

Introduction

I decided to write this book in July 2005 shortly after an al-Qaeda cell blew up a dozen civilians on a London double-decker bus. Turning from one cable news channel to another in the wake of “7/7” I was appalled by the inability of media analysts to recognize the perpetrators’ religious motivation and shocked by their child-like naiveté when questioning Muslim spokesmen about the bloody deed. As a consequence of this jarring experience, I began research for a work designed to provide the curious layperson with vital information on Islam, not yet knowing in what direction this quest would lead me. During the months of hard labor that followed, my focus switched from portraying the sheer “otherness” of Muslim thought to something altogether more ambitious: chronicling the root causes of the troubled relationship between Islam and the West today.¹ This change in emphasis occurred because, while examining a myriad of topics, including human rights, freedom of expression, the appropriate treatment of religious minorities, homosexuality, suicide bombing, and so forth, I found time and again that Muslims and Westerners held strikingly different presuppositions on these issues and came to utterly opposing conclusions. I presumed that other scholars must have recognized and then documented this vast disagreement in considerable detail; but upon examining the literature in many fields, scholarly and popular, I discovered, much to my shock, that no one had yet undertaken such an important task in full. There and then I took it upon myself to plug in the gap and set forth, without any prejudice or animus, to learn exactly *why* contemporary Muslims and Westerners maintain such contrasting visions. The fruit of my labors, *A Tale of Two Cultures*, provides a simple, yet profoundly disturbing answer to that query. In brief the West and Islam adhere, for the most part, to incompatible perspectives on the meaning and ultimate goal of existence. Having largely cast aside their ancestral faith, Christianity, the former’s inhabitants now sense that nothing exists beyond this physical universe. As

a direct result of that growing realization, Westerners are intent upon maximizing personal happiness in the here-and-now because “you only have one life to live.” In stark contrast, Muslims continue to assume the reality of supernatural forces and believe, almost unanimously, that we humans have been placed upon this earth for a higher purpose. Indeed, having never questioned the basic truths of Islam, they *know* beyond a shadow of a doubt that the universe has a Creator who will judge each and every one of us beyond the grave, rewarding righteous Muslims with heaven and unbelievers with hell. That fundamental clash of worldviews—materialism vs. supernaturalism—underlies the many areas of contention between Islam and the West today.

Although my thesis is sustained by a considerable array of evidence drawn from a broad variety of sources, I recognize that many people are accustomed to a more reassuring message that stresses the likelihood of ultimate harmony between the two civilizations. Consequently, they may find my diametrically opposite suggestion of “irreconcilable differences” hard to believe. Therefore, before proceeding to the heart of this book I would like to dispel some of that skepticism and also to challenge some flawed assumptions that Muslim-Western differences are merely superficial. With that objective in mind, I offer the following introduction. It will guide the reader step-by-step through the information that compelled me towards my own atypical and dissenting point of view. By drawing upon and synthesizing research drawn from numerous distinct fields, including history, political science, religious studies, sociology, and popular culture, this introductory section will reorient the reader to a considerable degree and equip him or her with the insights necessary to appreciate the solid foundations upon which the argument running through *A Tale of Two Cultures* stands. That said, and begging a little indulgence for the detailed analysis that follows, I will begin our journey into the yawning chasm between Islam and the West with a brief examination of modernity.

Over the past two hundred years, little by little, the West has embraced a set of novel institutions and attitudes known broadly

as “modernity.” To be modern means living in an industrial/ technological society that displays an intense passion for scientific innovation, rejects the received wisdom and tradition of previous generations in favor of limitless changes, and stresses the need to be rational and skeptical, especially when confronted by individuals claiming to possess supernatural truths. It also requires democratic government, individual liberty, equality for all citizens, and insists upon the individual’s right to autonomy and choice in every aspect of his/her life, be it occupation, sexual partners, or even physical appearance.² Modernity is inseparable from and driven onwards by the phenomenon known as secularization. In the words of perhaps its foremost scholar, sociologist Steve Bruce, “secularization can be identified with the following developments: the declining importance of religion for the operation of non-religious roles and institutions, such as those of the state and the economy, a decline in the social standing of religious roles and institutions, and a decline in the extent in which people engage in religious practices, display beliefs of a religious kind, and conduct other aspects of their lives in a manner informed by such beliefs.” As a result of secularization’s assault on the supernatural, a tendency sometimes described as “the disenchantment of the world,” modern societies can be expected, as Paul H. Beattie remarks, to hold “the view that consideration of the present well-being of mankind should predominate over religious considerations.”³

The striking erosion of traditional religious faith among the inhabitants of most Western European nations, a reality expressed in Pope Benedict XVI’s lament that “there is no longer evidence for a need of God, even less of Christ,” provides a powerful affirmation of modernity’s secularizing inclination.⁴ A plethora of data confirms that in the ancient heartland of Christianity the masses have, by and large, rejected their ancestral faith’s bedrock practices and teachings in three significant areas. First of all, belief in God. In 1999/2000 statistics compiled by the Swedish-based World Values Survey (WVS), an unsurpassed indicator of global attitudes and values, asked a sample of Western Europeans if they believed in a

personal God, essentially the being portrayed in the foundational texts of Judaism and Christianity. Results for some major Protestant and Catholic nations revealed the following percentage of affirmative replies: West Germany, 38.5; France, 22; Italy, 65; Netherlands, 23.5; Ireland, 65; Sweden, 16; Great Britain, 31. Likewise, a 2006 *Financial Times* /Harris Poll of adults in five major European nations, which asked respondents if they believed in a Supreme Being garnered the following percentage of “yes” replies: Great Britain, 35; France, 27; Italy, 62; Spain, 48; Germany, 41.⁵

Secondly, attendance at church services, usually a reliable indicator of religious vitality, has reached extremely low levels in most Western European nations, further affirmation of secularization’s inroads. For example, the European Values Study for 1999/2000 asked respondents how frequently they spent time “in church or synagogue” offering several options, including “every week” or “not at all.” Here are the respective numbers for these two choices: France, 5.1, 81.9; Great Britain, 15.4, 71.4; Germany, 12.1, 45.1; Italy, 14.7, 55.3; Czech Republic, 6.9, 78.4; Ireland, 33.5, 43.8. Also inquiring into the frequency of attendance at worship in 2000, the World Values Survey uncovered the following statistics for those who “never or practically never” go to church: Great Britain, 55; West Germany, 30; Italy, 17; Netherlands, 48; Belgium, 46; Norway, 42. Even where church attendance appears quite robust, for example the staunchly Catholic Republic of Ireland, the bigger picture still suggests a weakening of commitment. Hence in 2004, although 60% of the population claimed to be attending services every Sunday, as recently as 1975 the corresponding figure had been a stupendous 85%. So dramatic is the decline in Irish church attendance that in 2005 not one priest was scheduled for ordination in the Archdiocese of Dublin, a historical first.⁶

Third, the masses’ rejection and/or reinterpretation of Christianity’s immemorial teachings upon life after death provides further evidence that Western Europe has been thoroughly secularized. Let us now examine some invaluable statistics pointing towards that conclusion. In 1999 when the

European Values Study (EVS) asked the general public in various countries “Do you believe in life after death?” it received the following percentage of “no” totals: France, 55.3; Great Britain, 41.7; Germany, 61.2; Italy, 27.2; Belgium, 51.4; Sweden, 54. Even those people who do hope to survive beyond the grave are extremely vague or inconsistent about the precise nature of what awaits them *post-mortem*. Hence when the EVS asked respondents if they believed in “heaven,” the following percentage replied with a yes: France, 31.2; Great Britain, 55.8; Germany, 30.9; Italy, 58.7; Sweden, 31.2. These numbers are relatively unimpressive, but when asked to affirm the reality of “hell,” the proportion of affirmative replies dropped even further: France, 19.6; Great Britain, 35.3; Germany, 20.8; Italy, 49; Sweden, 9.4.⁷ Obviously, believing in paradise while denying its theological twin, the pit, suggests a powerful degree of uncertainty about the afterlife. Making the public’s confusion or plain lack of interest even more manifest is the simultaneous and widespread subscription to a teaching about life after death drawn from the Hindu/Buddhist tradition: reincarnation. Here below are the percentage answering yes to the question “do you believe in Reincarnation?” posed by the 1999/2000 version of the World Values Survey: France, 21.8; West Germany, 21; Italy, 17.8; Belgium, 17.2; Ireland, 23.8; Sweden, 19.8.⁸ What does this mass of confusing data tell us? In brief, the large number of people who reject the afterlife outright, coupled with a “pick n’ mix” attitude that posits belief in heaven, but not hell, while also accepting reincarnation, suggests a profoundly secular culture, one in which the possibility of life after death has become unimaginable or irrelevant. Such are the fruits of modernity.

At this point the reader may ask, “But what about the USA? Doesn’t it provide a compelling example of an industrial society that retains a powerful attachment to traditional religious belief in spite of modernity?”⁹ This is an important issue because if America has not been secularized and “disenchanted” then my assumption of a basic fault line between an irreligious West and a God-centered Islam becomes problematic. For that reason, once more requesting the reader’s indulgence, I will take some

time to demonstrate that two remarkable changes in the basic nature of contemporary American Christianity do indeed provide compelling evidence for the reality of secularization in the USA. Before venturing down that path, however, we must first address the foremost pillar supporting claims to so-called American exceptionalism, which is, as Steve Bruce remarks, “the enduringly high rate of church involvement.” Over the last fifty years, when asked by the Gallup organization’s annual surveys “Did you yourself happen to attend church or synagogue in the last seven days?” from 40-43% of Americans polled, have answered “yes.” Scholars who proclaim that modernity need not be accompanied by secularization have gleefully cited these numbers to buttress their argument. But the Gallup figures fly in the face of the major denominations’ lament that their membership rolls are dwindling and their houses of worship increasingly deserted on Sunday mornings, a phenomenon known as “empty pew syndrome.” This discrepancy between statistics and “on the ground” observation is not hard to explain: Gallup relies on honest self-reporting to discover how many people frequent services, and since, as Andrew Walsh reminds us, “no behavior is more ‘socially desirable’ than church attendance” they may be inclined to exaggerate.¹⁰

Alternative studies based upon concrete examination do indeed suggest that actual rates of church-going in the USA are much lower than has been assumed. In 1993, when C. Kirk Hadaway, a sociologist affiliated with the United Church of Christ, conducted a painstaking and systematic analysis of the major American churches’ own demographic statistics, he found that “Protestant and Catholic church attendance is roughly one-half the levels reported by Gallup, no more than 20-25% of the population.” He then called for “a moratorium on claims about the singularity of the United States in terms of church attendance.” A decade later, Hadaway and his associates put these lower numbers to the test by seeking to find the “real” percentage of Americans who had attended weekly worship during the year 2000. That exhaustive task required them to determine the number of churches (and other places of worship)

in the USA, along with the average number of persons in attendance at services. Summing up the conclusions of this, the most detailed and meticulous survey of its kind, Hadaway pronounced that “when children under five years are excluded from the population base in 2000, the percentage of Americans attending worship is 21.4%.” Even the nation’s evangelicals, usually presumed to be the embodiment of America’s immunity to secularization, only had a weekly attendance rate of 25.4% during that year. Two other prominent sources, the General Social Survey (GSS), conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago and the American National Studies (NES), both recently redesigned to “weed out” respondent exaggeration on this specific topic, affirm a more moderate rate of church attendance. The GSS data from 1996 to 2004 reveals that, on average, only about 25% of adults went to church weekly, with another 20% admitting that they “never” went. And the NES’s figures from 1996 to 2004 found that about 24% of respondents went to church weekly with about 33% never attending any service whatsoever!¹¹

Realizing that a much-vaunted piece of evidence for this nation’s alleged religiosity rests upon some very doubtful foundations, we are now prepared to examine the major changes in American Christianity that affirm the reality of secularization. Let us begin with the recent substitution of the Old Time Gospel’s emphasis on the believer’s depravity and sinfulness with a therapeutic “Gospel lite” attuned to the larger culture’s sudden obsession with self-help and personal actualization. During the 1950s a new mentality began to invade American culture: the individual ought to engage in powerful self-reflection and confront his/her inadequacies in order to attain personal happiness and maximize self-esteem. This call to know oneself intimately spread like wildfire over the ensuing decades, resulting in an unashamedly therapeutic popular culture, one typified by numerous “12-step,” recovery and addiction programs, not to mention an arsenal of popular psychology manuals promising to make unhappy persons the “best that they can be.” Currently, book store shelves creak under the weight of numerous best-selling therapeutic works

offering advice on how to overcome, in the words of one publishing house's on-line catalog, "Fear, loneliness, stress, depression, insecurity, anxiety, alcoholism, substance abuse, divorce, bereavement, difficult people, sex problems, obesity, parenting [and] whatever you are dealing with" The same self-indulgent themes can also be seen on such well-watched television talk shows as *Oprah*, *Dr. Phil*, and *Tyra Banks*.¹²

Over the last half century, touched by that powerful therapeutic emphasis in American popular culture, the churches have, by and large, deemphasized old-fashioned biblical teachings about our ingrained propensity to sinfulness, replacing them, as religion historian Robert Wuthnow puts it, with "language from psychology, therapy, and recovery literature." This radical reinterpretation of the Gospel can be traced to the publication of Norman Vincent Peale's *The Power of Positive Thinking* (1952), a blockbuster work that sold over two million copies in the first two years after its publication. "For Peale," writes Steve Bruce, "the Christian message was reduced to a battle between good and evil, but these were no longer objective and external forces. They were within us and 'evil' was that which held back our development, it was a lack of self-confidence. God becomes positive thinking." Today, the fusion of Christianity with "pop psych" principles has become standard, as any visitor to a Christian bookstore or to the enormous inspirational sections at giant chains like Borders and Barnes and Noble will quickly learn. In 2007, typifying the trend, celebrated Florida pastor and television personality Joel Osteen released *Becoming a Better You: 7 Keys to Improving Your Life Every Day*. Noting that "rarely does he appeal to the Bible," one orthodox critic complained that in this book "Osteen teaches self-help but wraps it in a thin guise of Christian terminology ... He blends the most popular aspects of New Age and self-help teaching with Christianity. And his audience is eagerly drinking this in."¹³

We cannot overestimate the extent to which, in their pastoral activities and writings, ministers, priests, and professional theologians have replaced biblical discourse about our innate human tendency to sinfulness and evil deeds with the

comforting and sympathetic jargon of self-help and recovery. In 1995, affirming this new state of affairs, Lutheran scholar L. Gregory Jones complained that “psychological language and practices have become more powerful than the language and practices of the Gospel ... As a result we have translated and reduced the Gospel into psychological categories,” thereby “alter[ing] and distort[ing] the practices of the church.” And in his recent work, *The Transformation of American Religion*, Alan Wolfe concurred that in most of America “the old-time religion” with its “talk of hell, damnation, and even sin, has been replaced by a nonjudgmental language of understanding and empathy,” and commitment to a deity who “rarely gets angry and frequently strengthens our self-esteem.” The broad substitution of therapy for theology, a phenomenon that George Carey, one-time Archbishop of Canterbury described as “Christ the savior,” turning into “Christ the counselor,” would have been unthinkable even a century ago, let alone during the Middle Ages or Reformation. American Christianity has indeed undergone a serious makeover. And since, in the words of Steve Bruce, “the basic change involves replacing the otherworldly with the mundane, there seems no obvious reason not to regard it as secularization.”¹⁴

Furthermore, a newfound openness to the very possibility that other faiths have positive aspects and offer their followers a valid means to please God provides additional evidence that secularization is making inroads in the United States. This sudden receptivity to the principles of other world religions manifests itself in two significant ways. First, believers have begun to forsake the churches’ traditional insistence that salvation is a unique prerogative of those who have faith in Jesus Christ. As a telling example of such pluralism, Benton Johnson and his colleagues’ study of the Presbyterian Church (USA), one of the “mainline” Protestant denominations, revealed some extremely unorthodox positions on salvation. When asked the definitive question “can a person be saved only through Jesus Christ?” the authors discovered that “Amazingly enough, fully 68% of those who are still active Presbyterians don’t believe it.” And “about 60%” also insisted that “all the

different religions of the world are equally good ways of helping a person find ultimate truth.” Benton and associates concluded that most American Presbyterians held to an incoherent worldview styled “lay liberalism,” as a result of which they “can give seemingly orthodox responses to Gallup-style claims about Jesus and the Bible,” even while “believ[ing] that God also had a hand in writing the Koran and the Buddhist Scriptures.” Likewise, the National Study of Youth and Religion, “a unique research project on the religious and spiritual lives of American adolescents conducted from 2001 to 2005 at the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill,” confirms the power of this pluralistic stance among the young. Inviting us to “consider conservative Protestants,” researchers Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton observed that “about half of the teens say that many religions may be true; more than one-third say it is okay to practice multiple religions; more than one-quarter believe people should not try to evangelize others.” Then in June 2008 a massive survey conducted by the Pew Research Center Forum on Religion and Public Life also discovered, in its own words “that most Americans have a non-dogmatic approach to faith. A majority of those who are affiliated with a religion do not believe their religion is the only way to salvation.” Here, sorted by religious affiliation, are the percentage of Americans agreeing that “many religions can lead to eternal life”: [all] Protestants, 66; Evangelicals, 57; mainline Protestants, 87; Catholics, 79.¹⁵

Secondly, the new openness among American Christians toward “the Other” can be ascertained by the zeal with which a sizable minority of them have incorporated a principle central to Hinduism, Buddhism, and the New Age movement into their understanding of ultimate truth: reincarnation. According to the 1990 World Values Survey, 25.2 % of Americans subscribe to that doctrine. And a 2003 Harris Poll showed that “27% of all Americans believed in reincarnation, including 40% of all 25-29 year-olds.” Even more striking, however, the same poll revealed that despite this doctrine’s incompatibility with their own tradition’s view of the afterlife, 21% of self-professed “Christians” believed in it. Affirming that these figures are no

anomaly or fluke, the Barna Group, a Christian non-profit organization celebrated for its extensive polls on faith based issues, also concluded that about 25% of professed American Christians currently accept reincarnation as true. But even more striking, among those claiming to be “born again,” that is people “who believe that they will experience eternal existence in Heaven solely because they have confessed their sins to God and are depending upon Jesus Christ to spare them from eternal punishment or rejection,” the Barna Group found that 10% expect to be reincarnated after their own deaths! This departure from orthodoxy appears even more pronounced among the young. The National Study of Youth and Religion, mentioned above, found that “57% of Catholic youth maybe or definitely believe in reincarnation, 46% in astrology,” while “33% of Conservative Protestant youth maybe or definitely believe in reincarnation, 33% in astrology.” “The numbers,” as Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton observe, “are astounding.”¹⁶

This passion for pluralism and inclusion among America’s Christians, Protestant and Catholic alike, represents a profound departure from about two thousand years of Christian thought and would have been considered ridiculous, if not offensive, even fifty years ago. So why then are churchgoers suddenly inclined to erase the distinction between their own faith’s teachings and those of other world religions? Let me propose a simple, but economical explanation. Behind the willingness of this nation’s Christians to transform their own faith by mixing it with contradictory teachings derived from other spiritual traditions and the accompanying acknowledgment that these rivals might be right stands a central feature of modernity: doubt about the reality of any supernatural claims. Among Europeans, as we have seen, a growing conviction that we dwell in a purposeless cosmos has led to an outright collapse in the peoples’ allegiance to their ancestral faith. In the USA, however, the same pervasive uncertainty has produced something rather different, not outright abandonment of Christianity, but instead a new inclusiveness, a sincere effort to

update the faith by fusing it with tenets drawn from the Other. That gigantic shift constitutes secularization American style.¹⁷

Let us pause for a moment to take stock of the preceding points. Thus far I have pointed out that the phase of human development called modernity is inseparable from the rise of science and the gradual weakening of religious faith as a guide to public and private spheres alike, a process known as secularization. And highlighting some powerful changes in the content of American Christianity's current teachings and mindset, I have argued against so-called "American exceptionalism," insisting instead that secularization is a very real and ongoing process in the U.S.A. Keeping these points in mind we are ready for a further observation: lurking behind the modern world's basic presuppositions, their hidden stepsister, so to speak, stands a powerful and ancient philosophical position known as "materialism," to which the discussion now turns.¹⁸

Materialism is "the belief that all that exists is the physical, there are no higher realities, no psychic or spiritual truth, independent of the physical world ... everything is matter and energy, and there is nothing else." And since, from this point of view, "the spiritual is a delusion ... there can therefore be no such things as the supernatural, paranormal phenomena, post-mortem existence or occult phenomena."¹⁹ Today, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, albeit with a minimum of fanfare or publicity, materialism's fundamental assumptions about reality enjoy massive and growing support from the West's scientific establishment. Specialists in several different fields of endeavor, including physics, biology, chemistry, geology, astronomy, and neuroscience have, by and large, reached a common anti-supernatural conclusion. Summing up their shared consensus, physicist Victor J. Stenger informs us that "the wide range of collective observations by thousands of scientists worldwide, using the best instruments of modern technology find no signs of substances other than matter. This includes the ingredients of mental activity, which seem to be solely the product of material processed in the brain. No cognitive data or theories currently require the introduction of either supernatural forces or

immaterial substances such as spirit.” The proponents of this thoroughly naturalistic worldview perceive no signs of a higher purpose to humanity’s existence. As Taner Edis puts it: “We come from accidents, not design. Our lives have no cosmic meaning, and our destiny is dust, not immortality.” Modern science does not challenge the existence of a Supreme Being head-on; instead it operates according to a “functional atheism,” whereby in the preceding author’s blunt words, “God is a wholly unnecessary hypothesis.”²⁰

Scientific materialism’s rejection of the possibility that another reality exists beyond the physical, its patent disregard for the prospect of eternal life in heaven, has trickled down to the average person in Western societies, producing not so much professed unbelief as a form of “practical atheism,” exemplified in the popular phrase, “you only live once.” Acknowledging the great potency of that “common man’s” materialism allows us to make sense of contemporary Americans’ fascination with supermodels, movie stars, pop singers, cosmetic surgery, reality TV, and above all, hyper consumption, to which we must now devote some attention.

Since the close of World War Two Americans have enjoyed an explosion of economic prosperity unequalled in human history, allowing even humble men, women, and youth to embrace an ethic of unabashed consumerism, essentially “the belief that goods give meaning to individuals and their roles in society.”²¹ In just a few decades a culture that once emphasized the virtue of thrift, self-restraint, and freedom from debt has turned into a gigantic marketplace, a land of vast shopping malls that sanctions self-gratification, “retail therapy,” and “shopping ‘til you drop.” Every day, as even the most casual observer cannot fail to notice, an endless barrage of multi-media advertising promises fulfillment, increased attractiveness, and barrels of “fun” with the next purchase.²² And the desire to buy and consume as many items as possible is intensifying thanks to the Internet revolution that began during the mid-1990’s. Today, from the privacy of one’s home or the office, web surfers can log on to and negotiate an infinity of specialty websites or cyber stores peddling every commodity under the

sun 365 days per year, “24/7.” By 2004 Internet sales had reached an astounding \$11.4 billion. Due to the medium’s almost magical ability to furnish goods and services around the clock without the hassle of crowded parking lots and department store crowds, it can only increase the sheer volume of conspicuous consumption in the decades to come.²³

At its heart the rampant consumerism taking place in America (and all across the West) is a metaphysical phenomenon, a question of ultimate meaning. Scholars of shopping and popular culture recognize this reality quite well. For example, discussing shopping in the twenty-first century, Arthur Asa Berger insists that “there is something holy, something of the sacred connected to purchasing objects, the things we buy are signs, it can be surmised, that we have been blessed. And so we consume, often with religious fervor.” Similarly, emphasizing the West’s “firm belief in the salvific power of consumerism,” David J. Hawkins reminds us that “After the events of September 11, 2001, officials in the U.S. government urged Americans to go shopping. This advice was meant to try to stimulate the flagging economy, but it also served to remind people what the Western world was about. The Western ‘way of life’ was closely identified with the values of consumerism,” which, “has its [own] statements of faith, its catechism, and its rhetoric of salvation.” And analyzing the higher significance of department stores and giant malls, sociologist George Ritzer refers to them as “cathedrals of consumption,” to which we make “pilgrimage in order to practice our consumer religion.”²⁴

I would like to push these insightful comments a little bit further: the hedonistic eat, drink, buy, be merry philosophy that now permeates Western societies is a by product of materialism’s triumph over belief in the supernatural worldview. The never-ending urge to buy and to acquire objects is fueled by an increasingly disillusioned secular civilization’s haunting suspicion that nothing exists save for the here-and-now. Consequently, rather than wait to amass “treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20), as the New Testament counsels, most ordinary people, including many who call themselves

“religious” spend their time acquiring “treasures on earth” instead.

We are, at last, sufficiently well-informed to move this introductory section toward the other civilization featured in *A Tale of Two Cultures*, Islam. Although the West has undergone a prodigious diminution of supernatural beliefs because of secular modernity’s rise to dominance, Muslims, as will become obvious in the pages that follow, have traveled a very different path into the twenty-first century. First, in stark contrast with the marginal role that Christianity now plays in the West, their ancestral faith continues to enjoy tremendous popularity and commitment among the planet’s one billion Muslims. “In the course of the last one hundred years,” remarks Ernest Gellner, “the hold of Islam over the minds and hearts of believers has not diminished and by some criteria has probably increased ... Islam is a Qur’an belt.”²⁵ Muslims have preserved their religious heritage intact by warding off the corrosive faith-destroying effects of modernity and its irreligious twin, secularism. So powerful is the faith today, so appealing, that those intellectuals and reformers who propose change in order to make Islamic societies more compatible with Western-derived notions of worldly progress and material prosperity suffer enormous disapproval and inspire outright contempt. Instead, traditionalist voices who reject modernity altogether and call for return to a pristine, unsullied Islam, often called “fundamentalists,” are gaining in strength and prestige especially among the younger generation.²⁶

Islam’s abiding success among the masses arises from its ability to provide them with a compelling answer to the “eternal question” posed by almost every man or woman who has ever lived: “what is the purpose and ultimate goal of my fleeting existence upon this earth?” With great firmness the Qur’an insists that “the life of this world is but a sport and a pastime. It is the life to come that is the true life, if they but knew” (Qur’an 29:64). Each human being has been placed upon this earth by God to take a test, one that will determine his/her ultimate fate in the afterlife (Arabic, *al-akhirat*). As an article posted on a major Muslim website explains, “Our final destination is the

Hereafter. Where we end up Jannah (Paradise) or Jahannam (Hell-fire) depends on what we worked toward in this life.” The person who practices submission (Arabic, *Islam*) can be assured eternal bliss, but those who reject His commands by persisting in unbelief are guaranteed hellish torment.²⁷ The vast majority of Muslims alive today “know” beyond a shadow of a doubt that heaven and hell, paradise or the pit, are real places, just as tangible as the house next door or the neighborhood coffee shop.²⁸ The possibility of being mistaken in this supposition simply does not enter their minds at all, a striking departure from the widespread skepticism about an afterlife that now permeates the West. Thus when the World Values Survey asked Muslims “Do you believe in hell?” it received the following percentage of “yes” answers: Egypt, 100; Indonesia, 99.3; Saudi Arabia, 97.5; Bangladesh, 100; Iraq, 97.8; Pakistan, 100; Morocco, 99.6; Jordan, 98.9. And when asked an accompanying question “do you believe in heaven?” the same respondents offered up the following number of “yes” answers: Egypt, 100; Indonesia, 99.5; Saudi Arabia, 98.4; Bangladesh 100; Iraq, 98.3; Pakistan, 100; Jordan, 99.2; Morocco, 99.7.²⁹

Throughout this work I will contend that Islam’s profound resistance to change, its inability to embrace Western-derived notions of civilized conduct, originates in the former’s absolute certainty that this life is a relatively insignificant preparation for life after death, at which time, depending upon one’s commitment to Allah’s laws, the individual will attain either eternal delights in heaven or experience the unimaginable agonies found in the bowels of hell. I recognize that the Western reader, invariably conditioned to some extent by secular modernity, may find it inconceivable that a “sane” or “thinking” human could base decisions on the reality of such supernatural places. Consequently, I will take this opportunity to demonstrate otherwise by analyzing in some detail the normative Muslim position on life after death. That task will pave the way for a better understanding of the chapters to come and, for the purposes of this introduction, make clear that materialism is incompatible with Islam’s understanding of reality itself.

Drawing upon some explicit texts in the Qur'an and some noteworthy hadith (sayings of the Prophet Mohammed), Islamic scholars have pieced together a very precise and detailed picture of *al-akhirat*. On the first night in the grave deceased persons will be visited by two terrifying angels, Munkar and Nakir, who will test their religious beliefs through a series of questions about God and His Prophet. Should the man or woman under examination turn out to have been an observant Muslim, the grave will be widened and furnished with a cool breeze to refresh its believing occupant. Then the two angels will provide the favored one with a view of paradise, saying "this is your place friend of God." But should the deceased's responses reveal unbelief, Munkar and Nakir instead approach him "with various instruments of punishment, including embers from gehenna, and burning skewers with them that penetrate every hair and vein. The angels [then] strike his face and buttocks. They twist the corpse perversely as they clamor for the spirit, which they extract from the heels and the toenails." Making matters worse, the victim's grave starts to shrink, soon becoming so tiny "that a person's ribs will be pushed together so that they overlap." Lying in discomfort after this "torture in the grave," as Muslims call it, the unbeliever can anticipate what lies in store because "below him, 77 doors open to Hell, and a hot wind blows into his grave to remind him that God will resurrect him in the fire."³⁰

At some unspecified point in the future the angel Serafiel will blow upon his trumpet twice, signaling both the Resurrection of the Dead and the onset of Last Judgment. Upon "that day," as the Qur'an warns, "will every soul be requited for what it earned. No injustice will there be that day for Allah is swift into taking account" (40:17). In the presence of Allah himself secretary angels will weigh and measure the deeds of each and every human being who has ever existed. Then humanity shall be apportioned into two groups, "the people of the right hand" and "the people of the left hand" (56:8-18). The former, faithful Muslims, will be escorted into heaven; the latter, unbelievers and evildoers, will be "cast through the gates of hell to dwell therein forever" (39:72).³¹

Summing up the Qur'an's understanding of heaven, Juan Eduardo Campos explains that "paradise is a domesticated arboreal garden where the air is perfumed and rivers of milk, honey and wine flow (Q. 47:15). It is populated by elegantly dressed believers who dwell in luxurious heavenly mansions (Q.9:72, 15:47, 36:55-58, 88:10-16). They are reunited with righteous family members, they consort with angels (Q.13:23-24), and handsome youths and beautiful large-eyed houris serve them unlimited quantities of food and drink" (Q.43:71, 52:19-24, 76:15-22). In addition, as Yazbeck and Haddad write, heaven's "inhabitants will eat and drink 100 times more than their earthly bodies could hold and will enjoy it 100 times more... they will not suffer bodily ailments or be subject to functions such as sleeping, spitting or excreting. They will be forever young." And these assorted delights constitute only the tip of an iceberg because the Almighty has pronounced that "they will have in paradise all that their souls could desire, all the eyes could delight in" (Qur'an, 43:70), a promise affirmed by a hadith stating, "in it [paradise] is such bliss the likes of which eyes have never seen, no ears have heard about, and no mind has ever conceived." In the light of these awesome assurance we can certainly appreciate why Muslims think "even the smallest place in paradise," as Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar puts it, "is better than this world and all that is in it."³²

Hell, however, is a place of eternal punishment for "whoever opposes God and His messenger" (Qur'an 9:63), a nightmarish spot whose residents, to provide just one typical example, "will be given to drink boiling water so that it cuts their bowels (to pieces)" (Qur'an 47:15). Time and again Qur'an and hadith promise that unbelief or bad conduct in this life will be rewarded accordingly following the Last Judgment. Here is a frightening portrayal of the traditional Islamic vision: "the people of the Fire are sighing and wailing, wretched, their skins are constantly exchanged for new ones so that they can taste the torment anew, they drink festering water ... people are linked together in chains of 70 cubits, wearing pitch for clothing and fire on their faces, boiling water will be poured over their heads, melting their insides as well as their skins, and hooks of

iron will drag them back if they try to escape.” And compounding the torture even further, “fire as we know it [here on earth],” according to one petrifying hadith, “is one-seventieth part of the fire of Hell. It is as if sixty-nine equal portions were added to the fire as we know it.” The volume of pain experienced in *jahannam* is difficult to envision, but a beautifully entitled document “A Description of Hellfire” posted on a popular Islamic website offers some insight. It states: “The fire consumes everything, leaving nothing untouched. It burns skin, reaching all the way to the bones, melting the contents of the stomach, leaping up to the heart and exposing the vital organs.” Given our natural inclination to avoid suffering of even the mildest kind, it should come as no surprise that a vast number of Muslims today believe, along with Harun Yahya, that “the main aim, the basic goal of humanity, should be to avoid hell. The biggest threat to man is hell and nothing can be more important than saving one’s soul from it.”³³

Clearly, Muslims and Westerners are separated by mutually exclusive, if not hostile, worldviews. The former still believe that this universe is the handiwork of an omnipotent God who has vested humanity with a purpose and will hold us to account for our deeds on a future day of reckoning. The latter, however, having been jolted by modernity’s pervasive doubt and an accompanying wave of secularization, are increasingly inclined toward a materialist position on reality, one assuming the absence of both spiritual beings and any overarching purpose to life. Still, the contest between these incompatible visions has proven remarkably one-sided. At this very moment, empowered by high-tech communications devices, which pay scant attention to cultural boundaries, the Western materialist philosophy has issued two enormous challenges to Islam, beginning with consumerism.

We can best appreciate why consumerism poses so much danger to Muslims’ spiritual health by returning briefly to the realm of Islamic theology. Islam teaches that this world (known as *ad-dunya* in Arabic) is a lowly, fallen place belonging to God’s adversary, Satan, and that its many carnal pleasures serve

as potentially lethal distractions from the self-restraint and moral righteousness required to attain entry into the place of true and eternal pleasure: heaven. As the Prophet put it in a very clear hadith on the nature of this purely physical realm: “the dunya is cursed. Cursed is all that is in it except for the remembrance of Allah and that which resembles it.” He also cautioned that “love of this world (Arabic, *hubb-e-dunya*) is the root of all evil.”³⁴ To ward off sin-inducing temptation, or “the whisperings of shaytan,” a good Muslim is enjoined to live a lifestyle informed by *az-zuhd*, (Arabic, self-denial), “which literally means removing worldly pleasures and resisting carnal desires ... living an austere life, choosing to refrain from lust, and despising the world’s carnal and material aspects,” in favor of “eternal happiness in the Hereafter.” The *zahid* never forgets the Qur’an’s warning that “the life of this world is nothing but a [quick passing] enjoyment and verily the Hereafter that is the home that will remain” (Qur’an 40:39). Ideally, a Muslim practicing *az-zuhd* should have as little to do with this reality as possible in order to minimize chances of being drawn into sin or delighting in the “superficial possessions” that might turn his thoughts away from Allah and *al-akhirat*. As Shaikh Mohamed Hisham Kabani explained in a 2002 sermon: “You have to take from dunya only your necessities from food, drink, and clothes, and not involve yourself too much in it. It is not going to benefit you. Building high rises ... building huge companies, building up stocks ... None of that is going to make you someone whom Allah loves.” Rather, “that will make you someone dunya and shaytan love.”³⁵

Needless to say, Western consumerism with its zeal for enjoying this life to the fullest, be it via shopping malls, fine dining, popular music, luxury vacations, and fast cars, makes a travesty of Islam’s call to abstain from earthly pleasure and focus instead on Allah, who will, in return, grant the faithful gratification after death. There is certainly a mighty disconnect between a Western hedonist who wears designer clothing, indulges in crash diets, and dallies with eternal youth and physical perfection through the good graces of a plastic surgeon and, on the other hand, a God-fearing Muslim who cheerfully

accepts scarcity now in anticipation of superior clothing, perfect beauty and eternal youth in paradise!³⁶

Today the West's thrill-seeking popular culture and the "hypersecular ... pluralism" that guide it, to use the words of Bryan Turner, is overrunning the planet, bringing the blessings of what Benjamin Barber styles "McWorld" to all humanity, ready or not. Spearheaded by MTV, Starbucks Coffee, Hollywood, Coca Cola, McDonald's and credit cards, a new ethic of leisure and fun threatens to sweep aside traditional societies' most cherished social and religious values with impunity.³⁷ Scholars commenting on globalization and modernity have acknowledged that the advance of Western consumer culture horrifies and outrages Muslims. For example, shortly after 9/11, George Ritzer pointed out that "Bin Laden, al-Qaeda and the Taliban are waging war against McDonaldization and American-style consumerism" because "they see no place for fundamentalist Islam in fast-food restaurants and, more generally, in a world dominated by indebtedness and consumerism and made possible and incited by credit cards and cathedrals of consumption."³⁸ While fundamentally accurate, remarks like these do not take into account the spiritual dimensions of Muslim hostility to unending purchases, a factor inseparable from Islam's unequivocal teachings on the relationship between life in this world (dunya), self-denial (zuhd), and success in the afterlife. Operating from within the purview of these compelling parameters, Muslims fear that should their societies be transformed into bastions of consumerism and materialist pleasure-seeking, then millions of precious souls will find themselves on the fast track to damnation for two major reasons.

First, the individual who focuses on consuming in the here-and-now gainsays the Qur'an's warning that "the enjoyment of this world is short and the Hereafter is better for him who obeys God's commands" (Qur'an 4:77), while making light of its many warnings to "know that the life of this world is only play and pomp and mutual boasting among you" (Qur'an 57:20). By concentrating on the purchase of objects the aimless consumer

has rejected an Islamic virtue known as *dhikr* (Arabic, remembrance of God), falling instead into its cardinal opposite— *ghaflah* (Arabic, forgetting God). And by practicing *ghaflah*, such people have fallen into the hands of Allah’s enemy because, as the Qur’an explains, “if anyone blinds himself from the Remembrance of the Most Benificent, we appoint for him Shaitan to be an intimate companion to him” (Qur’an 43:36. See also, 5:91). Second, the Muslim who develops a passion for buying and spending the fruits of a consumer lifestyle, including “junk food, clothes, leisure, rock music and television programmes,” as Akbar S. Ahmed puts it, will soon be contaminated by that unislamic state of mind discussed earlier, “hubb-e-dunya” (love of this world). Loss of faith is bound to follow shortly thereafter because, as Mahmud Es’ad Cosan informs us, “when the love of this world and ambition cover the eyes of the believer, his religious feelings decline. Consequently, he does not care much about the hereafter or the hellfire.” At this stage, having cast off the possibility of life beyond the grave and eternal punishment as an implausible fairytale, the lapsed Muslim will have no good reason to practice self-restraint or abstain from satisfying every carnal appetite. In that event, to cite the opinion of a document entitled “The Final Jihad,” we can anticipate “crime, violence, drug abuse, alcoholism, prostitution, pornography ... atheistic thought, disrespect for parents and elders,” not to mention “love of a debauched animalistic lifestyle focused on only the crudest pleasures of the flesh.” And at the Day of Judgment, to their everlasting sorrow, all those deluded souls who set aside the remembrance of God or partook in illicit pleasures will “taste the touch of hell” (Qur’an 54: 48), at which time “poured upon their heads will be scalding water by which is melted their bodies and their skin” (Qur’an 22:19-20). Little wonder, then, that Western consumerism and its’ this-worldly call for unending fun and self-gratification poses a major threat to Islam’s integrity.³⁹

The materialist philosophy that runs beneath the surface of modernity is generating a second mortal threat to Islam’s survival, radical individualism. In the first four chapters of this

book we will examine the numerous disagreements that arise when Western commitment to the primacy of individual wishes and rights encounters the Muslim preference for subordinating personal desires to the weight of religious tradition and the rights of society as a whole. Before undertaking that examination, however, some background material and analysis will prove beneficial.

Since the conclusion of World War Two an enormous “values shift” has been taking place in the industrialized nations of North America and Western Europe, tearing down long-held precepts on the appropriate balance between personal satisfaction and the collective wellbeing of the larger social order. Freed from the daily struggle to make ends meet by the rise and expansion of cradle-to-grave welfare states, raised in an atmosphere of peace, post-war generations set their sights high, demanding civic privileges that surpassed traditional liberties such as freedom of speech and the press. Instead, they demanded something altogether more audacious: that men (and, importantly, women) be granted the opportunity to enjoy personal autonomy and freedom of action in every aspect of life. Proponents of this radical individualism, as I term it, employed the old-fashioned terminology of “rights” to couch their numerous demands. From this novel perspective, one should be granted not just the right to choose a new religion, but also to abortion, euthanasia, premarital cohabitation, having children out of wedlock, or dressing up as a member of the opposite sex at work. And, quite logically, proponents of these sweeping new privileges insist that the now sacrosanct principles of equality for all and non-discrimination be extended beyond the categories of race and gender, to protect practitioners of the above activities from social stigma or persecution. At present, commitment to unlimited individual freedom enjoys immense popularity in all Western societies. Its supreme virtues, “tolerance” and “open-mindedness” (a willingness to acquiesce in and refusal to criticize any lifestyle choice whatsoever), have turned into the distinguishing characteristics of a sophisticated human being.⁴⁰

The supposition that people are entitled to complete sovereignty in every portion of life has been extended to the realm of sexuality. Over the last fifty years a new sense of entitlement has set aside powerful moral and religious restraints confining the expression of physical passion to (heterosexual) marriage. “Sexual activity,” explains Basil Mitchell, has “come to be regarded as a mode of self-expression which should be subject to no constraints except those freely accepted by the partners ... within this strongly individualistic framework, freedom to express one’s sexual preference is claimed as an important human right.” Women stand at the epicenter of this sexual revolution. Having received basic equality in the workplace and full access to education through the good graces of feminism, they now demand a corresponding degree of equality in the bedroom, making light of the old assumption that only “loose” or “fallen” women engage in premarital sexual activity. “Today,” in the words of sociologist Anthony Giddens, “it is commonplace for a woman to have multiple lovers prior to entering (and even during as well as after leaving) a serious sexual involvement ... Girls feel they have an entitlement to engage in sexual activity, including sexual intercourse, at whatever age seems appropriate to them.”⁴¹

Even more startling, however, is the extension of one’s presumed right to unlimited sexual freedom unto a group whose activities have traditionally occasioned more stigma and rage than any other: homosexuals. Since the mid-1960’s a sea shift has taken place in the West’s attitude toward gays and lesbians. In many nations courts have decriminalized same-sex relations to ensure personal privacy and extended anti-discrimination laws to homosexuals as the members of a protected minority. Meanwhile, educational systems routinely teach their youthful wards to respect gays in the name of tolerance and diversity, often while lecturing them on the evils of homophobia. In addition, local and national governments, especially in Western Europe, now insist upon basic equality for same-sex couples, often setting up domestic partnership laws to recognize their unions or, on occasion, even sanctioning full-blown “gay marriage.” Popular goodwill towards this once-despised

segment of society continued to grow by leaps and bounds, a reality affirmed by data from the World Values Survey. In 1981/82 the WVS asked its subjects “can homosexuality ever be justified?” and received the following percentage of “never justifiable” responses: Spain, 57.4; France, 51.6; Italy, 66; West Germany, 45.3; Great Britain, 47.4; Sweden, 38.8. But when posed the same query in 1999/2000, a vastly smaller proportion of subjects in the same countries answered “never justifiable;” Spain, 12; France, 23.2; Italy, 29.9; West Germany, 17.9; Great Britain, 24.6; Sweden, 8.7. Today, if asked gay human rights activist Robert Wintemute’s rhetorical question, “is it not discrimination against gay, lesbian and bisexual individuals because of their sexual orientation rather than same-sex love that is wrong?” most Westerners, particularly the young would utter a resounding “yes!”⁴²

In order to appreciate fully Muslims’ response to radical individualism, we must first recognize that the individual freedoms and high degree of personal autonomy rooted in the West’s unique political tradition and now taken for granted by its inhabitants in the extreme version described above, run contrary to their faith’s vision of permissible conduct in several ways. First, Islamic legal thought places far greater weight upon maintaining the health and wellbeing of the entire community than upon the rights of solitary dissenters to deviate from the norm. Quite simply, “The Islamic principles,” as Maimul Ashan Khan puts it, “give priority to the rights of state, society and collective interests over individual rights.”⁴³ Second, Islam insists that God enjoys rights, whereas His creatures are characterized by duties and responsibilities to Him. Indeed, the range of rights granted to an individual should be in direct proportion to the extent of his submission (Islam) to the divine will. From this point of view, writes Mahmood Manshipouri, “human rights are a function of human obligations, and not their antecedents.”⁴⁴ Third, believing that strong families constitute the best guarantee of a flourishing Islamic social order, and fearing that sexual license (Arabic, *fitna*) provides the most severe threat to the integrity of that structure, Islamic law mandates powerful restrictions on the free expression of human

sexuality. The following hadith beautifully encapsulates the Muslim demand for a culture of modesty: “O young men, whoever among you has the means to establish a family he should get married for marriage preserves the chastity of one’s eyes and sexual organs, and whoever cannot afford to establish a family, he must fast from desiring sex, for abstention in that case will protect him from sin.”⁴⁵

Such assumptions about the proper balance between personal freedom and the needs of a viable Islamic society result in some profound divergences from the West’s emphasis on the primacy of individual rights. First, in the eyes of Islamic orthodoxy individual self-expression cannot be countenanced if it casts doubt on the fundamental principles of God’s One True Faith. For that reason, censorship of the press and gags on free speech are praiseworthy methods of assuring the community’s spiritual health and its “right” to be free from the cancerous growth of religious doubt. As an example, in 1995, noting that “no individual has the right to call for what contradicts the public order,” Egypt’s Court of Cassation issued a “judicial pronouncement... as to the illegitimacy of any public criticism of the divine authorship of the Qur’an, or other fundamental tenets of the Islamic faith.”⁴⁶ Second, religious minorities cannot be placed on an equal footing with Muslims. By willfully rejecting Islam, Jews, Christians, and others have robbed God of His right to be worshipped in the exclusive manner—Islam—pleasing to Him. In light of this audacious rebuke to the Almighty, unbelievers do not deserve the rights and privileges granted to those who have fulfilled their religious duties, Muslims. Rather, they merit punitive discrimination. As a result of this eminently logical viewpoint, today non-Muslim minorities are routinely denied the right to hold government office, build new places of worship, marry Muslim women, testify in Islamic courts, or to conduct missionary work.⁴⁷

Third, gender equality, an indispensable component of Western modernity has been rejected. Muslims from all walks of life fear that if women are granted equal access to the world of politics and commerce men will be incapable of resisting their sensual charms. The ensuing out break of adultery and

fornication (Arabic, *zina*) will then destroy the beloved Muslim family as its members surrender to their unchained animal urges. And those who abandon themselves to bouts of unlawful copulation, defying the Qur'an's warning that "God forbids all shameful deeds" (Qur'an 16:91) can expect an excruciating fate in the flames because "whoever does this [zina] shall merit a full penalty. The torment will be doubled to him on the Day of Resurrection, and he will abide there in disgrace" (Qur'an 25:28).⁴⁸

It should come as no surprise, then, that radical individualism, with its characteristic insistence upon the right of each man or woman to indulge in what Maimul Ashan Khan derides as "decadent sexual permissiveness," fills Muslims with a profound sense of revulsion towards the West. For the most part, they perceive its unequalled degree of personal freedom as a license to carry out monstrous levels of sin. As one internet critic explained in a discussion of Euro-American morality: "A brief glimpse at any Western society like the USA and UK, run on values of freedom, secularism and democracy will reveal a complete breakdown in the social and moral fabric with homosexuality, paedophilia [sic], adultery, promiscuity, fornication, pornography and abortion rampant, not forgetting all the sexually transmitted diseases that come hand in hand with such liberalism."⁴⁹ One aspect of the call for unlimited sexual freedom offends Islamic morality more than any other: the campaign for homosexual rights, or gay liberation. The oft-repeated suggestion that some people have been born with an ingrained attraction to members of the same sex strikes Muslims as a monstrous assault on God's wisdom and justice. Reflecting this position, Heba G. Kotb writes: "Allah considers homosexuality to be the result of a choice. It is inconceivable that Allah made people homosexuals then declared it a crime and prescribed punishments for it in both this life and the next. To accept such a proposition is to accept that God is unjust." And invoking a "slippery slope" argument, they sense that if this most sinful activity is normalized and freed from stigma, nothing else can be prohibited. After all, as Australian psychologist and college professor Hanan Dower remarked in

2002, “if Allah loves homosexuals, he will also love thieves, murderers, liars, hypocrites, criminals...” Lest it be assumed that I exaggerate the depths of Muslim antipathy toward homosexuality, we need only turn to evidence derived from the most recent World Values Survey. Here are the percentage of respondents in several geographically diverse Muslim societies who replied “never justifiable” to the question “is homosexuality ever justifiable?:” Jordan, 98.6; Iraq, 98.3; Indonesia, 94.5; Saudi Arabia, 82.4; Bangladesh, 96.1; Iran, 90.4; Egypt, 99.9; Morocco, 99.7.⁵⁰

Essentially, the disagreement between Muslims and the West about the individual’s right to sexual self-expression stems from their larger disagreement about the meaning of life itself. The former, knowing with the complete assurance that this world is but a place of testing and preparation for entry into the hereafter, an examination passed only through submission (Islam) to the Creator’s injunctions, cannot reform their laws to make life in this transitory realm easier or more comfortable. For Westerners, in contrast, radical individualism and the sexual freedom following in its wake are the logical fruits of a materialist worldview. As Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi explains: “The worldview of atheistic humanism has become established in twentieth-century civilization... the rejection of any notion of the supernatural and the after-life and the realization that this life is all there is, leads to a humanist call for action. It is that humankind should make the most of life here on earth, and be committed to social justice...”⁵¹

Since the West’s materialism is at odds with Islam’s God-centered and spiritual understanding of reality, the best prospect for peaceful coexistence between the respective civilizations would be a policy of “live and let live,” or simply “agreeing to disagree.” I have no doubt that a secular-minded, fun-loving American or European would not choose to replace his/her lifestyle with a new one based on the Qur’an and hadith. If so, then it is only reasonable and fair to grant Muslims the same opportunity to maintain their own fundamental values without being forcibly subjected to change. And yet, today, in the name of universal human rights, the West is imposing its distinctive

commitment to radical individualism upon the world's Muslims, demanding not just freedom of expression and religious liberty for their societies, but far more obnoxious guarantees of civic equality and sexual freedom for both women and homosexuals. These demands demonstrate a breathtaking arrogance toward and ignorance of Islam because, as Niaz A. Shah writes, "the international human rights system is focused on the treatment of human beings in this world. It does not deal with the relationship between Man and His Maker; nor with the system of reward and punishment in the next world."⁵² Asking Muslims to grant forbidden liberties, particularly those their religion treats as abominable sexual sins, constitutes a powerful assault on the community's prospects of attaining salvation. After all, the Qur'an warns that "whoever contends with and contradicts the Messenger after guidance has been clearly conveyed to him, and follows a path other than that of the faithful believers we shall leave him in the path he has chosen and land him in hell, what an evil destination" (Qur'an 4:115)!

By now, after examining a good deal of information from a multitude of disparate sources, it should be rather obvious that Muslims and Westerners *do* adhere to mutually incompatible worldviews, supernaturalism, and materialism, thereby rendering talk of future harmony and cooperation dubious, at best. By keeping in mind the nature and extent of this disconnect between civilizations, the newly reoriented reader will be ready and able to understand the common thread running through all of the disagreements chronicled in *A Tale of Two Cultures: Islam and the West*. Before proceeding any further, however, I would like to end this introduction with a brief synopsis of the chapters to follow.

My opening section "Freedom of Expression," compares the reaction of Westerners and Muslims to those people who criticize or mock the sacred symbols and figures of their respective faiths, Christianity and Islam. To that end, we will deal with a host of irreverent artists, writers, and events, all of them united by a common skepticism toward religious truth, but rarely discussed in the same pages. At the same time, I will also explain why Muslims feel compelled to suppress such

“blasphemy,” and why Westerners protect it as freedom of speech. I attribute their clashing responses to utterly different guiding principles, sharia (Islamic law) on the one hand, human rights on the other, and then engage in a detailed examination of both sources, conducting a thorough comparison and contrast.

The following chapter, entitled “Religious Freedom” has two basic thrusts. First, I demonstrate that the West now grants complete religious liberty to its citizens, including the opportunity to change one’s religion, a privilege now enshrined as a quasi-sacred human right. I contrast this relaxed position with the vehement insistence of Muslims and their governments that apostasy from Islam is a heinous violation of sharia to be prevented and punished for the spiritual benefit of community and individual alike. Then I examine the West’s current presupposition that in the name of equality and non-discrimination Muslims ought to receive a privileged status, comparing that good fortune to the striking degree of discrimination, inequality and violence suffered by non-Muslim minorities.

Chapter three, “Women Gone Wild,” focuses on the contrasting perception of women in the respective cultures today. I begin by arguing that as a by product of two sexual revolutions, Euro-American popular culture now thrives upon and celebrates female sexuality in a manner that most Muslims find irredeemably wicked and dangerous to the wellbeing of humanity. Following an in-depth examination of so-called honor killing and the moral presuppositions sustaining it, we then move to the growth of Western feminism and its campaign for complete gender equality, if not interchangeability, between men and women. I shall pay special attention to the now-dominant (at least in the West) feminist orthodoxy on rape, domestic violence, and sexual harassment, revealing that Muslims view these matters in a way that the great majority of Westerners will find inhumane and repugnant.

In the next chapter, “Why Do They Hate Us So?” we will learn that Western efforts to bring sexual freedom and homosexual rights to Muslim lands in the name of universal human rights are outraging ordinary Muslims, who sense that

waves of “gay imperialism” and feminist imperialism” will soon destroy their families and, eventually, Islam itself. Here I will discuss the sudden acceptability, if not outright reverence, for gay people all across the West, and compare it to the perilous conditions that Muslim homosexuals suffer. I will also bring up the Internet, which is now facilitating, adultery, fornication, and easy “hook-ups” through instant access to pornography, chat rooms, and adult dating sites, arguing that this explosive new technology threatens to overthrow sharia-based morality. We then conclude the discussion with an examination of the profound Muslim conviction that Western sexual imperialism is just part of an ongoing and eternal Jewish/Zionist plot to annihilate Islam by destroying its moral foundations.

In “Life or Death?” my concluding chapter, I will demonstrate that even if the respective civilizations could resolve their differences over sexual freedom, the short-term cause of Muslim rage, conflict would still be unavoidable because they maintain irreconcilable perspectives on war, violence, and the permissibility of lethal force. Still informed by the residual traces of its Judeo-Christian heritage, the West now prizes peace and has established a system of international governance designed to minimize warfare. But Muslims, influenced by their own Islamic theory of international relations accept the necessity of unending holy war (Arabic, *jihad*) until the global victory of their religion and the resulting elimination of all unbelief. Furthermore, we will also learn that when discussing issues related to warfare, among them targeting “innocent” civilians, defining “terrorism” and “suicide bombing,” the respective parties operate with incompatible definitions and presuppositions. These multiple differences about war, peace, and killing are merely addenda to the larger conflict of worldviews running throughout this book. Since Westerners are driven by the desire for material happiness on this earth they find the misery occasioned by war and battle odious; yet Muslims, their eyes set on a different objective, heaven, can contemplate violence in this transitory realm if it will ensure humanity’s path to salvation in the hereafter.

Endnotes

¹ By claiming that two entities styled, respectively, “The West” and “Islam” do exist in the world, then positing some fundamental differences between them, I am not suggesting that every representative of these cultures will subscribe to identical views, nor denying the possibility of convergence on some issues. Rather, I employ an analytical tool developed by renowned German sociologist Max Weber, and specifically designed to make helpful, albeit approximate comparisons, the “Ideal Type.” On this device see Max Weber’s *The Methodology of the Social Sciences*, trans. and eds. Edward A. Shils and Henry A. Finch (New York: Free Press, 1997), 88.

² Anthony Giddens, *Modernity and Self-Identity* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1991), 1-3, 5, 16, 27, 80-81, 98; Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 94, 118-119; Alberto Martinelli, *Global Modernization* (London: Sage Publishers, 2005), 7-8, 10-11, 17; Ernest Gellner, *Postmodernism, Reason and Religion* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 75-76, 80; David J. Hawkins, “The Origins of Modernity and the Technological Society,” in *The Twenty-First Century Confronts Its Gods*, ed. David J. Hawkins (New York: State University of New York Press, 2004), 27, 38; Paulos Mar Gregorios, “Liberalism and Fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity: How Two Traditions Have Handled Modernity,” in *Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, eds. M. Darrol Bryant and S.S. Ali (St. Paul, MN: Paragon Press, 1998), 4-5, 8; Jan-Erik Lane and Hamoud Redissi, *Religion and Politics* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 16.

³ Steve Bruce, *God Is Dead* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2002), 33; Paul H. Beattie, “The Religion of Secular Humanism,” in *On the Barricades*, eds. Robert Basil, Mary Beth Gehrman, and Tim Madigan (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1989), 47. For useful discussions of secularization, see the following: Bryan Wilson, “New Images of Christian Community,” in John

McManners, ed., *The Oxford History of Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 587-588; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 3-6; Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong?* (New York: Harper's and Collins, 2003), 96-97; Peter W. Williams, *Popular Religion in America* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989), 12.

⁴ Pope Benedict XVI quoted in "Religion Takes a Back Seat in Western Europe," at

http://www.usatoday.com/news/world/2005-08-10-europe-religions-com_x.htm (Accessed 3.17.06). On the churches' increasing marginality in Western Europe, see the following: Grace Davie, *Religion in Modern Europe* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 38; Bryan Wilson, "New Images of Christian Community," 599, 607-608, 616; Loek Halman and Ole Riis, "Contemporary European Discourses on Religion and Morality," in *Religion in Secularizing Society*, eds Loek Halman and Ole Riis (London: Brill, 2003), 1, 3; Claire Berlinski, *Menace in Europe* (New York: Crown Forum, 2006), 1, 6.

⁵ "World Values Survey," at

<http://www.jdsurvey.net/bdasepjds.wg/sevs/home.jsp?OWNERwvs>. (Accessed 4.06.08); "Religious Views and Beliefs Vary Greatly by Country, According to the Latest Times/Harris Poll," at

<http://www.harrisinteractive.com/news/allnewsbydate.asp?NEWSID=1131> (Accessed 4.12.08). The documentation on Europeans' growing abandonment of belief in God is extensive. See, for example, Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave* (Tilburg: Netherlands: EVS-WORC, 2001), questions 30_A and 32, at pages 86 and 94; "Eurobarometer 2005," at http://ec.europa.eu/public-opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_225_report_en.pdf (Accessed 4.12.08); "British Banishing Fears About Death and Gods," at <http://www.humanities.co.uk/copy-of-opinion-polls/fears.html/Gdyframe.htm> (Accessed 4.02.08); Sheena

Ashford and Noel Timms, *What Europe Thinks* (Aldershot: Dartmouth Publishing, 1992), 40-42.

⁶ Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*, questions 1_F and 35; “World Values Survey,” 1999/2000, question F028; “Religion Takes a Back Seat in Western Europe.” On this pronounced decline in church-going, see also, Sheena Ashford and Noel Timms, *What Europe Thinks*, 46; Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 31; Linda Woodhead, Paul Healey and Grace Davie, “Introduction,” in *Predicting Religion*, eds. Linda Woodhead, Paul Healey and Grace Davie (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2003), 4; Helen Cameron, “The Decline of the Church of England as a Local Membership Organization: Predicting the Nature of Civil Society in 2050,” in *ibid*, 109-111; Patrick J. Buchanan, *The Death of the West* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2002), 180.

⁷ Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*, questions 30_B, 30_C, and 30_D, at pages 86-88. We can observe almost identical results in the *World Values Survey* for 1999/2000. See questions F051, F053, and F054.

⁸ “World Values Survey,” 1999/2000, question F057. On the surge of belief in reincarnation among ordinary Europeans, see also Steve Bruce, *God is Dead*, 119-120; Christopher Partridge, “Alternative Spiritualities, New Religions, and the Reenchantment of the West,” in *The Oxford Handbook of New Religious Movements*, ed. James R. Lewis (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50; Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1996), 108-109; and Loek Halman, *The European Values Study: A Third Wave*, question 31, at p.92.

⁹ There are good reasons to believe that Americans’ legendary religious faith is rather superficial and involves quite a bit of posturing. Indeed, according to an array of survey data Americans display a staggering lack of knowledge when it comes to the “ABCs” of Christianity. As George Gallup and Jim Castilli observe in *The People’s Religion: American Faith in the 90’s* (New York: MacMillan, 1989), 21: “only four in ten

know that Jesus according to the Bible delivered the Sermon on the Mount. Fewer than half of all adults can name, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as the Four Gospels of the New Testament, while many do not know that Jesus had 12 disciples or that he was born in Bethlehem.” Moreover, notes Alan Wolfe in *The Transformation of American Religion*, (New York: Free Press, 2003), 247: “58 percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments, just under half know that Genesis is the first book of the Bible, fewer than that can tell interviewers the meaning of the Holy Trinity, and 10% of them believe that Joan of Arc was Noah’s wife.”

¹⁰ Steve Bruce, *God is Dead*, 204-205; *Religion in the Modern World*, 128-130; Andrew Walsh, “Church, Lies, and Polling Data,” *Religion in the News*, vol. 1, no. 2 (Fall 1998) at http://www.trin.coll.edu/depts/csrpl/RIN%20Vol.1No.1/RIN%20VOL.1No.2/Church_lies_pol.. (Accessed 8.05.08); Tom Flynn, “True Churchgoing Revealed,” *Free Inquiry*, 18, no. 4 (Fall 1998) at http://www.secularrhumanism.org/library/fi/frontlines_18_4.html. (Accessed 8.05.08); “New Research Casts More Doubt on Church Attendance Figures,” at <http://www.atheists.org/flash.line.church/htm> (Accessed 8.11.08)

¹¹ C. Kirk Hadaway, Penny Long Marler and Mark Chaves, “What the Polls Don’t Show: A Closer Look at U.S Church Attendance,” *American Sociological Review*, 58, no. 6 (December 1993), 749-751; C. Kirk Hadaway and Penny Long Marler, “How Many Americans Attend Worship Each Week? An Alternative Approach to Measurement,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 44, no. 3 (September 2005), 307-308, 310-311, 313, 318; Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *The Sacred and the Secular: Religion and Politics Worldwide*, 91-92; “The GSS General Social Survey, 1972-2006,” question 105 at <http://www.norc.uchicago.edu/GSS/website/Data&Analysis/> (Accessed 8.04.08); “The ANES Guide to Public Opinion and Electoral Behavior,” at http://www.electionstudies.org/nesguide/toptable/tablb_5b.htm (Accessed 8.09.08).

¹² Christina Hoff Sommers and Sally Satel, *One Nation Under Therapy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2005), 8, 58-64; Merrill M. Hawkins, Jr., "Personal Spirituality," in *Faith in America, vol. 3*, ed. Charles H. Lippy (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2006), 51; Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1998), 2, 152; Wade Clark Roof, *Spiritual Marketplace* (Princeton, N.J: Princeton University Press, 1999), 39; Frank Furedi, *Therapy Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), 1-3, 21, 40, 153; "Self Help Bookstore, Helping Your Personal Growth to Success," at <http://www.selfhelpbooks.com/> (Accessed 5.06.08).

¹³ Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, 157; Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, 144-145; Patrick Allitt, *Religion in America Since 1945: A History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 264. Review of Joel Osteen's *Becoming a Better You*, at http://www.amazon.com/review/R9T5bC098DM5M/ref=cm_pr_viewpnt#R9T5BC098DM5M (Accessed 8.01.08). For further examples of therapeutic books by popular Christian authors, see "Self-Help Books From a Christian Perspective," at http://www.rpeurifoy.com/Christn/c_selfhp/c_sh_bks. (Accessed 5.06.08).

¹⁴ L. Gregory Jones, "The Psychological Captivity of the Church in the United States," in *Either Or*, eds. Carl E. Bratten and Robert W. Jensen (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Press, 1995), 97-98; Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion*, 3; Frank Furedi, *Therapy Culture*, 17; Steve Bruce, *Religion in the Modern World*, 147. See also, Thomas C. Reeves, "Not so Christian America," *First Things*, 66, (October 1996), at <http://www.firstthings.com/article.php?id-article=3924> (Accessed 4.08.08).

¹⁵ Benton Johnson, Dean R. Hoge, and Donald P. Luidens, "Mainline Churches: The Real Reason for Decline," *First Things*, 31, (March 1993) at http://www.firstthings.com/articles/php3?id_article=5100. (Accessed 5.14.06); and *Vanishing Boundaries* (Louisville:

Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994), 184; Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 77; “Salvation through Buddhism,” at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2008/September/1.20.html> (Accessed 8.09.08); “Statistics on Religion in America Report—Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life,” at <http://religions.pewforum.org/reports> (Accessed 8.09.08). On the growing unwillingness of Catholics to claim that salvation can only be achieved within their tradition, see J.A. DiNoia, O.P., “Christian Universalism: The Nonexclusive Particularity of Salvation in Christ,” in *Either Or*, 37.

¹⁶ “World Values Survey,” 1990, question F057; “The Religious and Other Beliefs of Americans 2003,” at http://www.harrisinteractive.com/harris_poll/index.asp?PID=359. (Accessed 5.12.08); “China Regulates Buddhist Reincarnation,” at <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/20227400/site/newsweek/print/1/displaymode/1098/> (Accessed 8.09.08); “Americans Describe Their Views about Life After Death,” at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.asp?Page=Barnaupdate&BarnaupdateID=150> (Accessed 8.09.08); Christian Smith with Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 4, 44.

¹⁷ I am not alone here. For the observation that America’s move away from a single source of spiritual nourishment, typically Christianity, towards a multi-sourced general spirituality constitutes secularization, see Alan Wolfe, *The Transformation of American Religion*, 245, 248; Robert C. Fuller, *Spiritual, But Not Religious* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001; 171-172; Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven*, 10-11.

¹⁸ I have no wish to belabor the reader with the many twists and turns in the development of Western materialist thought from its beginnings in Ancient Greece to the present. For useful discussions of materialism’s various manifestations over the last 2500 years, see the following: Paul Kurtz, *Philosophical Essays on Pragmatic Naturalism* (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1990), 12; Taner Edis, *Science and Nonbelief* (Westport, CT:

Greenwood Press, 2007), 6, 20-21; Frederick Albert Lange, *The History of Materialism* (London: Kegan and Paul, 1957 (first edition, 1865), 14-22, 98, 253-255, 297; Mario Bunge, *Scientific Materialism* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing, 1981), ix; T.Z. Lavine, *From Socrates to Sartre: The Philosophic Quest* (New York: Bantam Books, 1984), passim; Richard C. Vitzthum, *Materialism* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1995), 13-14, 19, 26-27, 29-60, 63-64, 66.¹⁹ “Materialism,” at

<http://www.kheper.net/topics/worldviews/materialism.htm>

(Accessed 7.11.08). For similar definitions, see Paul K. Moser and J.D. Trout, “General Introduction,” in *Contemporary Materialism*, eds. Paul K. Moser and J.D. Trout (New York: Routledge, 1997), 1-2; Douglas M. Stokes, “Parapsychology and Its Critics,” in *A Skeptic’s Handbook of Parapsychology*, ed. Paul Kurtz (Buffalo, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1987), 380; George G. Stack, “Materialism,” at

<http://members.aol.com/NeoNoetics/Materialism.html>

(Accessed 3.11.08).

²⁰ Andrew Melnyk, *A Physicalist Manifesto* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 278, 309; David M. Armstrong, “Naturalism, Materialism, and First Philosophy,” in *Contemporary Materialism*, 40; Richard C. Vitzthum, *Materialism*, 169, 218; David Papineau, *Thinking About Consciousness* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), 1, 3, 175; Victor J. Stenger, *Has Science Found God?* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 2003), 81, 261-262; Taner Edis, *The Ghost in the Universe: God in Light of Modern Science* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 2002), 16; *Science and Nonbelief*, 62.

²¹ This is Gary Cross’s definition in *An All-Consuming Century* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2000), 1.

²² George Ritzer, *Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption* (London: Sage Publishers, 2001); *Enchanting a Disenchanted World* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press, 2005), ix-x, 1-2, 33; Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 7-8; Robert D. Manning, *Credit Card Nation* (New York: Basic Books, 2000), 2, 5, 8-9, 113-114, 182; William

Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, and Jacqueline Butterell, *Social Communication in Advertising* (London: Routledge, 2005), 5, 225; Arthur Asa Berger, *Shop 'Til You Drop* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005), 1, 50; Paco Underhill, *The Call of the Mall* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2004), esp. 13, 15, 202; James B. Twitchell, *Living It Up: Our Love Affair with Luxury* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002).

²³ Sharon Zukin, *Point of Purchase*, 205-206, 232; Arthur Asa Berger, *Shop 'Til You Drop*, 62-63; George Ritzer, *Explorations in the Sociology of Consumption*, 145, 149; *Enchanting a Disenchanted World*, 133-134; Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1999), 3.

²⁴ Arthur Asa Berger, *Shop 'Til You Drop*, 56; David J. Hawkins, "Introduction," in *The Twenty-First Century Confronts Its Gods*, 8; George Ritzer, *Enchanting a Disenchanted World*, ix. See also, Ira G. Zepp, *The New Religious Image of Urban America* (Nivet, CO: University of Colorado Press, 1997), 12, 124-126, 190; James B. Twitchell, *Living It Up*, 156.

²⁵ Ernest Gellner, "Foreword," in *Islam, Globalization, and Postmodernity* (New York: Routledge, 1994), xi.

²⁶ The relationship between Islam, modernity, secularization, efforts at reform, and the growth of fundamentalism has generated a massive literature and many different interpretations of these phenomena. My own view is informed by the following sources: Paulos Mar Gregorios, "Liberalism and Fundamentalism in Islam and Christianity: How Two Traditions Have Handled Modernity," in *Muslim-Christian Dialogue*, 8, 10-11; Jan-Erik Lane and Hamadi Redissi, *Religion and Politics: Islam and Muslim Civilization* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), 16, 32; Mohammed Charfi, *Islam and Liberty* (London: Zed Books, 2005), 6, 13; Beverly Milton Edwards, *Islamic Fundamentalism* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), 2,5, 73; Fareed Zakariya, *Myth and Reality in the Contemporary Islamist Movement* (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 17, 21-22, 29-31; Ejaz Ekram, "The Muslim World and Globalization: Modernity and the Roots of Conflict," in *Islamic Fundamentalism and the*

Betrayal of Tradition: Essays by Western Muslim Scholars, ed. Joseph E.B. Lumbard (Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2004), 265-267; Mehran Kamrava, "Introduction: Reformist Islam in Comparative Perspective," in *The New Voices of Islam*, ed. Mehran Kamrava (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 1, 5; Philip W. Sutton and Stephen Vertigans, *Resurgent Islam* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2005), 28, 47, 173; Moattaz A. Fattah, *Democratic Values in the Muslim World* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 44-45, 81; Peter R. Demant, *Islam vs Islamism* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2006), 89, 139-140.

²⁷ "The Afterlife: The Resurrection," at http://www.readingislam.com/servlet/Satellite?c=Article_cid=115425127819&pagename=2en. (Accessed 6.11.08). See also, Syed Abul Ala Maududi, "The Message of Islam," at <http://www.jannah.org/articles/messageofislam.html> (Accessed 3.04.08); "Life After Death," at http://www.wamy.co.uk/leaflets/english_lad.html. (Accessed 3.13.06); Jane Idleman Smith, "Islam," in *Encounters with Eternity: Religious Views of Death and Life After Death*, eds. Christopher Jay Johnson and Marsha G. McGee (New York: Philosophical Library, 1986), 185, 189; Jonathan F. Brockopp, "Islam," in *Death and the Afterlife*, ed. Jacob Neusner (Cleveland: Pilgrim Press, 2000), 60.

²⁸ For examples of this complete certainty, see the following contemporary Muslim documents: "A Description of Hellfire (part 1 of 5): An Introduction," at <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/344/> (Accessed 6.17.08); "A Description of Hellfire (part 2 of 5): Its Appearance," at <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/348/> (Accessed 6.17.08); Dr. Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar, "Al Jannah Wa an-Naar, in the Light of the Qur'aan and Sunnah," at <http://www.islamworld.net/heavenhell.htm> (Accessed 10.12.06); "Ahkhirat—Life After Life," at <http://www.ummah.net/forum/showthread.php?F=14156> (Accessed 3.04.08).

²⁹ “World Values Survey,” 1999/2000, questions F053 and F054.

³⁰ William C. Chittick, “‘Your Sight Today is Piercing:’ The Muslim Understanding of Death and Afterlife,” in *Death and Afterlife: Perspectives of World Religions*, ed. Hiroshi Obayashi (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 125; Hanna Kassis, “Islam,” in *Death in World Religions*, ed. Harold Coward (Maryknoll, N.Y: Orbis Books, 1997), 31-55; “The Journey into the Hereafter (part 5 of 8): The Unbeliever in the Grave,” at <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/412> (Accessed 7.02.08); Leor Halevi, *Muhammad’s Grave* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 199; “Aakhirat—Life After Life.”

³¹ Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection* (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York, 1981), 63, 84; Hanna Kassis, “Islam,” 56, 58; William C. Chittick, “‘Your Sight Today Is Piercing,’” 125, 136-137; Kenneth Kramer, *The Sacred Art of Dying* (Mahwah, N.Y: Paulist Press, 1988), 160-162; Danish Vaiyani, “Jannah: The Ultimate Reward,” at <http://alkalima.com/?page=Archives&vol=7&issue=1&id=73> (Accessed 3.04.08).

³² Juan Eduardo Campos, “Muslim Ways of Death: Between the Prescribed and the Performed,” in *Death and Religion in a Changing World*, ed. Kathleen Garces-Foley (New York: M.E. Sharpe Inc., 2006), 156; Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, 89; Nabeel al-Awadhi, “A Party in Paradise, A Party in Hell,” at <http://www.as-sahwah.com/viewarticle.php?articleID=661&> (Accessed 4.20.06); Dr. Umar Sulaiman al-Ashqar, “Al Jannah wa an-Naar.”

³³ Jane Idleman Smith and Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad, *The Islamic Understanding of Death and Resurrection*, 85-86; “A Description of Hellfire (part 3 of 3): Its Food and Drink,” at <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/357/> (Accessed 6.17.08); “A description of Hellfire (part 5 of 5): The Horrors of Hell,” at <http://www.islamreligion.com/articles/383/> (Accessed 6.17.08).

Harun Yahya, “The Truth of the Life of This World,” at http://www.youngmuslims.ca/online_library/books/truth_of_this_world/truth06.html (Accessed 3.16.08). Hadith on hellfire quoted in “The Belief of Hell in Islam,” at <http://www.hilalplaza.com/islam.Hell.htm> (Accessed 6.17.08).

³⁴ The term “dunya” can signify either “the world,” “the life of this world,” or “the pleasures of this world,” all of which, from the perspective of Islamic orthodoxy are “lesser, despicable, and superficial ... in comparison to the real life as Allah called it—the life in the hereafter.” “Ad-Dunya (This World),” at <http://members.cox.net.arshad/ad-dunyahtml> (Accessed 3.04.08). First hadith on the dunya quoted in Abu-Abdur-Rahman Mohammed Navaid Aziz, “The Life of This World,” at <http://www.sunnahonline.com/library/purification/0110.htm> (Accessed 3.11.08). Second hadith quoted in “Hubb-e-Dunya (Love of This World),” at <http://books.themajlis.net/node/577> (Accessed 6.06.08). For more material on the dunya’s vile nature, see the following: “Ghافلah, the Sickness of Modern Man,” at <http://www.ummah.net/islam/Mba/articles.ghافلah.htm> (Accessed 6.06.08); Liam Brian Yost, “Slave to the World, Masochism,” at http://www.crescentlige.com/thisthat/my%20views/slave_to_the_world.htm (Accessed 3.04.08); and “Fear the Dunya,” at http://www.fearthedunya.com/2007/10/31/audio-fear_the_dunya... (Accessed 3.03.08).

³⁵ “Zuhd (Asceticism),” at <http://www.thewaytotruth.org/heart/zuhd.html> (Accessed 6.23.08); “Ghافلah, the Sickness of Modern Man;” “Chapter on Zuhd (Asceticism) and Its Significance,” at <http://books.themajlis.net/node/661> (Accessed 6.06.08); Shaykh Mohamed Hisham Kabani, “Zuhd—Leaving Dunya,” at <http://www.sunnah.org/audio/khutba/khutba%2002-7-2003.htm>. (Accessed 3.04.08). See also, Mahmud Es’ ad Cosan, “Love of Dunya (This Life);” “Zuhd (Asceticism);” and “Practising az-Zuhd in the Dunya,” at <http://www.sunnahonline.com/ilm/purification/0067.htm> (Accessed 3.04.08).

³⁶ Plastic surgery provides perhaps the most startling example of the West's "here and now" philosophy and the most noteworthy defiance of Islam's call for self-denial or "zuhd." In the USA millions of surgical procedures—nose jobs, facelifts, tummy tucks and breast augmentations are performed each year, demonstrating true "hubb-e-dunya." On this growing phenomenon, see Virginia L. Blum, *Flesh Wounds* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2003), 55, 87; Deborah A. Sullivan, *Cosmetic Surgery* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), ix, 15, 157-164; Elizabeth Harken, *Venus Envy* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 4, 161, 298; Victoria Pitts-Taylor, *Surgery Junkies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 39, 43, 59-60; Alex Kuczynski, *Beauty Junkies* (New York: Doubleday, 2006), 4-7, 9, 43.

³⁷ Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 90; Benjamin R. Barber, *Jihad vs McWorld* (New York: Ballantine Books, 2001), esp. xi-xii, 17, 88, 97, 100, 104. On this theme, see also, Jocelyn Cesari, "Islam in the West," in *Globalization and the Muslim World: Culture, Religion, and Modernity*, eds. Birgit Schaebler and Leif Stenberg (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2004), 80; Robert D. Manning, *Credit Card Nation*, 300; William Leiss, Stephen Kline, Sut Jhally, and Jacqueline Butterill, *Social Communications In Advertising*, 379-381; James L. Watson, "Transnationalism, Localism, and Fast Foods in East Asia," in *McDonaldization: the Reader*, ed. George Ritzer (Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Ridge Press, 2001), 225.

³⁸ George Ritzer, "September 11, 2001. Mass Murder and Its Roots in the Symbolism of American Consumer Culture," in *ibid*, 208-209. For similar statements on Muslim outrage over the spread of consumerism, see also Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World* (New York: Routledge, 2003), xii, xxi; Bryan S. Turner, *Orientalism, Postmodernism and Globalism*, 90-91; Akbar S. Ahmed, *Postmodernism and Islam*, (London: Routledge, 1992), 209, 243; Mark Levine, "Islam, Globalization, and European Public Spaces," in *Islam and the*

New Europe: Continuities, Changes, Confrontations, eds. Sigrid Nokel and Levant Tezcan (Piscataway, N.J: Transaction Publishers, 2005), 69.

³⁹ Abu-Abdir-Rahman Mohammed Navaid Aziz, “The Life of This World,” “Ghafflah, the Sickness of Modern Man;” “Who is Devil (Satan or Shaitan)?” at <http://www.progressive-muslim.org/who-is-devil-satan.htm> (Accessed 6.24.08); Mahmud Es’ad Cosan, “Love of Dunya;” Liam Brian Yost, “Slave to the World: Masochism;” “The Final Jihad,” at http://www.Islamic_world.net/finaljihad.php. (Accessed 1.12.06).

⁴⁰ Ronald Inglehart, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Society* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990), 5, 187, 195; Paul R. Abramson and Ronald Inglehart, *Value Change in Global Perspective* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 1, 4, 9-10, 19, 41; Ronald Inglehart, Miguel Basanez, and Alejandra Moreno, *Human Values and Beliefs: A Cross-Cultural Sourcebook* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1998), 11; Shelly Bludgeon, *Choosing a Self* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 5-6; Graham Ward, *True Religion* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003), 126-127; Loek Halman and Thorlief Petterson, “Differential Patterns of Secularization in Europe: Exploring the Impact of Religion on Social Values,” in *Religion in Secularizing Society*, 52-53, 75; Anthony Giddens, *Runaway World*, 4-5; Meic Pearse, *Why the Rest Hates the West* (Downer’s Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2004), 13, 71-72.

⁴¹ Basil Mitchell, “The Christian Conscience,” in *The Oxford History of the Christian Church*, 638; Paula Kamen, *Her Way* (New York: New York University Press, 2000), esp. 1-4, 30-33, 52-53; Anthony Giddens, *The Transformation of Intimacy* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 6, 11. See also, Anthony Giddens and Christopher Pierson, *Conversations with Anthony Giddens* (Oxford: Polity Press, 1998), 111-112, 124-125.

⁴² “World Values Survey,” 1999/2000, question F118; Ronald Inglehart and Christian Wetzel, *Modernization, Cultural Change and Democracy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 128; Ronald Inglehart, “Mapping Cultural

Values,” in *Measuring and Mapping Cultures: 25 Years of Comparative Value Surveys*, eds. Yilmaz Esmer and Thorleif Pettersson (Boston: Brill, 2007), 25-26; Robert Wintemute, *Sexual Orientation and Human Rights* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), 1.

⁴³ Ann Elizabeth Mayer, *Islam and Human Rights* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2005), 51-53; Mahmood Monshipouri, “Islamic Thinking and the Internationalization of Human Rights,” *The Muslim World*, LXXXIV, no. 2-3 (July-October 1994), 219; Ibn Warraq, *Why I Am Not a Muslim* (Amherst, N.Y: Prometheus Books, 1995), 183; Maimul Ashan Khan, *Human Rights in the Muslim World* (Durham, N.C: Carolina Academic Press, 2003), 117

⁴⁴ Muddathir Abd al-Rahim, *Human Rights and the World’s Major Religions, vol. 3: The Islamic Tradition* (Westport, CT: Praeger Perspectives, 2005), 11; Mansour Farhang, “Fundamentalism and Civil Rights in Contemporary Middle Eastern Politics,” in *Human Rights and the World’s Religions*, 63-64; Niaz A. Shah, “Women’s Human Rights in the Koran,” *Human Rights Quarterly*, 28, no. 4 (2006), 872; Mahmood Manshipouri, “Islamic Thinking and the Internationalization of Human Rights,” 218.

⁴⁵ Ibrahim Abdulla al-Marzouqi, *Human Rights in Islamic Law* (Abu Dhabi, 2001), 185; Oussama Arabi, *Studies in Modern Islamic Law and Jurisprudence* (The Hague: Kluwer Law International, 2001), 150-151; “Understanding the Muslim and Islamic Family,” at http://www.islamimatrimonials.com/muslim_matrimonials_family.htm. (9.08.05); “Women in Islam and Women in the West: Convergences and Crossroads,” at <http://www.muslimwomenstudies.com/convergences.htm> (Accessed 4.10.07); Khalid Abou El Fadl, *The Great Theft* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 2005), 257. Hadith on chastity quoted in Heba G. Kotb, “Sexuality in Islam,” at <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology/GESUND/ARCHIV/kotb2.htm> (Accessed 6.04.07).

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