states "*A sacred month for a sacred month: violation of sanctity [calls for] fair retribution. So if anyone commits aggression against you, attack him as he attacked you, but be mindful of God, and know that He is with those who are mindful of him*" (Q: 2:194). In other words, if the Meccans were not taking prisoners of war neither should Muhammad and his followers.

6.2 Qur'anic Verses and the Role of Abrogation

It is also important to address one of the most controversial verses of the Qur'an in regards to violence and warfare towards the Other which brings up the issue of the Qur'an and abrogation. As Islamic scholar David Dakake points out, this verse has "been a source of great controversy and is often quoted by militant Muslims as well as Western detractors of Islam and not only for its mention of the issue of the *jizya*."⁶⁷ The verse says "*Fight those of the People of the Book who do not [truly] believe in God and the Last Day, who do not forbid what God and His Messenger have forbidden, who do not obey the rule of justice, until they pay the tax and agree to submit*" (Q: 9:29). First, it is important to understand the "tax" that this verse is referencing. The *jizya*, or poll-tax, was a required payment that Jews and Christians had to pay while they were living under the Islamic state. The tax was levied by the Islamic state in response to the benefit "from the military protection of the state, the freedom of the roads, and trade, etc."⁶⁸ that Jews and Christians had while living under Islamic rule. Second, the verse is clearly addressing both Jews and Christians with its use of the term "People of the Book." However, it

⁶⁷ David Dakake, "The Myth of a Militant Islam," in Islam, Fundamentalism, and the Betrayal of Tradition: Revised and Expanded eds. Joseph E.B. Lumbard (Bloomington: World Wisdom, Inc., 2009), 33-34

⁶⁸ Ibid, 33

is important to analyze the historical context of this verse in order to understand its implications concerning legitimate warfare with the Other.

Following the death of Muhammad, many Muslims saw it as their duty to spread Islam beyond the boundaries of Arabia. The spreading of Islam was not limited to a certain ethnic group or state. Rather, it was believed that the Qur'anic message should be spread to all peoples throughout the world in order to better society. Furthermore, in the seventh century, violence was the norm. In fact, "warfare and conflict were the normal state of affairs between nations and peoples. The state of nearly constant warfare was simply the 'way of the world' and peace was the extraordinary and occasional exception to the rule. Today, in the modern world, the situation is somewhat reversed: we might say that 'peace' is generally the norm and warfare, although not exactly extraordinary, is somewhat less of a constant than it was in ancient times."⁶⁹ Since the world is completely different than it was following the death of Muhammad, most Muslim scholars have declared that the use of warfare today should be for defensive rather than offensive means. However, to a practicing Muslim in the seventh century, this idea would have seemed contrary to the world that he was living in. Finally, the idea that verse 9:29 represents the ultimate view or authority on Muslim relations with the Other is ridiculous. This would be like "declaring that Medieval Papal pronouncements about the Crusades are key to understanding Catholic feelings about Muslims and Jews today or like saying Deuteronomy 20:10-18 exposes the true, inner attitude of Jews toward the presence of gentiles in the land of Israel."⁷⁰ In other words, violence has a place in the history of all of the

⁶⁹ Ibid, 34

⁷⁰ Ibid, 34-35

monotheistic religions but that in no way defines the religion or the religion's ability to adapt and change to historical time periods.

Verse 9:29 raises a very important point regarding Qur'anic verses: the role of abrogation. As mentioned earlier, the Qur'an was not revealed all at one time. Rather, it was revealed over a period of twenty three years. Therefore, there are many examples where newer verses of the Qur'an, or verses revealed at a later time period, overrule or trump earlier verses. These newer verses that abrogate certain of the older verses were mainly revealed during the Medinan period of Muhammad's prophetic career. This abrogation is important because it specifically pertains to verse 9:29. The final verse that was actually revealed to Muhammad that pertained to Jews and Christians is in Chapter 5. This verse states that "*Today all good things have been made lawful for you. The food of the People of the Book is lawful for you as your food is lawful for them. So are chaste, believing, women as well as chaste women of the people who were given the Scripture before you, as long as you have given them their bride-gifts and married them, not taking them as lovers or secret mistresses. The deeds of anyone who rejects faith will come to nothing, and in the Hereafter he will be one of the losers*" (Q: 5:5). This verse is extraordinary in its implications for Jewish, Christian, and Muslim relations. In essence, the Qur'an is making it lawful for Muslims to marry Jews and Christians. Furthermore, this verse is clearly contradicting the harsh tone of verse 9:29. It is important to note that practicing Muslims all accept the process of Qur'anic abrogation so it is impossible for a Muslim to say that verse 9:29 trumps verse 5:5. The controversy surrounding verse 9:29 illustrates why both historical context and abrogation within the Qur'an are imperative in understanding the overall attitude and themes that the Qur'an contains regarding Muslim relations with Jews and Christians.

One final aspect concerning the ethics of war involves the *darura*, or necessity, of war. In other words, when is it ethically acceptable to resort to violence against one's enemy? When waging war the example of Muhammad and certain Qur'anic passages illustrates two points. First, warfare is permissible when it is waged for the overall welfare of the Muslim community. Second, warfare is permissible when it is done in response to an attack or a violation by an enemy of the community.⁷¹ It is already clear that Muhammad and his followers engaged in warfare only after the emigration to Medina. The reasons and motivations behind this fighting, however, have been debated by scholars repeatedly over the past centuries. What is clear is that Muhammad saw no problem in waging warfare against peoples he deemed a threat to his community.

Clearly, both Muhammad and the Qur'an provide details regarding the validity of warfare and the limitations placed upon it. However, what do these guidelines mean in relation to the Other? One of the most essential points to make regarding Muhammad and warfare is that the historical example and the verses found in the Qur'an are largely directed towards the polytheists. As discussed earlier, Muhammad spent much of his later life in conflict with the polytheists of Mecca. In addition, it was his crusade against polytheism and his revival of the monotheistic tradition of Abraham that served as the foundation of his religious message. There is no historical example left by Muhammad in which he engaged in violent campaigns to uproot Christian and Jewish communities. Such acts would seem to be contradictory to both his message and the protections granted to both Jews and Christians in the Qur'an. There is also no evidence of Muhammad waging campaigns of forced conversions of Jews and Christians.

⁷¹ Sohail H. Hashmi, "Saving and Taking Life in War," from *Islamic Ethics of Life: Abortion, War, and Euthanasia*, eds. Jonathan E. Brockopp (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 146-147

Finally, the evidence analyzed earlier indicates that Muhammad wished to incorporate both Jews and Christians into his movement. Should they choose to keep their religion they would still be able to follow the religious laws of their sacred books if they adhered to Muhammad's political leadership.

When it comes to the ethics of war, the examples of Muhammad and the Qur'an mostly reference the polytheists. Therefore, an analysis of both the Qur'an and the example of Muhammad indicates that warfare with the monotheistic Other was permissible at a certain time period in history but would be deemed impermissible in today's modern world due to Qur'anic abrogation. Clearly, later successors of Muhammad reached different conclusions but the theme of this paper is to understand the motivations and beliefs concerning the Other only through the historical Muhammad. Muhammad did not engage in violence with Jewish or Christian communities for the sole reason of them belonging to another faith. Rather, he followed the example of the Qur'an which contains numerous statements which infer that members of other monotheistic traditions are protected religions in Islam. In addition, certain passages indicate that members of the monotheistic Other are to be allowed to worship freely and unmolested. There are, however, cases where Muhammad viewed certain Jewish tribes living in Medina as hostile towards him and where he subsequently banished or subdued them. These conflicts with some of those Jewish tribes will now be discussed.

6.3 Muhammad and Conflict with the Other: An Overview of the Jewish Tribes of Medina

Muhammad's relationship with the Jewish tribes of Medina was a complicated one. Although there are examples of cooperation and co-existence, there are also numerous examples of conflict following his emigration to Medina. For the most part these conflicts were of a non-violent nature. Much of it stemmed from a resentment expressed by the Jewish tribes

concerning Muhammad's growing influence and popularity in Medina. For Muhammad, the hostilities that existed between him and his followers and the Jewish tribes were often baffling. It is probable that Muhammad did not expect such conflict to arise with the Jewish people. After all, he was preaching a message that he claimed was the same message originally brought by the Prophet Abraham. However, part of the problem regarding Muhammad's claim of prophet hood for the Jews concerned both his lineage and activity as a prophet and statesman.

Following Muhammad's emigration to Medina and the signing of the Constitution of Medina Muhammad believed that the Jewish tribes would be much more open to receive his religious message than they actually were. Muhammad soon realized that although the Jewish tribes may be open to him serving as their leader and arbitrator, they were not flocking to convert to his religious doctrine. First, the Jews openly questioned his lineage. After all, a Jewish prophet must certainly come from Jewish parents. How could Muhammad claim to be the final prophet for the Jews yet not be born into the Jewish faith? In response, Muhammad argued that his line of prophecy came through Ishmael, Abraham's son with his handmaiden, Hagar. However, Ishmael is also a problematic figure for the Jews. In fact, the Jews do not recognize Ishmael as one of their prophets at all and when he is mentioned in the Bible he is portrayed in a negative fashion: "*Then the Angel of the Lord said to her: You have conceived and will have a son. You will name him Ishmael, for the Lord has heard your [cry of] affliction. This man will be [like] a wild ass. His hand will be against everyone, and everyone's hand will be against him; he will live at odds with all his brothers*" (Genesis: 16:12). Clearly, the birth of Ishmael is not something that is celebrated by the Jews.

Next, the Jews were suspicious of Muhammad's actions in Medina. Their prophet was supposed to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, not establish a new community at Medina.

Clearly, Muhammad had no plans of rebuilding the Jewish temple. On the contrary, he had expected that the Jews would accept him as the final prophet and embrace the teachings of Islam. One final point to make regarding the relationship between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes involves the direction of prayer for Muslims. Muhammad and his followers originally prayed in the direction of Jerusalem.⁷² When tensions began to mount between Muhammad and the Jews the direction of prayer changed. In fact, a specific Qur'anic verse references this change: *"Who could be more wicked than those who prohibit the mention of God's name in His places of worship and strive to have them deserted? Such people should not enter them without fear; there is disgrace for them in this world and painful punishment in the Hereafter. The East and the West belong to God: wherever you there, there is His Face. God is all pervading and all knowing"* (Q: 2:114-115). In essence, it was the outright rejection of Muhammad as a prophet of God that resulted in tensions between both sides down the road. In order to best understand the complicated relationship between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes of Medina it is important to look at the works of Montgomery Watt, Asma Afsaruddin, Ibn Ishaq, and Martin Lings. Although it is impossible to ascertain a clear and final verdict concerning the exact nature of the relationship and conflict, a use of all of these scholars can provide one of the best possible historical interpretations concerning the complicated relationship between Muhammad and the Jews.

6.4 The Expulsion of the Bani Qaynuqa

Many of the Jewish tribes felt that the signing of the Constitution of Medina was not incumbent upon them.⁷³ In fact, many preferred the Meccan dominance of the Arabian

⁷² Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 99

⁷³ Martin Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* (Rochester: Inner Traditions, 2006), 164

Peninsula over Muhammad and his followers. When tensions started to arise between Muhammad and the Jews the verses of the Qur'an began to reflect and warn Muhammad of certain dangers: "*You who believe, do not take for your intimates such outsiders as spare no effort to ruin you and want to see you suffer: their hatred is evident from their mouths, but what their hearts conceal is far worse. We have made our revelations clear for you; will you not use your reason?*" (Q: 3:118). This passage references some of the Jewish clans who sought to undermine Muhammad's rule over Medina. In addition, it served as a warning to those who followed Muhammad to not befriend those who wished Muhammad out of Medina. During this time period Medina housed numerous Jewish clans. Those who were particularly hostile to Muhammad were the tribes of Bani Qaynuqa, Ban-Nadir, and the Qurayzah.⁷⁴ This hostility actually stemmed from the victory at the Battle of Badr, which had cemented Muhammad's rise to power in Medina and his claim of prophethood to his followers. In order to undermine his efforts some Jewish conspirators reported his activities to those in Mecca. In addition, some encouraged the Quraysh to muster an even larger force than had been assembled at the Battle of Badr in order to crush Muhammad and his followers once and for all.

Martin Lings recounts a story in *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources* where tensions between both sides finally boiled over.⁷⁵ Reportedly, it began when a Muslim woman came to sell goods in a part of Medina that housed some Jewish clans. The sources claim that she was insulted by a Jewish goldsmith. When one of the Helper's came to her defense and demanded an apology for the insult, a fight broke out between him and the goldsmith. The goldsmith was killed and in response the Jews killed the Helper. Anger arose on

⁷⁴ Ibid, 164

⁷⁵ See Lings, 165, for detailed account of the story.

both sides regarding the incident and the Helpers demanded vengeance. In response, the Bani Qaynuqa tribe began to raise a force. Whether this force was for offensive or defensive purposes remains unclear. However, those who were devoted to Muhammad quickly surrounded the tribe's fortress and demanded an immediate surrender. A representative of the Bani Qaynuqa realized that the surrounded force could be executed and therefore went to Muhammad and asked that his people be treated well. Muhammad ordered that their lives would be spared but that they must leave Medina immediately. This incident was the first in a series of conflicts between Muhammad and his followers and the Jewish tribes of Medina.

6.5 The Expulsion of the Banu-Nadir

The second conflict that arose between Muhammad and the Jews occurred with the Jewish tribe of Banu-Nadir in August of 625 CE. Islamic sources say that Muhammad received a message from God that members of the Banu-Nadir tribe were plotting to kill him.⁷⁶ In addition, the Banu-Nadir was accused of failing to pay a contribution of blood money that they owed to the tribe of Banu Amir. In response, Muhammad ordered that the Banu-Nadir must leave Medina. If they agreed to leave Muhammad told them that they would still be considered the owners of their palm-tree groves and that they would therefore receive a tribute of the produce grown from them. The Banu-Nadir refused this offer and prepared a defense of their fortress in Medina. Muhammad's followers quickly surrounded the fortress and a siege began that lasted about fifteen days.⁷⁷ With no way of getting supplies into the fortress, the Banu-Nadir was forced to surrender. Although they were granted their lives they were given less favorable

⁷⁶ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 149-150

⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 150

terms than originally offered by Muhammad. They were forced to depart to the neighboring town of Khaybar with six-hundred camels.

6.6 Origins of The Battle of Khandaq (Trench) and the Dealings of the Banu Qurayzah

Probably the most widely known and controversial conflict between Muhammad and the Jewish tribes occurred following the Battle of the Trench in 627 CE. The origins of this conflict lay with the banished tribes of Bani Qaynuqa and Banu-Nadir. Both tribes were angry at having been banished from Medina and the Banu-Nadir specifically was largely responsible for the organization of the Meccan confederacy that initiated the battle. Prior to the onset of the Battle of the Trench the Banu-Nadir openly announced their support for the Meccans.⁷⁸ In addition, they were successful in convincing another tribe, the Banu Ghatafan, to join the Meccan confederacy against Muhammad and his followers. They were able to do this by promising the Banu Ghatafan half of their date harvest from Khaybar. This of course rested on the assumption that the Meccan confederacy would be successful and allow the Banu-Nadir to regain their lands in Medina.

The Banu-Nadir was not the only Jewish tribe that supported the confederacy building against Muhammad. Another such tribe was the Banu Qurayzah. Prior to the battle commencing the Banu Qurayzah abided to the non-belligerency treaty that they had signed with Muhammad and loaned the Muslims the tools that were necessary to dig the trench around Medina. However, when they realized the enormous force that the Meccans had mustered against Medina they broke their pact with the Muslims. The Banu Qurayzah openly preached a stance of neutrality while secretly entering into negotiations with the leading members of the

⁷⁸Afsaruddin, *The First Muslims: History and Memory*, 9

Quraysh and the Banu Ghatafan against the Muslims.⁷⁹ While in contact with the Meccans the Banu Qurayzah provided them with information regarding Muhammad and his forces. In addition, the tribe came close to attacking Muhammad from the rear during the siege. Such a conspiracy violated the terms of the non-belligerency treaty and posed a huge threat to Medina and the Muslim community during the battle.

6.7 The Battle of Khandaq (Trench)

The Battle of the Trench occurred in 627 CE and lasted about two weeks. By the time that the battle took place the Meccans were extremely frustrated with the growing threat posed by Muhammad and his community at Medina. The Meccans were used to being the dominant political, religious, and social force in Arabia prior to the rise of Muhammad. They were a force un-challenged and they were not accustomed to anyone or any group threatening their position in the region. Therefore, they hoped to assemble a vast army in an effort to completely wipe out the Medinan community. In total, the Meccans were able to comprise a force of about 10,000 men, divided into three separate corps.⁸⁰ In addition, they had about 300 cavalry within this force. Their numbers doubled the amount of men that Muhammad could bring to the field. Furthermore, their superior cavalry could simply march over the ground forces of Muhammad's army should they meet openly in battle. Muhammad quickly realized that meeting the Meccan force in the open field would mean a total defeat of not only his army but his community as a whole.

Muhammad was unsure of how to meet the Meccan force that was now threatening Medina. Therefore, he decided the best solution was to assemble a war council in order to

⁷⁹ Ibid, 9

⁸⁰ Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 166

discuss ideas concerning how to defeat the large Meccan force marching towards them.⁸¹ It was suggested that a trench be dug wherever Medina was vulnerable to a cavalry charge.

Muhammad agreed with this course of action and the trench was dug in the northern part of the city. The trench took six days to complete and Muhammad worked alongside the Emigrants and the Helpers in completing its construction.⁸² It is important to remember that warfare in Arabia during this time consisted of men and horses meeting each other on the open field. Siege warfare did not exist and the Meccans were completely thrown off guard when they reached the city and encountered the trench.⁸³ However, with no other option besides retreating back to Mecca, the Meccans laid siege to the city.

During the siege of Medina the Meccans tried to persuade the Jewish clan of Banu Qurayzah to openly attack Muhammad and his forces.⁸⁴ However, they refused to take this course of action. During the siege Muhammad decided to initiate negotiations with some of the nomadic tribes that were a part of the Meccan force in hopes of evening the numbers. Specifically, he offered them a third of the date harvest of Medina if they agreed to retire from the field of battle. However, the leading Helpers protested any negotiations with the enemy and Muhammad consented and called off the bargaining. Nevertheless, things began to spiral downwards for the Meccans shortly after the siege began. A month before the battle the Medinans had harvested their crops, making it extremely difficult for the Meccans to feed their horses. Food also ran short and the Meccan's morale plummeted. They had assembled the largest force possible to crush Muhammad once and for all yet they could not defeat his forces

⁸¹ Lings, *Muhammad: His Life Based on the Earliest Sources*, 223

⁸² Watt, *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman*, 168

⁸³ *Ibid*, 168

⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 169

dug in behind the walls of Medina. The Meccans were ultimately forced to retreat in defeat. They headed back to Mecca with Muhammad and his community still intact and invigorated more than ever.

6.8 The Fate of the Banu Qurayzah

The fate of the Banu Qurayzah has been examined and analyzed by numerous scholars of religious history. Two of the best accounts can be found in the work of W. Montgomery Watt's *Muhammad: Prophet and Statesman* and Asma Afsaruddin's *The First Muslims: History and Memory*. Immediately following the Meccan withdrawal from Medina, Muhammad summoned his forces to the fortress of the Banu Qurayzah. The Banu Qurayzah had broken the treaty that they had signed with Muhammad. They had been in contact with the Meccan forces during the siege and the information that they had provided to the enemy could have been disastrous for Muhammad and his community. Their actions were treasonous in the eyes of Muhammad and his followers and he believed that this threat within his own community needed to be eliminated. Prior to this victory Muhammad may not have been able to take such action against the Banu Qurayzah stronghold. However, this stunning victory in the face of a superior foe made Muhammad realize that his position of power was growing not only in Medina but throughout Arabia as a whole.

Muhammad and his forces surrounded the Banu Qurayzah stronghold that resulted in a siege that lasted twenty-five days.⁸⁵ Muhammad demanded their immediate and unconditional surrender. Many of the other clans, realizing the potential fate of the Banu Qurayzah, went to Muhammad and asked that he show mercy on the clan if they surrendered. In addition, the Banu Qurayzah asked that they be given the same treatment as the Banu-Nadir. In essence,

⁸⁵ Ibid, 171

they were hoping to be banished from Medina and never be allowed to return. However, Muhammad decided to leave their fate up to someone who was trusted and respected throughout Medina. Ibn Ishaq reports that the fate of the Banu Qurayzah was entrusted to Sa'd ibn Mu'adh, a member of the tribe of Aws and ally of the Banu Qurayzah.⁸⁶ Ibn Mu'adh was seriously wounded in the Battle of the Trench and he died soon after his decision. The Aws swore to abide by whatever decision that ibn Mu'adh made.

The judgment of ibn Mu'adh was extremely harsh. He decided that the fate of the Banu Qurayzah must follow the law laid out in Deuteronomy.⁸⁷ All of the men were to be executed and the women and children were to be sold into slavery. Many see this event as a catalyst for Jewish-Arab hostilities throughout the Middle East. However, a few important points need to be made before jumping to such a conclusion. First, the Banu Qurayzah were only punished because their actions, if successful, would have destroyed Muhammad's young community at Medina. They had engaged in treasonous activities and their aid to the Meccans could have proved disastrous to Muhammad and his followers at Medina. Furthermore, how could Muhammad ever trust the Banu Qurayzah again when hostilities with the Meccans were at an all time high? Therefore, the authority rested with Muhammad and the leaders of the various clans to decide the punishment of the Banu Qurayzah.

Muhammad had allowed the Jewish clans to remain and live in Medina as long as they were not hostile to himself or his followers. It is clear that when any tribe posed a threat to his community Muhammad was not hesitant to take action against them and remove them from Medina. This should not, however, lead to a conclusion that Muhammad had an anti-Jewish

⁸⁶ See Alfred Guillaume's, *The Life of Muhammad: A Translation of Ibn Ishaq's Sirat Rasul Allah* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 461-48 for full account.

⁸⁷ See Deuteronomy 20:12-18.

agenda. It is important to remember that Muhammad at first used diplomacy with the Jews residing in Medina and established a domestic policy based on coexistence. This is illustrated through the Constitution of Medina and through non-belligerency treaties. The execution of the Banu Qurayzah is significant because of the threat that they posed to both the political authority of Muhammad and his community in Medina. If their betrayal had been successful Muhammad and his community could have been completely wiped out. Clearly, the judgment was harsh and unprecedented in Muhammad's rule in Medina. However, an analysis of the events leads to a conclusion that the execution was not the result of a planned attack on the religious Other for being different but rather an attack on a tribe who had broken their treaty with Muhammad.

VII. Conclusion

The evidence presented in this paper provides an outline concerning how Muhammad interacted with other religions that existed in Arabia during his lifetime. The information allows us to see a rudimentary foreign policy model that the early Muslim community, with Muhammad acting as the head of state, exhibited towards other communities. It is important to differentiate between those religions that are protected within the Qur'an, such as Judaism and Christianity, and those religions that are not, such as polytheism. All of these religions existed within Arabia during the lifetime of Muhammad. In fact, one can go so far as to say that Muhammad's relationship with the polytheists of Mecca shaped and influenced his political actions towards other religions. While Muhammad and his followers abhorred the practice of polytheism and the degradation of the Ka'bah by the various idols, they sought to incorporate the early Jews and Christians into their movement through the shared bond of monotheism. Furthermore, even though Muhammad and the teachings of Islam condemn the practice of polytheism, the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya illustrates his willingness to at least compromise with polytheists. Therefore, if a foreign policy model is to be taken from Muhammad, it must be concentrated on his relations with Jews and Christians but also take into account his relations with the polytheists of Mecca.

To help layout a foreign policy model it is essential to begin with Muhammad's use of diplomacy with the Other. Furthermore, it is important that we differentiate between a

domestic policy concerning the Other within and a foreign policy concerning the Other without. First, the Constitution of Medina set a standard regarding how Muhammad viewed the early Jewish communities living in Medina, and it is the best example of Muhammad's establishment of a domestic policy with the Other within, specifically inside the walls of Medina. In essence, the document is the framework of his domestic policy with the Jewish tribes. It created a community founded on the tradition of monotheism that was bound to protect one another in times of conflict. The document illustrates that during the early period of the emigration Muhammad did not seek to eliminate the practice of Judaism in Medina nor did he wish to have Islam dominate the city. It is true that Muhammad sought to convert the Jewish tribes and that he was frustrated by their lack of support for his religious message. However, those who did not convert were allowed to practice their religion as before. In addition, the example of the Qur'an supports Muhammad's actions. The People of the Book are distinct from polytheists and practice a revealed religion that is protected in Qur'anic teachings. It is true that there are certain tenets of the Jewish and Christian faiths that the Qur'an frequently takes issue with and outright rejects. However, these issues do not negate the fact that Judaism and Christianity are still said to be revealed religions from God. They have their place in the history of monotheism. The domestic policy that Muhammad practiced with the Jewish tribes upon his arrival in Median illustrates this Qur'anic principle.

As a political head of state Muhammad also engaged with the Other outside the walls of Medina. This interaction resulted in a foreign policy with peoples who could not and would not be a part of his monotheistic community at Medina. The best example of a foreign policy with the Other without is the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya. Specifically, the treaty exemplifies Muhammad's willingness to negotiate with his enemies. After an analysis of the treaty, one can

conclude that Muhammad practiced a foreign policy that incorporated compromise even when the terms were not in his favor. Although it is clear that Muhammad must have been forced to negotiate with the Quraysh at al-Hudaybiyya since he was in no way prepared for a physical confrontation, the treaty does illustrate that he was willing to use diplomacy outside the walls of Medina. Furthermore, when Muhammad was in a greater military position than his adversary and he was able to conquer Mecca, he did not resort to violence and bloodshed. Rather, he again used diplomacy and granted a general amnesty to the city. It is true that Muhammad engaged in warfare throughout his career as a political head of state. However, examples such as the Treaty of al-Hudaybiyya and the bloodless conquest of Mecca illustrates that he was not a militant warlord who resorted only to violence but a politically savvy head of state who understood the benefits of diplomacy and compromise.

Muhammad's political model is heavily shaped by both pragmatism and pluralism. His pragmatic approach towards incorporating all of the monotheistic faiths under a single banner illustrates his desire for coexistence with the Other. The early Believers movement adhered to the same values, religious teachings, and pious lifestyle which served to bond them together. Their mutual struggle against polytheism provided them with a single principle against which to unite. Muhammad understood this and used his political skills to build his community of monotheists into a single political entity seeking to remove polytheism from Mecca. Jews and Christians constituted part of this early movement which again illustrates Muhammad's example of coexistence with the Other. Of course, after Muhammad's death the Islamic community splintered into different factions. Furthermore, Muhammad's early believer's movement gradually became completely distinct from both Judaism and Christianity and evolved into the

Islam that exists today. However, was this Muhammad's original goal? The evidence suggests that this may not have been the case.

Clearly, violence occurred during Muhammad's lifetime both with the Other within and the Other without. There was conflict between the Jewish tribes of Medina and Muhammad which resulted in the exile or death of those tribes. In addition, there was also a lifelong struggle against the Quraysh of Mecca. However, these examples of violence with the Other are not a constant theme throughout Muhammad's lifetime. The conflict with the Jewish tribes was not the result of religious differences but the result of balances of power and political struggles. The Jews were not expelled because they rejected Muhammad's religious teachings. Rather, their expulsion resulted from political tensions resulting from Muhammad's status as head of state. Many of the Jewish tribes preferred the Quraysh's dominance over Arabia to Muhammad's. Some sought to undermine his political rule by providing information to the Quraysh during times of war, both violating the non-belligerency treaties and threatening the young community in its infancy. It is important to remember that Muhammad found himself a leader of a community that was far from being firmly established. He faced attacks from a dominant force in Mecca all the while balancing his political rule in Medina. Trying to fight both the Meccans and what he believed to be conspirators and traitors within the walls of Medina may well have destroyed his community shortly after its establishment. Therefore, he used his political and military will to quell internal dissent and expel those who threatened his rule.

The execution of the Banu Qurayzah was extremely harsh and violent. It is an example of the harsh climate and history of violent warfare that was firmly established in Arabia during this time period. However, it was not a precedent. It was a violent action taken by Muhammad in the wake of a foreign policy that was up to this point largely based on coexistence with the

Other. The Quraysh had immediately tried to quell Muhammad and his followers once he began openly preaching his religious message. While residing in Mecca Muhammad resorted to non-violence even in the face of torture, starvation, and sometimes death for his followers. It was not until Muhammad became a head of state in Medina that he responded to these attacks through force of his own. For scholars and commentators to use the execution of the Banu Qurayzah to argue that Muhammad initiated a long standing policy of violence and warfare towards the Other is to ignore large portions of Muhammad's history.

What do all of these examples tell us about the historical Muhammad's policy towards the Other? How do we layout a foreign policy model with examples of both coexistence and violence with the Other? The answer is quite simple. Political models and foreign policies are never single entities that follow only one underlying principle. Rather, they are adaptive, ever-changing models that are influenced by a great host of varying factors. Foreign policies are largely based on a mutual coexistence of those that are different from one another. They seek to preserve a way of life that allows for different religions, values, norms, and world views to exist on the same plane. This diversity makes it only natural that tensions will arise.

Muhammad's political model and attitudes towards the Other are no different than the foreign policies exhibited by today's governments. Furthermore, just like with today's governments, Muhammad had to deal with tensions within his own state and conflicts with other powers. This resulted in the examples of foreign policy and domestic policy laid out in this paper. There is cooperation and coexistence, but there is violence as well.

The best of foreign policies still do not negate the fact that sometimes violence and warfare are inevitable. I submit that Muhammad above all understood the benefits of coexistence with the Other and preferred diplomacy and negotiation over violence. There is no

doubt that the early Jewish and Christian tribes frustrated him and at times even infuriated him for what he believed to be both the rejection of his religious message and their efforts to usurp his rule in Medina. However, Muhammad understood just as today's governments understand that you cannot hope to battle the entire world and survive. You must sometimes compromise with those that you disagree with. This is clearly exemplified by Muhammad's strategic negotiations with the Meccans at al-Hudaybiyya. Muhammad took a pragmatic approach in dealing with a religion that he openly rejected. Finally, I submit that Muhammad wished to incorporate Jews and Christians into his community based on religious principles and a shared adherence to monotheism. Therefore, he adopted a policy that at the very least offered a mutual coexistence with the Other and at the very best sought to incorporate the Other into a single political and religious movement.

Appendix

Sahifat al-Madina, or Constitution of Medina⁸⁸

In the name of God the Compassionate, the Merciful. This is a document from Muhammad the prophet [governing the relations] between the believers and Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib, and those who followed them and joined them and laboured with them. They are one community (*umma*) to the exclusion of all men. The Quraysh emigrants according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit within their number and shall redeem their prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers.

The B. 'Auf according to their present custom shall pay the bloodwit they paid in heathenism; every section shall redeem its prisoners with the kindness and justice common among believers. The B. Sa'ida, the B. 'I-Harith, and the B. Jusham, and the B. al-Najjar likewise.

The B. 'Amr b. 'Auf, the B. al-Nabit and the B. al-'Aus likewise.

Believers shall not leave anyone destitute among them by not paying his redemption money or bloodwit in kindness (283).

A believer shall not take as an ally the freedman of another Muslim against him. The God-fearing believers shall be against the rebellious or him who seeks to spread injustice, or sin or enmity, or corruption between believers; the hand of every man shall be against him even if he be a son of one of them. A believer shall not slay a believer for the sake of an unbeliever, nor shall he aid an unbeliever against a believer. God's protection is one, the least of them may give protection to a stranger on their behalf. Believers are friends one to the other to the exclusion of outsiders. To the Jew who follows us belong help and equality. He shall not be wronged nor shall his enemies be aided. The peace of the believers is indivisible. No separate peace shall be made when believers are fighting in the way of God. Conditions must be fair and equitable to all. In every foray a rider must take another behind him. The believers must avenge the blood of one another shed in the way of God. The God-fearing believers enjoy the best and most upright guidance. No polytheist shall take the property or person of Quraysh under his protection nor shall he intervene against a believer. Whosoever is convicted of killing a believer without good reason shall be subject to retaliation unless the next of kin is satisfied (with blood-money), and the believers shall be against him as one man, and they are bound to take action against him.

⁸⁸ Translated from Ibn Ishaq's *Sirat Rasul Allah* by Alfred Guillaume.

It shall not be lawful to a believer who holds by what is in this document and believes in God and the last day to help an evil-doer or to shelter him. The curse of God and His anger on the day of resurrection will be upon him if he does, and neither repentance nor ransom will be received from him. Whenever you differ about a matter it must be referred to God and to Muhammad.

The Jews shall contribute to the cost of war so long as they are fighting alongside the believers. The Jews of the B. 'Auf are one community with the believers (the Jews have their religion and the Muslims have theirs), their freedmen and their persons except those who behave unjustly and sinfully, for they hurt but themselves and their families. The same applies to the Jews of the B. al-Najjar, B. al-Harith, B. Sa'ida, B. Jusham, B. al-Aus, B. Tha'laba, and the Jafna, a clan of the Tha'laba and the B. al-Shutayba. Loyalty is a protection against treachery. The freedmen of Tha'laba are as themselves. The close friends of the Jews are as themselves. None of them shall go out to war save with the permission of Muhammad, but he shall not be prevented from taking revenge for a wound. He who slays a man without warning slays himself and his household, unless it be one who has wronged him, for God will accept that. The Jews must bear their expenses and the Muslims their expenses. Each must help the other against anyone who attacks the people of this document. They must seek mutual advice and consultation, and loyalty is a protection against treachery. A man is not liable for his ally's misdeeds. The wronged must be helped. The Jews must pay with the believers so long as war lasts. Yathrib shall be a sanctuary for the people of this document. A stranger under protection shall be as his host doing no harm and committing no crime. A woman shall only be given protection with the consent of her family. If any dispute or controversy likely to cause trouble should arise it must be referred to God and to Muhammad the apostle of God. God accepts what is nearest to piety and goodness in this document. Quraysh and their helpers shall not be given protection. The contracting parties are bound to help one another against any attack on Yathrib. If they are called to make peace and maintain it they must do so; and if they make a similar demand on the Muslims it must be carried out except in the case of a holy war. Every one shall have his portion from the side to which he belongs; the Jews of al-Aus, their freedmen and themselves have the same standing with the people of this document in pure loyalty from the people of this document (284).

Loyalty is a protection against treachery: He who acquires aught acquires it for himself. God approves of this document. This deed will not protect the unjust and the sinner. The man who goes forth to fight and the man who stays at home in the city is safe unless he has been unjust and sinned. God is the protector of the good and God-fearing man and Muhammad is the apostle of God.

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