

Revised Fifth DRAFT: May 2007

**THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND
THE POLITICS OF RELIGION**

*The Tenth Commonwealth Lecture,
London, U.K., May 15, 2007*

by

Ali A. Mazrui

Director, Institute of Global Cultural Studies
and
Albert Schweitzer Professor in the Humanities
Binghamton University
State University of New York at Binghamton, New York, USA

Albert Luthuli Professor-at-Large
University of Jos, Jos, Nigeria

Andrew D. White Professor-at-Large Emeritus
and Senior Scholar in Africana Studies
Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, USA

Chancellor
Jomo Kenyatta University of Agriculture and Technology
Nairobi, Kenya

This draft has responded to prior editorial suggestions from the Commonwealth Foundation in London. For oral presentation the lecture will be shortened as appropriate. All the views and interpretations in the lecture are of course strictly the author's own and are not necessarily shared by the Commonwealth Foundation.

**THE POWER OF LANGUAGE AND
THE POLITICS OF RELIGION**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Pages</u>
I. Between Language and Religion	2
II. Between the Sacred and the Secular	7
III. Jewish Exceptionalism and Western History	15
IV. Language Policy: National and Continental	17
V. Commonwealth Membership as a Learning Experience	21
VI. A Commonwealth Conclusion	30

The Commonwealth is the mother of the most influential language in human history – the English language. The influence of English as the language of academe may be reflected in its distinction of probably having published more books about all the religions of the world than any other language on earth. This is perhaps because the former British Empire has always had to deal with a multiplicity of religions within its dominions. Today, the Commonwealth of Nations comprises more than a third of the Muslim population of the world – lodged in Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria, and elsewhere.¹ The Commonwealth also includes about a third of the Christian countries of the world – especially in Africa, the Caribbean, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, and the Anglophone world of the Pacific.

This lecture addresses such paradoxes as to why Muslims are well represented in the Commonwealth while Arabs are not, and why Christianity is under siege globally while the English language is the dominant international language.

Between Language and Religion

Europe has been the cradle of the most influential languages in human history, while the Middle East has been the womb of the most influential religions. At its best, language facilitates not only communication but also concord among people. At its worst, religion has produced not only conflict but even large-scale warfare. In human history far more people have died as a result of religious rivalries than as a result of linguistic disputes -- and the same holds true in multi-religious and multi-lingual Commonwealth countries like India and Nigeria.

Is there something which religion as a spiritual phenomenon can learn from language as a cultural force? If religion was like language, would the world be a safer place? Let us take this intellectual challenge step by step and see where it leads us.

“In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God.” So said the Bible. But the history of *homo sapiens* amended the proposition as follows, “In the human beginning was also the Word, and the Word was African, and the Word was Africa.” In “other words,” Africa invented language. How? Because on present evidence Africa is where the human species began, and where the most basic human institutions originated.²

But while Africa invented language, Asia helped to make language sacred. Almost all great religious scriptures originated in Asia – the Vedas, Bhagavad Gita, and Upanishads of Hinduism; the Tipitaka of Buddhism; the varied words of wisdom of Confucius; the Torah of Judaism; the Christian Bible; and the Qur’an of the Muslim faith.

If Africa invented language, and Asia made language sacred, where does Europe fit in? Europe universalized language. We could define a universal language as

- 1) One which is widely understood in at least twenty countries,
- 2) Has been adopted by at least ten of them as the main language of national business,
- 3) Has a minimum of 500 million fluent speakers, and
- 4) Has spread across at least two continents.

The indisputable candidates for universal languages are English and French, with Spanish close behind. Certainly, the Commonwealth has had a lot to do with the spread – and continuing vitality – of the English language. There are prestigious prizes such as the

Man Booker prize, annually given to the best novel written by a citizen of the Commonwealth or the Republic of Ireland. Also, the Commonwealth Foundation has established the Commonwealth Writers' Prize to recognize, and bring to a wider audience, outstanding literary work by Commonwealth authors.

The Chinese may have had an Empire but there is no Chinese Commonwealth. The spread of the Chinese language may have more to do with Chinese emigration than with Chinese state power. The Chinese language may have more fluent speakers than do English and French added together, but Chinese is not widely understood in twenty countries nor has it been adopted by ten countries as the main language of national business. Chinese has not convincingly spread across two continents either – at least not yet! It remains to be seen whether China's emergence as the next super-power will have linguistic consequences for the world as a whole.

If Europe is the cradle of the most universal languages in human history, and the Middle East is the womb of the most universal religions, what makes a religion “Universal”?

The criteria of religious universalism are different from the criteria of linguistic universalism, partly in scale and partly in kind. A religion may be considered universal if

- 1) Its message is truly addressed to the human race as a whole,
- 2) That message has been adopted as the main religious tradition of at least fifty societies,
- 3) That message has spread to at least two continents.
- 4) A universal religion in this sense also needs to have at least half a billion individual followers.

The undisputed universal religions by these criteria are Christianity and Islam. But by other criteria Buddhism and Judaism deserve special attention. Buddhism is about 500 years older than Christianity; and Christianity is about 600 years older than Islam. In distribution Buddhism has spread to many societies, and has many followers, but it is basically confined to a single continent. Buddhism is overwhelmingly a religion of Asia – though its adherents are to be counted in hundreds of millions across multiple societies. Of the 375 million Buddhists in the world, 369 million (slightly more than 98 percent) are to be found in Asia.³

In distribution Islam is still in the continuing process of expansion. The overwhelming majority of Muslim countries are either in Asia or in Africa, and when added together those Muslim populations are already over a billion people.⁴ Although there is an expanding Muslim presence in the Western world, Islam still has a primarily Afro-Asian base.⁵

In Asia the Commonwealth is represented by three out of the four largest concentrations of Muslims – Pakistanis, Bangladeshis and the Muslims of India;⁶ Indonesia is not a member of the Commonwealth.

According to some estimates, the largest concentration of Muslims in Africa is not Egypt but Nigeria – and Nigeria is a member of the Commonwealth.⁷

In distribution Christianity is a multi-continental religion. There are Christian nations in Europe, North America, South America, Africa, Oceania and the Caribbean. If Islam is fundamentally an Afro-Asian religion in distribution, Christianity is an Afro-Western religion.⁸ Almost all Christian nations are either in the Western world or in

Africa. On the whole, Africa is the ultimate arena of both rivalry and potential partnership between Christianity and Islam. We shall return to that theme later on.

When Christianity went multicontinental in Europe, Africa, North America and South America, it fell short of full universalism by its failure in Asia, the continent of its birth. Apart from the Philippines and East Timor, there are almost no Christian nations in either Asia or the Middle East where Christianity originated.⁹ None of the Asian Commonwealth countries is Christian. Nevertheless, globally Christianity has more adherents than any religious tradition in human history.¹⁰ It remains to be seen whether the number of Christians in the world will be overtaken by the number of Muslims before the end of this twenty-first century. Muslims will overtake Christians numerically if Muslims continue to have more children than Christians world wide,¹¹ and if the Christian world continues to be secularized to the extent of either atheism or agnosticism. Indeed, according to a recent newspaper report:

Britain may continue to regard itself as a Christian nation. But practicing Muslims are likely to outnumber church-attending Christians in several decades, according to a recent survey by Christian Research, a group that specializes in documenting the status of Christianity in Britain.¹²

Of the three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam), the only one which has been successful at home where it was born, as well as abroad, is Islam. The religion of Muhammad began among the Arabs, and the Arabs have remained overwhelmingly Muslim to the present day.

Christianity, on the other hand, is a religion in exile. The Christian message failed to flourish among the people to whom it was first revealed – the Jews. The Christian message also failed in the region of its birth – the Middle East. Christianity also failed in

the continent of its birth – Asia. Apart from the Philippines, East Timor and perhaps South Korea and the Lebanon, Asia in reality boasts no real Christian nations. In any case, none of these countries is a Commonwealth member.

Buddhism was born in Northeast India in the 6th century of the pre-Christian era. Gautama Buddha [563 BCE-483 BCE) was the founder who underwent a deliberate transition from wealth to rags, from the white palace to the log cabin

While there are many Buddhists in India today, and spectacular Buddhist shrines, Buddhism's greatest success was in China, Korea, Japan, and Central and South-East Asia – but not as much in India, the home of its birth. The chief boosters of Buddhism in India in the twentieth century occurred when Buddhism was driven out of Tibet by China and found a home in India, and the conversion of Dalit leader B. R. Ambedkar to Buddhism.

In this new millennium, the Taliban in Afghanistan destroyed the huge sculptures of the Buddha because the Taliban regarded the sculptures as a form of idolatry.¹³ There was Buddhism in Afghanistan before Islam triumphed over Buddhist rituals, beliefs and symbols.

Between the Sacred and the Secular

In a lecture about both religion and language, it is worth noting that of the three universal religions – Buddhism, Christianity and Islam – only Islam has remained linguistically authentic. Islam's primary language today is still the language of its original revelation, the Arabic language. Formal prayers all over the Muslim world [salat] are still conducted overwhelmingly in Arabic – five times every day.

Also in a lecture about religion and language, it is important to note that the Qur'an is the most widely read book in its original language in human history. Every minute of every day there are millions of people reciting some verse of the Qur'an either when greeting each other, or during the five daily prayers,¹⁴ or to "point a moral or adorn a tale."¹⁵

Again in this lecture about religion and language, it is worth noting that Christianity is par excellence a religion in translation. Until Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Cross*, most Christians in the United States had no idea what language Jesus spoke. Large numbers assumed Jesus spoke some kind of English language – something like the quaint idiom of King James' Authorized Version.

This is not to underplay the enormous impact of the Christian Bible not only on religious history but also on the history of literature, the fine arts, social and political thought, and the vocabularies of dozens of languages.¹⁶ While the Qur'an is the most widely read book in its original language in history, the Bible is by far the most widely read book in translation in the history of the written word.¹⁷

Even the original four gospels of the New Testament (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John) were themselves primarily in the Greek language with only a smattering of Aramaic phrases. In other words, the Gospels were from the start in a language which Jesus did not speak.

By about 1450 CE, with the invention of the printing machine, there were already 33 translations of the Bible. By the end of the twentieth century the Bible was available either in part or as a whole in well over a thousand languages,¹⁸ in spite of the prolonged resistance of Roman Catholic priests to anything but scripture in Latin.

In contrast the great majority of Muslims have preferred to read the original Arabic version of the Qur'an, and have the Arabic translated for them by scholars in mosques, in madrasas or more recently by radio, television, video or DVD.

Most written translations of the Qur'an are published between the same covers as the original Arabic. A popular approach is to have the Arabic verse on the left side of the page, and its translation next to it on the right side of the same page, with annotations in the footnotes or endnotes. It is almost impossible to buy the whole of the Qur'an totally in translation.¹⁹ With the Bible it is almost impossible to buy it in any other form but translation.

If Islam is the most linguistically authentic of the great universal religions, and Christianity the least linguistically original, Buddhism lies somewhere in-between. There is a Buddhist hybrid Sanskrit – a Middle Indo-Aryan literary language. It is a Prakrit dialect, heavily infiltrated by Sanskrit, even if it is not precisely in the Buddha's own language. However, early Buddhist scripture in Pali is at least partly authentic linguistically since it may have been spoken by Gautama Buddha himself.²⁰

The Commonwealth today includes the birth places of three great religions of the world – Buddhism, Hinduism and the Anglican part of the Protestant Reformation of Christianity. Buddhism and Hinduism originated in India, and Henry VIII embraced the ideas of Martin Luther and John Calvin in bringing about the Protestant break with Rome.

While the Commonwealth does include the largest Hindu country in the world (India), it does not include the largest Buddhist country (which is China). Nor does the Commonwealth include the largest Muslim country in the world (Indonesia, a former

Dutch colony). But, as was mentioned earlier, but the Commonwealth does include the next three largest Muslim populations in the world – Pakistan, Bangladesh, and India.

Is there a sense in which Judaism might also be regarded as a universal religion? Judaism does not meet our criteria of universalism, but it does have some compensating attributes. Judaism has fewer than twenty million followers world wide, and is the majority religion of only one country (Israel).

On the other hand, Judaism is a mother-religion. The Jewish Bible is the womb of the Old Testament of Christianity and the womb of Islamic accounts of the ancient Prophets. The Qur'an has a lot to say about Adam and Eve, about King Solomon and King David, about Noah and Moses. The Qur'an covers even more about Jesus – echoing the New Testament, as well as the Old – and has a whole Sura (chapter) on Mary.²¹ It is arguable that the Jewish religious impact on the world is more through Christianity and Islam rather than directly through the dissemination of the Torah or the Talmud.

The three religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam are all part of the contribution of the Semitic peoples to world civilization. But the Semitic heritage is not only religious; it is also linguistic.

In a global context, the most successful Semitic religion so far is Christianity; the most successful Semitic language is Arabic; the most successful Semitic people are the Jews. Let us take each of these propositions in turn. First, in what sense is Christianity the most successful of the Semitic religions?

The most obvious is the multi-continental scale of this dominant religion of Europe, North America, the Caribbean, South America and nearly half of Africa. It is

also the religion of the great majority of the richest nations in the world.²² The institutions of Christianity are among the best organized religious bodies on earth. Its missionary work has immense resources, and a far reach. Great church leaders like the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury are world news in almost every major utterance they make. The global stature of the Pope especially has no equivalent in any other religion or denomination of the world.

And the Vatican as a small European Village is unique in its status as a full-scale sovereign state. Indeed, the Pope is in some respects a bigger world figure than even the President of the United States. The Pope also exercises authority for a much longer period than most other heads of state. This is quite apart from the fact that the Roman Catholic Church is the richest religious institution in world history.

There is one additional factor which has made Christianity the most successful Semitic religion. This is the moral impact of Christianity on other religions and cultures. Christian matrimonial ethics have been more monogamous than almost all other religious traditions.²³ With every new generation monogamy is becoming more and more of a global standard of matrimonial ethics.

The liberal wing of Christian values has also led the world in the emancipation of women over the last one hundred years – especially since women were given the vote in the West early in the twentieth century.

Christian values tried harder to abolish Sati (widow-burning) in British India than Muslim values had attempted to do under the Mogul empire.²⁴ Rather belatedly Christian values also led the way in the abolitionist movement against slavery,²⁵ although Christians continued to be racist long after emancipating their slaves.²⁶

To summarize, Christianity has been successful in its multi-continental expansion, in helping to enrich and modernize Christian nations, in attaining high visibility in the mass media, in the scale and efficiency of its evangelical and missionary work, and in the global stature of such religious leaders as the Pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury.

If Christianity is thus demonstrably the most successful Semitic religion in the world, Arabic is the most successful Semitic language. Hebrew had almost died until the modern state of Israel miraculously resurrected it. There are small pockets of Aramaic speakers in Iraq and Syria. Phoenician has almost disappeared. The Semitic languages of Ethiopia like Amharic and Tigrinya are alive and well, but together they have fewer than a hundred million speakers.²⁷

Arabic, on the other hand has several hundred million native speakers, has spread over at least two continents, has been institutionalized in a League of Arab states with more than 20 members, and has been adopted by the United Nations as an additional official language after the original five languages (English, French, Chinese, Russian and Spanish).

Arabic is also the language of ritual of 1.2 billion Muslim worshippers spread over at least eighty countries. It is the language of the five daily salat, the language of the Hajj to Mecca, the language of Muslim weddings and Muslim funerals, and of Muslim greetings and salutations, and of many of the rituals of the fast of Ramadhan.

This is quite apart from what was mentioned earlier – that the Qur'an is the most widely read book in its original language in human history. And that original language is of course Arabic.

But where is the Arabic language in the Commonwealth? This brings us to one of the paradoxes of the Commonwealth. Although this family of nations includes about a third of the Muslim population of the world, the Commonwealth does not include a single Arab country. The British ruled or occupied such Arab countries as Egypt, Sudan, Jordan, Iraq, Kuwait and some of the Emirates of the Gulf, but not a single one wanted to be a member of the Commonwealth on attainment of sovereign status. Only Sudan briefly agonized whether to federate with Egypt, or join the Commonwealth, or pursue independent sovereign status. The Sudanese opted for sovereign independence. In more recent times a number of Arab states have re-evaluated the relevance of the Commonwealth.

The question arises why every Black African country previously ruled by Britain joined the Commonwealth, while Arab countries in Africa and elsewhere initially declined to do so. There are several Muslim countries in the Commonwealth, but none of them is Arab. One reason is that the Arab world felt betrayed by Great Britain after all the promises made by Lawrence of Arabia and others about unifying the Arabs after the collapse of the Ottoman Empire. Lawrence's mission was to bring the Arabs together against Ottoman occupation as part of the British strategy in World War I. Lawrence promised the Arabs that if they united and revolted against the Turks, Arab freedom and a united Arab nation would be supported by Great Britain.²⁸ But once the Ottoman Empire collapsed, Arab countries became the spoils of the victorious European powers. Much of the Arab World felt under European rule either as outright colonies, or as protectorates, or as Mandates of the League of Nations – including Palestine which became part of the British administered territories.²⁹

Secondly, Arabs felt betrayed by Great Britain with regard to the Balfour Declaration of 1917 in support of a Jewish homeland, and the British abandonment of the Palestinians on the eve of the creation of the state of Israel in 1947-48. While the Ottomans were being defeated, Lord Balfour, the British Foreign Secretary, issued his historic Balfour Declaration expressing British support “for the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people.” The declaration was affirmed in a letter from Arthur James Balfour to Lionel Walter Rothschild, the 2nd Baron Rothschild, a leader of British Jewry.³⁰ Diplomatic double-speak without actual action was apparent in Lord Balfour’s proviso that “nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities.”³¹ In fact, the British failed to protect the freedom and integrity of the Palestinian people – with long-term disastrous consequences for the history of the world and region.

Thirdly, the Arabs rejected the Commonwealth as a disguised version of British imperialism – at a time when the British were still insisting on a base in Egypt to defend the Suez Canal. The anti-British sentiments of the Arabs were vindicated in 1956 when Britain allied herself with France and Israel to invade Port Said in Egypt. Even the United States was opposed to the invasion of Egypt by Britain, France and Israel.³²

Much later it became less and less sensible to blame the Commonwealth for the policies of one of its members. For example, no one blames the Commonwealth today for Tony Blair’s actions in Iraq.

If the most successful Semitic religion is Christianity, and the most successful Semitic language is Arabic, let us now address the most successful Semitic people.

Underlying Jewish exceptionalism in modern history is that the Jews are cast between being extreme victims and being spectacular achievers. In modern history, the Jews are extreme victims especially in relation to the Nazi Holocaust which destroyed six million Jewish men, women and children.

But an even more remarkable phenomenon is Jews as achievers. Anybody can be a victim if the oppressor is strong enough and ruthless enough, but it takes special talent, resolve, and even genius to be achievers of the scale of Jewish exceptionalism. Let us look more closely at Jews as the most successful Semitic people in history.

Jewish Exceptionalism and Western History

A number of observers (including Jews themselves) have pointed to the disproportionate numbers and influence of Jews in various sectors of the US government, commerce, education, and entertainment.

Jews are prominent in US commercial and financial sectors.

Summarizing the influential positions of Jews in American society, a number of leading observers of Jews in the United States have noted:

- Jews are only 3 percent of the nation's population and comprise 11 percent of what this study defines as the nation's elite. However, Jews constitute more than 25 percent of the elite journalists and publishers, more than 17 percent of the leaders of important voluntary and public interest organizations, and more than 15 percent of the top ranking civil servants.³³
- During the last three decades Jews [in the United States] have made up 50 percent of the top two hundred intellectuals ... 20 percent of professors at the leading universities, 27 percent of high civil servants, 40 percent of partners in the leading law firms in New York and Washington ... 59 percent of the directors, writers, and producers of the 50 top-grossing motion pictures from 1965 to 1982, and 58 percent of directors, writers, and producers in two or more primetime television series.³⁴

The most important reason for Jewish power in the United States is the successful counter-penetration by Jews into the citadels of American power.

The United States as an Empire can only be checked by the United States as a democracy. African Americans, Latinos and Muslim Americans have a lot to learn from Jews about how to be empowered Americans. So indeed do women of America of all races. American women are substantially liberated, but they have yet to counter-penetrate the citadels of supreme power.

If African Americans, Muslim Americans, Arab Americans, Latinos and women of all races became half as successful as the Jews in influencing directions of American policy, their effect would probably be towards liberalizing the foreign policy of the United States. At the moment America is torn between a domestic philosophy based on rights and a foreign policy based on might. Demographic changes in the United States may tilt the balance towards a better and more humane equilibrium. The Jews are an impressive example of how a minority can shape the orientation of the majority. It is partly because of that factor that Jewish influence on American foreign policy is a matter of consequence for the Commonwealth and the world. Former President Jimmy Carter has reminded us in his recent book how U.S. policy on the Middle East is distorted by the power of the pro-Israeli lobby in Washington, D.C.³⁵

We already know that Jewish achievements in Western history go well beyond this handful of individuals who belong to the absolute top of human intelligence. The number of Jews who have won the Nobel Prize since it was established a century ago is staggering for a community so small (well below 15 million worldwide). One columnist has estimated that 20 percent of Nobel Prize winners have been Jews.³⁶

What is clear is that in modern times Jews have been at their best when they have been Europeanized or Westernized. It has been the combination of a Jewish heritage (through ancestral religion) with Western assimilation (through European languages) which has produced the most outstanding intellectual results.

We have begun to realize that Jews and Westerners have historically been two peoples in the slow process of becoming one. Is it similarly true that Arabs and Africans are two peoples who have historically been converging towards becoming one people? Religion and language have been two crucial forces which have influenced changing identities and cultural continuities in the global experience of the Semitic peoples.

Language Policy: National and Continental

While the United States may be described as the world's first universal nation, South Africa may be qualified as Africa's first universal nation. The population of the United States consists of people from almost every country in the world, of almost every religious persuasion, of almost every tribal ancestry.

South Africa's population is not remotely as diverse as that of the United States. But while South Africa has fewer "tribes" than Nigeria, it has more distinct "races" than virtually any other African country. People of Malay or Dutch origin in South Africa arrived in the country more than three hundred years ago. Indians and Chinese go back to at least the nineteenth century. Religious traditions entrenched across generations include indigenous religions, both liberal and racist forms of Christianity, Hinduism, diverse schools of Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and the most secular of all African states on the continent.

But on the issue of languages there is a big difference between the United States as the world's first universal nation and South Africa as Africa's first universal nation. The United States is neither linguistically tolerant nor culturally pluralistic. Historically, the United States has been a great asylum of diverse peoples on the run from persecution, but the United States has not been a great refuge of diverse cultures. The United States rescues persecuted people, but does not rescue endangered languages or cultures. On the contrary, while the United States extends a lifeline to refugees, it sentences their imported cultures to death in little more than a generation or two.

On the other hand, South Africa as Africa's first universal nation has started its post-apartheid era as linguistically more tolerant and culturally more pluralistic than the United States. Post-apartheid South Africa recognizes eleven official languages – probably one of the larger number of official languages in any single nation-state in history.

Post-apartheid South Africa missed the opportunity of recognizing languages from three continents. South Africa failed to include at least one South Asian language or Malay among the official languages. But eleven languages from Africa and Europe is still impressive. Any of those languages may be used by a Member of Parliament in a legislative debate. Indeed, it is up to the discretion of any Minister to draft any legislation from his or her Ministry in any of the eleven languages.

The eleven languages also inform the broadcasting policy of post-apartheid South Africa. While television is more restricted in its choice of languages, radio has been stretched in South Africa to accommodate as many languages as possible³⁷.

On the issue of both religion and language, the South African Constitution includes a council or mechanism for protecting not only civil liberties but also cultural rights. This institutionalized protection of cultural rights has empowered the government of South Africa to resist pressures from the United States urging South Africa to engage in detention of Muslims without trial or to harass South African citizens in the name of the United Nations' security concerns. (U.N. concerns are sometimes a fig leaf for the concerns of the big powers!).

South African Islam may sometimes be more radical than average. But its radicalism is sometimes more based on subjective Jihad against local crime and drugs than objective Jihad against external enemies of Islam. While North Africa has Arab jihadists, West and East Africa black jihadists, Southern Africa has had disproportionately few South East Asian and South Asian jihadists. But most South African Muslim militants are intellectual radicals rather than security risks. They are jihadists of rhetoric rather than rockets.

To what extent is South Africa's readiness to recognize eleven official languages a consequence of the country's prior history of apartheid? The logic of the Bantu Education Act included respect for indigenous African languages, though the respect was for the wrong reasons. The apartheid regime regarded Western education through Western languages as a radicalizing experience. Westernized Africans wanted to capture, or at least share power at the center of the society. The idea of creating more culturally relevant educational institutions for black children was bound to lead not only to the Africanization of syllabi and curricula but also to the increasing use of indigenous languages as media of instruction.

On the whole, the apartheid regime wanted to use indigenous languages as a mechanism of compartmentalizing and dividing society. On the other hand, the post-apartheid regime is seeking to utilize indigenous languages as a mechanism for integrating and uniting society.

The recognition of the eleven official languages was designed to facilitate greater national integration in administration, in the legislative process, in the media as well as in schools and colleges.

While South Africa is in the lead in devising a highly original domestic language policy, Libya under Muammar Qaddafi is in the lead in recommending a continent-wide language policy for Africa as a whole. In a long conversation I once had with the Libyan leader over dinner in his famous tent in Tripoli, he emphasized the need for a clear language policy if Africans were serious about realizing their dreams for development, independence and unity. Schools all over Africa were to teach one international European language (like English or French), one indigenous African language relevant to that particular country (e.g. Zulu, Hausa, Wolof, Xhosa, or Kiswahili) and the Arabic language (which now has more native speakers in Africa than in the rest of the Arab world).

But in Arab Africa, what would be the indigenous African language? One strong candidate in countries like Algeria, Morocco or Libya itself would be the most relevant Berber language in that part of North Africa.

Alternatively, an Arab country may choose to teach in its schools one of the larger sub-Saharan languages which have been greatly influenced by Arabic. The choice would include Kiswahili, Hausa, Somali or Wolof.

In my conversations with him, the Libyan leader did not clarify how he would promote such a continental language policy. But I was surprised when he asked me for a copy of a book written by my father Sheikh Al-Amin Ali Mazrui entitled, *The History of Mazrui Dynasty of Mombasa*.³⁸ My father had written the book in Arabic. It was translated into English and annotated by J. McL. Ritchie. I had no idea how the Libyan leader knew about my father's book, nor why he did not ask for one of my own books!!! I have since sent Muammar Qaddafi Sheikh Al-Amin's book as requested.

The Libyan leader's interest in my father might have been influenced by the assumption that Sheikh Al-Amin embodied the three languages which Qaddafi was recommending. Sheikh Al-Amin was able to speak and write Kiswahili and classical Arabic (*fus-ha*) and could also speak English but not write it. [English was the weakest of my father's three languages]. Did the Libyan leader regard my father as *Exhibit A* of the trilingual sub-Saharan African? This is yet to be confirmed in relation to the Libyan leader's vision of a continental language policy for Africa.

Commonwealth Membership as a Learning Experience

Let us now explore what Commonwealth countries can learn from each other in terms of human relations. We may then inquire into what religion can learn from language in terms of reconciling human differences.

Religious considerations are often cited to explain why women rise higher in some cultures than in others. Commonwealth countries in South Asia have a lesson to teach others – the lesson is that women can reach the pinnacle of power regardless of the

religion to which their country belongs. South Asia is the grand laboratory to demonstrate that proposition.

It began with Sri Lanka (previously Ceylon). Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was assassinated in 1959. The national outrage finally resulted in a vote of confidence in the late Prime Minister's widow, Sirimavo Bandaranaike. She became the new leader of the party and rose to be the new Prime Minister. Her religious background was Buddhism.

The next woman Prime Minister in the region was in India. Indira Gandhi did not immediately succeed her father, one of the architects of the new Commonwealth after World War II. Prime Minister Shastri followed Jawaharlal Nehru before the succession of Indira Gandhi as India's Head of Government. The religious background of the Nehrus and of the majority of Indians was Hinduism.

The third South Asian country to have a woman Prime Minister was Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto became the first woman Prime Minister of her country. Like Indira Gandhi and Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Benazir Bhutto was elected more than once to the Prime Ministership. But, of course, Benazir Bhutto was neither a Buddhist nor a Hindu. She was the Muslim world's first Head of Government, ever.

The fourth South Asian country to produce a woman Prime Minister was Bangladesh. Indeed, Bangladesh produced more than one female Head of Government – Begum Khaleda Zia and Sheikh Hasina Wajed who alternated competitively as leaders of their country. Of course, both Bangladeshi women were Muslim.

The fifth South Asian country to produce a powerful woman leader was Myanmar (formerly Burma). Aung San Suu Kyi and her party were elected to power in 1990. But

the military in Myanmar never allowed her to assume power, and she has remained under different kinds of house arrest ever since. However, she did win the Nobel Prize for Peace in 1991. About 80 per cent of the population of Myanmar belongs to classical Theravada Buddhism. Although previously ruled by Great Britain, both as part of India and later as a separate colony, Myanmar is not a member of the Commonwealth.

Also outside of the Commonwealth, but geographically not far from Myanmar is the Philippines. That became the sixth Asian country to have a woman Head of Government. Corazon Aquino became President of the Philippines. Mrs. Corazon Aquino and the majority of her compatriots were of course Christians.

What do South Asian members of the Commonwealth have to teach the rest of the Commonwealth? The region has demonstrated that it is possible for a woman to rise to the pinnacle of political power regardless of whether her society is Buddhist (as in Sri Lanka and Myanmar) or Hindu (as in India), or Muslim (as in Pakistan and Bangladesh) or Christian (as in the Philippines). Indeed, further east, Indonesia also produced a woman President Megawati Sukarnoputri. Although not a member of the Commonwealth, Muslim Indonesia has had a woman Head of Government long before most Christian members of the Commonwealth have done.

On the other hand, Christian members of the Commonwealth like, (alphabetically), Australia, Barbados, Canada, Jamaica, South Africa and the United Kingdom have a lot to teach the rest of the Commonwealth about other aspects of democratic governance – ranging from free and fair elections to the genuine independence of the judiciary, from respect for minorities to the Rule of Law.

As for countries divided by at least two religions, Tanzania seems to be experimenting with a presidency in religious rotation. The Founder-President, Julius K. Nyerere was a Christian; followed by Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim; followed by Benjamin Mkapa, a Christian; and now succeeded by Jakaya Mrisho Kikwete, a Muslim.

Nigeria may already be learning from Tanzania the principle of religious rotation in presidential power. Nigeria's governance in this respect is not as consistently rotational as Tanzania, but there is evidence that Nigerians are beginning to lean in that direction.

But there are other dualisms in the Commonwealth apart from the religious divide. Canada has a linguistic dualism between English and French-speaking Canadians. Guyana and Trinidad and Tobago have an ethnic dualism between citizens of African descent and those of Indian descent. Northern Ireland has an intra-Christian religious divide between Protestants and Catholics. And Cyprus has a historic linguistic and religious divide between Greek and Turkish Cypriots.

These are dual societies rather than plural societies. Zimbabwe, on the other hand, has a double dual society – divided between Black and white, on the one hand, and between Shona and Ndebele, on the other.

Of these dual societies, the one which has the most to teach the rest of the Commonwealth is Canada – which has tried extraordinarily hard with policies of bilingualism, biculturalism and “Quebec as a distinct society.” Canada is not yet an unqualified success as a dual society – but it has done better than the others so far.

With regard to other Commonwealth countries (plural societies) which have linguistic fault-lines, we have already referred to South Africa with its spectacular

innovation of eleven official languages. But a much older experiment in a complex language policy is the Indian Republic. Indian nationalist leaders were once naïve enough to think that their Constitution could simply stipulate Hindi as the national language of independent India. Since then the Indians have worked out a linguistic division of labour between Hindi, English and the multiple state languages of the Indian Federation. Of all the plural societies of the Commonwealth, the Indian Federation has a lot to teach the rest of the Commonwealth about how to reconcile religious diversity, linguistic pluralism, ethnic politics and democratic governance.

The Commonwealth country with most to teach about race-relations must inevitably be South Africa. The agreement to end political apartheid was based on the Faustian Pact that Blacks would acquire the political crown while whites retained the economic jewels. Political apartheid was dismantled but economic apartheid remained intact for the time being. South Africans have since embarked on Black empowerment and affirmative action in order to enable non-white people to have a greater share of the economic jewels. The struggle is still continuing, fortunately in conditions of democratic openness and transparency in South Africa.

If South Africa is the biggest challenge in race relations in the Commonwealth, the United Kingdom is the greatest challenge in relations between civilizations. Because the government of the United Kingdom has chosen to be a close ally of the United States, and the United States has unleashed or supported more wars against Muslim countries than anybody else since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire in the wake of World War I, the United Kingdom has permitted itself to be on the fault-line of clash of civilizations in this twenty-first century.

But while the government of the United Kingdom has allied itself too closely with the United States, the people of the United Kingdom have not. The majority of the British people have consistently been against the war in Iraq. The British people have not wanted to be on the fault-line of the unfolding conflict between Islam and the American Imperium.³⁹ The United Kingdom is therefore well-placed to teach the rest of the Commonwealth how best to strike a balance between cooperation with the United States and rejection of the American Imperium. The U.K. government cooperated too much with the Bush administration; British public opinion blew the whistle in favour of a better balance in world order. The struggle for a better equilibrium continues.

The Western Christian ethic of the minimization of violence has repeatedly been honoured by Westerners more in the breach than the observance. In the last hundred years Christians have killed vastly more people than have followers of any other religion in any single century. Many of the millions of victims of Christian violence in the two world wars were themselves fellow Christians – though the Holocaust against the Jews and genocide against the Gypsies stand out as special cases of genocide perpetrated by Westerners in otherwise Christian nations.

If minimization of violence is part of Christian ethics, it is a standard which has not only been violated by the West. It has also been better implemented by other cultures in history. In the first half of the twentieth century India produced Mohandas Gandhi who led one of the most remarkable non-violent anticolonial movements ever witnessed. Westerners themselves saw Gandhi's message as the nearest approximation of the nonviolent Christian ethic associated with "turning the other cheek", but transformed into resistance to injustice.

Mahatma Gandhi's India gave birth to new principles of passive resistance and satyagraha. Yet Gandhi himself said that it might be through the Black people that the unadulterated message of soul force and passive resistance might be realized.⁴⁰ If Gandhi was right, this would be one more illustration when the culture which gives birth to an ethic is not necessarily the culture which fulfills the ethic.

The Nobel Committee for Peace in Oslo seems to have shared some of Gandhi's optimism about the soul force of the Black people. Africans and people of African descent who have won the Nobel prize for Peace since the middle of the twentieth century have been Ralph Bunche (1950), Albert Luthuli (1960), Martin Luther King Jr. (1964), Anwar Sadat (1978), Desmond Tutu (1984), Nelson Mandela (1993), Kofi Annan (2001) and Wangari Maathai (2004). Neither the Mahatma himself nor any of his compatriots in India ever won the Nobel Prize for Peace. Was Mahatma Gandhi vindicated that the so-called "Negro" was going to be the best exemplar of soul force? Was this a case of African culture being empirically more Gandhian than Indian culture?

In reality Black people have been at least as violent as anything ever perpetrated by Indians. What is distinctive about Africans is their short memory of hate.

Jomo Kenyatta was imprisoned by the British colonial authorities over charges of founding the Mau Mau movement. A British Governor also denounced him as "a leader unto darkness and unto death."⁴¹ And yet when Jomo Kenyatta was released he not only forgave the white settlers, but turned the whole country towards a basic pro-Western orientation to which Kenya has remained committed ever since. Kenyatta even published a book entitled *Suffering Without Bitterness*.⁴²

Ian Smith, the white settler leader of Rhodesia, unilaterally declared independence in 1965 and unleashed a civil war on Rhodesia. Thousands of people, mainly Black, died in the country as a result of policies pursued by Ian Smith. Yet when the war ended in 1980, Ian Smith and his cohorts were not subjected to a Nuremberg-style trial. On the contrary, Ian Smith was himself a member of Parliament in a Black-ruled Zimbabwe, busy criticizing the post-Smith Black leaders of Zimbabwe as incompetent and dishonest.⁴³ Where else but in Africa could such tolerance occur?

The Nigerian civil war (1967-1970) was the most highly publicized civil conflict in post-colonial African history. When the war was coming to an end, many people feared that there would be a bloodbath in the defeated eastern region. The Vatican was worried that cities like Enugu and Onitcha, strongholds of Catholicism, would be monuments of devastation and blood-letting.⁴⁴

None of these expectations occurred. Nigerians – seldom among the most disciplined of Africans – discovered in 1970 some remarkable resources of self-restraint. There were no triumphant reprisals against the vanquished Biafrans; there were no vengeful trials of “traitors”.

We have also witnessed the phenomenon of Nelson Mandela. He lost twenty-seven of the best years of his life in prison under the laws of the apartheid regime. Yet when he was released he not only emphasized the policy of reconciliation – he often went beyond the call of duty. On one occasion before he became President white men were fasting unto death after being convicted of terrorist offences by their own white government. Nelson Mandela went out of his way to beg them to eat and thus spare their own lives.

When Mandela became president in 1994 it was surely enough that his government would leave the architects of apartheid unmolested. Yet Nelson Mandela went out of his way to pay a social call and have tea with the unrepentant widow of Hendrik F. Verwoed, the supreme architect of the worst forms of apartheid, who shaped the whole racist order from 1958 to 1966. Mandela was having tea with the family of Verwoed.⁴⁵

Was Mahatma Gandhi correct, after all, that his torch of soul force (satyagraha) might find its brightest manifestations among Black people? Empirical testimony was at work again..

In the history of civilizations there are occasions when the image in the mirror is more real than the object it reflects. Black Gandhians like Martin Luther King, Jr., Desmond Tutu and, in a unique sense, Nelson Mandela have sometimes reflected Gandhian soul force more brightly than Gandhians in India. Part of the explanation lies in the soul of African culture itself – with all its capacity for rapid forgiveness.

It is a positive modification of “*The Picture of Dorian Gray*.” In Oscar Wilde’s novel, the picture of Dorian Gray is a truer reflection of the man’s decrepit body and lost soul than the man himself. The decomposition of Dorian’s body and soul is transferred from Dorian himself to his picture. The picture is more real than the man.

In the case of Gandhism, it is not the decomposition of the soul but its elevation which is transferred from India to the Black experience. In the last one hundred years both Indian culture and African culture have, in any case, been guilty of far less blood-letting than the West. Christian minimization of violence has been observed more by non-Christians than by ostensible followers of the Cross. The West should learn more

about nonviolence from the legacy of Mahatma Gandhi. And Indians should learn more about Gandhism from the experience of Black people. The Commonwealth should become not a mutual admiration club but a mutual emulation society, a partnership of learning from each other.

A COMMONWEALTH CONCLUSION

In this lecture about language and religion, it is worth noting that the Commonwealth encompasses more than a couple of thousand languages from Gujarati in India to Giriama in eastern Africa, alongside the English language as the lingua franca.⁴⁶

The Commonwealth also encompasses dozens of religions – ranging from the big ones (Hinduism, Buddhism, Confucianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam) to the communal religions of the Yoruba, the Baganda, the Lugbara and the Zulu.

What can religion as a cultural force have to learn from language as a global enterprise? As we have noted earlier, the human race has spilt blood over religion far more often and in larger numbers than over linguistic disputes.

There is a sense in which language is more fundamental in human affairs than religion. Theoretically a society can function without having any theistic religion, but no society can function without having a language.

And yet religious differences continue to trigger deadlier passions than do linguistic quarrels. One linguistic solution for multilingual countries has been a kind of linguistic ecumenicalism, as exemplified by India's policy of accommodating its diverse languages at state level, while promoting Hindi as a national language. South Africa is also experimenting with linguistic ecumenicalism by recognizing eleven official languages, alongside English as the official language for the country as a whole.⁴⁷

Can religion learn a form of ecumenical state craft from these linguistic experiments? Political constitutions normally distinguish between secular states on one side, and states with an established official religion, on the other.

But we probably need a third category distinct from both a secular state and a theocracy. We need an ecumenical state.

When His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales once suggested changing the Coronation Oath from “Defender of the faith” to “Defender of faith”, was he proposing a historic shift from England’s established church to an ecumenical state? Was Prince Charles ahead of his time?

It has been estimated that before the end of this century Britain will have more practicing Muslims than practicing Anglicans. Even if Muslim immigration into Britain does not increase at all, Muslims in Britain will continue to have larger families than Anglicans. In addition, the pace of secularization among British Christians is much faster than among British Muslims. More and more churches may become empty, while more and more Muslims will seek mosques and other buildings to tend to their increasing numbers.⁴⁸

The Commonwealth as a whole is not short of practicing Muslims, as we indicated earlier. However, it is short of native speakers of the Arabic language. But there is hope on the Arab horizon. In a Question and Answer Session at Trinity College, University of Melbourne in March 2006, the Commonwealth Secretary-General, Don McKinnon, reported to a surprised audience that both Palestine and Israel “had expressed interest” in Commonwealth membership.⁴⁹ (The British had after all administered Palestine before partition as a Mandate of the League of Nations).

Yemen had also expressed interest in the Commonwealth – perhaps partly influenced by Aden’s many years as a British colony in the first half of the twentieth century.

The most surprising expression of interest has apparently come from Algeria, which had no colonial link with Britain. Ironically, Egypt – which was once a British dependency – initially preferred to join Francophonie rather than the Commonwealth. Indeed, Boutros Boutros-Ghali has even served as the Secretary-General of Francophonie after stepping down as Secretary-General of the United Nations.

A Commonwealth country which is evolving into a kind of ecumenical state is Nigeria. At the federal level Nigeria sees itself as a secular state. But twelve states in the North have already adopted Islamic law (the Shari’a) as the basis of state constitutions. There may be a case for Nigeria to review its constitution and consciously accommodate an ecumenical system of governance. This immensely complex society stands a chance of working out brilliant constitutional innovations to help it deal with its problems.

Ecumenicalism is not the only thing which religious pluralism can learn from linguistic pluralism. Let us explore another dimension.

One other difference between language and religion is the simple fact that language is less monopolistic. The same individual human being can love several languages, and even master them. Yet Semitic religions (Abrahamic) tend to be based on EITHER/OR allegiance. One cannot be both a Christian and a Muslim, or both a Muslim and a Jew, in spite of the doctrinal linkages among the three religions.

On the other hand, a Yoruba can be an adherent of the Yoruba spiritual universe and still be a Christian or a Muslim. Indigenous African religions are less based on the

principle of either-or than are the three Abrahamic religions. The multi-religious paradigm of the indigenous heritage is closer to the multi-linguistic paradigm of the wider African experience. Africa also has more religions than any other continent. Is there a convergence between Africa's plurality of languages and Africa's diversity of religions? Does the pluralism help to promote religious tolerance in Africa?

Senegal in West Africa is 94 percent Muslim. And yet from 1960 to 1980 Senegal had a Roman Catholic President without demonstrations in the streets denouncing the Head of State as an infidel. And from 1980 to the year 2000 Senegal had a Muslim President with a Roman Catholic First Lady. Africa is almost unique in carrying the ecumenical spirit to such high levels.

Within the Commonwealth there is the case of Tanzania. The number of Muslims and Christians in Tanzania is almost equal. Without changing their Constitution Tanzanians have de facto adopted a religiously rotating presidency. As we mentioned earlier, the first President, Julius K. Nyerere, was a Christian, followed by Ali Hassan Mwinyi, a Muslim, who was in turn followed by Benjamin Mkapa, another Christian. And now Tanzania has once again a Muslim Head of State, Jakaya Kikwete. Again, where else but in Africa can one find the ecumenical spirit so high on the pinnacle of power?

Africa's linguistic diversity poses problems for national integration, but that diversity has helped Africans to learn skills of patient communication. And these skills in turn have enabled Africans to cultivate skills of religious tolerance. In Africa the music of linguistic pluralism sometimes inspires the hymns of religious diversity.

*In the beginning was the Word,
and the Word was with God,
and the Word was God!*

ENDNOTES

¹ Statistics on religious demography may be found in the US State Department's *2006 Report on International Religious Freedom* available online at <http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/index.htm>, accessed March 31, 2007.

² On the evidence of human beginnings in Africa, see, for example, Rick Weiss, "More Evidence of Skull's Link to Humans," *The Washington Post* (April 7, 2005); Nicholas Wade, "DNA Study Yields Clues on First Migration of Early Humans," *The New York Times* (May 13, 2005); and John Noble Wilford, "Homo Sapiens Gets a Lot Older in a New Analysis of Fossils" *The New York Times* (February 17, 2005).

³ These figures are drawn from "Number of Followers of Major World Religions," *Current Events* (March 10, 2006), Volume 105, Issue 21, p.4.

⁴ There are more than 350 million Muslims in Africa, while there are more than 892 million Muslims in Asia; see "Number of Followers of Major World Religions," *Current Events* (March 10, 2006), p.4.

⁵ Europe and North America is home to approximately 39-40 million Muslims, according to the estimates in "Number of Followers of Major World Religions," *Current Events* (March 10, 2006), p.4.

⁶ According to the US State Department's *2006 Report on International Religious Freedom*, the number of Muslims in Pakistan may be close to 149 million; in India about 138 million; and about 128 million in Bangladesh.

⁷ Because of religious and political issues over the implications of population numbers, the estimation of the numbers of Muslims in Nigeria is quite contentious. Moreover, population estimates are quite unreliable. However, based on the US State Department's *2006 Report on International Religious Freedom*, the Muslim population of Nigeria may be between 70-75 million, while that of Egypt may be estimated to be about 67 million. According to an earlier Associated Press report, "Muslim Mobs, Seeking Vengeance, Attack Christians in Nigeria," *New York Times* (May 13, 2004), "Many of Nigeria's 126 million people, [are] split almost evenly between Muslims and Christians. . ." One report estimates the percentage of Muslims in Nigeria at 75 percent; see <<http://www.islamicweb.com/begin/population.htm>>, accessed May 28, 2004. In 2006, Nigeria did conduct another census - without asking religion and ethnicity. See Michelle Faul, "Nigeria Tries To Take a Head Count," *The Washington Post* (March 25, 2006).

⁸ Of course there are large numbers of Christians in Asia – about 341 million, according to "Number of Followers of Major World Religions," *Current Events* (March 10, 2006), p.4. – but few states that are explicitly Christian.

⁹ South Korea, according to the US State Department's *2006 Report on International Religious Freedom*, has about 8.6 million Protestants, and 5.1 million Catholics, but is still only about 29 percent of the population.

¹⁰ There are a little more than 2.1 billion Christians in the world today, according to the "Number of Followers of Major World Religions," *Current Events* (March 10, 2006), p.4.

¹¹ In 2005, Brian Nichiporuk pointed out at a Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life on "The Coming Religious Wars? Demographics and Conflict in Islam and Christianity," (Wednesday, May 18, 2005), "Muslim regions tend to have significantly higher fertility rates than many other parts of the world." but also pointed to the complex and diverse nature of these fertility rates. The event transcript is available at <<http://pewforum.org/events/print.php?EventID=82>>, accessed February 27, 2006.

¹² Jane Perlez, "Old Church Becomes Mosque in Uneasy Britain," *New York Times* (April 2, 2007).

¹³ On this act, see Kristin Romey, “Cultural Terrorism,” *Archaeology* (May/June 2001), Volume 54, Issue 3, p. 16.

¹⁴ This testifies to the importance of the oral tradition in Islam, as Daniel A. Madigan has pointed out in Madigan, *The Qur'an's Self Image : Writing and Authority in Islam's Scripture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2001), p. 3; and on one interpretation of the rules of the recitation of the Qur'an, see Muhammad Abul Quasem, *The Recitation and Interpretation of the Qur'an : Al-Ghazālī's Theory* (Bangi, Selangor, Malaysia : Jabatan Usuluddin dan Falsafa, Fakulti Pengajian Islam, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, 1979).

¹⁵ This phrase is from Samuel Johnson, *Vanity of Human Wishes*, reprinted in *Vanity of Human Wishes(1749) and Two Rambler Papers (1750)* (Los Angeles: William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, University of California, 1950), p. 18.

¹⁶ For instance, Solomon Liptzin has surveyed the influence of the Bible on world literature in his *Biblical Themes in World Literature* (Hoboken, NJ: Ktav Pub. House, 1995); also see Willis B. Glover, *Biblical Origins of Modern Secular Culture: An Essay in the Interpretation of Western History* (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1984).

¹⁷ Relatedly, consult John F. Baker, ed., “A Special Report: Selling the Bible,” *Publishers Weekly* (October 5, 1990), pp. 3-18.

¹⁸ Consult Harry M. Orlinsky and Robert G. Bratcher, *A History of Bible Translation and the North American Contribution* (Atlanta, GA: Scholars Press, 1991). A fascinating account of the influence of the translation of the King James Bible may be found in Alister E. McGrath, *In the Beginning: The Story of the King James Bible and How It Changed a Nation, Language, and Culture* (New York: Doubleday, 2001).

¹⁹ See Hussein Abdul-Raouf, *Qur'an Translation : Discourse, Texture and Exegesis* (Richmond, VA: Curzon, 2001) pp. 37-61, for an extended discussion on why the Qur'an cannot be translated.

²⁰ Relatedly, see M. S. Thirumalai, “Language Use in Buddhism,” *Language in India* (October 2002), Volume 2, No. 7, < <http://www.languageinindia.com/oct2002/buddhismandlanguage.html>>, accessed April 3, 2007.

²¹ This is Sura 19, entitled “Maryam.”

²² Rodney Stark in his *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005), has argued that Christianity was central to the success of Western societies.

²³ See David P. Barash and Judith Eve Lipton, *The Myth of Monogamy: Fidelity and Infidelity in Animals and People* (New York: W. H. Freeman, 2001), p. 137, on the impact of Christianity on the monogamous practices of the elite in Europe.

²⁴ Contextual discussions of this issue may be found in Andrea Major, *Pious Flames: European Encounters with Sati, 1500-1830* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006) and Lata Mani, *Contentious Traditions: The Debate on Sati in Colonial India* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).

²⁵ The story of William Wilberforce and other Quaker activists in the abolitionist movement is dramatized in the 2007 movie *Amazing Grace*.

²⁶ However, the Bible and Christianity have also inspired great African American leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr., and W. E. B. DuBois; see E. J. Dionne, “A Tale for Slavery's Children,” *The Washington Post* (December 25, 2006).

²⁷ On the linguistic origin and dispersal of Semitic languages, consult Angel Sáenz-Badillos (transl. by John Elwolde), *A History of the Hebrew Language* (Cambridge and New York, NY : Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp.3-8, and Thomas L. Thompson, *Early History of the Israelite People : From the Written and Archaeological Sources* (Leiden and New York : Brill, 1992), pp. 72-176.

²⁸ Indeed, Lawrence was aware of the empty nature of these promises; see William Hare, *Struggle for the Holy Land: Arabs, Jews, and the Emergence of Israel* (Lanham, MD: Madison Books, 1995), pp. 131-32.

²⁹ The League of Nations Covenant, particularly Article 20, provided what was ultimately a false hope to the Arabs that they would achieve independence; see Hare, *Struggle for the Holy Land*, pp. 273-274.

³⁰ For a succinct discussion of the events leading to the Balfour Declaration, see Walter Laqueur, *A History of Zionism* (New York: MJF Books, 1997), pp. 181-205; and for a longer treatment, see Leonard Stein, *The Balfour Declaration* (Jerusalem : Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1983).

³¹ Consult Hare, *Struggle for the Holy Land*, p. 231.

³² A full treatment of the Suez crisis can be found in a collection of essays edited by William Roger Louis and Roger Owen, *Suez 1956: The Crisis and Its Consequences* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989).

³³ See Benjamin Ginsberg, *The Fatal Embrace: Jews and the State* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993) p. 103.

³⁴ Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, *Jews and the New American Scene* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), pp. 26-27.

³⁵ See Jimmy Carter, *Palestine Peace Not Apartheid*, (New York and London: Simon and Schuster, 2006).

³⁶ Charles Krauthammer, "Everyone's Jewish," *Washington Post* (September 25, 2006).

³⁷ I was privileged to interview President Thabo Mbeki briefly about the language policy of South Africa in his office in Pretoria on April 24, 2007. I am grateful to the President, but any errors in interpretation are entirely my own.

³⁸ Sheikh Al-Amin Ali Mazrui, *The History of Mazrui Dynasty of Mombasa*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press for the British Academy, 1995). Translated and annotated by J. McL. Ritchie.

³⁹ For instance, a January 2007 BBC poll showed that 81 percent of Britons opposed US actions in Iraq, while 57 percent had a negative view of US actions globally; see the report by Kevin Sullivan, "Views on U.S. Drop Sharply In Worldwide Opinion Poll," *The Washington Post* (January 23, 2007).

⁴⁰ This statement was reported in the *Harijan* (March 14, 1936); see Sudarshan Kapur, *Raising Up A Prophet: The African-American Encounter With Gandhi* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992), pp. 89-90.

⁴¹ This was the appellation given to Kenyatta by British Governor Sir Patrick Renison, according to the Kenyan Ministry of External Affairs. <<http://www.mfa.go.ke/kenyatta.html>>. December 28, 2005.

⁴² Jomo Kenyatta, *Suffering Without Bitterness* (Nairobi and Chicago: East African Publishing House and Northwestern University Press, 1968).

⁴³ For an overview of the transition from white rule to black rule in Zimbabwe, consult Anthony Parsons, "From Southern Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, 1965-1985," *International Affairs* Volume 9, Number 4, (November 1988), pp. 353-361; also see Victor De Waal, *The Politics of Reconciliation: Zimbabwe's First Decade* (London and Cape Town: Hurst and David Philip, 1981).

⁴⁴Readers interested in a guide to the Biafra war may consult Zdenek Cervenka, *The Nigerian War, 1967-70: History of The War, Selected Bibliography and Documents* (Frankfurt Am Main: Bernard & Graef, 1971).

⁴⁵ On Mandela's meeting with Mrs. Verwoerd, see Anthony Sampson, *Mandela : The Authorized Biography* (New York: Knopf, distributed by Random House, 1999), p. 514.

⁴⁶ Africa alone, according to UNESCO, has over 2058 languages; see the table in appendix A, Zaline Makini Roy-Campbell, "The State of African Languages and the Global Language Politics: Empowering African Languages in the Era of Globalization," in Olaoba F. Arasanyin and Michael A. Pemberton, Eds., *Selected Proceedings of the 36th Annual Conference on African Linguistics* (Somerville, MA: Cascadilla Proceedings Project, 2009).p. 9 at <www.lingref.com, document #1401>, accessed March 16, 2007.

⁴⁷ Linguistic ecumenicalism in Africa is discussed in greater detail in Alamin M. Mazrui, *Swahili Beyond the Boundaries: Literature, Language, and Identity* (Columbus, OH: Ohio University Press, 2007), p.12.

⁴⁸ Perlez, "Old Church Becomes Mosque in Uneasy Britain," *New York Times* (April 2, 2007).

⁴⁹ "Several countries seek Commonwealth membership, Secretary-General says," (March 22, 2006), Press Release, at < <http://www.trinity.unimelb.edu.au/news/2006/20060322-1>>, Trinity College, University of Melbourne, accessed April 4, 2007.