

## Western Evolutionism in the Muslim World

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As a general system of thought, evolutionism is the most powerful ideology in modern Western secularist civilization. It arose in the West over a century ago and spread there first, gradually reducing the Christian culture of the West until it became a residual influence. Because Western nations such as England, France, and the Soviet Union imposed themselves on Muslim lands in the form of colonialist regimes, we should not be surprised to find within the Muslim world the echoes of evolutionary thinking in many of the modernist, or Westernized, Muslims, and even amongst their opponents, the Muslim fundamentalists. This was perhaps inevitable, given that the educational system of the Muslim world has been patterned on that of the West.

In the West, evolutionary modes of thought have gradually created a secularized world devoid of religious attachments. In the Muslim world, it is only natural that modernist Muslims, the so-called Westernized Muslims who take their bearings from Western as opposed to Islamic thinking, should have sought to create within Islam a similarly secularized culture, likewise cut off from its religious roots. Such Muslims have been the dominant influence in the Muslim world from the nineteenth century up to the Second World War, ample time in which to realize their ambitions. In this fashion, evolutionism, an ideology that arose in the West and succeeded in utterly de-Christianizing the West, has now penetrated into the Muslim world like a Trojan horse.

That being so, we would do well to examine the origins of evolutionary thinking in the West to discern both its nature and to see how it displaced Christian beliefs and institutions. The secularist civilization it produced is now sweeping the entire globe and threatening to destroy the lingering elements of traditional Islamic civilization. By first examining what happened in the Christian world, we are in a better position to grasp what has been going on within the domains of Islam in the recent past. That understanding should have a direct bearing on the question of whether the traditional culture of Islam can be preserved. Indeed, the world of Islam may very well be the

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( إنا لله وإنا إليه راجعون. )

last rampart left to conquer before a purely secular one-world government is created by the West, a regime that would have at its disposal all of the technological means to control vast populations and to subvert all religions in the name of secularism. Let us recall, by the way, that the reign of *al Dajjāl* (Antichrist), according to the hadith of the Prophet, is that of an implacable world-government bent on undermining all authentic religions and persecuting their adherents.

One must not confine evolutionism to Darwinist or Neo-Darwinist biological theories, although Darwinism was the initial foundation upon which the other ideological systems built their structures. Darwinism is merely a specific form of evolutionism in general.<sup>1</sup> By evolutionism in this larger sense, Western thinkers have in mind the transformation of anything—an institution, a society, a culture, a civilization—from one stage of development to a higher one. Needless to say, as time went by, evolutionism was applied to everything from the physical universe to psychology, to theology, to philosophy.<sup>2</sup> Nothing eluded the evolutionary process, which as a result became the underlying dogma of modern Western thought. Marxism, Freudianism, existentialism, feminism, surrealism, and republicanism, just to cite these particular ideological “isms,” are all seen as products of an evolutionary process that has an ameliorative aspect to it. The ameliorative coloration to social evolutionism implies that things move along through diverse transformations towards constant improvements. The destruction of a monarchy through the rise of a republican regime represents, in the eyes of modernists, evolutionary change towards what is morally better; hence, the ameliorative aspect in social evolutionism. By the way, those modernist Muslims and Muslim fundamentalists who have been responsible for the toppling of various monarchical regimes in the Muslim world in this century have all felt that this was an improvement, an amelioration. In all of these cases, an evolution towards the better has taken place—in the eyes of the revolutionaries, of course.

The corollary of evolutionism is another dogma called uniformitarianism.

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<sup>1</sup>The eminent French zoologist, and one of the greatest biologists of the twentieth century, Pierre P. Grassé, has this to say about the “pseudoscience” of biological evolutionism: “Through use and abuse of hidden postulates, of bold, often ill-founded extrapolations, a pseudoscience has been created. It is taking root in the very heart of biology and is leading astray many biochemists and biologists, who sincerely believe that the accuracy of fundamental concepts has been demonstrated, which is not the case.” *Evolution of Living Organisms* (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 6.

<sup>2</sup>Or, as Geoffrey West in his *Charles Darwin: A Portrait* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1938), 324, puts it: “Darwinism has been seized upon by all parties as a strong bulwark in defence of their contradictory preconceptions. On the one hand Nietzsche, on the other Marx, and between them most shades of Aristocracy, Democracy, Individualism, Socialism, Capitalism, Militarism, Materialism and even Religion.”

This is the thesis that the operations of Nature, as they manifest themselves at the present day, are uniformly the same as in the infinitely remote past. If the modern Westernized individual is a believer in evolutionism in its many different guises, he/she is also an adherent of uniformitarianism. Charles Darwin (d. 1882), through such books as *The Origin of Species* and *The Descent of Man*, popularized evolutionary thinking along biological lines. His friend, the famous geologist Charles Lyell (d. 1875), popularized uniformitarianism through his *Principles of Geology*. Both evolutionism and uniformitarianism became the complementary dogmas underlying most of the thinking of the modern West. With these "scientific" philosophies, the former in the biological domain and the latter in the geological, it soon became possible to apply the latest evolutionary notions to the most diverse domains. Thus, Thomas Huxley (d. 1895) applied them to the moral and ethical fields, and Herbert Spencer (d. 1903) to the philosophical and social fields, and, indeed, the latter's evolutionism had a great influence on modernists both in the West and in the East, especially in India and Japan.

Prior to Darwin and Lyell, however, the West had known nothing of either evolutionism or uniformitarianism. The great majority of scientists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were religious individuals. Some of them, like Isaac Newton (d. 1727), were almost mystical in their ideas about God and the universe. Darwin and Lyell, therefore, played key roles in the transformation of Western thinking, or, as the jargon would put it, in the evolution of Western thinking. But after Darwin and Lyell, the pious scientist became an aberration and gave way to the secularist scientist. Gradually, this mind-set entered into the educated strata of society in the Western world as the general ideas of evolutionism stripped the entire educational system of its formerly Christian foundations. This would be reduplicated in the colonialist educational systems established in the Muslim world by the English, the French, or the Russians, and similar results would be produced.

Before the days of Darwin and Lyell, Western man had been a creationist, not an evolutionist, and a catastrophist, not a uniformitarianist. As a creationist, he believed that the Divinity created the different species in perfect forms, meaning that they descended into this world in a state of perfection. In other words, they did not evolve from lower species through a process of transformation, as evolutionary thinking affirmed. And as a catastrophist, he believed that humanity's sinful propensities have provoked the divine wrath from time to time and brought on the awesome catastrophes, social and natural, delineated in the Bible, such as the universal flood that exterminated everyone except for the Prophet Noah and his family.

What Darwin and Lyell actually did through their evolutionism and uniformitarianism was to make it practically impossible for the educated

Western individual to accept the Bible as being an authentic account of how humanity came into this world and what its destiny has been. If there was no special creation of the species by God, then they must have evolved from lesser species through vast periods of time. Those immense geological epochs, under the domination of uniformitarianism, had no room for sudden catastrophes such as a universal flood, for everything could be accounted for by the uniform processes of Nature, which had worked in the past as they do in the present. To explain the geological column, there is no need to take into account a universal flood: we simply calculate how long it would take present-day natural processes to produce the geological column, and that is the end of the matter. Whereas geologists of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had seen everywhere in the rocks the evidence of the catastrophic results of the Biblical flood that had long ago engulfed humanity, the geologists of the latter part of the nineteenth century dismissed all of that catastrophism by appealing to the tenets of their newly-discovered uniformitarianism, a dogma that was gradually applied to other fields of thought.

Creationism and catastrophism are to be found in all the scriptures of humanity. The Qur'an and the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad contain statements that are clearly creationist and catastrophist in nature. The man of simple faith has always interpreted those statements in a rather literal fashion. But they can also be seen within a vast metaphysical and cosmological framework that Islam developed over the course of time, and which we find in such diverse authors as Jābir ibn Hayyān (d. 776), al Fārābī (d. 950), al Birūnī (d. 1048), the Ikhwān al Ṣafā' of the tenth century, and the great Sufī mystical sage Ibn al 'Arabī (d. 1240).<sup>3</sup> The creative word of the divine command, "Be!" (the *kun* of the Qur'an), while it has the sense of creation out of nothingness, is also capable of being given an emanationist interpretation, so that the species descend through different levels of manifestation into the lowest and final level (i.e., the material universe, in a vertical descent that implies a perfection of form). This is the exact opposite of the horizontal causality preached by evolutionism, which sees the evolution of the species through a series of imperfect types culminating in man after aeons of development.

The attempt on the part of the Christian theistic evolutionists to reach a compromise between creationism and evolutionism inevitably suggests that the Creator is incapable of creating perfect types instantaneously, but stands

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<sup>3</sup>The metaphysical and cosmological framework of traditional Islamic thought, within the perspective of divine oneness (*tawhīd*), can be found in the immense, multi-volume compendium of Sufi esoteric doctrines by Ibn al 'Arabī, *al Futūḥāt al Makkīyah* (The Meccan Revelations). This great work has been published a number of times in this past century and is now being edited, volume by volume, by the well-known scholar Osman Yahya.

in need of the long periods of trial and error supplied by evolutionism operating under uniformitarianist conditions. When theistic evolutionism entered the Muslim world, it immediately resulted in an implicit rejection of the divine fiat “Be!” contained in the Qur’an, and it called into question the divine perfection of Allah. But that was not all, for theistic evolutionism, apart from questioning the omnipotence of the Divinity, ended up by rejecting the entire metaphysical and theological heritage of Islam, since it assumed that, alongside of Allah, there was a mass of matter out of which He could create the universe through evolutionary processes. The medieval Muslim sages would have called such an assumption by its rightful name, associationism (*shirk*), which is the cardinal sin of Islam, since it is tantamount to declaring that there are two eternals, Allah and the material mass out of which He created the world and its creatures.<sup>4</sup> The traditional Muslim theologians always understood that a wrong theological belief—or a heresy, as they would put it—cannot but produce repercussions in the way humanity views the Creator and the creation, and this in turn affects one’s entire religious outlook. They would have immediately discerned the fact that theistic evolutionism turned its practitioners into de facto “associators,” or what the Qur’an calls *mushrikūn*. But in the nontheological thinking of present-day modernist Muslims who espouse theistic evolutionism in an attempt to combine religion with evolutionism, there is no such thing as “heresy,” nor does “associationism” seem the fearful thing that the Qur’an and the hadith picture it to be.

If evolutionism destroyed the old creationist view of the Christian world, uniformitarianism effectively removed the divine will from its immediate operation within man’s world through catastrophism. If no catastrophism on a vast scale had existed in the past, then the Biblical chastisements, such as the universal flood or the Red Sea that engulfed Pharaoh and his forces, were mere figments of a pre-scientific age’s imagination. Things have always been more or less as they are now: uniformitarianism has always prevailed. Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century, the Bible had disappeared as an authoritative scripture for many a Westerner, who simply looked upon it as the literary fruit of an earlier age which was less evolved than his/her own in the intellectual and scientific realms. When only material causality entered into the origins of humanity, and when no traces of the divine wrath chastising its immorality could be found in history or in Nature, then clearly

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<sup>4</sup>If Muslim theistic evolutionists were to admit that Allah created the original material mass out of nothingness through the divine command “Be!” (*kun*), and that afterwards everything “evolved” in accordance with the latest evolutionary fads of thinking, they would nevertheless still be rejecting the instantaneity of God’s creative fiat with regard to the different species. Moreover, it is contradictory to affirm that God was capable of creating instantaneously the original material mass but incapable of creating instantaneously the different plant and animal species, to say nothing of the special creation of humanity.

the entire world was devoid of any signification, and there was no room at all for either God or religion.

Secularism was the logical fruit of a meaningless world. Throughout the twentieth century, the Western world became increasingly secularized, and that very fact was in its turn given an ameliorative interpretation as something good, because the evolution of society towards a religionless world was an improvement. In some of the more violent, anti-religious evolutionary ideologies of the present century, such as communism, the systematic destruction of religion and all that it stands for vis-à-vis humanity and society is an avowed aim. But the secularist ideologies of the capitalist regimes are, in the long run, almost as ruinous for religion as those in the communist world. The importation of a goodly number of these ideologies into the Muslim world in this past century through the agency of both the colonialist powers and their protégés, the Westernized Muslims who succeeded them in the exercise of power in the Muslim lands, has gone far towards recreating the Muslim world in the image of the West. Secularism inside the Muslim world comes not only from attempts on the part of modernist Muslims to follow in the footsteps of their Western mentors, but also from the absence of the catastrophist mentality in their cultural formation. This engenders in them a strange complacency towards the most awesome catastrophe alluded to constantly in both the Qur'an and the hadith, that of the coming Day of Judgment, when the heavens and the earth and all people will be judged. For the uniformitarianists, both in the West and in the East, since there were no catastrophes of a universal nature in the past, there will be none in the future.

The West had been a Christian civilization up until the eighteenth century. Two crucial turning-points for the future of the West, and for the world for that matter, took place in that century: the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution in England. The French Revolution destroyed the monarchy and the Church in France, and thus ushered in the republicanism that spread like wildfire all over Europe throughout the nineteenth century and down into our times. Its principles and modes of operation were repeated at the end of the First World War by the Bolshevik Revolution, which likewise destroyed the monarchy and the Church in Sacred Russia. The revolutionary spirit in the guise of republicanism would be carried into the Islamic world by the West and picked up as the rallying cry of the modernists in the Muslim world, such as the Young Turks who destroyed the caliphate and the Islamic institutions of Turkey under Mustafa Kamal and his followers after the First World War. The end of this process has not been reached yet, for the reinterpretation of Islam as a democracy and a republic has been going on for some time now in the writings of both the modernists and the

fundamentalists,\* both of whom take their cues from Western political systems which see democracy and republicanism as the culminating points of a long evolutionary process.

The second eighteenth-century event that was instrumental in turning the West into a de-Christianized, secularist world was the Industrial Revolution of England. This uprooted the old Christian way of life based on two things: agriculture, and the arts and crafts. Modern technology, operating under the unbridled license of capitalist and communist ideologies, now began the systematic exploitation of Nature, with the resulting pollution and exhaustion of natural resources, to say nothing of the ecological disasters that afflicted greater and greater portions of the globe. In the dehumanized world of modern science and technology, there was no room for the intrusions of Christianity into the daily life of humanity.<sup>5</sup> All of this was touted as an improvement over the old Christian world of the past, when people were governed by the dictates of religion in all spheres of life. The evolution of a religious society into a de-religionized society was construed as an amelioration, a kind of progress in the moral sense, a victory over obscurantism. The emerging secularist, humanistic world was everywhere taken as the norm. Since that norm was best seen in all its fullness in the modern West, the East, and therefore the Islamic world, was looked upon as necessarily defective: it still had monarchs, religion, the crafts, and it was still pre-industrial—it was still the romantic East of the Arabian Nights. It was at a lower level of social evolution; it was therefore weak and backwards. Because of its backwardness, it was not as morally upright as the West, for the Westerner associated his/her secularist Civilization (with a capital C) with the heights of morality, since evolutionism, as was said earlier, had an ameliorative sense to it, at least in the Westerner's view.

It was in the nineteenth century that the dogma of evolutionism merged with another dogma, that of progress, to form an irrefutable system of thought

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\*It might be explained here that the position of the so-called "fundamentalists" is that Islam is flexible enough to accept whatever changes history might bring on. In this instance, their "reinterpretation of Islam as a democracy" is based on their perception that democracy is essentially a form of *shūrā* and, in particular, that it is one that works well in the modern context. Ed.

<sup>5</sup>"Science and technology," says Huston Smith, "would not have changed man's outlook a fraction as much as they did had they not been reinforced by scientism. Its epistemological assumption that only the scientific method gives 'news about the universe' produced the ontological conclusion that corporeal reality is the only concrete and self-sufficient reality there is." *The Forgotten Truth: The Primordial Tradition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976), 120. And Wolfgang Smith says that "the modern conception of a self-contained and self-sufficient universe is certainly incompatible with the metaphysical teachings of Christianity." *Cosmos and Transcendence: Breaking Through the Barriers of Scientistic Belief* (Peru, IL: Sugden, Sherwood & Co., 1984), 43.

that carried everything before it.<sup>6</sup> By progress, the Westerner meant an indefinite material and moral perfection that knew no end, as we can see in the writings of the French thinker Condorcet (d. 1794). Before the eighteenth century, the word "progress" in Christianity referred to an individual's spiritual progress in view of the Hereafter and salvation: if one were not progressing in that sense, one was retrogressing into worldliness and material things. Islam has the same sense for "progress," as we see in the medieval Muslim manuals on the moral life written by brilliant theologians such as al Ghazālī (d. 1111), or Sufis such as 'Abd al Qādir al Jilānī (d. 1166), who are only echoing the doctrines on the spiritual life found in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (ṢAAS). Progress as a dogma was given a pseudo-scientific shot in the arm when it allied itself with the evolutionary ideology drawn up by such thinkers as the previously-mentioned Herbert Spencer, whose philosophy and social theories embraced evolutionism on the widest possible scale. The Western nations now had a kind of "doctrine" behind modern Civilization that replaced the old Christian teachings that had formed the underpinnings of Christian civilization.

The magical word "progress" became a secularist ideology that englobed every single domain of thought and dominated Western thinking from top to bottom. The West's entire colonialist philosophy revolved around the thesis that the white man's superior Civilization was a blessing to the colonies in the East because it transmitted to them "progress" in a thousand different ways. This was of course the famous "white man's burden," which was backed up by the entire range of evolutionary postulates that not only Darwin and Lyell, but all of the other late-nineteenth-century thinkers, supplied with fervent enthusiasm. The Western world saw itself as the pinnacle of the evolutionary process. Since this whole movement culminated in the secularist Civilization of modern man, there was no room, in that scheme of things, for religion. Not only had the modern West succeeded in creating a religionless Civilization on the ruins of the old Christian civilization of the past, but this new entity was of course superior to its predecessor. It was likewise necessarily superior to Islam and to anything else found in the East, whether it be the Chinese civilization or the Japanese.

Unfortunately for the Muslim world, the Westerner was not the only one to believe in the material or even the moral superiority of modern Western civilization. There were also Muslims within the Islamic world who believed in the West's superiority because, through their education in Western institutions of learning, they had absorbed the entire gamut of evolutionary ideologies

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<sup>6</sup>See on this, Wolfgang Smith, *Teilhardism and the New Religion* (Rockford, IL: Tan Books Publications, 1988), chap. 8, "The Idea of Progress," 152-75. This whole book is a masterful critique of the French Jesuit, Teilhard de Chardin (d. 1955), whose combination of evolutionism and Catholicism made him one of the most influential of contemporary thinkers.



upon which the West had based its contentions of superiority. Take away those evolutionary ideologies, and the West was left only with illusions of power based on purely material and quantitative elements. A case could even be made that the quantitative civilization of the modern West could never have been created without first eliminating the spiritual, qualitative elements coming from Christianity. The arguments one heard in the Muslim world at the turn of the century about the "materialistic West" and the "spiritual East" were really deductions based on the fact that Islam constituted a qualitative civilization as opposed to the quantitative civilization of the West. But behind that deduction was an unexpressed intuition: modern Western civilization could never have arisen unless it had first laid to rest the old Christian civilization of the past by progressively eliminating Christianity from the social, political, economic, educational, artistic, philosophical, and moral domains. The modern West reduced Christianity to a manageable, peripheral residue of its former self, and called that "progress."

That same reduction to a merely tangential phenomenon was what the modernist Muslims sought to do to Islam during the days of the Western colonialist regimes and afterwards. If they were never as successful as their counterparts in the West, it was because of the traditional cultural heritage of Islam, which transmitted qualitative spiritual elements that impeded the reduction of the Islamic religion to the near vanishing point reached by Christianity in the West. Islam still had its sacred law (the Shari'ah); it still had its traditional arts and architecture here and there; it still had a powerful faith centered on Allah, His angels, His books, His messengers, and the Day of Judgment, to say nothing of the fact that the overwhelming mass of Muslims still lived within the religious cosmos of Islam. These were elements that could not be eliminated overnight, no matter how strenuously the modernists attempted to refashion Islam in keeping with Western notions of progress.

The confrontation between modern Western secularist civilization and the traditional Islamic civilization of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had all the makings of a tragedy. This was because the West not only dominated Islam through colonialist systems of rule but, more importantly, because it was possessed of a feverish missionary zeal to propagate "Civilization" within the Muslim world at all costs. Within a short time, Western political, economic, educational, social, and legal institutions cropped up everywhere in the French, English, Dutch, or Russian colonies. Unfortunately for the Muslims, this confrontation was one of unequal proportions. The West came with superior economic and military power at its disposal: it had all of the advantages that the industrial civilization of Western Europe had created in the way of technological and scientific superiority. By contrast, the Muslim world that the West conquered was by and large militarily and economically weak. Great segments of the Muslim world were caught in a moment of decline and even

lethargy. By virtue of the evolutionary perspective that had entered into the Westerners' view of history, the Islamic world seemed backwards and unprogressive when compared with the triumphant Western culture. To the secularist mind, the religion of Islam seemed medieval and immutable; it was at the direct antipode of the secularist, progressive, and dynamic world Civilization to which the West belonged. When the famous English historian Macaulay (d. 1859) went to India to draft the penal code for that land, he did so in full awareness—or so he thought—that English jurisprudence was by far superior to the local Islamic and Hindu codes and without the slightest qualms about the moral, social, and juridical results for the Muslims and Hindus of that land. He felt that he was bringing Civilization to that benighted land.

The West that invaded the Muslim world in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was quite different from the Christian West that sought to wrest the Holy Land from the Muslim world during the Crusades. The medieval West attacked the Muslim world in the name of Christianity; and after two centuries of holy war, the last Crusader kingdom fell to Muslim armies fighting in the name of Islam. These were two great religious civilizations fighting in the light of their respective revealed messages. Of the two, Islam was probably the more superior in many different fashions, for this was the medieval West that absorbed a considerable number of elements from Islamic philosophy, literature, music, medicine, astronomy, mathematics, pharmacology, and even architecture. In other words, there were no Westernizing Muslims in those days, because the West was totally Christian, and secularism as a way of life was still centuries away. When secularism does appear, however, then we begin to hear of Westernizing or modernist Muslims who also believe in the world Civilization that had been launched by the West on the ruins of the old Christian civilization of the past. This modern West was irreligious in its very essence, and even anti-religious in its general tendencies. If it had manifested a few reserves towards crushing the remains of Christian civilization in the West, it would have none at all towards the Islamic civilization, and that is exactly what we have seen in this past century of Western domination over Islam.

As previously mentioned, there were Muslims who agreed with their Western overlords about the superiority of modern Western secularist civilization. They are the ones who shifted their allegiance to this civilization and accepted with greater or lesser fervor its evolutionary ideologies of one brand or another; and in doing so, they became the so-called Westernizing, or modernist, Muslims. Their acceptance of Western values in lieu of Islamic values, or their reinterpretation of Islam in the light of Western values, was the result of their education in Western schools. To be sure, not all Muslims who went through Western schools emerged as Westernizing Muslims, for many received Western educations but retained their traditional Islamic religious

culture. What characterized the modernist Muslim was not, therefore, his/her Western education so much as the fact that he/she accepted various Western evolutionary ideologies. What types he/she accepted depended on the time and place of his/her education and culture formation. Sir Sayyid Aḥmad Khān (d. 1898) sounds like a Victorian Englishman, and so does Amīr 'Alī (d. 1928), whereas Muḥammad Iqbāl (d. 1938) has a strong flavor of the creative evolutionism of the French philosopher Henri Bergson (d. 1941) and of the "superman" philosophy of Friedrich Nietzsche (d. 1900) in his strange reinterpretation of the Sufi notion of the "Perfect Man."

There is no one type of modernist Muslim, but in general all modernist versions of Islam are characterized by their common hostility towards traditional Islamic intellectual, spiritual, theological, and other doctrines. It is, in any case, these modernist Muslims with whom the Western world sided during the entire colonialist and postcolonialist period for the simple reason that they embodied the very same ideologies espoused by Westerners, who naturally considered any Muslim adhering to the same ideas to be superior to the other Muslims, the "other Muslims" being the overwhelming mass of the faithful and their religious leaders. Yet when all is said and done, the modernists have been only a minority throughout the recent history of Islam, albeit a powerful minority, because they have enjoyed constant Western backing and support. When the West left the Muslim world after the Second World War, the modernists came face to face with yet another minority that had been there all along, one which had devoted much of its energy to ridding the Muslim world of Western colonialist presence. This was the Islamic fundamentalist movement, which could now devote its energies to refashioning the Muslim world in the light of its own ideas, which it construed to be opposed to those of the modernists.

Fundamentalism in the Muslim world is quite distinct from Protestant fundamentalism in the West. The evangelical forms of fundamentalism arose in the West at the end of the nineteenth century to protect the infallibility and inerrancy of the Bible from the attacks of liberal Protestants and the higher criticism of the sacred book of Christianity. The rising tide of secularist culture, and especially the evolutionary ideas that were coming into being, threatened the entire Christian way of life. For that reason, the evangelical fundamentalists were staunch upholders of creationism and catastrophism. In those days, the Catholic Church was likewise centered on the infallibility of the Bible and was also creationist and catastrophist in dogma and interpretation. But all of that would change after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which turned out to be a major watershed in the religious history of the West, for it consecrated modernist interpretations of doctrine, rituals, and morality, leaving the Catholic Church, the most ancient of the churches, adrift in a sea of confusion and chaos. And since the Catholic Church had

been the last traditional institution that could hold back the dissolving tendencies of modern Western secularism, its transformation after the Second Vatican Council left the West utterly defenseless before every subversive and radical ideology that came upon the scene. It also meant that evangelical fundamentalism emerged as the last stronghold of the old-time faith centered on the Bible as the divine word.

Eventually, Protestant evangelical fundamentalism would develop into various branches, one of which would become violently Zionist in its backing of Jewish nationalist aspirations in the Holy Land. This form of Christian Zionist fundamentalism first came to the fore in England, and was responsible for British support of Jewish colonialism in Palestine in the days of the British Mandate; and, afterwards, the American Christian Zionists of fundamentalist persuasion would play an equally strong role in the continued American support for the Jewish state of Israel. This would all have a direct bearing on Islam, since for these Christian fundamentalists the creation of the state of Israel and the capture of Jerusalem in 1967 are signs of the impending end of the ages. For them, the Antichrist will rule the whole world from Jerusalem; and it is to destroy him and his world government that the Christ comes again to close the ages. To hasten the Second Coming of the Christ, the Christian Zionists are enthusiastic supporters of Jewish Zionism, since the Jews, in their interpretation of events, are destined to be fervent followers of the Antichrist. Therefore, the sooner the Antichrist comes, the quicker will be the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. For the Christian Zionists, the Muslim world constitutes a block to the realization of their dreams for the simple reason that the Dome of the Rock, the Islamic monument that has the visible imprint of the Prophet Muhammad's foot, made on the night of his ascension through the seven heavens to the Throne of Allah, is situated precisely where the second temple of Jerusalem stood before its destruction in the year 70 A.D. by the Romans under Titus. It is there where the third temple must be built to constitute the focal point of the Antichrist's activities. Hence the animosity of Christian Zionism towards the Muslim world. The Muslims by and large ignore the incredible influence of Christian Zionism in the West as well as its end-of-the-world scenario involving the sacred sanctuary (*al Haram al Sharif*) in Jerusalem.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>On Christian Zionism and its influence on American politics, see Ruth W. Mouly, *The Religious Right and Israel: The Politics of Armageddon* (Cambridge, MA: Political Research Associates, 1985). The most popular bestseller of the 1970s, selling in the millions, was *The Late Great Planet Earth* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1970) by Hal Lindsey, one of the principal champions of evangelical Zionism in the United States. For the history of Christian fundamentalist Zionism in the United States, see Timothy P. Weber, *Living in the Shadow of the Second Coming: American Premillennialism, 1875-1982* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academic Books, 1983).

Islamic fundamentalism, for its part, was not centered on the inerrancy and infallibility of the Qur'an, since that was taken for granted by the great mass of Muslims, including the intellectual elite, who never opposed its revealed nature. Moreover, the Western critiques of the Qur'an, of the Prophet Muhammad, and of the hadith literature were deeply resented by all Muslims, who saw in these attacks yet another version of the same subversive imperialism that was undermining Islam through colonialist regimes. If it was not the integrity of the Qur'an that the fundamentalists had in view, then what was it that they were preaching? Muslim fundamentalists such as Sayyid Qutb (d. 1966) of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt, or the Wahhābī movement of Saudi Arabia, or the Jama'āt-i-Islāmī of Mawlānā Mawdūdī (d. 1979) of Pakistan, or Khomeini's revolutionary Islamic fundamentalism in Iran,<sup>8</sup> all have this in common: they seek to reaffirm the sacred law (Shari'ah) of Islam in the public domain.

In the traditional Islamic civilization of the past, the Shari'ah operated both in the public and in the private domains. Western colonialism and Westernized Muslims also went to work on the structures of Islam by introducing European legal codes of all sorts, with the result that by the time Western imperialism left the Muslim world after the Second World War, only the private sector of the Shari'ah was left standing. With Western colonialist administrations gone from the scene, the modernist chiefs of Islam found themselves locked in mortal combat with the fundamentalists, the modernists standing for a secularized state, as we see in modern Turkey, and the fundamentalists for an Islamic state that upholds the Shari'ah in both the public and private sectors, as we see in the monarchy of Saudi Arabia, which is perhaps the only Muslim state wherein the Shari'ah, as interpreted by the Wahhābī muftis, is fully enforced. Whatever one might think of the fundamentalists of Islam in general, it is very obvious that they, like the modernists, are opposed to traditional Islam and its eminent authorities. And also like the modernists, they too are a minority in a vast Muslim world that still follows traditional Islam.

What we do not find amongst the Muslim fundamentalists is a body of scientists, like the creationist scientists of the Christian world, who are working to undo the ill effects of evolutionary dogmas in the public educational

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<sup>8</sup>Khomeini's teachings on the sovereignty of the jurist (*wilāyah al faqīh*) can best be appreciated in the historical perspective of Shi'i thinking as expounded by Said Amir Arjomand, *The Shadow of God and the Hidden Imam* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1984). See especially pp. 268-270 for the contradictions that pit Khomeini's absolutist concept of the *imām* as chief of state against the republicanist notion of the rights of a legislature.

system by examining with a critical eye all aspects of modern science.<sup>9</sup> The so-called creationist scientists of the fundamentalist movement have appeared in increasing numbers in America and in Europe in the last generation, and they have had a tremendous impact on the public in their critiques of modern evolutionary science. Their books, lectures, and journals have made such an impression on the public that the scientific establishment in major universities has had to form coalitions to combat the anti-evolutionary ideologies of the creationist scientists. It is no longer possible for modern evolutionists to say that all scientists adhere to evolutionary ideologies, for that is patently false. The fact that the creationist scientists have written textbooks for Christian colleges and private schools of an evangelical stamp shows that the Christian fundamentalists see the battle with the secularists largely in terms of education. They know that a person whose mind has been formed by evolutionary ideologies of the most diverse types is flawed in both religious faith and convictions. They also know that the educational institutions that exist now in the Western world—both communist and capitalist—are purely secularist and even anti-religious in nature, teaching evolutionary views that are incompatible with Biblical texts and with a religious view of the cosmos, humanity, and society. That being the case, they have sought to stem the tide by establishing Bible colleges, writing books, and publishing educational materials. Education, in other words, is for them the paramount means of combatting the all-pervading secularism of our times.

In the traditional Islamic world, education and the educational system established by the state and private individuals were the principal means for the transmission of religious disciplines, such as Qur'anic commentary (*taf-sīr*), jurisprudence (*fiqh*), theology (*kalām*), and the like. The question of one's beliefs was not left to individual opinion or interpretation. On the contrary, from an early period Muslim authorities have upheld orthodox formulations of belief (*aqīdah*) drawn from the Qur'an and the hadith. These were the essential saving truths that all knowledgeable and pious Muslims were supposed to know. In times of decline, the reformation of the Islamic community came through a reaffirmation of the traditional doctrines, metaphysically, theologically, mystically, and otherwise. There have been numerous declines

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<sup>9</sup>The most influential work put out by the creationist scientists was *The Genesis Flood: The Biblical Record and Its Scientific Implications* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1961) by John C. Whitcomb and Henry M. Morris, which consists of a geological analysis of the flood that contrasts the catastrophist perspective with the uniformitarianist. It set the stage for a spate of works in all domains of science. Morris became the director of the Institute of Creation Research in San Diego, California, and *The Genesis Flood* has gone through more than twenty-three printings. The Creation Research Society also publishes a quarterly on all aspects of evolutionism from a scientific perspective, and the society's influence now spans the globe.

and rebirths in the history of Islam; but in all cases of spiritual reformation, as we see in the days of al Ghazālī (d. 1111), it was always through the traditional teachings and practices that Islam found regeneration and a new lease on life.

The essential problem now facing the Islamic world is, in the final analysis, purely educational in nature. The secularist West, whether capitalist or communist, knows very well that to train people in the proper fashion, one must use the age-old methods of instruction, namely, the educational system. To create a secularist culture, the educational institutions and the form and content of education must be stripped of all religious signification, which is precisely what has happened in the West. If the youth of the Muslim world receive a largely secularist education, the general results will be the same as in the Western world. To say, as some Westernizing Muslims have maintained, that modern Western systems of thought represent no more of a threat to the Islamic tradition than did the intrusion of Greek philosophy and science into the intellectual expressions of early Islam, which wound up integrating Greek thinking into the Islamic worldview, is to totally misunderstand the distinction between modern and ancient thinking. Aristotelianism and Neoplatonism were not atheistic systems of thought; the sciences of the Muslim world were all centered on the divine unity and were seen as expressions of it; and the world was not reduced purely to the material dimension, nor was science limited merely to quantitative considerations.

It is likewise an illusion to imagine that the medieval Islamic sciences and thinking transmitted to the West retained their character as expressions of the divine unity in the minds of Western thinkers and scientists of later times, for they did not. Modern thinking in the West is a-theistic in the etymological sense of that term, not only in its philosophical postulates but also in its methodological implementations. There is of course no harm in pursuing a science that has a merely quantitative approach to a given object of study and ignores the metaphysical connections of all things with the divine Absolute. But when that science claims, as does modern science, that its perspective and method of approach are the only ones that can properly evaluate reality, a reality that has been reduced to the material plane alone, then this is clearly a form of philosophical totalitarianism.

The modernists tried their hand in directing the Muslim world in ways that would lead to the actual de-Islamization of the Islamic world. In the event, they ran afoul of the fundamentalists, who see in the modernists the same threat to Islam as was posed previously by the colonialist regimes. But the fundamentalists, for their part, reduce Islam to certain political, social, and economic aspects of the sacred law (the Shari'ah). They exclude the spiritual path (*ṭarīqah*) as part and parcel of orthodox Islam, and they evince a total lack of understanding of the role that the Islamic arts and architecture have played in the preservation of the faith throughout the centuries. Besides, in

the more revolutionary brands of fundamentalism, as in Shi'i republicanism, we are not really too far removed from radical forms of Islamic modernism, to say the very least.

Only traditional Islamic intellectualism and spirituality, as represented in its great philosophical, theological, cosmological, and scientific systems, all of which were based on the divine unity, can provide the necessary light with which to judge every single aspect of modern secularist civilization. If they have that light, it is because they see the total picture from a metaphysical and spiritual perspective. At the same time, because of their universality, they include the mystical perspective of Sufism as an integral part of the complete message of Islam. The time for that traditional perspective, which has always been manifested in moments of crisis, has now come. From the vantage point of its universal perspective, much of what passes for "progress" and many an "ism" and evolutionary ideology of modern times, whether in the West or in the East, will seem like strange departures from the timeless truths contained within the sacred tradition of Islam.

Traditional Islamic thought is much too vast to be encompassed within the confines of a single system. This is because it is based on the inexhaustible richness of the metaphysical notion of the divine oneness (*tawhīd*), which is the supreme Truth within all lesser truths. Yet all of those schools of thought in Islam must be rediscovered and reexplored and readapted to the needs and circumstances of the present day. In all epochs of reform in the past, that was precisely what the Muslim intellectuals did: they readapted the traditional teachings in a fresh manner to the needs of their day, thus giving to the doctrine of *tawhīd* a powerful radiance that had a convincing allure to it. That is what is needed in these days, not only in response to the ideologies arising in the West, nor to the notions entertained by Muslim modernists and fundamentalists of different kinds, but above all because the Truth carries with it an absolute obligation to manifest itself at all times and in all places. This manifestation of the Truth, after all, is part and parcel of the jihad that everyone must engage in while living in this world, and that is reason enough for using the traditional teachings as weapons to cut through the illusions and errors of our time.