The past and future of the West cannot be fully comprehended without appreciation of the twinned relationship it has had with Islam over some fourteen centuries. The same is true of the Islamic world.

CHAPTER 1

The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization

AWESOME POWER resides in the terms we employ. Harvard professor Samuel Huntington's use of the phrase "Clash of Civilizations" as the title of an article in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993 illustrates this truth. Pundits and scholars immediately sorted themselves out as supporters or critics of Huntington's phraseology, as often as not basing their opinions more on the rhetoric of the title than on the specifics of his argument. By wielding these three words at a propitious moment, and under respected auspices, Huntington shifted a discourse of Middle East confrontation that had been dominated by nationalist and Cold War rhetoric since the days of Gamal Abdel Nasser in the 1950s and 1960s. The new formulation took on almost cosmic proportions: the Islamic religion, or more precisely the world Muslim community that professes that religion, versus contemporary Western culture, with its Christian, Jewish, and secular humanist shadings. How

quickly and fatefully a well-chosen phrase can challenge perceptions of reality.

In all fairness, it must be recognized that Huntington imputes no particular religious notions to the "Islamic civilization" he sees as fated to confront the West in the twenty-first century. His argument focuses on comparing an idealized "Western civilization," based on democracy, human rights, free enterprise, and globalization, with economic, social, and political structures in other parts of the world that he sees as unsympathetic, adversarial, and incapable of betterment. This line of thought does not differ greatly from the theories of global progress toward modernity, as exemplified by the contemporary West, that were popular in the quarter century following World War II. However, Huntington's version corrects a shortcoming of those earlier "modernization" theories. In the 1950s and 1960s theorists commonly opined that modernization would relegate religion to an insignificant role in public affairs. But the surge of Islamic political activism that hit a first crest in the Iranian Revolution of 1979 showed the hollowness of these predictions and thus opened the way for Huntington to reintroduce a religious terminology, albeit one barren of religious elaboration, into a more pessimistic prediction of future developments.

It is hard to strip religious terms of religious content, however. The "Islamic civilization" in Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" has been understood religiously, at least some of the time, by defenders and detractors alike. Coincidentally, the same phrase appeared in a book title in 1926: *Young Islam on Trek: A Study in the Clash of Civilizations*.[1] Its author, Basil Mathews, was Literature Secretary in the World's Alliance of YMCA's, but his vision of Islam, similar to many others of the same period, would strike many of Huntington's admirers as being right up-to-date.

> The system [*i.e.*, Islam] is, indeed, in essence military. The creed is a war-cry. The reward of a Paradise of maidens for those who die in battle, and loot for those who live, and the joy of battle and domina-

tion thrills the tribal Arab. The discipline of prayer five times a day is a drill. The muezzin cry from the minaret is a bugle-call. The equality of the Brotherhood gives the equality and *esprit de corps* of the rank and file of the army. The Koran is army orders. It is all clear, decisive, ordained—men fused and welded by the fire and discipline into a single sword of conquest.[2]

Can we have a liberalized Islam? Can Science and the Koran agree? . . . Conviction grows that the reconciliation is not possible. Islam really liberalized is simply a non-Christian Unitarianism. It ceases to be essential Islam. It may believe in God; but He is not the Allah of the Koran and Mohammed is not his Prophet; for it cancels the iron system that Mohammed created.[3]

Huntington's partisans—except for the evangelical Christians among them—would not see eye to eye with Mathews on everything. As a missionary, Mathews expressed a firm conviction that Protestant Christianity could be what he calls "a Voice that will give [young Muslims] a Master Word for living their personal lives and for building a new order of life for their lands." His criticism of the West oddly echoes some of the voices of the Muslim revival, suggesting that this sort of criticism can take root in other than Muslim soil:

Western civilization can never lead them to that goal. Obsessed by material wealth, obese with an industrial plethora, drunk with the miracles of its scientific advance, blind to the riches of the world of the spirit, and deafened to the inner Voice by the outer clamor, Western civilization may destroy the old in Islam, but it cannot fulfill the new.

When the shriek of the factory whistle has drowned the voice of the muezzin, and when the smoke-belching chimney has dwarfed the minaret, obscured the sky, and poisoned the air, young Islam will be no nearer to the Kingdom of God. Their bandits will simply forsake the caravan routes of the desert for the safer and more lucrative mercantile and militarist fields.

> Nor can the churches of Christendom, as they are today and of themselves, lead the Moslem peoples to that goal. Limited in their vision, separative in spirit, tied to ecclesiastical systems, the churches of themselves if transported *en bloc* to the Moslem world, would not save it. They have not saved their own civilization. They have not made Christian their own national foreign policies in relation to the Moslem peoples. They have not purged the Western commerce that sells to the East and that grows rich on its oil-wells, but passes by on the other side while the Armenian, stripped and beaten, lies in the ditch of misery.[4]

I do not mean to suggest by these citations that Huntington borrowed either his title or his ideas, much less his writing style, from Mathews. The little-remembered YMCA worthy was giving voice to the standard Protestant missionary rhetoric of his time. Huntington's espousal of secular Western values substitutes pugnacity and pessimism for Mathews' optimism and religious zeal. (Indeed, Mathews' choice of title plays off of, and energizes, the much better known book title by Arnold Toynbee published three years before: *The Western Question in Greece and Turkey: A Study in the Contact of Civilizations*.[5]) For all their differences, however, the coincidental employment of the same phrase for essentially the same subject shows that the anxiety many American observers of the Muslim world have felt ever since the Iranian Revolution is not entirely new. Protestant missionaries, who outnumbered any other group of Americans in non-Western lands and accounted for the great preponderance of American thought about Asia and Africa prior to World War II, harbored an ill-disguised contempt for Islam that looms in the background of today's increasingly vitriolic debates about Islam and the West.

Huntington's recoining of the phrase "Clash of Civilizations" successfully captured an array of feelings that had been calling out for a slogan ever since Khomeini toppled the Shah from his throne. Other phrases—"Crescent of Crisis," "Arc of Instability," "Islamic Revolution"—had auditioned for the part with indiffer-

ent success. No one much disagreed, at least at the level of vagueness that informs most foreign policy posturing, about what it was that needed a name; but compressing it into a single phrase proved difficult. "Clash of Civilizations" caught the imagination because it was dynamic, interactive, innocent in Huntington's exposition of awkward definitions and boundaries, not transparently bigoted or racist, and vaguely Hegelian in the seeming profundity of its dialectical balance between good and evil. Combined with its author's eminence as a noted political scientist, and the reputation for sagacious insight commonly ascribed to *Foreign Affairs* by its subscribers, "Clash of Civilizations" won the prize.

Beyond its surface attraction, however, lay a deeper allure harking back to Basil Mathews' era. Civilizations that are destined to clash cannot seek together a common future. Like Mathews' Islam, Huntington's Islam is beyond redemption. The book on Islam is closed. The strain of Protestant American thought that both men are heir to, pronounces against Islam the same self-righteous and unequivocal sentence of "otherness" that American Protestants once visited upon Catholics and Jews.

The comparison with Protestant views about Catholics and Jews is worth pursuing. Whatever became of the ferocious Protestant refusal to visualize an American future—the future that has actually transpired—in which Protestants and Catholics would agree to disagree on selected matters, but otherwise live in harmony and mutual respect? Symbolically, John F. Kennedy's 1960 victory in the Democratic primary in largely Protestant West Virginia proved that the American people had a greater capacity for inclusion than their preachers and theologians did. How about the Protestant anti-Semitism that severely constricted the residential, educational, and occupational options of American Jews and permitted a virulent hater like Henry Ford to be viewed as a great man? From the 1950s onward, with the reality of the Holocaust and the ghastly consequences of European anti-Semitism ever more apparent, the term "Judeo-Christian civilization" steadily emerged from an obscure philosophical background—Nietzsche

used "Judeo-Christian" scornfully in *The Antichrist* to characterize society's failings—to become the perfect expression of a new feeling of inclusiveness toward Jews, and of a universal Christian repudiation of Nazi barbarism. We now use the phrase almost reflexively in our schoolbooks, our political rhetoric, and our presentation of ourselves to others around the world.

The unquestioned acceptance of "Judeo-Christian civilization" as a synonym for "Western civilization" makes it clear that history is not destiny. No one with the least knowledge of the past two thousand years of relations between Christians and Jews can possibly miss the irony of linking in a single term two faith communities that decidedly did not get along during most of that period. One suspects that a heavenly poll of long-departed Jewish and Christian dignitaries would discover majorities in both camps expressing repugnance for the term.

Substantively, a historian would argue, the term is amply warranted. Common scriptural roots, shared theological concerns, continuous interaction at a societal level, and mutual contributions to what in modern times has become a common pool of thought and feeling give the Euro-American Christian and Jewish communities solid grounds for declaring their civilizational solidarity. Yet the scriptural and doctrinal linkages between Judaism and Christianity are no closer than those between Judaism and Islam, or between Christianity and Islam; and historians are well aware of the enormous contributions of Muslim thinkers to the pool of late medieval philosophical and scientific thought that European Christians and Jews later drew upon to create the modern West. Nor has there been any lack of contact between Islam and the West. Despite periods of warfare, European merchants for centuries carried on a lively commerce with the Muslims on the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean; and the European imagination has long teemed with stories of Moors, Saracens, and oriental fantasy. Politically, fourteen of today's thirty-four European countries were at one time or another wholly or

partially ruled by Muslims for periods of a century or more. The historians of these countries sometimes characterize these periods of Muslim rule as anomalies, inexplicable gaps in what should have been a continuous Christian past, or as ghastly episodes of unrelenting oppression, usually exemplified by a handful of instances. In reality, however, most of the people who lived under Muslim rule accustomed themselves to the idea, and to the cultural outlook that went with it, and lived peaceable daily lives.

Our current insistence on seeing profound differences between Islam and the West, what Huntington calls civilizational differences, revives a sentiment of great antiquity. As in the past, dramatic events have catalyzed this reawakening. The fall of America's friend, the Shah of Iran, and the anguishing detention of American diplomatic personnel in Tehran in 1979, were but a prelude to the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon of September 11, 2001. However, they gave us a twenty-year head start on worrying about Muslims conspiring to carry out violent political acts professedly based on religious principles. Previous cataclysms echo in the background of these events: the fall of Crusader Jerusalem to Saladin in 1187, the fall of Byzantine Constantinople to the Ottomans in 1453, and the nearly successful Ottoman siege of Vienna in 1529 are but three. The aftermath of each of these events brought with it a shudder of horror at what might transpire should the Muslims prevail on a grander scale. The historian Edward Gibbon gave this fear its classical expression in the eighteenth century in his discussion of what might have happened if a Saracen raiding party from Spain had not suffered defeat at the hands of Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours in 732. "Perhaps the interpretation of the Koran would now be taught in the schools of Oxford, and her pupils might demonstrate to a circumcised people the sanctity and truth of the revelation of Mahomet."[6]

Here is how a Lutheran pamphleteer expressed this sentiment in 1537 when many Europeans thought a new and possibly successful siege of Vienna was imminent:

> Christians should also take comfort in the knowledge that the Turkish Empire is God's enemy, and that God will not allow it to annihilate the Christians. Although God has caused this empire to arise in these last times as the most severe of punishments, nonetheless He will not allow the Christians to succumb completely, and Mahomet will not rule alone in the whole world . . . Therefore those who fight against the Turk should be confident . . . that their fighting will not be in vain, but will serve to check the Turk's advance, so that he will not become master of all the world.[7]

It may well be that past episodes of Islamophobia did more good than harm. They rallied frightened people and encouraged them to seek refuge from despair in their religious faith, and the military responses they contributed to ideologically were probably no bloodier than they would have been anyway. By good fortune—and Christian antipathy toward foreigners—few Muslims were resident in European Christian lands so there wasn't anyone local to kill when preachers whipped their congregations into an Islamophobic froth. The Jews, of course, had worse luck when the arrow of Christian alarm pointed in their direction, as it did many times, including the time of the Black Death of 1348–1349. "In the matter of this plague, the Jews throughout the world were reviled and accused in all lands of having caused it through the poison which they are said to have put into the water and the wells . . . and for this reason the Jews were burnt all the way from the Mediterranean into Germany."[8]

We are no longer living in medieval isolation, however. Large Muslim minorities reside and work in almost every country in the world, including every European land and the United States and Canada. The potential for tragedy in our current zeal for seeing Islam as a malevolent Other should make us wary of easy formulations that can cleave our national societies into adversarial camps. A number of years ago a government adviser from Belgium visited with a group of scholars at the Middle East Institute of Columbia University. She was looking for ideas on how to in-

duce the Muslims living in Belgium to become more like "normal" citizens. They were more than welcome to live in Belgium, she averred, but surely it would be best if they were distributed a few here and a few there so that they would not constitute a visibly different social group. Their headscarves and beards would not be so noticeable, and they would not perturb the Belgian national community. As we were sitting in a room overlooking Harlem, it was pointed out to her that clustered communities of difference do not always have to be thought of as ghettos. Socially visible minorities are not only a given in American life, but also a wellspring of cultural creativity. Perhaps in time the folks with the headscarves and beards would become a parallel resource for Belgium.

The question confronting the United States is whether the tragedy of September 11 should be an occasion for indulging in the Islamophobia embodied in slogans like "Clash of Civilizations," or an occasion for affirming the principle of inclusion that represents the best in the American tradition. The coming years may see wars and disasters that dwarf what we have already endured. But they must not see the stigmatization of a minority of the American population by an overwrought majority whipped up by the idea that that minority belongs to a different and malign religious civilization. "Clash of Civilizations" must be retired from public discourse before the people who like to use it actually begin to believe it.

"Islamo-Christian Civilization"

To the best of my knowledge, no one uses, or has ever used, the term "Islamo-Christian civilization." Moreover, I would hazard the guess that many Muslims and Christians will bristle at the very idea it seems to embody, and other readers will look suspiciously at the omission of "Judeo-" from the phrase. I can only hope that they will withhold final judgment until they have considered my "case" for introducing the term.

To begin with, why not "Islamo-Judeo-Christian Civilization"? If I were looking for a term to signal the common scriptural tradition

of these three religions, that might be an acceptable, albeit awkward, phrase. But for this purpose, phrases like "Abrahamic religions," "Children of Abraham," and "Semitic scriptualism" do quite well. I am trying to convey something different. The historical basis for thinking of the Christian society of Western Europe—not all Christians everywhere—and the Muslim society of the Middle East and North Africa—not all Muslims everywhere—as belonging to a single historical civilization goes beyond the matter of scriptural tradition. This historic Muslim-Christian relationship also differs markedly from the historic Jewish-Christian relationship that is more hidden than celebrated in the phrase "Judeo-Christian Civilization." European Christians and Jews—no one includes the Jews of Yemen or the Christians of Ethiopia in discussions of "Western" origins—share a history of cohabitation that was more often tragic than constructive, culminating in the horrors of the Holocaust. Cohabitation between Muslims and the Christians of Western Europe has been far less intense. Rather than the unequal sharing of social, political, and physical space underlying the Jewish-Christian relationship in Europe, which may fruitfully be compared with the historic Muslim-Jewish relationship in the Middle East and North Africa, the term "Islamo-Christian civilization" denotes a prolonged and fateful intertwining of sibling societies enjoying sovereignty in neighboring geographical regions and following parallel historical trajectories. Neither the Muslim nor the Christian historical path can be fully understood without relation to the other. While "Judeo-Christian civilization" has specific historical roots *within* Europe and in response to the catastrophes of the past two centuries, "Islamo-Christian civilization" involves different historical and geographical roots and has different implications for our contemporary civilizational anxieties.

Let it also be noted that there are two other hyphenated civilization that deserve discussion, but that will not be discussed here. A treatment of "Judeo-Muslim civilization" would focus on scriptural, legal, and ritual connections between these two faiths; on Jewish communities in Muslim lands and their literatures in

Judaeo-Arabic and Judaeo-Persian; and on the profound intellectual and religious cross-fertilization best represented in the works of Jewish and Muslim thinkers in Islamic Spain. A great deal of scholarly writing has already been devoted to these subjects, though not under the rubric "Judeo-Muslim civilization. The second hyphen would link Islam with Orthodox Christianity in what could be called "Byzantino-Muslim civilization." (Oswald Spengler preferred the term "Magian" in *The Decline of the West*.) Where Latin Christians outside of Spain had little first-hand experience with Muslim society, many Orthodox Christians lived for centuries under discriminatory conditions in Muslim lands. Thus while Muslim thinkers had little contact with intellectual life in Western Europe, they drew heavily on the Greek heritage preserved by Orthodox Christianity. And the various Christian communities of the east entered the modern period with attitudes toward Islam that differed profoundly from those of Western Europe. But that discussion I will leave to other hands.

Before undertaking to argue in support of Islamo-Christian civilization—it is time to drop the quotation marks—the broader implications of using such a term should be made clear. First, its use renders Huntington's "Clash of Civilizations" definitionally nonsensical. If the Muslim societies of the Middle East and North Africa, and the Christian societies of Western Europe and America, are conceived of as belonging to the same civilization, then conflicts between the two constituent elements of that single civilization would automatically take on an internecine character, analogous historically to past conflicts between Catholicism and Protestantism. Whatever the level of hostility between the parties in conflict, the presumption of a common heritage would prevent their being conceived of as different civilizations, and consequently make it easier to imagine their eventual reconciliation. Russia "rejoining" Europe after the fall of the Soviet Union affords a comparison. Blood is thicker than holy water.

Secondly, current inquiries into whether Muslims are capable of rising to the level of Western civilization, or of civilization at all in

the minds of some, would become irrelevant. Western critics of Islam persistently propose civilizational litmus tests: Does Islam meet, or is it on its way to meeting, Western standards of gender equality? Can Islam conceive of human rights in a manner that sufficiently resembles Western conceptions to be counted as civilized? Does Muslim understanding of religious toleration and secularism come close enough to Western ideals for inclusion in the civilization club? Tests like these, conceived in willful denial of the appalling failure of most Western societies, as recently as a hundred years ago, to live up to the same standards, are intended as rhetorical devices for finding Islam wanting rather than as serious questions.

Even today, islands of religious practitioners within both Judaism and Christianity profess illiberal views, ranging from limitations on the behavior and life choices of women, to advocacy of government support for religious organizations, to hopes for an imminent messianic theocracy, that depart substantially from the egalitarian and secular standards that the would-be Western crusaders of "The Clash of Civilizations" have emblazoned on their banners. Scarcely any of the unattractive strictures and intolerant attitudes manifested by *some* Muslim groups lack parallels among *some* Christian and Jewish groups, or among *some* post-religious Western secularists, for that matter. But since Jews, Christians, and Western secularists have named themselves as charter members of the civilization club, the ideological or behavioral shortcomings, from the majority's point of view, of this or that Jewish or Christian group do not impugn or threaten the civilizational inclusion of those religious traditions as a whole. Christianity and Judaism pass by definition the civilizational litmus tests proposed for Islam even though some of their practitioners dictate women's dress codes, prohibit alcoholic beverages, demand prayer in public schools, persecute gays and lesbians, and damn members of other faiths to hell. Muslims of every stripe, on the other hand, stand accused of being party, by reason of religious belief, to the worst behaviors manifested by some groups of their coreligionaries. Jim Jones, David Koresh, and Meir Kahane do not typify

Christianity and Judaism in the eyes of civilized West, but those same eyes are prone to see Osama bin Laden and Mullah Muhammad Omar as typifying Islam.

What stands in the way of our conceptualization of an Islamo-Christian civilization is a historical master narrative rooted in fourteen centuries of fear and polemic, and, of course, the current conviction among many Westerners that there is something "wrong" with Islam. I propose first to investigate in some detail the former problem, the age-old master narrative, and reserve the question of what, if anything, went wrong in Islam for my next chapter. If a persuasive case can be made for re-narrating the last fourteen centuries in terms of an Islamo-Christian civilization, it will facilitate an analysis of more recent events in the Middle East and of the current crisis of authority within Islam.

Superficial objections to re-narrating history in this way abound. Here are a few of the obstacles that seem to stand in the way of linking Muslim history with that of Latin Christendom:

- *Chronological discrepancy*: Muhammad lived seven hundred years after Christ.
- *Inveterate hostility*: Islam repeatedly attacked Christendom and has shown unrelenting enmity toward Christians.
- *Christian experience*: The Christians who confronted Islam over the centuries never saw it as anything but an enemy, alien power.
- *Scriptural error*: The many stories shared between the Quran and the Bible are inaccurate or distorted in their Quranic version.
- *Denial of divine truth*: Islam's recognition of Abraham, Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad as Messengers of God stops short of affirming Christ's divinity.
- *Ingratitude*: Islam has never recognized its doctrinal debt to Judaism and Christianity and has never accepted them as parent (and therefore superior) faiths.

Obstacles like these do not stand up to scrutiny. Take disparate chronology: No one has any difficulty comprehending that western

Christendom has separate Catholic and Protestant forms although more than fifteen centuries elapsed between the birth of Christ and the day that Martin Luther nailed his 95 theses to the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg in 1517. A roughly similar time span separates the birth of Christ and Moses' receipt of the Ten Commandments, but that does not impede our use of the term Judeo-Christian. As long as one religious tradition can be seen as growing out of, or being closely akin to, an earlier one, a lapse of time is not a crucial factor.

What about inveterate hatred? Did Muslims fight against Christians and express hatred for them? Yes, from time to time; and their actions and feelings were ardently reciprocated. But did not the early Protestants also pour hatred and scorn on the Catholics and oppose them in incredibly bloody wars? And did not the founders of Protestantism separate themselves from and revile the edifice of Scholastic scholarship that Catholic priests and monks had built up over many generations? By the same token, did not the early Christians scorn the Jews for refusing to recognize their Messiah and declare the vast accumulation of Talmudic legal and moral teachings irrelevant because of the advent of a new law in the person of Jesus Christ? And did not the Jews reciprocate that scorn and condemn those Jews who abandoned the law and became Christians? The sibling linkages between Protestantism and Catholicism and between Christianity and Judaism enshrined in our master narrative of Judeo-Christian civilization depend no more on mutual respect and pacific relations than they do on chronology. Protestants and Catholics may have butchered one another in the past, and Christians may have massacred and vilified Jews and been feared and despised in return, but our appreciation—today—of civilizational kinship among Protestants, Catholics, and Jews is immune to such unfortunate historical memories.

Thus it appears that we do not include Islam in our civilization club mainly because we are heirs to a Christian construction of history that is deliberately exclusive. Western Christendom has regarded Islam as a malevolent Other for many centuries and has in-

vented any number of reasons for holding this view. However, the reasons have come second to the malevolence. Shifting Western portrayals of Islam over the centuries make it clear that reasons for disliking Islam have been constructed as rationales for a preexisting and ongoing animosity and not vice versa. This pattern persists to the present day. Since September 11, 2001 we have read of a Protestant minister's declaration that Muhammad was a demon-possessed pedophile and have heard countless charges that Islam is a religion of terror. These verbal assaults do not draw on previous Islamophobic litanies. Today's anti-Muslim rants are concerned less with recycling Islamophobic canards from centuries past, such as Muhammad being a lying demagogue, than with finding new ways of articulating old hatreds. Under current circumstances, however, the emotional satisfaction some audiences derive from this updating and repackaging of traditional Islamophobia is not worth plunging the world into a series of wars, or nurturing the vilification of a significant portion of the American population.

A fundamental restructuring of Western thinking about relations with Islam calls for a fresh look at history. In the sections that follow, I will outline such a look. The historical development of Western Christendom and Islam parallel each other so closely that the two faith communities can best be thought of as two versions of a common socioreligious system, just as Orthodox Christianity and Western Christendom are considered two versions of the same socioreligious system. For eight centuries, the pathways of development led in the same direction and occasionally virtually overlapped one another.

Latin Christians and Middle Eastern Muslims experienced common challenges in parallel time frames. However, they reacted to these challenges in different ways, and the variations in their responses had consequences in terms of how they responded to the next set of challenges. These divergences accumulated and contributed to a parting of the ways that became evident in the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries. From that time on, Western Christendom, with its overseas colonies, and Islam, now including

mass Muslim societies outside the Middle East, followed trajectories that differed markedly, like fraternal twins that are almost indistinguishable in childhood but have distinctive, and not necessarily compatible, personalities as adults. Where in the earlier centuries the sibling traditions moved through their life stages in astonishingly similar ways, after 1500 they began to act as rivals in a worldwide drama. Yet the ways in which they played their roles as rivals still reflected their sibling character and their functioning within a common system: Islamo-Christian civilization.

Siblings in Step: The Early Centuries

Between 632 and 711, Arab armies carrying Muhammad's revelations from God defeated a broad array of Persian, Byzantine, and Visigothic enemies and seized power over a vast swathe of land stretching from northern Spain to southern Pakistan. From Egypt eastward, the lands that in the seventh century became part of the Caliphate, as historians call the Muslim empire after the title of its ruler, had once been part of Alexander the Great's domain. They had subsequently been heavily influenced by Greek lifestyles and philosophies under Greek, Macedonian, and Persian generals and kings who succeeded to that empire after Alexander's death in 323 B.C.E. West of Egypt, the Caliphate incorporated parts of North Africa, Iberia, and southern France that had formerly belonged to the Roman Empire. There too Roman artists, authors, and political leaders had commonly looked upon Greek culture as a model to emulate. It is fair to say, therefore, that the conquests of the Muslims, inspired by the leadership of their Arabic-speaking prophet, posed the challenge of ruling over, and winning over, a population with a predominantly Greco-Roman cultural orientation in its upper social strata. This is precisely the challenge that the earliest Christians, inspired by the life and death of their Aramaic-speaking messiah, had faced centuries earlier.

The prior experience with Christianity set some of the conditions for later Muslim growth through the circumstance of the

largest Christian communities of the age coming abruptly under the control of Muslim rulers. The exact proportion of the total Christian faith community living in Spain, North Africa, Egypt, the Levant (the eastern end of the Mediterranean), the Arabian peninsula, Mesopotamia, and Iran is difficult to estimate; but these lands included three of the four patriarchal centers—Jerusalem, Alexandria, and Antioch—and had produced most of Christendom's leading thinkers and writers, including Jesus and his Twelve Disciples, the Palestinian and Syrian Jews who authored the gospels and epistles of the New Testament, the Egyptian St. Anthony who pioneered the practice of monasticism, the bishops of Alexandria and Antioch who propounded major formulae for understanding the Holy Trinity and the person of Christ, and a series of influential North African theologians culminating in the towering figure of St. Augustine.

To be sure, Anatolia (Turkey) and Greece had large Christian communities and remained unconquered, and Constantinople was a great Christian metropolis and the seat of a patriarch; but being committed to Greek as their ecclesiastical language, and committed to following the eastern patriarchs rather than the Roman popes, these communities played negligible roles in the growth of Latin Christendom, which today we take to represent the historical core of Judeo-Christian or Western civilization. Certain other Christian communities that escaped Muslim conquest, notably the Armenians, Georgians, and Ethiopians, remained even more isolated from subsequent developments in the Latin west.

From the perspective of the core area of later Judeo-Christian or Western Civilization, then, Christianity's seven-century head start over Islam contributed more in terms of accumulated religious thought and institutional experiment, which were equally available to the Muslims through their Christian subjects and Christian converts to Islam, than it did in converting, structuring, and ruling a mass Christian society. Muslims and Latin Christians seeking to extend their faiths in the seventh century were both starting from small territorial and demographic bases. In the year

711, when most of Spain fell to the Muslims, the mass of the western European populace outside Italy and some Christianized areas of France, that is to say, most inhabitants of Germany, Poland, Scandinavia, the British Isles, the Lowlands, and northern France, still revered many gods and followed polytheistic practices, privately if not publicly.

By contrast, believers in polytheism were comparatively rare in caliphal lands. West of Iran, most of the peoples whom the Arabs conquered professed Christianity or Judaism in one form or another. Zoroastrianism, the dominant faith in Iran, did not share the scriptural tradition that Islam claimed kinship with through the Quranic designation of Christians and Jews as "Peoples of the Book," that is, peoples whose religious traditions were based on divine messengers like Abraham, Moses, and Jesus who preceded Muhammad. Peoples of the Book were entitled to retain their religious observances and receive state protection in return for special tax payments and adherence to certain restrictions on social and religious behavior. Nevertheless, Zoroastrianism did resemble Christianity and Judaism in being basically monotheistic, having a well-developed legal and ecclesiastical structure, and transmitting its beliefs and traditions in a canonized sacred text—the Avesta—composed over many centuries. As a practical matter, therefore, the treatment of Zoroastrians by Muslim rulers did not differ substantially from the treatment of Christians and Jews. *De facto* they regarded them as one of the Peoples of the Book rather than as polytheists.

In terms of the centuries-long transformation of religious and social identity that gradually took place within the Caliphate, a process that can be called "Islamization," and the parallel process of "Christianization" that occurred in western and northern Europe, Islam faced a different, and in some ways easier, situation. To win the hearts of the non-Christians of western Europe, Latin Christendom had to accommodate many pre-Christian practices, from Christmas trees to the adoption of certain divinities as Christian saints, while working strenuously to eradicate other beliefs

and rituals. Most of the non-Muslims who came under the political sway of the Caliphate, on the other hand, were already oriented toward monotheistic, scriptural religion. Polytheism posed a challenge among the tribal speakers of Berber languages in the highlands and deserts of North Africa and among the nomadic Turks of Central Asia; but in most regions, centuries of Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian preaching and community organization had paved the way for a smoother transition to Islam. In this respect, the fact that Muhammad's career followed that of Jesus by six hundred years made it possible for Islam to spread more easily than Latin Christianity. Scriptural monotheists had a much shorter distance to travel, in moral, doctrinal, and organizational terms, to convert to Islam than did European devotees of Wotan, Thor, Jupiter, Epona, Mercury, and a host of other gods whose cults had never developed a comparable scriptural tradition.

Thus these two offshoots of the Judaic scriptural tradition began at roughly the same time to build, through religious conversion, regional societies that would come in time to organize themselves around religious beliefs and practices. The Islamic version of the tradition had the advantage of growing within a region in which many people already knew the tradition well. It also benefited from the continuation of Greek as a learned language, and an established practice of translating Greek texts into Syriac, a Semitic language closely related to Arabic. Though Rome and the western Mediterranean world owed a historical debt to Greek culture, the eclipse there of the Greek language in the waning centuries of the Roman Empire cut Latin Christendom off from much of the pre-Christian Greek heritage. This heritage passed in greater measure to the nascent Muslim society through translations from Greek into Arabic, either directly or by way of intermediate translations into Syriac or Persian.

The process, pace, and indicators of Christian and Muslim conversion vary sufficiently from place to place to make a succinct history difficult. However, over the last few decades, historians of Islam and Christianity, working separately, have tended to discard

earlier assumptions of a very rapid pace of conversion. Conquest narratives, both Muslim and Christian, that had once led historians to believe in the instantaneous conversion of battlefield survivors and defeated peoples are now understood to mark at most the commencement of processes of religious penetration that took several, or many, generations. By the same token, the tales of saints and missionaries, more often Christian than Muslim, that attribute prodigies of proselytization to these holy personages are read now less as veracious histories than as exercises in literary piety ornamented by implausibly miraculous events. As for contemporary documents containing concrete data, like lists of bishops attending early Christian councils and locations where coins with Islamic formulae were minted, these seem less convincing than they once did as evidence of religious change among the population at large. A bishop's flock might have numbered only a small percentage of the residents in the territory he presided over, and a mint may indicate nothing more than Muslim governing control at the time and place inscribed on the coins.

In *Conversion to Islam in the Medieval Period*, published in 1979, I argued for a slow chronology of religious change and for a conceptual approach to mass religious change based on models of innovation diffusion originally developed to analyze processes of technological change in the twentieth century. According to this approach, new ideas, whether in the material or the religious realm, depend on the spread of information. No one, it maintains, can adopt something new without hearing about it first. In actual fact, this is not necessarily true. On certain occasions, kings or tribal chiefs became persuaded that conversion to Islam or Christianity would be of benefit and accepted the new faith on behalf of subjects or tribesfolk who had no idea what it meant and may not have been aware that their formal religious identity had changed. However, this sort of nominal conversion, which seems to have been more frequent where polytheistic religious views predominated, whether in Europe, North Africa, or Central Asia, than in the heartland of the already monotheistic Middle East, required

generations of follow-up effort to bring about "real" Islamization or Christianization, understood as a deep penetration of scriptural religion into the life styles, world views, and day-to-day piety of a population.

For religious change to have a deep impact on popular beliefs and customs, knowledge of the substance of the religion had to percolate through the countryside and reach into every village and encampment. In societies that were largely illiterate, like those of seventh-century Europe, North Africa, and the Middle East, information spread primarily by word of mouth; and the proponents of the new religious views, whether Christian or Islamic, did not always speak the same language as the people they hoped to bring into the faith. Under these circumstances, significant conversion, that is, conversion that involved some actual understanding of the new religion, as opposed to forced baptism or imposed mouthing of an Arabic profession of faith, must surely have started with fairly small numbers.

Peasants in agricultural villages, the vast majority of the population throughout both conversion regions, may have gone for generations after the defeat of their polytheist chief by a Christian king, or the passage of military control to a conquering Arab army, without access to reliable information about the new faith. In Western Europe, so-called "pagan survivals," beliefs, and practices continuing from pre-Christian times, sometimes in superficially Christian guise, continue to show up for many centuries. In the late sixth century, around the time of Muhammad's birth, Bishop Martin of Braga, a Christian center in northern Portugal that rivaled Toledo for influence in the pre-Muslim Iberian peninsula, deplored local polytheistic practices:

> Observing the Vulcanalia and the kalends, decorating tables, wearing laurels, taking omens from footsteps, putting fruit and wine on the log in the hearth, and bread in the well, what are these but worship of the devil? For women to call upon Minerva when they spin, and to observe the day of Venus at weddings and to call upon her whenever

> they go out upon the public highway, what is that but worship of the devil?[9]

Complaints about "pagan survivals" by Muslim writers in the early centuries are comparatively infrequent, though they become more common in later centuries when Islam spreads into south and southeast Asia and sub-Saharan Africa, beyond the region dominated in pre-Islamic times by Christianity, Judaism, and Zoroastrianism. Since the Muslim authorities tolerated sizable Christian, Jewish, and Zoroastrian communities, beliefs and practices particular to those communities not only survived, but eventually stimulated parallel observances among Muslims, most notably pious visitations to shrines revered by one of the earlier faiths and revalidated in Muslim tradition. To this day, for example, the Cave of the Patriarchs in Hebron (Arabic al-Khalil) remains sacred to both Jews and Muslims as the resting place of their ancestors, the various members of the family of Abraham.

One of the themes of modern controversy about Islam in comparison to the West relates to the question of tolerance. Islamophobes have long regarded Islam as unchangingly intolerant because it denies full religious equality to Jews and Christians. The Muslim response has focused on long periods of peaceful and mutually beneficial coexistence during centuries when life in Latin Christendom was blighted by expulsions of Jewish and Muslim minorities and then by warfare between Catholics and Protestants. In fact, Islam and Christianity both proclaimed their hatred and intolerance of polytheism, but until Islam began to expand outside its core area after the year 1000, polytheism seldom posed the problem for Muslim rulers that it posed for European Christians.

The challenge to Latin Christendom was one of eradicating polytheistic belief systems, a process that involved destroying idols and temples, cutting down sacred groves, banning the activities of priests, and prohibiting customary observances. Muslims, meanwhile, worked to persuade adherents of competing, but tolerated, monotheistic faiths to abandon the ways of their ancestors and

join the Muslim community. The long-term result was a greater degree of religious homogeneity in Europe than in the Middle East. The Christians effectively eradicated polytheism. But in the process European Christians became comfortable wielding the weapons of religious intolerance: bans, expulsions, inquisitions, excommunications, and charges of heresy. The difference in these matters between the two religions deriving from the Judaic scriptural tradition reflects less a fundamentally different understanding of tolerance than the different preexisting religions in the regions they expanded into.

The innovation diffusion model of conversion indicates a process that worked itself out over a period of several centuries. A comparatively small number of early adopters, probably including an appreciable number of slaves or war captives in both the Christian and Islamic cases, formed a nucleus for expansion that accelerated as their numbers and their ability to communicate with potential converts grew. Language was crucial. The presence of bilingual Jewish communities in many parts of the Roman Empire facilitated the initial spread of Christianity beyond its Aramaic-speaking core. Arabic, however, was spoken only in the Arabian peninsula and the desert borderlands that extended northwards from Arabia between Syria, Jordan, and Iraq. This initial impediment to the spread of knowledge about Islam dissolved only when intermarriage with non-Muslim, non-Arab women, many of them taken captive and distributed as booty during the conquests, produced bilingual offspring. Bilingual preachers of the Christian faith were similarly needed in the Celtic and Germanic language areas of Western Europe.

This slow process of information diffusion, which varied from region to region, made changing demands on religious leaders and institutions. When a faith was professed primarily by a ruler, his army, and his dependents, but was still little known, and even linguistically inaccessible, to the great majority of a region's inhabitants, greatest priority went to servicing the needs of the ruling minority and discrediting, denigrating, or exterminating the

practices of the majority. Latin church leaders repeatedly condemned polytheistic practices and celebrated the destruction of cult centers and idols. Muslim leaders limited the public performance of Christian and Jewish rites and the building of new religious buildings, even while guaranteeing freedom of Christian and Jewish belief. Once a few centuries had passed, however, and the new faith had become the religion of the great majority of the population, both Christian and Muslim religious leaders began to occupy themselves with elaborating popular institutions and reaching out to the common people.

In the seventh and eighth centuries, religious leadership in Middle Eastern Islam and Latin Christianity revolved around officials: governors and commanders appointed by the caliphs for the Muslims, bishops installed by popes or regional synods for the Christians. As the respective demographic bases expanded through gradual spread of the faith among the populace, however, so did the number of men desiring to focus their lives on religion. Not everyone could be a bishop or a caliphal governor. From the ninth century onward Latin Christendom and Islam mirrored one another in the rapid growth of bodies of religious specialists. St. Benedict, the founder of Latin monasticism, had lived in Italy in the sixth century, and monasteries dedicated to his rule had arisen in various parts of western Europe. The notion of organizing these monasteries into a Benedictine Order dates to the ninth century, however, as the popularity of monasticism rapidly increased. The parallel phenomenon in Islam involved the rise of the *ulama*, "possessors of religious knowledge," groupings of men in every sizable community who gained popular, that is, nongovernmental, recognition as authorities on Muslim lore and the legal understandings implicit in that lore. Individuals credited with this sort of learning are known as early as the time of Muhammad, but their numbers multiplied throughout the caliphate in the ninth century.

In their similarities and differences these bodies of religious specialists strongly affected the later trajectories of social and political

development in their respective areas. One particularly striking similarity was the dedication of each group to a single language of religion—Latin in Europe, Arabic in North Africa and the Middle East—regardless of political or ethnic boundaries. As low levels of literacy hastened the replacement of Latin by the Romance languages and the parallel development of distinctive local dialects of Arabic, uneducated believers had increasing difficulty with the language of the monks and the ulama, a situation that was even more pronounced in regions that spoke entirely different languages, like German and Persian. As a result, religious specialists and/or their writings could move relatively easily from one region to another because they could always find counterparts or audiences who spoke and read Latin or Arabic; but the religious outlook and practice of the uneducated took on a more narrow, local coloration.

The social organization of the monks differed markedly from that of the ulama. Christian monasteries, and convents for women devoted to the religious life, espoused an ideal of prayerful removal from sinful society. Sited initially in rural locales, their personnel took vows of celibacy and seldom traveled. By contrast, in Islam, where from the ninth century on an important goal of religious specialists was collecting the sayings (*hadith*) attributed to the Prophet Muhammad, flight from sin took the form of personal acts of piety, such as night vigils and extensive fasts, rather than removal from society. Travel was encouraged and celibacy uncommon. Where monks pursued important educational and scholarly activities within the monastery, transmitters of hadith, who formed the core of Muslim religious studies at the lower levels, usually lived in cities and taught large numbers of students, many of whom went into trading or craft occupations after finishing eight to twelve years of study. Since the ulama married and had children, families with inherited religious prestige, and the social eminence that went with that prestige, came to play important roles in urban economic and political life by the end of the tenth century. In Europe, men and women from noble families sometimes became monks and nuns, and could wield political influence

from those positions; but they seldom established hereditary religious lines.

Closely parallel developments in the area of education eventually lessened this difference in social roles. The deposition of the last Roman emperor in the west in 476 had symbolized a serious decline in literacy, urban life, and economic vitality. Monastic schoolteachers preserved a modicum of learning during the following centuries, but their efforts were little felt beyond their cloistered communities. Across the Mediterranean, the Arab conquest of Syria and Egypt, key provinces of the Byzantine Empire (Eastern Roman Empire), gained for the Caliphate rich lands that had been sheltered from much of the decline experienced in western Europe. The switch from Greek to Arabic as the language of government and the dominant religion, a process that took more than a century, caused discontinuity in traditions of literacy and education; but teaching school and writing books continued at a more rapid pace in the growing Muslim society than in Latin Christendom. Higher learning took place primarily through apprenticeship in government bureaus or among small groups of students gathered around particular masters in mosques or private homes. More formal organization of higher religious studies began with the spread of religious colleges, called *madrasas*, from the eleventh century onward.

These institutions resemble so closely, both in organizational form and scholarly approach, the Christian universities that appeared in major European cities a short time later that some scholars have maintained that there must have been a direct influence of the former on the latter. Be that as it may, it is apparent that both sorts of institution systematically prepared religious specialists for active roles in society. This was no innovation for Islam, where the ulama had always lived active social lives; but for Latin Christendom it reflects the growth in the thirteenth century of fresh ideas about religious roles, represented by the new preaching orders of Dominicans and Franciscans, who dominated university life. The reclusive life of the monk and the nun maintained its attraction,

but most university graduates sought active careers giving guidance to the faithful in communities now firmly dedicated to a Christian way of life. Thus the Christian clergy, though still celibate, began to resemble more closely the Muslim ulama as an urban social force.

What distinguished Latin Christendom most fatefully from its Muslim sibling society on the other shores of the Mediterranean Sea was Islam's rejection of a hierarchical ecclesiastical structure. A few ulama served as mosque officials and religious judges, but these positions were not situated within a centralized hierarchy. Christianity had initially grown within the religiously diverse structure of the Roman Empire. Centralized organization had provided strength in the face of competing priesthoods, such as those of Isis and Mithra, and the empire itself had provided an organizational model of provinces and subprovinces. Contrast to this the Caliphate, a conquest state from the death of Muhammad in 632 onward, with no religious hierarchy separate from the political hierarchy of the state. For the first two centuries, state organization assumed that all Muslims were Arabs and therefore sharers in the benefits derived from rule over non-Muslim non-Arabs. Seeing to the economic and political interests of the ruling minority fully occupied the caliphal institutions, leaving spiritual needs, in particular those of a growing number of non-Arab converts, to the informal attention of local groups of pious individuals, the forerunners of the ulama. Yet the Muslim caliphs were well familiar with the ecclesiastical organizations of their non-Muslim subjects. Indeed, they often manipulated the appointment of non-Muslim religious officials. Perhaps this familiarity also made them aware of the bitter struggles for control of the church hierarchy in Eastern Christendom and thus made avoidance of ecclesiastical organization seem virtuous. This is implied by the common Muslim boast that Islam has neither monks nor priests.

In the absence of an ecclesiastical hierarchy, the rapid expansion of the ulama that accompanied the accelerating growth of the Muslim community as a whole in the ninth century took place

outside the control of the caliphal government. For a few decades in the middle of the century, a series of caliphs tried to enforce doctrinal discipline on the ulama throughout their realm by requiring allegiance to one particular theological viewpoint. However, the ulama resisted this *mihna*, or "inquisition," some of them to the point of martyrdom, with the result that this belated effort to centralize Islam through a caliphal institution failed. From that time on, groups of local ulama families consolidated social predominance in most cities and from time to time acted politically on behalf of their followers. Yet they never sought to coordinate their activities with ulama groups in other localities. Having given up on doctrinal centralization, the caliphs, along with an assortment of warlords who seized control of one or another province as caliphal authority waned in the tenth century, sometimes patronized locally popular religious figures or doctrines when they thought this might work to their local political advantage. But the ulama never constituted an organized challenge to their rule.

The ulama did succeed, however, in arrogating to themselves the right to elaborate and interpret the religious law. The *sharia*, or Islamic religious law, became increasingly systematic in several variants as the students of major legal theorists took up residence in different cities and popularized their master's teachings. The religious judges appointed (sometimes only nominally) by the rulers from the ranks of the ulama applied that law to everyone—government officials, imams of mosques, and ordinary citizens alike. Nevertheless, large areas of dispute, particularly relating to criminal offenses, they left for civil trial by other government officers.

By contrast, the centralization efforts made by the Catholic Church as the Christian community in western Europe grew in size and diversity over the same time period proved more thoroughgoing. Strong popes, in league with reformers who wanted to improve monastic organization and discipline, asserted the sole and unconditional authority of the church hierarchy. An eleventh-century reform movement based on the monastery of Cluny in France, and owing allegiance solely to the pope, extended central-

ized control to far-flung daughter monasteries. However, tightening church jurisdiction over priests, monks, nuns, and the properties devoted to their activities, particularly under the forceful reformer Pope Gregory VII (1073–1085), contributed to worsening tensions between rulers and church officials. The canon law of the Catholic Church, which like its Islamic counterpart aspired to be all-embracing, conflicted directly with the legal claims of kings. Though the Catholic Church stood up to the claims of secular rulers more boldly than the ulama did, in the long run, the ulama protected their role as interpreters of the law more effectively. They bent before the undeniable power of the ruler in many instances, but they always insisted on a reaffirmation of the ruler's theoretical subjection to God's commandments. By contrast, the popes collided head-on with powerful Christian rulers in a series of bruising confrontations, and ended up being forced to acquiesce in a steady expansion of royal law.

In sum, the Latin Christian and Muslim reinterpretations of the Judaic religious tradition closely paralleled one another in historical development for some seven centuries after 622. Knowledge of the faith among ordinary people, particularly in the countryside, was slight to nonexistent at the start of the period. Christianity deployed missionaries to spread the word; Islam did not. But Islam had the advantage of spreading in lands that were well prepared to accept the Islamic version of scriptural monotheism. Disregarding regional variations, it is probably not far wrong to assume that developments of the seventh through ninth centuries, among Muslims and Latin Christians alike, lay the foundations of later mass religious expansion at a popular level even as most religious specialists focused their efforts on elaborating doctrine, building their own social and institutional networks, and servicing the needs of ruling elites.

Muslim religious society manifested itself increasingly in cities and their immediate rural hinterlands from the tenth century onward. The same phenomenon occurred slightly later in Latin Christendom where economic recovery from the post-Roman collapse

quickened only in the twelfth century. More remote rural locales and fringe regions became religiously oriented still later. In both societies, this later expansion posed a challenge to the religious elites. In responding to that challenge the sibling religious societies set off on diverging paths.

Same Crisis, Different Responses: The Middle Centuries

Latin Christians tended to look inward during the early centuries. They knew very little about Islam. The orthodox Christians of the east, on the other hand, knew much about Islam and viewed with alarm the loss of Byzantine territory and the steady shrinkage of congregations as the pace of conversion accelerated. Some characterized the confrontation between Christianity and Islam as one of true piety and morality versus the lure of wealth, power, and immoral worldliness, thus prefiguring the exact opposite construction of Muslim-Christian conflict by Islamic ideologues in the twentieth century. The Byzantine emperors, who bore the responsibility for maintaining Christian power in lands bordering the Caliphate, seldom saw eye-to-eye with the popes and kings of Latin Christendom; but they overcame their distaste to urge a joint military enterprise against Muslim rule in the Holy Land. Their cries of alarm helped motivate the crusades, a movement that brought Islam and Latin Christendom into contact, but also heightened the hostility between them.

Between 1095 and 1250, Latin crusaders, with occasional Byzantine help, launched a series of attacks on the Muslim rulers of the Holy Land, initially establishing four small principalities based in the cities of Edessa, Antioch, Jerusalem, and Tripoli at the eastern end of the Mediterranean, the land they knew as Outremer ("Overseas"). Political histories of the crusades usually identify religious fervor and the leaders' desire for land that might be turned into noble estates as the primary Christian motivations. At the economic level, however, Italian trading cities like Pisa, Genoa, and Venice

benefited greatly, both from the transportation fees they charged the crusaders and from the growing commerce their merchants carried on with the Muslim lands. While battles and alliances dominate both the historical narratives and the less formal story-telling that the Crusades generated, peacetime activities accounted for most of the cultural contact that took place during that period.

In Spain, where Christian campaigns against Muslim principalities paralleled the Crusades, Christian scholars took advantage of peaceful moments to make Latin translations of Arabic books, which they took back to France and Italy. In Sicily, a Muslim land that was conquered by raiders from northern France during the decades leading up to the Crusades, Arabic and Greek manuscripts also became available for translation. And in the crusader states and adjoining Muslim countries, Italian traders and European nobles who became long-term residents experienced the daily life of Muslim society and brought local customs and ideas back home with them.

During this period, a cornucopia of stimuli from Muslim lands transformed many aspects of European life: philosophy (commentaries on Aristotle), theology (Averroism), mathematics (Arabic numerals), chemistry (gunpowder), medicine (surgical technique), music (lute-playing, troubadour songs), literature (tales that show up in Italian works), manufacturing (glass, paper, woodblock printing), cuisine (pasta, sugar), and the enjoyment of everyday life. The areas most heavily influenced were in southern Europe, but Muslim philosophical views penetrated the universities of northern Europe as well. Muslims today lament the fact that so few people in the West appreciate the massive transfer of culture, science, and technology that began during this period; that transfer, they maintain, paved the way for Europe's later scientific discoveries and intellectual sophistication. This fully warranted lamentation illustrates the power of historical narratives. Where the parallel transmission of ideas and styles from Italy and southern France to northern Europe during the Renaissance is conventionally narrated as an aspect of western

Christian civilization as a whole, few attempts have been made to view Mediterranean cultural developments holistically, either in this period or a few centuries later when Muslim and Jewish refugees from Spain brought "European" ideas southward. It is not the Mediterranean that keeps historians from seeing these flows as happening within a single civilizational complex: Spain and Sicily, where much of the cultural stimulation centered, were parts of Europe. Rather it is the ingrained bias toward viewing anything occurring within Christendom as *entre nous*, and everything emanating from non-Christian sources as contact with the Other.

Comparing the lack of discussion of Muslim cultural influences with Western hyper-awareness of the Crusades themselves, the tendentious reading of Christian-Muslim relations as built on hostility rather than productive relations becomes evident. A parallel might be drawn with today's perceptions of Europe's impact on the non-European (including Muslim) world in the nineteenth century. Postcolonial thinkers from lands subjected to imperialism concentrate on forms of subjection involved with European imperialism that were virtually unperceivable to past generations of traditional European intellectuals. The latter were prone to stress the economic and technical benefits of relations with Europe in the imperialist era, a phenomenon usually described as westernization or modernization, even as they grudgingly acknowledged the oppressive nature of the colonial system. People from formerly colonized societies see these as benefits for which no one is owed any gratitude, given the immensity of the burdens inflicted by the putative imperialist benefactors. In exactly the same manner, the Latin Christians of the twelfth through fourteenth centuries (as well as their descendants today) saw no reason to express gratitude toward, or to recognize the scientific and artistic superiority of, the Muslim societies from whence they were obtaining the ideas, techniques, and industrial processes that would soon catapult Latin Europe along a new and immensely fruitful developmental path. Borrowers have their pride.

The precedence given to violent conflict over cultural borrowing by the dominant historical narratives of this period has ob-

scured parallel developments in the social and religious spheres on the opposite sides of the Mediterranean. Mention has already been made of European universities coming into being in the late twelfth century in a fashion strongly resembling the slightly earlier development of Muslim madrasas. On the Muslim side, these institutions initiated a gradual move toward systematizing preexisting approaches to learning among the ulama. On the Christian side, the universities had a much greater impact because they moved the locus of religious learning out of the cloister and into the town, a phenomenon simultaneously manifested in the proliferation of grand cathedrals and the comparative lessening of investment in abbey (i.e., monastery) churches. Where madrasa professors were simply ulama who were lucky enough to land a tenured position with a salary paid by an endowment, European university professors were usually Dominican and Franciscan friars, members of a type of religious organization that first appeared in the thirteenth century. Friars, like the cathedral canons who came to be organized along similar lines, lived by a set of rules, including celibacy, just as monks and nuns did; but they were not cloistered. They mixed with ordinary citizens, as the ulama always had, and took preaching to the public to be a sacred obligation.

This movement from the cloister into lay society was symptomatic of a need that began to be felt for greater ministration to the religious needs of ordinary people. The deepening of Christian identity at all levels of society, both urban and rural, that became apparent from the twelfth century onward paralleled an identical trend in Muslim society. The pressures that accompanied this climax of the long, slow process of conversion—conversion of minds and souls and not just adoption of a nominal identity—challenged Muslim and Christian religious specialists in similar ways:

- Many lay people wanted to express their religious feelings, and have access to religious knowledge, in their everyday spoken languages instead of in Latin or Arabic.
- People living in the countryside desired closer contact with religious men and women to whom they might look for spiritual guidance,

and they resented the dominance and arrogance of leadership based on monasteries and cathedrals, or on the dryly legalistic presumption of the ulama as sole interpreters of the sharia.

- The growing role of legal matters in religious affairs left many laypersons longing for a more emotional and less legalistic religious experience.
- The penetration of Christianity and Islam into quotidian life led people to seek means of experiencing their faith together in organized groups.

On the Christian side these pressures manifested themselves in two ways, communal living and popular preaching movements. In the twelfth century, women who desired to live a life of religious devotion and charitable work, but who did not wish to join a cloistered order, banded together in communities of Beguines. These town-based societies became popular enough to account, in some instances, for as much as 15 percent of the adult female urban population. The beguines wore plain clothing, worked at crafts, followed strict rules of behavior without necessarily eschewing marriage, and showed a marked inclination toward mysticism. Beguines composed the first European works on mysticism written in vernacular languages, starting with Beatrice of Nazareth's "Seven Manners of Love" written in Flemish in 1233. A parallel movement among men, known as Beghards, included an element of wandering mendicancy. The Church initially blessed the religious commitment of the beguines and beghards but then had second thoughts. Marguerite Porete, who had written a work on mysticism in Old French, was burned at the stake for heresy in 1310. In 1317 the Council of Vienne, after hearing charges of heresy and immorality, abolished beguinage and stipulated that women who wished to live such a life should be brought under strict Church control.

The fate of the beguines and beghards tied into broader fears of heresy that consumed the Church in the thirteenth century. The movement begun by Peter Waldo is representative. A merchant of

Lyons, Waldo gave away his property in 1176 and assumed leadership of a group of men dedicated to a life of holy poverty and bringing the faith to the common people in their own languages. The Pope blessed their way of life but warned them that they could not preach. The Waldenses, as they came to be called, ignored the warning, and their lay preaching brought upon them a charge of heresy. More than eighty Waldenses were burned at the stake in Strasbourg in 1211. Despite suppression, remnants of the Waldenses survived to become Protestants in the sixteenth century.

In fourteenth-century England, John Wyclif, a teacher of theology and philosophy at Oxford, led a somewhat similar movement of "poor priests" who preached to the common people in English. Some of his followers collaborated on translating the Bible into English, the so-called Wyclif Bible. Wyclif was condemned as a heretic, but he escaped burning and died of natural causes in 1384. John Huss in Bohemia did not escape execution. Like Wyclif a well-educated priest, Huss translated Wyclif's writing into Czech and led a militantly anti-Church movement that became involved in wars against Bohemia's Catholic rulers. He was burned in 1415, just over a century before Martin Luther inaugurated the Protestant Reformation in 1517 and turned to translating the Bible into German.

No single movement responded to all of the popular religious pressures that began to become evident in the twelfth century. Some focused on lay people living devout lives, either singly or in groups. Some encouraged mysticism. Some devoted themselves to poverty. Some preached in vernacular languages and translated the Bible into words common people could understand. Some were pacifist. Some were bellicose in the face of Church persecution. All, however, aroused the ire of the Catholic Church and felt the sting of persecution. By the time the definitive break of the Protestant Reformation split Latin Christendom for good in the sixteenth century, mysticism, group living, poverty, and pacifism had necessarily receded. Catholic opposition made militant defense the highest priority.

In Islam, the same pressures gave rise to similar tendencies; but the result over the long term was quite different. The term Sufism is generally associated with these tendencies, but the first manifestations of Sufism in the ninth century differed substantially from what Sufism became in the thirteenth century. Though the word *sufi* probably derives from the patched cloak of wool (Arabic *suf*) that signaled the religious poverty of the wearer, the usual translation of the term is "mystic." This is appropriate for the visionary souls of the early Islamic centuries who yearned for closeness with God and expressed their yearnings in ecstatic, sometimes very poetic, utterances and in acts that their admirers interpreted as miracles. These individuals had many admirers and disciples, and by the eleventh century some of these disciples were living or meeting in houses (variously called *khangah*, *zawiya*, or *ribat*) dedicated to Sufi devotions.

In the thirteenth century these loose assemblies of devotees crystallized into formal brotherhoods (*tariqa*, pl. *turuq*) featuring hierarchical ranks, initiation procedures, set rituals, fixed rules of conduct, and organizational linkages with brotherhoods in other towns dedicated to the rituals of the same Sufi master. Mystic endeavor, increasingly expressed through vernacular poetry, remained the hallmark of the top ranks of these brotherhoods. But many thousands of brothers in the lower ranks, not to mention ordinary citizens who admired the Sufi way of life but were not prepared to make a personal commitment to it, looked upon the brotherhood more as an organization for collective religious experience and moral guidance in everyday life, and as a point of contact with a person of manifest holiness, the leading shaikh of the order.

Sufi codes of conduct frequently stipulated poverty and withdrawal from worldly affairs. Wandering mendicants represented the extreme expression of this. Association with most Sufi orders, however, proved compatible with life in the workaday world, especially for laymen who admired the Sufi life but did not become full members of an order. In this respect Sufism came to represent an integration of religious devotion with a sober and moralistic

approach to daily life. The brotherhoods, which acquired phenomenal popularity by the end of the fifteenth century, offered an alternative form of Muslim social and religious experience in which mysticism ultimately played a lesser role than communal devotion to a moral code of behavior sanctified by a saintly figure. Scores of brotherhoods formed, some appealing to higher social ranks and some to lower. The most popular developed geographic networks that spread over thousands of miles irrespective of political divisions.

The ethos of brotherhood Sufism strikingly resembles the ethos of the simultaneous movements within Latin Christendom. Communal devotion, poverty as an expression of detachment from worldly things, mysticism, use of vernacular languages, town-based organization but with penetration into rural areas, and adoption of locally accessible saintly figures as moral models in the place of the increasingly legalistic ulama/clergy are among the specific parallels. The durability of these responses to the popular religious demands that first became evident in this era has lasted to the present day. In Islam, a myriad of popular (and often politically assertive) Muslim organizations pattern themselves consciously or unconsciously on the model of Sufi brotherhoods. Their parallel in Christianity is the contemporary proliferation of new sects, particularly within evangelical Protestantism.

Parallel too was the sense of anger and opposition that the growth of Sufism provoked among the ulama, which resulted on rare occasion in the well-publicized execution of a Sufi shaikh. Though some ulama were themselves Sufis, many others execrated Sufi practices, particularly the dancing and music used in rituals. These opponents of the Sufis would surely have resorted to large-scale persecution if they had had a tradition of identifying and exterminating heretics and an organizational structure suitable for implementing persecution.

In Latin Christendom, the confrontation between established structures and hierarchies and new forms of religious yearning and expression generated increasing friction from 1100 to 1500, with a

final culmination in the Protestant Reformation and the shattering of church unity. In Islam, the comparatively weak institutional structure of the ulama could not hold back the new spiritual currents. Where Christendom stood firm and then broke in two, Islam bent and accommodated. By 1500 Sufi orders were well established in most regions. Many ulama remained disenchanted, and the adoption of political militancy by some Sufi orders, most notably in Anatolia (Turkey), provoked wars of suppression; but Sufism was on its way to becoming the primary focus of popular Muslim piety.

The legal impact of the divergent Muslim and Christian responses to new spiritual needs deserves special notice. The shattering of Christian unity culminated in generations of uncommonly vicious warfare between Protestant and Catholic. The competing claims of canon law and royal law over the preceding centuries had set the stage for expressing ecclesiastical disagreements in legal terms. During the Reformation, championing the Catholic or the Protestant cause became an inherent part of royal authority. Preachers and tract writers on both sides inveighed against their enemies and called the faithful to the slaughter. The Peace of Westphalia in 1648 brought the worst of the killing to an end. But by the time the fever had spent itself, a goodly portion of western Europe's population had been consumed, and the remaining scars reinforced a growing conviction that state power must never again be put at the disposal of intolerant religion.

Western secularists today subscribe passionately to the mantra of separating church and state. The logic of their position seems self-evident: religious belief combined with state power is a witch's brew that poisons all who consume it. It happened that way in European history. The lesson was learned. From Westphalia on, royal will would take precedence over the dictates of popes and preachers. Individual kings might still be fanatics, but in the interests of the crown, their successors might choose to marry or form alliances across religious boundaries.

But this break between church and state didn't happen in Islam. Sufi devotion could occasionally mobilize armies. One such army

powered the Safavid family to dominion over Iran in 1501. And a will to extirpate Sufi heterodoxy could occasionally prompt rulers to launch military campaigns. In Ottoman Turkey it happened several times between 1300 and 1500. But by and large, the Sufi brotherhoods that became the paramount expressions of mass piety after 1400 lived in harmony with one another and cooperated with state officialdom. Rulers were more likely to patronize eminent living Sufis and arrange to be buried at the feet of deceased saints than they were to charge them with heresy or disloyalty. Where being a Catholic or a Protestant implicitly charged Christian monarchs with responsibilities to defend their faith against the other persuasion, in Islam the communal prayers of the mosque, the proceedings of the courts of religious law, and the Sufi rituals of devotion fit comfortably together in the lives and worldviews of most Muslim rulers. Islamic law, in the abstract, remained universal and unchallenged while the canon law of the Catholic Church receded in the face of post-Westphalian royal writ, and the Protestants never produced an all-encompassing legal philosophy of their own.

The Siblings Part: The Later Centuries

While Islam and Christendom remained locked in hostile sibling embrace after 1500, accidents of history carried their competition into new arenas. Between 1200 and 1400 a series of Mongol and Turkic assaults exposed the Muslim Middle East to new influences from Central Asia and China while between 1400 and 1500 a series of maritime discoveries opened European eyes to exotic new worlds in Africa, Asia, and the Western Hemisphere. These parallel experiences shaped the respective economic and political futures of western Christendom and Middle Eastern Islam. Later Muslim dynasts struggled for centuries to re-create the great and prosperous Eurasian land empire of Genghis Khan, while the Europeans—except for the Russians, who too had experienced Mongol rule—became fixated on maritime empire.

With respect to religion, the sibling faiths faced parallel challenges. The two centuries preceding the onslaught of the Mongols in 1218 had seen substantial Muslim expansion into India and sub-Saharan Africa. Since the cultural traditions of these new regions were not based on the Hellenistic worldview that had permeated the Mediterranean lands in the centuries following the conquests of Alexander the Great, the challenge of absorbing the new territories into an Islamic realm differed greatly from the one facing the Arab conquerors of the first Islamic century. Muslim rulers confronted populations they deemed idolatrous and responded with a fluctuating mix of military action, persecution, commercial exploitation, and religious preaching, the latter conducted mostly informally by the newly emerging Sufi brotherhoods. The experience of Mongol empire accelerated these tendencies by inspiring post-Mongol shahs and sultans to grab more and more territory.

Western Christianity experienced a parallel confrontation with what it considered idolatry in enclaves along the African coast and, more extensively, in the New World. Like the shahs and sultans, Europe's monarchs responded with a mix of military action, persecution, commercial exploitation, and vigorous preaching, mostly conducted in highly organized fashion by Dominicans, Franciscans, and Jesuits acting explicitly at royal command.

Taking Islam and Christianity together, scriptural monotheism in the Semitic tradition seemed to be on the march everywhere. But looking broadly at the period 1500 to 1900, western Christendom and Middle Eastern Islam exhibit proselytizing dissimilarities. It is a commonplace of modern Euro-American historical thinking that Europe surged ahead during these centuries and left the Muslim world in the dust. Words like "decline," "stagnation," and "backwardness" are hurtful to Muslim ears in view of Islam's earlier centuries of glory; but the contrast in wealth and material power that had so much favored the Muslims before the sixteenth century undeniably grew to favor the western Christians.

But wait. Perhaps there is another way of looking at things. Suppose instead of inquiring about imperial riches, one were to

ask what percentage of the world Muslim community today is composed of the descendants of people who converted to Islam between 1500 and 1900. The answer would surely exceed 50 percent: pretty much all of Bangladesh, Malaysia, and Indonesia; enormous groups of sub-Saharan Africans; most of the Muslims of Pakistan, India, and China; substantial populations in southeastern Europe and Central Asia. By contrast, if one were to ask what percentage of today's Roman Catholic and Protestant populations descend from ancestors who converted to Christianity between 1500 and 1900, the answer would be well under 20 percent, and would fall to a very low level indeed if one excluded the Americas, Australia, the Pacific islands, and the southern one-third of Africa—lands where the European Christians encountered no religion of competitive sophistication. In the great Afro-Eurasian land bloc and the adjoining region of southeast Asia, European Christianity and Islam went head to head in a contest for the souls of the indigenous peoples, and Islam unquestionably won.

If today one were to measure the long-term success of competing socioreligious systems, therefore, according to their demonstrated appeal over recent centuries, one would be forced to conclude that Islam pushed decisively ahead between 1500 and 1900 while, after an initial surge, European Christianity eventually declined, stagnated, and fell backward. Of course, no one measures success in this fashion—except for contemporary Muslim ideologues who relentlessly expose Europe's lack of religiosity and morality and encourage their Muslim audiences to hold firm to the right ways of their tradition. But obviously this was not always the case.

From the dawn of Christianity down to the nineteenth century—and still today in evangelical Christian circles—the winning of souls took precedence over wealth and power as a sign of success. Our master narratives of European history still put great emphasis on the triumphant spread of Christianity until roughly the nineteenth century, when missionary efforts to extend the faith are increasingly portrayed as quirky, if not downright distasteful.

An uncharitable observer might opine that European Christians happily equated the spread of their faith with the spread of civilization right down to the point when it became evident that their faith was no longer spreading very effectively, and then switched to a different set of civilizational indices: miles of railroad track, factory output, military might, size of empire, etc. Of course, the fact that Islam surged ahead conversion-wise as Christianity stagnated did not play a role in this switch of evaluative indices. Christians, after all, tended to regard Islam as a form of barbarism and usually alleged that its success derived from theological shallowness and pandering to polytheism. But Islam's proselytizing surge during its centuries of so-called "decline," and Christianity's proselytizing stagnation, cannot seriously be questioned. Nor can it be denied that the aggregate success of Islam and Christianity in becoming the world's dominant religion(s) over the past five centuries is as striking a historical phenomenon as the worldwide triumph of European imperialism.

The counterargument can be made that the two experiences of religious expansion do not bear comparison because the European Christians, unlike the Muslims, were spectacularly open to new ideas and in the process of achieving, in the Enlightenment, a transcendent, post-scriptural understanding of the world that many Muslims are still reluctant to embrace. But this historical construction, too, is open to query. Were Muslim societies truly closed to new ideas? In a word, no. The world Muslim community during these centuries embraced scores of new populations in Africa and Asia, learned their languages and customs, found common ground with their traditional institutions and arts, and showed the same remarkable adaptability that had marked the initial spread of Islam in the seventh and eighth centuries and later the growth of the Sufi brotherhoods in the middle centuries. By contrast, the Europeans eagerly collected plants, animals, and artifacts from exotic lands, and made very good use of some of them. But they were not nearly so open to learning exotic languages, assimilating local customs, and respecting traditional so-

cial and artistic values. The new ideas that the Europeans were open to were their own, not those of their imperial subjects. When Europe was comparatively weak in the middle centuries, cultural borrowing from Muslim neighbors made good sense. But with empire came a conviction of superiority that closed most western minds. Western Christendom offered nothing, for example, to compare with the annual pilgrimage to Mecca as a place where believers from every land, and speaking every language, could sojourn and learn from one another in conditions of racial and spiritual equality.

So the siblings that had for so long trodden the same developmental path parted company. European monarchs trumpeted their intent to Christianize the world, but settled for economic and military might. Muslim rulers in the Middle East, North Africa, and India (Morocco, sub-Saharan Africa, and Southeast Asia followed different trajectories) strove mightily to create rich and powerful land empires, but only sporadically thought of converting their subject peoples to Islam. Would it be oversimplifying matters to say that when scriptural monotheism enjoyed the political and financial backing of powerful rulers, efforts at proselytization eventually faltered; but when the job of spreading the faith fell to unofficial Sufi merchants and wayfarers acting beyond the reach of Muslim rulers, Islam succeeded? What this formula leaves out is a dynamic that in some parts of Africa and Asia saw "unofficial" Islam succeed precisely because it was a potent alternative to the Christianity being propounded by the imperialists. If imperialism was a form of foreign tyranny, Islam, unwavering in its vision of a universal legal and moral order, increasingly became the bastion of resistance to tyranny.

According to the "clash of civilizations" hypothesis, the (Judeo-Christian) West has always been and always will be at odds with Islam. According to the Islamo-Christian civilization model, Islam and the West are historical twins whose resemblance did not cease when their paths parted. The best way to substantiate the latter contention is to ask whether the various Western and Islamic

societies of today are truly different. As most specialists acknowledge, a significant portion (approximately 12 to 15 percent) of Muslims in many countries would like to see Islamic governments impose and enforce a moral and behavioral order that they see as an integral part of being Muslim. Another percentage, seemingly of about the same magnitude, or perhaps a bit smaller, would like to live in an essentially secular society and conduct their spiritual lives through private observances. These two minorities are generally scornful of one another and contest for the allegiance of the less ideological majority. By comparison, in the United States, the country that Muslim ideologues see as standing for the whole of Western society, a significant minority, made up of conservative Christians from the heartland, publicly pressures the government to impose its religiously-based moral standards on the country as a whole. Another minority, the battered, bicoastal remnants of American liberalism, sees itself as holding true to rights and freedoms that are guaranteed in the Constitution but threatened by the "Religious Right." The two minorities scorn one another and contest for the allegiance of the residual majority.

True to the ongoing sibling relationship of the two societies, American commentators on Islam characterize militant Muslims as the dominant voice in the Islamic world, and scarcely recognize the presence there of liberal minds. At the same time, they characterize the American "Religious Right" as something completely different: either a moral force for good, if they belong to that camp, or an aberrant and anti-democratic phenomenon that cannot be readily explained. Muslim commentators, on the other hand, whether militant or secular, see America as a secular land of sin, salesmanship, and superficiality and seem totally unaware of the admirable qualities that most Americans exhibit in their daily life. Neither religious nor secular Muslims have much use for the American "Religious Right," particularly in view of its current romance with Zionism. As for their own societies, liberal Muslims deplore religious militancy and wish for it to go away while militant Muslims see homegrown liberals as agents of American influ-

ence or abettors of dictatorship. Neither sibling seems capable of seeing itself or its twin in a comprehensive and balanced fashion, because neither is prepared to recognize itself in the mirror.

Looked at as a whole, and in historical perspective, the Islamo-Christian world has much more binding it together than forcing it apart. *The past and future of the West cannot be fully comprehended without appreciation of the twinned relationship it has had with Islam over some fourteen centuries. The same is true of the Islamic world.* The case for Islamo-Christian civilization as an organizing principle of contemporary thought is rooted in the historical reality of those centuries. One might hope that historians of Western Civilization and of Islam will see the value of readjusting their perspectives to take this reality into account. But our society cannot wait for the sluggish current of historiographical reflection to carve a new channel. The case for Islamo-Christian civilization rests more immediately on the need of all Americans to find common ground with our Muslim diaspora communities at a time when suspicion, fear, draconian government action, and demagoguery increasingly threaten to divide us. Islamo-Christian civilization is a concept we desperately need if we are to have any hope of turning an infamous day of tragedy into a historic moment of social and religious inclusion.