

## Law and Society

### For Further Reflection

1. Given the evident diversity of Islamic approaches to law and society, is it possible to talk of a particular “challenge of Islam” to Christian and democratic concepts of law and society? How much are the persistent strains of political Islam connected to originating ideals of Islam?
2. Is there a specific theological space for Christians and Muslims to work together politically in the light of the struggles of modern liberal democracies to understand the place of religion in the public square? The phenomenon of the Arab Spring seems to bring to the fore a situation where more Islamised governments may be conducive to greater freedom for minorities, questioning the Church’s readiness to approve of secularised governmental structures. The legacy of Aristotle to both Islam and Christianity may offer some pointers to a shared political project.
3. To what extent do different conceptions of the nature of God shape the respective political theologies of Islam and Christianity? Where might the *similarities* of understanding about the nature of God lead to shared political projects?
4. How might a more nuanced Christian understanding of the distinction between law and grace serve the common good of Christians and Muslims and deepen mutual understanding? How does the Christian concept of grace distinguish Christian understandings of the political?
5. Is there a continuing relevance to the motifs of the Meccan and Medinan paradigms? How are these paralleled in the Church? How can a serious response to the idea that power corrupts true religion avoid a sectarian abdication of political responsibility?

6. Can the Church assert “Christian Culture” or a “Christian State”? How does the Church deal adequately and authentically with past failures of Christian political theology (e.g. colonialism, militarism) whilst affirming and advocating the legacies of Christian political theology that provide for freedoms that may otherwise be under threat? How does the Church guard a Christian inheritance in European and North American public life without erecting an exclusionary barrier to the cultural and religious contributions of Islam? What is the relationship between an evangelical call to the lordship of Christ and contemporary political and legal systems?
7. What does the common good of Christians and Muslims look like? Can we point to specific models of good practice? How does the Church arrive at a common good that is theologically authentic yet understood beyond the bounds of the Church? How do the freedoms of secular modernity contribute to the political dialogue between Christians and Muslims? How, and to what extent, do both Christians and Muslims understand and affirm the freedoms of secular modernity such as democracy and gender equality?
8. What is the distinctive Christian contribution to the idea of religious freedom? Can Muslims furnish an understanding of religious freedom consonant with contemporary liberal democracies? Does Islam have an understanding of itself that can settle with minority status? It must be admitted that the Church has a long history of persecution and intolerance and that, as late as the 1960s, Vatican II marked a seminal shift in the recognition by the Church of religious diversity. In what ways might the Church’s own struggles to arrive at notions of religious freedom be mirrored in Islam’s engagement with the West? What is the role of the worldwide Church in responding to the plight of Christian minorities in Muslim contexts and how might the concept of *dhimmitude* be replaced by notions of shared citizenship? How can the pursuit of

religious freedoms be a collaborative venture across the Christian and Muslim faiths and what theologies might underpin such a shared endeavour?

9. Relations between Christians and Muslims can still become prey to global geopolitics and perceived historical fault-lines that may be outside the control of both confessional communities. This is especially apparent in the place of Israel and Palestine in the respective histories of Christians and Muslims. What is the Church's understanding of "the land" in Christian eschatology and its relation to the state of Israel? What is the significance of the longstanding Christian communities of the Middle East to both the world Church and the future plurality of Islam at a time of increasing fragility for such communities? What role do the holy sites of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in the Middle East play in a shared project of hospitality and witness to the common good?