

Christian-Muslim Relations in the United States: Reflections for the Future After Two Decades of Experience

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Preliminary Observations

Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims. The sacred Council now pleads with all to forget the past, and urges that a sincere effort be made to achieve mutual understanding; for the benefit of all men, let them together preserve and promote peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.
(*Nostra Aetate* 3)¹

For those who devote themselves to the study of relations between Christians and Muslims, the task of writing a single sentence about that history would be daunting; yet, the bishops of the Catholic Church in 1965 chose to sum up centuries of relations in a brief understatement: “Over the centuries many quarrels and dissensions have arisen between Christians and Muslims.” The words stand in stark contrast to what follows, namely, a remarkable call for conversation and collaboration by first forgetting the past and then making a sincere effort for mutual understanding.

These two sentences signaled something of a revolution in a Christian approach to relations with Muslims. This passage is the second of two paragraphs that constitute the third section of the 1965 *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non Christian Religions*, issued during the fourth and final session of the Second Vatican Council (1962–65). The first paragraph

referenced a letter in 1076 from Pope Gregory VII to a Muslim ruler named Al-Nasir, who had requested priests for the Christian people in his territory in what is present-day Algeria. That exchange of letters, though exemplary for the approach espoused in the second paragraph of the *Declaration*, was not typical of relations between Muslim and Christian leaders over the centuries.²

Thirty-six years later and on pilgrimage to Syria, Pope John Paul II would offer this fuller observation about relations between Christians and Muslims:

Interreligious dialogue is most effective when it springs from the experience of 'living with each other' from day to day within the same community and culture. In Syria, Christians and Muslims have lived side by side for centuries, and a rich dialogue of life has gone on unceasingly. Every individual and every family knows moments of harmony and other moments when dialogue has broken down. The positive experiences must strengthen our communities in the hope of peace; and the negative experiences should not be allowed to undermine that hope. For all the times that Muslims and Christians have offended one another, we need to seek forgiveness from the Almighty and offer each other forgiveness. Jesus teaches us that we must pardon others' offenses if God is to pardon us our sins (cf. Mt. 6:14).

As members of the one human family and as believers, we have obligations to the common good, to justice and to solidarity. Interreligious dialogue will lead to many forms of cooperation, especially in responding to the duty to care for the poor and weak. These are the signs that our worship of God is genuine.³

The words John Paul II chose to use in Syria in 2001 to describe Christian-Muslim relations seem more balanced and more realistic than the words of 1965. Rather than asking all to forget the past, he made a suggestion that forgiveness is an important component for present and future relations. A few months later, he would develop the themes of peace, justice and forgiveness in his 2002 message for the World Day of Peace: "No peace without justice, no justice without forgiveness: this is what in this message I wish to say to believers and unbelievers alike, to all men and women of good will who are concerned for the good of the human family and for its future."⁴

Building upon these ideas, Muslims and Catholics in the United States at the regularly scheduled meeting of the West Coast Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims examined these three themes in February 2003. Here are their points of consensus:

1. We, Catholics and Muslims, believe that God is the source of peace and justice, and thus we fundamentally agree on the nature of peace and justice and the essential need of all to work for peace and justice.
2. Our rich teachings and traditions of peace and justice serve as a resource and inspiration for all; however, our immediate and present actions to work

together are often wanting. The need to work together for peace and justice is a pressing demand in these troubled times.

3. We believe that it is God who forgives and that as Catholics and Muslims we are called by God to offer forgiveness. Forgiveness is an important step to moving beyond our past history if we are to preserve human dignity, to effect justice, and to work for peace.
4. We may disagree on certain points of doctrine, even as we respect the others' rights to believe in the fundamental integrity of their teachings and affirm all their human and religious rights. With love and in the pursuit of truth, we will offer our criticisms of one another when we believe there is a violation of integrity of faith in God. We must avoid demonizing one another and misrepresenting one another's teachings and traditions.
5. When we meet in dialogue and discuss matters of peace, justice, and forgiveness, while being faithful to our traditions, we have experienced a profound and moving connection on the deepest level of our faith, which must take effect in our lives.⁵

These points of consensus suggest steps for future relations between Christians and Muslims and express a sentiment for building a culture of dialogue between them.

After more than 35 years, Christian-Muslim relations have a history that can be studied, and participants in these programs have developed strategies for adapting to external circumstances. Even by September 11, 2001, there were three ongoing, regularly scheduled dialogues in place that were co-sponsored by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and Muslim organizations and councils. These are only one set of ongoing relationships in the United States between Christians and Muslims, for many Christian congregations and Islamic centers have good neighborly relations. Christian and Muslim leaders in cities and towns across the country know one another and see one another on various occasions. Muslim and Christian scholars participate in programs together and, on an international scale, church leaders and Muslim leaders now meet and participate regularly in dialogues.⁶

Observations from Dialogue

In November 1986, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved funding for professional staff in the field of interreligious relations, and I was hired for that position in 1987. Although I have also attended to some ecumenical activities, principally bilateral dialogues with Orthodox Christians and with Anglicans, and although the interreligious work was not intended to be exclusively with Muslims, the bishops wanted their episcopal conference to establish a program in Islamic relations.

A quick check of the files of the USCCB Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs reveals the following programs in Christian-Muslim

relations from 1987–2003: three consultations of Christian scholars and leaders on Christian-Muslim relations (1989, 90, 93); three national Catholic-Muslim dialogues (two in 1991 and one in 1992) with the last two co-planned with the American Muslim Council; two joint statements of the USCCB and the American Muslim Council (one in 1993 after the World Trade Center bombing and one in 1995 before the United Nations Conference on population and development); two consultations with Muslim experts on public policy (1995 and 96); three meetings with representatives of Imam Warith Deen Mohammed and a trip to Rome jointly led by Cardinal Keeler and Imam Mohammed (1996); and a series of meetings from 1996 to 2003 of regional dialogues co-sponsored by the USCCB and Muslim organizations.⁷

The regional dialogues are three: one (the Midwest Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims) beginning in 1996 in partnership with the Islamic Society of North America and taking place in the Indianapolis area; a second (the Mid-Atlantic Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims) beginning in 1998 in partnership with Islamic Circle of North America and taking place in New York City; and a third (the West Coast Dialogue of Catholics and Muslims) beginning in 2000 in partnership with advisory (*shura*) council and meeting in Orange, California. These dialogues have met each year to the present, eighteen meetings in all.

A sign of the good will and firm relationships formed between the USCCB and various Muslim organizations participating in these programs was the statement issued on September 14, 2001. It was signed by the Chairman of the Bishops' Committee for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs and the leadership of five of these sets of relations:

Catholics and Muslims meet regularly as friends and religious partners in dialogue and engage together in many community projects. We are fully committed to one another as friends, believers, and citizens of this great land. We abhor all terrorist acts and hate crimes and implore all American citizens to refrain from sinking to the mentality and immorality of the perpetrators of Tuesday's (September 11, 2001) crimes.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and American Muslim Council, Islamic Circle of North America, Islamic Society of North America, Muslim American Society and numerous Islamic centers and councils have co-sponsored dialogues on religious themes and we commit ourselves to the many noble goals of interreligious cooperation. We believe that the one God calls us to be peoples of peace. Nothing in our Holy Scriptures, nothing in our understanding of God's revelation, nothing that is Christian or Islamic justifies terrorist acts and disruption of millions of lives which we have witnessed this week. Together we condemn those actions as evil and diametrically opposed to true religion.

We urge all American citizens to unify during this national tragedy and encourage cooperation among all ethnic, cultural, racial, and religious groups constituting the mosaic of our society. We appeal to American citizens to come to the assistance of the countless victims of Tuesday's crimes and the victims of any crimes of hate in the aftermath of those awful events. We join in supporting our Government in the pursuit of those who were responsible for Tuesday's terrorist acts, always mindful of the moral imperative to act with restraint and respect for civilian lives. We appeal to law enforcement agencies and the general public to assist those who may be targets of hate crimes. We entreat Catholics and Muslims to join together and with all people of good will in services of prayer and community programs promoting peace.

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The Midwest regional dialogue between the USCCB and ISNA has held discussions around the topic of revelation over the course of most of its eight meetings. The Mid-Atlantic dialogue has been discussing aspects of marriage and family life. The West Coast dialogue has addressed various topics under the general heading of spirituality. The five points of consensus on peace, justice, and forgiveness resulted from the 2003 meeting of the West Coast Dialogue. Participants in all three dialogues spent considerable time, a complete meeting or more, on the topic of religion and violence at the meetings following September 11, 2003. Participants felt it was important to do that; most reported that these were their best meetings in terms of candor and growth in mutual understanding.

The USCCB has enhanced these efforts in dialogue by offering, in partnership with the National Association of (Catholic) Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, summer institutes on interreligious relations (1997 and 2000) and an advanced institute on Islam and Catholic-Muslim relations (2002). Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, a specialist on Islam, and now president of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue in Rome, joined me and others in facilitating them. For the advanced institute devoted entirely to Islam, twenty-five diocesan personnel attended. Also, the U.S. bishops' Subcommittee

on Interreligious Dialogue received a grant from the Catholic Near East Welfare Association to offer institutes for bishops on Islam and Catholic-Muslim relations over the next three years. The first of these was given for twelve bishops in March 2003; the second will take place in March 2004.

Now, after sixteen years and with my time on the staff of the USCCB coming to an end, I have looked back and looked forward.⁹ What have I learned from my Muslim friends and the experiences over the past two decades in dialogue with Muslims? I had an occasion recently to distill these lessons into ten points:

- 1) Muslims feel compelled to lecture Christians about the basics of Islam to correct the mistaken views of Islam which Christians might hold. I am grateful for this in that I have learned much from the variety of perspectives on Islam which I have heard over the years. Muslims are particularly eager to tell Christians that Islam is not a new religion and that they venerate all the prophets, including Jesus and his mother Mary. For too many centuries, from the beginning of the encounters between Arab Muslims and the Christians outside of the Arabian Peninsula, Christians have made outlandish statements about Islam, Muhammad, and Muslims. Both tendencies persist today — Christians making incorrect statements and Muslims wanting to educate Christians about Islam.
- 2) Muslims might speak in generalities about other religious groups, just as Christians might do, and Muslims might offer compliments or criticisms of these other groups. What they are truly looking for in religious individuals is God-consciousness or fear of the Lord, as Christians might call this virtue. That is what is important for Muslims.
- 3) Although Christians and Muslims may use many of the same expressions and terms, they need to be clear with each other how they are using these terms. They often talk past one another because we presume we each understand the same words and expressions like revelation, the word of God, Son of God, begotten, and Gospel.
- 4) Muslims look upon Christians pretty much as one group although those who have taken the time to learn about the differences have some insight into how much variety there is among Christians regarding belief and practice, how we interpret scripture, and how we regard one another as Christians. So, if one Christian says something or does something very negative with regard to Islam, Muslims expect other Christians to correct that person or by our silence we are expressing agreement with what has been said. Christians might not think they need to dissociate themselves from a Christian who isn't remotely related to their church, but Muslims generally don't understand how Christians can live with the distances between them due to structure, doctrines, liturgical practices and methods.
- 5) Muslims expect Christians to live the same moral lives that they are living because the Qur'ān does not offer a new teaching on how one should behave, other than particulars about diet, prayer or other particular aspects of Islamic life. In other words, God's Guidance is a moral message, whether

in the Torah, Gospel, or Qurʾān, and Muslims expect Christians to live up to it — taking care of the needy, being honest, being faithful, not stealing, not killing, etc.

- 6) Muslims are particularly eager to tell Christians about their respect for Jesus. They have difficulty understanding why Christians might not like them, or distrust them, or feel that they are out to get them, or why Christians say what they do about Muslim beliefs when Muslims know they themselves have such a wonderful respect for Jesus.
- 7) The word “mission” functions in the same way among Muslims as the word “jihad” does among Christians. Both are beautiful words, but in their use or perceptions there are implications of violence which are difficult to avoid.
- 8) Christianity is a highly structured religion. Even small, independent, and loosely structured churches are conscientiously unstructured as a contrast to the rest of Christianity. In other words, whether we are Catholics, Presbyterians, Anglicans, Orthodox, Baptists, Lutherans or whatever, we have identifiable instruments of authority and communion. From the outside, others might not understand how the structures of authority in the churches work or how Christians regard these structures, but outsiders have observed that any Christian guilty of error, whether in teaching or in action, is corrected by the church authorities. This kind of structure is not so prominent in Islam. Differences among Muslims function in ways to which Christians are not so attuned because Christians may be looking for authority figures and bodies to correct those in error in some effective way. Yet, Islam has had no supreme council or supreme leader who coordinates authority in such a way that some are clearly judged as in error and given a choice whether to remain outside or to become reconciled with the rest.
- 9) On the level of everyday experiences, Muslims and Christians can and do relate very well. Women’s groups continue to meet in spite of political developments because they share experiences and are attentive to one another’s needs. In a retreat environment, Christians and Muslims relate together well when they maintain their prayers and reflect together on issues of mutual importance. These moments of sharing can be quite profound.
- 10) Christians and Muslims often judge one another by the extremists. This can happen between any two groups, but because of the particular history they have had and the way strife has been promoted as a way of dealing with one another, they each make the mistake of judging the other’s worst by their own best. Christians and Muslims have let the extremists too often do all the talking in public discourse.

I expect that our regional dialogues which have figured so prominently in my life over the last eight years will have a shelf life. For now the model is working and people are not tired of it. They convene once a year; twice a year might be a burden. They have become annual retreats. The Midwest dialogue is reviewing a sixty-five page draft of a resource on revelation with a chapter on Christian perspectives and a chapter on Muslim perspectives. There is a third chapter on our shared themes and differences, and an introduction about

this dialogue and dialogue itself. This has not been an easy task. Something similar was produced in the late 1980s and published in English as *The Challenge of the Scriptures*, the result of a French/North African group of Christian and Muslim scholars.¹⁰ The USCCB and ISNA text, *Revelation: Christian and Muslim Perspectives*, is different in that it is co-produced by an episcopal conference and an Islamic organization.

A shorter but equally conclusive report will be produced by our regional dialogue on the West Coast, touching on various areas of spirituality. Like the Midwest dialogue, this group had to learn how to write a text together. I am hoping that the Mid-Atlantic dialogue will someday produce a useful resource on marriage and family. When we held the two meetings after 9/11 to discuss religion and violence, we found that we were able to write something together, a summary of our discussion.¹¹

We can now talk about a number of key doctrinal questions in an environment of trust; yet, given our history, it is difficult to write something together on religion and violence. We can do comparative theology and comparative exegesis, and maybe we need to do more of that before trying something else. I hope that someday we also might begin to write together about pieces of the history of our relations.¹²

Suggestions for the Future

One area for theological dialogue between Christians and Muslims could involve discussion of our relationship to the contemporary world — a world of consumerism, multi-national corporations, globalization, a secularized media, religious reform movements, growing democratization, and religious pluralism. Christians look to various moments in the twentieth century, perhaps a few decades before that, when they began taking a fresh look at the modern world. Muslims too have their reformers who have offered Islamic analyses of the post-colonial, modern world. Here in the United States, protected as we are by the public religious pluralism guaranteed by the Constitution, we have an ideal situation for engaging in this discussion. The literature produced by both Christians and Muslims fills shelves already.

From a Christian perspective, relations with Muslims can be understood within the context of an understanding of the church and the ministry of service to all in building the reign of God, establishing justice, ministering to people's needs, and fulfilling every true desire for union with God. Muslims share a similar point of view in their understanding of the multitude of prophets and messengers who have brought God's message to humanity. The similarity of our understanding of the message gives rise to a similar view among those who receive God's revelation that it is incumbent on them to respond by actions in creating a just society and meeting the needs of all. Pope

John Paul II has reiterated this point time and again. An excellent example was his address in 1985 in Morocco to tens of thousands of Muslim youths:

Christians and Muslims have many things in common, as believers and as human beings. We live in the same world, marked by many signs of hope, but also by multiple signs of anguish. For us, Abraham is a model of faith in God, of submission to his will and of confidence in his goodness. We believe in the same God, the one God, the living God, the God who created the world and brings his creatures to their perfection. . . . (August 19, 1985).

I believe that we, Christians and Muslims, must recognize with joy the religious values that we have in common, and give thanks to God for them. Both of us believe in one God, the only God, who is all justice and all mercy; we believe in the importance of prayer, of fasting, of almsgiving, of repentance and of pardon; we believe that God will be a merciful judge to us all at the end of time, and we hope that after the resurrection He will be satisfied with us and we know that we will be satisfied with Him.¹³

A whole series of theological questions follow from this position, and we are only at the beginning of examining them. The goal of our dialogue is not to explain away our very real and great differences regarding our teachings about God. Nor are we trying to collapse one religious group into the other or collapse both into a single religious tradition. Faced with our major differences, religious leaders often want to suggest instead of theological dialogue a common effort in the public sphere with an emphasis on social projects or examining current political questions. These are important initiatives, but so too is the common theological task. We need to try more projects in comparative theology between Christians and Muslims. When we write theology together, we pay special attention to the audience and thus we develop a respect for the language, methods, and beliefs of our dialogue partners. Our understanding of our faith, even with our differences, will be enhanced.

One particular area of theological study is joint study of the Bible and the Qurʾān. We need to read our scriptures together and, let me suggest, we need to bring our scholars together for sessions of joint exegesis. By interpreting our scriptures together, we gain valuable insight not only into the message of the scriptures but how the scriptures themselves have been lived by the generations. Common themes will be found, and differences in teachings and beliefs will be noted. We will also learn from one another how we approach the diversity of texts in Scripture and how Scripture relates to that body of literature we call, for want of a better term, Tradition. We can open for one another classical methods of interpretation and commentary on Scripture and modern methods too. The benefits could be enormous, not only for mutual

understanding, but also for broadening our own views and growing in our respect for the ways in which God continues to work among all of us.

When this kind of rapport develops among those whose beliefs are incompatible in several ways, spiritual bonds do form and indeed continue to grow among them. There is indeed a very profound goal, one that can be reached by those willing to apply themselves rigorously to a spiritual discipline. Muslims and Christians, worshipping the one God, have many spiritual gifts which they can share compatibly with one another to enhance each other's faith in God.

I began my reflections with a reference to the plea of the Second Vatican Council for Christians and Muslims to forget the past and move forward, but I tempered those thoughts with the suggestions that we need to confront the past in a spirit of forgiveness and with a desire to live in a culture of dialogue and peace. By doing so, we will also be able to address injustice together with integrity.

Early in 2002, the past Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr. George Carey, hosted a number of Christians and Muslims, leaders and scholars, at Lambeth Palace for two days of discussions on the theme "Building Bridges." Dr. David Kerr of Edinburgh University, formerly Director of Hartford Seminary's Macdonald Center for the Study of Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations, made these observations about the history of Christian-Muslim relations:

1. There is no single history of Christian-Muslim relations; no meta-narrative that can be applied to all situations.
2. The European/Western history of Christian-Muslim relations is but one contextual model. It is itself a varied experience, inspired by competing myth: the domination notion of Christian-Muslim confrontation that focuses on external social aspects of Islam is counterpoised by the tradition of *convivencia* in which Christians have searched with Muslims, and with Jews, for a common language of faith.
3. The European experience is also varied in socio-political terms. (He uses Bosnia and Kosovo as just one set of examples.)
4. [His conclusion] is that Western European understandings of Christian-Muslim relations can claim global dominance only as a result of imperialism. [He calls for self-critical dialogue within Christianity.]¹⁴

The contextual perspective is indeed varied. For example, Sophronius, Greek Patriarch of Jerusalem who handed over the city to Umar, the Caliph, complained to Emperor Heraclius, "Why is the flow of blood continual? Why are bodies prey for birds of the sky? Why are churches destroyed and the cross insulted?" The Nestorian Patriarch in Persia, Yeshuyab III, in contrast wrote: "They have not attacked the Christian religion, but rather they have commended our faith, honored our priests . . . and conferred benefits on churches and monasteries."¹⁵ Both accounts are from the seventh century.

We also find double-minded attitudes towards Islam in some of our great thinkers and spiritual leaders in the Western and Catholic tradition. Francis of Assisi accompanied the Fifth Crusade, engaged in a dialogue with the Sultan of Egypt but probably did not hold much hope for his eternal salvation. Nicholas of Cusa responded to the fall of Constantinople to the Ottomans with his extraordinary text, *De Pace Fidei*, and an imaginative representation of the approach of the Second Vatican Council. He wrote in 1453 just over 500 years before the Declaration of the Council. But, when Nicholas investigated the Qurʾān some years later, he reported that it is full of lies and leads to moral turpitude.¹⁶

At the same conference in England where David Kerr made his observations, Professor Tarif Khalidi of Cambridge University offered his own thumbnail sketch of Christian-Muslim relations in four periods: 1) the age of triumph (7th–9th centuries), 2) the age of curiosity (10th–14th centuries), 3) the age of indifference (14th–17th centuries), and 4) the age of bafflement (18th–20th centuries).¹⁷ It is good to balance our different perspectives. Let us hope that the day will come when we can begin writing the history of these relations together, perhaps in small pieces, but still writing these together.

If Christians and Muslims are to move beyond their confrontations and their bafflement with one another, then we must begin where we are now. Many of us who have been engaged in Christian-Muslim relations for a number of years will begin beyond the first steps. We have been taking those first steps in the United States for two decades and there are sufficient numbers of us and considerable trust and joint accomplishment for us to move to the second steps, perhaps one of the four suggestions I have mentioned here briefly. In 1979 when speaking to the tiny Catholic community in Ankara, Pope John Paul II, after citing the long first paragraph of the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non Christian Religions*, asked “If it is not urgent, precisely today when Christians and Muslims have entered a new period of history, to recognize and develop the spiritual bonds that unite us, in order to preserve and promote together for the benefit of all ‘peace, liberty, social justice and moral values.’” (November 29, 1979) I believe we have begun that process of mutual recognition and development. It provides us with a firm foundation for more intense dialogue, theological exchange, comparative exegesis, and the needed exercise of writing the history of our relations together.

Endnotes

1. Texts and translations of documents of the Holy See, including the Second Vatican Council and speeches of popes are taken from *Interreligious Dialogue: the Official*

Teaching of the Catholic Church (1963–1995), edited by Francesco Gioia (Boston: Pauline Books and Media, 1997). Texts issued after this publication can be found in the bulletin of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Pro Dialogo*, published generally 3 times a year.

2. The reference in the *Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non Christian Religions* is simply parenthetical: "(Cf. St. Gregory VII, Letter III, 21 to Anazir [Al-Nasir], King of Mauretania PL, 148.451A.)." Later, in 1991, choosing to write directly to Muslims on the occasion of Eid and soon after the close of the Gulf War which he had opposed, John Paul II gave a fuller reference to this text:

"I close my greeting to you with the words of one of my predecessors, Pope Gregory VII who in 1076 wrote to Al-Nasir, the Muslim Ruler of Bijaya, present day Algeria: 'Almighty God, who wishes that all should be saved and none lost, approves nothing in so much as that after loving Him one should love his fellow man, and that one should not do to others, what one does not want done to oneself. You and we owe this charity to ourselves especially because we believe in and confess one God, admittedly, in a different way, and daily praise and venerate him, the creator of the world and ruler of this world.'"

"These words, written almost a thousand years ago, express my feelings to you today as you celebrate *'Id al-Fitr*, the Feast of the Breaking of the Fast. May the Most High God fill us with all His merciful love and peace."

3. *Pro Dialogo* no. 107, (2001/2): 172. Also published in *Origins: Catholic News Service Documentary Service* 31/1 (May 17, 2001): 14.

4. John Paul II, World Day of Peace Message 2002, published in *Origins* 31/28 (December 20, 2001): 466.

5. These five points are listed in a news release issued after the dialogue met. The news release can be found on the website of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops at: <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2003/03-056.htm>.

6. For a recent reflection on these dialogues see: Archbishop Michael Fitzgerald, "The New Opportunity for Christian-Muslim Dialogue," *Origins* 33/1 (May 15, 2003): 10ff. The Vatican's dialogues with Muslims are regularly reported in the bulletin of the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue, *Pro Dialogo*, published three times a year in English, French and Italian.

7. Materials related to these activities have been published over the years in *Origins: Catholic News Service Documentary Service*: 21, 33 (1/23/92); 24, 14 (September 15, 1994); 25, 14 (September 21, 1995); 25, 36 (February 29, 1996); 30, 41 (March 29, 2001); 31, 16 (September 27, 2001). See also my articles: "Vatican II Sparked Flurry of Activities." *Catholic International* (February 2002), Special Issue on Understanding Islam: 13–17; "Islamic-Catholic Relations in the USA: Activities of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops (1996)" and "Recent Developments," *Islamochristiana* 23 (1997): 245–9; "The Goal and Fruit of Catholic-Muslim Dialogue." *The Living Light*, Department of Education, United States Catholic Conference, 32, 2 (Winter 1995): 51–60; and "An Islamic-Roman Catholic 'National' Dialogue." *Ecumenical Trends* 22, 9 (October 1993): 10–13.

8. The text is found on the USCCB website at <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2001/01-163.htm>.

9. This paper was prepared for a program at Hartford Seminary in the fall term 2003. Early in 2004, the author would begin serving as special assistant for interreligious initiatives to the president of Georgetown University, Washington, DC.

10. *The Challenge of the Scriptures. The Bible and the Qur'an*. Muslim-Christian Research Group. Translated by Stuart E. Brown. Maryknoll, New York: Orbis, 1989.

11. The text of the news release can be found on the USCCB website: <http://www.usccb.org/comm/archives/2003/03-089.htm>.

12. For further information see: John Borelli, "An Overview: Christian-Muslim Relations in a Post-9/11 World," *Origins* 32/37 (February 27, 2003): 615ff.

13. The best collection of Vatican and papal statements about interreligious relations is *Interreligious Dialogue: the Official Teaching of the Catholic Church*, edited by Francesco Gioia (Boston, MA: Pauline Books and Media, 1997).

14. *The Road Ahead: A Christian-Muslim Dialogue*, edited by Michael Ipgrave (London: Church Publishing House, 2002), 35–36.

15. Rollin Armour, Sr., *Islam, Christianity, and the West: A Troubled History* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 2002), 28–9, 40.

16. See my article, "An Overview: Christian-Muslim Relations in a Post-9/11 World," *Origins* 32, 37 (February 27, 2003): 615ff. The specific references to Cusa and Francis Assisi can be found in Rollin Armour's book cited above.

17. *The Road Ahead*, 40–42.