

ISLAM
From Its Origin to the Modern Period

by

C. T. Lewis

© copyright 2017 Diakonos, Inc.

Troy, Michigan

United States of America

The place to begin a study of Islam is with the life of its prophet, Muhammad. We will therefore start with his birth, the oracles later compiled to make the Quran, and the political and military activity through which he organized the Arabs into a single nation and began the attempt to conquer the rest of the civilized world. During the prophet's life, the religious piety he taught came to be organized around five basic pillars: belief, daily prayer, almsgiving, the observance of Ramadan, and the making of pilgrimages to Mecca. After the prophet's death, a controversy arose over who would be his successor, and this resulted in Muslims being divided into two major factions, the Sunni and the Shia. Subsequently, the religion showed itself to be a cultural power, inspiring creative works in theology, philosophy, politics, economics, medicine, mathematics, architecture, art, literature, and music. At the same time, it showed itself to be an aggressive military power, expanding through holy war and exerting control over the neighboring Arabs, Persians, and Byzantines.

Although Islam was one of the great powers of the medieval world, it became sidelined as modern nations began following the very productive policy of separating the church from the state after the Reformation of Luther. Today, it is the major antagonist in an ongoing battle between the values of the medieval world and those of the modern world created by Protestant Christianity. It is against this backdrop that we must understand the rise of fundamentalist and terrorist expressions of Islam.

Table of Contents

THE LIFE OF MUHAMMAD	4
THE RISE AND FALL OF THE ISLAMIC EMPIRE	20
THE UMMAH UNDER THE SHADOW OF WESTERN CIVILIZATION	34
THE RESPONSE OF ISLAM TO THE MODERN WORLD	47
THE MUSLIM COLD WAR	65

The Life of Muhammad

The religion of Islam was born in the early medieval period among the tribal peoples living in Arabia in the 7th century. Although frequently regarded as a religion for Arabs, in the medieval period it won a large number of adherents in Africa, India, and Asia, and in the modern period it has begun to win a large number of adherents in Europe, Canada, and America. In fact, it is often said to be the fastest growing religion in the world, numbering a fifth of the planet's population and second only to Christianity. It is also a controversially combative religion, and this has made it difficult for the outsider to get accurate information about it since its attackers and defenders are usually more interested in influencing than educating the public.

The main focus of Islamic religion is the god Allah, in himself regarded as beyond human comprehension, though in his relationship with human beings regarded as the one who loves the righteous and hates the sinner.¹ The name Islam is the infinitive form of the Arabic verb "to submit," and a Muslim is "one who submits to the will of Allah." Although this verb can be used to connote the idea of peace, this connotation refers to the peace that comes after submission. It is therefore a religion of struggle, and the struggle to achieve submission occurs on two levels, both of which go by the name *jihad*: there is "the greater jihad" (the inner spiritual struggle against disobedience within oneself), and there is "the lesser jihad" (the outer physical struggle against disobedience in the world). Accordingly, the world is divided into two halves: the *dar al-Islam* (the territory of Islam) and the *dar al-harb* (the territory of war).

Although theoretically Islam traces its origin to the mind of Allah, its historical founder was the prophet Muhammad (said to be the last of the prophets), and he in turn was the founder of the Ummah (the nation of Islam). It recognizes three authoritative sources of religious teaching. The first consists of the verbatim words of Allah (preserved in the Quran): *By Allah! We have certainly sent messengers to nations before thee, but the devil made their deeds fair-seeming to*

¹ **Allah** is simply Arabic for "the God" (very close to Hebrew *El* or Aramaic *Elah*). In the Quran, however, this word is frequently used as though it were a personal name. There is naturally a great deal of overlap between the concept of Allah and that of YHWH (e.g., his oneness, his sovereignty, his providence, and his attributes of immateriality, spacelessness, timelessness, omnipresence, omniscience, omnipotence, omnibenevolence, etc.). The main difference is a personal one: YHWH is said to love both the sinner and the righteous; Allah is said to love the righteous but hate the sinner. Muhammad says: *If you love Allah, then follow me. Allah will love you and forgive your faults, and Allah is forgiving and merciful. But if they turn back, then surely Allah does not love unbelievers* (Quran 3:31-32).

them. So he is their patron today, and for them is a painful chastisement. And we have not revealed to thee the Book except that thou mayest make clear to them that wherein they differ, and as a guidance and a mercy for a people who believe (Quran 16:63-64). The second consists of the lived example of the prophet (preserved in a body of tradition called the Hadith): *Certainly you have in the Messenger of Allah an excellent exemplar for him who hopes in Allah and the Latter day, and remembers Allah much* (Quran 33:21). The third consists of the consensus of the religious community (preserved in a body of tradition called Ijma): *My ummah will never agree upon an error* (ibn Majah 2:1303). In tracing the origins of this religious movement, we will divide it into two parts: (1) the first deals with the spirit of Islam (i.e., its conception in the mind of the prophet [from AD 610 to 622]); (2) and the second deals with the nation of Islam (i.e., its materialization into a people, a land, and a system of government [from AD 622 to 632]).

The Birth of the Spirit of Islam (610 – 622)

The story begins in the Middle Ages, the thousand-year period following the fragmentation of the great Roman Empire (476 BC). Although the origins of human civilization had begun in the Middle East, its center of gravity had by now shifted to Greco-Roman Europe, while its older centers of power remained in Indo-Iranian Asia. Greco-Roman Europe had converted to Christianity and was further divided into a Latin-speaking West (now parceled out to various Germanic tribes) and a Greek-speaking East (still enjoying united rule under a Byzantine Emperor). The Middle East was Zoroastrian, and enjoyed political unity under a Sassanian Dynasty that controlled all the old centers of culture in Egypt, Mesopotamia, the Levant, Anatolia, and Persia.

What of Arabia? It lay on the southern periphery of the civilized world, caught as it were between the Zoroastrianism of the Sassanians and the Christianity of the Byzantines (not to mention the religion of the disenfranchised Jews). To be sure, attempts had been made to bring it under the civilizing influence of Rome, and these can be traced back as far as the reign of Caesar Augustus. Nevertheless, the empire had never been able to penetrate very far into the desert peninsula, so it contented itself with maintaining various trading outposts at its northeast extremity. Like so many other regions beyond the borders of the empire, the interior of the country remained under the control of various tribal kingdoms (in this case, the Semitic Arabs).

What of the Arabs? They were but one of several people groups traditionally referred to as Semitic, and frequently divided into eastern (e.g., Assyrian and Babylonian), northwestern (e.g., Canaanite and Hebrew), and southwestern (e.g., Arabic and Ethiopic). As for their way of life, it was not unlike what we read about in the biblical stories about Abraham and can still see today in the life of the modern Bedouin (i.e., “desert dwellers”). Religiously they were polytheists, patriarchal in their social organization, often marrying multiple wives, sometimes practicing female infanticide. As a pre-civilized people, their social order was not based on individual freedom, but on strong ties of social obligation: first to kin, then to friends, and finally to strangers. Moral life was less about one’s private intentions and more about one’s public image or deeds, and the policing of human behavior was largely done through the power of the community to shame or honor. Upper classes did not mix with lower classes, since this could expose them to public shame or ridicule. As for their economy, they were not city-dwellers but made their living as nomadic pastoralists, farmers, or merchants. Within this lifestyle, inter-tribal relations could be established through formal treaties or covenants, but most of the emphasis fell on self-preservation, and disputes frequently arose over rights to land and offspring. As we shall see, a great many of these cultural values were taken over and given divine sanction by the prophet Muhammad, and things which might otherwise have been regarded as matters of custom were transformed into matters of orthodox religious practice in Islam. Today, this has greatly contributed to the Muslim perception that the spread of western culture is nothing short of an assault on Islam, and it is largely responsible for the hostility felt toward the west and the belief that Islam is engaged in a defensive war against America.

The Early Life of Muhammad (570 – 610 AD)

As is often the case when it comes to the founders of religions, there are numerous legends about the birth of the prophet Muhammad. A Jew proclaimed a star under which Muhammad would be born; his mother is said to have seen a light emanating from her womb; after his birth, two men clothed in white cast the child Muhammad on the ground in the desert, took his heart from his body, purified it in the snow from a black lump and replaced it. According to another tradition, as soon as the boy was born, he fell to the ground, took a handful of dust and looked toward the heavens, proclaiming, “God is Great.”

Beyond such legends, the most reliable information that has come down to us about the prophet’s life is found in his own testimony (the Quran), the traditions handed down about him by others (the Hadith), and an early biography (written by ibn Ishaq in Baghdad in 775). He was born around AD 570 in the trading city of Mecca (i.e., at the west end of the Arabian Peninsula). His father died before he

was born, his mother died when he was about six, and so he was raised by his uncle Abu Talib. Although not wealthy, his uncle was the head of his clan and belonged to the tribe of the Quraysh (keepers of the Kaaba, a local religious shrine, called a *Masjid* or *Mosque*).² As always in such cultures, the various clans traced their ancestry to a single tribal head (in this case, a tribe of merchants known as the Quraysh). According to pre-Islamic tradition, this tribe was one of many descended from Ishmael, the half-Egyptian son of Abraham (indicating that they already had some familiarity with the traditions of the Jews). Indeed, the Bible clearly regards Abraham as not only the ancestor of the nation of Israel but also of the nomadic peoples living throughout northern Arabia (Gen. 25:6).

As a young man, he lived a normal life, working for his uncle as a shepherd. When he became older, he began working as a merchant on the caravan routes that ran to India and Palestine (where he would have come into contact with Jews and eastern Christians). More honest than most, he acquired a good reputation, along with the nicknames al-Sadiq (truthful) and al-Amin (trustworthy). Having become a respected businessman, he was increasingly sought out as an impartial arbitrator in tribal disputes, and he increased his wealth and social standing by marrying a rich widow and business owner named Khadijah. The marriage was a happy one, and the couple had six children, two sons who died in infancy and four daughters. Muslim tradition draws attention to the prophet's rise from orphanhood to earthly success as an example of divine grace that ought to be imitated: *Did he not find thee an orphan and give thee shelter? And find thee groping, so he showed thee the way? And find thee in want, so he enriched thee? Therefore the orphan, oppress not. And him who asks, chide not. And the favor of thy Lord, proclaim* (Quran 93:6-11).

Until he was about forty, Muhammad lived the prosperous life of a trader. Nevertheless, he became increasingly dissatisfied with the materialistic lifestyle of the city and the pagan idolatry at the shrine of the Kaaba. Profoundly dissatisfied with the immorality and superstition going on in his native homeland, he became convinced of the importance of righteous conduct and of the existence of one true God. In making this transition to a morally earnest form of monotheism, it is frequently speculated that he was influenced by natural theology Judaism and Christianity. If that is the case, however, this influence did not inspire him to

² **The Kaaba** simply means "the Cube." It had apparently served for several centuries as the preferred location of pagan tribal worship on the peninsula. It attracted large numbers of pilgrims annually, and its attractions included a large black stone (probably a fallen meteorite) as well as hundreds of idols (representing tribal deities). One of the prophet's most important achievements would be to transform this shrine from a place devoted to idols to a place devoted to Allah. In so doing, he claimed to be restoring the shrine to its original purity, asserting that the stone was a symbol of the offspring of Ishmael, and also, that the shrine surrounding it was built by Abraham and his son Ishmael (Quran 2:125). The fantastic claim that the shrine was built by the great patriarch has not found any independent literary or archaeological support.

convert as much as to pursue a life of private piety while still living among his own people. He began taking to long periods of seclusion, fasting, and meditation in a cave a couple of miles north of Mecca (i.e., at Mount Hira). It was in fact during one of these periods of asceticism that he received his first revelations (faithful Muslims still imitate their leader's example once a year during the month of Ramadan): *The month of Ramadan is that in which the Quran was revealed, a guidance to men and clear proofs of the guidance and criterion. So whoever of you is present in the month, he shall fast therein, and whoever is sick or on a journey, he shall fast a like number of other days* (Quran 2:185).

The Early Ministry of Muhammad (610 - 618)

At age forty, Muhammad received a vision while praying in his cave at Hira in the month of Ramadan. Unlike the theophany that came to Moses and appeared in Jesus, this was not a descent of the divine presence but a disclosure of the divine mind through the angel Gabriel (an important distinction that underlies most of the other distinctions between Islam and the Judeo-Christian religion).³ The angel said "Read!" to which the prophet responded "I cannot read" (though he did recite the angelic words, thus playing off a secondary meaning of the verb *Qarah*, from which we get the word *Quran*).⁴ By universal scholarly consent, the first oracle revealed to the prophet was the following: *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Read in the name of thy Lord who creates, creates man from a clot. Read and thy Lord is most generous, who taught by the pen, taught man what he knew not* (Quran 96:1-5).

This first revelation is also attested in traditions handed down by his family and preserved in the Hadith. According to these traditions, the prophet's initial reaction was one of terror. He supposed he was at best an inspired poet or at worst under the influence of an evil spirit (i.e., a *jinn*). He subsequently experienced doubts and contemplated suicide. Our earliest account says that he was eventually persuaded to accept these revelations as divinely given by his wife, Khadija: *At last unexpectedly the Truth came to him and said: O Muhammad, you are the messenger of God. The messenger of God said: I had been standing, but I sank to*

³ **Revelation** in Islam is said to occur in one of three forms: (1) inner inspiration; (2) obscure vision; (3) and verbal communication from a prophet: *It is not vouchsafed to a mortal that Allah should speak to him, except by revelation, or from behind a veil, or by sending a messenger...* (Quran 42:51). Although these three forms of revelation are also found in the Bible, the prophet's list omits the central feature of biblical revelation, which is the deity's act of making himself present in a specific place and time in human history (e.g., first in the sanctuary of Moses, and then in the person of Jesus Christ).

⁴ **Muhammad was illiterate** according to most interpretations of this passage. Consequently, his oracles needed to be memorized or written down by his followers. Nevertheless, there is room for doubt: when the treaty of Hudaibah was being signed, Muslim tradition says Muhammad took the pen from Ali, struck out some words, and replaced them with others. Also, on his deathbed, Muhammad called for pen and ink to name a successor, but his strength failed before he could do so.

my knees; then I crept away and my shoulders trembled; then I entered Khadija's room and said: Cover me up, cover me up until the fear has left me. Then he came to me and said: O Muhammad, you are the messenger of God. Muhammad said: I thought to cast myself from a ledge of the rock, but while I was contemplating this he appeared to me and said: O Muhammad, I am Gabriel and you are the messenger of God. Then he said: Speak. I said: What shall I say? Then he took me and pressed me vigorously three times until exhaustion overtook me. Then he said: Speak in the name of your Lord who has created you. And I spoke. And I came to Khadija and said: I am full of anxiety, and I told her my experiences. She said: Rejoice! By God, God will never put you to shame; you do good to your own, you speak the truth; you return what has been entrusted to you; you tolerate toils; you give hospitality to the guest; you help the Helpers of Truth (Sahih Muslim, Bk 1, Hadith 301).

For three years, the prophet continued to receive divine communications, but he kept them within the narrow circle of his household: his first converts were his wife, his adoptive slave son Zaid, his cousin Ali,⁵ and his friend Abu Bakr⁶ (these latter two would eventually fight for the role of successor to the prophet). Eventually, he received the call to public ministry in the year 613, and his first public message can still be read in the 74th chapter of the Quran (his second major oracle). This message contains several important elements that would set the tone for many to follow. First, a command was issued for the prophet to praise God: *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. O thou who wrappest thyself up, Arise and do magnify.* Second, a command was issued for the prophet to warn the people of the coming judgment: *Arise and do warn... For when the trumpet is sounded, that will be a difficult day for the disbelievers... the people of the right hand [will be] in gardens... [the people of the left hand] will be cast into hell.* And third, a call was issued for the people to repent, by which was meant that they should believe, pray, and give to the poor (the first three pillars of Islam): *In gardens, they ask one another about the guilty: what has brought you to hell? They will say: we were not of those who prayed; nor did we feed the poor; and we indulged in vain talk with vain talkers and called the Day of Judgment a lie.* His discourse closes with the following words: *It surely is a reminder. So whoever*

⁵ **Ali** was the son of Muhammad's uncle, Ali Talib. As an early convert, he assisted the prophet throughout his entire career and was his close male relative. Later, he became the prophet's son-in-law through marriage to his daughter Fatimah. Still later, he would become the prophet's fifth successor, Imam Ali ibn Ali Talib (and the founder of Shiite Islam).

⁶ **Abu Bakr** was a man of high standing and the first convert outside the prophet's family. As such, he quickly rose to become the prophet's senior advisor. Later, he became the prophet's father-in-law through the giving away of his daughter Aishah. Still later, he would become the prophet's first successor, Caliph Abu Bakr (and the founder of Sunni Islam).

pleases may mind it. And they will not mind unless Allah please. He is worthy that duty should be kept to him and worthy to forgive (Quran 74:54-56).

Although the prophet managed to win a small number of converts, most of them were members of his own household, foreigners, and the poor. Among the tribal laity, the initial response was one of contempt, and most regarded him as simply peddling various odds and ends that he had picked up from natural theology, Judaism, and Christianity. Among the tribal leaders, however, the initial response was more hostile, for they could see he was trying to build a new community around himself, and they were particularly incensed at his condemnation of the worship going on at the Kaaba. At first, he was encouraged to stop preaching, and here they simply used the traditional methods of bribery and threat. After he refused, he would have likely been killed had it not been for the protection of his uncle Abu Talib. His followers suffered various forms of persecution, resulting in the martyrdom of a slave girl named Sumayyah bint Khayyat, and the relocation of a small number of refugees to Ethiopia (615 AD). This persecution of the new religion gave rise to what was probably the most controversial incident in the early history of Islam. According to two early traditions (one in al-Waqidi and another in al-Tabari), the prophet attempted to win over his kinsmen by allowing a place in his religion for the worship of three local female deities: *al-Lat*, *al-Uzza*, and *al-Manat*. These sources claim that the passage of scripture prohibiting the worship of these deities was changed from an earlier version which sanctioned it (the earlier version is sometimes referred to as “the Satanic Verses”: *Have ye thought upon al-Lat and al-Uzza and Manat, the third, the other? These are the exalted gharāniq (cranes), whose intercession is hoped for* [purportedly found in Quran 53:21]). In other words, the prophet had a lapse of judgment, wherein he briefly courted polytheism (under the influence of Satan), but later returned to monotheism (under the influence of Allah): *And we never sent a messenger or a prophet before thee but when he desired, the devil made a suggestion respecting his desire; but Allah annuls that which the devil casts, then does Allah establish his messages (Quran 22:52).* The main reason why the story is so controversial is because it challenges the idea of the prophet’s infallibility, though this idea nowhere appears in the Quran.⁷ Whatever the case,

⁷ **The Doctrine of Isma** asserts that the prophets were not only infallible but also without sin. This runs contrary to the Bible, which portrays the prophets as both fallible and sinful. But it also runs contrary to the Quran, which contains passages alluding, for example, to the sinfulness of the prophet Moses (28:16) and to the sinfulness of the prophet Muhammad (40:55, 47:19, 48:1-2). Likewise, the idea that Muhammad was a sinner is found in the Hadith: *Please forgive the sins which I have done in the past or will do in the future, and also those which I did in secret or in public, and that which you know better than I* (Sahih al-Bukhari, Vol. 9, page 403). The doctrine is therefore of late origin, emerging only after Islam had come into more direct contact with Christianity, and specifically the doctrine of the sinlessness of Jesus. Accordingly, the adoption of this doctrine rested not on the authority of the Quran or the Hadith but on that of the Ijma (i.e., the consensus of the community). As for those traditions which conflicted with this doctrine, they were either dismissed as spurious or given a softer translation or interpretation

the fact that he remained resolute in his monotheism meant that opposition would continue, and it eventually took the form of a boycott against marriage and trade with his clan (616 – 618 AD). It was during these tumultuous years that we encounter the most important revelation in the life of Muhammad. According to the Quran, on a certain night the angel Gabriel took him on a journey to the temple mount in the city of Jerusalem, and from there he ascended into Heaven (whether in the body or in the mind is debated): *Glory to him who carried his servant by night from the Sacred Mosque to the Remote Mosque, whose precincts we blessed that we might show him of our signs* (Quran 17:1). According to the Hadith, it was on this occasion that he was given the first commands concerning the new faith's most important practical activity, public ritualized prayer. Although the various rites connected with public prayer likely developed over time, it is probably to this period that we owe the most fundamental prayer found in the Quran, the Fatiha or "Opening": *In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful. Praise be to Allah, the Lord of the worlds, the Beneficent, the Merciful, Master of the day of Requital. Thee do we serve and Thee do we beseech for help. Guide us on the right path, the path of those upon whom Thou hast bestowed favors, not those upon whom wrath is brought down, nor those who go astray* (Quran 1:1-7).

The Birth of the Nation of Islam (622 – 632)

Muhammad's religion reached a critical turning point in the year 619. In the first place, his wife died (after which he became engaged to the six year old daughter of his friend, Abu Bakr). More importantly, his uncle died (after which the headship of his clan passed to another uncle, who was less interested in serving as his protector). The prophet now found himself with about a hundred followers, a far greater number of enemies, and completely devoid of political influence or protection.

Nevertheless, Muhammad's fortunes were about to take a turn for the better. In the following year, he converted six pilgrims from a city two hundred miles to the south named Yathrib (later renamed Medina). The year after that, twelve delegates came from that city and sought him out as a counsellor. The year after that, seventy-five individuals came from that city and invited him to become their leader, pledging obedience to his laws and protection from their military. The prophet agreed, and thus began the famous migration or "Hijra". Believers first began to migrate in small waves, shortly followed by the prophet. In making this

(e.g., a number of English translations of the Quran render the Semitic word *hattat* "sin" in some contexts and "shortcomings" in others [some even take the interpretive liberty to specify these as "alleged" shortcomings]).

journey, they exchanged natural ties for religious ones, an exchange for which they were promised the reward of heaven: *Those who leave their homes in the cause of Allah, and are then slain or die—on them will Allah bestow verily a goodly Provision. Truly Allah is He Who bestows the best provision* (Quran 22:58).⁸

The Hijra, therefore, marks the birth of the theocratic nation of Islam. Muhammad was no longer a rejected prophet, but a powerful ruler, lawgiver, and judge. His destination was Medina, an agricultural city, the inhabitants of which were ethnically Arab but religiously divided between paganism, Judaism, and Islam. His arrival at the new city can be precisely dated to July 16, 622 (the starting point for year 1 A. H., “after Hijra”). In preparation for the tremendous tasks that lay ahead, the prophet resolved to set his domestic affairs in order: first, he consummated his previously arranged marriage to the daughter of Abu Bakr, the now nine-year-old Aisha; second, he married a thirty-year-old widow named Sauda (who subsequently took over the affairs of his household). As we shall see, the prophet’s relationship with women took a different turn as he embarked on his political career, and over the next ten years he would acquire twelve wives and at least four concubines. Although these patterns were not unknown in the culture of his day, they have created problems for those who would claim him as a model of moral perfection. Moreover, it is evident that his behavior encountered opposition even among his contemporaries, and the subject is singled out for explicit treatment in the Quran: *O Prophet, we have made lawful to thee thy wives whom thou hast given their dowries, and those whom thy right hand possesses whom Allah has given thee as prisoners of war, and the daughters of thy paternal uncle and the daughters of thy paternal aunts and the daughters of thy maternal uncle and the daughters of thy maternal aunts, who fled with thee; and any believing woman, if she gives herself to the Prophet, and the Prophet desires to marry her. It is especially for thee, not for the believers... that no blame may attach to thee* (Quran 33:50).⁹

⁸ **Heaven** is mentioned in numerous passages of the Quran. It is usually referred to as the Garden or *Jannah*. In general, it is described as the place where everything one longs for will be fulfilled. More specifically, it is described in very sensuous terms as a place of earthly bliss: there are couches, fine food and drink, serving boys, and even young full-breasted virgins. Entrance into heaven is conditioned upon the good deeds of the believer and the favor of Allah. Certain deeds, however, are considered sufficiently weighty as to virtually guarantee divine favor, for example leaving one’s kin for Allah (as here) or dying as a martyr for Allah (Quran 3:169 - 170).

⁹ **Muhammad’s relationship with women** warrants careful examination, not for the purpose of satisfying a lewd curiosity, but for the purpose of weighing the claim of his being a pattern of moral perfection (in some respects his behavior is not appreciably different from that of the biblical patriarchs, but of course they are never held up as patterns of moral perfection). As mentioned, the number of his wives is usually reckoned at twelve (legally married), and the number of his concubines at four (taken as plunder in war). The Hadith contains a lot of information about the prophet’s relationship with his wives, and the Quran exhorts others to follow his example: it upholds traditional roles for men and women and also frequently exhorts men to be gentle with their wives. At the same time, it upholds a husband’s right to strike his wife or take multiple wives and concubines (a maximum of four). Both men and women are equally free to get a divorce if they wish (in a patriarchal society, however, this is

The Statecraft of Muhammad (622 – 624)

Muhammad had been asked to unite the city's tribal factions into a single people (the *ummah*). Although this gave the prophet tremendous power, he did not assume the posture of an elected king but of a divine lawgiver. Accordingly, the foundation of the new state was essentially theological,¹⁰ and it was on this foundation that he began drawing up what would eventually become known as *The Constitution of Medina*. This document became the basis for the formation of a multi-ethnic religious state in the city of Medina, and it set important precedents for the future political history of Islam. It drew its authority from the prophet, gave first class citizenship to his followers, and laid down rules for conducting domestic policies and foreign wars. Those who were not religious followers were granted the freedom to practice their religion and given basic civil rights. In exchange, they were required to pay taxes and do military service.¹¹

Muhammad never authorized the use of any symbol for his nation (centuries later it would borrow the symbol of the crescent from the Persians). He did, however, change the name of the city to the City of the Prophet and immediately set about passing its first laws.¹² The most important of these were the first three

usually much easier for men than women).

¹⁰ **Islamic Theology:** By this period, the religion's two most basic doctrines had already been well established, namely the existence of Allah and the prophetic supremacy of Muhammad. At this early stage, theology came in the form of creeds to be believed (*aqidah*). It would be more than half a century before theology would begin to seek illumination through philosophical arguments (*kalam*).

¹¹ **Dhimmi**s were protected minorities, which is to say, non-Muslims living among Muslims (at this point in history, the term refers to pagans, Jews, and Christians). Such minorities were not subject to forcible conversion but were granted freedom to practice their faith, as long as they kept their faith out of the public sphere. As a general rule, they were permitted to govern their own communities under their own special laws in exchange for which they had to pay taxes to the government (here again however, they had to keep certain practices out of the public sphere, for example eating pork or drinking alcohol). In many cases, there is evidence that such protected minorities could own businesses, hold public office, and even serve in the army. As we shall see, this system worked well all throughout the Middle Ages, but would have to be rethought after the rise of western democratic republics in which there was a sharp separation between the church and the state.

¹² **Islamic Law** (*sharia*): *Sharia* refers to ideal divine law. *Fiqh* refer to the human interpretation of that law (what we might call jurisprudence). The main areas of human life for which specific rules were laid down included religion, family, society, business, warfare, dress, diet, etc. In all of these areas, the legislation reflects not only natural moral law (e.g., do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal), but also the mores of ancient tribal society (e.g., blood revenge, polygamy, and harsh punishments). Accordingly, it has a deeply tribal ethos, focusing less on inner intent and more on outward behavior so that all of life may be brought into conformity with socially recognized rules (for this reason, westerners are frequently viewed as being unspiritual or irreligious). This lends to public life a very tangible sense of collective identity, but it also creates a very proud culture governed by the forces of shame and honor. Even at this early period, some of the most recognizable elements of law were already in place: e.g., the prohibitions against abortion, homosexuality, bestiality, eating pork, consuming animal blood, etc. As startling as it might seem, the requirement that women be veiled in public was not an invention of the prophet, but something he borrowed from the Greco-Roman West (after they ceased doing it, only then did it become associated with Islam). Another striking fact: although the prophet condemns idolatry, he nowhere prohibits the representation of living creatures (this was a decision of later jurists). This indicates that while law began with the prophet, it developed in and through the work of his successors. Indeed, in some cases we can detect stages of development in

pillars of his religion: the confession of faith as a pre-requisite to full citizenship,¹³ public ritualized prayer,¹⁴ and the obligation to pay taxes.¹⁵ He also purchased a large tract of land and set about building a large house into which he would eventually move with his two wives. This house not only served as his personal residence but also as the seat of his government, and therefore, as the first place of religious assembly. It is usually regarded as the first mosque, and the original site is now occupied by the much grander Al Masjid An-Nabawi (“the Prophet’s Mosque”). It was a place to gather for the daily prayers, annual festivals, religious schooling, the collection and distribution of charity, and the organization of social projects (very similar to a synagogue or a church).

Muhammad wasn’t merely concerned with domestic affairs, however. He immediately began organizing his followers into a military force. Its purpose was twofold: to provide a standing defense for the city and to boost its economy by performing what were initially bloodless raids on commercial caravans travelling to and from Mecca (in the first year, the prophet personally led three such raids). At first glance, this appeared to be nothing more than the age old tribal custom of plundering desert wayfarers. Now, however, this practice was furnished with a religious justification: the plunderers were said to be acting in self-defense, for they were merely recovering the means of survival which they had left behind when they were driven from their home by those who rejected Islam. It is to this activity that we can trace the earliest passage advocating war in the Quran:
Permission to fight is given to those on whom war is made, because they are

the thoughts of the prophet himself, as for example in his remarks on wine: first called a gift of God (Quran 16:67), then regarded as dangerous (Quran 2:219), and finally prohibited (Quran 5:90).

¹³ *Sahadah* is the public confession of faith: *There is no god but Allah, and Muhammad is the Messenger of Allah*. At this early period, it had not yet acquired the above creedal formulation, but a public profession of like content was nevertheless required for full admission into the citizenship of the nation.

¹⁴ *Salat* is the word used to refer to public ritualized prayer (a believer’s most important obligation next to that of belief). Although prayer plays a central role in all major religions, nowhere else is the standard obligation of praying with a pure heart accompanied by so great an emphasis on public performance and external rituals (indeed, the opposite values of privacy and interiority are urged within Christianity). In effect, this emphasis transforms prayer into a largely social act through which individuals can be brought into a uniform state of mind (about five half-hour sessions per day). Its preparatory rites would eventually include purity of intention, recital of the *Bismillah* (“In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful”), and ritual ablution (a requirement that became increasingly elaborate with the accrual of tradition and to which was later appended the usage of a prayer carpet). As for the prayer itself, it was originally directed toward the city of Jerusalem (following the pattern of Daniel 6:10) but was later changed to Mecca (Quran 2:142). The Quran requires that three prayers be performed daily, one at sunrise, another at sunset, and another at midday (Quran 11:114). As yet, there was no definitive answer to the question of why the requirement of daily prayer was moved from three to five, but in all likelihood it, too, owes its origin to the accrual of interpretive traditions around the Quran.

¹⁵ *Zakat* is better understood as a tax than almsgiving. It is not voluntary, and although a part of it is to be used for the relief of the poor, a part of it is also to be used to support public officials, the clergy, the government, and the army (Quran 9:60). The prophet nowhere provides any concrete regulations about which possessions are to be taxed, how much, or how the money is to be distributed. During his own lifetime, he managed these things as he saw fit, and it was left to his successors to provide for the fiscal organization of the nation (the precedents they set account for a major part of Islamic law, or Shariah).

oppressed. And surely Allah is able to assist them. Those who are driven from their homes without just cause except that they say: Our lord is Allah (Quran 22:39-40).

Muhammad also attempted to strengthen unity and reduce opposition by converting as many people as possible to Islam. The earliest converts were always disenfranchised individuals, families, or clans. But even among the more well established, he very quickly succeeded in converting nearly all of them from tribal polytheism to the national religion of Allah. His greatest difficulty, however, lay with the Jews: they rejected his claim to prophetic status, and they were already secure in their possession of a national identity as well as in their monotheistic faith in YHWH. Moreover, they were a danger to the faith of the rest of the community, because they were not afraid to challenge the things he said whenever they came into contradiction with their own scriptures. At this point, therefore, a tremendous theological effort was made to recast the whole of biblical religion, and oracles poured forth which sought to challenge both Judaism and Christianity.¹⁶ These religions were viewed as corruptions of Islam, which was first revealed to Adam, and subsequently had experienced seasons of falling away and seasons of restoration through prophets like Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus. In terms of practice, Muhammad shifted the annual season of fasting from one day on Yom Kippur to the whole month of Ramadan, and he shifted the orientation of prayer from the temple in Jerusalem to the Kaaba in Mecca. The point, of course, was to argue that those who were rejecting his message had fallen away and that a final season of restoration was at hand in the confrontation between the Jews and Muhammad. In the end, while the prophet's attempt to re-write biblical history did much to put historical ground under the feet of those who were already his followers, it did little to secure the confidence of the Jews (or still later the Christians). His recasting of the Bible had shown only token familiarity with certain classical passages, and it exhibited very little knowledge of its history and almost no understanding of its practices or theology (the most glaring omission being the absence of temple worship, the centerpiece of both Judaism and Christianity). Muhammad's attitude toward those who preferred their own scriptures to his messages did not go unaddressed in his oracles: *And when there came to them a Book from Allah verifying that which they have (the Bible)... they disbelieved it. So Allah's curse is on disbelievers. Evil is that for which they sell their souls—that they should deny that which Allah has revealed, out of envy that*

¹⁶ **The Islamic View of Christianity:** Muhammad was far more familiar with Judaism than Christianity. Accordingly, he brought the charge of polytheism against the doctrine of the Trinity (curiously, he thought it referred to God, Mary, and their son Jesus). As a result, Jesus' divinity was strenuously denied: he was viewed as one of the prophets, and his gospel was viewed as a call to return to Islam. Although he retained the idea of the virgin birth and miracles, he denied the idea of the crucifixion and resurrection (claiming instead that Jesus only appeared to have died but was actually taken up into heaven as a reward for his righteousness).

Allah should send down of his grace on whomsoever of his servants he pleases. So they incur wrath upon wrath, and there is an abasing chastisement for the disbelievers (Quran 2:89-90).

The Military Career of Muhammad (624 - 632)

An outbreak of war was inevitable. The followers of the new religion had clearly been driven from their homeland of Mecca. The raids being conducted on that city's caravans were clearly coming from Medina. Both sides began the process of entering into tribal alliances in order to build up their military, one to conduct the raids and the other to defend against them. The first shedding of blood took place during what has become known as the Nakhla Raid (January of 624). The prophet had sent a group of men disguised as religious pilgrims to do some spying, but upon encountering an unusually rich caravan they plundered it and killed one of its men (a double transgression, since they not only killed a man but did it during one of the holy months). Although the prophet initially disapproved, he later gave sanction to the act: *They ask you concerning fighting in the sacred months. Say: Fighting in it is a great offense... but a greater offense with Allah is to prevent mankind from following the way of Allah, to disbelieve in him, to prevent access to the Mosque at Mecca, and to drive out its inhabitants, and persecution is worse than killing. And they will not cease fighting you until they turn you back from your religion, if they can. And whoever of you turns back from his religion and dies while an unbeliever... they are companions of the Fire: therein they will abide (Quran 2:217).*

The news of the raid, the killing, and the desecration of the holy month spread like wildfire. What is more, the ordinary avenues of reconciliation had been closed off, since the prophet was asserting that the attempts to inhibit the spread his religion justified his followers in breaking tribal custom and taking human life. An army was therefore dispatched to protect the caravans, and the prophet's army was sent out to meet them at a place called Badr. The Battle of Badr was quickly over, about three hundred Muslims winning a decisive victory over about a thousand Meccans (March 13, 624). Afterward, the nation of Islam acquired a reputation as the most significant military power on the peninsula and was readily joined by large numbers of families, clans, and tribes. Again, however, their victory was not welcomed by the Jews, particularly those belonging to the influential tribe known as the Banu Qaynuqa. Although sources differ as to who did what to who, it ended with the prophet laying siege to the tribe, followed by their surrender, expulsion from the city, and the appropriation of their property (the prophet took for himself a fifth of the spoils). The following oracle was revealed: *Those who disbelieve, neither their wealth nor their children will avail them aught against Allah, and they will be fuel for the fire... Say to those who disbelieve: you shall be*

vanquished, and driven together to hell... Indeed there was a sign for you in the two hosts which met together in encounter [a reference to the Battle of Badr] (Quran 3:10-13).

The Muslim-Quraysh War lasted from 624 – 630. All of the battles that occurred during this period were either against neighboring tribes or the city of Mecca. As a result, the new nation acquired a tremendous amount of spoil of which the prophet began the custom of keeping a fifth, and also that of regularly acquiring new wives (at about the rate of two per year [at one point, he married and divorced three women in a single year]). At this point, voices of protest began to be raised, some claiming that his domestic lifestyle was inappropriate and others that he was spreading religion through the power of the sword (both of these charges were met with a divine rebuttal in the Quran).¹⁷ As a result, the prophet found himself warring on two fronts, one foreign and one domestic. In regards to the former, a complete list of its battles would probably number upward of seventy, and scholars are frequently able to cross reference traditions contained about them in the Hadith with passages in the Quran. In regards to the latter, he reduced opposition to his rule by getting rid of the two remaining tribes of Jews living in Medina (the Nadir and the Qurayzah). In the case of the former, he simply expelled them and appropriated their property. In case of the latter, he beheaded the men and distributed their women and children to his fellow Muslims (it was on this occasion that he acquired his first concubine, a Jewish woman named Rayhanah). After many years of jihad, the prophet's army finally conquered Mecca (January of 630). His men entered the shrine and destroyed the idols of the Kaaba, dedicating it solely to the worship of Allah (it is now known as the Mosque al-Haram). Muhammad triumphantly declared: *Truth has arrived and falsehood has perished, for falsehood is by its nature bound to perish (Quran 17:81).*

After the war, Muhammad remained very active, but he had only a few years left to live (630 – 632). All throughout these years, he continued to marry and lead various military expeditions. Meanwhile, tribes came from all over and joined themselves to the nation for economic, political, and religious reasons. Soon, he

¹⁷ **Personalized oracles:** The Quran contains numerous passages in which divine revelation condescends as it were to address matters touching the personal life of the prophet. The nation is told that the prophet is their exemplar (Quran 33:21). When he speaks, they should follow his instruction and not make decisions for themselves (Quran 33:36). When they visit his home, they should do so only when invited, and they should not stay for after dinner conversation (Quran 33:53). They should not annoy the prophet (Quran 33:57). They are told that he is morally justified in having many wives, concubines, and any other woman he might desire (Quran 33:50). They are told that he is morally justified in marrying his daughter-in-law Zaynab (Quran 33:35 – 40). A certain group of oracles encourage his wives to stay married, but also grants them the freedom to get a divorce, and then adds the threat of punishment if their conduct be found improper (proper conduct is specified as being obedient to their husband, cautious in speaking to other men, remaining within their homes, and covering up their beauty [Quran 33:28-34]). Another group of oracles threatens those who are spreading evil reports about the faith with the death penalty if they do not desist (Quran 33:60-61).

was the most powerful man in the Arabian Peninsula, and a strong sense of national superiority had begun to create missionary zeal for the spread of Islam: *You are the best nation raised up for men: you enjoin good and forbid evil and you believe in Allah* (Quran 3:110). Accordingly, the prophet's gaze now turned north toward the civilized world of the Persians and the Byzantines. A number of traditions say he sent emissaries to the rulers of these empires, asking them to repent of their idolatry and convert to Islam (the rulers would be Khosraw of Persia and Heraclius of Byzantium). When they declined his offer, it wasn't long before he found grounds for the use of military force. Hitherto, he at least paid lip service to the idea that violence should only be used in self-defense, though his application of this rule frequently betrayed an eagerness to detect injury, and it is difficult to avoid the impression that his purpose in enunciating it was not so much to avoid war as to justify it. Now, however, his policy became explicitly aggressive, for he asserted that divine sanction had been given to break previously established treaties and slaughter the pagans (that is, unless they should convert): *A declaration of immunity from Allah and his Messenger to those of the idolaters with whom you made an agreement... Allah is free from liability to the idolaters, and so is his Messenger... If you repent, it will be better for you; and if you turn away, then know that you will not escape Allah... When the sacred months have passed, slay the idolaters wherever you may find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush. But if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor rate, leave their way free. Surely Allah is forgiving and merciful* (Quran 9:1-4). Jews and Christians were spared the judgment of wholesale slaughter, but it was clear that they, too, could expect to face military opposition until they were ready to submit to the governance of Islam: *Fight against those who—despite having been vouchsafed revelation—do not believe either in Allah or the Last Day, and do not consider forbidden that which Allah and his Prophet have forbidden, and do not follow the religion of truth, til they pay the exemption tax with a willing hand, after having been humbled. And the Jews say “Ezra is God's son,” while the Christians say “The Christ is God's son.” Such are the sayings which they utter with their mouths, following in spirit assertions made in earlier times by people who denied the truth (i.e., the pagans). May God destroy them! How perverted are their minds! They have taken their rabbis and their monks—as well as the Christ, son of Mary—for their lords beside Allah, although they had been bidden worship none but the One God, save whom there is no deity* (Quran 9:29-31). As for Muslims, they were promised paradise if they should die in the cause of jihad, and threatened with perdition if they should turn back: *Surely Allah has bought from the believers their persons and their property—theirs in return is the Garden. They fight in Allah's way, so they slay and are slain* (Quran 9:111); *He who disbelieves in Allah after his having believed, not he who is*

*compelled while his heart is at rest on account of faith, but he who opens his breast to disbelief—on these is the wrath of Allah, and they shall have a grievous chastisement (Quran 16:106).*¹⁸

The prophet's call to aggressive jihad against the civilized world was one of the last things he said to his followers. This does not in itself prove that every instance of the use of military force today is aggressive rather than defensive. Rather, the point is that he set a precedent for defensive as well as aggressive warfare. Accordingly, those of his followers who advocate the use of violence are upholding rather than departing from his example (something that cannot be said of those who use violence in the name of Christ). Although Muhammad's intention was undoubtedly to bring war to the civilized world, he was prevented from doing so by an unexpected turn of events that would leave his people without a leader. In the year 632, Muhammad resolved to make what would be his first and last pilgrimage to the Kaaba (the pilgrimage traditionally referred to as the *Hajj*). He was accompanied by a large number of followers as he made the journey, so that everything he said and did on his journey might set a precedent for future generations. This, in turn, became the fifth pillar of Islam, requiring that every able-bodied believer imitate the prophet's farewell pilgrimage at least once in his life. The prophet began with an elaborate series of preparations, putting him in a state of dedication called *ihram* (i.e., he bathed, put on proper attire, practiced various forms of self-denial, and performed various ritual actions). The ritual proper took place in two stages, the easiest of which was called the little pilgrimage (i.e., visiting the shrine, kissing the black stone, and passing seven times around the Kaaba), and the hardest of which was called the greater pilgrimage (i.e., walking seven times between the hills of Safa and Marwa, climbing Mount Rahma, picking up pebbles on Muzdalifah and throwing them at the stone pillars in the city of Mina, participating in a sacrificial meal, and once more kissing the black stone and passing seven times around the Kaaba). At the time, no explanation was given for the meaning of these various rituals, and so the justification for performing them rested entirely on the authority of the prophet (later on, reasons for them would be furnished *post facto* by various Muslim theologians). Shortly after making the pilgrimage, the prophet's health deteriorated. He had headaches and fevers, and he stopped rotating between wives (though he did stay with his favorite, Aishah). Within just a few days, he was dead.

¹⁸ **The Punishment for Apostasy** is said to be perdition, but nowhere do we find a command to meet out the death penalty in the Quran. Nevertheless, religious jurists very quickly arrived at the conclusion that this was implicit in the teaching of the prophet, for he had already decreed the death penalty for polytheists, and an apostate was deemed worse than a polytheist. Moreover, this interpretation found ample support in the Hadith: *Allah's Messenger said, "The blood of a Muslim who confesses that none has the right to be worshipped but Allah and that I am His Messenger, cannot be shed except in three cases: for murder, adultery, and for the one who reverts from Islam and leaves the Muslims"* (Bukhari, volume 9, #17).

The Rise and Fall of the Islamic Empire

In just a few decades, a single man, Muhammad, had founded a new religion and united the scattered tribes of Arabia into the powerful nation of Islam. It's hardly surprising that many came to believe he indeed was the prophet ordained by God.

The religious center of the nation was at Mecca. It was regarded by Muslims as the most ancient habitation on the earth, the place where the first man and woman were sent after their fall from the heavenly garden, where the biblical patriarchs built the first house of worship, and where true religion was restored in the days of Muhammad. True religion was belief in the god who loves the righteous and hates the sinner (*Allah*), observance of the five pillars (*shahadah*, *salat*, *zakat*, *siyam*, and *hajj*), and life within the traditional mores of tribal culture (a very gregarious and showy commitment to family, community, and hospitality).

The political center of the nation was at Medina. Here was the palace of the prophet, the place from which he exercised governance over domestic affairs through the enforcing of *sharia* and provided for its expansion into foreign lands through the waging of *jihad* (often regarded as the sixth pillar of Islam). Now, we will look at the work of his successors, which consisted primarily of preserving his oracles, codifying his laws, and expanding his nation from Arabia into the Middle East (hitherto dominated by the medieval empires of Persia and Byzantium).

The Rashidun Caliphs

Muhammad's death was a blow to the nation. He had failed to make any public decision about a successor. In spite of his many wives, he had no sons (though he did have four daughters). His closest male relative was his cousin, Ali, who was married to his daughter Fatimah (together, they produced the only male offspring of the prophet, his grandsons Hasan and Hussein). A tremendous struggle for power ensued: numerous tribes felt his death dissolved their bonds of loyalty and they stopped paying their taxes.

While Muhammad's family members were busy burying him, a group of leaders gathered in secret to elect a successor, eventually settling on his longtime friend, Abu Bakr. Later, the family challenged this decision, arguing that the prophet had personally named his successor as Ali. The leaders claimed it was too

late to reverse their decision, and so the seeds of a schism were sown between the party of Abu (the majority) and the party of Ali (the minority). The former believed succession was a matter of election and that the successor was simply to act as the prophet's representative (they called him a *caliph*). The latter believed succession was a matter of inheritance and that the successor had a share in the prophet's sinlessness and divine excellence (they called him an *imam*). Although the two parties did not immediately embark upon a formal split, their differences would eventually give rise to Sunni and Shiite Islam (each of which finds support for their claims in different Hadith).

For now, however, the nation would enjoy a thirty year period of unity under four caliphs: Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman, and Ali (called *Rashidun*, or "Rightly Guided"). The first was Abu Bakr, who ruled for two years from 632 to 634. In his inaugural address, he clearly defined his role as caliph of the prophet: *Obey me so long as I obey Allah and his Messenger. But if I disobey Allah and his Messenger, you owe me no obedience.* Though short, his administration was one of the most successful in the history of the nation: at home, he secured the observance of *sharia* (in particular, the paying of taxes); abroad, he defeated those tribes that attempted to rebel by waging *jihad* (the so-called Ridda Wars, 632 – 633).¹⁹ Having thus secured the whole land of Arabia, he sent his general, Khalid ibn al-Walid, to conduct war with the Persians and the Byzantines (both of whom had worn each other out in a protracted battle for control of the Middle East). A simple message was sent to both civilizations: *Submit to Islam and be safe. Or agree to the payment of the tax, and you and your people will be under our protection. Otherwise, you will have only yourself to blame for the consequences, for I bring men who desire death as ardently as you desire life.* The Persians were the first to decline, and in a lightning swift campaign the armies of the caliph conquered the richest province of their empire (that is, modern day Iraq, 633). The Byzantines were the next to decline, and in an equally swift campaign, they suffered heavy losses and were forced to retreat to the fortified city of Damascus (an act whereby they conceded the occupation of Palestine, 634). It began to look as though the whole medieval world was poised for submission to Islam.

The Caliphate of Umar (634 – 644)

Abu Bakr did not reign for very long, but he was very far seeing. In the first place, he knew that it would be important to produce a written collection of the

¹⁹ **The Ridda Wars** (i.e., the "apostasy wars") are interesting, in part because they were waged against tribes led by rival prophets. Even during the lifetime of Muhammad, his claims to exclusive prophethood were rejected by various tribes of Bedouin, each of which claimed to have access to revelation of their own through such prophets as Musaylama, Saf, and Tulayha. The battle of prophet against prophet was short-lived, however, and they were all defeated at the Battle of Aqraba in 633.

prophet's oracles, though there is disagreement about whether he was the first to begin this task (so the Sunni), or whether it had already been accomplished by Ali (so the Shiites).²⁰ He was nevertheless the first ruler to explicitly appoint a successor, his chief adviser and father-in-law Umar ibn al-Khattab.

Umar is highly regarded by Sunnis but negatively regarded by Shiites (being thought of as a usurper of the rightful rule of Ali). In either case, he was an extremely influential ruler who made numerous important reforms in the government of the nation. Although he kept the capital at Medina, he was the first to propose beginning the calendar with the Hijra. He also created new departments of government, filling these posts with close associates of the prophet and giving them high salaries. Finally, he developed a system for interpreting the rules of law, instituting a police force, and keeping public records.

In foreign affairs, his rule saw the organization of the empire into provincial governments and the conquest of new territories which even today are associated with Islam. He created a tremendous incentive to military conquest by allowing the army's officers to keep nearly half of the plunder acquired while on campaign. Beyond that, however, it is not exactly clear how personally involved he was in these conquests, for his generals exercised a great deal of autonomy, and the capital city was six hundred miles away from the nearest front. In any case, the nation immediately began to expand along its three main fronts: the Levant, Persia, and Egypt. The conquest of these territories took place over a period of ten years, beginning in the year 635. The following are usually accounted as being among the most notable events: (1) the taking of Jerusalem and the building of a wooden mosque on the site of the temple mount; (2) the taking of Caesarea and the burning of the great library founded by Origen; (3) the taking of Alexandria and the burning of the famous library founded by Ptolemy I (according to one famous tradition, the caliph justified the act by declaring: *If these books are in agreement with the Quran, we have no need of them; and if these are opposed to the Quran, destroy them*).

In a single decade, the Muslims had taken over the entire Middle East, completely conquering the empire of Persia as well as three fourths of the empire of Byzantium. It was now the largest empire in the world. What were its policies toward the subjugated minority? Contrary to popular belief, it did not engage in forced conversion but pursued a program of tolerant segregation. At this early period, it was still widely believed that Islam was a religion of the Arabs, by the Arabs, and for the Arabs. Accordingly, a great effort was made to ensure that its

²⁰ **The Preservation of Quran** was undertaken by the prophet's followers, who either memorized whole chapters, or wrote them down on palm leaves, wood, stone, bones, and leather. A number of individuals are specifically mentioned in the tradition as having worked as recorders of oracles, the most important of which was the prophet's personal scribe, Zayd ibn Thabit.

homeland on the peninsula be exclusively inhabited by Arabic Muslims. As for the realm beyond, it is true that a small number of tribal polytheists were forcibly converted, but there were no forcible conversions of the larger number of Zoroastrians, Jews, or Christians. Indeed, the winning of many converts could only mean a decrease of tax revenues and an increase of foreign influence in the government. So, the conquerors did not seek to convert or even intermix with the local population, but rather, to exercise military rule over them from distant camps, garrisons, and colonial cities. The conquered were essentially treated as second class citizens: they were responsible for paying taxes, denied the right of serving in the upper ranks of government, but exempted from military service and granted the right to exercise a large amount of political and religious autonomy. As a result, many subjected peoples enjoyed a better situation than the one they left behind, and the new rule was even welcomed by a large number of Zoroastrians, Jews,²¹ and non-Chalcedonian Christians²² (many of whom had suffered heavy taxation and periodic persecution under the rule of the Byzantines). A Christian writer in Syria roundly declared: *The God of vengeance delivered us out of the hands of the Byzantines by means of the Arabs.*

The Caliphate of Uthman (644 – 656)

Caliph Umar's reign came to a sudden and violent end (he was assassinated by a disgruntled slave who had been hired by the Persians to get rid of him on his trip to Mecca during the Hajj). He was buried at the nation's second holiest site, next to the graves of Muhammad and Abu Bakr (the *Al-Masjid an-Nabawi*, or "the Prophet's Mosque"). Although he did not himself name a successor, he had made provision for such an appointment through a council of six elders, and they chose a son-in-law of the prophet named Uthman ibn Affan.

In many ways, these first two caliphs reflect the different sides of Muhammad. For example, the prophet was a man of austere religiosity, but he also shared the tribal culture's flavor for luxury and hedonism. The former tendency was more characteristic of Umar, but the latter was more characteristic of Uthman. He was the first caliph to begin ruling like a king, building for himself a palace and

²¹ **The Jews** had been let alone for a long time, but they began to experience persecution after they sided with the Persians against the Byzantines in a last ditch effort to regain access to the land of Israel (a protracted conflict that lasted from 614 to 625). When the Byzantine Emperor Heraclius retook the city of Jerusalem, he drove off, forcibly converted, or massacred all that remained of the Jews. When Caliph Umar took Jerusalem, he was far more generous: not killing or imposing forcible conversions, but allowing the Jews to live in the city of Jerusalem.

²² **The Non-Chalcedonian Christians** are those who rejected the classical dogmatic formula of one person with two natures. As a general rule, they were not Greeks, but Hebrews, Arabs, and Egyptians. Religiously, they were either Monophysite (which maintained that a single nature compounded of divine and human elements was found in Christ), or Nestorian (which upheld the two natures, but drew a sharp distinction between the person of the eternal Son and that of the historical Jesus). Today, the Muslim program of moderate religious tolerance is attested by the continued existence of the Coptic Church in Egypt and the Church of the East in Syria.

taking many wives. Although independently wealthy, he was much freer about making withdrawals from the public treasury, and he also began using it as a common fund from which citizens could take loans at interest. He increased the salaries of public officers, but he also gave many public offices to the members of his family (the Umayyads) as well as to the wealthy tribal heads of Mecca (the Quraysh). These latter measures were particularly controversial, for they were clearly intended to put political power into the hands of kith and kin (both of whom had been among the earliest enemies of the prophet Muhammad).

Uthman's foreign policy was less aggressive than that of his predecessor. Nevertheless, he was the first to create a navy and expand beyond the Levant into the Mediterranean Sea. He also expanded beyond Persia into Armenia, and beyond Egypt into North Africa (inhabited by tribes known as Berbers). One of the most important consequences of this latter expansion was the birth of a prosperous slave trade in Africa. As we have already seen, the prophet was himself not averse to taking prisoners of war as slaves. Nevertheless, the subsequent availability of human property had been drastically reduced by his prohibition of enslaving Muslims, or even Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. The neighboring continent, however, was largely inhabited by pagan tribes, so his successors were the first to begin the practice of trafficking in men and women. Their method of controlling the slave population was to castrate the men and to take the women as wives or concubines (in this way, their offspring could then be regarded as Muslims).²³

Undoubtedly, the most important achievement of this caliph was the production of a definitive version of Quran. Although the prophet's oracles had been memorized by associates, written down by scribes, and gathered into a single collection, disputes had already begun to arise in the far flung colonies of the empire over the proper pronunciation, order, and even content of certain oracles. Uthman responded by appointing a group of men to review existing materials, evaluate their differences, and produce a final critical edition. Thus, by this period, it is apparent that a number of different collections existed, but the most authoritative collection was that of a wife of the prophet named Hafsa, while the editorial process of reconciling all of this was given to the prophet's personal secretary Zayid ibn Thabit.²⁴ Although it has become fashionable to entertain

²³ **The Treaty of Baqt** provides the earliest documentation of the Muslim slave trade in Africa (ca. 652). The treaty was drawn up in order to establish relations between the Muslims living in Egypt and the Makurian Kingdom in Nubia (one of the few nations to resist conquest, and recently, a nominal convert to Christianity). Among the treaty's many provisions, it offers goods in exchange for an annual importation of 360 slaves to Egypt (such slaves would be taken from the interior of the continent).

²⁴ **The Sana'a Manuscript** is probably the most important witness to this process, discovered in Yemen in 1972. It is one of the oldest manuscripts in existence for the Quran (dated to before 671). The parchment of the manuscript contains two layers of text (a lower one that has been washed off, and an upper one that is written over it). The fact that metal was used in the original ink has enabled the recovery of the erased text. The upper text conforms almost perfectly to the standard version, but the lower text contains a significant number of variations. What kinds of

radical skepticism about the integrity of ancient texts, all the available evidence suggests that the process of textual preservation was of the highest possible order, and that the work which has been handed down to us is substantially that of Muhammad. Nevertheless, an instruction was given to burn all variant manuscripts, and copies of the authorized version were distributed to Medina, Kufa, Basra, and Damascus. This had the effect of enshrining, as it were, the dialect of Quraysh within Arabic (subsequently regarded as a divine language, and therefore, essentially untranslatable). All except the ninth oracle were prefaced by a phrase known as the *B'smalah*: "In the name of Allah, the Beneficent, the Merciful." They were organized, not by chronology, but rather by length, and eventually came down to 6,666 verses (or *ayahs*), divided into 114 chapters (or *surahs*). Accordingly, the critical study of this text has largely consisted in assigning given oracles to a specific period in the prophet's life, the broadest divisions of which consist of his ministry in Mecca and his ministry in Medina. Unfortunately, the monumental effort at standardization still failed to achieve the desired unity, for the ancient custom of using the written word as an aid to verbal memorization meant that the standard text still failed to employ vowels or punctuation, and this in turn gave rise to variant readings of ambiguous words, phrases, or sentences (efforts to aid standardization by adding vowels and diacritical marks date to as recently as 1923). Although such a small amount of variation might appear unimportant, we have to remember that one of the fundamental features of this religion is that the *logos* became a book, not a person. In other words, a greater degree of perfection is demanded by Islam for the Quran than by Christianity for the Bible (in all fairness, however, a perfectionist attitude toward scripture can be found among both Christians and Muslims).

The United Empire

As we have seen, the choosing of the prophet's successor did not go unchallenged. A small faction still believed that the rightful ruler of the nation should be his closest male relative, Ali. Although the rule of others was tolerated for awhile, the recent caliph's attempt to put political power into the hands of the prophet's former enemies was the last straw. Loyalists murdered Uthman and proclaimed the caliphate of Ali in 656 (a claim that was rejected by the now displaced Umayyads).

variations do they reveal? Although a few variations are found in wording, they are not such as to significantly alter the meaning of the passage. Most of the variations occur in the area of order, spelling, and style of the script. This suggests two conclusions: (1) textual variations did in fact exist; (2) but these textual variations were not very significant (nevertheless, this is a legitimate challenge to the idea that every element in the book should be regarded as a perfect record of the deity's *ipsissima verba*).

As a result, Ali's four year reign was beset by civil war, often referred as the first *Fitna* (or trial, 656 – 661). Although the new caliph had not himself organized the coup, he nevertheless found himself opposed by factions that refused to recognize his leadership and demanded blood ransom for the life of Uthman. His supporters were called the *Shia* (or factionalists, ultimately making up about a tenth of the population, and now largely concentrated in Iraq and Iran). His opponents were called the *Sunni* (or traditionalists, ultimately making up about nine tenths of the population, and now very widespread throughout the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe, and America). For the first time, armed warfare erupted between Muslims, and to this day other wars have periodically erupted between Shi'ites and Sunnis (the oldest and largest denominations of Islam).

Although Ali held the title of caliph, his followers would later refer to him as the first imam (i.e., true leader). He was religiously fervent, removing officials that had been appointed through nepotism and providing for an equal distribution of wealth throughout the community. Because of the intense opposition to his rule, he moved the capital of the nation to Kufa in Iraq (i.e., outside Arabia, and away from the shrine of the Kaaba and the city of Muhammad). After much fighting, both sides became discouraged about the loss of life, and it was agreed that a group should be appointed to peaceably decide the matter of succession between Ali and Muawiyah (the next Umayyad). This greatly angered the most radical supporters of Ali, who subsequently split away from both communities and became known as the Kharijites (i.e., “the Outsiders”). This group believed the question of leadership should not be decided by heredity (as with the Shi'ites) or by arbitration (as with the Sunnis). Instead, it should be decided by moral impeccability and victory in battle (both regarded as signs of favor from Allah). They were the first sect to assert that their opponents were not even true Muslims, using this assertion to justify unlimited acts of violence against both Shi'ites and Sunnis (such an assertion would subsequently be known as *takfir*)²⁵ In response to the rise of radicalism, another minor denomination of thought eventually appeared called the Murjites (i.e., “the Postponers”). According to their teaching, the questions facing

²⁵ **The Kharijites** tended to draw their people from among the lower classes of society, each of which elected a local leader from among their own members. They observed a strict literalism when it came to scripture, the greatest possible rigor in keeping the five pillars, and waged jihad on all other groups through isolated acts of violence, associating martyrdom with immediate translation into paradise. For these reasons, they are often regarded as the earliest expression of radical or terrorist Islam. Originally this group was declared heretical, not because they were violent per se, but because they perpetrated acts of violence outside the ordinary chains of authority. Nevertheless, it is clear that their purpose in doing so was to challenge the legitimacy of the established authority, and so it is not surprising to learn that these methods were eventually taken up by conservative groups operating from within the fold of the Sunni and the Shia. Today, radicalism can be found within all mainstream groups, but those who prefer to dissociate themselves from such activities refer to them as “Kharijites” (e.g., the label has been applied and denied in connection with groups like al-Qaeda and ISIS). Modern communities directly descended from the Kharijites are found in Zanzibar and especially Oman.

the community did not admit of a sure answer, and so the most responsible course of action was to postpone judgment (they also asserted that it was impossible to judge who was and was not a true believer, and urged that such judgments should be left in the hands of Allah). An obvious problem with this approach is that it reduced its adherents to passivity in political affairs and to a tentative acceptance of whatever the more active members of the community have seen fit to bring about (for example, this group acquiesced, without either accepting or rejecting the rule of the Umayyads). In short, this group lacked an identity, and it's understandable if other believers felt they were fence-sitting (indeed, the only thing they really regarded as an unforgivable sin was high-handed idolatry, or *shirk*).²⁶

The Umayyad Dynasty (Damascus, 661 – 750)

The radicals eventually murdered Ali. He was struck down while praying in a mosque, and after being entombed in the city of Najaf, it became the center of Shi'ite Islam. Thereafter, a brief struggle for the rule of the nation arose between Hasan (the eldest son of Ali), and Muawiyah (the next in line from the Umayyads). After only a few months, the former chose to stand down, but sources differ as to why: some say he was paid off and decided to retire from public office (so the Sunni); other say he just wanted to avoid bloodshed, but still had designs to resume public office (so the Shi'ite). In either case, he finished out his days in luxury and sensuality at the city of Medina (taking upward of 60 wives, and upward of 300 concubines). Although not officially in charge of the nation, his followers still regarded him as the second imam, and therefore, as the true authority in all matters of religious practice (i.e., because he alone had inherited the spiritual qualities of the prophet Muhammad). Thus, while the nation was for all practical purpose under the authority of the caliphate of the Umayyads, it was still divided between Sunnis and Shi'ites (and the more radical Kharijites).

Muawiyah ruled from 661 to 680 (Hasan, meanwhile, was poisoned by one of his wives). Muawiyah was a very successful caliph, but more a politician than a religious figure (he and his family only converted when it became expedient to do so). He was deeply resented by the Shi'ites, but tangible opposition only came from the Kharijites (consisting in isolated acts of terrorism). In domestic affairs, he established a new capital at Damascus, thereby moving the imperial heartland from the rural desert to the urban Middle East, and also began imitating the

²⁶ **The Murjites** did not last for very long. While their respect for freedom and tolerance may seem commendable to westerners, it can hardly be claimed that these principles were in step with the precedents laid down by the Quran and the Hadith. Nevertheless, their teachings were not wholly without influence, and later theologians absorbed some of their ideas in the doctrine of *irja* (i.e., restraint). This doctrine asserts the right of believers to withhold judgment on doubtful matters (i.e., matters not explicitly dealt with in the Quran or Hadith). While it might seem that the matter of who ought to rule the nation is a prime case in point, the postponement of this question is not practical feasible, and so one is forced to take sides with either the Hadith of the Sunni or the Hadith of the Shia.

patterns laid down by the Byzantines. In foreign affairs, he continued to expand the nation through warfare, extending further west into Africa, further east into Persia, and conquering the islands of Cyprus and Rhodes. From these islands on the Mediterranean Sea, he was able to bypass the Taurus Mountains, laying siege to the capital of Byzantium, the great city of Constantinople (674 – 678). The inability to take the city marks the first halt in the advance of Islam, and therefore, posed a significant challenge to the idea of their military supremacy as a sign of the favor of Allah (in fact, the city would keep Muslims out of Eastern Europe for the remainder of the Middle Ages).

At home, the caliph created tremendous opposition by trying to establish a dynasty. His opponents had little doubt that the increasing corruption of the caliphate was the reason why the nation had fallen out of divine favor and was now unable to conquer the Byzantines. Therefore, when the Sunni gave the rule of the nation to Muawiyah's son, Yazid (the sixth caliph), the Shi'ites gave it to Ali's second son, Hussein (the third imam). Unfortunately, when the latter attempted to meet up with his support base at Kufa, he and his men were slaughtered at a town just south of Baghdad (Kerbala, 680). Afterwards, he and his men became the venerated objects of a martyr cult within Shi'ite Islam, thereby deepening the rupture with Sunni Islam. In fact, the rupture was so deep that it occasioned a number of changes in religious practice: for example, the adding of a new prototype, so that Muhammad was accompanied by Hussein (the prototype of the righteous sufferer); the adding of a new sacred time, so that Ramadan was accompanied by Muharram (during this month, dramas of the battle were re-enacted, and the people engaged in crying, beating their chests, and cutting themselves); and the adding of a new sacred place, so that the shrine of the Kaaba in Mecca was accompanied by the tomb of Hussein at Kerbala (a pilgrimage to the tomb of Hussein at Kerbala is said to merit the value of a thousand pilgrimages to the shrine of the Kaaba at Mecca). Finally, the martyrdom of Hussein was followed by a second civil war in which the caliphate of Yazid (operating out of Damascus) was opposed by a steward of the imamate named Abdullah ibn az-Zubayr (operating out of Medina [680 – 692]). All throughout this period, the struggle over who would rule the nation was accompanied by arguments over who was divinely appointed to serve as the next rightly-guided imam, and also accompanied by the expectation that whoever it was would abolish oppression and restore justice. Accordingly, this as yet unnamed individual acquired the messianic title *Mahdi* (or, "the rightly-guided one"). In the days ahead, the belief in an ideal ruler who would one day unite the nation of Islam crystallized into an end of eschatological hope found among the Shi'ites²⁷ as well as Sunnis²⁸.

Unfortunately, the projected messianic ruler was not forthcoming. While the hope of a future earthly kingdom was being born among the Shi'ites, the reality of

a present earthly kingdom was being established by the Sunnis. After the end of the second civil war, the old imperial order was re-established under caliph Abd al-Malik (685 – 705). Over the next half century, he and his descendants ruled not as charismatic leaders but as institutional office holders. They governed from a rich and well-guarded palace, their public lives consisting in receptions and deliberations, and their private lives spent in hunting, literature, music, wine, and girls. The military was no longer a band of relatives with a shared interest in vengeance or plunder but servants of the government whose salaries were furnished by the taxpayers. Although the first class citizenry was still made up of Arabs, they were increasingly outnumbered by a mass of second class citizens taken from among the Syrians, Egyptians, Persians, Africans, Turks, Indians, Chinese, and Gypsies. In the absence of ethnic unity, an effort was made to create something of a cultural unity. The first step in this direction was to make Arabic the language of international administration (though this was no longer the tribal Arabic of the Quran, but a more cosmopolitan form of Arabic that borrowed extensively from both Greek and Persian). Similarly, traditional forms of currency were replaced by coins minted by Muslims (whereas the older coinage was stamped with the image of the cross, the newer coinage was stamped with a quote from the Quran: *Say "He alone is God"*). This shift from visual to verbal symbolism on currency was part of a larger trend toward aniconism in all forms of art (although a categorical prohibition of representative art is not found in Quran, the prophet expressed negative views about it in various stories preserved in the Hadith). As a result, the artists of the period used classical techniques to produce highly ornate forms of decoration, consisting mostly of calligraphy, geometric forms, and foliage patterns (the usual objects of such adornment being ceramics, books, and architecture, most notably the Dome of the Rock²⁷). The most important legacy of the nation, however, came from their wars of conquest. By now, they were pushing their boundaries west into Spain (where they were known as Moors) and east as far as India and China (where they were known as Saracens). In spite of all these successes, however, they still failed to penetrate into the heartland of European Christendom as yet another attempt to take the city of Constantinople was turned back by the forces of the Byzantine emperor Leo III

²⁷ **The Dome of the Rock** was built in the city of Jerusalem in 691. Like most monumental architecture, it was more symbolic than functional, the purpose being to serve as a visible demonstration of the nation's supremacy over Judaism and Christianity. The building enshrines a large rock, the summit of Mt. Zion, and the traditional sight of such events as the binding of the Isaac and the building of the Temple (it is also regarded as the place where Muhammad ascended into Heaven on his famous Night Journey). Known as the Foundation Stone, it had already served as a place of pilgrimage for many hundreds of years by the Jews before it was taken over by the Muslims (it is still visited by Jews, particularly on Yom Kippur). Beneath the stone is a large cavern known as the Well of the Souls (sometimes regarded as the traditional resting place of the Ark of the Covenant).

(717 – 718).²⁸ Although quite unintentionally, these events set the stage for the birth of an independent civilization in Western Europe, which was now able to detach itself from its weakened overlord in Eastern Europe. All that was needed was for it to establish its religious independence (something it had already laid foundations for under the bishop of Rome) to withstand the encroachment of Islam (something it achieved under the Frankish king Charles Martel at the Battle of Tours (732)). The victory of Charles brought an end to the march of Islam and was the first step toward uniting all of western Europe, first as the Kingdom of the Franks (under his son Pepin in 751), and then as the Holy Roman Empire (under his grandson Charlemagne in 800). The Pope and the Carolingians would grow increasingly powerful, and the feudal empire they created would eventually seek to vindicate its claim to religious and political sovereignty by reclaiming the Mediterranean world for Christendom in a series of campaigns called the Crusades. For now, however, it was enough that the west's resistance to conquest stood as living proof against the claim that the whole world had been divinely predestined for submission to Islam.

The Abbasid Dynasty (Baghdad, 750 – 945)

This period began as a result of a rising tide of opposition to the worldliness of the caliphate. By now, it had become an ideology of the caliphs that the status quo of their authority was divinely sanctioned, not by virtue of their fidelity to the Quran, but by virtue of the fact that everything on earth was predestined by Allah. Although the simple minded accepted this idea without question, a not insignificant number of independent minds began arguing for the idea of free will, and for the concomitant ideas of responsibility and accountability (with the end in view of criticizing the caliphate).²⁹ This marked the birth of *kalam* (scholastic

²⁸ **The Religious Reforms of Leo III** (the “Syrian”): The eastern emperor believed that the hand of divine providence could be detected in the continual persecution of the Byzantines by the Muslims. In order to restore his administration to divine favor, he undertook two religious reforms: (1) first, he sought to forcibly baptize dissidents within his community (mostly Jews and Montanists); (2) and second, he forbade the veneration of icons (smarting under the fact that a pagan nation was bringing the charge of idolatry against Christians). The theological controversy over the veneration of icons that ensued launched the public career of the last and greatest of the patristics, Saint John of Damascus (d. 749). A Christian monk living in the capital of the Umayyad Empire, he wrote the first sustained apologetic against Islam (*Conversation between a Saracen and a Christian*) as well as the first apologetic for the legitimate use of icons (*Apologetic Treatise against those Decrying the Holy Images*). He is widely regarded as the most important theologian between Augustine and Aquinas, producing a work of systematic theology called the *Fount of Wisdom*. His writing was one of the most important influences on the seventh ecumenical council, the last jointly acknowledged by both the eastern and the western church.

²⁹ **The Orthodox Islamic View of Predestination** affirms that the deity possesses foreknowledge of all that will happen, and also that he controls all that will happen by virtue of laws of cause-and-effect and reward-and-punishment which he has embedded in creation. Accordingly, man is free to determine his action but not free to determine the outcome of his action, for this is subject to the aforementioned laws. In general, it is asserted that these so operate that good works lead to good results and bad works lead to bad results, reinforcing the association between moral integrity and earthly success (and contributing to the formation and maintenance of social casts).

theology), the earliest school of which were the Qadarites (i.e., proponents of free will), and the earliest proponents of which were men like al-Hasan al-Basri (d. 728), Ghaylan al-Dimashqi (d. 732), and Abu Adb-Allah Makhul (d. ?). The rise of such thinking created a climate favorable to opponents of the status quo, which by now included a significant majority of non-Muslims, Kharijites, Shi'ites, and even Sunnis. Thus, when a dispute arose over the succession of the caliph, the nation found itself embroiled in a third civil war (744 – 750). In the end, the scepter passed to a man who called himself Al-Saffah (the Generous), a relative of the prophet's uncle Al-Abbas (from whom his descendants took their dynastic name, the Abbasids).

The Abbasid Revolution was more than just a change in the nation's rulers. The new administration postured itself as the one that would bring about the restoration of true Islam. This, of course, was an overstatement: the rulers were Sunnis, and nothing had been done to heal their division with the Murjites, Kharijites, and Shi'ites. Still, their caliphs were close relatives of the prophet, and they (at least the earlier ones) gave a good outward show of morals. Government positions were not given away to their own tribesmen, military power was used to protect rather than expand borders, and full citizenship was granted to people of all races (not just Arabs). As a symbol of these changes, they moved the center of their empire further east, building a new city called Baghdad on the borders of Iraq and Iran (a region known in antiquity as Khorasan, or "land of the sunrise"). By now, the nation had relaxed its efforts to penetrate into eastern and western Europe. Instead, it focused on absorbing the cultural riches of the Middle East, India, and China. It would eventually become the largest, richest, and most culturally diverse civilization in the world. Although the majority religion was Islam, there were a few enclaves which preserved Zoroastrianism, some larger enclaves of Judaism and Christianity, and now increasing contact with Hinduism and Taoism, along with Confucianism, Buddhism, and Manichaeism.

This period was culturally rich, and it is sometimes referred to as "the Golden Age of Islam." One of its most notable achievements was the production of the first comprehensive history of Islam, written by Ibn Ishaq in Baghdad around 755 AD. But the most numerous achievements are associated with the dynasty's fifth caliph, a Harun al-Rashid (786 – 809). In foreign affairs, he continued to wage war on Byzantium, but he entered into friendly relations with the Holy Roman Empire (famously exchanging gifts with Charlemagne). In domestic affairs, he was a patron of all forms of higher culture, building a massive library in the capital called The House of Wisdom. This quickly became the primary center of intellectual activity in the Middle Ages, the fruit of which came in the form of translations, commentaries, and fresh research. In literature, the most notable achievement was a voluminous anthology of eastern folklore,

eventually known as *1001 Nights*.³⁰ In scholarship, the most notable achievement was the translation of all the most important works of classical antiquity from Greek into Arabic (e.g., Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Hippocrates, Euclid, Archimedes, Plotinus, Galen, etc.). The translation of these works brought about a rebirth of classical learning and inspired the production of fresh work in mathematics, science, and philosophy. In mathematics, Roman numerals were replaced with Arab numerals, and the first systematic treatise on equations appeared (a book called “To Restore Broken Parts,” or *Al-Jabr*). In science, numerous advances were made in the field of optics, physics, medicine (e.g., the discovery of anesthesia, cauterization, and contagion), and engineering (e.g., the invention of the clock pendulum, magnetic compass, and astrolabe). In philosophy, new depths were explored in epistemology, ethics, and metaphysics by thinkers like Al-Kindi, al-Farabi, Avicenna, and Averroes. In religious thought, this period saw the first systematic attempt at doing rational theology, a practice known as *kalam*.³¹ In a similar vein, it also saw the systematization of sharia into different legal traditions, called *fiqh* (the five schools of law that are still with us today are the Hanafi, the Shafi’i, the Maliki, the Hanbali, and the Ja’fari). Finally, it saw the first attempts to produce a canonical collection of tradition about the life of the prophet, and in this way sought to provide a normative account of what could and could not be established by his example, also known as his *sunnah*.³²

³⁰ *1001 Nights* is a collection of more than three hundred stories, preserved from the folklore of countries from Egypt to India. These are set within an overarching narrative, according to which they were recited by a beautiful woman named Scheherazade to the Shahryar, king of the Persians (although a fictional story, it draws heavily on elements found in Baghdad during the reign of Caliph Harun al-Rashid, and so it is not surprising that the earliest extant copies of this text date to the early 9th century). The most famous stories from the collection are undoubtedly those of *Aladdin’s Wonderful Lamp*, *Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves*, and *The Seven Voyages of Sinbad*. It is all the more strange, therefore, that none of these were part of the original collection, but were added to the collection by a French translator in the year 1710.

³¹ **The Birth of Systematic Theology among Muslims:** As we have seen, rational reflection on religious faith began with the politically charged question of whether the status quo was the result of human freedom or divine predestination. But this in turn opened the door to more pressing questions concerning the rational grounds of Islam, and therefore, to the question of whether its teachings were to be accepted on the basis of revealed tradition (*hadith*) or on the basis of reason (*kalam*). Those who rejected the use of reason altogether were the traditionalists (*muhaddithun*), while those who took it up were the theologians (*mutakallimun*). From there, two main schools of theology developed, the Jahmites (who espoused negative theology, according to which the existence of the deity is known intuitively but is also beyond understanding), and the Mu’tazilites (who espoused a positive theology, according to which the existence of the deity can be demonstrated as well as understood through certain rationally intelligible attributes [e.g., omnipotence, omniscience, omnibenevolence, etc.]). The Mu’tazilite theology eventually acquired the endorsement of the state, which then sought to enforce acceptance of their ideas through the establishing of an inquisition (the most important points of orthodoxy being the unity of God and the created nature of the Quran). In carrying out their theological project, they depended heavily on the philosophy of Aristotle, taking up his impersonal method of reasoning and his emphasis on the external world of nature (as opposed to Plato’s more personal method of reasoning and emphasis on the interior world of mind). It was through these influences that interest in the natural sciences and the scholastic approach to doing theology passed into the west, where it achieved classical form in the works of Albertus Magnus and Thomas Aquinas.

³² **The Canonical Hadith:** Traditions about the life of the prophet had been handed for many years, and there had even been attempts to provide an exhaustive collection of them. Now, however, it became necessary to establish a

In spite of all these achievements, the empire was in its twilight. The religious divisions in the umma, coupled with the vastness of its territories, began a process in which its once united government began to break apart into smaller independent states. This process began in the far western half of the empire, and from there it made its way to the far eastern half of the empire. Predictably, the first secessionist state was set up by the recently deposed Umayyads, who set up a dynasty of their own in Spain in 756. These were followed by the Idrisids in northwest Africa in 788, the Aghlabids in north central Africa in 801, the Tulunids in the Levant in 868, and the Fatimids in Egypt in 909. The Fatimids were the most famous, partly because they were Shi'ites and partly because they founded the well-known city of Cairo. Eventually, this process of disintegration reached the imperial heartland of Persia, and that too came to be divided up amongst such groups as the Tahirids, Sajids, Saffarids, Samanids, and finally the Buyids (932). The Buyids, like the Fatimids, were Shi'ites, and they would emerge as the most powerful state in the Middle East. It was a devastating blow to the nation of Islam. From their earliest history, they had staked their claim to divine favor on the invincibility of their military and the unity of their people. But they had been unable to conquer the civilizations of the west, and now they were religiously and politically divided.

critical method for determining which hadith were authentic and which were not authentic. The Shi'ites accepted a much smaller collection of hadith (rejecting any tradition that was not directly or indirectly connected with Ali). The Sunnis produced the broadest collection (the earliest being that of al-Bukhari (d. 870), then Muslim (d. 875), Abu Dawud (d. 889), Ibn Maja (d. 886), at-Tirmidhi (d. 892), and an-Nasai (d. 915)).

The Ummah under the Shadow of Western Civilization

In the previous chapter, we traced the rise and fall of the nation of Islam. After the death of the prophet Muhammad, the nation was transformed from a rural state based in the Arabian Peninsula, to a military empire based in the Holy Land, to a rich urban empire with powerful international connections based in Persia. Under a dynasty of rulers called the Abbasids, it reached its cultural peak, advancing beyond other civilizations of the day in the arts, along with math, science, and scholarship, and even sought to provide a philosophical foundation for its religious worldview.

Unfortunately, Islam's glory days were short lived. Like Christianity, it believed that it had been divinely commissioned to rule the world. Unlike Christianity, however, it was an essentially this-worldly kingdom, and so it was not by faith able to rise above the ordinary processes of fragmentation and defeat that are the lot of all earthly civilizations. Politically, the nation broke apart into different states, whether Sunni, Shi'ite, or Kharijite. This in turn had a weakening effect on its military, which proved unable to defeat the Holy Roman Empire in eastern Europe or the Byzantine Empire in western Europe.

In the subsequent history of the nation, there arose a wide range of independent states, the most influential of which ruled from Cordoba in Spain, Cairo in Egypt, and Baghdad in Persia (from here, its religious traditions spread east into the Punjab, India, and China). As these states warred with one another to reunite the ummah, they began hiring into their armies a large number of foreign converts called mamluks, and in the course of time these became so numerous that they took control of the government: the Berbers in Spain, the Kurds in Egypt, and the Iranians in Persia. As unfortunate as this was, however, far more important than the ummah's increasingly fragmented political structure was the diminishing state of its cultural productivity. In the early Middle Ages, it had birthed the most advanced civilization of its day (7th – 10th centuries AD). But in the high Middle Ages, it suddenly found itself on the defensive against Rome and Byzantium (11th – 13th centuries AD). Henceforth, it would find itself increasingly under the shadow of Western Civilization.

The High Middle Ages

The whole climate had changed. On the one hand, there was no longer a single leader of the nation. On the other hand, even the separate states were increasingly governed by purely secular rulers, who therefore took to themselves the title of emir, shah, or sultan. As the religious unity of the state could no longer acquire even token symbolism in its political head, the burden of producing it increasingly fell on the people.

Under these conditions, religion appeared a more urgent need than things like math, science, scholarship, or philosophy (or, for that matter, any discipline that was non-Islamic). Accordingly, the real leaders in the local community were not intellectuals, but experts in *ijma*, hadith, and Quran. Known as the *ulama*, they organized themselves into religious law schools or *madrasahs*, and in time came to command the loyalty of the people more than the rulers of the state. In fact, the heads of state were often compelled to submit to their tutelage in order to vouch for the legitimacy of their rule.

Preoccupation with religious tradition was also accompanied by a mass movement of popular piety known as “Sufism.” The movement began with a small number of individuals who practiced various forms of self-denial and also dressed in a coarse woolen cloth (*suf* means “wool”). Eventually, it was taken up by a much larger number of individuals and involved combining outward adherence to law with an inner love for Allah. The latter was clearly a novel element, arising more out of the needs of the human heart than anything found in the life of the prophet Muhammad. It was perhaps this needs based origin that accounted for its tremendous popularity: spiritual teachers (called *sheikhs*) taught spiritual disciplines (called *tariqah*) and set up discipleship schools (called *khanaqahs*). As in the Christian monastic movement, the sufis were devoted to simple living, charitable work, and missions. Unlike the monks, however, they continued to engage in secular labor, take wives, and participate in warfare. As part of their spiritual discipline, they prized subjective experience over objective knowledge and cultivated the arts of poetry, music, and dance. This frequently resulted in the proliferation of unorthodox ideas: sheikhs were often deified, stories circulated about their ability to perform miracles, and tombs became places of veneration and pilgrimage (sufi disciples often claimed to have occult experiences of the prophet Muhammad). As a result, tremendous opposition arose between the sufis and the *ulama*, who believed that pagan folk religion was being carried out under the banner of Islam. A lasting synthesis between the two approaches was eventually established by the famous thinker, Al Ghazali³³.

The Rise of the Turks (945 – 1095)

As we have seen, the three primary centers of Islam were in Spain (now controlled by the Berbers), Egypt (now controlled by the Kurds), and Persia (now controlled by the Iranians). But the group that would eventually assume control of nearly the entire community consisted of a tribe of warlike nomads from central Asia. Known as the Turks, their closest relations are known to us in the biblical period as Scythians, in the classical period as Huns, and the medieval period as Magyars. The Arabs first came into contact with them under the Rashiduns, used them as domestic servants under the Umayyads, and finally as soldiers under the Abbasids (it was during this period that they were converted to Islam by the Sufis). Eventually, they became so numerous that they were able to seize control of the government, and they began ruling under a series of overlapping dynasties: the Ghaznavids (977), the Seljuks (1037), the Khwarazmians (1077) and, of course, the well-known Ottomans (1299).

The Turks were already a warlike people. It was therefore a matter of concern when large numbers of them began embracing a religion that sanctioned the waging of jihad on the rest of the world. In many ways, they outdid their predecessors when it came to holy war, and it's no accident that they were the first to begin conquering of the orient. After taking a firm hold of the state, they pledged to take jihad into the east on an annual basis and began crossing over into the Punjab in 997 (i.e., the source of the Indus at the intersection of Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India). The raids brought them into contact with a people that were pagan rather than Zoroastrian, Jewish, or Christian. Accordingly, the battles were marked by unbridled ferocity: villages were pillaged, temples destroyed, and peoples massacred, reduced to concubinage, or sold into slavery. This effort would continue for the next four centuries and has been described as the bloodiest chapter in the history of man (death toll estimates range up to 80 million). Those who survived found themselves in sufficiently unfavorable conditions that they became nominal converts to Islam (in the end, however, the native population never really embraced Islam, and today the majority religion is still Hinduism).

Next, the Turks pushed the frontiers of their empire west, bringing them to Egypt, the Holy Land, and the doorstep of Byzantium. Pilgrims who had hitherto been tolerated in lands controlled by Muslims began carrying back horror stories about atrocities performed by Turks. The kind of treatment ordinarily reserved for pagans was now being used against Zoroastrians, Jews, and Christians. Towns were being pillaged, churches were being destroyed or converted to mosques, and people were being either killed or sold into slavery. Some stories appear to have been fabricated, but others were demonstrably true, and this was all that was needed to foment popular support for the idea that the west should intervene in the east. After a few initial skirmishes, there was a decisive confrontation between the

Byzantines and the Turks at the Battle of Manzikert in 1071. The Byzantines were badly beaten, and Turks began pouring by the thousands into Asia Minor (i.e., modern day “Turkey”). As a result, the eastern empire now controlled very little territory beyond that immediately surrounding the city of Constantinople, and they were no longer in a position to provide protection to those living in the Middle East. The emperor sent ambassadors to the western empire, requesting military assistance from the papacy.

The Crusades need to be understood against the backdrop of all the foregoing. As we shall see, however, this event was far more significant for the history of Christianity than for Islam. The most devastating war brought against the prophet’s nation did not come from the crusaders of the west, but from the continuing migration of warlike peoples from the east. Just as central Asia had furnished Islam with its most violent proponents (the Turks), so now it furnished Islam with its most violent opponents (the Mongols). The Turks were by now converted to monotheism, but the Mongols were still pagan shamanists. At the time when the Turks were occupying Asia Minor, the Mongols were still a group of illiterate tribes living in central Asia. By the following century, however, they had gathered into a single state, the ruler of which was known as a “khan”. A century after that, they embarked on a program of imperialism under the leadership of Genghis Khan, who conquered most of central Asia, spreading east as far as China, and west as far as the Middle East. Unlike the crusaders, who scarcely penetrated beyond the ummah’s frontier, he would succeed in taking Persia, Mesopotamia, and most of Palestine from the Muslims. Even more important than the loss of land would be the loss of human life: the wars of the great khan would take as many as 80 million lives (a figure topped only by the Muslim conquest of India and World War II).

The Crusades (1095 - 1254)

In the meantime, much had happened in Europe. Previously, we saw that the Muslims had been prevented from making further inroads not only into Eastern Europe (due to their inability to take Constantinople) but also into Western Europe (due to their inability to defeat Charles Martel at Tours in 732). Picking up from there, a number of very important events subsequently took place in the west. First, the West immediately embarked on an attempt to retake Spain (usually called the Reconquista). Second, it united its various states under the banner of the church into a theocracy that would become known as the Holy Roman Empire (i.e., under Charlemagne at Aachen in 800 AD). Afterward, the empire was divided into three districts, each of which fought for control of the papacy (the districts roughly corresponding to the regions we know today as Italy, France, and Germany). Meanwhile, the papacy became increasingly corrupt, and attempts were made to

rescue it from the power of the state (i.e., by creating religious institutions free from secular control, the first of which was the Abbey of Cluny in 910 AD). The attempts met with success, and before long the west was filled with religious institutions that had no affiliation with the state, the leaders of which were eventually appointed as cardinals, and eventually, given the power to elect the pope (the credit for these changes belongs to Pope Leo IX, 1049 - 1054).

Unfortunately, the newly liberated church was not content with spiritual authority but also sought to wield supreme earthly authority. The papacy shut down the eastern rite churches in its lands (leading to the east-west schism of 1054), and it entered into a political alliance with the Norsemen (giving religious sanction to their conquests in Italy, Normandy, and England). Now at the height of its power, a single grand enterprise was conceived to reunite the eastern and western churches and expand its territories as far as the Holy Land. An opportunity to put this plan into action arose when the eastern emperor asked the western pope for help against the infidels, and thus was born the 1st Crusade (1095 – 1099 AD). Byzantium was clearly in trouble: in the west her holdings in Greece were being invaded by the Normans, and in the east her holdings in Asia Minor were being invaded by the Turks. Pope Urban II gave his call to arms at the city of Clermont in 1095, and the whole western world joined in a common cause against the rule of Islam. In hindsight, it is often felt that although the war was politically justified, it was also used as a pretext for indulging in plunder, a point further aggravated by the fact that this was carried out under the banner of the Cross. The religious incentives for war were the same as those used by their enemies: remission of sin and immediate entrance into heaven (it even went so far as to extend these blessings to a soldier's parents). Nevertheless, there were also a large number of earthly incentives, including exemption from taxes, interest, and even debt (for the businessmen, there was also the prospect of developing a lucrative trade in eastern commodities). A large number of those who participated did so in order to evade debt, and others were no better than pirates, one contemporary reporting that the most offensive crimes were committed under the cover of ecclesiastical protection.

Although the migration was set to begin in the springtime, a great many popular migrants banded together informally and set out on their own in what is known as the Peasant's Crusade.³³ Eventually, however, an armed company of more than three-hundred thousand departed under the leadership of a number of

³³ **The Peasant's Crusade:** As many as four waves of migrants attempted to make the journey east without the support of a standing army, largely under the influence of a self-appointed visionary named Peter the Hermit. As they passed through the cities along the Rhine, Main, and Danube, they committed numerous atrocities against the Jews. Eventually, however, they were themselves cut to pieces as they attempted to pass through the territory of the Bulgarians, Hungarians, and Turks. By some estimates, as many as three-hundred thousand individuals lost their lives during these ventures, not including the foreigners whom they pillaged.

very distinguished men, the most notable of which were Godfrey and Tancred. Godfrey was a descendent of Charlemagne and had a reputation for both his piety as well as his prodigious physical strength (on one occasion, he is said to have cloven a horseman from head to saddle with a single blow of his sword). Tancred was a descendent of the Normans, and in many ways he embodied the popular ideals of chivalry (he alone sought to protect the lives of those who had been conquered in warfare). Upon their arrival at Byzantium, the emperor was alarmed at the sheer size of the army, and he justly suspected that they had more in mind than his mere protection (he managed to elicit an oath from them that they would return all conquered territories to the eastern empire, an oath which few kept, though the only one who refused to take it was Tancred). The army then proceeded to take the cities of Nicaea, Dorylaeum, and Antioch. Eventually, they arrived at Jerusalem, and after a five-week siege the city was breached in the year 1099 AD. The unbridled massacre which followed resulted in about ten thousand beheadings, including men, women, and children, Muslims and Jews, and all who sought refuge within the Dome of the Rock. The Age of the Crusades had begun, and though one might be tempted to suppose that the carnage of war diminished enthusiasm for the undertaking, surviving accounts betray no signs of regret: *The victors were covered in blood from head to foot. It was a most affecting sight which filled the heart with joy, to see the people tread the holy places in the fervor of an excellent devotion.*

After the First Crusade, the newly conquered territories were named crusader states, much to the distress of the eastern empire. Nevertheless, this monumental undertaking would eventually fail in all three of its principle endeavors: it would not retain control of the Holy Land; it would not halt the advance of Islam; and it would not heal the schism between Rome and Byzantium. In all, there were seven major crusades from 1095 – 1270, and smaller expeditions would continue well into the 16th century (e.g., one of the most distinguished patrons of the cause was Christopher Columbus). A few notable events: (1) the second crusade was an utter failure, but is notable for having been supported by Bernard of Clairvaux and condemned by Peter Abelard (1147 – 1149); (2) the third crusade was sparked by Saladin's retaking of the city of Jerusalem and is also famous for causing Richard the Lionheart to absent himself from the throne of England (1189 – 1192); (3) in the fourth crusade, the army briefly seized control over the city of Constantinople (1202 – 1204); (4) during the fifth crusade, support for the war effort began to diminish (1213 – 1221); the sixth crusade was the first to occur without the support of the pope (1228 - 1229); the seventh crusade was the first to occur without the support of the public (1248 - 1254). The Crusades had several important consequences, the most negative of which included not only the cost of human life and the demoralizing effect of war, but also an intractable

hostility between the west and Byzantines, Jews, and Muslims. Among the more positive consequences, we may note the decline of feudalism at home and the expansion of travel abroad, increasing the west's domestic prosperity and its knowledge of foreign lands, people, and customs. The fortunes of war inspired many to devote themselves to monastic life, and this resulted in the proliferation of monastic orders, the most distinguished of which took up residence on Mt. Carmel³⁴ (lesser well known orders are those of the Antonites, the Trinitarians, Font Evraud, Grammont, and the Brothers of the Sack) . The need of a perpetual standing army also encouraged the development of the so-called military orders, which combined monastic vows with medical and military service, such as the Knights Hospitaller³⁵ and the Knights Templars³⁶ (lesser well known orders are those of the Teutonic Knights and of Iago of Campostella, Calatrava, and Alcantara in Spain). From a theological point of view, the most important consequence of this event was the precedent it set for the granting of papal indulgences on a mass scale. Never before had the pope's power to absolve sin been used to such an effect, setting into motion the resources of a whole empire, and it would not be long before what had previously been an occasional practice would become enshrined as a dogma of the church. The church and the state were on the verge of the divorce.

The Beginnings of the Modern Period

The Crusades caused an increase in cultural contact between Arabs and Europeans. As a result, the project of recovering of the classics of western civilization that began with the Muslims was taken over by the Christians. In this case, however, it did not result in a temporary flourishing of culture such as was seen in Baghdad,

³⁴ **The Carmelite Order:** A number of soldiers decided to devote themselves to monastic life and established an abbey on Mt. Carmel (later legend traced their origins all the way back to the prophet Elijah). Its rule was drawn up by the patriarch and only later confirmed by the pope, and this accounts for its tendency to the more eastern ideal of monasticism. As a result, the order became known for its devotion to the mystical life, as expressed in the act of contemplative prayer, and it would eventually produce such mystics as Theresa of Avila, John of the Cross, and Brother Lawrence. Eventually the resurgence of war forced them to migrate westward back into Europe, and they only returned to the mountain in the 19th century.

³⁵ **Knights Hospitaller:** This military order, marked by the black mantle and the white cross, began at the abbey of John the Baptist in Jerusalem (also called the Knights of John the Baptist). The abbey served as a hospital for the care of pilgrims, and received a large sum of money and a charter for the new order after the fall of Jerusalem. In time, it expanded from medical to military service, and therefore came to include within its ranks monks, medics, and knights (the most prominent of the three).

³⁶ **Knights Templars:** This military order, marked by the white mantle and the red cross, began when Hugo de Payens and Godfrey St. Omer took a vow to defend the pilgrims of the city of Jerusalem in 1119 AD. To better fulfill this vow, they took up residence in a palace near the temple mount, and within a decade, three hundred knights had joined the order. This soon became the largest of the military orders, known for its piety and discipline and for its devotion to the motto *Non nobis, Domine, non nobis sed tuo nomini da gloriam*.

but a more permanent stream of cultural productivity that would remain fixed in western Europe. The west's educational institutions upgraded from monastic schools, to cathedral schools, to professional universities, such as, those in Paris, Toledo, Bologna, Oxford, and Cambridge. Students studied Latin, the Trivium (grammar, logic, and rhetoric), and then the Quadrivium (music, arithmetic, geometry, and astronomy). The most prized subjects were medicine, law, and theology.

By contrast, the ummah had exchanged the more rational traditions of the west for the more mystical traditions of the east, and their social life was increasingly regulated by the government in strict accordance with the authority of Ijma, the Hadith, and the Quran (their last great intellectual was Averroes in the 12th century, but his thought had a far greater impact among Christians than it did among Muslims). Furthermore, while their political life remained relatively unchanged by the Crusades, it was about to be deeply disrupted by the invasion of the Mongols. These began with the conquests of Genghis Khan but continued with those of his successors all throughout the 13th century. As a result, the already divided nation of Islam was further segregated into rump states scattered across Spain, Africa, Egypt, India, and Asia Minor. It was very far from the grand world empire envisioned by the prophet Muhammad.

As if all these setbacks were not enough, the invasions were followed by a devastating epidemic known as the Black Death (mid-14th century). Although mysterious at the time, it is now known to have been caused by a micro-organism called *Yersinia pestis*, which found a reservoir in fleas and brown rats, and which spread from central Asia through the agency of the Mongols: first passing eastward into China, and then passing westward into Asia Minor (from there it spread further west into Europe and further south into the Middle East). While in Christian communities it was popularly believed that the plague was a divine punishment for sin, while in Muslim communities it was popularly believed that it was a divine mercy (i.e., because it sent infidels to hell and believers to heaven). Thus, even though both communities lost about a third of their respective populations, one responded with more of a guilty hysteria and the other with more of a quiet submission. In any case, the plague served only to decimate the population of an already struggling Islamic nation.

The Renaissance (14th – 16th century)

The transitional period leading to the modern world is known as the Renaissance. After the Black Death of 1348, an increasing number of kingdoms began to operate independent of the initiative of the church. As a result, a fresh stream of cultural activity started emerging via the patronage of wealthy aristocrats in 14th century Italy. Although the theme of their work was still set within a

religious worldview, its attention was more directed at the appreciation of human experience and potential. It is therefore sometimes called the humanist movement, and it brought with it a renewed interest not just in preserving, but in carrying on, as it were, the classical traditions begun by the Greeks and Romans. Such efforts can be seen in the philosophy of Ficino, the scholarship of Petrarch, and the sculpture of Donatello. In music, the movement known as *ars nova* combined increasingly complex sounds with increasingly secular lyrics, beginning the gradual overthrow of plainchant. The strange board game imported from the east during the crusades rose to new levels of complexity, inspiring the first written chess manuals by Lucena and Damiano. The three most famous technological advances of the day were gun-power (which transformed warfare), the compass (which opened up the western hemisphere), and the printing press (which inaugurated an age of mass communication). The cultural richness of this period bore with it a new ideal of human life, that of becoming the Renaissance Man, the best example of which we find in Leonardo da Vinci. Such a glorification of humanity, while compatible with Christianity, could hardly have arisen in Islam.

In spite of the ummah's inability to absorb the spirit of humanism, it remained a formidable political and military power. All throughout this period, the Turks enforced sharia among Muslims and steadily expanded their sphere of influence throughout Asia Minor and into the Balkan Peninsula. Now under a dynasty of rulers known as the Ottomans, their crowning achievement was the belated conquest of Constantinople, which they then renamed Istanbul (1453). Although this highly symbolic victory undoubtedly established their supremacy over the once great medieval empire of eastern Europe, it did little to secure any long term advantage over the modern empire that was being birthed in western Europe. In fact, it unwittingly gave a cultural boost to the west, since all the most educated men immediately fled from Byzantium to Italy. Furthermore, the west was also broadening the horizon of its world with Columbus' discovery of the New World in 1492.³⁷ Hitherto, the center of the civilized world had been the Mediterranean Sea, but that dignity was shortly to pass to the Atlantic Ocean and to the coastlands of western Europe and America. In addition, this feat of navigation was accompanied by others, such as the circumnavigation of Africa and the

³⁷ **1492** is an important year for a number of reasons. Ever since the Muslims first conquered Spain, the west had been engaged in an ongoing effort at re-conquest (a project that took seven hundred years, beginning with the halt of their advance by Charles Martel). By the fifteenth century, most of the peninsula had been retaken, and it now consisted of the Christian kingdoms of Castile, Aragon, Portugal, and Navarre. All that remained of the original Muslims invaders was the far southern state of Granada. After Ferdinand of Aragon married Isabella of Castile, the two largest kingdoms were joined into one, and together they began the process of uniting the whole peninsula. As religious unity was still a major factor in politics, they instituted the Inquisition in 1478, and they subsequently took care of the last remnant of religious minorities in 1492 (defeating the Muslims and expelling the Jews). Spain had become the champion of Roman Catholicism, and it is no accident that this year also marks the discoveries of Columbus, who hoped above all else to expand the wealth, influence, and prestige of the church.

provision of an all-water route to India. The old centers of civilization and the oriental trade routes became of secondary importance, and with it all the lands hitherto controlled by Muslims. The future of civilization lay with the establishing of transcontinental colonies, and these would not be established by Muslims but by Christians.

But greater than the expansion of the world, or even the recovery of a proper view of man, was the recovery of a proper view of God. Here we refer not to the discovery of the new world, or to the recovery of humanism, but to the rediscovery of the invisible nature of the church brought about by the Protestant Reformation. As a religious movement, it acted as a catalyst for all the other elements of change that were already in the air, and at its center was the troubled conscience of a single man named Martin Luther. Martin Luther's story is of interest because it illustrates a condition that is common to all. By entering the monastery, he hoped to satisfy the demands of his conscience through a life of good works. But the more he advanced in the disciplines of external piety, the more he felt the burden of his own interior sinfulness. Although he might have taken his guilt as a sign of the futility of moral living, he instead found therein a revelation of a higher kind of life than that for which he had been aiming, one that depended solely on his personal faith in the gospel without the mediation of the institutional church. In effect, this meant that the spiritual lives of individuals did not depend upon the visible institutional church, but the reverse: the visible institutional church depended upon the spiritual lives of individuals (i.e., the invisible church). And this in turn was so contrary to the prevailing views of the day that it precipitated a full-scale reformation of every area of the life of the church, first in Germany (1517), then in Switzerland (1519), and finally in England (1534). Here again, the drawing of such a sharp division between the this-worldly and the other-worldly aspect of religion was essentially foreign to the spirit of Islam.

All throughout this period, the ummah remained wedded to the traditions of the medieval world: it was not interested in exploring new lands or the potentialities of humankind or of a purely spiritual Kingdom of God. On the contrary, religious authority was to be wielded by the state, and the enforcement of sharia was to exert control over every aspect of public life. As the clergy were in the employ of the government, they usually vouched for the legitimacy of the establishment and its programs. The cultural elites of society had few interests outside their religion and the maintenance of its traditions. They produced no new insights into spiritual life, and certainly no new insights in such areas as math, science, or scholarship. There also was no interest in learning western languages, and so there wasn't even the opportunity to gain from the knowledge of the nations around them. Still, the ummah was not completely monolithic, and in fact we can witness the emergence of three very different expressions of it over the course of

this period. The Mongol Empire in India was the most unusual, for although its official religion was Islam, its people were more enthusiastic about the mystical ideas of the Sufis. Numerous religious movements sought to unite Islam with Hinduism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, and even Christianity (the most successful of such syncretistic attempts is found in the religion known as Sikhism). As for the neighboring land of Persia, this had been retaken by a Kurdish dynasty known as the Safavids, who in turn began transforming the whole region into a bastion of Shi'ite Islam. The Ottoman Empire, however, was by all accounts the greatest of the Islamic states, taking the legacy of Sunni Islam from their homeland in Asia Minor west into the Balkans and south into the Middle East, Egypt, Africa, and Arabia. As we have seen, they did not share in many of the cultural developments going on in the west, but they did have a very efficient system of government, a very powerful military, and were probably the most advanced people of their time when it came to finding creative uses for gunpowder (among their most feared weapons was their elite corps of infantry known as Janissaries).

The Early Modern Period (17th – 18th century)

The seeds of the modern world were planted during the Renaissance: sea travel led to colonization (initially of the western hemisphere, but this was just the first stage in what would eventually become a race for the imperial colonization of the whole planet); humanism led to the total emancipation of reason (leading to a virtual explosion of fresh discoveries in the areas of math, science, scholarship, and deeper philosophical insights); and the rediscovery of the invisibility of the religious community opened the door to a new model of society in which there was a separation between the powers of the church and state. From there, it's not difficult to see how the most prominent features of today's world came into being: namely, globalism, technology, and secularism. But all of these features originated not in lands that were Muslim, but ones that were Christian (and specifically those of western Europe). These features gained the strongest foothold in those states that gave birth to secular democratic republics (the earliest example of which was the Netherlands in 1581). What is more, these changes would prove so powerful as to render obsolete all older models of civilization, a fact that could not be a matter of indifference to religions seeking to claim the allegiance of all nations, like Christianity and Islam.

The seventeenth century was momentous for the new world, the old world as well as for the ummah of Islam. In the new world, it inaugurated the colonial history of North America, with Catholics laying the foundations for New France, and Protestants the foundations for New Sweden, New Netherland, and New England (most important of all, however, were those groups seeking to create an entirely new kind of nation, like the Puritans, Baptists, and Quakers). In the old

world, it saw the last great war between Protestants and Catholics, the Thirty Years War (1618 – 1648). Among Catholics, this period saw a revitalization of its art (Baroque), literature (Cervantes), and scholarship (Francisco Suarez). Among Protestants, it saw the appearance of congregational churches, a growing emphasis on internal piety, and the writings of Milton, Bunyan, and Donne. As for the free exercise of reason, in math we see the invention of analytic geometry, in science the empirical confirmations of the heliocentric theory, and in scholarship the beginning of biblical criticism. In philosophy, the great achievement of the period was the replacing of medieval scholasticism with a program of knowledge based on reason alone (Rene Descartes) and the ensuing debate over the relative value of man’s public knowledge about the physical world and the private knowledge about himself that lay at the basis of his convictions about religion, morality, and aesthetics (Blaise Pascal). All this is but a sampling of the achievements of the west, and in comparison, very little had changed in the eastern states governed by Islam. Rulers fought wars of dynastic succession, nations took up arms against their neighbors, and the most expansive of these was still the Ottoman Empire. Unfortunately, she was about to see the end of her military supremacy in a series of conflicts known as the Great Turkish War (1683 – 1699). Her advance was now opposed by a papal alliance between Catholic European states called “the Holy League”. In the end, she lost Hungary to the Austrians and for the foreseeable future, was prevented from making further incursions into central Europe.

In the eighteenth century, we witness the final stages in the maturation process of the modern west. These involved the race for global imperialism, the Industrial Revolution, and the formation of democratic republics in Britain, France, and America. Understandably, it was also the century in which the first conservative reactions to modernism began to appear among Muslims. The Ottoman Empire had entered a period of steady decline, for which it received the unflattering title “the sick man of Europe”. The Mongol Empire was also in a state of decline: its rulers were involved in a perpetual struggle for power, many of its people were in open revolt, and its fragmented lands were becoming easy prey for the colonial ambitions of the British. Even the Persian Empire was in a state of decline, and here, too, we may cite as causes not only the colonial presence of the British, but also the expansive wars of Russians (under their new modernizing czar, Peter the Great). It was high time for a reformation in the ummah, and this fittingly came from a place which for centuries had remained on the periphery of Islam, their homeland of Arabia (currently held by the Ottomans). An important chief in one of the region’s towns was named Muhammad ibn Saud. It was his desire to found a new state in the ummah’s original homeland, but he also wanted to use it to revitalize orthodox Islam. He therefore allied himself with a scholar Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab, whom he entrusted with the religious guidance of

the community. Together, they founded the state eventually known as Saudi Arabia, and also the religious revival movement known more narrowly as Wahhabism or more broadly as Salafism (its first capital was established at Riyadh in 1744). It was a movement that sought to recover the earliest practices of the Sunni and was therefore opposed to the rationalism of the kalam, and also to the traditions of the Sufis and the Shia. Accordingly, its theory was drawn solely from the Sunnah and the Quran, and its legal practice solely from the most conservative school of Sharia known as Hanbalite. Unlike most states throughout the Middle Ages, it was not content to be nominally Islamic, but was prepared to wage jihad against any nation that tolerated practices that were non-Islamic (which meant most of the communities currently under the rule of the Ottomans). In doing this, it followed the pattern of the early Kharijites, who declared their opponents to be non-Muslims and who used this as a justification for declaring jihad against people who self-identified as Muslim. In turn, this attitude was extended toward secular peoples, Jews, and Christians (who had hitherto enjoyed a fair degree of tolerance throughout the medieval period).

It would be difficult to overestimate the importance of the birth of Saudi Arabia. As we shall see, it did not immediately rise to the prominence it has today, but would struggle to survive throughout much of the 19th century. Nevertheless, after the breakup of the old medieval empires, it set an example for other small states of how to survive in the modern world. Like the original ummah of the prophet, it was created out of jihad, was led by an absolute monarch, and claimed no constitution beyond that of the Quran (i.e., as interpreted and implemented by the royal cabinet). In addition, it boasted control of the nation's most important centers of worship; it saw and continues to see itself today as an exemplar for other nations of true Islam.

The Response of Islam to the Modern World

In the previous chapter, we talked about the decline of the nation of Islam. This was partly due to external factors like invasions and disease, but it was also partly due to internal factors like religious divisions and political fragmentation. Perhaps most significant of all was the decay of its cultural life, which is to say, its retreat from rational criticism and its failure to gain from the west's exploration of the globe, recovery of classical humanism, and deepening views about spirituality. By the early modern period, the old empires had fallen significantly behind the west, which by now had begun to reshape human civilization into a community of globalized, industrial, democratic republics.

In the present chapter, we pass from the early modern to the late modern period (i.e., the 19th and 20th centuries). Although a great many features might be used to characterize this period, the most important from a global perspective was the rise of what is sometimes called imperialism, an ongoing struggle for global power by the modern states of Europe. Although it began with the colonization of the Americas, it continued with the race to colonize Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. From there it passed into empire-building as the colonies sought in various degrees to exert control over the economic, military, and political life of their host countries. In effect, the ummah was now in danger of becoming a colonized people rather than a colonizing people.

How would the ummah respond? In the previous chapter, we saw that the first reaction among a group that chose to reject modernism and return to the traditions laid down by the prophet Muhammad (i.e., the restoration movement known as Wahhabism and the birth of Saudi Arabia). In the present lesson, we see the beginnings of another reaction among a much larger group, and this involved embracing modernism and taking a progressive approach to the religion of Islam (i.e., beginning with the al-Nahda movement and the birth of the modern state of Egypt). With the breakdown of the old medieval empires, an ideological battle arose over whether the newly emerging modern states should be politically liberal or conservative, a dispute that cut across the traditional boundaries of Sunni, Shi'ite, or Kharijite. Both movements claimed to be the truest expression of their ancestral faith, and both referred to themselves as "Salafi" (i.e., ancestral). The question has persisted into the present day: what is the true form of Islam?

Under the Old and the New Imperialism

Modern imperialism had its remote origins in the confrontation between Western Europe and the Ottoman Empire. After the Turks took control of the Middle East, it suddenly became necessary to seek an all water route to the orient, leading to the discovery of the Americas (in the 16th century) and the colonization of India (in the 17th century). By the end of the 18th century, the western states had acquired numerous colonies throughout the eastern hemisphere, many of which had been formerly controlled by Muslims: Spain controlled Morocco, the Netherlands much of Indonesia, and Britain dominated the territory in and around India (Russia was soon to colonize much of Asia).

Muslims were not unaware of the advance of western civilization. Smaller states had been completely overwhelmed. As for what remained of its medieval empires, the power of the Persians was shrinking under the advance of Russia, and the power of the Mongols under the advance of Britain. The only remaining bulwark against complete domination by Europe was the Ottoman Empire. An idea was conceived to cautiously modernize the empire from the top down in an effort to keep it in the game with the other colonial powers (called *tanzimat*, or “reorganization”). But the task was more easily said than done, for it required that they embrace institutions which would allow the public to operate outside the bounds of sharia law: e.g., state sponsored education, free speech, equality before the law, parliaments, constitutions, etc. In order to justify the infractions arising from these reforms, the leaders argued that they were necessary evils but that this need not lessen the genuineness of their devotion to Islam. Accordingly, the government became increasingly scrupulous about the public image of Islam: e.g., the public observance of prayer, the keeping of festivals, the building of mosques, and the giving of high salaries to clerics. Although the program was supported by the upper classes (who were largely in the employ of the government), it was strongly resisted by the lower classes (i.e., the local clergy, students, and populace). The secular wing of government was sacrificing religious integrity to political expediency. People gave public demonstrations, students began underground movements, and clerics who had the boldness to oppose the regime were imprisoned, deposed, or even executed.

A great question had arisen for Muslims: could they maintain their religious traditions with a high level of purity and still survive in the modern world? For some, the empire’s program of modernization went too far. For others, it was too cautious and didn’t go nearly far enough. In either case, it set the stage for the provinces to begin seeking independence by rebelling, a process that began shortly

after the French Revolution (1789) and Napoleon's invasion of the Middle East (1798 – 1801). Napoleon believed that Egypt was the “key to the world” (presumably because it furnished a land route to India prior to the building of the Suez Canal). Although he ultimately failed to take control of the country, he did inspire its leaders to throw off the yoke of the Ottoman Empire. This resulted in the birth of the modern state of Egypt, which almost immediately found itself at war with the modern state of Saudi Arabia (1811 – 1818). Why did war break out so quickly between these two states if they were both practitioners of Islam? It broke out because the more recent of the two espoused a more liberal system of government (i.e., Egypt) and the older of the two espoused a more conservative system of government (i.e., Saudi Arabia). This battle set a precedent for the future of Islam: as the old empire fell apart, the splinter states that grew up in its place would have to choose how to govern, and their choice often embroiled them in a war of religious ideals against neighboring states. So it was with Egypt: it was the first to embrace the idea of nationalism, asserting that the government should no longer be controlled by foreign Turks but rather by native Arabs; it modernized its government, its law, and its technology all on the basis of patterns found in Europe; it even attempt to appropriate western learning in the hopes of bringing about a cultural Renaissance (called *al-Nahda*, the forerunner of which was Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi³⁸). To be sure, the religion of the country was still Islamic, but the machinery by which it governed its people was a mixture of different elements, some of which were Islamic, and some of which were non-Islamic.

The Rise of Mujahedeen, Prophets, and Mahdis

After the violence with which liberal ideas spread under Napoleon, the west entered a period of conservative backlash in which it sought to suppress revolutions, maintain traditional monarchies, and establish mutually agreed upon boundaries between the various states (known as the Concert of Europe, 1815 – 1854). Nevertheless, this strategy was about maintaining peace at home than giving up the struggle for colonial power abroad. For example, while the west was committed to stopping revolutions at home, it was not averse to liberating east European states from the Ottoman Turks: e.g., beginning in Serbia, Greece, and Bosnia. At the same time, it was not averse to expanding its colonial empire in

³⁸ **Rifa'ah al-Tahtawi** (1801 – 1873): A very broad intellectual, he wrote about western civilization and about the possibility of its being reconciled with Islam. As a young man, he studied in Paris. After returning home, he became involved in the project of modernizing Egypt. He argued that the principles of Islam were compatible with a great many of those found in modern Europe. He spoke highly of the latter's culture (i.e., its arts, sciences, schools, universities, libraries, museums, and hospitals), its virtues (freedom, honesty, and charity), and its religion (pointing to the superiority of European Christians over Egyptian Christians). He does not hesitate to criticize anything that might challenge the Sunnah or the Quran, yet he eventually became an advocate for parliamentary democracy and the education of women.

lands inhabited by Muslims (e.g., in Africa, Asia, and India). All throughout this period, Muslims were not simply the victims of imperialism, but they continued to wage small scale jihad against the indigenous peoples living in their own territories (e.g., a massive number of local jihads were conducted against natives living in West Africa from the 1780s to the 1880s).

Muslims had always been fighters, and the presence of foreign empires created an atmosphere ideally suited to guerilla warfare. While most of these uprisings were immediately put down, others of them resulted in the temporary formation of “jihad states”. To attempt a full account of every insurgency would not be feasible, and in most cases they achieved nothing of lasting political importance (though the heroism of those who participated in them continues to provide rich material for the hagiography of Muslims). Among the most important were the revolt of Sayed Ahmad Rai Bareilvi in India in 1826 (against the British), the revolt of Abdelkader in Algeria in 1832 (against the French), and the revolt of Imam Shamil in the Caucasus in 1834 (against Russia). The most important scene of colonial conflict, however, was the Punjab (the area now divided into Afghanistan, Pakistan, and India). As this region provided a natural point of invasion for the subcontinent, it became the sight of many wars between the British (who wanted to protect their control over India³⁹) and the Russians (who wanted to continue advancing throughout Asia). Referred to as “the Great Game”, the British fought from modern day Pakistan and the Russians from modern day Afghanistan, engaging in proxy wars in the years 1838, 1843, 1848, and 1878. To the present day, this region remains the centerpiece of the struggle between the ummah and western colonial powers (it is also the origin of the political party known as the Taliban and notorious leaders like Osama bin Laden).

For Muslims, the decline in their national fortunes created an atmosphere also suited to apocalyptic forms of religion. This was especially true in the orient, where the struggle against colonialism was the greatest and where the ulama had greater difficulty protecting orthodoxy from the influences of Hinduism. A new trend began with a Shi’ite named Shaykh Ahmad who was born, lived, and worked in Iran in the early 1800s. As a young man, he was deeply distressed by the fragmentary state of the nation, but he was also distressed by what he perceived as widespread corruption among its people. He arrived at the conclusion that the situation could only be remedied by a fresh dispensation of revelation. Although

³⁹ **The Indian Rebellion of 1857:** This was the first war for independence fought in India. It began when native soldiers mutinied against the East India Company. Although rumor spread that the revolt of the Indians had been fomented by the Muslims, the response of the whole community was divided, some fighting alongside the Indians and others alongside the British. In the end, the British put a violent end to the revolt, and the region was quite explicitly transformed into a colony. Afterwards, Muslims living in India began a religious movement to fight secularism and colonialism, a movement very similar to Wahhabism called Deobandi (because it originated in the city of Deoband).

this might seem impossible in a religion which claimed that the final dispensation of prophetic revelation ceased with Muhammad, he got around this limitation by arguing that the original oracles of the prophet contained mysteries as yet unfathomed. By using an allegorical method of interpretation, he was able to draw a number of unorthodox ideas out of the Quran. Furthermore, he argued that these ideas as well as things more wonderful still would be vindicated by the soon coming return of the Mahdi, a matter about which he claimed to have uncovered hidden knowledge in certain passages of the Quran. The movement he began won a considerable number of followers from among the Twelver Shi'ites (a sect subsequently known as Shaykhism).

This period also saw the appearance of a number of individuals claiming to be the Mahdi: (1) The first claimant was Ali Muhammad Shirazi, who went public in Iran in 1844. A Twelver Shiite, he believed himself to be a descendent of Muhammad through the prophet's son-in-law Ali and his grandson-in-law Husayn. A man of mild manners but also intense piety, he became an adherent of Shaykhism. The followers of this sect had recently arrived at the conclusion that they should begin searching for the Mahdi, and the first to supply an answer to their demand was Shirazi. From thenceforth, he referred to himself as the *Bab* (i.e., "the Door"), and he said that he would unite the whole human race under a new age of sharia through his inspired interpretation of the Quran. Although the movement he began was forcibly suppressed, it would eventually give birth to what has become known as "the Bahai Faith".⁴⁰ (2) The second claimant was Muhammad Ahmad, and he went public in Sudan in 1881. Although a Sunni, he was also a Sufi, and he also claimed to be a descendent of Muhammad through Ali and Husayn. A man of rigorous piety, he acquired respect as a local sheik but was expelled from his order for his rigorous advocacy of Wahhabism. After his subsequent claim to be the Mahdi, he liberated the region from the power of the Turks, creating a temporary jihad state known as Mahdist Sudan. His followers called themselves the Ansar, and in addition to rejecting the traditional schools of legal theory, they amended the confession of faith to include a reference to the Mahdi and amended the five pillars to include devotion to jihad. After ten years, control of the country was restored via the intervention of the British (including a young Winston Churchill⁴¹). But they were never successful in wholly quieting the

⁴⁰ **The Bahai Faith** has its roots in Shaykhism and Babism. The latter movement gained thousands of followers but was suppressed in Iran, and he and many thousands of followers were killed in 1850. In the aftermath, a follower named Mirtza Husayn Ali Nuri was released after a lengthy imprisonment and claimed to be the recipient of fresh revelations in 1866. He called himself "Baha Ullah" (Glory of God), and he taught that mankind was a single race, that they needed to be a global society, that all religions were from the one true God, and that it was time for all peoples everywhere to recognize their oneness and unite.

⁴¹ **Winston Churchill on Islam:** Winston Churchill fought as a British soldier during the Mahdi War and wrote a book about his experience entitled *The River War*. His views about Islam have become famous: *How dreadful are*

Ansar, and even today they remain a powerful political force among the Sudanese.⁴² (3) The third claimant was Mirza Ghulam Ahmad, and he went public in India in 1889. He was born into a family of Sikhists, and he also had a lot of regular contact with missionaries, so from an early age he was led to reflect on the similarities and differences between Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity. Although a pious recluse, he drew much attention to himself after suddenly declaring himself not only to be the Mahdi, but also the second coming of Christ, not to mention the likeness of Krishna (an incarnational deity within Hinduism). The movement which he started attracted tens of thousands of followers, but it proved far more successful among Hindus than Muslims or Christians. It is usually referred to as Ahmadiyya Islam and today accounts for about one percent of the global population of Muslims (most of whom are located in Africa, Asia, and Indonesia).⁴³

The New Imperialism and Progressive Islam

Near the end of the century, a new phase began in the history of western

the curses which Mohammedanism lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy. The effects are apparent in many countries. Improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live. A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement; the next of its dignity and sanctity. The fact that in Mohammedan law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property – either as a child, a wife, or a concubine – must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men. Individual Moslems may show splendid qualities. Thousands become the brave and loyal soldiers of the Queen: all know how to die: but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world. Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every step; and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it had vainly struggled, the civilisation of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilisation of ancient Rome. In spite of these views, Churchill also warned against error in the opposite direction, especially in times of war: There are many people in England, and perhaps elsewhere, who seem to be unable to contemplate military operations for clear political objects, unless they can cajole themselves into the belief that their enemy are utterly and hopelessly vile. To this end the Dervishes, from the Mahdi and the Khalifa downwards, have been loaded with every variety of abuse and charged with all conceivable crimes. This may be very comforting to philanthropic persons at home; but when an army in the field becomes imbued with the idea that the enemy are vermin who cumber the earth, instances of barbarity may easily be the outcome. This unmeasured condemnation is moreover as unjust as it is dangerous and unnecessary... We are told that the British and Egyptian armies entered Omdurman to free the people from the Khalifa's yoke. Never were rescuers more unwelcome.

⁴² **The Ansar Movement** is alive and well today, though it has never recovered political power in the Sudan. Muslims living in the Sudan are largely divided between traditional Sufis and Ansar Sufis. The latter are particularly known for their militant nationalism, and they still depend for their leadership on a familial descendent of the original Mahdi. .

⁴³ **The Ahmadiyya** not only believed in the return of the Mahdi but also that his coming meant that the spread of their teaching would no longer to be through violent coercion but rather through peaceful conversion. Beyond that, however, most of their beliefs and practices were distinctively Islamic: they recited the classical confession, practiced the five pillars, and adhered to most of the traditions handed down by the Sunnis. It was the only sect to condemn all forms of violence (excepting such violence as might be used in self-defense). The movement was widely rejected by the religious establishment, and today its adherents are regarded as heretics rather than genuine Muslims (today, it represents about 1% of the global population of Muslims).

civilization in which the various states became involved in a far more aggressive campaign for colonial power, usually referred to as “the new imperialism”. This was brought about by a variety of factors, the most importance of which included a fresh wave of revolutionary fervor (in the year 1848),⁴⁴ the onset of the Crimean War (1853 – 1856),⁴⁵ and the breakdown of the Concert of Europe (1854 – 1871).⁴⁶ Beginning in the 1870s, the race for imperial expansion gave birth to hundreds of new colonies throughout Africa, India, China, and central, southeast, and southwest Asia. In turn, the tremendous wealth generated from these colonies was used in funding a race for cultural supremacy, which largely consisted of aggressive advancements in the pure sciences (i.e., by expanding man’s knowledge of the physical world beyond the limits of classical physics), and aggressive advancements in the applied sciences (i.e., the invention of new technologies made possible by the Second Industrial Revolution). As a result, this period saw a sudden increase in mass leisure, standard of living, and innovative popular consumer culture. Known as “the Beautiful Age” (or satirized as “the Gilded Age”), it saw a growing interest in the therapeutic application of psychology, a tremendous increase in public health via the advent of the germ theory of disease, and a rapid succession of technological inventions such as electric lighting, the telephone, the radio, the phonograph, the motion picture, the automobile, the airplane, etc.

⁴⁴ **The Year of the Revolution** saw as many as fifty revolutions in a single year, all of which were failures. In each case, the newly established liberal democracies fell into disunity and were replaced once more by conservative monarchies. Nevertheless, this year saw a great many states gradually incline toward classical liberalism, and it also saw the first organized efforts at radical liberalism. Ever since the vision of a socialist utopia was first put forth in France, more practically minded advocates had been organizing themselves into political groups, each with a different spin on how best to re-negotiate the boundaries between private and public property (sometimes religious, sometimes not religious). As everyone knows, the future of this movement lay in the hands of the philosopher Karl Marx, who that same year published his *Communist Manifesto*.

⁴⁵ **The Crimean War** marked the beginning of the end for the balance of power in the old world. Broadly speaking, the incentive for war grew up around the question of what to do with the “sick man” of Europe, meaning, “Who was going to benefit by picking up the pieces of the crumbling Ottoman Empire?” In the Middle Ages, it had been one of the most formidable powers in Europe, but hard times had fallen upon the Muslim Turks, and there was a growing fear that its regions were shortly to be added to the already massive empire of Orthodox Russia. Thus, it quickly became a matter of international interest when religious disputes between Muslims and Orthodox living in the Holy Land furnished a pretext for Russia to invade Turkey. Shortly thereafter, war was declared on Russia by Great Britain and France (both sides were offended by what they perceived as the spineless neutrality of Austria). The forty years of peace between the great powers had ended, and so began the breaking down of the Concert of Europe.

⁴⁶ **The Breakdown of the Concert of Europe:** After the Crimean War, the old alliances fell apart and a new atmosphere of competition prevailed. France immediately sought to reclaim her title as the most powerful nation on the continent. Britain was not averse to this as long as she continued to rule the high seas and remain the most powerful nation on the planet. Meanwhile, nations previously held in check saw their opportunity to expand, Sardinia uniting the regions around it into the state of Italy, and Prussia uniting the regions around it into the state of Germany (both completed by 1871). Even Japan and America became involved in the attempt to acquire offshore colonies: Japan began by acquiring Taiwan and Korea, and America began by acquiring Guam, Puerto Rico, the Philippine Islands, and Hawaii (following the Spanish-American War of 1898).

For Muslims, the new imperialism was a bad situation gone worse. Nearly all of their medieval territories had been overrun by colonial powers, and they were not able to keep up with scientific and technological progress. Arabia, Egypt, and India had all come under occupation, and this was soon to be the case with every other state on the continent of Africa (the only exception being the Dervish State⁴⁷). Persia was still independent, but the attempts of its leaders to modernize were strongly opposed by the lower clergy and the people. The Ottoman Empire appeared to be the ummah's last hope, but even though it had enjoyed some success at modernizing, it was in debt to numerous countries throughout Europe because of the Crimean War (also, it could no longer control the traffic of western influence in and out of its lands, and there was even a movement to further intensify such influence from within by a group known as the Young Ottomans⁴⁸). A number of leaders saw very clearly that the future of the religion now hung in the balance, and it was this above all else that led to the emergence of what is usually described as "progressive Islam". Although essentially a pragmatic movement, it sought to ground its innovations in radically new interpretations of the Quran, and this in turn required that one reject some or even all of the Hadith (a view called "Quranism"). In defense of this approach, it was argued that no scripture verse explicitly endorsed the use of tradition. In opposition to this approach, it was argued that the scriptures implicitly endorsed the use of tradition when they exhorted Muslims to follow the example of Muhammad (Quran 33:2).

An early forerunner of the progressive movement was Sayyid Ahmad Khan. He was born in India to a noble family in Delhi, then the capital of what little remained of the Mongol Empire. By now, the subcontinent had been effectually deprived of its independence, and he decided to pursue his education and career from the British. After having achieved a prominent role in the government, he was witness to the violent rebellion of 1857. Like so many others, he was troubled not only by the death of many loved ones, but also by the collapse of yet another medieval empire before the might of the British. From that point forward, he turned much of his scholarly attention to religion, and he became a strong advocate of the need for better education among religious people. He criticized the negative effects of thoughtless adherence to dogma, and he praised the benefits of a western style education. He wrote numerous works on a wide range of subjects (he has the

⁴⁷ **The Dervish State** was established by a group of Sunni Muslims in Somalia and lasted from 1897 – 1920. It acquired a reputation for stubborn resistance to western imperialism at a time when colonists controlled over 90% of the continent of Africa (it was, in fact, the only remaining independent Muslims state in Africa).

⁴⁸ **The Young Ottomans** was a political party that felt too much caution had been exercised in undertaking modernism. Although faithful to Islam, it felt that the governance of the state should follow suit with the rest of modern Europe. The primary fruit of their labors was the Constitution of 1876 (the first constitution in the history of the Ottoman Empire). Unfortunately, the constitution was only in effect for two years, after which the government was restored once more to a monarchy.

distinction of being the first Muslim to write a commentary on the Bible). He also began founding modern schools for the education of Muslims, the most famous of which was at Aligarh. Unfortunately, his pursuit of independent thought led him to espouse many unpopular ideas: for example, he rejected polygamy, violent jihad, and encouraged cooperation with the British. The ulama declared him a heretic, and in the face of tremendous pressure from his own people, he stopped writing about religion. Nevertheless, he continued to promote the cause of education, plant schools, and create organizations (he was one of the founders of the Muslims League, which is most famously associated with the creation of the state of Pakistan). In the end, his attempts to advance education were successful, but his attempts to reform Islam were condemned by Muslims and ignored by Christians.

An individual whose attempt to spread progressive ideas would meet with greater success was Jamal al-Din al-Afghani. Born in Afghanistan, he studied in Persia (where he came under the influence of Shaykhism) and then studied in British India (where he studied comparative religion). After performing the Hajj, he joined the Freemasons and began spreading reformist ideas in Egypt in 1870s. He believed the ummah ought to embrace western rationalism, western political systems, and especially its science and technology. Only by embracing modernism could the ummah become powerful enough to throw off the yoke of colonialism and unite once more into a single community (an idea known as pan-Islamism). Moreover, he taught that this was in fact the only way to recover the true spirit of Islam (which he claimed consisted in the free and enterprising ways of the prophet Muhammad). But while many were inspired by his call to reform the faith, few were persuaded of his orthodoxy. His writings were often more spiritual than Islamic, and he was very selective in his citing of the Quran. He encountered fierce opposition from the ulama and was expelled from numerous countries before resettling in Europe. His most famous disciple was Muhammad Abduh. Born in Egypt, he went to the al-Azhar University, where he studied logic, philosophy, and mysticism under al-Afghani. In the 1880s, he and his former professor began publishing a newspaper called *The Indiscernible Link* (quoting Quran 2:256). In it, he expressed the ideas of his master, but also his own: namely, that the ummah should follow reason alone and break with the whole medieval tradition (which, in a peculiar way, he said followed the pattern laid down by Muhammad). Accordingly, he opposed polygamy, supported equal rights, encouraged rational criticism of the Quran, etc. He became a strong supporter of the Bahai Faith and believed in the brotherhood of Muslims, Jews, and Christians. Although his ideas met with strong opposition, they also met with strong advocacy: Qasim Amin (who was the first to fight for the liberation of women), Muhammad Rashid Rida (who tried to wed Abduh's ideas with Wahhabism), and Lufti al-Sayyid (who divorced Abduh's ideas entirely from the religion of Islam).

The World Wars

The new imperialism ultimately culminated in the first and second world wars. The remote cause was growing competition over who would inherit the lands of the only remaining empire of the Muslims, the Ottoman Empire. The most likely candidate was Russia, but the Russians were in for some sharp competition from Germany. The latter had been unified into a single state in 1871, forged an alliance with Austria-Hungary in 1873, and then with Italy in 1882 (an arrangement called the Triple Alliance). Under Kaiser Wilhelm II, this new alliance became increasingly focused on building its military and expanding its borders (1888 – 1918).

By now, the Muslim world inside the Ottoman Empire had been reduced to Anatolia and various parts of the Middle East (the most important of which was the formerly independent province of Arabia). In the capital, the struggle continued over traditional versus modern forms of government (the empire got its first constitution in 1876, revoked it in 1878, restored it again in 1908, and nearly revoked it again in 1909). In the provinces, the general climate of instability encouraged revolutionaries to challenge the authority of the empire (e.g., the Shoubak Revolt of 1905, the Hauran Druze Rebellion of 1909, and the Karak Revolt of 1910). In each case, these rebellions were brutally suppressed, but they were indicative of a widespread loss of confidence in the religious and political authority of the ummah's last great empire. As a result, a number of Muslims began migrating to America.⁴⁹

As for the Muslim world outside the Ottoman Empire, it was almost entirely under the control of foreign powers (notable exceptions being the previously mentioned Dervish State, Yemen,⁵⁰ and Oman⁵¹). The most important centers of

⁴⁹ **The First Wave of Muslim Immigrants to America:** Although about one in five slaves brought to the new world were Muslim, they subsequently converted to Christianity. Free persons who came did so as individuals, so there was almost no Muslim presence in America well into the 19th century. The first waves of immigrants began coming after 1875, mostly men trying to save their families from the crumbling Ottoman Empire. Although such waves continued throughout both world wars, they were quite small and only amounted to a population of about 100,000 by 1960 (far less than a percent of the overall population). Of the few who came, most were attracted to Detroit and worked for Henry Ford. The country's first mosque was built in Highland Park in 1919. After that, most moved to the new plant in the south end of Dearborn, where another mosque was built in 1936. The south end of Dearborn developed into the only area in North America with a majority of Muslims.

⁵⁰ **Yemen** was occupied in the south by the Ottomans but retained its independence in the north under a dynasty of kings who for many centuries had belonged to an obscure sect of the Shiites called the Zaidi. They were more moderate than most mainstream groups, refraining from violent jihad and disbelieving in the infallibility of their imams.

⁵¹ **Oman** was a notable exception, perched on the southeast tip of the Arabian Peninsula. To the present day, it has remained an absolute monarchy, and it is the only modern state descended from the Kharijites (though they practice

colonial activity were India, Egypt, and Iran. India had been under occupation by the British since the uprising of 1857. Egypt had hitherto been independent, but when grass roots opposition to western influence began threatening violence, she was occupied by the British in 1882 (i.e., in order to protect their interest in the Suez Canal).⁵² Iran was still nominally independent, but having incurred massive debts to western nations, she, too, began making major economic and political concessions to the British (most famously, she granted the latter a fifty year monopoly on the production, sale, and export of tobacco in 1891). In the following year, a mass of protesters hit the streets, decrying the conceding of power to their western overlords. Although opposed by the status quo of the political regime, they were supported by the ulama, and specifically by the Shiite cleric known as Grand Ayatollah Mirza Shirazi. As in other countries, the nation was ripe for a showdown between modernizing politicians and traditionalist clerics. The initial victory went to the modernists, who established the country's first constitution in 1906 (executing its main opponent, Sheikh Fazlollah Noori). As we shall see, however, the traditionalists were by no means defeated, and they would manage to re-establish sharia law in 1978 (under the leadership of Ayatollah Khomeini). Over the course of the next century, the fallout of the two world wars would result in the addition of new states to the ummah, the creation of grass roots religious organizations, and the eruption of tremendous civil conflict between traditional and progressive Muslims.⁵³ This period would also mark the growth of a nationalistic form of Islam among blacks living in urban America.⁵⁴

it in a modified form called "Ibadi"). Although strict observers of sharia, they are tolerant of other religious groups and do not seek expansion through jihad.

⁵² **Umar Mukhtar** was a Sufi cleric who led a resistance movement to Italian colonialism in Libya beginning in 1911. Although the rebellion was ultimately squashed, it lasted for two decades and secretly received assistance from Egypt. It was a pattern that would be repeated in the future, an apparently local uprising being secretly assisted by the government of an adjacent state.

⁵³ **Indonesia, Progressive Islam, and the Muhammadiyah:** The progressive movement began in India with Sayyed Ahmad Khan, grew to mature form in Egypt with the teaching of Al-Afghani and Muhammad Abduh, but would have its greatest impact far from the heartland of the ummah in Indonesia. Although the Muslim religion had reached this area as far back as the late Middle Ages, its people remained deeply grounded in non-Islamic culture with only a thin veneer of Islamic religion. In order to remedy this situation, an intellectual named Ahmad Dahlan began a progressive wing of Sunni Islam called the Muhammadiyah (i.e., the Followers of Muhammad). Its purpose was to purify the people of their attachments to ancient paganism and get them to embrace moral monotheism under the banner of Islam. As such, it favored modern forms of government, and it opposed the use of violence in spreading Islam. It would grow to become the world's largest progressive movement since its inception in Java in 1912 (today, its 29 million adherents account for about 2% of the global population of Islam).

⁵⁴ **The Rise of Black Nationalism** was a native development rather than a foreign import from missionaries. A mass migration of four million blacks left the rural south for the urban north following the passage of Jim Crow laws in 1890. Unfortunately, this move did not result in their escaping the net of poverty, and this encouraged many to begin searching beyond the traditional avenues of freedom and identity. A certain Drew "Ali", who had just returned from travelling in Mecca, began working toward a new kind of religious identity with the establishment of the Canaanite-Moorish Science Temple of America (New Jersey, 1913). The first teacher of black nationalism, he asserted that blacks were descended from Moorish Muslims, and these in turn from the Moabites of Canaan. He also taught that Jesus was a black man who was executed by the Romans while attempting to redeem black

World War I (1914 – 1918)

The Great War was the first industrialized war executed on a global scale. It arose against the backdrop of the new imperialism, the most important theatre of which was now the Balkan Peninsula (the region formerly under the control of the Ottoman Turkish Muslims). Known as “the powder keg of Europe”, it had grown politically unstable because of the revolutionary aspirations of its indigenous peoples and the colonial claims of its foreign overlords. Thus, after a Serbian rebel assassinated an Austro-Hungarian nobleman, what might otherwise have amounted to nothing more than a local uprising set into motion a whole network of colonial alliances. After Austria-Hungary declared war on the Serbs, Russia mobilized on behalf of the latter, while Germany mobilized on behalf of the former. As other nations became involved to honor their international alliances, and two massive coalitions formed: the Allies (led by the United Kingdom, France, and Russia, and joined by Italy, Japan, and the United States), and the Central Powers (led by Germany and Austria-Hungary, and joined by Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire).

The war is most often remembered for its use of trench warfare, a tactic that quickly resulted in a stalemate along the eastern and western fronts of the Central Powers. What was its effect on the ummah of Islam? Its last great hope was the now crumbling Ottoman Empire. Although she had no real stake in the war, it provided an opportunity for her to win political allies, and so she sided with Germany. Unfortunately, she did not do well in the war: while maintaining her hold on Asia Minor, she suffered heavy losses in Palestine, Mesopotamia, and central Asia. Perhaps the most striking thing of all, however, was the fact that she used the war as an opportunity to exterminate the foreign peoples living in her midst and also to attack other states under the governance of Islam. As for the empire’s program of ethnic cleansing, this consisted of an Assyrian Genocide (exterminating 150,000 – 300,000), a Greek Genocide (exterminating 450,000 – 750,000), and an Armenian Genocide (exterminating 1,500,000). A great deal of controversy has arisen over the question of whether her acts of genocide furnished a pattern for how her German allies would later deal with the Jews.⁵⁵ As for the

Moabites. When it came to re-writing the biblical narrative, he benefitted greatly from the idea that whites had introduced corruptions into the Bible. In his own lifetime, the movement grew to upward of thirty thousand, and he opened temples in Detroit, Chicago, Harlem, Pittsburgh, etc. In the end, his teaching released forces in the community beyond his ability to control: he was mysteriously killed and his followers divided into factions. Nevertheless, the groundwork had been laid, and a similar movement called the Nation of Islam would appear in connection with names like Wallace Fard Muhammad, Eljiah Muhammad, Malcolm X, Louis Farrakhan, etc. (as this movement never achieved recognition by mainstream Muslims, a more orthodox form of it would eventually appear called the American Muslim Mission under the leadership of Wallace Deen Muhammad).

⁵⁵ **The Turkish Precedent for the Holocaust:** The idea that such a precedent exists is a subject of contention among historians in both Germany and Turkey. The evidence for its existence is provided not only by the fact that both nations engaged in genocide, but also by an oblique reference to both events in a speech by Adolf Hitler: *The*

empire's attacks on her own people, these were directed against Persia (to gain access to petroleum reservoirs), against Egypt (to gain access to the Suez Canal), and against Arabia (to put down the Arab Revolt of 1916 – 1918). The Arab Revolt was the most important of these events, for it was incited by the promise that after the war they would be granted their independence and also control of the Middle East.⁵⁶

By the end of the war, massive political changes were on the horizon. Those nations which emerged as the biggest global powers were Britain, America, and Russia. Britain was still the largest empire in the world. America was not far behind, and it was her president who began the initiative to create an international peacekeeping organization called the League of Nations.⁵⁷ Russia had changed the most, the czarist regime having just been overthrown and replaced by a communist state under the leadership of the Bolsheviks and Vladimir Lenin. For all three victors, the most pressing question at hand was what to do with the fallen empires of the Hapsburgs, the Germans, and the Ottoman Turks. The Hapsburg empire became prey to a series of local revolutions, resulting in the formation of various nation-states (e.g., Austria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia). In Germany, the monarchy was abolished and the government reconstituted as a representative democracy called the Weimar Republic (forced to sign the humiliating Treaty of Versailles⁵⁸). As for the Ottomans, their empire was reduced to a small part of Asia Minor. As promised, Arabia was granted her independence, but she was double-crossed and deprived of the Middle East. Against pre-war agreements, it was now

aim of the war is not to attain certain lines, but consists in the physical destruction of the opponent. Thus, for the time being, I have sent to the East only my "Death's Head units" with the order to kill without pity or mercy all men, women, and children of Polish race or language. Only in such a way, will we win the vital living space that we need. Who still talks nowadays of the extermination of the Armenians?

⁵⁶ **The Arab Revolt:** The British promised the Arabs national independence and control of the rest of the Middle East if they would agree to fight against the Ottomans. Tremendous forces arose in support of this proposal, including politicians, nationalists, and even the clergy (who opposed the secularization of religion being carried out by the Young Turks). In order to assist them, high ranking officials were sent to the country, the most famous of which was T. E. Lawrence (famously known as "Lawrence of Arabia"). The revolt would ultimately prove successful, briefly resulting in the formation of the Kingdom of Hejaz (beginning in 1918), but the region was eventually reconquered by the Saudis (beginning in 1925).

⁵⁷ **The League of Nations** was the first international organization explicitly designed for the maintenance of global peace. In many ways, however, it was simply a broader version of what had existed in the old world as the Concert of Europe. Many individuals had called for the creation of such an organization, but the actualization of this idea is largely to be credited to Britain and America (it was mentioned as the last of President Woodrow Wilson's Fourteen Points). Its primary function was to provide a forum for negotiation and to provide support for its joint resolutions through economic sanctions (though it did not have the ability to use military force).

⁵⁸ **The Treaty of Versailles** is widely regarded as a major factor in the onset of World War II. It failed to provide compensation for the costs of war suffered by Italy, and it placed responsibility for the whole war on the shoulders of Germany. A massive fine for the war immediately crippled the nation's economy. Its army was to be reduced to one hundred thousand men, and the military was required to destroy all of its tanks, boats, and planes. All of its colonies were given away, a sizeable portion of its native territory went to Poland, and the country itself split in two (with the larger part of the country separated from its heartland in Prussia).

decided that the whole fertile crescent should be carved up into independent states, and then only gradually decolonized (the Sykes-Picot Agreement). In the meantime, the process of decolonizing allowed member states of the League of Nations to continue governing as trustees of the Middle East (i.e., until its inhabitants were judged ready to manage it on their own): Britain got Iraq, Palestine, and Jordan; France got Syria, Lebanon, and southern Asia Minor; and Russia got Istanbul, the Turkish Straits, and Armenia. To add insult to injury, plans were also drawn up for the creation of a Jewish state in the land of Palestine (the so-called Balfour Declaration⁵⁹). At the time of the declaration, the population of the region was 87% Muslim, 10% Christian, and 3% Jewish. Although the projected state would not appear for many decades, immigrants immediately began pouring in by the thousands, and in just over a decade they jumped from 3% to 30%. Newspapers began carrying stories about riots between Arabs and Jews.

After the war, all that remained of the ummah was a collection of various states professing Islam. Those states which were independent included Turkey, Afghanistan, Iran, Arabia, Yemen, and Egypt (in general, the challenge within these states was that of politicians attempting to modernize them from the top down while encountering fierce opposition from the clergy led populace). Those states which were still under colonial occupation were India, Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Palestine, and Indonesia (in general, the challenge within these states was whether to embrace a policy of cooperation or non-cooperation with their western overlords). Turkey had the greatest success at secularization: it deposed the sultan, established a democratic republic, and instituted many modern reforms (all following the Turkish War of Independence, 1919 – 1923).⁶⁰ Afghanistan attempted something similar, but with less success: although it managed to secure its independence, all attempts to modernize were met with protests, rebellions, and

⁵⁹ **The Balfour Declaration** called for the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine through the economic agency of the Rothschilds and the political agency of the British. It was the first attempt to realize the vision of Zionism, first proposed by Theodor Herzl writing from Hungary in 1896. Public support for the idea came from nations interested in the removal of foreign influence, Christians who thought the repatriation of the chosen people would usher in the apocalypse, and Jews who wanted to escape the rising tide of antisemitism. The British also had selfish reasons, since the creation of a loyal Jewish state in Palestine would secure their access through the Suez Canal to India and Asia. After the war, an excellent opportunity was furnished by the breakdown of the Ottoman Empire. The idea was strongly opposed by Palestinian Arabs who did not wish to suddenly find themselves living under the rule of Jews. It was strongly supported by Jews, and in just a couple years the membership of Zionist organizations leapt from 7,500 to 150,000.

⁶⁰ **Mustafa Kemal Atatürk** was the founder of the modern Republic of Turkey (1923 – 1938). A former military officer of the Ottoman Empire, he was also a major leader in the Turkish War of Independence. Although raised in a religious home, he eventually became a proponent of nationalism rather than Islam. He was not a student of the Quran, but rather of Montesquieu, Rousseau, Voltaire, and Comte. A devout atheist, he believed that the affairs of the state should be managed in accordance with reason rather than the supposed revelations of the prophet Muhammad. He abolished sharia courts and shut down religious schools, monasteries, religious orders, and institutions controlled by the ulama. Monogamy was introduced, the professional world opened up to women, public schools were instituted, and so forth.

assassinations (1919 - 1924). Iran faced the same kinds of challenges, though here the protest against modernism took less of a physical and more of an intellectual form at the Qom Seminary (the training ground of Ayatollah Khomeini from 1920 - 1924). In Iraq, there was a general uprising aimed at dislodging the British, known as the Iraqi Revolt of 1920 (although the revolt was ultimately put down, it persuaded the British to change their policy from one of direct to indirect rule). Likewise, in Syria-Lebanon, there was a general uprising aimed at dislodging the French, known as the Great Syrian Revolt of 1925 – 1927 (here again, the revolt was put down, and the French were persuaded to change their policy from one of direct to indirect rule). In Arabia, King Hussein of the newly established Kingdom of Hejaz promptly declared himself supreme caliph of the whole world, a claim that was recognized neither by westerners nor by most Muslims (in fact, it provoked an attack by the Saudis who were able to reclaim Arabia in 1926). In Indonesia, in response to the spread of the more liberal Muhammadiyah and the more conservative Wahhabis, a moderating movement appeared called Nahdlatul Ulama (Java, 1926).⁶¹ In Egypt, as a counterthrust to the nation's progressive tendencies, a more conservative organization called the Muslim Brotherhood was formed by a man named Hasan al-Banna in 1928.⁶² In Palestine, animosity toward colonialism was perhaps the greatest, aggravated by the looming shadow of Zionism, a project which sought to take the state away from the Muslims and give it to the Jews. This led to a series of riots, the most famous of which arose out of struggles to gain access to the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem in 1929. In the wake of this event, the grand mufti Muhammad Amin al-Husayni invited representatives from all nations of the ummah to meet at Jerusalem in 1931 (a two week conference that drew 130 delegates from 22 states). Although called in order to address the urgent matters at hand, the delegates also began taking the first steps toward the formation of a more permanent international council of representatives for Muslims (what would eventually become the World Muslim Congress).

World War II (1939 – 1945)

Only a couple decades after the war to end all wars, the nations of western

⁶¹ **The Nahdlatul Ulama** is a political organization espousing a moderate version of Sunni Islam (somewhere between traditional and progressive). The NU favors traditional government under sharia (contra the progressives), it but opposes intolerance of other religions and the use of violence in spreading Islam (contra the traditionalists). It would eventually grow to become the ummah's largest independent organization, and it accounts for 2.5% of its total population.

⁶² **The Muslim Brotherhood** was founded by a teacher named Hasan al-Banna. It promoted traditional beliefs, encouraged jihad against colonial powers, and aimed for the global unification of all believers in Islam. In the years to come, its members would draw attention to themselves by their involvement in various acts of terrorism, and it would be banned in numerous states. Nevertheless, it would grow to become the biggest and most influential movement for revival in the 20th century, inspiring Islamic fundamentalism in the Sudan, Syria, Palestine, Jordan, and other countries.

civilization found themselves embroiled in World War II. Although there had much talk about the establishment of a just peace, in reality a great many countries found themselves under the yoke of a dictated peace, one in which a small democracy of victorious nations rode on the backs of defeated nations. In turn, the latter were left to look after their own affairs but could only do so competitively by giving unlimited power to the state, a measure that was taken up in Japan (under Hirohito), in Italy (under Benito Mussolini), and especially in Germany (under Adolf Hitler). The events which plunged the civilized world into its next great war were Hirohito's invasion of Manchuria (1931), Mussolini's invasion of Ethiopia (1935), and Hitler's invasion of Poland (1939). These three nascent empires would become known as the Axis Powers, and their rivals would become known as the Allied Powers.

This war was very different than the first, especially for Muslims. Although they had no shortage of grievances against the west, nearly all of their lands were under the direct control of the west. A few conspired with the Axis powers (e.g., Iraq⁶³), but most fought on behalf of the Allies (e.g., India⁶⁴). Those nations capable of independent involvement in the war were Turkey, Afghanistan, Egypt, Iran, and Arabia. Turkey remained neutral for most of the war (it only declared itself for the Allies upon the defeat of the Axis). Afghanistan remained neutral for the whole duration of the war and was relatively unaffected by it. Egypt also remained neutral, though it entered into secret negotiations with Germany in the hopes that it might be able to remove the British (these hopes were dashed when the latter accomplished a string of victories running from North Africa to Egypt to Sicily). Iran was another country that claimed neutrality, though here again there was suspicion that it was secretly harboring Nazis. The country was promptly invaded, its leader replaced, and very soon found itself in league with the Allies (it provided oil and a supply corridor between the British and the Soviets, for which it became known as "the Bridge of Victory"). Arabia was the only independent state to unequivocally declare itself on the side of the Allies. Just before the outbreak of

⁶³ **Iraq in World War II:** Although formally under the protection of the isles, it was very near to becoming independent. At the start of the war, it publically broke off ties with the Axis, but then privately engaged in secret correspondences with both Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy. A tremendous amount of propaganda for these countries was spread from Baghdad, and this city was also used as a harbor for the notorious Amin al Husseini. Amin was a Sunni cleric in charge of the holy places in Jerusalem (an office known as that of the Grand Mufti). A strong proponent of Islamism, and also a strong opponent of Zionism, he sought to further the cause of his people through collaboration with Fascist Italy and Nazi Germany. He was familiar with, though not directly involved in, the work of Himmler in the Holocaust. He used his position of authority to recruit Muslims to fight on behalf of the Axis Powers.

⁶⁴ **India in World War II:** Britain's control of India had by now reached the peak of its unpopularity. The most famous movement for independence was undoubtedly that of Mahatma Gandhi. A less famous appeal for independence was that of the Muslim League, which offered to fight in exchange for the creation of the state of Pakistan. While Gandhi's non-violent followers were put into prison, the Muslim League sent at least four hundred thousand men to the front.

war, it discovered what would later be recognized as the largest oil reserve on the planet in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf. The west provided it with the resources needed for mass production, and it began providing the west with huge quantities of oil. A long-term relationship was established that has continued to the present day (previously, the country's primary source of income had been from pilgrims making the annual journey to Mecca!).

The war famously ended with VE Day (following the suicide of Adolf Hitler) and VJ Day (following the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki). As before, the great global powers to emerge were Britain, America, and the Soviet Union (though by now it was evident that the empire of the isles was in its twilight and the future of the world lay in the hands of the U.S. and the U.S.S.R.). Even before the war had ended, meetings about what to do after the war were already being held by Churchill, Roosevelt, and Stalin: at Tehran, they decided to partition postwar Germany; at Yalta, they made a fresh attempt at global peace by rejecting the charter of the League of Nations and replacing it with that of the United Nations (unlike its predecessor, this organization provided for the representation of colonized peoples); and at Potsdam, an attempt was made to secure free democratic elections throughout Europe, though now a sharp disagreement arose between the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. (now under the leadership of Harry Truman). It now became apparent that there were not one but two visions of the postwar world, a division between the democratic west and the communist east famously referred to as "the iron curtain" in a speech by Winston Churchill. As for the rest of the planet, those smaller countries which had formerly been colonial possessions became known as the Third World, and the vast majority of these were inhabited by Muslims.

In the immediate aftermath of the war, a tremendous number of changes occurred in the political geography of Islam, most of which was now set in the Third World. Although most of these changes would occur sporadically over the next couple years, they are best viewed as outcomes of World War II rather than as events belonging to the Cold War. In point of fact, it was precisely through the disbanding of the League of Nations that a mass effort began toward de-colonization, inaugurating what has since become known as the post-colonial period (the main centers of which were in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East). Turkey was already independent, but now it recovered those parts that had been variously apportioned to the east and the west (accordingly, it was destined to become the first battleground state of the Cold War). In Africa, Libya was the first Muslim state to become independent (at present, it is most popularly known in connection with the city of Benghazi). In Asia, the first Muslim states to achieve independence were Indonesia and India. Assent was also given to the long-standing demand that the subcontinent be partitioned into two states. Thus, a new

state was created just south of Afghanistan and given the name of Pakistan (i.e., “land of the pure”). In all, 14.5 million people participated in what is often regarded as the largest mass migration in history (a very violent process which cost the lives of millions of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs [including the life of Mahatma Gandhi]). Even after the migration, fighting would continue between India and Pakistan, mostly over claims to the intervening lands of Jammu and Kashmir. In anticipation of the creation of this new state, a very conservative religious movement was founded by Abul Ala Maududi called Jamaat-e-Islami.⁶⁵

Meanwhile in the Middle East, foreign militaries were removed from the states of Arabia, Egypt, and Iran, and new states were formed in Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon. All of these new Islamic states became charter members of the United Nations, and many of them joined in a separate organization of their own called the Arab League (Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, and Lebanon). Palestine was a rather more complicated affair. The United Nations planned to divide the region into two equally sized states, one called Israel and the other called Palestine (unfortunately, the borders of the two regions were not continuous, but each state was sliced into three discrete regions, thereby creating an almost inevitable border dispute). The Arab League immediately opposed the division, immediately precipitating the Arab-Israeli War, and inaugurating what has since become known as the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict (1948 to the present).

⁶⁵ **Jamaat e-Islami** sought to ensure that the newly created state would not be based on secular but religious government. Accordingly, JI espoused traditional views of doctrine and sharia: e.g., the segregation of men and women, strict laws of asceticism, harsh punishments, etc. Since its inception, it has proved a very influential force internationally, but especially in the local countries of India, Pakistan, and Afghanistan. Like the Muslim Brotherhood, certain adherents of the group became associated with acts of terrorism, and this has resulted in some states banning the organization.

5

The Muslim Cold War

In the previous chapter, the ummah experienced its unhappy transition into the modern world. In making this transition, it went from being a colonizer to being the colonized, and in the process it witnessed the fall of its last great medieval empire, the Ottomans. In response, intellectuals sought to update their ideas, local freedom fighters engaged in guerrilla warfare, and apocalyptics arose claiming to be the Madhi. After the devastating effects of two world wars, however, an effort began toward decolonization, and this allowed for the sudden appearance of a large number of independent states.

In the present chapter, therefore, we see a rapid increase in the rate of both decolonization and state building (the number of states would increase from 15 to 50 in just the latter half of the 20th century). Here again, the most important question facing these new states was whether they would embrace a religious form of government or a secular form of government. Although a few opted for the former, the vast majority embraced the latter, and here again there were two major options to choose from: one or another form of capitalism, or one or another form of socialism (the most dominant form of which was communism). An important part of the larger Cold War, this battle over what kind of government to choose, is sometimes referred to as the Muslim Cold War (in the years to come, the battle over government would increasingly be seen as a battle for the preservation of public morality, which was shortly to deteriorate in the secular governments of the west⁶⁶).

What were these fifteen remnant states making up the world of Islam? Its richest, most influential, and most conservative state was undoubtedly the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (the only other traditional monarchies to be found were in the small, impoverished, and religiously unorthodox kingdoms of Yemen and Oman). All other independent states were either partly or wholly secular (even though the religion of the majority remained that of Islam). Africa had Egypt and Libya. The Near East had Palestine, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Iraq. The Far

⁶⁶ **The Spiritual Decadence of the West** has become a subject of mutual concern for both Christians and Muslims. In the postwar period, a pattern of spiritual decay and technological empowerment began to appear in secular democratic republics. Although professing to stand for the highest humanitarian values, their societies have witnessed the decline of religion, of the family, and of individual virtue. In place of the upwardly mobile values of identity, character, and the free exercise of reason, there has appeared a prevalence of junk culture, profanity, sexual perversity, gluttony, drugs, infanticide, suicide, etc.

East had Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Southeast Asia had Indonesia. Asia Minor had Turkey. In spite of these divisions, however, a number of organizations were already working to provide the states with political unity (e.g., the Arab League) as well as religious unity (e.g., more liberal groups like the Muhammadiyah and the Nahdlatul Ulama), and more conservative groups (e.g., the Muslim Brotherhood and the Jamaat-e Islami). The earliest postwar attempt to unite the ummah across the globe regardless of the ethnic and religious differences of its various groups was the World Muslim Congress (the first of three major organizations devoted to pan-Islamism⁶⁷). The ummah's battle for global dominion was not over, and much of the history of the 20th and 21st centuries would consist in the clash between atheist communism and the missional religions of Christianity and Islam (albeit in very different ways).

The Cold War Period (1946 – 1991)

After World War II, the United Nations was formed to provide international peace and also to provide justice and independence for formerly colonized peoples. As new states came into being, however, a period of mutual hostility opened up between the governments of the democratic west and those of the communist east. Usually referred to as the Cold War, it took the form of a nuclear arms race between the United States (leading NATO⁶⁸) and the U.S.S.R. (leading the Communist Bloc⁶⁹). The Third World provided the theater for this conflict, whether in the peripheral regions of the Near East or the Far East: in either case,

⁶⁷ **Pan-Islamic Organizations:** The idea of creating a permanent international organization was first conceived by a gathering of various representatives in Mecca in 1926. An initial draft of how such an organization might look was produced at a similar gathering in Jerusalem in 1931. The actual creation of such an institution did not occur until after the war under the leadership of Muhammad Amin al-Husayni and Inamullah Khan. It was called the World Muslim Congress (Pakistan, 1949). Eventually it was superseded by the World Muslim League (Mecca, 1970). This in turn was later superseded by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (Saudi Arabia, 1969). At present, OIC serves as the collective voice of the Muslim World, and with fifty-seven member states, it is the largest international organization next to the United Nations.

⁶⁸ **NATO**, or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, was officially founded in 1947. It was an international alliance of governments mutually dedicated to providing a collective defense against all external attackers (but specifically the communists). As the Cold War progressed, it grew tremendously in terms of the number of member countries, investment of money, and the potential strength of its military. Strange to say, the organization was never required to conduct military operations against the communists during the Cold War, but it did conduct military operations in Muslim countries after the Cold War (in the Yugoslav Wars of 1991 - 2001 and immediately following the attacks of September 11, 2001).

⁶⁹ **The Communist Bloc** was a group of tightly packed communist states located throughout central and eastern Europe. After the Russian Revolution of 1917, Russia allied with other communist nations to form the U.S.S.R. in 1922. After World War II, this organization immediately sought expansion into western Europe, beginning in Turkey and then Greece. The expansion and mutual cooperation among communist states eventually acquired formal expression in the Warsaw Pact of 1955.

the majority population was Muslim, and their struggle for statehood was carried out under the shadow of the ideological battle between the US and the USSR.

The Cold War began with attempts by the U.S.S.R. to expand its influence from Turkey into Greece and from there into the rest of Europe (1946). When Turkey refused the establishment of military bases on its coastlands by the U.S.S.R., its refusal was met with military and economic assistance from the U.S. (just across the channel, a civil war had erupted between the communist and democratic parties in Greece). The President then went public with his famous Truman Doctrine, according to which it was the responsibility of the west to maintain international peace by supporting free people resisting attempted subjugation. The first recipients of such help were the people of Asia Minor, a land almost entirely inhabited by Muslims, but unique in that it drew a firm line between politics and religion (a situation that has not remained static⁷⁰).

The Cold War progressed as attempts to contain communism followed its absorption of Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary, and especially, Czechoslovakia. The first major theatre in which this occurred was the divided city of Berlin in 1948 (an event in which a trade blockade was directed against the western allies by the U.S.S.R. and in which it was famously bypassed via an airlift arranged by the U.S.). From there, the battle very quickly spilled over into the Third World: (1) Arabia remained an ally of the U.S. (it was already involved in a treaty to sell oil in exchange for the protection of the royal family, and as a traditional monarchy it didn't have to take a position on the question of democracy versus communism); (2) In Egypt, however, the nation's courtship with modern systems of government was more open-ended. There were rumors of a potential overthrow of the secular government by the Muslim Brotherhood. When a certain politician jailed many of its members, he in turned was assassinated, and a battle for control of the government ensued resulting in the establishment of socialism under Gamal Abd el-Nasser (making the country an ally of the U.S.S.R.); (3) In the Levant, the plan to partition the land into two states made things a bit more complicated, the projected state of Israel receiving the support of the U.S., and the projected state of Palestine receiving the support of the U.S.S.R. The region saw new uprisings during each of five waves of immigrant Jews, and even though the plan to divide it up had not yet been formally adopted by the UN, it was unilaterally declared effective by Prime Minister David ben-Gurion. This

⁷⁰ **Muslims in Asia Minor** were harshly suppressed after the fall of the Ottoman Empire and the establishment the Republic of Turkey (all legal, educational, and religious institutions were taken over by the state during the administration of Mustafa Kemal "Ataturk"). After the war, however, there appeared a grassroots reaction to secularism marked by the creation of religious societies and lobbying for greater tolerance for religion in both the private and public sphere. Ever since, the balance has steadily crept toward a public policy more in favor of religion than secularism (e.g., today, the hijab is no longer prohibited, voice is given to political parties that are explicitly Muslim, and proposals have been issued to make the entire state Islamic).

presumptive declaration of a state of Israel was rejected by the Arabs, and thus began the Arab-Israeli War of 1948 (a war in which the Israeli's stood opposed to the combined forces of Palestine, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, and Iraq). The war was won by the Jews, and they not only assumed control of the territory initially allotted to Israel, but over half of the territory initially allotted to Palestine. What is more, the Gaza Strip was occupied by Egypt, and the West Bank was occupied by Jordan—leaving no land with which to create a state for the Palestinians (hundreds of thousands fled the borders as refugees). As the Arabs had opposed the creation of a state for Israel, so the Jews now opposed the creation of a state for Palestine. The next fifty years would see four more bloody wars, the Jews claiming the land in virtue of the conquests of Joshua (ca. 1250 BC), and the Arabs claiming it in virtue of the conquests of Umar (636 AD). As in Asia Minor, the global powers tended to view the entire battle in light of its potential for either expanding or containing the forces of communism.

The First Phase of the Cold War (1948 – 1979)

The Cold War is usually divided into two phases, the first of which extends from the aforementioned events to the gradual relaxation of tensions (called “détente”). Although the earliest battles in this contest took place in the Middle East, attention quickly turned to the Asian Pacific after the victory of the communist party in the Chinese Civil War of 1949. After the rise of Red China, western allies agree that they should seek to prevent the further spread of communism in the northern peninsula of Korea and in the southern peninsula of Indochina (both of which were split into factions of communism and anti-communism). In the following year, the United State sent military aid to the anti-communists in South Korea⁷¹ and non-military aid to the anti-communists in North Vietnam.⁷² Why did such intervention not extend further south into Muslim Indonesia (or nearby Muslim Malaysia)? Under other circumstances it probably would have, but the newly liberated state began its history as a secular democracy.

⁷¹ **The Korean War** (1950 – 1953): The Korean War began when the communist north invaded the anticommunist south (crossing the 38th parallel in 1950). President Truman set a precedent for solitary executive action by getting authorization to send troops from the UN rather than Congress (he also set a precedent for dissimulation by referring to the intervention not as a war but as a police action). General Douglas MacArthur drove the militants out of the south, and he then extended the conflict by attempting to conquer the north (though this proved unsuccessful). The American public eventually grew disenchanted with the war because of the lack of success, the high cost, and the large number of casualties (over 35,000 Americans and over 4 million Asians).

⁷² **The First Indochina War** (1946 – 1954): The Indochina Peninsula, also known as Southeast Asia, is currently divided among the states of Myanmar, Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam. After World War II, this region was under the colonial power of the French, but it began to face military resistance from a communist dictator named Ho Chi Minh. At this early stage, the United States did not want to escalate the war by sending in troops, but they did send military advisors, money, and weaponry (e.g., napalm). Later, they would become involved in the Second Indochina War (better known as the Vietnam War).

As a result, it was regarded as an ally of the west, though it continued to experience strong opposition from communists and religious radicals.⁷³

A further chapter in this story opened up with the accession of Eisenhower in the U.S. (replacing Truman) and Khrushchev in the U.S.S.R. (replacing Stalin): the west sought to reduce its expenditure on the military, and the east sought to remedy the abuses of the past through a program of “de-Stalinization” (both beginning in 1953). Although attempts to contain communism continued, the western powers now pursued their object through more indirect and sometimes covert means, e.g., not only by ending the war in Korea, but also by helping to establish a democratic republic in Vietnam, and by supporting anti-communist rebels in Indonesia (a fact that has only recently come to light). Meanwhile in the Middle East, a more materialistic incentive for containing communism began to appear, namely the production and transmission of foreign oil: (1) Although democratically elected, the socialistically inclined prime minister of Iran wanted to nationalize the oil industry of Iran (in effect taking the second richest oil reserve on the planet away from Britain). A propaganda campaign was therefore initiated to secure his removal by the shah, referred to as “Operation Ajax” (a joint effort of the British Secret Service and the CIA in 1953 [that same year saw the publication of Ian Fleming’s first James Bond book, *Casino Royale*]). This operation restored the flow of oil to western markets, and it secured it by setting up a puppet government under the country’s former ruler (i.e., until the Iranian Revolution of 1979); (2) Again, the socialistically inclined president of Egypt wanted to nationalize the canal system in Egypt (which, in effect, meant taking access to the Suez Canal away from Britain [the primary conduit for the shipment of oil, which accounted for more than half of its traffic]). In this case, however, direct military action was taken, and the country was invaded by the combined forces of Israel, France, and Britain in 1956. Such action naturally smacked of colonialism, and it was opposed not only by Muslims, but more importantly, by the U.S. (which by now had little choice, having already condemned similar actions by the U.S.S.R. against Hungary⁷⁴). When US economic sanctions brought about the invasion’s failure, it not only proved a tremendous humiliation for the once great empires of Europe, but an equally tremendous demonstration of the power of the United States

⁷³ **Sekarmadji Maridjan Kartosoewirjo** was a conservative Muslim who founded a movement called Darul Islam which sought to transform the Republic of Indonesia into the Islamic State of Indonesia (1950 – 1962). All throughout the 1950s, this movement was very strong, controlling most of the rural population and commanding an army of over fifteen thousand guerillas.

⁷⁴ **The Hungarian Revolution:** This event was a one-month nation-wide revolt of the Hungarians against the rule of the USSR (it began in Budapest in 1956). As such, it provided a parade example of the kind of colonial despotism to which the United States had committed itself under the Truman Doctrine (providentially situated at the precise moment when her own interests were being undermined by the nationalization of the Suez Canal). The revolution was violently suppressed by the USSR, even as the nationalization of the canal provoked the invasion of the British (and both actions were publically condemned by the US).

(indeed, it was precisely at this point that individuals began clamoring for the formation of a European Union).

The Suez Crisis had a tremendous effect on the Cold War in the late 1950s. At face value, it seemed like a good thing, for it suggested that nations wanting to be free from colonialism had a friend in either the U.S. or the U.S.S.R.. Indeed, in the wake of this event, the number of Muslim majority countries would double, going from 15 to 30⁷⁵ (the states' economic strength was also greatly increased through the coordination of their efforts at oil production⁷⁶). Unfortunately, this event also destroyed the unity of the western allies, and many of the new nations began aligning themselves with communism as their regions were vacated by the French and the British. In the Near East, the power vacuum was filled by the spread of socialism from Egypt to Syria to Iraq (all of whom began receiving assistance from the USSR). In the Far East, the power vacuum was filled by the founding of a rebel organization calling itself the National Liberation Front (but better known as the Viet Cong). Even in the western hemisphere, it inspired rebels to overthrow the government and establish a communist satellite on the island of Cuba.⁷⁷ As a result, the tensions between the east and the west had been brought to their highest pitch when John Kennedy came to the White House in 1961 (the same year the communists built their famous wall and sent their first man into outer space). Although his administration proved short, it saw the birth of yet another oil crisis in the Middle East.⁷⁸ the assumption of responsibility for maintaining peace

⁷⁵ **The Number of Muslim States Doubles:** Most of the new states came from Africa (indeed, in the year 1960 alone, we see the formation of no less than seventeen new states, thus inspiring the name "the Year of Africa"). 1956 saw the independence of Morocco, Sudan, and Tunisia; 1957 saw the independence of Malaysia; 1958 saw the independence of Guinea; 1960 saw the independence of Burkina Faso, Chad, Mali, Mauritania, Nigeria, Senegal, and Somalia; 1961 saw the independence of Kuwait, Sierra Leone; 1962 saw the independence of Algeria.

⁷⁶ **OPEC**, or the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, coordinated the reserves of the five biggest oil producing countries in the world (beginning in Baghdad in 1960). The five charter countries were Arabia, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, and Venezuela (though they were soon joined by Qatar, Indonesia, Libya, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador, and Gabon). In this way, the power to determine the price of oil gradually passed from the various companies controlled by America to the companies represented by OPEC (the vast majority of which were controlled by the Arabic community in the vicinity of the Persian Gulf, and especially, Saudi Arabia). It would be difficult to overestimate the significance of this organization: it allowed hitherto colonized countries not only to increase their wealth but also to become a force in international politics.

⁷⁷ **The Cuban Revolution of 1959:** As with so much of South America, Cuba was originally a colony of the Spanish. She achieved her independence shortly after the Spanish American War in 1898. Unfortunately, the government of the island was highly unstable, and she found herself under supervision via the naval base at Guantanamo Bay. The internal affairs of the country were often regulated by America. Radical political groups opposed what seemed to them just another form of western colonialism and began espousing eastern communism. Under Fidel Castro, a successful revolution was staged, and the country was quickly transformed into a satellite of communism with the support of the USSR.

⁷⁸ **The First Kuwait Crisis (1961):** Under the League of Nations, the region of Mesopotamia had been artificially partitioned into two states, Iraq and Kuwait. Although Iraq acquired independence immediately after World War II, Kuwait did not achieve independence until 1961. Almost immediately, however, the country was reclaimed and invaded (no doubt in part because of its strategic access to the bay and its rich oil reserves [the fourth largest in the world]). Although the protection of Kuwait was originally undertaken by Britain, it was soon taken over by the

in Indochina, and an exchange of threats and counter-threats on the island of Cuba.⁷⁹ The political climate in these regions only worsened when Lyndon Johnson came to the White House in 1963 (his accession roughly paralleling that of Brezhnev in 1964). Although things had settled in Cuba, a similar revolt appeared in Latin America in 1964 (for a full year, the Dominican Republic was under military occupation by America). The far east saw the outbreak of the Second Indochina War,⁸⁰ as well as an anti-communist purge in Indonesia⁸¹ (both beginning in 1965). Meanwhile, the Near East saw the formation of the Palestinian Liberation Organization⁸² and the outbreak of the Six Day War in 1967. In the Six Day War, a surprise attack was launched against Arab forces that had been deployed along the borders of Israel. In a lightning swift campaign, they took the Gaza Strip from Egypt, the West Bank from Jordan, the Golan Heights from Syria, and the entire Sinai Peninsula (nearly tripling the size of the country). It was a

allies of the U.S. (i.e., the Arab League led by Saudi Arabia).

⁷⁹ **The Bay of Pigs Invasion** (1961) and **The Cuban Missile Crisis** (1963): The Bay of Pigs invasion was a failed attempt to invade the island of Cuba conceived by the CIA. The Cuban Missile Crisis was a standoff between the US (which had stationed nuclear missiles in Turkey) and the U.S.S.R. (which had stationed nuclear missiles on the island of Cuba). Over a period of thirteen days, the two superpowers came to the brink of nuclear war, but the crisis was at last averted through the mutual disarmament of both sides.

⁸⁰ **The Second Indochina War**, better known as the Vietnam War, was ignited by an incident in the gulf of Tonkin in 1965 (in which it was alleged that a North Korean warship had attacked a US ship). President Johnson was granted permission by Congress to use whatever means necessary to repel the attack, after which he dispatched the first ground troops to DaNang. Although the war effort began with the support of the citizenry, there was a growing feeling of uncertainty about the aims of the war (which did not involve acquiring territory, but only searching for and destroying the enemy), the means of the war (which were often limited by seemingly artificial restrictions), and the progress of the war (government sponsored reporting encouraged illusions about a speedy victory, but these were brutally shattered in the Tet Offensive of 1968).

⁸¹ **Indonesia's "New Order"** was a bloody political transition in which the previous communist-leaning president (Sukarno, 1945 - 1966) was replaced by an anti-communist president (Suharto, 1966 - 1998). Although a political victory for the west, it was a very violent transition involving the mass killing of at least five hundred thousand members of the communist party. Under the new government, death squads were employed to track down and kill the administration's political enemies (there is also a growing body of evidence that they received assistance in the form of money and intelligence from the CIA). As a domestic purge of communism, the victims of violence were mostly fellow Muslims. As the purge spilled over into foreign nations, however, it also came to affect non-Muslims (hundreds of thousands were brutally killed in the eastern half of the island of Timor after it was de-colonized by the Portuguese [1975 - 1999]).

⁸² **The Palestinian Liberation Organization**, or PLO, was a secular organization dedicated to anti-Zionism and to the creation of a state for Palestine (begun 1964). Three points from its initial charter are worthy of mention: (1) Only Jews who lived in Palestine before 1917 should be citizens in a Palestinian state; (2) Only Palestinian Arabs deserve the right of self-determination; (3) Warfare against Israel is legal and should be pursued militarily. As there were different ideas about how to apply these broad principles, the organization immediately split into different factions: e.g., Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP), Popular Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP), Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine - General Command (PFLP-GC), and the Fatah. Together, these various factions embarked on a massive campaign of terrorism, the purpose of which was to destroy Israel and establish Palestine. When it became apparent that such tactics were not achieving their goal, they began turning toward more diplomatic strategies and acquired recognition as a liberation movement from the UN (under the leadership of one of its founding members, Yasser Arafat, from 1969 - 2004). But the organization's shift from violence to diplomacy caused some members to break off and join other terrorist groups or form terrorist groups of their own (the most violent of which was that of Abu Nidal).

tremendous victory for the Jews (backed by the U.S.), but a humiliating defeat for the Arabs (backed by the U.S.S.R.). The new state's aggressive expansion sowed the seeds of future reprisals, while the massive numbers of displaced peoples resulted in a fresh wave of immigration for Muslims (many of whom went to America⁸³).

At long last, a mutually agreed upon strategy for détente was settled upon by Brezhnev and Nixon (1969 – 1974). The Nixon administration is known for many things: in domestic affairs his most momentous decision was that of rejecting the gold standard; in foreign affairs he entered into positive relations with China and took steps to end military activity in Latin America, Vietnam, and the Middle East. Meanwhile, as tensions cooled in the battle against communism, the growing power of the Muslim world made itself felt with the rise of Muammar Gaddafi in Libya (1969),⁸⁴ but especially, by the Yom Kippur War (1973). In the Yom Kippur War, a surprise attack was launched to retake the territories which in the previous war had been seized from the Arabs by the Jews (the conflict not only began on the holy day of Yom Kippur, but also in the holy month of Ramadan). Both sides received massive amounts of support from their allies, the U.S.S.R. backing the Arabs and the U.S. backing the Jews. Against all expectations, the attackers met with a fair amount of success, and a significant amount of occupied territory was given back after a ceasefire had been brokered by the United Nations. In the end, however, the outcome owed less to military than economic factors, and it is generally agreed that the west was pressured into negotiating for peace by an oil embargo launched by OPEC (resulting in the West's first postwar recession, the energy crisis of 1973). The embargo quadrupled the cost of oil globally, proving an especially painful setback for the now more consumptive than productive America, as well as a major victory for the Middle East (especially Saudi Arabia). The Saudis were now in possession of what has since become known as “the oil weapon”, and they purposed to use their newfound wealth and power in assisting the economic and military development of states inhabited by Muslims, and in turn, to use this as a platform for advancing their Wahhabi interpretation of Sunni Islam. The first major action they undertook was simply to advise their fellow

⁸³ **The Second Wave of Muslim Immigrants to America:** There was only a population of about 100,000 Muslims in America by the 1960s. After the Six Day War, a second wave began and would climb over the next four decades to about 3 million (about 1% of the total population). This number has spiked in recent years as a result of the Syrian Refugee Crisis beginning in 2011 (the U.S. has admitted over fifteen thousand registered Muslims and an unknown quantity of unregistered ones).

⁸⁴ **Libya** achieved its independence in 1947, was freed from colonial occupation in 1951, began a prosperous oil industry with OPEC in 1962, and replaced the monarchy with a socialist republic under Muammar Gaddafi in 1969. Taking Egypt as his example, Gaddafi sought to combine socialism with Sunni Islam. Like so many progressives, he found his way around traditional ideas by rejecting the much of the Hadith and embracing Quranism. He was not dear to traditionalists, and he exercised great control over the religion of the state, putting down numerous rebellions (mosques were raided, students arrested, and clerics hanged).

nations that the fallout of the war had provided a most advantageous setting in which to negotiate a peace settlement between Israel and Palestine. When news of this attitude reached the ears of President Carter, he immediately organized a series of peace talks between the leaders of Egypt and Israel. Although early meetings were shaky, the three were eventually able to agree on a mutually satisfactory course of action, the Camp David Accords of 1978. In this treaty, they agreed that the right to exist extended to both Israel and Palestine, and the former made provision for the creation of the latter by promising to return the lands seized during the Six Day War. In the years to come, the governments of the two nations would remain faithful to the terms of the accord, but it proved unpopular among many of the people. The Egyptian President, Anwar Sadat, was assassinated by members of a newly risen organization called the Egyptian Islamic Jihad (a conservative group that wanted to move the state from secular to religious governance). As for the Israelis, most refused to decolonize, and they continued to expand their settlements throughout the Gaza Strip and the West Bank (the heartland of what was supposed to become Palestine⁸⁵).

The Second Phase of the Cold War (1979 – 1991)

The tensions of the Cold War were reawakened during the administration of Jimmy Carter (1977 – 1981). Although he had enjoyed an early success with the Camp David Accords, his political legacy would forever be marred by his provocation of war with the Soviet Union and his unwitting empowerment of religious radicals the Middle East. Troubles first began when the communist party seized power in Afghanistan 1978. There followed a series of radical reforms designed to modernize the state, all of which met with stiff resistance from a rural majority of Muslims. Opponents of the new government were violently suppressed, but these were able to organize a successful resistance with covert help from the US. This in turn provoked an invasion of the country by the forces of the USSR. Thus began the Soviet-Afghan War, a ten year conflict that effectively renewed the hostility between the democratic west and the communist east (a conflict the west attempted to fight via a grain embargo,⁸⁶ and also by continuing to

⁸⁵ **The Statehood of Palestine** remains very fluid. The aforementioned treaty certainly granted it the right of statehood. There was also an official declaration of statehood by the PLO in 1988. But the conditions under which this declaration was made indicate that it was a declaration *de jure* rather than *de facto*. The governance of the West Bank was still largely determined by a minority population of Jews, while the right to vote was still denied to the majority population of Arabs. Increasingly frustrated with the PLO, a new violent political organization appeared seeking to resolve the matter through force of arms called Hamas. In recent years, there was another official declaration of statehood by the UN in 2012. Here again, however, the declaration has not been accompanied by tangible changes in the lives of actual Palestinians.

⁸⁶ **The Grain Embargo of 1980** would prove more harm to the US than to the USSR. In the previous decade, a sudden boom in agricultural exports persuaded banks to do more lending and farmers to go more readily into debt, both hoping to capitalize off the steadily rising value of their products and land. But the boom was suddenly cut

furnish the mujahedeen with money, arms, and training [the most notorious of which was a young soldier named Osama bin Laden]). But as America was assisting the mujahedeen in Afghanistan on behalf of the American Cold War, an entirely different group of radicals began a revolt in Iran on behalf of the Muslim Cold War. At a point when progressive government had furnished its people with freedom and material prosperity, they rejected it in favor of an anti-western authoritarian government under the leadership of the Shiite cleric Ayatollah Khomeini (1979). The revolution was not merely of local significance, but became a major catalyst for the revival of fundamentalism, and for casting off western civilization's godlessness, immorality, and materialism (Khomeini was the first to denounce the west as "the Great Satan"). The cleric therefore used this occasion to demonstrate his power over the west: first, by decreasing its export of foreign oil, leading to the energy crisis of 1979 (in response, an embargo on the sale of arms to Iran was levied by America); and second, by the seizure of fifty-two western diplomats as hostages, leading to the hostage crisis of 1979 (this was a response to the fact that sanctuary had been given to the former Shah of Iran in America). He also encouraged the faithful to start similar revolutions in their own states, sparking an attempted revolution in Saudi Arabia,⁸⁷ another in Egypt,⁸⁸ and the outbreak of the Iran-Iraq War of 1980.⁸⁹ *Iran's Islamic revolution has awakened all the Islamic countries. We cannot put off establishing Islamic governments and administering the divine laws. The objective of the Islamic Republic and its officials is none other than to establish a global Islamic rule (Ayatollah Khomeini).*

short with the embargo, and banks stopped giving out the loans which by now had become essential to the financial operation of most small farms. After Carter was replaced by Reagan the embargo was lifted, but the damage had already been done: purchases were not resumed, and government assistance was not given to bail out the farmers. Many farms went bankrupt, and some farmers committed suicide.

⁸⁷ **The Grand Mosque Seizure** occurred when about five hundred radicals took hostages and seized the Kaaba in Mecca, calling for the overthrow of the Saudis, and for the accession of one of their own members who they said was the Mahdi. A list of grievances was aired against the Saudis, asserting that they were no longer truly Islamic, but had become Americanized. The revolt was put down, but it clearly hit a nerve with the regime: cinemas were shut down, gender segregation enforced, school classes adapted to focus more on Islam, etc.

⁸⁸ **The Egyptian Islamic Jihad** was a fundamentalist organization that sought to replace secular with religious government in Egypt. Although the EIJ was successful in carrying out an assassination of the nation's president, most of its members were subsequently rounded up and rather leniently put in prison (the nation resumed its secular form of government). In just a few years, most of them were released and resumed operations, while others went on to found similar groups in other regions: some formed the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in 1981, and others eventually joined Al Qaeda in 1987.

⁸⁹ **The Iran-Iraq War** (1980 – 1988): Khomeini opposed all modern secular governments, but he also opposed the monarchy of the Saudis (he claimed that they had been corrupted via their economic alliance with America and were not religiously fit to lead the world of Islam). When Khomeini began encouraging popular revolt in the nearby nation of Iraq, Saddam Hussein ordered the invasion of Iran. Khomeini was a fundamentalist cleric, but Hussein was an advocate of national socialism (only nominally espousing Sunni Islam). His attack won the support of Saudi Arabia, the other Gulf States, and the U.S. After eight years of fighting, the conflict ended with no obvious gains for either side, though not without exacting a huge cost to life and property.

Reagan's first term came at a time when there was tremendous dissatisfaction with the country's leadership (1981 – 1985). In domestic affairs, he sought to radically reduce government involvement in the economy. In foreign affairs, he pursued two courses against the communist east: (1) first, he wanted to cripple their economy; (2) and second, he wanted to exploit the weakness of their economy by escalating the arms race. The first objective he achieved with the help of the Saudis, who he persuaded to flood the market with huge quantities of cheap oil (while this increased our dependence on foreign oil and bankrupted many oil companies in the U.S., it also bankrupted the U.S.S.R.). The second objective he achieved by redirecting a massive amount of government spending to the armed forces and to the assistance of anti-communist rebels (e.g., in the Soviet-Afghan War and in the Iran-Iraq War). Such efforts were carried out in every major theatre of the Cold War: in Asia, aid was given to Cambodia (against Khmr Rouge), to Indonesia (to support Suharto [a democratic Muslim]), and in the Philippines (against Ferdinand Marcos); in Africa, aid was given to Angola (against Jose Eduardo dos Santos), to South Africa (against the apartheid government), to Libya (against Muammar Gaddafi [a socialist Muslim]); in Latin America, aid was given to Nicaragua (to support the Contras against the Sandinistas), El Salvador (to support Jose Napoleon Duarte), and Guatemala (to support Jose Efraim Rios Montt). The only direct military intervention was the invasion of the island of Grenada in 1983. In all this, however, the most important theatre of war for Muslims was the Middle East, where the fundamentalist movement started by Ayatollah Khomeini now passed into Lebanon. It was the most diverse state in the region, formerly comprising a majority of Christians, but increasingly made up of a majority of Muslims (following the displacement of the Palestinians). It had been in a state of intermittent civil war since 1975 and had become the primary base of operations for the PLO against the nation of Israel. After a recent assassination attempt, the country was invaded by Israel (Beirut, 1982). A permanent foothold was gained by Israel (backed by the U.S.), but this inspired the creation of a retaliatory group called Hezbollah, or "the Party of God" (backed by Iran). Hezbollah would grow to become one of the largest fundamentalist organizations in the world, acquiring notoriety as the first arm of the revolutionary Shiites in Iran. Its original manifesto read: *We are the Party of God, the vanguard of which was made victorious by God in Iran. There the vanguard succeeded to lay down the bases of a Muslim state which plays a central role in the world. We obey the orders of one leader, wise and just, that of our tutor and jurist who fulfills all the necessary conditions: Ruhollah Musawi Khomeini.*

Reagan's second term saw a new season of détente with the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev (1985 – 1989). The Soviet economy had grown stagnant due

to declining prices in oil, and its political influence had been broken by relentless insurgencies from western supported rebels (and also by the domestic catastrophe of Chernobyl). Its new leader was kept busy just trying to secure the survival of the state, and he no longer sought to keep pace with the arms race (he also began to remove the Soviets from Afghanistan). He regularly met with the president, who famously asked him to tear down the Berlin Wall, and before long the two declared an end to the hostilities of the Cold War (though its official end is usually dated to the collapse of the USSR). In spite of all this, however, it was only the beginning of a new chapter for the Muslim Cold War. At the time, the greatest perceived threat was that of the socialist Muammar Gaddafi of Libya, but by far the greatest actual threat was that of the cleric Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran. Popular confidence in the religious leadership of the Saudis had passed to Khomeini, and he, in turn, attempted to demonstrate the international power of his movement by issuing a fatwa offering a 2 million dollar bounty for the killing of Salmon Rushdie, a writer from British India whom he accused of making blasphemous remarks in a book entitled, *The Satanic Verses* (the fatwah called forth book burnings, riots, and killings, as well as several unsuccessful attempts at assassination by Hezbollah). After the pattern of the medieval caliphs, the cleric sent a letter to Mikhail Gorbachev, offering reasons for the failure of communist materialism and inviting him to embrace the religion of Islam (his invitation was gently declined). He also managed to create fresh problems for Reagan in an event known as the Iran-Contra Affair. Although the sale of arms to his country had been placed under an embargo, unnamed sources hinted that such sales had nevertheless occurred under the authority of high level officials (the most senior of whom was Oliver North, possibly operating with the knowledge of Reagan). The deal was designed to provide additional funds to the contras in Nicaragua, secure the release of seven hostages from Hezbollah, and prevent other countries from stepping in to meet the military needs of Iran. In the end, it resulted not only in a political scandal for the president, but indicated that those fighting the battle against communism did not sufficiently appreciate the looming threat of fundamentalist Islam. By now, the arm of fundamentalism had stretched from Iran to Lebanon and into the Holy Land. A popular revolt called the first intifada flared up, consisting of strikes, boycotts, and stone-throwing by Arabs against Israelis (1987 - 1993). Although this revolt was provoked by attempts to expand the occupation of the Israelis, it was also provoked by the growing belief that she was a pawn of America ("the Great Satan"). Following the lead of Iran, and then Hezbollah, there appeared yet another radical group called Hamas (the Resistance). But even more important than that, an idea was conceived to extend the local intifada against Israel into a global intifada against America, and so a large number of the mujahedeen who had

fought in the Soviet-Afghan War banded into an organization called Al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden (1988).⁹⁰

The Reagan administration had only been over for a few years when the world witnessed the unravelling of the U.S.S.R. and the end of the Cold War. The massive bloc ceased to exist and was replaced by Russia and a Commonwealth of Independent States. People tore down the wall separating the east from the west, and most of the states on the far side proceeded to reject communism, beginning with Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Romania, Bulgaria, and Albania (though it still remained in other places like China, Cuba, North Korea, Laos, and Vietnam). Fourteen former colonies declared themselves independent: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Estonia, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Moldova, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan. The new administration proudly declared the onset of a new era. America's victory had made it the sole global superpower on the planet. In the process, however, it had gone from being the world's greatest creditor to the world's greatest debtor (the previous eight years had seen the national debt triple from one to three trillion dollars). Moreover, the battle for global dominion was not yet over, for the decline of communism would provide fresh opportunities for Islam. A case in point: of the new states that had been created, six were inhabited by a majority of Muslims: Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Uzbekistan (although their religion had been suppressed by atheism, they were immediately visited by missionaries from the Saudis, Iranians, Turkey, etc.). The question re-emerged as to whether they would choose a religious or a secular form of government, and whether the latter would be more in the direction of capitalism or socialism. But socialism was now increasingly suspect in view of the obvious failure of the USSR. Capitalism was also increasingly suspect in view of its apparent role in the moral degeneration of the U.S. A growing number began inclining toward the traditional idea of a theocratic union between religion and the state, whether governed by a king or a parliament (in either case, the norms of sharia would be written into its constitution). Unquestionably, the single most important leader in this resurgence of traditional Islam was Ayatollah Khomeini. Although his death roughly coincided with the fall communism, the spirit of the movement he began continued to inspire attempts at revolution all throughout the ummah. Today, a

⁹⁰ **Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda:** Osama bin Laden was born to a wealthy family that had acquired billions of dollars in the oil industry (Saudi Arabia, 1957). He studied in his home country throughout his youth, but fought alongside the mujahedeen during the Soviet-Afghan War, and then became involved in an organization that funneled money, weapons, and training to them from nearby Pakistan. After the war, a great many soldiers were eager to expand their struggle into other parts of the world, and this led them to create an organization broadly devoted to the advancement of fundamentalist Islam, which they called "Al Qaeda" (the Fundament). Although an essentially independent organization, it received training from earlier fundamentalist associations inspired by Ayatollah Khomeini, such as the Islamic Egyptian Jihad and Hezbollah.

condition of political instability pervades most countries inhabited by Muslims because there is a battle going on for the soul of Islam. This struggle is not limited to local governments, but it spills over into international affairs because of the mandate to bring the whole world into submission to Islam, whether violently (i.e., via direct military confrontation) or non-violently (i.e., via the gradual infiltration of media, courts, and government). Although a policy of peaceful coexistence continues to be espoused by progressive Muslims, this policy is frequently condemned as both heretical and weak by more conservative Muslims. For the outsider, there are two important questions here: (1) first, which side is right? (2) and second, which side is winning the most adherents? The first question we addressed in our earlier lessons on the life of Muhammad. The second question we will attempt to address in the following section on post-Cold War Islam.

The Post-Cold War Period (1991 – 2016)

“The Post-Cold War Period” is an ambiguous phrase, and it suggests quite accurately that we do not yet know the historical significance of our present era. Politically speaking, the sole superpower on the globe is the US, but few would wish to characterize this as a *Pax Americana*. There are still plenty of foreign wars, and most would suggest that the west’s sense of national identity has grown weaker rather than stronger.

President George Bush senior marks the transition to this period (1989 – 1993). His greatest domestic problem was how to solve the national debt, which had tripled under the previous administration from about one to three trillion dollars (this would make it difficult for him to keep his promise of “no new taxes”, and in the end he raised the federal debt by another one and a half trillion). In foreign affairs, he presided over the final stages of the Cold War, but the new challenge on the horizon was really Islam. Although the west may have breathed sigh of relief at the death of the Ayatollah, the spirit of fundamentalism did not die with Khomeini. Over the next couple years, it would take advantage of the political instability caused by the fall of the Soviet Union, most notably in Iraq, Somalia, and Yugoslavia: (1) the Gulf War, widely perceived as a quick success in liberating Kuwait from Iraq, was really the beginning of a very long conflict between Al Qaeda and America (1990 – 1991⁹¹); (2) in Somalia, there was a

⁹¹ **The Gulf War:** After its eight-year war with Iran, a big debt and a large military had grown up in Iraq. It was a perfect time to fulfill her long-standing ambition to retake Kuwait. Unfortunately, the involvement of other nations was a foregone conclusion given the peacekeeping role of the UN, not to mention the fact that the invasion posed an immediate threat to the national security of Saudi Arabia and to the oil interests of her old ally the United States. The Saudis had long postured themselves as an exemplar for the ummah, and now they had an opportunity to assert their religious independence by fighting the war with the help of Muslims rather than Americans (a course of action

complete breakdown of government, followed by various attempts to fill the power vacuum by warlords, Muslims, and most notably Al Qaeda (1991 – 2006⁹²); (3) in Yugoslavia, the central government began cracking down on groups seeking independence, whether Orthodox, Catholic, or Muslim (though here again, we see the hand of Al Qaeda, 1991 – 2001⁹³).

This period, therefore, is marked by the rapid spread of fundamentalism. As we have seen, it was a religious movement that sought to return to the fundamental teachings of Muhammad. Its revitalization in the modern world owes to the Wahhabis of the 18th century. But although spearheaded by the Saudis, it was significantly dulled by the royal family's attempt to secure wealth and power through their alliance with the United States. It really only came into its own with the Iranians and with the revolution of Ayatollah Khomeini. He not only commandeered already existing groups like the PLO, but also inspired the birth of new groups like Hezbollah, along with innumerable other radical groups in Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Iraq, and the Middle East. Before long, the fundamentalist revolution he inspired passed from the Shiites of Iran to the Sunnis of Arabia, the most notorious group of which was Al Qaeda founded by Osama bin Laden. The appearance of fundamentalism in both camps naturally reawakened hostility between Sunni groups (often backed by Saudi Arabia) and Shiite groups (often backed by Iran). But struggle as they might with one another, they both shared a

that was specifically urged on them by Osama bin Laden). Nevertheless, they resumed their interdependence with the west, resulting in a swift victory against Saddam Hussein (during the conflict, his use of chemical weapons and further research into biological weapons drew forth attempts to limit his effort to produce weapons of mass destruction via regular inspections). Meanwhile, a permanent military presence in the gulf was granted to America, and positive relations were resumed with the Saudis (much to the disappointment of bin Laden).

⁹² **The Somali Civil War** (formerly the Dervish State, mostly inhabited by Sunni Muslims): Although one of the few regions to resist the march of western imperialism, it was eventually colonized in 1920 and then granted independence again in 1960. After a brief period under democracy, it then came under the control of socialist dictator Siad Barre (1969 – 1991). After his overthrow, the region descended into political anarchy, with various factions struggling for control of the government, among them representatives of both moderate and fundamentalist Islam. The moderate groups were made up of the local leaders of sharia law courts, who provided the people with stability, education, health care, and police services. The fundamentalist leaders belonged to a group called Al-Itihaad, which received troops from Al Qaeda and money from Saudi Arabia. As in the Gulf War, peacekeeping military intervention was sanctioned by the UN and largely provided by the US.

⁹³ **The Yugoslav Wars**: This region was one of several that came into being after the fall of the Ottoman Empire. After World War I, the idea was conceived of creating a state for all southern Slavs, giving birth to Yugoslavia (a monstrous artifice made up Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, Kosovo, and Vojvodina). After World War II, the region came under the atheistic control of the USSR (even though it was largely made up of Orthodox Christians, Roman Catholics, and Sunni Muslims). After the Cold War, the Yugoslavian President Slobodan Milosevic sought to keep the nation under socialist government, and although he managed to keep Serbia, Montenegro, Vojvodina, and Kosovo, the majority populations in other lands began lobbying for independent statehood in Slovenia (1991), Croatia (1991), Macedonia (1991), and Bosnia (1992). The result was a series of notoriously bloody wars, the atrocities of which have often been falsely ascribed to racism, but owe more to political and religious culture (most Slovenes were Catholic, most Croats were Orthodox, and most Bosnians were Muslim [almost immediately, the Bosnians received military assistance from Afghanistan, soldiers of Al Qaeda under the leadership of Osama bin Laden]).

mutual loathing of progressive Islam and a virulent hatred of Europe and America. As Ayatollah Khomeini had declared the west “the Great Satan”, so now would Osama bin Laden pronounce his famous “Jihad against the West.”

The Jihad against the West (1993 - 2001)

At the beginning of Bill Clinton’s administration, the only global superpower was the United States, though an attempt was made to find a counterbalance through the creation of the European Union (1993 – 2001). Religiously speaking, this period is marked by an acceleration of the west’s march toward godlessness, as well as Islamic fundamentalism’s official declaration of war against “the Great Satan” (1993 - 2001). In many ways, both of these trends were greatly empowered by the advent of the internet, which not only provided people with virtually unlimited access to ideas, but also gave them the ability to create and coordinate non-localized organizations. In the president’s very forgettable inaugural address, he spoke mostly about material prosperity, health care, and generational change. There was no mention of a jihad against the west, and what instances of it were known from other countries were ascribed to poverty rather than religion (an import from socialist historiography, which continues to argue that religion is merely a cloak for economic issues). As a result, there was very little public awareness of the religious dimension of the battle going on in the world, reporters increasingly ascribing every instance of conflict to sad ignorant hatred and going into great detail about bombs, death tolls, and personal suffering.

Meanwhile, a private jihad had been going on against the west (in fact, since the Gulf War in 1990). The traditional centerpiece of this hostility was the cultural imperialism of the west and its continued support of the state of Israel against the state of Palestine (a crisis it was now attempting to solve via the Oslo Accords⁹⁴). As we have seen, the leader of this effort was Osama bin Laden, though his public criticism of the royal family resulted in his being exiled from Arabia and his subsequent relocation to the Sudan. From there, he began arranging the first attacks by Al Qaeda against the EU (the creation of a base in Morocco⁹⁵) and the US (a hotel bombing directed against marines in Yemen in 1992 and an early bombing of the World Trade Center in New York in 1993⁹⁶). His real purpose,

⁹⁴ **The Oslo Accords** are a set of ongoing negotiations designed to gradually bring about a two state solution for Israel and the PLO (Norway, 1993). A success among diplomats, it failed to adequately address the interests of the people they were there to represent, and in just a few years their constituents were again at war. Nevertheless, the accords have remained on the table and continue to be used as a basis for peace talks in the Middle East.

⁹⁵ **The Moroccan Islamic Combat Group** is a satellite of Al Qaeda that stationed itself in Morocco in the early 1990s (i.e., on border territory between Muslim Africa and non-Muslim Europe). Its purpose was to establish an Islamic state in Morocco, and from there to make inroads into Western Europe.

⁹⁶ **The First Attack on the World Trade Center** was intended to bring down both towers and kill tens of thousands, though on this occasion it only killed six. The men directly responsible had been trained in Afghanistan and then came as illegal immigrants to America. Prior to the attack, they mailed letters to various newspapers

however, was not to perform isolated acts of terror, but rather to bait the west into a war of attrition that would leave her demoralized and bankrupt. The first attempt was in the Somali Civil War, where he sent thousands of mujahedeen to fight on behalf of factions devoted to fundamentalism and where he helped stage an ambush against soldiers who had been deployed to bring aid to civilians (the Battle of Mogadishu, 1993 [dramatized in the book and film *Black Hawk Down*]). The second attempt was in the Yugoslav Wars, where he again sent thousands of mujahedeen to fight for the independence of the Bosnians, and where they invited western aid by committing acts of violence against their own people during the Siege of Sarajevo (1993 – 1996). Here, the idea was to draw the west into a war in which they would unwittingly aid the jihadists, and it was equally hoped that the creation of a fundamentalist state in Bosnia might furnish a stepping stone into the rest of Europe. This latter prospect made the war all the more toxic: the government, fearing the encroachment of fundamentalism, sanctioned the indiscriminate slaughter and rape of hundreds of thousands of Muslims (most notoriously in the Srebrenica Massacre); the rebels openly received aid from Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Sudan, Turkey, Brunei (and they secretly received aid from radical groups in Iran, Afghanistan, and Algeria). In the end, the massacres provoked a threat of airstrikes from NATO, and the government finally agreed to peace talks with the Bosnians (the country was given its independence, but was not taken over by fundamentalism, and is still made up of Muslims, Orthodox, and Catholics).

The public jihad against the west began with a fatwa issued by Osama bin Laden entitled *Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places* (1996). It provided a list of grievances against Zionist-Crusaders, as well as religious authorization for the indiscriminate killing of Americans: *The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it.* The document received almost no attention from the public, and it was given only a little bit more by the government: a profile was drawn up of its author and there was pressure to have him expelled from the Sudan. Unfortunately, the expulsion probably did more harm than good, as a fundamentalist political party known as the Taliban had just taken control of the government in Kabul, Afghanistan (thereby inaugurating the Afghan Civil War, 1996 – 2001).⁹⁷ The new government warmly received Osama bin Laden, and a

indicating their intentions and further indicating that other attacks would follow unless the west withdrew its forces from the Middle East and ceased its aid to Israel. In the subsequent investigation, several of the men involved were rounded up, but no immediate connection was established with Osama bin Laden or Al Qaeda.

⁹⁷ **The Taliban** had already been around for a number of years. Its ideas were imported from the Jamaat e Islami movement in nearby Pakistan. Its recruits came mostly from private schools in which fundamentalists were cast in the posture of freedom fighters who rescued people from the abuses of local government officials. Its activities

mutually beneficial relationship was struck up between Al Qaeda and the Taliban (both operating out of the city of Kandahar and openly supported by the Saudis, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates [privately by other countries]). Nevertheless, the west didn't really perceive the gravity of this threat until a second fatwa was issued followed by the bombing of the US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania (1998). These attacks were immediately linked to Osama bin Laden and suspicion fell on his sanctuaries in Sudan and Afghanistan. In order to arrest future attacks, missile strikes were ordered against weapons facilities in both countries, roughly contemporary with bombings in Kosovo (once more to liberate Muslims), and then more bombings in Iraq (to obstruct their attempts at producing WMDs). A popular interpretation is that the president was attempting to "wag the dog" (i.e., to flood the headlines with international crises in order to draw attention away from his sexual scandal involving Monica Lewinsky). At any rate, the missile strikes called forth widespread protests among Cubans, Russians, and Muslims [especially those associated with Iran, Pakistan, Hezbollah, Hamas, the Muslim Brotherhood, etc.]. The event made something of a religious hero out of Osama bin Laden, and the first plans to have him assassinated were drawn up by Bill Clinton (for various reasons, he passed up opportunities to enact these plans).

The centerpiece in the jihad against the west is popularly known as the attacks of September 11, 2001 (one year after the bombing of the USS Cole). It was to consist of four coordinated attacks: one against the Capital in Washington, another against the Pentagon in Virginia, and two against the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York. The nineteen men who carried it out were members of Al Qaeda (15 were Saudis, 2 from the United Arab Emirates, 1 from Egypt, and 1 from Lebanon). The men began by hijacking four passenger airliners en route to California. Two of the planes were successfully crashed into the twin towers of the World Trade Center; the third was successfully crashed into the Pentagon; and the fourth was found in a field in Pennsylvania (a misfire after the passengers launched a successful attack against the hijackers). 44 passengers died in the plane that crashed in Pennsylvania, but their heroism has been commemorated at the site of the crash in the Flight 93 National Memorial. 125 people were killed by the plane that hit the Pentagon, and they, too, have been commemorated at the site of the crash in the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. 3000 people were killed by the planes that hit the twin towers of the World Trade Center (including a large number of firefighters and police men). At the time of their completion, the twin towers were the tallest buildings in the world, one of the

consisted in taking control of political institutions via the threat of military force. In a few years, it took control of the government in Kabul, thus inaugurating the Afghan Civil War (1996 – 2001). Although the new regime was opposed by a group calling itself the United Front, it was supported by Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates. The US would not intervene until after 9/11.

seven wonders of the modern world, and had been dedicated to the cause of promoting world peace through trade. Now standing on the site is the National September 11 Memorial and Museum. The American people were galvanized in a joint stance against terrorism, but their reaction was more mixed when it came to the question of what if anything this had to do with Islam. American Muslims also had a mixed response: some of them celebrated the attacks, while others of them made contributions of food, medical supplies, shelter, money, and blood. The Islamic reaction around the globe was similarly mixed: nearly every political leader condemned the attack (with the notable exception of Iraq). But there was also evidence of celebration among people living in the Levant, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Iraq. This mixed reaction reveals the tremendous diversity that currently exists within the ummah, a diversity that owes in large part to a gap that has always existed between individual Muslims and the religion of Islam.

The War on Terror (2001 – 2013)

Just prior to 9/11, the presidency passed from Bill Clinton to George W. Bush. While the former had been in the habit of taking polls before responding to attacks, the latter was determined to respond with a counter-attack. In announcing his intentions to the nation, he was very careful to point out that the enemy was terror rather than Islam, even going so far as to characterize Islam as “a religion of peace.” In so doing, he unwittingly initiated two wars: one a global military campaign against terrorist regimes and the other a battle of words over the true nature of Islam. While his intentions were noble, the foray into the realm of political correctness obscured the fact that the so-called war on terror was being directed almost entirely against fundamentalist Muslims. As a result, many citizens were left in the dark about such fundamental questions as, “Who is the enemy?”, “What are our objectives?”, and “What constitutes victory?” Meanwhile, the very fuzzy war on terror commenced with a very concrete war in Afghanistan, the specific objective of which was to dismantle Al Qaeda and remove the Taliban.⁹⁸

A far more controversial chapter in the War on Terror opened with the Iraq War (2003 – 2011). The justifiability of this war was called into question because it could not be easily tied to any specific act of provocation nor did the country it

⁹⁸ **The War in Afghanistan** has acquired notoriety as being the longest military conflict in the history of the United States (lasting from 2001 – 2014). It began when the demand to hand over Osama bin Laden was rejected by the government of Afghanistan (which claimed that the west had not provided sufficient proof of his involvement in the attacks of 9/11). NATO, the US, and the UK were the primary players in the war, and they succeeded in ousting the Taliban by 2002 and establishing an interim government under the presidency of Hamid Karzai by 2004. In spite of these victories, however, a steady stream of insurgents continued to wage periodic attacks from nearby Pakistan, and efforts to stabilize the country led to a ten year occupation by the United States. It was precisely the kind of quagmire envisioned by bin Laden, and it was one that would also see the death of bin Laden in 2011.

was directed against appear to have any obvious link to Al Qaeda or its jihad against America. Those who opposed the conflict suspected that the real motivation was to secure access to foreign oil, while those who supported it argued that it was necessary to protect our country from a nation with links to terrorism and weapons of mass destruction (although it would eventually be discovered that it had no such links or weapons). The war resulted in an exchange of evils: although it successfully removed a man who by all accounts was a cruel socialist dictator, it created a power vacuum that was soon filled by Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, who assumed leadership over a new strain of Al Qaeda in Iraq. Although the war was supposed to be over, it was now being drawn out by a series of unexplained insurgencies, the cause of which would later be traced to a nascent organization that derived inspiration but not approval from Osama bin Laden (who disapproved of its strategic use of violence against fellow Muslims). The new organization had a threefold mission: to expel the west, to create a new state, and to establish a worldwide caliphate. The movement grew quite rapidly, entering into cooperation with a number of other militant groups, and becoming the fourth major exporter of fundamentalism (alongside Saudi Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan). Now increasingly aware of their independence, they dropped the name Al Qaeda and began calling themselves the Islamic State of Iraq (or ISI). The US military was not passive: they killed Zarqawi and all but a few dozen of his converts from Al Qaeda.

The first term of President Barack Obama marked a significant shift in the policy of the west (2009 – 2013). Unlike his predecessors, the new president was raised by non-religious parents, his mother being an agnostic from Hawaii and his father an atheist from Kenya (his stepfather was a liberal Muslim from Indonesia). In domestic affairs, he focused heavily on gun control, health care, abortion, feminism, the environment, and rights for LGBT. In foreign affairs, he sought to steer the foreign policy of the country away from militancy and toward diplomacy. Accordingly, he declared an end to the global War on Terror and began a campaign of active outreach toward Muslims (part of what has been derogatorily referred to as his global apology tour). As the number of troops rapidly declined in Iraq, an equally rapid effort began to regather the scattered remnants of ISI. Needful of an unstable government to exploit, they found their answer in the Arab Spring of 2010. The Arab Spring was a remarkable replay of events that had occurred one hundred and fifty years earlier, when over fifty countries made attempted revolutions toward secular democracy (often called “the Spring of the Nations,” “the Year of the Revolution,” or just “1848”). This time, however, it began among Muslims living in Tunisia (the catalyst being the humiliation and subsequent self-immolation of a poor street vendor named Mohammad Bouazizi). The revolution successfully brought down the previous regime and replaced it with free

democratic elections, inspiring similar but less successful uprisings in Algeria, Lebanon, Kuwait, Jordan, Morocco, Iran, Oman, Sudan, Djibouti, Mauritania, Palestine, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Western Sahara, Bahrain, Iraq, Egypt, Yemen, and Libya. In most cases, the uprisings were violently suppressed by the government, but a state of protracted civil war emerged in the countries of Yemen, Mali, Egypt, Libya, Syria, and Iraq. This condition of political instability provided a great opportunity for ISI, now led by a mysterious man named Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Through terrorist attacks, he was able to provoke government majority Shi'ites to oppress lay minority Sunnis, thereby creating a situation in which the cry for liberation could be answered by ISI. The strategy worked, and since the project was viewed as a mere local squabble by the presidential administration, the organization was able to establish a presence in Iraq and begin expanding into Syria. The new state imposed the most stringent interpretation of sharia, established a headquarters in Raqqa, and rebranded itself as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (now thoroughly beyond the vision or control of Osama bin Laden⁹⁹).

The president's second term would see a tremendous amount of political conflict between the three branches of government (2013 – 2017). In domestic affairs, he became more aggressive in his efforts to liberalize the country. In foreign affairs, he continued to encourage immigration, withdraw troops, and was not yet prepared to believe a real threat was posed by ISIS. Meanwhile, the new state was not long in initiating its plan to bring about the apocalypse: in a lightning swift campaign, they sent soldiers from their capital in Syria to take as much as a third of the territory of Iraq (including such major cities as Fallujah, Ramadi, and Mosul, all in the summer of 2014). It was a major victory, recalling the ancient prophet's re-conquest of his homeland, and it's no accident that a global caliphate was proclaimed immediately afterward by Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi (this was also the occasion of his first public appearance and speech¹⁰⁰). Millions of refugees began

⁹⁹ **The Final Days of Osama bin Laden:** The great mujahid had been forced to hide in Pakistan after 9/11. Although still attempting to lead as he once did, he was losing men from Al Qaeda to ISI. In some of his personal correspondence, he expressed skepticism about the new movement, saying that its acts of violence were too indiscriminate, that it was expanding beyond regions it could control, and was too hasty in its ambition to establish a caliphate. Eventually a certain intelligence officer revealed his location to the authorities in exchange for twenty-five million dollars, and he was slain while sleeping in his three-story compound by Navy Seals in May of 2011.

¹⁰⁰ **The Gospel According to Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi** is filled with cross references to the Quran and the life example of Muhammad. It also contains a historic account of the modern fundamentalist movement, tracing its roots back to mujahid sheiks Osama bin Laden and Abu Musab al-Zarqawi and noting the spread of its satellites to Tunisia, Libya, and Egypt. The following excerpts provide a representative sample: *O you who believe, be careful of your duty to Allah and do not die unless you are Muslim... We send a glad tiding to the Islamic Ummah in the midst of the events which we were established in it and for it... Ascending from a lower level to a higher level is from the graces of Allah Almighty on the Jihadi groups, and it is a proof for their blessed work, as decline and retreat is a proof for a malady, we seek refuge with Allah... As for the sincere Ulama, we ask for your support to the religion and call you to join us: hasn't the time come to dust your feet with the soil of the land of jihad, to hear the*

seeking asylum in other countries, and jihadists began using them as cover to infiltrate countries that had opened their borders. What began as a small band of mujahedeen had now grown into a full-fledged state, and in just the next couple years it would establish satellites in at least 18 other countries and organize as many as 90 attacks worldwide. By those figures alone, it has already proved a more successful fundamentalist movement than its predecessors in Arabia, Iran, and Afghanistan. The movement has been widely rejected by the ummah: publically, a military coalition of 34 countries has been formed specifically for the purpose of combatting ISIS (called the Islamic Military Alliance¹⁰¹); but privately, ISIS has received a large number of converts as well as financial support from wealthy donors in countries like Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Syria, and others. At present, its greatest ambition is to acquire nuclear capability, a capability currently possessed by nine states: the US, Britain, France, Russia, China, India, North Korea, Israel, and Pakistan. The only Muslim majority country to possess such weapons is Pakistan, though attempts to acquire them are currently in the works by Iran (an eventuality President Obama has sought to delay by lifting the west's economic sanctions against the country). All of this points to the fact that the jihad against the west is not over, and so neither is the west's need for a response (whether one wants to call it a "war on terror" or a "war on radical terrorist Islam"). It is perhaps no accident that this religious attack on the West from without is coming precisely at a time marked by religious decay from within. The times call for deep soul searching among non-believers, Jews, Muslims, and Christians.

sound of bullets over your head?... As for the people, you have experienced dictatorship and injustice for long years, so beware of replacing these years of injustice with the injustice of democracy... corruption is to be ruled by man-made laws after all these sacrifices... The cloud is about to disappear from the skies of our dear Ummah for the bright sun of Islam to rise, carrying warmth, safety, security, pride, and well-being for every Muslim and Muslima and every boy and girl, because all of them have a right in the treasury of the Muslims.

¹⁰¹ **The Islamic Military Alliance** has met with mixed reviews. Saudi Arabia is the leader of the alliance. Of its other thirty-three members, several do not house a majority of Muslims (Uganda, Gabon, Benin, Togo), and others were not even aware that they had been included (Malaysia, Lebanon, Pakistan). Furthermore, its membership does not include the most radicalized countries (Iraq, Iran, and Afghanistan). What it intends to do is not clear, nor is its leader's level of commitment against terrorism (the Saudis continue to spread radicalism by planting mosques that teach Wahhabism throughout the world).