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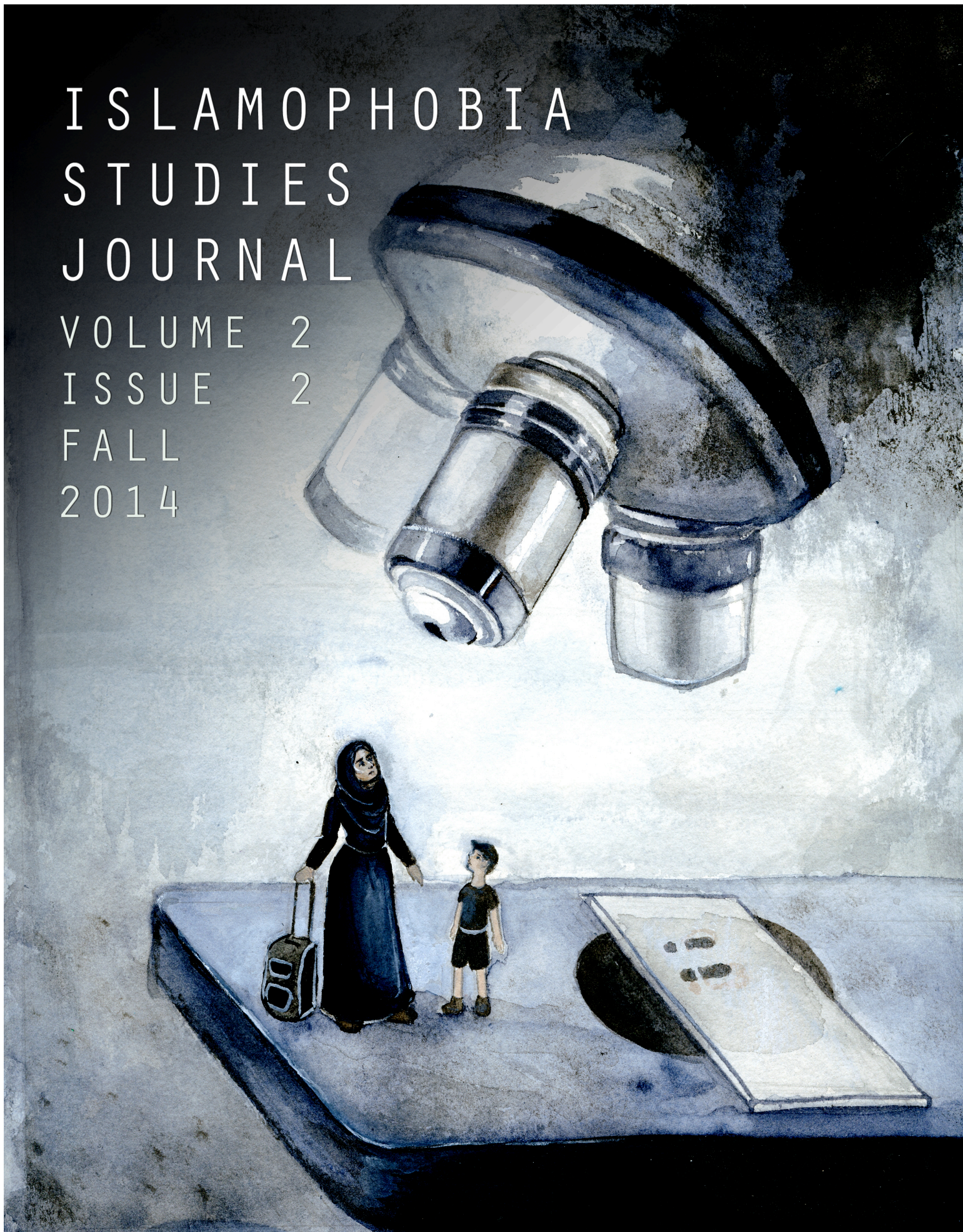
"Ex-Muslims," Bible Prophecy, and Islamophobia: Rhetoric and Reality in the Narratives of Walid Shoebat, Kamal Saleem, Ergun and Emir Caner

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Abstract: The connection between Christian dispensationalism ("rapture" theology) and anti-Muslim sentiments is an understudied topic often missing from the scholarship on Islamophobia. This paper is an attempt to fill this gap by focusing on the problematic narratives of four prominent "ex-Muslim" converts to Christianity: Walid Shoebat, Kamal Saleem, Ergun and Emir Caner. I argue that these men have used their Middle Eastern heritages to coax the public into believing that they are former terrorists in order to sell books, demonize Islam, and promote their particular interpretation of Christianity.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years several Christians of Middle Eastern descent have entered the public discourse on Islam claiming to be "ex-Muslim extremists" who are now on a mission to warn America about the "evils" of Islam. The tales promoted by these men create a dualistic and totalizing worldview in which Islam is presented solely in negative terms in polar opposition to the positive values attributed to Christianity and Judaism. Moreover, the rhetoric they use is strikingly similar to that of professional Islamophobes and each of the men discussed here have a particularly close relationship to Christian dispensationalism. This paper will examine the Islamophobic propaganda espoused by these "ex-Muslim radicals" through their own writings and appearances in the media while also using the example of early modern British narratives of Barbary captivity for comparative analysis. As the stories of these men have undergone further scrutiny, many of their claims have been found to be outright falsehoods or at least highly problematic. It is this author's contention that these men have utilized their Middle Eastern ethnicities to their advantage economically as well as to the advantage of dispensationalism through their othering of Muslims. According to Herman and Chomsky, "former radicals who have come to "see the light" represent a "class of experts whose prominence is largely a function of serviceability to power."[1] Their stories serve a powerful rhetorical function in the service of Islamophobia.

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

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[1] Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1998), 24.

comes to "truly" know Jesus as their savior.[2] Evangelicals typically place a strong emphasis on evangelizing and stress the authority of the Bible over human intermediaries. While evangelicals are highly active in American politics and many, if not most, are politically conservative, a significant proportion of evangelicals fall to the opposite side of the political spectrum. The term "fundamentalist" is also not precise enough here since there are Christians that could be classified as fundamentalist, but not dispensationalist. Therefore, dispensationalism, which will be briefly described below, is the most accurate term for describing the specific theological leanings of the "ex-Muslims" that will be focused upon here.

Dispensationalism is a form of futurist premillennialist eschatology based on two modern theological innovations that were introduced by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882) in the early nineteenth century – the concept of a secret "rapture" of the "true" believers (meaning "born-again" evangelicals only) and the idea that God has two separate and distinct plans for the Church and for the Jews.[3] This theological system divides history into major eras of biblical history, called dispensations. The creation of Israel in 1948 and the retaking of Jerusalem and the West Bank by the Israeli army during the Six-Day War of 1967, events dispensationalists claim are fulfillments of biblical prophecy, along with the popularity of Hal Lindsey's *The Late Great Planet Earth* (1970) and the *Left Behind* novels of Tim LaHaye and Jerry B. Jenkins have been instrumental in catapulting dispensationalism to mainstream prominence among evangelical Christians in America. Dispensationalists read contemporary geo-political events into the prophetic writings of the Bible, especially the books of Daniel and Revelation. Some of the most popular preachers in America, including John Hagee, Rod Parsley, and Mark Driscoll, are followers of this eschatological framework. Dispensationalists are extremely active in American politics, especially in promoting pro-Israel causes, but most importantly, dispensationalists are highly effective promoters of Islamophobia.[4] In fact, their efforts have been so effective that American attitudes towards Islam are actually worse today than in the year following the September 11 attacks.[5]

Dispensationalists have been able to alter the discourse on Islam through their calculated use of the mass media. According to Edward Said, "a corps of experts on the Islamic world has risen to prominence, and during a crisis they are brought out to pontificate

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

[3] For a more in-depth treatment of dispensationalist theology, see Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism 1875-1925* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1979). Also closely related to dispensationalism is Christian Zionism, which is Christian support for the state of Israel and the ideology of Zionism. For works on this ideology see Stephen Sizer, *Christian Zionism: Roadmap to Armageddon?* (London: IVP Academic, 2005); Stephen Sizer, *Zion's Christian Soldiers: The Bible, Israel and the Church* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007); and Stephen Spector, *Evangelicals and Israel: The Story of American Christian Zionism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[4] Some well-known dispensationalist politicians include former Alaska governor Sarah Palin, former U.S. presidents Ronald Reagan and George W. Bush, Senator James Inhofe (OK), and former House Minority Whip Tom Delay.

[5] Nathan Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry: How the Right Manufactures Fear of Muslims* (London: Pluto Press, 2012), 3; and "Public Remains Conflicted over Islam," August 24, 2010, *Pew Research Center*,
<http://www.pewforum.org/2010/08/24/public-remains-conflicted-over-islam/> (accessed April 3, 2014).

on formulaic ideas about Islam on news programs or talk shows" where they spread "previously discredited, Orientalist ideas."[6] Shoebat, Saleem, and the Caner brothers have used their "Muslim-sounding" names and alleged biographies to become those experts claiming an "insider" status aimed at bolstering their credibility. The othering of Islam promoted by these men then becomes "objective" in the view of those consumers who read their books or hear them speak in public. This effectively masks the othering discourse present in their rhetoric allowing Islamophobia to go unrecognized and become an "unconscious ideology."[7]

The work of Stuart Hall is helpful to shed some light upon the inner workings of othering discourses. Hall defines naturalization as "a representational strategy designed to fix difference, and thus secure it "forever" or "to secure discursive or ideological closure." [8] The Islamophobic discourse seeks to *naturalize* its definitions and interpretations of Islamic concepts, thereby fixing the way Americans view Muslims. In this way, an Islamic concept like *shari'a* becomes fixed as a rigid system of laws requiring stoning and the subjugation of women in the minds of Westerners making it impossible for it to be seen as the relatively flexible legal and ethical code of conduct practiced by many Muslims around the world.[9] Related to naturalization is the concept of stereotyping which "symbolically fixes boundaries, and excludes everything that does not belong" thereby setting up strong dualisms (normal/abnormal, us/them, etc.) and, according to Hall, "tends to occur where there are gross inequalities of power."[10] Those promoting anti-Islam propaganda typically deploy the term "Judeo-Christian" as a means of establishing a boundary cutting off Islam from the other two Abrahamic faiths. "Judeo-Christian" then becomes synonymous with Western civilization which, in turn, becomes synonymous with the positive values of freedom, peace, and civilization, while "Islamic" becomes synonymous with the negative values of tyranny, barbaric, violent, and so on. It is through these principles that othering discourses operate. In the section that follows, the definition of Islamophobia to be used in this paper will be delineated.

DEFINING ISLAMOPHOBIA

In the most literal sense, Islamophobia could be defined simply as the irrational fear of Muslims, yet the term has come to signify an entire discourse of othering for which scholars have differed on how to define it as well as debated its usefulness as an academic concept. The most useful definitions provided by scholars are those that treat Islamophobia as an othering discourse similar to racism and anti-Semitism. While the term "Islamophobia" was used prior to 9/11 by scholars, the term did not enter the mainstream American discourse until after those attacks and with the body of anti-Islam literature and media propaganda that followed. Anas Al-Shaikh-Ali states that while "Islamophobia did not start

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[6] Edward Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How We See the Rest of the World* (New York: Vintage Books, 1997), xi.

[7] Said, *Covering Islam*, 49.

[8] Stuart Hall ed., *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1997), 245.

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

[10] Hall, *Representation*, 258.

in the wake of 9/11...the phenomena has substantially increased [since then]" and has "evolved to become an explicit, almost anti-Semitic style criticism of Islam and Muslims without in fact being acknowledged as such."[11] Chris Allen criticizes the term for its inclusion of "phobia" which, according to him, transforms the phenomenon into a sort of "disease" or "illness" and thus masks the deliberateness of those who produce and transmit anti-Islam ideology.[12] Allen ultimately settles on a definition of Islamophobia as an ideology which functions similar to racism by formulating a negative image of Islam and Muslims.[13] Marcel Maussen argues that the term is problematic because it "conflates various forms of discourses and acts of violence suggesting that they all emanate from an identical ideological core."[14] On this point, I tend to agree with Maussen. Some promote anti-Islam ideology from a secular perspective while others anti-Muslim activists come from a specifically Christian perspective. However, many of those in the United States who adopt Islamophobic ideology get their information from dispensationalist sources disguised as "experts" or "insiders."

Erik Bleich's article "Defining and Researching Islamophobia" summarizes the various definitions put forth by scholars for the phenomenon while also critiquing the problems inherent with the term such as its ambiguity or its highly-contested and polarizing nature. He also critiques how scholars deploy the term in such a manner as to render identifying instances of Islamophobia difficult. In the end, Bleich offers a definition of Islamophobia as "indiscriminate negative attitudes or emotions directed at Islam or Muslims," and like Allen, sees Islamophobia as a discourse which functions similar to racism.[15]

Following Allen and Bleich, I define Islamophobia as an othering discourse which functions similarly to racism by creating an "us/them" dualism that defines "them" in negative terms in opposition to what "we" or "us" are ("they" are barbaric, "we" are civilized). The term Islamophobia will be used here to refer specifically to the discourse promoted by anti-Islam activists, scholars, politicians, political pundits, as well as television and talk radio hosts who knowingly and willingly advance negative stereotypes and broad sweeping generalizations about Islam and Muslims, even if they themselves believe their rhetoric to be unbiased. Ordinary Americans or Christians who consume and subsequently retransmit Islamophobic rhetoric should not be referred to as Islamophobes since they may not be fully aware of the political and religious motivations of those who create and promote such rhetoric, thus taking Islamophobic analyses as objective.[16] I reserve the term "Islamophobe" for those who dedicate their lives to spreading anti-Islam propaganda due to their own ideological biases against Islam and Muslims. Anxiety about terrorism or fear of Muslims due to constant exposure to news stories about violent Muslim extremists or militant attacks is not, in itself, Islamophobia. Likewise, as Mohamed Nimer accurately

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

[12] Chris Allen, *Islamophobia* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2010), 135.

[13] Allen, *Islamophobia*, 190.

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

[15] Erik Bleich, "Defining and Researching Islamophobia," *Review of Middle East Studies* Vol. 46, No. 2 (Winter 2012), 182.

[16] Acknowledging the problems inherent in the terms "religion" and "religious" as outlined by scholars such as J.Z. Smith, Timothy Fitzgerald, and Russell McCutcheon, I nevertheless deploys these terms due to their pervasiveness in the discourse on both Islam and Christianity.

points out, critically examining the beliefs and practices of certain Muslims, especially those that promote fundamentalism and the denial of rights to women, religious minorities, and others, is not Islamophobia either, just as critically examining dispensationalism is not anti-Christian nor should refuting certain aspects of U.S. history be considered anti-American.[17] The next section will discuss early modern British narratives of Barbary captivity in the context of othering and Protestant rhetoric. This example will help to illuminate the othering and dispensationalist propaganda found in the narratives of the "ex-Muslims" examined in the final section.

EARLY MODERN BRITISH NARRATIVES OF BARBARY CAPTIVITY

In order to illustrate the rhetorical function served by the stories of the men examined in this paper more clearly, it is necessary to refer back to the early modern period for an example which offers some strong parallels, that of Barbary captivity narratives written by British subjects. These narratives purport to describe the events surrounding the capture of Englishmen by pirates from Muslim lands and claim to provide insider information about Islamic culture. There were some authentic tales of Barbary captivity and many accounts did, indeed, contain some factual information about Muslim culture. Despite this, many also were filled with anti-Muslim bias and overt falsehoods.

During the early modern period, the British began to interact with Muslims and learn about Islamic culture on a relatively widespread basis. According to Maxime Rodinson, during this period many Europeans began to develop a more objective view of Islam and Muslims due to increased interactions in the diplomatic and economic spheres as well as a dramatic increase in travel to Muslim lands.[18] This period in Europe also witnessed the establishment of Arabic chairs at universities while printing presses translated many Arabic works into European languages.[19] This was no doubt troubling to the Protestant establishment in England, which helps to explain the popularity of Barbary captivity narratives in church circles. Many captivity narratives were written at this time as the increase in trade between England and North Africa also brought about a dramatic increase in piracy and the capture of English subjects for ransom or to be sold in slave markets. Estimates for the number of British captives taken by Barbary pirates vary, but evidence suggests thousands.[20] Because of the poor economic conditions back home, according to Nabil Matar, many captives converted to Islam and integrated into Muslim society where opportunities were plentiful.[21] Daniel Vitkus notes that adult conversions to Islam were rarely forced upon the captives,[22] so claims to that effect often found in the captivity narratives are most likely

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[17] Mohamed Nimer, "Islamophobia and Anti-Americanism," in *Islamophobia: The Challenge of Pluralism in the 21st Century*, ed. John L. Esposito and Ibrahim Kalin (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 77.

[18] Maxime Rodinson, *Europe and the Mystique of Islam* (New York: I.B. Tauris, 2002), 37.

[19] Richard Fletcher, *The Cross and the Crescent: The Dramatic Story of the Earliest Encounters between Christians and Muslims* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), 155.

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

[21] Daniel J. Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption: Barbary Captivity Narratives from Early Modern England* (New York: Columbia UP, 2001), 2.

[22] Daniel Vitkus, *Turning Turk: English Theater and the Multicultural Mediterranean, 1570-1630* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 111.

false and should be considered sensationalism. Many captives were even given a degree of freedom to move about cities and start businesses under certain circumstances.[23]

Church leaders in England played a crucial role in getting captives released and returned to England through fundraising campaigns which, according to Linda Colley, were instrumental in shaping public opinions about Muslims since audiences were exposed to sermons and speeches about encountering the other.[24] Captivity narratives were most likely read at these events to draw sympathy for British prisoners held in "strange" lands by "strange" people. "Faced with the worrying reality that Islam strongly appealed to many Christians, English readers turned for comfort to a series of captivity narratives that testified against the allure of Islam and promised that the Protestant deity would deliver English slaves from bondage, if only they kept the faith," says Vitkus.[25]

There is strong evidence that the rhetoric of the Barbary captivity narratives worked. Matar argues that during this period Englishmen created a dominant negative image of Muslims primarily within the contexts of popular literature and Christian theology since government and commercial documents do not show the same level of anti-Muslim bigotry and stereotyping.[26] Captivity narratives helped to create an image of the Barbary republics as a "hell on earth" according to G.A. Starr.[27] Joe Snader states that the captivity narratives played a major role in Protestant propaganda from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century.[28] Historian Norman Daniel says that polemics were written primarily to uphold faith and were meant to scare those at a distance from Muslim lands, but also protect those Christians who found themselves in their domain from becoming infected by the culture.[29] The captivity narratives of this period should be understood as an effort to dramatically alter the discourse about Islam and prevent Englishmen from being lured into their realm.

These narratives routinely portray non-Protestant groups, for example, Jews, Moors, Negroes, Turks, and Catholics, as the exotic and dangerous "other" in opposition to the "virtuous, pious, and freedom-loving" Protestant Englishmen. Many of these narratives contain strong anti-Muslim and anti-Turk sentiments. Sodomy is a frequent charge hurled against the Muslim people encountered by the British captives. These narratives represent an othering discourse in which the Protestant Englishmen are "us" and everyone else, especially Muslims, is "them." It should be noted the writers or editors of these narratives are not necessarily the men mentioned in the titles. Some of these tales were revised for specific audiences, particularly church crowds.

Here are but a few examples from these narratives. In John Rawlins' *The Famous and Wonderful Recovery of a Ship of Bristol, Called the Exchange, from the Turkish Pirates of Algiers* (1622), whenever the author describes the Turks doing something positive, they are described as "Christian-like."[30] But more often than not, they are described as cruel and barbaric. The

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[23] Nabil Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen in the Age of Discovery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 90.

[24] Linda Colley, *Captives: Britain, Empire, and the World, 1600-1850* (New York: Anchor Books, 2002), 75.

[25] Vitkus, *Turning Turk*, 111.

[26] Matar, *Turks, Moors, and Englishmen*, 13.

[27] Starr, G.A. "Escape from Barbary: A Seventeenth-Century Genre." *Huntington Library Quarterly, Vol. 29, No. 1*, November 1965: 35.

[28] Joe Snader, *Caught Between Worlds: British Captivity Narratives in Fact and Fiction* (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 2000), 19.

[29] Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (London: Oneworld, 1993), 295.

[30] Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 102.

writer also says that the reader should not be surprised by the "inhumanity" of the Turks and Moors since they "hate all Christians and Christianity."[31]

William Okeley's *Ebenezer; or, A Small Monument of Great Mercy, Appearing in the Miraculous Deliverance of William Okeley* (1675) contains a great deal of biblical references and portrays Muhammad as a cobbler who simply threw together different elements from various religions to create his own faith. When the author attributes positive traits to Muslims, he does so in a way that reverses the positive back to negative. For instance, in describing mosques the text says that "their temples are also very magnificent and much too good for their religion, whose practice and conversation speaks them to say, there is no God."[32] Here the author deliberately distorts the *shahada*, or affirmation of faith, said by Muslims. The author conveniently leaves out the rest of the phrase which in full says "there is no God but God and Muhammad is his messenger." In describing the method of picking slaves for purchase from the market, he refers to his captors as "rational creatures," an odd mix of terminology that combines a positive trait with a word suggesting them to be animals.[33]

In Joseph Pitts' *A True and Faithful Account of the Religion and Manners of the Mohammetans, with an Account of the Author's Being Taken Captive* (1704), the author charges Muslims with sodomy claiming that they are not pleased with the "natural" use of women.[34] The author also describes the Moors as lazy, belligerent, uncivilized, and dirty. Pitts writes that he converted to Islam and performed the *hajj*, giving him access to the holy cities of Mecca and Medina. His conversion to Islam gives him credibility as an insider. Near the end of his account he attributes his conversion to the devil working inside him and says that it was God's providence that brought him back into the Christian fold.

The account titled *The Adventures of (Mr. T.S.) An English Merchant, Taken Prisoner by the Turks of Algiers* (1670), "offers a narrative pattern remarkably suited to the nationalist fantasies of its historical moment," according to Gerald MacLean.[35] In this narrative, the charge of sodomy is once again leveled against the Moors.[36] The protagonist reflects on his past freedom that was robbed from him by the Muslims of North Africa and continually presents them as a sexually promiscuous people, even going so far as to claim that he became a sex slave of one of the king's wives, a claim that must be considered sensational.[37]

There are, indeed, numerous examples from which to choose; however, this brief sampling will suffice for the purpose of this paper. The majority of captivity narratives from this period contain clear religious rhetoric designed to elevate Protestant Christianity and warn readers about the "evils" of Islam and the "barbaric" nature of Muslims. Othering is a central element to these texts. The religious rhetoric and sensationalization is readily apparent because so many other travel accounts from this period take a vastly different tone.[38] The captivity narratives served as powerful tools for religious leaders seeking to undermine the appeal of Islam found in other literature and for those Britons seeking better

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[31] Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 119.

[32] Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 149.

[33] Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 151.

[34] Vitkus, *Piracy, Slavery, and Redemption*, 236.

[35] Gerald MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel: English Visitors to the Ottoman Empire, 1580-1720* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004), 182.

[36] MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 196.

[37] MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel*, 196-199.

[38] For examples of this, see MacLean, *The Rise of Oriental Travel* and Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, *The Turkish Embassy Letters* (London: Virago Press, 1994).

opportunities abroad. It will be apparent in the next section, after examining the stories of Saleem, Shoebat, and the Caner brothers, that the same rhetorical strategies are used. They create a strong anti-Muslim othering discourse while also using their Middle Eastern backgrounds to gain credibility as insiders similarly to the way the writers of captivity narratives used the trope of captivity to legitimize their "insider" status.

"EX-MUSLIMS" SOUND THE ALARM

In the years since 9/11, Walid Shoebat, Kamal Saleem, Ergun and Emir Caner have risen to prominence among politically far-right Christians with lofty stories about their upbringing in "radical Islam." The stories and rhetorical techniques deployed by them are all strikingly similar. Each of them has been promoted by dispensationalists with Shoebat openly advocating beliefs linking Islam to the Antichrist and other end-times prophecies. This section will explore the rhetoric espoused by these four men. A look at some of their writings will demonstrate both their connection with dispensationalism and the othering inherent in their narratives.

Ergun and Emir Caner have never lived in a Muslim-majority country, despite telling public audiences that they were raised in Turkey and indoctrinated in "radical Islam" – a story they told church audiences until 2010.[39] There are, however, serious problems with this narrative. In *Unveiling Islam*, a book the brothers coauthored, they write that Ergun was born in Sweden while Emir was born in Ohio after the family moved to America.[40] The profile for Emir Caner found on the website for Truett-McConnell College, where he has served as president since 2008, says that Emir was born in 1970.[41] One YouTube video documents the various dates that Ergun has given for his arrival in America despite evidence that he emigrated here at a very young age.[42] While he has claimed on various occasions that he did not arrive until 1978 or 1979, naturalization paperwork for his father shows that he entered the US in 1969.[43] And since Ergun graduated from high school in 1984,[44] that would mean he arrived at a very young age and thus would not remember any culture other than American.

After 9/11, the brothers realized they could make a lucrative career by altering their own biography and claiming they were raised in a fundamentalist environment. They have published several books about Islam and have given speeches at universities, churches, and in front of law enforcement and military personnel. Nathan Lean writes about several of these speeches in his book *The Islamophobia Industry*. According to Lean, Ergun Caner's speeches were filled with tales of how he and his brother were raised to hate all Jews, Christians, and the West. His speaking engagements also harshly rebuked the idea that "Allah" and "Jehovah" is the same God. Lean notes that their book *Unveiling Islam* sold nearly 200,000 copies due to its popularity among evangelical Christians.[45] The notoriety of the brothers helped propel Ergun to the position of dean at the Liberty University Baptist

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

[40] Ergun Caner and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 17.

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

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

[43] See <http://www.witnessesuntome.com/caner/Acar_Caner_Naturalization_duplicate-compressed.PDF>.

[44] Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry*, 89.

[45] Lean, *The Islamophobia Industry*, 84-86.

Theological Seminary in 2005, a job he held until 2010 when his fraudulent story was exposed.

Much of the credit for exposing Ergun's bogus persona belongs to another evangelical leader critical of Islam, James White, director of Alpha and Omega Ministries.[46] White worked with a native speaker of Arabic to examine the speeches of Ergun and found that many of the so-called Arabic phrases he uttered during his talks were simply gibberish.[47] This revelation along with other discrepancies in his biography led to his firing from Liberty University in 2010.[48] The websites of these brothers no longer host tales of former Muslim radicalism or of being raised in Turkey, only mentioning that they converted to Christianity as teenagers and were called to the ministry shortly thereafter.

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

Their most popular book, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs*, like their speeches, presents a strong othering discourse of Islam and Muslims. In describing their Christian mother's marriage to a Muslim father, they state that it was "doomed from the beginning, a clash of cultures" implying that Christian and Muslim culture are completely and utterly incompatible with one another.[49] At several points in the book, the authors make statements aimed at convincing the reader that their view is "objective" including "to think of Muslims as a homogenous group is erroneous and fails to do justice to the diversity of beliefs embraced within the religion" and "to equate all of Islam with religious persecution…would be an incredible overstatement."[50] Despite these accurate and balanced statements, their book still deploys sensationalized titles and subtitles such as "Muhammad: The Militant Messenger" (Chapter Two), "The First Revelation: Divine or Demonic?" and "The Story of Islam: A Trail of Blood" (Chapter Three). The third chapter, designed to be a broad survey of Islamic history, conveniently turns a violent period in the history of Christianity into an Islamic concept stating that "the Crusades arose because Christians adopted the Islamic doctrine of *jihad*."[51] In the conclusion to this chapter, they make several problematic claims and overly broad generalizations with regards to the concept of *jihad* and the role of war in expanding Islam, topics which have been given ample attention by many excellent scholars.[52]

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

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

[48] See Wan and Boorstein, *Washington Post*.

[49] Ergun and Emir Caner, *Unveiling Islam: An Insider's Look at Muslim Life and Beliefs* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 2002), 17.

[50] Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 171 and 176.

[51] Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 72.

[52] Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 77. Several recent works provide balanced and nuanced analyses of the concept of *jihad*. These include David Cook, *Understanding Jihad* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005); Michael Bonner, *Jihad in Islamic History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2006); and Asma Afsaruddin, *Striving in the Path of God: Jihad and Martyrdom in Islamic Thought* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2013).

The Caner brothers make no mention of biblical prophecy anywhere in this book or in their public speeches, yet their dispensationalist leanings can be gleamed from a short passage where they lambast Christians who critique their "adamant stand with Israel" and their belief that the Jews represent "God's chosen Priest Nation" by calling them "replacement theologians." [53] Dispensationalists use the term "replacement theology" pejoratively to attack the view that has been the traditional mainstream Christian teaching throughout church history – that the promise God made to Abraham and the Jewish people was fulfilled by Jesus. They reject those Christians that do not give the Jews and the state of Israel a central role to play in the end times. The term "replacement theology" is only used by dispensationalist Christians.

Kamal Saleem is another self-proclaimed "ex-terrorist" turned evangelist. Saleem's alleged biography is so outrageous that a columnist for the *Kansas City Star* dubbed him the "Forrest Gump of the Middle East."[54] His personal website provides the following outline of his life:

> *Born in 1957 into a large Sunni Muslim Lebanese family… Kamal Saleem was breastfed Islamic radicalism by his mother, and taught to hate Jews and Christians by his father. His cousin was the Grand Mufti of Beirut. Recruited by the Muslim Brotherhood for jihadi militancy as a small child, he completed his first bloody terror mission into Israel for the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) at the age of 7. Kamal ran important terror operations as a young man in the service of Yassir Arafat, under the coaching Abu Yussif and Abu Zayed (PLO/Fatah). He has worked for, and dined with, Muhamar Kaddafi (Libya). He has "carried the ball" for Baath Party leaders and military attaches of Saddam Hussein and Hafez al Assad (dictator of Syria), for Saudi Arabian sheikhs and princes, and for Abdul Rahman (Muslim Brotherhood). Kamal Saleem fought with the Afghan Mujahadeen for victory against the Soviets…before he and his patrons turned their attention to the destruction of the West – and Western freedoms – through Islamicization. Above all, Kamal thirsted for jihadic death to America.[55]*

The first thing noticeable about Saleem's biography is how it reads like a cheesy 1980s era action film. Indeed, much of his tale is deeply problematic. He claims to have carried out his first terror mission for the PLO (Palestinian Liberation Organization) at age seven. Since Saleem was born in 1957, this would have been sometime in 1964 or 1965, yet the PLO was only founded in 1964. Furthermore, terrorism did not become a strategy utilized by militant groups for Palestinian liberation until well after the 1967 Six-Day War in which Israel took control of the West Bank, Gaza, the Golan Heights, and East Jerusalem. Another strange aspect of his story is the vast array of organizations and causes he claims to have worked for – including former Libyan dictator Qaddafi, the Ba'ath Parties in Iraq and Syria, the Muslim Brotherhood, the PLO, and the mujahedeen in Afghanistan – which are all very different groups with divergent goals, groups that are often hostile to each other. One of the most humorous claims made by Saleem was that he is a descendant of the "grand wazir of Islam." This was until it was pointed out that no such thing existed and that it was equivalent to

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[53] Caner and Caner, *Unveiling Islam*, 242-243.

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

[55] See the website of Kamal Saleem at <http://www.kamalsaleem.com/>.

calling someone the "governor of Christianity."[56] It would seem that men like Saleem could come up with more plausible stories, but instead, they make life easy for those looking to debunk their claims.

Saleem has appeared on numerous evangelical shows promoting dispensationalist teachings and biblical prophecy. On one of these shows called *Jewish Voice*, a Messianic Jewish program,[57] Saleem proclaimed that Allah, the God of Islam, was mentioned in Isaiah 14:13-14 when God was speaking to Satan. In other words, Satan and Allah are one and the same. This statement was made in order to suggest that Muslims worships a complete different deity than Judaism and Christianity. According to Saleem and other dispensationalists, the "God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob" (an oft-repeated phrase used to contrast the "Judeo-Christian" God from "Allah") is the God of love and forgiveness while Allah is one of hate and anger – again demonstrating the othering present in the Islamophobia espoused by dispensationalists like Saleem.[58] In this video, Saleem claims that he was recruited into the Muslim Brotherhood when he was five years old, yet in his own book, *The Blood of Lambs*, he writes that he was recruited at age seven.[59] To make matters worse, on the back cover of the book it says that Saleem "went on his first mission, smuggling weapons into Israel as a child soldier for Yasser Arafat." The main problem with these claims is that the Egyptian-based Muslim Brotherhood, a group based in fundamentalist Islam, and the Palestinian-based PLO, a secular nationalist organization, are opposed to each other meaning he could not have possibly worked for both at the same time or been involved in a collaborative effort between the two.

In *The Blood of Lambs*, Saleem interlaces his own alleged biography with the story of his speaking tour with two other "ex-Muslim extremists" – Walid Shoebat and Zakariah Anani.[60] As is common with some strains of fundamentalist Christianity in America, Saleem critiques American pluralism and the First Amendment early in his book stating that he "came to realize that the strength of the American people is also its weakness. An open society with constitutionally protected freedom of speech and religion, which prides itself on its embrace of foreign cultures, was the perfect place to teach a message of hatred in broad daylight." He further states that he helped recruit people to radical Islam by finding jobs for poor men and then turning "them over to the imams at small "apartment mosques" to be radicalized." Saleem then turns to a common metaphor used in the Islamophobic discourse

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

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

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

[59] Kamal Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs: A Former Terrorist's Memoir of Death and Redemption* (New York: Howard Books, 2009), 2.

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

on Islam writing that "the human body does not know when a cancer is growing within."[61] He repeats his attack on American "tolerance" later in the book writing:

> *No matter how many terrorist acts are carried out by young Middle Eastern men, it is a cultural taboo for an American to sit in an airport and wonder whether the young Middle Eastern men they see are terrorists. This is why radical Islamists love America: she has replaced her generosity toward all cultures and religions with an unquestioning embrace of "multiculturalism."[62]*

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

In discussing his childhood, Saleem states that his mother taught him that "even the most sinful man is able to redeem himself with one drop of an infidel's blood" and that "the more infidels we killed, the better our chances to move quickly from punishment to paradise."[63] Saleem wants his reader to believe that the basis for salvation in Islam is killing non-Muslims, a strange idea for which he provides no Islamic sources as evidence. Saleem also claims that in order to be a "true" Muslims, one must work towards the establishment of a global caliphate, practice *taqqiya*,[64] and work to implement *shari'a* in every country.[65] Here Saleem attributes the goals of fundamentalist Muslims to all Muslims and follows the common Islamophobic tactic of claiming that these goals represent the "true and authentic" teachings of Islam and that any Muslim that does not adhere to these tenets are simply "liberal" or not "real" Muslims.

It was later uncovered that Saleem's real name is Khodor Shami and that he worked for Pat Robertson-owned CBN for sixteen years and has been working for James Dobson's Focus on the Family since 2003.[66] This would mean that he began working for CBN sometime around 1987, a fact conveniently missing from the section of his book titled "America 1985-1991." While it is certainly not clear when Shami immigrated to the United States, when he converted to Christianity if he really was ever Muslim, or if he was simply raised Christian, the blatant falsehoods and Islamophobic rhetoric he deploys is readily apparent.

Walid Shoebat is by far the most extreme and controversial of the lot. Moreover, he is also the most well-known of those examined here. The rhetoric found in his books is nothing short of the far-right vitriol synonymous with the likes of Rush Limbaugh, Michael Savage, or Pat Robertson. In his writings, he vehemently attacks secularism,

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[61] Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 7.

[62] Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 71.

[63] Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 11, 22.

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

[65] Saleem, *The Blood of Lambs*, 82.

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

environmentalism, "political correctness," along with every other pet peeve of far right-wing politics. According to Shoebat's website, his story goes as follows. He was a Muslim extremist for many years, he spent three years in an Israeli prison during the 1970s for his activities, and while in jail he was recruited to bomb a bank in Bethlehem, a plot he claims to have acted upon after his release. Shoebat's American mother and his Palestinian father sent him to live in the United States in 1978 where he continued his Muslim extremism until converting to Christianity in 1994.[67] According to a *Jerusalem Post* article, he claimed that he had a change of heart after seeing children near the bank he was recruited to attack, so he threw the bomb onto the roof instead. However, there are many problems with this narrative. No records can be found of any bombing at the bank Shoebat claims to have been the target. According to an investigative report conducted for CNN's *Anderson Cooper 360*, the Israeli government has no prison record under the name Walid Shoebat at all. In addition, several of Shoebat's relatives have been located and all of them state that Shoebat's education was moderate, that religion was not a major part of his upbringing, and that there was no bank bombing at all.[68] Shoebat's story has changed several times. When confronted about the lack of evidence about the bank bombing by the *Jerusalem Post* in 2008, he claimed it was not newsworthy at the time, but in 2004 Shoebat told the *Telegraph* "I was terribly relieved when I heard on the news later that evening that no one had been hurt or killed by my bomb."[69] The biography on his website is now very vague on details, probably to avoid giving too much information which could be used to prove his story false. That same CNN report details the healthy sum that Shoebat makes for giving speeches and writing books. According to tax records, Shoebat made over five hundred thousand dollars in 2009. He was also paid five thousand for an appearance sponsored by the Department of Homeland Security.[70] Shoebat has much to gain from selling his "story."

In his book *Why I Left Jihad*, Shoebat states that "the enemy's primary goal isn't the land. That's secondary. The enemy wants all Jews dead and Israel eliminated from the face of the earth." Shoebat also repeats the cancer metaphor writing "some estimate that Islamism is only 15% of the Muslim world, but a cancer starts small."[71] Throughout the book, he repeats the claim that as a Muslim he hated Jews and wanted them all dead while drawing sharp contrasts between Jewish and Muslim culture. He makes the highly problematic claim that "most assessments reveal that honor killings constitute a large percentage of murders in Muslim nations" yet provides no sources for this claim before writing that "never will you see a Jewish community performing such a barbaric act."[72] He writes that Palestine is a "fiction of the Islamists" and that "we never wanted a Palestinian state" since the "real issue" is "the destruction of the Jews"[73] This rhetoric is designed to peel Christians away from attempting to solve the century old Palestinian-Israeli conflict by diverting the issue from land, the main source of conflict, to religion, in an attempt to make the conflict seem unresolvable. By claiming that the real intention of Muslims is to "destroy all Jews," Shoebat and other dispensationalists can "other" Muslims while at the same obstructing peace efforts,

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[67] See the webpage of Walid Shoebat at <shoebat.com>.

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

[69] See Omar Sacirbey, "Skeptics challenge life stories offered by high-profile Muslim converts to Christianity."

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

[71] Walid Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad* (Top Executive Media, 2005), 23. This work is self-published by Shoebat.

[72] Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 25-26.

[73] Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 27.

something that cannot happen in their eyes. There must be war and destruction in the Middle East leading up to the Battle of Armageddon or else dispensationalism interpretations of biblical prophecy fall apart and will require a redo.

Shoebat further attempts to discredit liberal-progressive and mainstream Muslims stating "there are Muslims who reject many of the classical sources and truly focus on the peaceful verses of the Qur'an, seeking to re-interpret the verses because they truly do not want to engage in violence. These "liberal" Muslims seem to "re-write" Islam rather than correctly interpret it. They are peaceful *despite* Islam, not because of it."[74] Here again, like so many other dispensationalists opining about Islam, Shoebat attempts to define Islam in favor of Muslim fundamentalists and extremists. A common tactic of Islamophobes is to appeal to the doctrine of abrogation, or *naskh*, which fundamentalist Muslim interpreters use to argue that the Medinan verses cancel out the earlier Meccan verses, thereby allowing the so-called "verse of the sword" (9:5) to abrogate any and all verses calling for peace and pluralism. This concept is, however, deeply controversial and disputed. There are no established or agreed upon criteria for deciding which verses are abrogating (*nasikh*) and which are abrogated (*mansukh*).[75]

The latter section of his book is dedicated to biblical prophecy and here he makes many of the same claims with regards to Islam's role in the end times as Joel Richardson, a dispensationalist writer who claims that the Antichrist will be Muslim and has written that "Islam is anti-Christ to its very core."[76] The two men even co-authored another work titled *God's War on Terror: Islam, Prophecy and the Bible*, which is much more than a book on prophecy, it is nothing short of a diatribe against "tree-huggers," "leftists," "secularists," and of course, Islam and Muslims, combined with extreme pro-Israel propaganda. Much of the information found in *God's War on Terror* is repeated from *Why I Left Jihad* and both books are poorly written and highly disorganized, but since they were both self-published by Shoebat, there were no publishing or editorial standards to be met.

Shoebat is very active in dispensationalist circles and has spoken at prophecy conferences. He has also been interviewed on CNN and Fox News, and he has spoken in front of active-duty military personnel and law enforcement agencies. He has attained a sort of "rock star" status in far-right political circles. He is cited as a source in the books of many dispensationalists including John Hagee and Joel Rosenberg.

CONCLUSION

My suspicion is that these men were never Muslim at all, that they were either raised Christian or in a secular environment and converted to Christianity later in life. Following 9/11, these men found an opportunity to make money and to convert others to their form of dispensationalist Christianity through exotic tales of terror and mayhem. Much like the Barbary captivity narratives of the early modern period, these "ex-Muslim radicals" and their stories serve a powerful rhetorical function which aids both Islamophobia and dispensationalism. In both examples, those telling the stories establish their credibility by

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[74] Shoebat, *Why I Left Jihad*, 36.

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

[76] Joel Richardson, *Mideast Beast: The Scriptural Case for an Islamic Antichrist* (Washington: WND Books, 2012), *iii*.

claiming "insider" status. Once their credibility is established they proceed to create an othering discourse that demonizes Islam and Muslims. In both cases, one finds a touch of factual information sprinkled into a smorgasbord of harsh anti-Islam propaganda.

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

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

As Edward Said points out, "what is said about the Muslim mind, or character, or religion, or culture as a whole cannot now be said in mainstream discussions about Africans, Jews, other Orientals, or Asians."[77] The current anti-Islam discourse may be the last form of bigotry still widely accepted in American society. Muslims and Arabs continue to be portrayed in the media and in films as villains. While Jews and Muslims are found in similar numbers in America, bigotry against the former is no longer widely accepted in the way that it is against the latter. Dispensationalism has played a major role in this. Probably the biggest positive contribution dispensationalism has made in American society is promoting interfaith dialogue and understanding between Christians and Jews. Even many non-dispensationalist Christians support the idea of blessing the Jewish people based on Gen. 12:3. Yet the notion of "Judeo-Christian" civilization has also served as a wall blocking off the other major Abrahamic faith – Islam. To a large extent, dispensationalist thought has succeeded in promoting a Judeo-Christian/Islamic "clash of civilizations" mentality in the West.[78] As has been routinely stated, roughly half of humanity is either an adherent of Islam or Christianity making it imperative that all talk of an "Islam versus the West" clash of civilizations be put to rest. Both religions are here to stay and continue to grow exponentially. As Martin Luther King Jr. so eloquently put it, "we still have a choice today, nonviolent coexistence or violent co-annihilation."[79]

One of the rhetorical strategies deployed time and time again by dispensationalists to attack Islam is the argument that Muslims and Christians worship different gods – the God "they" (Muslims) worship hates while the God "we" worship loves. Miroslav Volf points out

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[77] Said, *Covering Islam*, xii.

[78] Historian Richard Bulliet critiques this dichotomy in his book *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004).

[79] Martin Luther King Jr., "A Time to Break Silence," in *A Testament of Hope: The Essential Writings and Speeches of Martin Luther King Jr.*, ed. James M. Washington (New York: Harper One, 1986), 243.

the end game of this strategy by stating that "since both Christians and Muslims are monotheists, if they worship different gods, they will rightly accuse each other of worshipping a false god, which is the worst of sins in both of these traditions. The love that Muslims and Christians have for the God they worship will pull them apart rather than bring them together."[80] That is precisely what some seek to do, pull the two faiths apart by separating or othering Muslims and the God "they" worship. Such actions not only pull Muslims and Christians apart, they pull humanity apart.

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[80] Miroslav Volf, *Allah: A Christian Response* (New York: Harper One, 2011), 35. The term "Allah" is formed simply by combining the definite particle *al* meaning "the" to the term *ilah* meaning "god" to produce the definitive *Allah* meaning "The God." This is similar to the indefinite "god" versus the definite "God" used in English. Arabic speaking Christians have used the term "Allah" for centuries.

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