

The question we heard so often after 9/11 was: “Why do they hate us so?” That’s my question. Why is there such anti-Western sentiment in the Islamic world? Even if it doesn’t always result in acts of violence, anti-Americanism seems rampant. Why?

First of all, let me say I am not an expert on this subject, as my Ph.D. is for biblical studies, not Middle Eastern studies. But I have read much and also taught “Introduction to Islam” for years. With that disclaimer out of the way, I will proceed.

There is not simply one reason for hostility to America and the West. But perhaps the best general answer is the current dominance of the West over the Islamic world. No one likes being weaker or dominated, but that is the situation of the Islamic world in relation to “the West.” The world’s leading countries economically, militarily, and culturally are the U.S., Europe, and Japan—none of them Islamic countries.

It didn’t use to be that way. There was a time when all (or most) of the world’s leading countries were Muslim

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humiliation and injustice. One particularly egregious case of wrongful non-Muslim dominance over Muslims is the modern State of Israel. Israel’s treatment of the mostly-Muslim Palestinian Arabs and, for many, Israel’s very existence as a Jewish state in the traditionally Islamic world, is an outrage not to be endured. The inability to remove the Jews from the lands of the Arabs and the holy places of Palestine and restore Muslim sovereignty is deeply humiliating for many. It is seen as an example of the wrongful dominance of the non-Muslim Jewish/ Christian West over

countries. But in recent centuries, Europe and now America have dominated the Islamic world, and this is profoundly humiliating for many Muslims. Much of the “Muslim rage” comes out of this sense of

Muslims.

But Israel is one example of Muslim subjugation and humiliation. Even though colonialism has receded and independence has come to Muslim countries, the U.S. is the only superpower and dominates the world militarily and economically. And U.S. culture has spread over the globe and is changing people’s traditional way of life and destroying their native cultures. So those in the Islamic world who do not embrace American and Western culture feel threatened by it and angry at its inroads. They see their whole way of life being endangered by foreign, Western, non-Muslim influences.

For an analogy, think of the resentment and resistance of conservative white Southerners in the U.S. to the imposition of desegregation and more recently to federal rulings insisting on the separation of church and state (the Montgomery Ten Commandments monument controversy) and invalidating anti-sodomy laws. If you think about it, conservative Christians and conservative Muslims are very similar in their reaction to the modern world, seeing it as godless and threatening to the very structure of their society.

A response:

In “Scholar’s Corner,” William Gartig correctly noted that “The Rapture” is a relatively recent fabrication. It was introduced from England and Scotland, but it became a doctrine of American Fundamentalism through the enshrinement of Scofield’s Bible which imposes a dispensational framework on Scripture. Jesus told his followers that no one knows the time or the day of his return. As an Episcopalian, I do not hold to dispensationalism. However I do believe that Christ will return for his bride, the Church. The image of bride and groom, which receives considerable treatment in the Bible, is potent because it speaks of a future consummation. Sadly many Episcopalians don’t believe that Christ will return though we recite this tenant of faith in the Nicene Creed. I am concerned that the Episcopal Church has cast aside many of the evangelical beliefs that once gave vitality to our church.

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The Rev. William G. Gartig will answer your questions about the Bible, Episcopal life and other religious subjects. Send questions to 2146 Cameron Ave. Apt. 5, Cincinnati, OH 45212-3631 or at gartig-wg@episcopal-dso.zzn.com.