

God and the Dystopias

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ABSTRACT

Dystopia means a frightening society. In this article, first, I searched for God in four dystopias, exalted by their prophecies, written by four renowned authors: Robert Benson (*Lord of the World*), Aldous Huxley (*Brave New World*), George Orwell (*Nineteen Eighty-Four*) and Boualem Sansal (*2084: The End of the World*). Their novels reflect their beliefs. The first three dystopias repudiated God, but God is omnipresent in the last one. Benson, a Catholic priest, gave rise to a world supreme leader who abolished the Christian God in the name of the Humanity worship. Huxley, probably a pantheist, told us about two worlds. In the first, God is seen as unnatural and eliminated by conditioning. In the other one, there is a mix of theologically empty gods. Orwell was an atheist. There is no God at all in his dystopia. Sansal, a “Muslim not religious, who don’t like Islam,” denounced Islam and its God in his dystopia.

After that, I considered factual dystopias and the Same God Controversy. Two historical ideologies, Communism and Nazism, also repudiated the Christian God. However, with the self-proclaimed Islamic State, we witness the omnipresence of the Muslim God in its ideology, like in Sansal’s dystopia. In conclusion, the absence of God is not necessary for a nightmarish society. The problem is who and what is God, a theological, philosophical, legal, political and social issue.

Keywords: Dystopian literature, God, Christianity, Islam.

INTRODUCTION

Dystopia is a genre of literature, a narrative fiction with speculative elements about a frightening society. Adams¹ noted that the term dystopia is used to describe an unfavorable civilization in which society is typically the antagonist. Social norms determine a terrible society. Usually, dystopian authors must establish a legal structure to omnipresent surveillance and to control the past. Here, I considered four much-known dystopias, written by Robert Hugh Benson, Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and Boualem Sansal. Respectively, their novels are *Lord of World* (L.W.), *Brave New World* (BNW), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1984) and *2084: La Fin du Monde* (2084).

Arman² described dystopia as the portrayal of a setting that completely disagrees with the author’s ethos. I am not quite sure about this regarding BNW, but it seems a good description. Dystopian authors write about what they fear most or what they think is terrible to the world. Feminists write about an oppressive theocratic society; book lovers write about dominant censorship and those who fear technology write about machines killing human beings.

My first goal is to observe how those four dystopias portrayed God in their fictional nightmarish

¹ Adams. Introduction to *Brave New Worlds: Dystopian Stories*. 1.

² Arman. *Discussing Dystopia: In-Depth Discussions of Dystopian Fiction, and the Possible Future We are Heading Towards*. Kindle edition. 2016

societies. After discussing that, I consider factual dystopias focusing on the Same God Controversy, which tries to define if Christians and Muslims worship the same God.

The Bible mentioned, at least, one clear dystopia. God says in Ezekiel 16:49-50: “The crime of Sodom was pride, gluttony, calm complacency; such were hers and her daughters’ crimes. They never helped the poor and needy; they were proud and engaged in loathsome practices before me, and so I swept them away”. Huxley said that “art also has its morality and many of the rules of this morality are the same as, or at least analogous to, the rules of ordinary ethics.”³ Both Huxley and Orwell mentioned Shakespeare in their dystopias. In Hamlet, Shakespeare wrote that the end of playing “both at the first and now, was and is to hold, as ’twere, the mirror up to nature, to show virtue her own feature, scorn her own image, and the very age and body of the time his form and pressure.”⁴ Then, one can feel comfortable using dystopias to discuss social and legal issues.

GOD IN FOUR DYSTOPIAS

Of the four dystopias, *Lord of the World* (L.W.) by Robert Hugh Benson is the oldest, published for the first time in 1907. Benson was a Catholic priest, son of an Anglican archbishop. About LW, first, it must be said that, despite being the oldest, it contains many prophecies, maybe more than the other three. Second, despite Benson being a successful author in his time, Benson’s book is the least known of the four dystopias. Dystopian readers do not seem to know LW at all.

On the other hand, if someone follows what popes say, both Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis highlighted and recommended LW.⁵ Pope Benedict XV, then Cardinal Ratzinger, in 1992, criticized the idea of New World Order, remembering that the lord of the world of Benson’s book brought world unification and claimed to bring peace.⁶ Pope Francis recommended LW twice. First, in 2013, when Pope Francis mentioned LW to argue that the spirit of the world leads to apostasy⁷. Notwithstanding, Pope Francis entered in contradiction in an interview also in 2013, when he said that “God is not Catholic, God is the spirit of world.”⁸ The lord of the world in LW would agree with Pope

³ Huxley, Aldous. “Foreword for *Brave New World*”. Vintage books. Kindle edition, location 493.

⁴ Sparknotes. “Act 3, scene 2”. Accessed November 23, 2017.

http://nfs.sparknotes.com/hamlet/page_150.html

⁵ Moyhahan, Robert. “Letter #5, 2015: Editorial”. Inside the Vatican. 2016. Accessed on March 2, 2016.

<http://insidethevatican.com/news/newsflash/letter-5-2015-editorial>.

⁶ Robert Moyhahan. “Letter #5, 2015: Editorial”.

⁷ Francis, Pope. “We do not Negotiate Our Fidelity to God”. 2013. Vatican. Accessed May 31, 2016. https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/cotidie/2013/documents/papa-francesco-cotidie_20131118_fidelity-god.html.

⁸ Scalfari, Eugenio. “La Rivoluzione di Francesco Ha Abolito il Peccato. *Repubblica*”. 2013. Accessed March 11, 2016.

http://www.repubblica.it/politica/2013/12/29/news/la_rivoluzione_di_francesco_ha_abolito_il_peccato-74697884/.

Francis with this definition of God. The second recommendation by Pope Francis, occurred in 2015 when he was talking about what he called ideological colonization. In this last case, Pope Francis used the book to argue for cultural diversity. It must be said, notwithstanding, that this previous portrayal of LW by Pope Francis is not accurate. LW is not a book for defending cultural diversity whatsoever, despite the fact that Benson, in the book, condemned a kind of world cultural standardization.

Regarding prophecies, Benson set his novel at the end of the twentieth century. He accurately foresaw the regnant secularism and cultural relativism that we witness since this time. Benson saw a world in which the state embraced materialism, using charity to eliminate the importance of religion, forming a cult of man. Philosophical relativism triumphed over objectivity, with the help of psychology. Besides that, LW prophesied: i) the destructive power of a nuclear bomb. No one survived after an airstrike in LW; ii) that many in the world will see euthanasia as a kindly way of killing; iii) the European Parliament and its power, and iii) that marriage will be seen as just a contract with no religious aspect.

On the other hand, the most important mistake is that Benson did not describe the Catholic Church accurately at the end of the twentieth century. In LW, the Catholic Church is much more faithful to her Doctrine and theologically combative, despite being a tiny minority, than one could define the Catholic Church since the end of that century. This is a very serious mistake since the Catholic Church is the only survival enemy of the lord of the world in the book. Besides that, in LW, universities became extinct because they were the strongholds of “individualism.” But, one would say more accurately that universities are actually the strongholds of humanism and philosophical relativism.

The main topic of LW is religion; if someone is searching for God in this novel, he will find that God is behind every aspect of it. However, God was repudiated in LW’s society. In Benson’s dystopia, the world established the humanity worship. Man was God. Humanitarianism became a religion, though anti-supernatural. The lord of the world is considered the incarnation of the Spirit of World, the Saviour. The world is “a union of earthly fortune and abandonment of individualism on the one side, and of the supernaturalism on the other, [in which] it was treason to appeal from God Immanent to God Transcendent.”⁹

In one passage, Benson takes us to the next dystopia, *Brave New World* (BNW), by Aldous Huxley. One character, in LW, was trying to convince his wife that religion is simply mental

⁹ Benson. Robert Hugh. “11 books by Robert Hugh Benson”. 2015. Titan Read. Kindle edition. Location 14077.

conditioning that began when one is a child.¹⁰ In BNW, all starts with mental conditioning in babies.

Initially, one point regarding BNW, published in 1932, is that it is the most challenging dystopia to grasp. Even Huxley was not quite sure what he was writing about, whether a satire against the American way of life in Europe, or whether about a utopia of planning and stability or a dystopia. In his introduction to BNW, Bradshaw (1994) revealed that Huxley in the '30s had: i) a contempt for parliamentary democracy; ii) a conviction that mass society must be organized as a hierarchy of mental quality controlled by an elite caste of experts; iii) asked for and ordered universe in the midst of the large world of planless incoherence; and iv) expressed his readiness to sanction eugenicist measure to arrest the rapid deterioration of the whole European West.¹¹

Regarding prophecies, Huxley is relevant to an understanding of how distractions can make people inattentive, in the face of atrocities around the world. In BNW, there is “no leisure from pleasure.”¹² These days, when people enjoy spending time on social networks, gossip and TV, it seems that many urgent issues are less important. Huxley also wrote against consumerism and Keynesian policies, and many could see how these policies are widely used in our day of “quantitative easing.” Besides that, the indiscriminate use of drugs, self-medication, fertilization in vitro generating twins, the sexualization of children and abortion clinics are commonplace in BNW and nowadays too.

Concerning BNW's mistakes in prophecies, Huxley said in 1946 that the obvious failure of this novel was that it contains no reference to nuclear fission. Benson had foreseen that in LW, twenty-five years before. Besides that, brainwashing and charity had not been efficient to either dismiss religion or to eliminate poverty.

In BNW, we have two societies. Huxley argued in 1946 that he did not support either society, he called one of them “insanity” and the other one (savage society) “lunacy” and “hardly less queer and abnormal.” He said that the most serious defect in the story is that there are only two bad alternatives. The powerful society in BNW is called the World State. The World State adopts genetic engineering, brainwashing, promiscuity, and drugs to reach its values of “Community, Identity and Stability.” The genetic engineering and brainwashing created a global caste system that suppresses nonconformity. Books, fathers, mothers, and religion are banned by the combination of genetic, conditioning, distractions and drugs.

The other society in BNW is called “Savage Reservations,” where poor people live segregated

¹⁰ Robert Benson, “11 books by Robert Hugh Benson”, location 14203.

¹¹ Bradshaw, David. “Introduction to Brave New World”. Vintage Books. 1994. Locations 205-351.

¹² Huxley, Aldous. “Brave New World”. Vintage books. 1994. Kindle edition, location 1290.

by electrified fences. It is defined in BNW as “a place which, owing to unfavorable climate or geological conditions, or poverty of natural resources, has not been worth the expense of civilizing.”¹³ There, they lived the life we know, imperfect, suffering, marrying, giving birth, getting old, without the scientific drugs and brainwashing of the powerful society.

Regarding God, there are more similarities between the dystopias of Benson and Huxley than one could suppose with such different authors. Like in LW, in the World State, cathedrals¹⁴, Christianity¹⁵, soul¹⁶ and Jesus¹⁷ were overthrown, “whisked.” The World State invented a deity, named Ford, after the American car-czar Henry Ford, that highlights the importance of assembly lines and consumerism, in a society where babies are not born but grown in hatcheries. Ford is neither transcendental nor a supernatural God; he is only a human model for the society. Like in LW, we have a destruction of the supernatural God in favor of humanitarianism. In the Savage Reservations, we have pantheism; they adopt a religion that is “half fertility cult and half penitent ferocity.”¹⁸ It is said that these Reservations still preserve “monstrous superstitions, Christianity and totemism and ancestor worship.”¹⁹ They try to “please Pookong and Jesus,”²⁰ they have Earth Mother, Sky Father, Mary and Etsanatlhei, Black Stone, great Eagle and Our Lady of Acoma. But, there is no theological description of the pantheism in the Savage Reservations.

A whole chapter in BNW is dedicated to a debate about religion between one Controller of the World State and John the Savage (Chapter XVII). The Controller argued that probably there is God, but his people do not need God because they are always young, happy and are never alone, and they have drugs. The drug *soma* is defined as “Christianity without tears.”²¹ Besides that, the Controller stated that “God is the reason for everything noble and fine and heroic.”²² and this would bring instability to the World State. John the Savage was not convinced. He wanted the right to grow old, ugly and impotent, to live in constant apprehension of what may happen tomorrow. In the final, it is not clear in BNW which side won the debate. Huxley revealed in 1946 what he considered a good religion. He stated that in a sane society, religion “would be the conscious and intelligent pursuit of man’s Final End, the unitive knowledge of the immanent Tao or Logos, the transcendent Godhead or

¹³ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 2594.

¹⁴ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 1018.

¹⁵ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 1177.

¹⁶ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 1259.

¹⁷ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 1025.

¹⁸ Huxley, Aldous. “Foreword for Brave New World”. Vintage books. 1994. Kindle edition, location 506.

¹⁹ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 1869.

²⁰ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 2041.

²¹ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 3575.

²² Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 3567.

Brahman.”²³ His philosophy of life would be “a kind of High Utilitarianism,” in which everyone looks for his/her “Greatest Happiness.”

Regarding Nineteen Eighty-Four (1984), many contrast it with BNW, arguing that Huxley and Orwell saw the future of the world very differently. However, a more detailed analysis will show that BNW and 1984 have many things in common. Like in Huxley’s book, in 1984:

- a) The Press and books were eliminated or rewritten in a way that they have “had no connection with anything in the real world,”²⁴
- b) It used Shakespeare to connect with the past,²⁵
- c) It used leisure, sports, and sex as popular oppression tools. There is a whole subsection to “films oozing with sex,”²⁶ called Pornosec,
- d) People can become “*unperson*.” In BNW, they are isolated in some places, in 1984, they disappear or live as nobody,
- e) There is an attempt to prevent men and women from forming loyalties,
- f) It supported an idea already accomplished in BNW in which all children were to be begotten by artificial dissemination,²⁷
- g) There is hatred for people trying to be alone,²⁸
- h) There is an attempt to extinguish all possibility of independent thought,²⁹
- i) Science is used to repress,³⁰
- j) It highlighted the need for controlling minds, based on the idea that the “reality exists in the human mind, and nowhere else,”³¹
- k) It held that men make the laws of Nature³² and
- l) The churches were destroyed.

Letters “h,” “j,” “k” and “l” above are also present in LW. Besides that, we have the following similarities between LW and 1984:

²³ Huxley, “Brave New World”, location 521.

²⁴ Orwell, George. “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”. Penguin Classics. 1949. Kindle edition, location 765.

²⁵ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 627.

²⁶ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 793.

²⁷ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 1122.

²⁸ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 1347.

²⁹ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 2945.

³⁰ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 2953.

³¹ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3763.

³² Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3991.

- a) Both dystopias highlighted the importance of language as a means of domination (Esperanto in LW and Newspeak in 1984),
- b) There is a semi-divine leader,³³
- c) The main character of 1984 did not believe in God but in the “spirit of Man,”³⁴ which is the religion in LW.

One clear difference between 1984 and both LW and BNW relates to London. This city in LW and BNW is a modern and developed city, but, in 1984, it is in a terrible condition. It seems that Orwell, with the awful conditions of London, wanted to write a condemnation of socialism, the Soviet Union, or the British socialists. In many parts of 1984, one can find such a position. For instance: i) London is dominated by the Ingsoc (English Socialism),³⁵ which grew out of earlier Socialist movement,³⁶ ii) the Big Brother always teach the principles of Ingsoc,³⁷ iii) Party members were supposed not to go into ordinary shops where it has a free market,³⁸ iv) the enemies of the Party do not support Ingsoc,³⁹ and v) the political philosophy in 1984’s world are Ignsoc in Oceania (London), neobolshevism in Eurasia, and in Eastasia is “called by a Chinese name usually translated as Death-Worship.”⁴⁰

Consequently, in terms of prophecies, 1984 is useful to describe current socialist countries, like North Korea, Venezuela, or Cuba, with their rationing of food, their need to be at war, and their poor economic conditions. Besides that, 1984 is exalted as a prophecy to our modern world regarding mass surveillance by states, through cell phones, personal computers, and social networks.

Regarding God, the word “God” appeared only four times in 1984, and two of them are a repetition of the same point and are not referring to God in the religious sense, but to the Party, defining God as power. The two remaining mentions are interesting. In the first occurrence, a poet called Ampleforth is found in a cell with the protagonist Winston. Ampleforth had been arrested because he allowed the word “God” to remain at the end of a line in a poem of Kipling.⁴¹ The second one is still more relevant; a Party member asked Winston if he believed in God. Winston replied that he did not believe and that what moved him to destroy the Party was the “spirit of Man.” Then, the Party member

³³ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 2997.

³⁴ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 4067.

³⁵ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 699.

³⁶ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3145.

³⁷ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 845.

³⁸ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 273.

³⁹ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 2606.

⁴⁰ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3001.

⁴¹ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3498.

answered that Winston, using this “spirit of Man,” promised, “to lie, to steal, to forge, to murder, to encourage drug-taking and prostitution, to disseminate venereal diseases, to throw vitriol in a child’s face.”⁴²

In Orwell’s book, the Catholic Church is described as an example of a successful intolerant organization in terms of perpetuating power.⁴³ In this respect, the British Catholic writer Evelyn Waugh wrote to Orwell in 1949, saying that 1984 failed because Orwell’s metaphysics is wrong. Orwell denied the soul exists and can only contrast matter with reason and will. For Waugh, Winston’s rebellion in 1984 is false. It is only another gang like the Party. And what makes 1984 more spurious to Waugh is the disappearance of the Church.⁴⁴

The newest dystopia, 2084: The End of the World,⁴⁵ by the Algerian writer Boualem Sansal, won the great prize for romance from the French Academy in 2015. Sansal, in his book, made a tribute to Orwell’s 1984. The dystopia of Orwell is mentioned and seen as meaning the past in Sansal’s book. The leaders in Sansal’s book adopted the three principles that presided over the creation of Ingsoc’s political system: ‘War is peace,’ ‘Freedom is slavery,’ ‘Ignorance is strength,’ and added three principles of their own: ‘Death is life,’ ‘Lying is truth,’ ‘Logic is absurdity.’ The idea of controlling the past and the thoughts, the use of a new language, omnipresent surveillance and the adoption of an imaginary enemy are present in both books.

In an interview, Sansal declared that he is a not religious Muslim and that he doesn’t like or believe in Islam.⁴⁶ Since he called Orwell a Christian, one can understand that Sansal is arguing that he is only culturally Muslim. It is clear that 2084 was written to condemn Islam. The society is based on submission to one and only God, Yölah, in a country called Abistan, after the prophet of the religion, Abi, similar to Muhammed, but immortal and immovable. In Abistan is said, “Yölah is great and Abi is his faithful Delegate,” like the Shahada (There is no god but Allah and Muhammad is his messenger). *Gkabal* is the name of the holy religion of Abistan, and it was also the title of the holy book. The main character of 2084, Ati, realized that religion in Abistan is absurd and adopted to implement totalitarianism.

Regarding prophecies, 2084 is portraying the future; it is much more a book to argue that

⁴² Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 4075.

⁴³ Orwell, “Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition”, location 3194.

⁴⁴ Waugh, Evelyn. “Waugh’s Letter to Orwell on Nineteen Eighty-Four”. In Orwell (1949). *Nineteen Eighty-Four: The Annotated Edition*. Penguin Classics. 1949; Kindle edition, locations 5141-5168.

⁴⁵ Sandal, Boualem. “2084: The End of the World”. Europa Editions. Translated by Allison Anderson. 2017.

⁴⁶ Meister, Martina. Algeria’s Orwell Portends Islamic Dictatorship in 2084. Worldcrunch.com. 2016. Accessed August 17, 2016. <https://www.worldcrunch.com/world-affairs/algeriaas-orwell-portends-islamic-dictatorship-in-2084>.

democratic societies must resist Islamism because it can “break up the society.” In that interview, Sansal mentioned the Algerian writer Tahar Djaout, who was killed in 1993 by the Armed Islamic Group for writing against Islamic fundamentalism. Sansal argued that Djaout once said that “if you speak, you die. If you don’t speak, you die. So speak, and die”. A week later, Djaout was murdered.

In relation to God, in Abistan, land of 2084, God (Yolah) is everything, and everything is in God. In Abistan, “the only economy was religious,” professions gravitated around sacrifices and pilgrimages.

In contrast to the other three dystopias, there is no love story in 2084, not even a woman character, which makes 2084 even more dry to read than the other dystopias. Sansal justified that by saying that in Islam, there is only love for God, and love is what Islam is fighting against. It is interesting to point out the epigraph of the book: ‘Religion might make us love God, but there is nothing stronger than religion to make us despise man and hate humankind.’⁴⁷

ACTUAL DYSTOPIAS AND THE SAME GOD CONTROVERSY

Every state has some degree of dystopia. The historian Victor Hanson wrote⁴⁸ that nowadays, in the US, with more technical and material progress, the country sees less freedom and moral, social and political regress. He held that George Orwell would be more accurate if his book were called 2016. Other states run nightmarish societies. A notorious example is the fact that the Chinese government controls every aspect of life in China, from banks and churches to a Chinese mother’s womb. It is also a plain fact that China arrests journalists and priests and polices the internet. No one knows for certain what is going on in China, be in its economy, or with its social problems. Also, recently, a shocking documentary called *Saudi Arabia Uncovered*, by ITV and the Public Broadcasting Service in the US, portrayed Saudi Arabia as a mix of North Korea and the Islamic State (ISIS). Saudi Arabia is shown as a murderous dictatorship, a country in which anyone is under constant surveillance, and people cannot express themselves freely. Saudi Arabia is also described as a country that uses public beheadings to make justice and schools use to teach hatred for Christians and Jews. North Korea can be seen as described in 1984 by Orwell, and one can see ISIS in 2084 by Sansal.

Two ideologies that determined social policies in different states in the twentieth century, namely, Communism and Nazism, repudiated the Christian God. But, in contrast, we have the omnipresence of God in ISIS’s ideology and Sansal’s dystopia. The classic author, Miguel de

⁴⁷ Originally: *La religion fait peut-être aimer Dieu mais rien n'est plus fort qu'elle pour faire détester l'homme et haïr l'humanité.*

⁴⁸ Hanson, Victor Davis. “The Great Regression”. 2016. Accessed August 22, 2016. <http://victorhanson.com/wordpress/?p=9421#comment-83759>.

Cervantes, writing at the beginning of the seventeenth century, also portrayed negative aspects of an Islamic society in his masterpiece, *Don Quixote*. It is corroborated by numerous scholars of Islam that, in an Islamic society, religion determines every aspect of the state. Would it also be theologically accurate that the omnipresence of the Christian God in a nightmarish society similar to ISIS?

Volf⁴⁹ argued that Christians and Muslims do worship the same God. But Christians and Muslims understand God's character differently. For example, the Quran denies the Holy Trinity, and Christians and Muslims have differences in how they understand God's love and justice. Also, the meaning of love of neighbor differs in Christianity and Islam.⁵⁰ Volf emphasized differences between Christianity and Islam that "concern the very core of the Christian faith – the Christian claims that God is the Holy Trinity and that God is love."⁵¹ With all that, Volf upheld the answer that Muslims and Christians worship the same God, because i) both Christians and Muslims determine that there is only one God, ii) God created everything that is not God, iii) God is different from everything that is not God, and iv) because God is good.⁵²

It is worth mentioning that Volf said that the closest thing Christians have to an authoritative statement about whether Muslims worship the same God comes from the Vatican II document called *Nostra Aetate* (1965), which "suggests" that Muslims and Christians worship the same God.⁵³ In this respect, it is important to recall that in the same year of Volf's book, Pope Benedict XVI, commenting on the Vatican II, said that *Nostra Aetate* has a weakness: "it speaks of religion solely in a positive way, and it disregards the sick and distorted forms of religion which, from the historical and theological viewpoints, are of far-reaching importance."⁵⁴ And Pope Benedict XVI, in his famous speech of Regensburg in 2006,⁵⁵ seemed to say that Muslims and Christians do not worship the same God, since, for him, in Muslim teaching, God is absolutely transcendent, his will is not bound up with any of human categories, even that of rationality, while the Christian God is *logos* (reason).

Solomon and Debs⁵⁶ considered almost exclusively the Quran to argue negatively, that

⁴⁹ Volf, Miroslav. "Allah: A Christian Response". HarperCollins e-books. 2012. Kindle edition.

⁵⁰ Volf, "Allah: A Christian Response", 14-15.

⁵¹ Volf, "Allah: A Christian Response", 124.

⁵² Volf, "Allah: A Christian Response", 97-98.

⁵³ Volf, "Allah: A Christian Response", 95.

⁵⁴ Benedict XVI. "It was a Splendid Day – Pope Pens Rare Article on His Inside View of Vatican II". *L'Osservatore Romano*. 2012. Accessed May 5, 2016. <http://www.news.va/en/news/it-was-a-splendid-day-benedict-xvi-recalls>.

⁵⁵ Benedict XVI, Pope. "Faith, Reason and the University Memories and Reflections". University of Regensburg. 2006. Accessed May 6, 2016 http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/speeches/2006/september/documents/hf_ben-xvi_spe_20060912_university-regensburg.html.

⁵⁶ Solomon, Sam and Debs, Atif. "Not the Same God: Is the Qur'anic Allah the LORD God of the Bible?" *Advancing Native Missions*. 2015.

Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God. They highlighted many differences between the Muslim God (Allah) and the Christian God. For instance:

- 1) Allah is unknown. “Nothing is as his likeness” (Surah 42:11). Adam, in the Quran, was not created in the image of God. While the Christian God made man his image (Genesis 1:26);
- 2) Allah is not knowable (Allah’s nature cannot be known) and never speak directly to any man not even to Muhammad (Surah 42:11). Islamic scholars prohibit any attempt to give any meaning to the nature of Allah. The Christian God walked, talked and fellowshiped with Adam, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses and other prophets;
- 3) Allah established a relationship of master/slave with Muslims (Surah’s 2:186, 15:42, 14:31), while in Christianity we have a father/son relationship between God and his believers (Matthew 18:12-14, John 14:1-2, Romans 8:15-16);
- 4) There is no Surah in the Quran saying that Allah is love and love thy neighbor in Islam means love other Muslims (Surah’s 8:39, 9:29, 58:22). In Christianity, God is love, and God requires believers to love even their enemies (Proverbs 25:21-22, Luke 6:35).
- 5) In Islam, to follow and love Allah is to follow and love Muhammad (Surah’s 3:31, 4:80, 8:1, 33:57). In Christianity, to follow and love God is to follow and love Jesus Christ (John 10:30, John 8:58, John 14:6-9, Matthew 11:27). Muhammad is just a man (Surah’s 41:6, 18:110), while Christ is God (John 1:1, John 10:30).

Another renowned scholar, Rémi Brague,⁵⁷ disagrees with those who say that Christians, Jews, and Muslims share three expressions commonly associated to them: “the three monotheisms,” “the three religions of Abraham,” and “the three religions of the book.” For him, these three expressions are false and dangerous. They are false because each masks a serious error concerning the nature of the three religions and dangerous because they encourage an intellectual sloth that relieves one of closely examining the reality. In short, regarding monotheism, Brague argued that to speak of the religions as “monotheistic” does not get us very far in understanding them. They have profound differences, and historically monotheism functioned as “an apple of discord” between Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Concerning Abraham, he said that simply because the names are the same does not mean that the personages are. In terms of the “religions of the book,” Islam does not consider itself as being part of these “peoples of the book” and Judaism, Christianity and Islam have a different relationship with their book.

⁵⁷ Brague, Rémi. “On the God of the Christians (and on one or two others)”. Translated by Paul Seaton. St. Augustine’s Press. 2013.

The Same God controversy is not a new one. The debate over whether Jews, Christians, and Muslims worship the same God is old as it is Islam. Saint John Damascene that lived in Damascus and saw the emergence of Islam discussed this subject in his book the *Fount of Knowledge*, written in the eighth century. Damascene answered the controversy negatively; he called Islam “the superstition of the Ishmaelites which to this day prevails and keeps people in error, being a forerunner of the Antichrist.”⁵⁸

Recently, the controversy received diverse answers after an incident in December 2015 that involved Dr. Larcyia Hawkins, a professor of political science at Wheaton College. The college had placed her on administrative leave because she publicly announced on Facebook that she would wear the Muslim hijab as part of her Advent worship to “stand in religious solidarity with Muslims because they, like [her], a Christian, are people of the book. And as Pope Francis stated last week, we worship the same God.”

Because of this incident, the philosophers Francis Beckwith,⁵⁹ Dale Thuggy⁶⁰ and Edward Feser,⁶¹ the theologian Miroslav Volf⁶² and the priest Aidan Kimel⁶³ answered affirmatively to the Same God controversy. On the other hand, the philosophers William Vallicella,⁶⁴ Lydia McGrew,⁶⁵

⁵⁸ Orthodox Christian Information Center. “St. John Damascene’s Critique of Islam”. Accessed November 23, 2017. http://orthodoxinfo.com/general/stjohn_islam.aspx

⁵⁹ Beckwith, Francis J. “Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?”. The Catholic Thing. 2015. Accessed April 13, 2016. <https://www.thecatholicthing.org/2015/12/17/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god/>.

⁶⁰ Tuggy, Dale. “Same God” Controversy Round-Up”. 2015. Accessed April 13, 2016. <http://trinities.org/blog/same-god-controversy-round-up/>.

⁶¹ Feser, Edward. “Christians, Muslims and the Reference of God”. 2015. Accessed April 23, 2016 <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com.br/2015/12/christians-muslims-and-reference-of-god.html>.

Edward Feser also dealt with the theme in two other articles: Feser, Edward. “Liberalism and Islam”. 2016. Accessed 23 April, 2016 <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com.br/2016/01/liberalism-and-islam.html>.

Feser, Edward. “Islam, Christianity and Liberalism (Again)”. 2016. Accessed May 6, 2016. <http://edwardfeser.blogspot.com.br/2016/01/islam-christianity-and-liberalism-again.html>.

⁶² Volf, Miroslav. “Wheaton Professor’s Suspension is About Anti-Muslim Bigotry, Not Theology”. 2015, The Washington Post. Accessed May 2, 2016. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2015/12/17/wheaton-professors-suspension-is-about-anti-muslim-bigotry-not-theology/>.

⁶³ Kimel, Aidan. “Do Christians and Muslims (and Jews) Worship the Same God?” 2015. Accessed April 15, 2016. <https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2015/12/20/do-christians-and-muslims-and-jews-worship-the-same-god/>.

⁶⁴ Vallicella, William. “Do Christians and Muslims Worship the same God?”. 2015. Accessed May 4, 2016. http://maverickphilosopher.typepad.com/maverick_philosopher/2015/12/do-christians-and-muslims-worship-the-same-god.html. Vallicella wrote also about the subject in: Vallicella, William. “Edward Feser on Christians, Muslims, and the Reference of God”. 2016. Accessed May 4, 2016 http://maverickphilosopher.typepad.com/maverick_philosopher/2016/01/edward-feser-on-christians-muslims-and-the-reference-of-god.html.

⁶⁵ McGrew, Lydia. “A Brief Note on “do Muslims and Christians worship the same God”. Extra Thoughts. 2015. Accessed May 20, 2016. <http://lydiaswebpage.blogspot.com.br/2015/12/a-brief-note-on-do-muslims-and.html>.

the theologians William Craig⁶⁶ and Peter Leithart,⁶⁷ and the writer Ralph Sidway⁶⁸ answered negatively. Observing their arguments, they use mainly philosophy of reference and different theological aspects related to the Bible and the Quran.

Summing up, it seems that if the scholar took one aspect above the others regarding these religions, especially the fact that both Allah and the Christian God are the “absolutely metaphysically ultimate,” then he or she would conclude that Christians and Muslims worship the same God. On the other hand, if the scholar goes to the details of Christianity and Islam, observing their sacred books and theology, he or she tends to argue that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God. To be more credible and accurate, dystopian authors should consider and respect theological details if God is present in his book.

Another British author, GK Chesterton, had no patience for dystopias, but he clarified that religious dogmas could be the way of friendship. In 1910, he said ⁶⁹ that the last few decades had been marked by a special cultivation of the romance of the future. For him, the modern man no longer presents the memoirs of his great-grandfather; but is engaged in writing a detailed and authoritative biography of his great-grandson. And also, that a difference of creed unites men—so long as it is a clear difference. If one says, “God is One,” and another says, “God is One but also Three,” this can be “the beginning of a good quarrelsome and also manly friendship.”

CONCLUSION

A common difficulty in all dystopias is to include the whole human nature in them, to explain how the humankind allowed and even enjoyed reaching such terrible societies and how the system lawfully controls this human nature. One can see the dystopian writers fighting to convince the reader about the credibility of their societies in every dystopia.

And if it is tough to consider human nature in dystopias, it is even tougher to include God in them. Gods have special natures and laws and a particular relationship with human beings. In Huxley’s book, it is said that God is the reason for everything noble and fine and heroic. All the four dystopias

⁶⁶ Craig, William. “Do Muslims and Christians Worship the Same God?” 2016. Accessed May 6, 2016. <http://www.reasonablefaith.org/do-muslims-and-christians-worship-the-same-god>.

⁶⁷ Leithart, Peter J. “Muslims, Christians and the Gods”. First Things. 2015, Accessed May 5, 2016. <http://www.firstthings.com/blogs/leithart/2015/12/muslims-and-christians>.

⁶⁸ Sidway, Ralph. “The Same God Question (Part 1)”. 2016. Accessed May 20, 2016. <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2016/01/the-same-god-question-part-1>.

Also, Sidway wrote on the controversy in: Sidway, Ralph. “The Same God Question (Part 2)”. 2016. Accessed May 20, 2016. <https://www.jihadwatch.org/2016/01/the-same-god-question-part-2>.

⁶⁹ Chesterton, G.K. “What’s Wrong with the World”. In The G.K.Chesterton Collection. Catholic Way Publishing. Kindle edition. Locations 34125-34185. 2013.

discussed here, which are among the best dystopias ever written, highlighted God, in one way or another. The first three dystopias repudiated the Christian God, and the last one portrayed the Islamic God as a totalitarian. Follow these dystopias; I discussed the Same God Controversy. The definitive answer to this controversy would have a substantial political and social impact, besides its influence on theology and philosophy.

Observing how some scholars answered it, it seems that if the scholar goes to the details of Christianity and Islam, considering their sacred books and theology, they tend to argue that Christians and Muslims do not worship the same God. An affirmative answer is regularly based on the idea that both Muslim God and Christian God are metaphysically ultimate.

Finally, we should remember, as Chesterton said, that clear religious dogmas could be a way of friendship.

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