A Turk by Any Other Name:
Michael Sattler, Martin Luther,
the Radical Reformation, and the Middle East

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This paper will attempt to analyze the contribution of the Radical Reformation to Muslim-Christian dialogue in the past and assess whether this historical example of "loving your neighbor as yourself," and more pointedly "loving your enemy" and "turning the other check," can play a role in the current situation in the Middle East. Dealing specifically with the former Benedictine monk and German Reformation leader Michael Sattler, it will juxtapose the *Schwertler* (sword-bearing) and the *Stäbler* (staff-bearing) responses to the existential threats emanating from the imminent Ottoman conquest and occupation of Central Europe. On a more fundamental level, the option of a peaceful, as opposed to a violent, response to one's enemy will be followed back to the early Mediterranean church of the third and fourth centuries in order to illustrate how the two options — i.e., between just war theory and love of one's enemy — were actually put into practice under great personal sacrifice by members of the church throughout the last two millennia. By comparing the positions of Sattler and Luther, an attempt will be made to demonstrate that a pacifist response to the threats to Christianity in the Middle East today is a viable option, rooted in the living traditions of the church on both sides of the Mediterranean.

Pacifism, as it was lived by the church throughout its history, also meant carrying for the material and spiritual needs of the entire community, friends

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and enemies alike. Can the church in the Middle East be expected to apply this principle in a situation in which its very physical existence is being threatened? Based on the personal experience of this author over the past two decades in Lebanon, an attempt will be made to enter into both an ecumenical and inter-faith dialogue between the various Christian traditions, as well as the predominant Muslim faith communities in the Middle East. At the end of this paper a concrete example will be offered, demonstrating that the church in the region can serve as a beacon, despite the dire situation in which it finds itself.

What is the "added value" of Christianity in the Arab world? In light of the existential crises facing Christian communities throughout the region, it is worth considering — at what appears to be a historical crossroads for the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) — whether our faith has anything truly unique to offer our Muslim, Jewish, and non-religious neighbors. When seen from a historical perspective, the church from its very inception has propagated values such as charity, love, freedom, peace, humility, and honesty. These ideals were translated over the centuries into more practical concepts such as social justice, community inclusion, tolerance of the other, empathy for neighbors and the enemy, and rule of law. In the global north, the Catholic Church was the first to transform fundamental tenets of the faith into a code of societal guidelines capable of dealing with the challenges of the modern age. The first papal social encyclical, "Rerum Novarum: Rights and Duties of Capital and Labor," was issued in 1891 in response to the dual challenges of global poverty and escalating social and political tensions in the industrial centers of the world during the decades leading up to the First World War. A century after the outbreak of World War I, the crises and conflicts now facing humanity are putting the two dominant religions of the Middle East, Christianity and Islam, to the test. The regional order that was created in the Arab world at the beginning of the twentieth century is threatening to collapse at the beginning of the twenty-first. Can today's Christians find resources in their own conflict-ridden past which offer a fresh approach to the seemingly intractable contradictions plaguing the Arab world?

What are the main sources of insecurity now threating the church in the Arab world? Can they also be interpreted as opportunities? In answering this question, it would make sense to distinguish between those conditions rooted in the social, cultural, and political traditions of the region and those factors which are primarily the result of the emergency situation in which many MENA countries currently find themselves. To properly assess the response of Christian communities to the threats and opportunities emanating from their environment, it will prove necessary to determine which sources of insecurity are external in nature and which can be at least partially traced back to the strengths and weaknesses of the Christian communities themselves, especially to the manner in which they apply the tenets of their faith to fields as diverse as business ethics, protection of the environment, accelerating emigration rates, treatment of minorities, immigrants and refugees, and gender roles in a rapidly changing global economy.

In order to put today's crisis situation into perspective, comparisons will be drawn to a variety of historical examples in which Christians in the Mediterranean region and Central Europe were forced to consider how applicable their religion was in dealing with existential threats. The main focus will be a comparison between Luther and Sattler. However, lessons will also be learned from the formative years of the church and from the Middle Ages. Starting with the Plague of Cyprian and Decian Persecution in the Roman Empire of the year 250 AD, three regional cases will be studied in order to determine their relevance for a Christian response today, based on the principles of peace and social justice. Finally, the background and context of any author writing about a topic as sensitive as religion in the Middle East should be taken into consideration at the outset of her or his deliberations. As a social scientist of Austrian-American origin, this author has been living in the Middle East on a continuous basis since the year 1999. The insights which provide the foundation for this article were acquired through over fifteen years of applied field research, teaching, and social activism in Christian and interfaith organizations in the region. As a practicing Mennonite working at a Maronite-Mariamite

university since the academic year 2000-2001, involved in Muslim-Christian dialogue on a practical level for over a decade, and as a member of the Council of Elders of the International Community Church (part of the Congregationalist National Evangelical Church — ICC/NEC) in Beirut during the last six years, this author will attempt to combine rigorous academic standards with a deeply felt concern for the future of his faith in the region.

In summary, an attempt will be made in this paper to illustrate that the current crisis of the church in the MENA offers Christians of all denominations an opportunity for a long overdue rethinking of issues related to power, authority, the use of force, and the accumulation of wealth. The result of this reassessment can place the church in the MENA in a position to both help the poor and disfranchised and deal with the root causes of their poverty and exclusion. It can assist in determining whether a peaceful response to existential threats is as relevant today as it was in the formative years of the church, during the period of Muslim expansion in the early Middle Ages, as well as the confrontation between Christians and Muslims in sixteenth-century Europe. This form of faith-based witnessing could demonstrate to our non-Christian neighbors, and to the rest of the world now so skeptical about the future of the MENA, that 2000-year-old Christian traditions do offer "added value," which can help revitalize the region from within.

Christian Responses to Existential Threats

The Arab world has changed dramatically since the beginning of the twenty-first century. Direct Western military intervention in the region after 9/11 eventually led to the collapse of a predictable, albeit tyrannical, regional order, which had proved highly effective in providing basic protection to minority religious groups in many countries. The now defunct Arab Spring toppled dictatorships in Tunisia and, more importantly, Egypt, leading to the takeover of both countries by Islamist parties through democratic elections. By the beginning of the 2010s, the Arab world saw the situation for Christians in the region go from bad to worse. An already inhospitable environment began to appear

openly hostile. The most obvious expressions of this are to be found in Iraq and Syria, where the so-called Islamic State or "Daesh" introduced a reign of terror, systematically targeting Christians, non-Sunni Muslims, and other minority groups. But also in Egypt, after the military coup against the democratically elected Muslim Brotherhood government of Mohammed Morsi in July 2013, the "authorities failed to tackle discrimination against religious minorities, including Coptic Christians, Shiʿa Muslims and Baha'is. Coptic Christian communities, in particular, reported new sectarian attacks and faced restrictions on building and maintaining their places of worship."[1] This deteriorating situation impacted Christians elsewhere in the MENA, most specifically in Lebanon, home to the largest indigenous Catholic community in the region and the only country in the twentieth-century Arab world in which Christians once made up the majority of the population.

In the following, three historical examples of Christian responses to existential threats will be briefly describe in order to illustrate that two options to violent oppression and exploitation have existed side by side throughout the history of the region. The first example will deal with the response of the church throughout the Mediterranean Basin to the above mentioned Decian Persecution, in which the Roman imperial state forced all inhabitants of the empire, with the exception of the Jews, to practice emperor worship upon threat of death. It illustrates that Christians not only resisted this policy, but also cared for their sick and dying oppressors during the Plague of Cyprian, which broke out during the same time period. The second and third cases are similar to each other in that they deal with the expansion of Muslim armies into overwhelmingly Christian parts of the Mediterranean world. The former example deals with the Arab Muslim "Fataḥ" (فتح) or opening up of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic lands to the north and west of what is now Saudi Arabia for conquest, starting with the defeat of Syria in 637 and culminating with the Battle of Tours, within easy marching distance of Paris, in

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1   Amnesty International, "Annual Report: Egypt 2014/2015," https://www.amnesty.org/en/countries/middle-east-and-north-africa/egypt/report-egypt/ (accessed April 12, 2015).

732. In this case Christians followed the dictates of "just war theory," which legitimized the use of force in self-defense.[2] The latter example focuses on the Ottoman invasion and occupation the Balkans and large swaths of Central Europe, twice besieging the capitol of the Holy Roman Empire of the German Nation, Vienna, between 1529 and 1689, and successfully reducing countries as far north as Poland and Lithuania to the status of fiefdoms until the late seventeenth century. In this case, however, the Christian response was more differentiated, with many leaders of the Protestant Reformation, including Martin Luther at the outset, rejecting any use of force against the Turks, preferring to put their trust in God.[3]

What lessons can be learned from the three above-mentioned examples? Recent research on the accelerated decline of the Roman Empire in the third and fourth centuries has drawn attention to the impact of widespread epidemics throughout the Mediterranean Basin, starting with the Antonine Plague

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2   A modern official Roman Catholic explanation of "just war theory" is the following: "The strict conditions for *legitimate defense by military force* require rigorous consideration. The gravity of such a decision makes it subject to rigorous conditions of moral legitimacy. At one and the same time:
   • the damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
   • all other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
   • there must be serious prospects of success;
   • the use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs very heavily in evaluating this condition.
   These are the traditional elements enumerated in what is called the 'just war' doctrine. The evaluation of these conditions for moral legitimacy belongs to the prudential judgment of those who have responsibility for the common good." *Catechism of the Catholic Church,* no. 2309, http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p3s2c2a5.htm (accessed April 9, 2015).

3   Writing in 1518, Luther stated: "Otherwise, if a priest of the church, whether he be of high or low rank, can remove God's punishment by the power of the keys, then he also drives away plagues, wars, insurrections, earthquakes, fires, murders, thefts, as well as the Turks, Tartars, and other infidels; none but a poor Christian would fail to recognize in these the lash and rod of God. For Isa. 10 says, 'Ah, Assyria , the rod of my anger, the staff of my fury! In its hand is my indignation' [cf. Isa. 10:5]. Many, however, even the 'big wheels' in the church, now dream of nothing else than war against the Turk. They want to fight, not against iniquities, but against the lash of iniquity and thus they would oppose God who says that through that lash he himself punishes us for our iniquities because we do not punish ourselves for them." "Explanation of the Ninety-five Theses, LW 31:79-252," p. 5, www.oocities.org/united_in_christ_3in1/95explained.pdf (accessed April 10, 2015).

of 165-180. It was followed by the Plague of Cyprian which afflicted the empire from 250 onward. Though unrelated, the Decian Persecution began in the same year. It was based on an edict issued by the Emperor Decius ordering everyone in the Roman Empire (except Jews) to perform a sacrifice to the Roman gods and the well-being of the Emperor. Christians were faced with the option of compromising their faith, going into hiding, or facing execution. Significant numbers opted for each of the three responses. This convolution of two disparate, but simultaneous forces, led to a major shift in the way Christians behaved and were perceived in the empire.[4] Christians who were facing severe persecution and even death at the hands of their pagan neighbors were nevertheless caring for their sick and often nursing those pagans afflicted by the plague back to life at the expense of their own wellbeing. The eminent scholar of religious history, Rodney Stark, offers three theses in an attempt to illustrate that it was Christian love of their neighbors, even their enemies, which catapulted the faith from obscurity to dominance in a few short centuries. By remaining true to their core beliefs, they were able to transform external threats into opportunities for growth and self-development.

> First, the Christians offered a more satisfactory explanation of the catastrophic events. Second, Christian values of love and charity were translated into practices of social service in the times of crisis, thereby creating a network of medical care. Third, with even minimal medical attention, the survival rate among the Christians (and any of their pagan neighbors whom they treated) was substantially higher than that in the general population. Over time, the proportion of Christians in the total population was thereby dramatically increased. When coupled with the network effect of those pagans now disengaged from traditional ties and attracted by Chris-

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4   Gary B. Ferngren, "A new era in Roman healthcare: How the early church transformed the Roman Empire's treatment of its sick," *Christian History* 101 (2011): 6-12. This "grace under pressure" was until then unknown in the empire. "Carthage's bishop, Cyprian, enjoined the city's Christians to give aid to their persecutors and to care for the sick. He urged the rich to donate funds and the poor to volunteer their service for relief efforts, making no distinction between believers and pagans" (11).

tian benevolence to new attachments, the result was to alter irreversibly the balance of the Roman empire.[5]

The two waves of Muslim expansion into Christian lands mentioned above will now be juxtaposed in order to see which factors might be significant in encouraging large numbers of the faithful to opt for love of enemy over self-defense. Stark points out that although the third- and fourth-century Christian communities were threatened by persecution, and even extermination in many cases, they did enjoy a high level of self-organization, which facilitated their coordinated decision to put charity, peace, and love above self-preservation. Notably, many scholars have highlighted the high rates of fatal contamination of those Christians who were caring for the pagan sick. It would seem that the autonomous governing structures of the early church provided them with the strength and wherewithal needed to overcome external forces, which could have otherwise forced them into submission.

During the centuries of Arab Muslim expansion into the Christian Middle East, North Africa, Italy, Spain, and France, no significant autonomous grass-roots structures existed within the Christian world, which could have challenged the dominate logic of just war in the face of the obvious aggression on the part of the invading foreign armies. Both the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic churches were deeply rooted in the tradition of "Constantinianism." This conceptual construct is based on the teachings of early Protestant leaders such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Thomas Cranmer, who claimed that the Roman Empire and the Christian elites joined forces at the time of Emperor Constantine the Great to the mutual benefit of both and the detriment of the Christian lay population and lower clergy. The contentious nature of

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5   Rodney Stark, Abstract in "Epidemics, Networks, and the Rise of Christianity," http://www. foresthomechurch.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/01/Epidemics-Networks-the-Rise-of-Christiani-ty-by-Rodney-Stark.pdf (accessed April 12, 2015). This article forms chapter 4 of Stark's book, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996), 73-94.

the term notwithstanding, the integration thus described of political and religious Christian power structures at the time of the Arab Muslim invasions did prevent any widespread debate on a peaceful response, based on the love of enemy, from taking place.

The situation had changed dramatically by the time the Ottoman armies reached the gates of Vienna, almost a millennium later. Throughout the Middle Ages a variety of heretical movements had challenged the predominance of the Orthodox and Catholic Constantinian hierarchies. From the emergence in the tenth century of the Bogomils in Orthodox Bulgaria and Bosnia to the spread of Waldensian, grassroots Christianity in France and Italy in the twelfth century, state-church hegemony was under attack. By the decisive defeat of the Catholic Kingdom of Hungary at the Battle of Mohács in 1526, the Reformation in Central Europe had erupted in full force. Highly decentralized in nature, the early Reformation leadership was undecided on whether they should maintain the Roman Catholic concept of the authority of the magisterium within the church and thus its close links to political power. This lack of central authority was believed to have encouraged the excesses of the German Peasant Wars 1524-5. By the time the Ottomans began their first Siege of Vienna in 1529, Martin Luther in Germany, as well as Ulrich Zwingli and John Calvin in Switzerland, had embraced a magisterial approach to the faith, justifying both a central church authority and a close relationship to state power structures. "The magistrate had a right to authority within the church, just as the church could rely on the authority of the magistrate to enforce discipline, suppress heresy, or maintain order."[6] Despite these attempts at rapid centralization of church power in Protestant Central Europe, a public space for dialogue outside of state-church/hegemonic control had already become well established and could not easily be abolished.

Faced with a series of humiliating defeats of the European Christian armies by the swiftly advancing Ottoman forces, Martin Luther shifted his position

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6   Alister E. McGrath, *Historical Theology: An Introduction to the History of Christian Thought,* Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), 159.

slightly, from a categorical rejection of resistance to support for a secular war against the Turks.[7] The German and Swiss Protestant leadership then attempted to enforce their positions, condoning just war, on the faithful throughout their spheres of influence. They were only partially successful in this endeavor. The public space created at the outset of the Reformation continued to be claimed by Zwingli's leftist adversaries in Switzerland, the adherents of the Radical Reformation. Their influence quickly spread, despite oppression throughout the German speaking world. Strict opponents of any form of magisterial authority within the church, the followers of the "Taufgesinnte" or Taufer movement[8] living on the frontier between the Ottoman and Christian armies faced two existential threats. The Ottomans were actually seen by them as the lesser of the two evils, as will be described below. The Roman Catholic and magisterial Reformation churches posed a much greater and more immediate danger because of their shared attempts to eliminate the public space for dialogue which had been introduced during the first years of the Protestant movement.

The position taken by the Taufer with respect to the Ottomans is of significance for the fourth historical case to be dealt with in following, that of modern day oppression of Christians in the MENA region. In many ways similar to third-century Christians during the Plague of Cyprian and the Decian

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7   In 1528, Luther wrote concerning the "misuse of the Christian name": "But what moved me most of all was this. They undertook to fight against the Turk under the name of Christ, and taught men and stirred them up to do this, as though our people were an army of Christians against the Turks, who were enemies of Christ; and this is straight against Christ's doctrine and name.… I say this not because I would teach that worldly rulers ought not be Christians, or that a Christian cannot bear the sword and serve God in temporal government. Would God they were all Christians, or that no one could be a prince unless he were a Christian! Things would be better than they now are and the Turk would not be so powerful. But what I would do is keep the callings and offices distinct and apart, so that everyone can see to what he is called, and fulfill the duties of his office faithfully and with the heart, in the service of God." ("Martin Luther, 'On war against Islamic reign of terror,' 1528, [translation of] Vom Kriege wider die Türken, 1528, [WA 30 II, 107-148], http://www.lutherdansk.dk/On%20war%20against%20Islamic%20reign%20of%20terror/On%20war%20against%20Islamic%20reign%20of%20terror1.htm [accessed April 11, 2015]).

8   The Taufer movement has been erroneously referred to as "Wiedertäufer" or "Anabaptists" in the past. This term assumes that they practiced multiple baptisms and was never used by the Taufer of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to describe themselves.

Persecution, adherents of the Radical Reformation propagated non-resistance when confronted by the Turks and passive non-conformance when dealing with the demands of their Protestant and Catholic rulers. Because the Taufer movement had so rapidly spread from Switzerland, Austria, and southern Germany into northern Germany and the Netherlands during the first years of its existence, it was able to make use of a broad network of communities which could disseminate, and personally live according to, their shared principles of peace, justice, and charity. The culmination of this process was a conference held in 1527 by the various Taufer communities of Central Europe, in Schleitheim in the canton of Schaffhausen in Switzerland, at which a policy of proactive pacifism and complete separation from the coercive instruments of the state was agreed upon. Many of the co-signatories of the resulting Schleitheim Confession were subsequently arrested and executed by the Christian governments in the regions of Central Europe in which they lived. There is no record of any members of the Taufer movement being arrested or persecuted by the Ottomans. According to the historical record of the trail of Michael Sattler, a prominent leader of the Taufer movement at the time and a signatory of the Schleitheim Confession, both the teachings of adherents of Lutheranism and that of the Roman Catholic Church were not in conformity with the "Gospel and the Word of God." The court record in reference to "the Turk" will be presented here in full because it is indicative of the open discourse typical of the time, despite the immediate threat of execution.

ARTICLES OR CHARGES AGAINST MICHAEL SATTLER

"First, that he and his adherents have acted contrary to the mandate of the Emperor.…

He has said that if the Turks should invade the country, no resistance ought to be offered them; and if it were right to wage war, he would rather take the field against the Christians than against the Turks; and it is certainly a great matter, to set the greatest enemies of our holy faith against us."

Thereupon Michael Sattler requested permission to confer with his brethren and sisters, which was granted him. Having conferred with them for a little while, he began and undauntingly answered thus.

"In regard to the articles relating to me and my brethren and sisters, hear this brief answer: First, That we have acted contrary to the imperial mandate, we do not admit; for the same says that the Lutheran doctrine and delusion is not to be adhered to, but only the Gospel and Word of God. This we have kept; for I am not aware that we have acted contrary to the Gospel and the Word of God; I appeal to the words of Christ.… If the Turks should come, we ought not to resist them; for it is written: Thou shalt not kill. We must not defend ourselves against the Turks and others of our persecutors, but are to beseech God with earnest prayer to repel and resist them. But that I said, that if warring were right, I would rather take the field against the so-called Christians, who persecute, apprehend and kill pious Christians, than against the Turks, was for this reason: The Turk is a true Turk, knows nothing of the Christian faith; and is a Turk after the flesh; but you, who would be Christians, and who make your boast of Christ, persecute the pious witnesses of Christ, and are Turks after the spirit."[9]

The reference to the Roman Catholic Church and their imperial Habsburg allies as being "Turks of the spirit" goes hand-in-hand with Sattler's insistence that the use of violence, even in self-defense, was unacceptable from a Christian perspective. Sattler equally distances himself from the "Lutheran doctrine and delusion," which by this time had shifted from opposition to the use of force against the Ottomans to a qualified acceptance of just war theory under extreme circumstances.

When looking back at the complex history of two millennia of Christianity through the simplifying lens of the three case studies described above, two strands of interpretation can be established. As was described by Stark, external threats are not necessarily a bad thing. When confronted by the dual challenges of the Plague of Cyprian and Decian Persecution in the year 250 AD, the early church was able to transform these existential threats into opportunities for internal development and external growth within an otherwise hostile environment. When comparing the medieval Arab Muslim and early modern Ottoman expansions into the Christian lands of the Mediterranean Ba-

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9   John Howard Yoder, ed., *The Legacy of Michael Sattler* (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 72.

sin, Balkans, and Central Europe, a similar picture emerges. However, in the former case, the church was unable to benefit from the challenges emanating from external threats of persecution. The latter example illustrates that the church proved to be much more adaptable, ultimately using the threats posed by "evil Turkish Other" to begin a process of self-evaluation and transformation during the Catholic, Protestant, and Radical reformations of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. The second strand of interpretation is rooted in the postulation that autonomous, self-governing, internal mechanisms are necessary for any society — or its constituent institutions — to transcend its internal inertia. The very existence of such critical, self-regulating capacities seems to be part and parcel of any civil society, in the West or in the Arab world.[10] As described above, the early church in the Mediterranean and the disparate, conflict-ridden Christian communities of Central Europe had begun to develop these capacities. This enabled them to focus on their core values of love, charity, and peace, even in the face of severe adversity. Whether it was the pagan elites of the third century or the Ottoman invaders of the sixteenth, Christians had the choice of responding to their enemies by either opting for self-defense or witnessing to their faith by sacrificially loving their neighbor. As Stark points out, the deontological option of putting tenets of faith before self-preservation actually helped the church to thrive in the long run.

The MENA Church in the Second Decade

The Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and Protestant churches are facing similar options today in the Arab world. One of the major positive develop-

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10 Michael D. Dawahare, *Civil Society and Lebanon: Toward a Hermeneutic Theory of the Public Sphere in Comparative Studies,* Parkland FL: Brown Walker Press, 2000). Also see: Eugene Sensenig-Dabbous, "Zivilgesellschaft im Feindesland – Demokratisierungsansätze trotz internationaler Einmischung und Konfessionalismus," in *Krisenherd Naher und Mittlerer Osten: Eine Region am Rande des Flächenbrands mit realistischer Friedensperspektive? Friedensbericht 2007,* ed. Ronald H. Tuschl (Berlin: LitVerlag, 2007), 53-72; and International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, "Assessment Tools for Measuring Civil Society's Enabling Environment," *Global Trends in NGO Law* 4 [2014], www.icnl.org/research/trends/trends5-1.pdf (accessed April 10, 2015).

ments for the church around the world in recent years has been the election of a Third World pope. When seen from a social justice and peace agenda perspective, the choice of the Argentinean Jorge Mario Bergoglio in March 2013 to replace a long line of European popes is indicative of the Catholic Church's increasing interest in world poverty, the impact of international terms of trade, and the need for Christians to not only practice charity, but to deal with the root causes of underdevelopment and economic exploitation.[11] The process initiated over 120 years ago with the issuing of the papal encyclical *Rerum-novarum*, now enjoys renewed support, not only within the Catholic Church, but within global Christianity as a whole. How has this international trend impacted the Arab world? Can a region so plagued by religious strife, terrorism, and regional wars even afford to deal with issues as banal as employees' working hours, workplace health and safety, income equality, or work-life balance? The following brief overview of Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant responses to the social justice agenda will focus on Lebanon. It is the only MENA country with a significant Christian population, in which the church has not yet been existentially threatened. All three Christian dominations maintain expansive educational and healthcare networks. This places them in an ideal position to put the tenets of love of neighbor and love of enemy into practice in a very practical manner.

The Catholic Church was the first to go beyond simple charity and to deal with the root causes of social injustice. In Europe, Catholic self-help organizations for workers and migrants actually predated *Rerum novarum* by several decades. By the beginning of the twentieth century, Catholic Social parties,

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11   Brazilian archbishop Hélder Câmara's now famous interjection, "When I give food to the poor, they call me a saint. When I ask why they are poor, they call me a communist" is indicative of liberation theology's demand that the Church deal with the root causes of injustice. This position is shared, however, by mainstream adherents of Catholic Social Teaching. Jorge Mario Bergoglio was never a supporter of Liberation Theology, although he shared many of their non-ideological positions. See: Francis Phillips, "Pope Francis was all too familiar with Liberation Theology. That's why he opposed it," *Catholic Herald,* June 14, 2013, http://www.catholicherald.co.uk/commentandblogs/2013/06/14/pope-francis-was-all-too-familiar-with-liberation-theology-thats-why-he-opposed-it/ (accessed April 7, 2015).

labor unions, women's associations, and agrarian movements were well established in most of Central and Western Europe. Following the horrors of two world wars, Catholic political, educational, and welfare organizations were successful in championing the rights of workers and migrants and could thus win significant electoral victories in both political and labor union elections. In Lebanon, Catholic Social Teaching was introduced during the presidency of Fuad Chehab (1958-64). In order to modernize the Lebanese state and economy, Chehab invited the Catholic Social thinker and researcher, Louis-Joseph Lebret, to become an advisor the presidency in 1958. Lebret had set up the Institut de Recherche et de Formation en vue du Développement (IRFED) in the same year, which

> aimed at promoting methods for global, harmonized, "self-propelled" development, inducing the passage from the human economy to economic democracy, in view of the development of peoples.… In 1960, at the request of President Chebab, he went to Lebanon with a team from IRFED, where he conducted a country-wide socio-economic study from 1960 to 1964. (Cf. Report in French entitled "Besoins et possibilités de développement du Liban" a 20-volume Development Plan).[12]

This endeavor ultimately led to the creation of a Ministry of Planning and the formulation of the country's First Development Plan. As opposed to a tradition adopted by many Lebanese Presidents, Chehab refused to alter the constitution in order to run for a second term. The momentum towards social reform and infrastructural development based on Catholic Social Teaching which he had established, in cooperation with Lebret, thus dissipated and came to end with the outbreak of the Lebanese Civil War in 1975. The legacy of Chehabism was not reintroduced after the civil war ended fifteen years later in 1990.

Neither the Eastern Orthodox nor the Protestant churches established the tradition of authoritative magisterial statements, or encyclicals, as was the case

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12 Développment et Civilisations Lebret-Irfed, "Louis-Joseph Lebret," http://www.lebret-irfed.org/spip.php?article86 (accessed April 12, 2015).

in the Catholic Church. This is primarily because of the decentralized nature of their respective national churches. Thus authoritative documents on social just and global peace are lacking. In several European countries, most notably Germany, the Protestants did establish Christian Social parties and other social movements along the lines of the Catholic organizations. This was not the case, however, in the predominantly Orthodox countries of Europe because of their comparative underdevelopment and lack of industrialization. Furthermore, the Russian Revolution of 1917, and the expansion of the Soviet Union into Central Europe and the Balkans after the Second World War, put an end to any nascent progressive Orthodox parties and labor unions that might have developed in its absence. Thus the Eastern Orthodox churches in the Arab world do not have the same international backing for a social justice agenda that the Catholics in the region enjoy. The Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I has emphasized on various occasions that the "world of faith can prove a powerful ally in efforts to address issues of social justice …, that it provides a unique perspective — beyond the merely social, political, or economic — on the need to eradicate poverty, to provide a balance in a world of globalization, to combat fundamentalism and racism."[13] This has not, however, led to any institutional initiatives similar to that described above for the Catholic Church.

No attempts have been made to replicate the extensive European Protestant network of political and societal organizations in the Arab world because of the limited size of the indigenous Protestant communities in the region. Along with the Catholics and Orthodox, individual Protestant congregations and religious leaders do champion the interests of the poor and marginalized, in particular the rights of migrant workers in the MENA, but these initiatives are dwarfed by the institutional networks which have been established in other parts of the Global South with significant Christians populations, such as Sub-Saharan Africa, the Philippines, India, or Latin America. One might ask

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13 World Council of Churches, "Ecumenical Patriarch reaffirms power of faith for social justice" (July 1, 2013), https://www.oikoumene.org/en/press-centre/news/ecumenical-patriarch-reaffirms-power-of-faith-for-social-justice (accessed November 12, 2015).

whether, despite these limitations, the three major Christian dominations have used their considerable autonomous resources to not only help the poor, but deal with the root causes of social injustice and exploitation in the Arab world? Empirical data for the entire MENA region is lacking. However, the Lebanese example seems to indicate that this is not (yet) the case. The following quotations from a recent study on the role of religious leaders of all three Christian dominations in Lebanon indicate that the peace and social justice agenda, as it is understood in other parts of the world, is still a marginal phenomenon in Lebanon. According to Robert Hamd's empirical findings, based on in-depth interviews with fifty church leaders, the "divided religious landscape in Lebanon exacerbates the Biblical justice problem. Each religious community in Lebanon cares for its own people group, while migrants are not afforded similar care simply because of their race." The "study found that 60% of Maronite leaders, 50% of Orthodox , and 65% of Protestants stated explicitly the church was for all peoples regardless of race, ethnicity, or social standing. [They agreed that extending] hospitality to others is an important feature [of their faith] that demonstrates genuine care and concern." However, only one "out of fifty participants acknowledges that the church can make a difference in Lebanese society to challenge the status quo. [According to the overwhelming majority of the respondents, the] church is not responsible for migrants. The state is responsible." Hamd concludes: "the findings of this study showed churches to be inhospitable when it comes to 'doing what they say' towards migrants."[14]

According to the International Labour Organization, defending the rights and championing the interests of labor migrants is one of the key challenges currently facing the Arab world.[15] It would seem that it is in this area that the three Christian denominations could best draw on their deontological heritage of speaking truth to power and caring for the poor irrespective of the distrac-

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14 Robert Hamd, *Generous Neighbors? Guest Workers and the Church in the Middle East* (Saarbrücken, Germany: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2013), 28, 124, 133.

15 International Labour Organization, "Labour Migration," http://www.ilo.org/beirut/areasofwork/labour-migration/lang--en/index.htm (accessed April 12, 2015).

tions of existential threats emanating from the region. By so doing, the modern church could demonstrate to its non-Christian neighbors, in a way similar to the early church during the Plague of Cyprian and Decian Persecution, that it has a unique role to play in the future of the MENA region. Though merely a modest contribution, caring for the poorest, weakest, and most vulnerable members of Middle Eastern society today could become a beacon, highlighting the added value of "loving your neighbor as yourself," and more pointedly "loving your enemy" and "turning the other cheek" in a time and place not dissimilar to the three historical cases described above.