Bible & Religion Educator Scholarship   Biblical and Religious Studies

10-1-2013

The Kahal, Zawiya, and Monastic Multiplexes: Informational Centripetalism as Medieval Mission

Larry Poston
lposton@messiah.edu

Linda Poston

Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah University is a Christian university of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.

Introduction: The Religions of the Book

OCLC (the Online Computer Library Center) currently gives direct support to more than 72,000 libraries in 170 countries (OCLC 3). Thousands of these collections are connected with universities, which number more than 9,000 worldwide (Föster 1). What is often not recognized is the fact that a majority of these educational institutions—including their libraries—have religious roots, being originally founded by missionary agents as a means of preserving, studying, and propagating specific religious beliefs and practices.

Generally speaking, contemporary historians and cultural anthropologists have not been positively disposed toward missionary religions (see, for instance, Tinker, *passim* and Said, *passim*). Even popular media has offered criticism through literary works such as James Clavell's *Shogun*, James Michener's *Hawaii*, and Barbara Kingsolver's *The Poisonwood Bible* together with Hollywood's *At Play in the Fields of the Lord* and *Rambo IV*. In each of these works, missionaries are presented as naïve, uneducated and even mentally ill fanatics who wreak havoc upon unassuming populaces.

This essay will demonstrate that rather than being destructive of indigenous cultures, the missionary endeavors of the Abrahamic religions have contributed to the development of what is often called the "high culture" of many civilizations in both the ancient and modern world. Christians and Muslims deliberately, and the Jewish people incidentally, have established educational institutions wherever their missionary journeys or migrations have taken them, increasing rates of literacy among men and women and establishing libraries that house both translated materials and indigenously produced documents. The essay will also show that when faced with the choice between limiting educational materials to solely religious items and inclusion of "secular" items, the latter option was almost always chosen, allowing for an

openness to cultural adaptation and contextualization very different from academic and media portrayals of these endeavors.

The Abrahamic religions were established and evolved mainly from written sources—in particular the documents considered to be inspired scripture: the *Tanakh*, the *New Testament*, and the *Qur'an*. "Secondary sources" included such works as the *Babylonian Talmud*, the *Nicene Creed*, *Chalcedonian Formula* and *Westminster Catechism*, and the *ahadith* and *Creed of Al-Ashari*. Third in importance were scholarly works such as Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*, Calvin's *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, and Al-Ghazali's *Deliverance from Error*.

In the Tanakh we find that "… *the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this on a scroll as something to be remembered…*" (Exodus 17:14), and "*When the Lord finished speaking to Moses on Mount Sinai, He gave him the **two tablets of the Testimony**, the tablets of stone **inscribed by the finger of God***" (31:18). **Written words** were at the heart of Hebrew religion. Christianity, from its inception, rooted itself in "*God-breathed **scriptures***" (2 Timothy 3:16), and even during the apostolic period Paul's writings were given the status of "scripture" by Peter (2 Peter 3:16). Islam teaches that the Qur'an is "uncreated" and part of the eternal essence of Allah. It is the perfect reflection of the '*Umm al-Kitab* – the "mother of **Books**" (see Surah 13:39).

Words, then, have been the foundation of the Abrahamic religious systems. **Books** have been written and carried by Jews, Christians, and Muslims wherever they have traveled. Whenever the adherents of these faiths settled, more books were written, added to the ones that were transported, and collected into libraries.

The Kahal Communities: Centrifugal Centripetalism

The *diaspora* of the Jewish people that began in 721 BCE and reached its peak in 70 CE was not a "missionary movement," seeing that it was a forced dispersal of a population that had become *persona non grata* in its homeland. Nevertheless, the Jews formed community organizations wherever they went, and these *kahals* were highly influential in various locations. They were established to preserve Jewish culture and heritage, and the importance given to educating succeeding generations led to the establishment of schools and accompanying libraries.

In the Middle East and in Eastern and Western Europe, these communities produced various types of professionals. Consequently, the Jews "…invested in their sons' religious and general education, attaining levels of education comparatively higher than the non-Jewish population at that time" (Botticini 888). This enterprise required the construction of hundreds of synagogues, which became "primarily a place where children and adults read and learned the Torah" (Botticini 899).

Questions of doctrine and polity were raised in these synagogues, requiring responses from credible sources. This need led to the establishment of academies, such as the *yeshiva* founded in Cordoba in 929. Eventually this city boasted 70 libraries and became the leading intellectual center of Western Europe (Botticini 915). In central Europe Jewry began to thrive when Gershom ben Judah (960-1028) founded an academy in Mainz. Jews from all over Europe were drawn to this centralized location, including the famous Rashi. When yet another academy was begun in Worms, the foundations were laid for the separation of the Ashkenazim (Germanic Jews) from the Sephardim (Iberian Jews).

In the Middle East, Jewish enclaves were established in Iraq as early as the seventh century BCE – and the educational institutions established in Babylon continued to expand throughout the Common Era. Nehemiah Allony's thirty years of research resulted in *The Jewish Library in the Middle Ages – Book Lists from the Cairo Genizah*, a collection of 114 book lists found in the Cairo Genizah ("depository") comprised of documents from rabbinic Jews between the eleventh and thirteenth centuries (Lavee 359).

The city of Kazimierz (Poland) was the most significant cultural center for the Jews in Eastern Europe from the 15th through the 18th centuries. During this period "almost every Jewish organization or association, including cultural societies, labor unions, and youth associations, even the smallest, had its own library…commercial lending libraries, Zionist Hebrew collections, socialist popular libraries, Yiddish collections, synagogue libraries, and school libraries" (Sroka 148). Other significant collections in this part of Europe included the Library for Jewish Studies of the Great Synagogue in Warsaw (40,000 volumes), the Strashun Library of Vilna (35,000 volumes), the Alejchem Jewish Public Library in Bialystok (41,800 volumes), and the Yiddisher Visenshaftlecher Institut of Vilna (100,000 volumes) (Sroka 148-149).

Prior to World War II, the Bibliothèque Medem in Paris was the largest Yiddish library in Western and Central Europe. Today its collections comprise 20,000 volumes in Yiddish and 10,000 titles in the Latin alphabet. It also maintains about 30,000 uncataloged volumes and extensive serial holdings. Together with the libraries of the Alliance Israélite Universelle and the Séminaire Israélite de France, Medem is a principal partner in the Réseau Européen des Bibliothèques Judaica et Hebraica, a consortium exercising enormous influence on behalf of European Jewry.

Even in the midst of Nazi oppression, Block 31 at Birkenau had a library—eight volumes locked in an elder's room. In Theresienstadt, a library of 100,000 books flourished. Prior to the ghettoization of the Jews in Vilna, the Mefiste Haskalah Library held 45,000 books. When the director Fayvush Krasni was executed, Herman Kruk, who had been the head of the Grosser Library in Warsaw, replaced him. "Kruk was indefatigable... In addition to running the library, he kept a diary that captures painful details of ghetto life…[he] and his colleagues caught rare glimpses of repose, and even of joy, among the books" (Battles 175). The collection swelled to 100,000 volumes as holdings from synagogues and private homes were sent for preservation and protection. The most popular book in the library during this time? Tolstoy's *War and Peace.*

Today the Jewish National and University Library in Israel functions as the chief educational resource for Judaism. It serves as the National Library for the State of Israel, the Central Library of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, and a repository of Jewish heritage from around the world. Founded in 1892 as the first public library in Palestine, it was intended to preserve books on Jewish culture—including that of the *diaspora* itself. The founders "were acutely aware of their diminished capacity to shape their own Jewish world in Europe, and strove to attain a measure of cultural and, specifically, scholarly self-empowerment—quite literally, to write themselves back into history" (Myers 144). In 1960 it was moved to the Givat Ram campus of Hebrew University, and today the collection contains 5 million books and several thousand manuscripts, archives, maps, and musical recordings. It would appear that a large percentage of the materials produced in the midst of the centrifugally-oriented *diaspora* have been brought back centripetally to the "*center of the nations*" (Ezekiel 5:5).

Islamic Jihads and Zawiyas: Macro and Micro Missiologies

The original missiological strategy of Islam involved the extension of a *da'wah* ("invitation") to territorial rulers throughout the Middle East and North Africa, offering reduced taxes, religious freedom for monotheists, and elimination of the stigma of "heresy" in exchange for allowing Muslims to establish political, economic, judicial, educational and religious institutions. These macro-level *jihads* spread Islam westward along the northern coast of Africa up into Spain and eastward to northern India, giving Muslims access to the libraries of the Byzantines, the Persians and others. "As a 'People of the Book,' Muslims founded centers of scholarship and libraries wherever their faith took root..." (Murray 98). "Islamic libraries were rich in diversity, allowing scholars from other lands to share the facilities. These libraries were known for their attractiveness and comfort, many adorned with the classic Islamic dome, some surrounded by walkways and landscaped with ponds" (Murray 56).

The origin of Islamic libraries is traceable to the Umayyad caliph Mu'awiya (r. 661-680). His collection in Damascus was modeled on the libraries of Isfahan and Gondeshapur in Persia, but an additional influence was the library "…of the Persian city of Shiraz, where there were more than three hundred chambers furnished with plush carpets. The library had thorough catalogs to help in locating texts, which were kept in storage chambers and organized according to every branch of learning" (Murray 56). Generations later, the philosopher/physician Avicenna (980-1037) told how he found there "…many rooms filled with books which were arranged in cases row upon row…I saw in this collection books of which few people have even heard the name and which I myself had never seen either before or since" (Battles 65-66).

Mu'awiya appointed a *sahib al-masahif* ("curator of books") to care for his library, into which went not only sacred writings but works in the liberal arts and sciences. "It became a

flourishing universal library along Alexandrian lines" (Battles 62). His successors built a library in the al-Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem; indeed, most Islamic libraries were connected with mosques, and "as in European monasteries, a prime function of the mosque library was the copying of books by scribes, in this case from Greek, Persian, Sanskrit and Latin into Arabic" (Murray 51). In this way, the Islamic "gospel" was spread.

Under the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (r. 813-833) the Bayt al-Hikma ("House of Wisdom") was established in Baghdad. This institution was the center of translation, compilation and comparison of the wisdom of peoples under Muslim rule from India to the Iberian Peninsula. The Arabic translator of Euclid, al-Hajjaj, worked there alongside al-Khwarizmi, father of the field of algebra (from his book *Kitab al-Jebr*). "Reading Hindu mathematical treatises collected…at the House of Wisdom, al-Khwarizmi adapted the Hindu numbering system…giving birth to the Arabic numerals we use today" (Battles 63).

The Bayt's expansion was seemingly endless, for "al-Ma'mun was almost fanatical in his desire to collect all the world's books under one roof, translate them into Arabic and have his scholars study them" (al-Khalili 68). Indeed, "by the middle of the ninth century the House of Wisdom would have been the largest repository of books in the world" (al-Khalili 71).

But the Bayt al-Hikma was far more than a library. There the Banu Musa ("the sons of Moses") married arithmetic and geometry in such a way that their *Book of the Measurement of Plane and Spherical Figures* became the foundation for much of Western science. They also produced *Astral Motion and the Force of Attraction* which "shows clear signs that [the brothers] had a crude qualitative notion not so far from Newton's law of gravitation" (al-Khalili 74). And Hunayn ibn Ishaq's translations preserved such titles as *On the Natural Faculties, On the*

Anatomy of Veins and Arteries, On the Anatomy of Nerves, and *Ten Treatises on the Eye* after Galen's original works were destroyed.

During the 820s, al-Ma'mun added an astronomical observatory to the library to test the accuracy of Ptolemy's *Almagest*. New star charts (*zijes*) were developed that expanded and updated those of Ptolemy. Another project involved measuring the circumference of the earth:

> "Al-Ma'mun dispatched a group that included his top astronomers…to the north-west corner of Iraq... There, the group split into two teams who headed out in opposite directions, due north and due south, counting paces as they went and placing arrows in the ground as markers along the way. They stopped when they had measured a 1-degree angle of the earth's curvature based on the positions of the stars. Multiplying this measurement by 360, they arrived at a figure of 24, 500 miles—a mere 400 miles short of the actual figure. (al-Khalili 86)

Another academic library was established in Baghdad by Sabur Ibn Ardashir in 993, containing some 10,400 volumes "representative of the various departments of literature" (Mackensen 290). More long-lasting was the Nizamiyah, founded by the Persian vizier Nizam al-Mulk. When al-Ghazali was the leading professor of this institution, its library boasted over 400,000 volumes (Mackensen 297).

In the 900s, the Fatimids built a "house of learning" in Cairo containing 600,000 volumes (Battles 66). As mentioned above, Muslim Spain's Cordoban library was estimated to have between 400,000 and 600,000 books. Al-Hakam (r. 961-976) sent men to the East to obtain all the books they could, and this endeavor created a library so large that the catalogue alone was reputed to fill 44 volumes of 50 folios each (Al-Khalili 192). A virtual "city of learning" was established called Medinat al-Zahra, and the influence of this institution stretched beyond Islam

and Judaism: "Cordoba attracted so many Christian scholars that it helped stimulate the establishment of universities in Europe" (Murray 52). The expansion of Islam was thus accompanied by an internationalization of learning, with great libraries serving as centers for scholarship that attracted many to the Muslim faith.

The Crusades, however, were devastating to Islamic collections. Perhaps the only positive aspect was the fact that some enterprising crusaders brought back many volumes to Europe, and "it was Arabic translations of classical Greek texts that preserved ancient works of philosophy and science which otherwise might have been lost to the West. Arabic renditions of Plato, Aristotle, and Galen were cornerstones of European educational advancement, which subsequently led to the Renaissance of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries" (Murray 54-55). The Mongol invasions came next, and in 1258 Baghdad and its 36 libraries were destroyed, "the pillagers tearing books apart so the leather covers could be used for sandals" (Murray 54).

Farther to the east in India, the Delhi Sultanate (13th – 16th centuries) developed the Khangah (Sufi), court, academic, mosque and private libraries. The Mughal ruler Akbar (1542-1605) developed an Imperial Library that contained 24,000 volumes. Akbar encouraged bookbinding and even established a library exclusively for women (Murray 104)—giving a boost to Islamic public relations at a time when the education of women was generally neglected.

The Ottomans were not as well known for their cultural accomplishments, though a significant library was established in 1678 in Constantinople, and in the 18th century the Enderun Library was developed at the Topkapi Palace for the royal household. Ottoman Islam spread by means of trade and Sufi missionaries to the Malay Peninsula and Indonesia, and there "a distinctive form of manuscript illumination developed among the Malays, an art influenced by

Chinese Islamic manuscript illumination and Arabic script" (Murray 111). Muslims, then, were not completely averse to contextualization.

After the expulsion of Muslims from Spain in 1492, "libraries developed in Muslim towns and trading centers, including deep in West Africa... By the 16th century, Timbuktu and other West African cities were held in high repute for their many scholars and their impressive book collections…" (Murray 98-99). Timbuktu's leading families possessed more than 100,000 manuscripts, covering the fields of religion, commerce, astronomy, botany and music. Today the city's Ahmed Baba library, constructed in 2010, contains 20,000 manuscripts dating as far back as 1204.

While the *jihad* was a "macro-missiology," more localized activities were developed as well. One example of such "micro-missions" was the establishment of *zawiyas* by the Sanusi Sufi Order of Cyrenaica, founded by Muhammad al-Sanusi (1787-1859). The largest of these outposts was at Jaghbub where an 8000 volume library formed the core of an educational facility that saw an average of 300 students in residence at any given time (Ziadeh 106).

Altogether some 53 *zawiyas* were built during al-Sanusi's lifetime. In Tripoli and Fezzan were at least 30; in the Sahara another 20, and in Egypt, the Siwa oasis and the oases of the western desert an additional 30 or more. The Bedouins of the Hijaz boasted fifteen of the institutions, and no accurate count has ever appeared for the regions of Ethiopia, Somaliland, Yemen, Persia, Iraq and India (Evans-Pritchard 63). While no accurate records were kept regarding these facilities' libraries, it is certain that their influence was extensive in the geographical areas that surrounded them.

Today the greatest library of Islam is at the Azhar University in Cairo, Egypt – which functions as a central "think-tank" for Sunni Islam with its *Shaykh al-Azhar*. Its collection

includes 9,062 books and 595,668 manuscripts, dating to at least the 8th century. The rare manuscript collection is said to comprise some seven million pages of material.

Christianity's Monasteries: "In But Not Of the World"

The Judaism of the pre-Christian era was centripetal in its missiology; Jerusalem was to function as an *axis mundi* in fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy that "*the mountain of the Lord's temple will be … raised above the hills and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, 'Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord…He will teach us his ways…'*" (Isaiah 2:2-3). Under the New Covenant, Christians were to pursue a strategy that was the reverse, as Jesus commanded them to "*Go and make disciples of all nations…teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you*" (Matthew 28:19-20). Such teaching requires schools— schools that are accompanied by libraries.

"With the rise of Christians to political power, many Roman book collections were wantonly destroyed as unholy, pagan teachings that revered more than one god. Yet the tradition of writing books and maintaining libraries persevered, for the book proved an effective means of propagating and spreading the newly dominant faith" (Murray 21). Rome early on had no theological collections of great importance; "its many churches kept just the few books needed for routine activity, such as liturgical manuals and copies of the Scriptures that the lectors used for readings" (Casson 139). But over time,

> "the rise and triumph of Christianity had a profound effect upon literature: it elevated religion into a predominant concern. To be sure, there were still writers, in both Greek and Latin, who dealt with secular subjects, but they are minor compared with the great Christian authors, the likes of Basil or Eusebius in Greek, of Augustine or Jerome in Latin. There was an outpouring of studies of the text

of the Bible, commentaries on passages and interpretations of them, discussions

of the nature of the divine, diatribes against views held to be heretical, and so on.

Such literature was out of place on the shelves of the libraries that existed; it

required its own libraries. These arose as part of Christian churches, monasteries,

and the like and, spreading far and wide during the Middle Ages, were steps in the

progression toward the libraries of today." (Casson 136)

In Caesarea, for instance, a collection of over 30,000 volumes was assembled by

Pamphilus, a scholarly cleric who saw to it that his library possessed its own scriptorium which

produced copies of the Bible to lend out or to donate. Both Eusebius and Jerome used these

books; Jerome mentions a copy of the supposed Hebrew original of the Gospel of Matthew as

well as the manuscripts from which Origen created his *Hexapla* (Casson 139).

Pope Damasus I (366-384) established an archive in the Roman Church of San Lorenzo,

later transferred to the Lateran Palace. The core of the Vatican library, this collection was,

generally speaking, entirely Christian, while collections elsewhere in Christendom were often

quite eclectic. In 425 the emperor Theodosius II established a university in Constantinople that

boasted three major libraries, only one of which was a theological collection. After the libraries

in Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Caesarea came under Muslim domination and made inaccessible

to Christian scholars, Constantinople's libraries became the most significant in the eastern half of

Christendom.

The original centrifugal missiology of Christianity was modified over time, mainly by the

monastic movement. Multiplex institutions were established that consisted of (at least) a church,

school, library, and dormitory. These monastic multiplexes multiplied centrifugally, but once in

place functioned centripetally, providing study centers for surrounding populations. During the

first quarter of the fourth century, Pachomius founded a monastic community near Dendyra in Upper Egypt which required literacy of its monks. Therefore "the monastery had to have books…There was a special niche in the wall for storing them, and the second-in-command… was charged with taking care of them: he was to maintain a count of them, and was to lock them up at night in the niche" (Casson 141). Also in Egypt was the monastery of Chenoboskion in Nag Hammadi, where in 1945 thirteen codices dating from the second half of the 300s were found. These have provided a fuller picture of early Christianity's competition with Gnosticism.

Monastic communities spread throughout the eastern empire, and with them libraries. Most were small and limited to theological works: "the monasteries of Constantinople, for example, probably had a collection of no more than one hundred each" (Casson 142). In the tenth century a Syrian monastery led by Moses of Nisibis preserved 250 manuscripts, many in Syriac. Indeed, eighth century bilingual stone inscriptions, in Chinese and Syriac, survive in modern Xian in China—evidence of the extent of Christianity's missionary expeditions (Battles 58).

Back in the West, Benedict established Monte Cassino in 529 and required in his Rule that the fourth hour to the sixth be spent in reading, and on Sundays the entire day. During the Lenten season, each monk was to read a book in its entirety. But it was left to Cassiodorus and his Vivarium monastery (founded 540-550) to elevate the role of copyist to a holy calling. "Cassiodorus saw to it that Vivarium had a library that would make possible the ample knowledge he wanted his monks to acquire. He started it by donating his own books, and he filled in gaps by purchases; the scriptorium was able to turn out as many copies as were needed" (Casson 144). His *Institutiones* influenced the monastic libraries of the Middle Ages to become research libraries, "setting up scriptoria and resorting to interlibrary loan to expand their

holdings, borrowing titles they wanted from monasteries that owned them and having the

scriptorium make copies" (Casson 145). Following in the footsteps of Cassiodorus was

Columban, who founded a monastery at Bobbio near Pavia (Italy) with a library of 666 works.

Other collections were at St. Gallen in Switzerland, at Fulda and Corvey in Germany, and at

Canterbury, Wearmouth and Jarrow in England.

Benedictine scriptoria were the most productive of the Middle Ages, turning out copies of

Scriptures, stories and works of the church founders, psalters, missals, the Gospels, and writings

of church leaders. The average scribe copied two books per year, with a Bible requiring 15

months (Murray 33-35). Monastic libraries began to lend books, "as long as something of equal

value was left as a deposit (often another book) to guarantee the title's timely return" (Murray

31). Constantinople became known for exporting books, many of which went to Arab and

Persian libraries where they were translated and studied by Muslim scholars (Murray 28).

Recognizing the value of books as a means of spreading the Christian gospel,

> "a library's most-used books were not only chained to desks and lecterns to
>
> prevent theft, but they were often protected by a "book curse" to scourge whoever
>
> damaged or stole them. After finishing the copying, the scribe usually added such
>
> a curse to the final page, warning that eternal damnation or prolonged physical
>
> suffering awaited any would-be perpetrator." (Murray 39)

During the Renaissance fewer people chose the monastic life, and cathedral schools

became the main centers of learning. The College of the Sorbonne was founded in Paris in 1257

by Robert de Sorbon (1201-1274), resulting in one of Europe's finest library collections and

establishing the practice of purchasing and loaning sets of books to students for the academic

year. During the Thirty Years War (1618-1648), Protestant libraries in Europe were developed

in non-traditional ways: "a significant factor in the growth of some libraries was the acquisition of books as spoils of war—largely from the scourged German states. During the wars of religion, library looting was virtually legalized" (Murray 117). An example is Sweden, where

> …King Gustavus Adolphus (1594-1632)…virtually emptied libraries in his army's path…Specially targeted by [his] raiders were the schools, seminaries, and colleges of the Jesuit order… (Murray 118)

In modern times, the spread of educational institutions for theological training has been accompanied by the establishment of libraries around the world. India, for instance, is home to 34 theological seminaries, of which four have outstanding libraries: Gurukul Lutheran Theological College, Leonard Theological College in Jabalpur, Serampore College, and the United Theological College in Bangalore. Farther east in Myanmar is the Burma Divinity School in Rangoon and the Karen Theological Seminary in Insein. In Indonesia is the Asia Graduate School of Theology in Yogyakarta. In the Philippines are the Union Theological Seminary, St. Andrews Theological Seminary, the Asia Graduate School of Theology, the Asia Baptist Graduate Theological Seminary, the Philippines Baptist Theological Seminary, and at least half a dozen others, all of which boast outstanding theological libraries. China currently has 18 legal theological schools, with Nanjing Theological Seminary serving as the national school for government-approved pastoral training. Taiwan boasts the Taiwan Theological College and Seminary and a Baptist Theological Seminary, Holy Light Seminary, Lutheran Theological Seminary and Yu-Shan Seminary. The library of the Taiwan Theological College and Seminary houses "52,000 books, mainly on Christian theology, philosophy, Christian education, social work, counseling, church music, religions, Taiwan history, etc." (Taiwan 1). In Japan, there is the Tokyo Union Theological Seminary which boasts one of the largest

theological library collections in Asia with over 100,000 volumes in Japanese, German and English, the Japan Lutheran College and Seminary, Japanese Bible Seminary, and Japan Baptist Theological Seminary. South Korea has the Daehan Theological University, the Korea Baptist Theological University and Seminary (with over 150,000 volumes), Luther Seminary, and Youngnam Theological University and Seminary.

Today the great libraries of Christianity exist in the Vatican and in various universities that began as church-related institutions. The modern Vatican Library was founded by Pope Nicholas V (1398-1455) who contributed hundreds of his own manuscripts and employed dozens of scholars and copyists to translate both pagan and Christian works into Latin, eventually producing a collection of some 9000 volumes. His head librarian, Giovanni Andrea Bussi (1417 – 1475),

> …acquired titles by using the particularly effective method of ordering monasteries to give up any works he or Nicholas wanted for the collection… It often happened that the pope's agent…simply hid a desired book under his robes and left with it. One particular papal secretary, who scoured northern Europe for manuscripts, justified outright theft by asserting the work had been rescued from 'neglect' and 'captivity' in the libraries of 'Teutonic barbarians.'" (Murray, 84)

Pope Sixtus IV (1471-1484) was the first to house the library in the Vatican palace. Sixtus V (1521-1590) commissioned the construction of a new library that is still in use today, holding 1.1 million printed books, 75,000 codices, and 70,000 prints and engravings. The Secret Archives contain another 150,000 items (Murray 301).

Conclusions: "Come Out and Be Separate" or "All Truth is God's Truth?"

The composition of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic libraries has always been tied to the issue of "religion and culture." Should "non-religious" or "non-Christian religious" works be included in libraries intended for use by religiously-oriented people? Three stances have developed in answer to this question.

1. A "religious documents only" stance, which holds that "pagan" documents have no place in libraries connected with synagogues, mosques or churches.

2. A "religious documents so that we can 'know our enemy'" stance, which holds that non-religious works may be included as resource material for contextualizing the missionary message of the respective religions.

3. An "all truth is God's truth" stance, which holds that non-religious works should be included because all human beings bear the *imago Dei* to at least some extent.

With respect to the first alternative, there is the famous story—most likely apocryphal—told of Islam's second caliph. After reaching Alexandria, the early jihadists asked 'Umar what they should do with the famed Library of Alexandria. The caliph is alleged to have answered: "Touching the books you mention, if what is written in them agrees with the Book of God, they are not required. If it disagrees, they are not desired. Destroy them therefore" (Battles 22-23). More broadly influential was the Roman Catholic Church's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, officially in force from 1559 to 1966, which prohibited the ownership and reading of books deemed unfit for Christians. The lists included not only "non-Christian" and "pagan" works, but so-called "Christian" works deemed heretical (i.e. Protestant works).

But it has always been difficult to ignore the fact that "non-believers" have often had highly useful ideas to contribute to human society. Could not Jews, Christians and Muslims

profit from the knowledge explicated in mathematical and scientific studies? Is there harm in examining the works of astronomers, medical personnel, agriculturalists, and the like? Those who believe that "religious" libraries may contain "non-religious" works are commonly divided into two groups.

The first consists of those who hold that "secular" works should be received and studied so that "religious" persons might have a better understanding of those they seek to convert. For instance, Isidore, bishop of Seville from 600-636, had a number of works by non-Christian authors, even though he considered these works unfit for his monks (Casson 140). And Philip II's Escorial library "a room on an upper floor contained banned books confiscated by the Inquisition, which Philip himself authorized, to root out heretics and Muslims and their beliefs…" (Murray 86).

A second group was not evangelistically oriented but was convinced that even non-religious persons bear the *imago Dei* and are therefore capable of producing useful literature. In 1524, Martin Luther "called for libraries with books on religious commentary, law, and medicine, and for histories that help in observing the marvelous works of God" (Murray 90). While the *genizah* library in Cairo mainly contained religious works, "the huge cultural horizon of the community [was] expressed by the presence of works of medicine, philosophy, historiography and even Arabic tales and Muslim writings" (Lavee 361). Further, the *genizah* was a depository for "…controversial religious texts, materials once used in worship, capricious transcriptions of the four-letter Hebrew name of God, or artifacts about whose sacred status there is irresolvable doubt" (Reif 123). And while the Bibliothèque Medem's holdings mainly deal with the Holocaust and histories of various Jewish communities in Europe, the library is also

noted for its reference materials and its collections of Philosophy, [Comparative] Religion, the Social Sciences, Theater, the Fine Arts, and Literary Criticism.

As noted above, the Mughal Akbar's Imperial Library included works on Poetry, Medicine, Astrology, and Music, Philology, Philosophy, Sufism, Astronomy, Geometry, and Law (Murray 104). And the Christian monastic libraries of medieval England held a wide variety of classical and medieval literature, including "secular works and chronicles of contemporary events" (Fritze 277).

A Need for Balance

In the course of their histories, Jews, Muslims and Christians have often been caricatured as "anti-intellectual, emotionally-driven fanatics," and it is certainly true that because of their theological convictions, some have focused on "the world to come" in ways that appear to underemphasize and denigrate their present existence. A focus on proselytization and conversion has often put them at odds with the priorities of non-religious persons. But in actuality, the missiological strategies of Christians and Muslims and the priorities given to cultural preservation on the part of Jews have resulted in the establishment of some of the finest learning centers and libraries the world has ever seen. While many historians and commentators blame religion for warfare and a host of other contemporary problems, it would be more accurate—and more just—to speak of humankind's indebtedness to the selfless men and women who have given their lives in the pursuit of goals in the realm of the spirit, and who in so doing have contributed enormously to the physical dimension as well.

References

Battles, Matthew (2003). *Library: An Unquiet History*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company.

Botticini, Maristella and Zvi Eckstein (2007). "From Farmers to Merchants, Conversions and Diaspora: Human Capital and Jewish History." *Journal of the European Economic Association*, v.5, no.5 (September).

Casson, Lionel (2001). *Libraries in the Ancient World*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E.E. (1949). *The Sanusi of Cyrenaica*. Oxford, U.K.: Clarendon Press.

Föster, Klaus (2013). *Universities Worldwide*. http://univ.cc/. Retrieved 8/11/13.

Fritze, Ronald Harold (1983). "Truth Hath Lacked Witnesse, Tyme Wanted Light": The Dispersal of the English Monastic Libraries and Protestant Efforts at Preservation. Ca 1535-1625." *The Journal of Library History*, v.18, no.3 (Summer).

el-Hachaichi, Mohammed (1901). "Chez les Senoussis et Les Touregs." *Revue de Paris* (Juillet-Aout).

al-Khalili, Jim (2011). *The House of Wisdom: How Arabic Science Saved Ancient Knowledge and Gave Us the Renaissance.* New York: The Penguin Press.

Lavee, Moshe (2008). [Review of the book *The Jewish Library in the Middle Ages—Book Lists from the Cairo Genizah* by Nehemiah Allony]. *Journal of Semitic Studies*, v.53, no.2 (Autumn).

Mackensen, Ruth Stellhorn (1932). "Four Great Libraries of Medieval Baghdad." *The Library Quarterly* v.2, no.3 (July).

Murray, Stuart A.P. (2009). *The Library: An Illustrated History*. New York: Skyhorse Publishing.

Myers, David N. (1996). "A New Scholarly Colony in Jerusalem: The Early History of Jewish Studies at the Hebrew University." *Judaism* v.45, no.2 (Spring).

Online Computer Library Center (2013). "Expand Your Reach Into The Library Market." http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/oclc/services/brochures/214270usb_expand_your_market_reach_with_OCLC.pdf. Retrieved 8/12/13.

Reif, Stefan C. (2002). *The Cairo Genizah: A Medieval Mediterranean Deposit and a Modern Cambridge Archive*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Said, Edward W. (1994). *Culture and Imperialism*. London: Vintage Press.

Sroka, Marek (2003). "The Destruction of Jewish Libraries and Archives in Cracow during

World War II." *Libraries and Culture* v.38, no.2 (Spring).

Taiwan Theological College and Seminary—Library (n.d.).
http://www.taitheo.org.tw/english/front/bin/ptlist.phtml?Category=8. Retrieved 4/15/13.

Tinker, George E. (1993). *Missionary Conquest*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press.

Ziadeh, Nicola A. (1958). *Sanusiyah: A Study of a Revivalist Movement in Islam.* Leiden: E.J. Brill.