Aslan. (2005). No god but God: The Origins, Evolution, and Future of Islam

9. An Awakening in the East

THE RESPONSE TO COLONIALISM

DISPATCH FROM FREDERICK Cooper, Deputy Commissioner of Amritsar, to the Foreign Office in London, regarding the fate of the mutinous Sepoys (Bengali Muslim soldiers) at Lahore, India. First of August, 1857:

> On the 30th of July, some 400 Sepoys from the 26th Native Infantry escaped from the prison camp at Mianmir, where by order of the Crown they had been assembled and disarmed to prevent them from possibly joining the Mohammedan rebels at Delhi. Being weakened and famished, the Sepoys were easily pursued to the banks of the Ravi, where some 150 of them were shot, mobbed backwards into the river, and drowned. The survivors floated across the river on pieces of wood until they reached the opposite shore, whereupon they gathered together like a brood of wild fowl, waiting to be captured. Had they tried to escape, a bloody struggle would have

> ensued. But Providence ordered otherwise. Indeed, everything natural, artificial, and accidental combined to secure their fate.
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> The sun was setting in golden splendour; and as the doomed men, with joined palms, crowded down to the shore on the approach of our boats, their long shadows were flung athwart the gleaming waters. In utter despair, forty or fifty dashed into the stream; and the sowars [mounted Indian soldiers], being on the point of taking pot-shots at the heads of the swimmers, were given orders not to shoot. The mutineers were remarkably compliant. They were evidently possessed of a sudden and insane idea that they were going to be tried by court-martial, after some luxurious refreshment. In consequence, they submitted to being bound by a single man, and stocked like slaves into the holds of our boats.
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> By midnight, as the glorious moon came out through the clouds and reflected herself in myriad pools and streams, we had gathered 282 of the Bengali rebels. In the morning, a party of Sikhs arrived with a large supply of rope. But being as the trees were scarce, the rope was not used. A larger problem lay in dealing with the loyal Mohammedan troopers, who would surely not have stood by in silence as justice was meted out upon their rebellious co-religionists. As fortune would have it, the 1st of August was the anniversary of the great Mohammedan festival of Bukra Eid. A capital excuse was thus afforded to permit the Mohammedan horsemen to return to their homes to celebrate, while we Christians, unembarrassed by their presence and aided by the faithful Sikhs, might perform a ceremonial sacrifice of a different nature upon their brethren.
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> There remained one last difficulty, which was of sanitary consideration. But again, as fortune would have it, a deep dry well was discovered within one hundred yards of the police-station, furnishing a convenient solution as to how to dispose of the dishonoured soldiers.
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> At first light, the prisoners were bound together in groups of ten and brought out of their prisons. Believing they were about to be tried and their unwarranted grievances heard, the Sepoys were unusually docile. But when the shots began to ring in the still morning air, and they suddenly discovered the real and awful fate that awaited them, they were filled with astonishment and rage.

> The execution commenced uninterrupted until one of our men swooned away (he was the oldest of our firing-party), and a little respite was allowed. After we had shot some 237 of the Mohammedans, the district officer was informed that the remaining captives were apparently refusing to come out of the bastion, where they had been imprisoned temporarily in expectation of their execution. Anticipating a rush and resistance, preparations were made against their escape. The bastion was surrounded, the doors opened, and behold! Forty-five bodies, dead from fright, exhaustion, fatigue, heat, and partial suffocation, were dragged into the light. These dead, along with their executed comrades were thrown by the village sweepers into the well. Thus, within forty-eight hours of their escape, the entire 26th regiment was accounted for and disposed of.
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> To those of you fond of reading signs, we would point to the solitary golden cross still gleaming aloft on the summit of the Christian church in Delhi, whole and untouched; though the ball on which it rests is riddled with shots deliberately fired by the mutinous infidels of the town. The cross symbolically triumphant over a shattered globe! How the wisdom and heroism of our English soldiers seem like mere dross before the manifest and wondrous interposition of Almighty God in the cause of Christianity!

There were a number of reasons for what the British described as the Sepoy Mutiny, but which is now universally recognized as the Indian Revolt of 1857. The history that led to the revolt is clear enough. Under the auspices of the East India Company, which maintained a total monopoly over Indian markets, the British Empire had been the effective ruler of India, though it was not until early in the nineteenth century, when the last Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah II, was forcefully deposed, that they assumed direct control over the country. By 1857, the British had so effortlessly pressed their will on the enfeebled population that they were free to plunder the vast resources of the Subcontinent.

To keep Europe's industries running, the colonized lands were rushed toward modernization. European ideals of secularism, pluralism, individual liberties, human rights, and, to a far lesser degree, democracy—the wonderful legacy of the Enlightenment that had

taken hundreds of years to evolve in Europe—were pressed upon the colonized lands with no attempt to render them in terms the indigenous population would either recognize or understand. Western technology was shared only insofar as it increased production. New cities were built instead of old cities being developed. Cheaply manufactured imports destroyed most local industries, and native markets had little choice but to focus almost exclusively on the economic needs of the colonial powers.

In return for the pillaging of their lands, the suppression of their independence, and the destruction of their local economies, the colonized peoples were to be given the gift of "civilization." Indeed, in every region to which Europeans laid claim, the colonialist project was presented in the guise of a "civilizing mission." As Cecil Rhodes, founder of the De Beers diamond company and at one time the virtual dictator of modern-day South Africa, famously declared, "We Britons are the first race in the world, and the more of the world we inhabit, the better it is for the human race."

Among the many problems with this so-called civilizing mission was that, well-intentioned as it may have been, it was often deliberately shadowed by a "Christianizing mission," the principle goal of which was, in the words of Sir Charles Trevelyan, Governor of Madras, "nothing short of the conversion of the natives to Christianity." In India, Christian evangelists were placed in the highest positions of government, including at all levels of the British Army. Charles Grant, the director of the East India Company (which until 1858 retained nearly all powers of government), was himself an active Christian missionary who believed, along with most of his countrymen, that Britain had been granted dominion over India by God in order to rear it out of its heathen darkness and into the light of Christ. Nearly half of all schools in the Subcontinent were run by missionaries like Grant who received large amounts of aid from the British Empire to indoctrinate the natives into Christianity.

Not all colonialists agreed with Britain's missionary agenda. Lord Ellenborough, Governor General from 1842 to 1844, continually warned his countrymen that the imperial promotion of Christian evangelism was not only detrimental to the security of the Empire, it would likely lead to popular resentment and perhaps to open rebellion. Yet

even Ellenborough would have agreed with Trevelyan, who argued that the Indian religion was "identified with so many gross immoralities and physical absurdities that it [would give] way at once before the light of European science."

The British conviction that the ancient foe of Christendom was in desperate need of civilization created a sense of inferiority and fear among India's Muslims, many of whom believed that their faith and culture were under attack. So while the annexation of native states, the dispossession of landowners, the disregard for the plight of the Indian peasantry, and the harsh revenue policies of the rapacious East India Company had formed a massive pyre of anger and resentment in India, in the end it was what Benjamin Disraeli called "the union of missionary enterprise with the political power of the Government" that struck the match of rebellion.

The fact is, the Bengali soldiers who launched the Indian Revolt in 1857 were not only angry at colonialist policies that had stripped their land of its natural resources, they were convinced, and rightly so, that the British Army was trying to convert them forcibly to Christianity. It was enough that their commanding officer openly preached the Gospel to all his military classes, but when they discovered that their rifle cartridges had been greased with beef and pork fat, which would have contaminated both Hindus and Muslims, their greatest fears were confirmed. In an act of civil disobedience, a small group of soldiers refused to use the cartridges. Their British commanders responded by shackling them in chains and locking them in military prisons. Seeing this response as yet another indication of the colonialist mindset, the rest of the Bengali regiment—some 150,000 soldiers—mutinied.

The soldiers quickly took control of Delhi and set up the deposed Mughal emperor, Bahadur Shah, as their leader. The octogenarian emperor released a written proclamation to the country, urging both the Hindu and Muslim populations to help him "liberate and protect the poor helpless people now groaning" under colonial rule. The proclamation reached every corner of India, and soon what had begun as a military mutiny among the Sepoy forces escalated into a joint Hindu-Muslim rebellion of the civilian population.

The British responded mercilessly and without restraint. To subdue the uprising they were compelled, somewhat reluctantly, to unleash the full force of their colonial might. There were mass arrests throughout the country; demonstrators both young and old were beaten on the streets. Most major cities were ravaged. In Allahabad, British soldiers indiscriminately killed everyone in their path, leaving the dead bodies to rot in piles on the streets. Lucknow was sacked, Delhi practically razed. Approximately five hundred Sepoys of the 14th Native Infantry were massacred at Jhelam. In Benares, the bodies of civilian sympathizers were hung from the trees. Entire villages were looted, then set aflame. It took less than two years of carnage and plunder before full colonial control was restored. With the rebellion crushed and the East India Company dissolved, the administration of the Subcontinent became the direct responsibility of the Queen, who could now proudly proclaim that "the sun never sets on the British Empire."

The violence with which colonial control was reasserted in India forever shattered any illusions of British moral superiority. For most Muslims, Europe's civilizing mission in the Middle East was revealed for what it truly was: an ideology of political and economic dominance achieved through brutal military might. The ideals of the Enlightenment, which the British never tired of preaching, could no longer be separated from the repressive imperialist policies of the colonizing government. In short, India became the paradigm of the colonialist experiment gone awry.

Even so, a large number of Muslim intellectuals remained convinced that the adoption of European values, such as the rule of law and the pursuit of scientific progress, was the sole means of overcoming the rapid decline of Muslim civilization in the face of European imperialism. This group became known as the Modernists, and perhaps no intellectual better represented their reformist agenda than Sir Sayyid Ahmed Khan.

Born to a family of Mughal nobility, Sayyid Ahmed Khan was a devoted follower of the Indian neo-mystic Shah Wali Allah, though by the mid-nineteenth century he had begun to distance himself from the puritanical overtones of an ideology that had already sparked a few anti-Hindu, anti-Sikh rebellions in India. During the Indian Revolt, Sir Sayyid worked as an administrator in the East India Company and

had witnessed for himself the gruesome revenge meted out by the British forces upon the rebellious population of Delhi. Although the experience did not deter him from remaining a loyal subject of the British Empire (as his knighthood suggests), he was nevertheless deeply pained over the plight of Indian Muslims after the collapse of the revolt. In particular, Sir Sayyid was worried about the way in which the revolt was being described by British authorities as "a long concocted Mohammedan conspiracy against British power," to quote Alexander Duff, Britain's leading missionary in India. Such beliefs had made the Muslim community the main target of government reprisals.

To combat this misperception, Sir Sayyid published his most famous work, *The Causes of the Indian Revolt*, which strove to explain to a British audience the reasons behind the events of 1857. This was not, he argued, a premeditated rebellion. It was the spontaneous result of a combination of social and economic grievances. That said, Sir Sayyid admitted that at the heart of the Indian Revolt was the widespread belief that the British were bent on converting the population to Christianity and forcing them to adopt European ways. This, according to Sir Sayyid, was surely a ludicrous notion. Despite the preponderance of evidence, he refused to accept the idea that the Queen's purpose in India was the conversion of its people. Sir Sayyid did, however, recognize that the mere *perception* that the colonialist project was a Christian war against Indian religions was enough to rouse the masses to revolt.

As a devout Indian Muslim and a loyal British subject, Sir Sayyid took upon himself the challenge of building a bridge between those two civilizations, so as to explain the culture, faith, and values of the one to the other. The problem as he saw it was that the Indians "did not understand what right the Government, whose subjects we are, had upon us, and what was our duty towards it." If only the goals and ideals of the British were explained to the indigenous population in a language they could understand, the Indians would become "not a burden but a boon to the community."

In 1877, Sayyid Ahmed Khan founded the Aligarh School, the primary goal of which was the revitalization of Islamic glory through modern European education. Sir Sayyid was convinced that if he could shine the light of European rationalism and scientific thought upon traditional Muslim beliefs and customs, the result would be an indigenous Islamic Enlightenment that would propel the Muslim world into the twentieth century. The Aligarh taught its students to throw off the shackles of the Ulama and their blind imitation (*taqlid*) of Islamic doctrine, for none of the problems facing Muslims in the modern world could be solved through their antiquated theology. The only hope for Islamic revival was the modernization of the Shariah; and the only way to achieve this was to take it out of the hands of the incompetent and irrelevant Ulama.

"What I acknowledge to be the original religion of Islam," Sir Sayyid claimed, "[is not the] religion which . . . the preachers have fashioned."

It was Sir Sayyid's Kashmiri protégé, Chiragh Ali (1844–95), who most succinctly outlined his mentor's argument for legal reform. Chiragh Ali was incensed at the way Islam had been portrayed by Europeans as "essentially rigid and inaccessible to change." The notion that its laws and customs are based "on a set of specific precepts which can neither be added to, nor taken from, nor modified to suit altered circumstances" is a fiction created by the Ulama to maintain their control over Muslims, Chiragh Ali said. He argued that the Shariah could not be considered a civil code of law because the only legitimate law in Islam is the Quran, which "does not interfere in political questions, nor does it lay down specific rules of conduct." Rather, the Quran teaches nothing more than "certain doctrines of religion and certain general rules of morality." It would be absurd, therefore, to regard Islamic law, which Chiragh Ali considered the product of the Ulama's imagination, to be "unalterable and unchangeable."

As one can imagine, the Ulama did not respond well to these charges of incompetence and irrelevance, and they used their influence over the population to fight with vehemence the Modernist vision of a new Islamic identity. Certainly, the Modernist cause was not helped by the fact that after the Indian Revolt it became increasingly difficult to separate the ideals of the European Enlightenment from its imperialist connotations. But it was the Modernist demand that the Shariah be withdrawn entirely from the civil sphere that caused the greatest concern among the Ulama. Religious scholars like Mawlana Mawdudi, founder of the *Jama'at-i Islami* (the Islamic Asso-

ciation), countered the Aligarh platform by arguing that, far from separating the religious and civil, Islam *requires* that "the law of God should become the law by which people lead their lives."

Ironically, though Mawdudi was himself a fervent antinationalist, his ideas were instrumental in providing the ideological foundation for the creation of the world's first "Islamic state," Pakistan. Yet to understand how India's Muslim community progressed from the disastrous aftermath of the Indian Revolt to the triumphant creation of their own separate homeland in less than a hundred years requires a brief detour through Egypt, where another group of Muslim reformists living under colonial rule were on the verge of launching an awakening in the East that would ripple through the whole of the Muslim world.

EGYPT AT THE turn of the nineteenth century had become, in the words of William Welch, "an essential spoke in the imperial wheel" of the British Empire. Unlike India, where the British held uncontested and unconcealed control over every level of civic administration, Egypt was allowed to maintain a façade of independence through the hereditary reign of its utterly impotent viceroys, or *khedives*. Though their fealty remained, in principle, to the Ottoman Empire, by the nineteenth century the khedives were little more than subjects of the British Empire. They were powerless to make any political or economic decisions in Egypt without the consent of their colonial masters. In exchange for a seemingly inexhaustible line of credit, which they could never hope to repay, a succession of viceroys had gradually settled into apathetic reigns characterized by unrestrained excess and political indifference.

Meanwhile, Egypt was inundated with foreign workers, wealthy investors, and middle-class Englishmen eager to stake their claims on a country with few bureaucratic obstacles and unlimited opportunities for advancement. To accommodate the rapid influx of Europeans, entire cities were built on the outskirts of Cairo, far away from the indigenous population. The foreigners quickly took charge of Egypt's principal export of cotton. They built ports, railroads, and dams, all to implement colonial control over the country's economy. With the

construction of their crowning achievement, the Suez Canal, Egypt's fate as Britain's most valuable colony was sealed.

To pay for these massive projects, taxes were increased, though they were already too high to be paid by the average Cairene, let alone by the expanding peasant class (the *fellaheen*) forced into the cities by the destruction of their local industries. Making matters worse, the khedives had been pressured into allowing the foreign élite unreasonable concessions, including exemption from all taxes except those levied on property, and total immunity from being tried in Egyptian courts.

Naturally, the iniquitous situation in Egypt led to widespread anticolonialist sentiment and sporadic uprisings, both of which were used by the British as further excuses to tighten their control over the population. The result was a government in staggering debt to European creditors and a disenfranchised population desperately in search of a common identity to unite them against the colonialist menace. By the middle of the century, the situation in Egypt was ripe for the Modernist message then being formed in India. That message would be brought to them by the man known as "the Awakener of the East"—Jamal ad-Din al-Afghani (1838–97).

Despite his name, al-Afghani was in fact not an Afghan. As his excellent translator, Nikki Keddie, has shown, al-Afghani was actually born and raised in Iran, where he received a traditional Shi'ite education in the Islamic sciences. Why he decided to pose alternately as a Sunni Muslim from Afghanistan or as a Turk from Istanbul is hard to say. In light of Shah Wali Allah's popular puritan movement, which had reached all corners of the Muslim world, al-Afghani may have considered it expedient to hide his Shi'ite identity so as to disseminate his reformist agenda more widely.

At the age of seventeen, al-Afghani left Iran for India to supplement his religious education with the so-called Western sciences. The year was 1856. Nearly two thirds of the Subcontinent was under the direct control of the British Empire. The economic policies of the East India Company and its various affiliates had allowed Britain to annex vast tracts of native-owned property. Regional rulers had been forcibly deposed and the peasantry stripped of their meager earnings. All through the country, rebellion was brewing.

At first, al-Afghani seemed unconcerned with the momentous events taking place around him. As his earliest biographer, Salim al-Anhuri, notes, he was too engrossed in his academic studies to concern himself with the plight of the Indian population. But the following year, when Indian grievances erupted into open rebellion, al-Afghani was suddenly roused to action. The young man was traumatized not only by the violence with which the British reasserted their control, but by the hypocrisy they showed in preaching such exalted Enlightenment values while cruelly stifling Indian appeals for liberation and national sovereignty. His experiences in the Subcontinent engendered in his heart a lifelong loathing of the British and a single-minded devotion to freeing the Muslim world from the yoke of European colonialism, which he considered to be the gravest threat to Islam.

Yet al-Afghani rarely spoke of Islam in religious terms. Perhaps his greatest contribution to Islamic political thought was his insistence that Islam, detached from its purely religious associations, could be used as a sociopolitical ideology to unite the whole of the Muslim world in solidarity against imperialism. Islam was for al-Afghani far more than law and theology; it was civilization. Indeed, it was a superior civilization because, as he argued, the intellectual foundations upon which the West was built had in fact been borrowed from Islam. Ideals such as social egalitarianism, popular sovereignty, and the pursuit and preservation of knowledge had their origins not in Christian Europe, but in the Ummah. It was Muhammad's revolutionary community that had introduced the concept of popular sanction over the ruling government while dissolving all ethnic boundaries between individuals and giving women and children unprecedented rights and privileges.

Al-Afghani agreed with Sayyid Ahmed Khan that the Ulama bore the responsibility for the decline of Islamic civilization. In their self-appointed role as the guardians of Islam, the Ulama had so stifled independent thought and scientific progress that even as Europe awakened to the Enlightenment, the Muslim world was still floundering in the Middle Ages. By forbidding rational dialogue about the limits of law and the meaning of scripture, the Ulama, whom al-Afghani likened to "a very narrow wick on top of which is a very small flame that neither lights its surroundings nor gives light to others," had become the true enemies of Islam.

But al-Afghani was no member of the Aligarh. In fact, he considered Sayyid Ahmed Khan a tool of the colonialist powers for his doting emulation of European ideals. As far as al-Afghani was concerned, Europe's only advantages over Islamic civilization were its technological advancements and its economic prowess. Both of these attributes would have to be developed in the Muslim world if Islam were to regain its former glory. But the only way to achieve lasting social, political, and economic reform in the region would be to contemporize those enduring Islamic values that had founded the Muslim community. Merely imitating Europe, as Ahmed Khan would have Muslims do, was a waste of time.

Al-Afghani's burgeoning political ideology was reinforced during his tenure as a member of the Educational Council in the Ottoman Empire. There, al-Afghani came into contact with a passionate group of Turkish reformers dubbed the Young Ottomans. Led by a handful of writers and academics, the most famous of whom was the brilliant poet and playwright Namik Kemal (1840–88), the Young Ottomans had developed an intriguing reformist agenda based on fusing Western democratic ideals with traditional Islamic principles. The result was a supernationalist project, commonly referred to as *Pan-Islamism*, whose principal goal was the encouragement of Muslim unity across cultural, sectarian, and national boundaries, under the banner of a single, centralized (and obviously Turkish) Caliphate—in other words, the revival of the Ummah.

Al-Afghani enthusiastically embraced the philosophy of the Young Ottomans, especially their call for the rebirth of the united Muslim community—one that included Shi'ites and Sufis as equal members—in order to combat European imperialism. In 1871, bolstered by his newfound faith in the prospects of Pan-Islamism, al-Afghani went to Cairo—then as now the cultural capital of the Muslim world—ostensibly to teach philosophy, logic, and theology, but in truth to implant his vision of the Modernist agenda into the political landscape of Egypt. It was in Cairo that he befriended a zealous young student named Muhammad Abdu (1845–1950), who would become Egypt's most influential voice of Muslim reform.

Born a *fellah* in a small village on the Nile Delta, Abdu was an extremely devout boy who by the age of twelve had memorized the

whole of the Quran. As a young disciple of the Shadhili Sufi Order, he had excelled in his studies of the Islamic sciences, so much so that he was sent to al-Azhar University in Cairo to continue his education. But despite his piety and indefatigable intellect, Abdu immediately clashed with the rigid pedagogy and traditionalist teachings of al-Azhar's Ulama. At the same time, he was struck by the ways in which Europe's lofty principles were so blatantly contradicted by its colonialist agenda.

"We Egyptians," he wrote, "believed once in English liberalism and English sympathy; but we believe no longer, for facts are stronger than words. Your liberalness we see plainly is only for yourselves, and your sympathy with us is that of the wolf for the lamb which he designs to eat."

Disenchanted with his religious and political leaders, Abdu became an avid disciple of al-Afghani and, under his tutelage, published a number of books and tracts advocating a return to the unadulterated values of the *salafs* ("the pious forefathers") who founded the first Muslim community in Medina. Labeling himself a "neo-Mu'tazilite," Abdu called for the reopening of the gates of *ijtihad*, or independent reasoning. The only path to Muslim empowerment, he argued, was to liberate Islam from the iron grip of the Ulama and their traditionalist interpretation of the Shariah. Like Sir Sayyid, Abdu demanded that every man-made source of law—the Sunna, *ijma*, *qiyas*, and the like—must be subject to rational discourse. Even the holy Quran must be reopened to interpretation, questioning, and debate from all sectors of Muslim society. Muslims do not need the guidance of the Ulama to engage the sacred Revelation, Abdu argued, they must be free to experience the Quran on their own.

While Abdu did not believe that Islam need separate its religious ideals from the secular realm, he categorically rejected the possibility of placing secular powers in the hands of religious clerics, whom he deemed totally unqualified to lead the Muslim community into the new century. What was needed instead was a reinterpretation of traditional Islamic ideals so as to present modern democratic principles in terms that the average Muslim could easily recognize. Thus, Abdu redefined shura, or tribal consultation, as representative democracy; ijma, or consensus, as popular sovereignty; and bay'ah, or the oath of allegiance, as universal suffrage. According to this view, the Ummah was the nation, and its ruler the Caliph, whose sole function was to protect its members by serving the welfare of the community.

Together, al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu founded the *Salafiyyah* movement, Egypt's version of the Modernist project. After al-Afghani's death, Abdu joined forces with his close friend and biographer, Rashid Rida (1865–1935), to push the Salafiyyah's reformist agenda to the forefront of Egyptian politics. Yet, despite its growing popularity throughout the region, the ideal of Pan-Islamism, which was at the heart of Abdu's reformist project, remained exceedingly difficult to implement.

The problem with Pan-Islamism was that the spiritual and intellectual diversity that had characterized the Muslim faith from the start made the prospects of achieving religious solidarity across sectarian lines highly unlikely. This was particularly true in light of the rising Islamic puritan movement, which sought to strip the religion of its cultural innovations. What is more, large and powerful groups of secular nationalists throughout the Middle East found the religious ideology behind the Salafiyyah movement to be incompatible with what they considered the principal goals of modernization: political independence, economic prosperity, and military might. Ironically, many of these secular nationalists were inspired by al-Afghani's brand of Islamic liberalism. In fact, Egypt's most influential nationalist, Sa'd Zaghlul (1859–1927), began his career as a disciple of Muhammad Abdu.

But while Zaghlul and his nationalist colleagues accepted the Salafiyyah's vision of "Islam as civilization," they rejected the argument that imperialism could be defeated through religious solidarity. One need only regard the petty squabbles of the Ulama to recognize the futility of the Pan-Islamist project, they argued. Rather, the nationalists sought to battle European colonialism through a secular countermovement that would replace the Salafiyyah's aspirations of religious unity with the more pragmatic goal of racial unity: in other words, *Pan-Arabism*.

Practically speaking, Pan-Arabism was deemed easier to achieve than Pan-Islamism. As one of its leading proponents, Sati al-Husri (1880–1968), reasoned, "Religion is a matter between the individual

and God, while the fatherland is the concern of us all." Nevertheless, the Pan-Arabists considered their movement to be both political and religious because, in their view, Islam could not be divorced from its Arab roots. To quote the nationalist ideologue Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, "The most glorious pages of Muslim history [are also] the pages of Arab history." Thus, while Pan-Arabists agreed with the Pan-Islamists that Muslims must return to the values of the original community in Medina, they defined that community as uniquely Arab. Muslim unity, it was claimed, could not be realized except through Arab unity, and Pan-Arabism was seen as "the practical step which must precede . . . Pan-Islamism."

Of course, the Pan-Arabists had a difficult time defining what exactly they meant by Arab unity. Despite their claims of racial solidarity, there is simply no such thing as a single Arab ethnicity. Egyptian Arabs had practically nothing in common with, say, Iraqi Arabs. The two countries did not even speak the same Arabic dialect. In any case, regardless of the Ummah's Arab roots, the fact is that at the beginning of the twentieth century, Arabs accounted for the tiniest fraction of the world's Muslim population—perhaps as little as 20 percent. In response to such obstacles some nationalists sought to connect themselves with the ancient cultures of their home countries. For example, Egyptian nationalists appealed to an imagined Pharaonic legacy, while Iraqi nationalists strove to return to their Mesopotamian heritage.

The Arab nationalists were given an unexpected boost at the end of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire collapsed at the hands of Kemal Ataturk. The Caliphate that had, despite its declining powers, symbolized the spiritual unity of the Ummah for nearly fifteen centuries was suddenly replaced by a radically secular, ultranationalist Turkish republic. The Empire was broken up by the victors of the war, particularly Britain, into individual, semi-autonomous states. In Egypt, Britain seized the opportunity to sever all ties with the Turks, simply declaring itself the country's sole protector. The khedive was declared king of Egypt, though he was still a puppet of the colonialists.

With the Caliphate dismantled and Egypt firmly under British occupation, Pan-Islamism was discarded as a viable ideology for Muslim unification. And though Pan-Arabism was thus left as the principal voice of opposition to colonialism, it could no longer hope to extend beyond national boundaries. Muslims were being forced to identify themselves as citizens of nations, not members of a community. With Pan-Islamism waning and Pan-Arabism powerless as a political force, it was left to a new generation of Muslims, led by the charismatic young socialist Hasan al-Banna (1906–49), to revive Egyptian aspirations for liberty and independence.

Hasan al-Banna came to Cairo in 1923 to pursue a higher degree in education. Profoundly influenced by the mystical teachings of al-Ghazali, al-Banna had joined the Hasafiyyah Sufi Order at a young age in order to dedicate his life to preserving and renewing the traditions of his faith and culture. Later, as an ardent and bright university student, al-Banna devoured the works of al-Afghani and Muhammad Abdu, feeling, as they did, that the decline of Muslim civilization was the result not only of foreign influence, but of a lack of dedication on the part of Egyptians to the original principles of Islam preached by Muhammad in Medina.

In Cairo, al-Banna was struck by the depravity and rampant secularism that had gripped the city. Traditional Islamic ideals of egalitarianism and social justice had been swept aside by the unbridled greed of the country's political and religious élites, most of whom eagerly colluded with the British colonialists in exchange for wealth and status. Foreigners controlled all channels of government and maintained a monopoly over Egypt's economy. Cairo had become a virtual apartheid state where small pockets of tremendously wealthy Europeans and Westernized Egyptians ruled over millions of impoverished peasants who labored on their lands and cared for their estates.

Al-Banna appealed to the Ulama at Egypt's al-Azhar University, but found them to be as ineffectual and irrelevant as the Modernists had accused them of being. Yet he was convinced that the Modernist enterprise was misguided in its attempts to adopt what he called "the social principles on which the civilization of the Western nations has been built." Al-Banna also rejected the nationalist ideology of Pan-Arabism, considering nationalism to be the principal cause of the murderous world war that had just ended. In the end, al-Banna

concluded that the only path to Muslim independence and self-empowerment lay in reconciling modern life with Islamic values—a process he referred to as "the Islamization of society."

In 1928, al-Banna carried his vision of Islamization to his first teaching post in the small village of Ismailiyyah, near the Suez Canal. If the Canal was the crowning achievement of the colonialist system in Egypt, Ismailiyyah represented the depths to which Arabs had sunk under that system. This was a region teeming with foreign soldiers and civilian workers who lived in luxurious gated communities that towered over the squalid and miserable neighborhoods of the local residents. Street signs were in English, cafés and restaurants segregated, and public spaces peppered with markers warning "no Arabs."

The iniquity and humiliation facing the residents in a region that was generating such colossal wealth for the British Empire enraged al-Banna. He began preaching his message of Islamization in parks and in restaurants, in coffee shops and in homes. The young and dispossessed, all those who felt betrayed by their feeble government and their ineffectual religious leaders, flocked to al-Banna and his simple message that "Islam is the answer." Eventually, what began as little more than an informal grassroots organization dedicated to changing the lives of people through social welfare was formalized into the world's first Islamic socialist movement.

"We are brothers in the service of Islam," al-Banna, then only twenty-two years old, announced at the first official meeting of his group, "hence we are *the Muslim Brothers.*"

It would be difficult to exaggerate the influence of the Society of Muslim Brothers on the Muslim world. Al-Banna's Islamization project quickly spread to Syria, Jordan, Algeria, Tunisia, Palestine, Sudan, Iran, and Yemen. Islamic socialism proved to be infinitely more successful than either Pan-Islamism or Pan-Arabism in giving voice to Muslim grievances. The Muslim Brothers vigorously tackled issues that no one else would address. Matters such as the increase in Christian missionary activity in the Muslim world, the rise of Zionism in Palestine, the poverty and political inferiority of Muslim peoples, and the opulence and autocracy of Arab monarchies were a regular part of the Brothers' agenda.

Perhaps the most significant aspect of al-Banna's movement was

that it represented the first modern attempt to present Islam as an all-encompassing religious, political, social, economic, and cultural system. Islam, in al-Banna's view, represented a universal ideology superior to all other systems of social organization the world had known. As such, it demanded a distinctly Islamic government—one that could properly address society's ills. Yet al-Banna did not believe it was his duty to impose this ideology on the current political system in Egypt. The Muslim Brothers was a socialist organization, not a political party: its principle concern was reconciling hearts and minds to God so as to alleviate human suffering, not bringing about a political revolution. True to his Sufi upbringing, al-Banna was convinced that the state could be reformed only by reforming the self.

Al-Banna's apolitical sentiments did not spare him the ire of the government. In 1949, at the behest of Egypt's khedive and undoubtedly with the encouragement of the colonialist leadership, al-Banna was assassinated. But while this act may have silenced the leader of the Muslim Brothers, it strengthened the Society itself, so that by the 1950s, it had become the most dominant voice of opposition in Egypt, boasting nearly half a million members. It therefore could not be ignored by the burgeoning anticolonialist, anti-imperialist rebellion that had been looming for years in the ranks of Egypt's armed forces.

On July 23, 1952, a group of disaffected military leaders who called themselves the Free Officer Corps launched a coup d'état against Egypt's inept monarchy and unilaterally declared the country free of colonial control. The coup was instigated by the head of the armed forces, General Muhammad Naguib. But everyone in Egypt knew that the real power behind the rebellion was Naguib's right-hand man, Colonel Gamal Abd al-Nasser.

Initially, the Muslim Brothers enthusiastically supported the Free Officers, primarily because Nasser had promised to implement their socialist agenda in postrevolutionary Egypt. The Society's leadership referred to the Free Officers as a "blessed movement" and helped maintain order and security in all the major cities in the aftermath of the coup. Nasser reciprocated their support by humbly going on a pilgrimage to al-Banna's tomb and even went so far as to invite the Muslim Brothers to join the new parliament, though they refused, for fear of sullying al-Banna's apolitical principles.

But as Nasser gradually implemented his nationalist agenda in Egypt, his authoritarian rule began to clash with the egalitarian values preached by the Muslim Brothers. In January of 1953, as part of Nasser's plan to consolidate his control over the government, all parties and political organizations were outlawed except the Muslim Brothers, whose support was still vital to his popularity with the people. The following year, however, when shots were fired at Nasser as he was delivering a speech in Alexandria, the opportunity to dismantle the Muslim Brothers finally presented itself. Blaming the attempt on his life on a conspiracy within the Society, Nasser outlawed the Muslim Brothers; its members were rounded up and imprisoned, its leaders tortured and executed.

In the dank, sadistic prisons of Nasser's Egypt, the Muslim Brothers fractured along ideological lines. For many members, it became painfully clear that the socialist vision of changing hearts to change society had failed. According to these Brothers, al-Banna's Islamization project could not be realized through acts of social welfare. If Nasser had taught them anything, it was that such lofty ideals could be enacted only by force. Postcolonial Egypt required a new vision of Islam and its role in the modern world, and the man who would provide that vision was, at the time, languishing in a prison cell in Cairo.

Poet, novelist, journalist, critic, and social activist Sayyid Qutb (1906–66) would come to be known as the father of Islamic radicalism. Born in Upper Egypt, he had, like al-Banna, moved to Cairo during the turbulent 1920s. After a brief stint in the Ministry of Education, Qutb traveled to the United States in 1948 to research its educational system. What he discovered was a nation committed to individual freedom, yet "devoid of human sympathy and responsibility . . . except under the force of law." He was disgusted by what he saw as the country's "materialistic attitude" and its "evil and fanatical racial discrimination," both of which he blamed on the West's compulsion to pull "religion apart from common life." Qutb was equally frightened at the rapid spread of Western cultural hegemony in the developing countries of the Middle East and North Africa, a phenomenon that the Iranian social critic Jalal Al-e Ahmad dubbed *Gharbzadeghi*, or "Westoxification."

Upon his return to Cairo in 1950, Qutb joined the Muslim Brothers, seeing in the Society a fervent dedication to founding a socialist Islamic polity. He quickly ascended to a position of authority, heading the organization's propaganda department. After the revolution of 1952, Nasser asked Qutb to join his government, but Qutb refused, preferring to continue his social activities with the Brothers. That decision would have devastating consequences. After the attempt on Nasser's life, Qutb was one of countless Muslim Brothers who were arrested, brutally tortured, and tossed into prison to be forgotten.

In the solitary confines of his cell, Qutb had a revelation. "Preaching alone is not enough," he wrote in his revolutionary manifesto, *Milestones*, published in 1964, the year of his release. "Those who have usurped the authority of Allah and [who] are oppressing Allah's creatures are not going to give up their power merely through preaching."

Qutb shocked Muslims by claiming that they were still living in a state of Jahiliyyah—"the Time of Ignorance" that preceded the rise of Islam—in which decadent and corrupt human beings had seized for themselves one of God's greatest attributes, namely, sovereignty. Qutb agreed with al-Banna that society's inequities could be addressed only by asserting the superiority of Islam as a complete social, political, and economic system. However, unlike al-Banna, Qutb envisioned that process to be a cataclysmic, revolutionary event that could be brought about only through the establishment of an Islamic state. As he argued in *Milestones*, "setting up the kingdom of God on earth, and eliminating the kingdom of man, means taking power from the hands of its human usurpers and restoring it to God alone."

In Qutb's view, the Islamic state would not require a ruler, at least not a centralized executive power like a president or king. The only ruler would be God; the only law, the Shariah. Qutb's radicalized vision of political Islam completely transformed the landscape of the Middle East, giving rise to a new ideology called *Islamism*.

Not to be confused with Pan-Islamism, the supernationalist theory of Muslim unity under a single Caliph, Islamism called for the creation of an Islamic state in which the sociopolitical order would be defined solely according to Muslim values. The Islamists argued that Islam is a comprehensive ideology that governs all aspects of the believer's life. As Qutb wrote, the fundamental concern of Islam is "to

unify the realm of earth and the realm of heaven in one system." The primary condition for the realization of that system would be the adoption and implementation of the Shariah in the public sphere. Western secular values must be rejected in the Muslim world because Islam forbids its theological beliefs to be "divorced in nature or in objective from secular life and customs." All secular governments, therefore, including those run by Arabs like Nasser, must be replaced, by force if necessary, with a viable and morally accountable Islamic state.

In 1965, a year after he had been released from prison, Qutb was rearrested for the publication of *Milestones* and was hanged for treason. Meanwhile, those radicalized members of the Muslim Brothers who had managed to escape Nasser's wrath found refuge in the only place that would open its arms to them: Saudi Arabia, a country on the verge of an economic explosion that would transform its rough band of tribal leaders into the wealthiest men in the world—an astounding achievement for a kingdom founded a little more than a decade earlier as the result of an informal alliance between an insignificant tribal Shaykh and a barely literate religious zealot.

AT THE DAWN of the eighteenth century, around the time Europe was beginning to take notice of the vast natural resources waiting to be tapped across the Mediterranean, the sacred land that had given birth to Islam and reared it in its infancy fell under the nominal suzerainty of the Ottoman Empire, though the Caliph allowed the Sharif of Mecca—a descendant of the Prophet and heir to the Banu Hashim—to wield authority over the Arabian population. Yet neither Ottoman influence nor the Sharif's control extended far beyond the Hijaz. Throughout the vast, inaccessible deserts of eastern Arabia—a region called the *Najd*, whose austere and sterile landscape was matched by its stagnant religious and cultural development—there lived large numbers of autonomous tribes loyal to no one but themselves. Among these was a small clan of little account led by an ambitious Shaykh named Muhammad ibn Saud (d. 1765).

While by no means a wealthy man, ibn Saud owned most of the cultivated lands in the tiny oasis town of Dariyah, which had been

founded by his family. His position as Shaykh gave him exclusive control of the town's wells and primary trade routes. Although he maintained a small network of caravans, his finances were severely limited by his reach, which did not extend beyond the boundaries of the oasis. Still, ibn Saud was a proud and ostentatious man, cut from the fabric of his ancient Arab ancestors, and fiercely dedicated to the protection of his family and clan. So when an itinerant preacher named Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab (1703–66) arrived in his oasis looking for protection, he immediately seized the opportunity to create an alliance that would increase both his economic prosperity and his military might.

Born in the deserts of Najd to a devout Muslim family, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab displayed his religious zeal at a young age. Recognizing his talent for Quranic study, his father sent him to Medina to study with the disciples of Shah Wali Allah, who had only recently launched his campaign against Indian Sufism. Abd al-Wahhab was deeply influenced by Wali Allah's puritanical ideology. But it was not until he left Medina for Basra and experienced for himself the rich diversity of Shi'ism and Sufism in all its local variations that his anger at what he considered to be the adulteration of Islam transformed into a fanatical obsession to strip Islam of its "superstitious innovations" and restore it to its original Arab purity. Upon returning to the Arabian Peninsula, he embarked on a violent crusade to promote his radically puritanical, "fundamentalist" sect of Islam, popularly known as *Wahhabism*.

A few words are needed about the meaning and function of fundamentalism in Islam. The term "fundamentalism" was first coined in the early twentieth century to describe a burgeoning movement among Protestants in the United States who were reacting to the rapid modernization and secularization of American society by reasserting the fundamentals of Christianity. Chief among these was a belief in the literal interpretation of the Bible—an idea that had passed out of favor with the ascendance of scientific theories such as evolution, which tended to treat biblical claims of historicity with mocking contempt. Considering the fact that all Muslims believe in the "literal" quality of the Quran—which is, after all, the direct speech

of God—it makes little sense to refer to Muslim extremists or militants as "fundamentalists." Nor is this a proper term for those Islamists like Sayyid Qutb whose goal is the establishment of an Islamic polity. Nevertheless, because the term "Islamic fundamentalism" has become so common that it has even slipped into Persian and Arabic (where its literal translations are, somewhat appropriately, "bigot" in Arabic and "backward" in Persian), I will continue to use it in this book—but not to describe politicized Islam. That movement will be called "Islamism," its proper name. "Islamic fundamentalism," in contrast, refers to the radically ultraconservative and puritanical ideology most clearly represented in the Muslim world by Wahhabism.

In truth, Wahhabi doctrine is little more than an overly simplified conception of tawhid. When the Wahhabi declares "There is no god but God," he means that God must be the sole object of religious devotion; any act of worship that involves any other entity whatsoever is considered shirk. For Abd al-Wahhab, this included the veneration of Pirs, the intercession of the Imams, the commemoration of most religious holidays, and all devotional acts that centered on the Prophet Muhammad. The Wahhabists sought to outlaw rituals like dhikr and matam or any other custom that had crept into Islam as it spread out of the tribal confines of the Arabian Peninsula to be absorbed by the disparate cultures of the Middle East, Central Asia, Europe, India, and Africa. In their place, Abd al-Wahhab instigated a strict implementation of the Shariah, free of all foreign influences and interpretations. Like al-Afghani, Muhammad Abdu, and the Pan-Islamists; Sa'd Zaghlul, Sati al-Husri, and the Pan-Arabists; Hasan al-Banna, the Muslim Brothers, and the Islamic socialists; and Sayyid Qutb, Mawlana Mawdudi, and the radical Islamists, Abd al-Wahhab called for a return to the unadulterated Muslim community established by Muhammad in Medina. Yet Abd al-Wahhab's was an archaic and exclusivist vision of that original community, and any Muslims who did not share it—especially the Sufis and Shi'ah—were put to the sword.

As Hamid Algar has pointed out, had it not been for the extraordinary circumstances under which Wahhabism emerged, it would undoubtedly have "passed into history as a marginal and short-lived

sectarian movement." Not only was this a spiritually and intellectually insignificant movement in a religion founded principally upon spiritualism and intellectualism, it was not even considered true orthodoxy by the majority of Sunni Muslims. Yet Wahhabism had two distinct advantages that would guarantee its place as the most important sectarian movement in Islam since the Penitents first gathered at Karbala a thousand years earlier. First, it had the good fortune to emerge in the sacred lands of the Arabian Peninsula, where it could lay claim to a powerful legacy of religious revivalism. Second, it benefited from a willing and eager patron who saw in its simple ideals the means of gaining unprecedented control over the region. That patron was Muhammad ibn Saud.

The facts of the alliance between Ibn Saud and Abd al-Wahhab have given way to legend. The two men first met as Abd al-Wahhab and his disciples were tearing through the Arabian Peninsula, demolishing tombs, cutting down sacred trees, and massacring any Muslim who did not accept their uncompromisingly puritanical vision of Islam. After being expelled from an oasis where they had received shelter (the horrified villagers demanded that Abd al-Wahhab leave after he publicly stoned a woman to death), they made their way toward the oasis of Dariyah and its Shaykh, Muhammad ibn Saud, who was more than happy to give Abd al-Wahhab and his holy warriors his unconditional protection.

"This oasis is yours," Ibn Saud promised; "do not fear your enemies."

Abd al-Wahhab replied with an unusual demand. "I want you to grant me an oath," he said, "that you will perform jihad against the unbelievers [non-Wahhabi Muslims]. In return you will be leader of the Muslim community, and I will be leader in religious matters."

Ibn Saud agreed, and an alliance was formed that would not only alter the course of Islamic history, it would change the geopolitical balance of the world. Abd al-Wahhab's holy warriors burst into the Hijaz, conquering Mecca and Medina and expelling the Sharif. Once established in the holy cities, they set about destroying the tombs of the Prophet and his Companions, including those pilgrimage sites that marked the birthplace of Muhammad and his family. They sacked the treasury of the Prophet's Mosque in Medina and set fire to every

book they could find, save the Quran. They banned music and flowers from the sacred cities and outlawed the smoking of tobacco and the drinking of coffee. Under penalty of death, they forced the men to grow beards and the women to be veiled and secluded.

The Wahhabis purposely connected their movement with the first extremists in the Muslim world, the Kharijites, and like their fanatical predecessors, they focused their wrath inward against what they considered to be the failings of the Muslim community. Thus, with the Hijaz firmly under their control, they marched north to spread their message to the Sufi and Shi'ite infidels. In 1802, on the holy day of Ashura, they scaled the walls of Karbala and massacred two thousand Shi'ite worshippers as they celebrated Muharram. In an uncontrolled rage, they smashed the tombs of Ali, Husayn, and the Imams, giving particular vent to their anger at the tomb of the Prophet's daughter, Fatima. With Karbala sacked, the Wahhabis turned north toward Mesopotamia and the heart of the Ottoman Empire. Only then did they get the attention of the Caliph.

In 1818, the Egyptian khedive, Muhammad Ali (1769–1849), at the behest of the Ottoman Caliph, sent a massive contingent of heavily armed soldiers into the Peninsula. The Egyptian army easily overwhelmed the ill-equipped and poorly trained Wahhabis. Mecca and Medina were once again placed under the care of the Sharif and the Wahhabists forcefully sent back into the Najd. By the time the Egyptian troops withdrew, the Saudis had learned a valuable lesson: they could not take on the Ottoman Empire on their own. They needed a far stronger alliance than the one they had with the Wahhabis.

The opportunity to form just such an alliance presented itself with the Anglo-Saudi Treaty in 1915. The British, who were eager to control the Persian Gulf, encouraged the Saudis to recapture the Arabian Peninsula from Ottoman control. To assist them in their rebellion, the British provided regular shipments of weapons and money. Under the command of Ibn Saud's heir Abd al-Aziz (1880–1953), the plan worked. At the close of the First World War, when the Ottoman Empire had been dismantled and the Caliphate abolished, ibn Saud reconquered Mecca and Medina and once again expelled the Sharif. After publicly executing forty thousand men and reimposing Wahhabism over the entire population, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud renamed the Arabian Peninsula "the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia." The primitive tribe of the Najd and their fundamentalist allies had become the Wardens of the Sanctuary, the Keepers of the Keys.

Almost immediately, the sacred land where Muhammad had received the gift of revelation miraculously burst forth with another gift from God—oil—giving the tiny Saudi clan sudden dominion over the world's economy. They now felt it was up to them to respond to this blessing from God by spreading their puritanical doctrine to the rest of the world and purging the Muslim faith once and for all of its religious and ethnic diversity.

The Muslim Brothers arrived in Saudi Arabia at an opportune time. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia remained the sole Muslim country in which the Ulama had not lost their grip over society. On the contrary, Saudi Arabia was both an utterly totalitarian and an uncompromisingly Wahhabist state. Here there was no debate between Modernists and Islamists; there was no debate whatsoever. Nationalism, Pan-Arabism, Pan-Islamism, Islamic socialism—none of these vibrant and influential movements in the Muslim world had a significant voice in the Saudi kingdom. The only doctrine that was tolerated was Wahhabi doctrine; the only ideology, Islamic fundamentalism. Any deviation was violently suppressed.

No wonder the Saudi monarchy viewed Nasser's secular nationalism as a direct threat to their way of life. As the man who defied the West by nationalizing the Suez Canal, Nasser had achieved near-mythic status not only in the Muslim world but in most other third-world countries. In the Middle East, Nasser embodied the last gasp of Pan-Arabism. His Arab socialist vision, though failing miserably in Egypt, was regarded by many Muslims as the sole alternative to the spread of Westoxification. So great was his charisma, and so successful his brutal suppression of opposition, that by the 1960s, his authority was unchallenged in every sector of Egyptian society.

Hoping to curb Nasser's growing influence in the Muslim world, the Saudi monarchy opened its arms to the radicalized Muslim Brothers—not just those who had been exiled from Egypt, but also those from other secular Arab states like Syria and Iraq. The Saudis offered

all the money, support, and security the Brothers needed to fight back against secular nationalism in their home countries. But the Muslim Brothers discovered more than shelter in Saudi Arabia. They discovered Wahhabism; and they were not alone. Hundreds of thousands of poor workers from all over the Muslim world began pouring into Saudi Arabia to work the oil fields. By the time they returned to their homes, they were fully indoctrinated in Saudi religiosity.

Religious adherence to the Saudi model became the prerequisite for receiving government subsidies and contracts. The vast sums the Saudis paid to various Muslim charities, the foundations they established, the mosques, universities, and primary schools they built—everything the Saudis did was inextricably linked to Wahhabism. In 1962, their missionary efforts gained momentum with the creation of the Muslim World League, whose primary goal was the spread of Wahhabi ideology to the rest of the Muslim world. This was, in effect, the new Islamic expansion, except that these tribal warriors did not need to leave the Arabian Peninsula to conquer their neighbors; their neighbors came to them. As Keepers of the Keys, the Saudis controlled the Hajj pilgrimage, to the chagrin of most Muslims who considered them little more than a crude band of unsophisticated fundamentalists. With billions of dollars spent to modernize and expand the pilgrimage festivities so as to ensure maximum participation, nearly a million Muslims inundate the bare Meccan valley every year.

Since the creation of the Muslim World League, the simplicity, certainty, and unconditional morality of Wahhabism have infiltrated every corner of the Muslim world. Thanks to Saudi evangelism, Wahhabi doctrine has dramatically affected the religio-political ideologies of the Muslim Brothers, Mawdudi's Islamic Association, the Palestinian Hamas, and Islamic Jihad, to name only a few groups. The Saudis have become the patrons of a new kind of Pan-Islamism: one based on the austere, uncompromising, and extremist ideology of Islamic fundamentalism, which has become a powerful voice in deciding the future of the Islamic state.

Of course, the problem with fundamentalism is that it is by definition a reactionary movement; it cannot remain tied to power. The Saudi kingdom discovered this from the very beginning when, sud-

denly flush with money, Abd al-Aziz ibn Saud began using his newfound wealth to build a life befitting a king. Soon Saudi Arabia was awash in modern technology bought from the West. The elaborate process of extracting oil from the desert required the presence of hundreds of foreign nationals—mostly British and American—who brought to Arabia an unfamiliar yet alluring culture of materialism. So close was Abd al-Aziz to the British Empire that he was even knighted by the Queen. In short, the king had been Westoxified and, as a result, turned his back on the Wahhabi warriors—now dubbed the *Ikhwan*, or "brothers" (not to be confused with the Muslim Brothers)—who had helped place him in power.

In 1929, the Ikhwan, angered by the greed and corruption of the Saudi court, launched a rebellion in the city of al-Salba. They demanded that the king renounce his materialism and expel the foreign infidels from the holy land. In response, Abd al-Aziz sent an army to al-Salba and massacred the Ikhwan.

However, Saudi Arabia quickly discovered what the rest of the world would soon learn. Fundamentalism, in all religious traditions, is impervious to suppression. The more one tries to squelch it, the stronger it becomes. Counter it with cruelty, and it gains adherents. Kill its leaders, and they become martyrs. Respond with despotism, and it becomes the sole voice of opposition. Try to control it, and it will turn against you. Try to appease it, and it will take control.

In 1991, during the Persian Gulf War to expel Saddam Hussein's Iraqi army from Kuwait, a small group of Saudi dissidents calling themselves *al-Qaeda* took up the original revolutionary ideology of Wahhabism and turned against the Saudi royal family, whom they considered to be a corrupt bunch of gluttonous degenerates who had sold the interests of the Muslim community to foreign powers. In true Kharijite fashion, al-Qaeda divided the Muslim world into "the People of Heaven" (themselves) and "the People of Hell" (everyone else).

The sinful actions of the Saudi princes have, in al-Qaeda's view, made them members of the latter group—apostates who must be punished by excommunication from the holy community of God. And it is not just the Saudi royal family that al-Qaeda has targeted. All Muslims whose interpretation of scripture and observance of the Shariah do

not fit in the Wahhabi model are considered infidels. Consequently, as al-Qaeda's founder, Osama bin Laden, has promised, "They shall be wiped out!"

Despite the tragedy of September 11 and the subsequent terrorist acts against Western targets throughout the world, despite the clash-of-civilizations mentality that has seized the globe and the clash-of-monotheisms reality underlying it, despite the blatant religious rhetoric resonating throughout the halls of governments, there is one thing that cannot be overemphasized. What is taking place now in the Muslim world is an internal conflict between Muslims, not an external battle between Islam and the West. The West is merely a bystander—an unwary yet complicit casualty of a rivalry that is raging in Islam over who will write the next chapter in its story.

All great religions grapple with these issues, some more fiercely than others. One need only recall Europe's massively destructive Thirty Years' War (1618–1648) between the forces of the Protestant Union and those of the Catholic League to recognize the ferocity with which interreligious conflicts have been fought in Christian history. In many ways, the Thirty Years' War signaled the end of the Reformation: perhaps the classic argument over who gets to decide the future of a faith. What followed that awful war during which nearly a third of the population of Germany perished was a gradual progression in Christian theology from the doctrinal absolutism of the pre-Reformation era to the doctrinal pluralism of the early modern period and, ultimately, to the doctrinal relativism of the Enlightenment. This remarkable evolution in Christianity from its inception to its Reformation took fifteen vicious, bloody, and occasionally apocalyptic centuries.

Fourteen hundred years of rabid debate over what it means to be a Muslim; of passionate arguments over the interpretation of the Quran and the application of Islamic law; of trying to reconcile a fractured community through appeals to Divine Unity; of tribal feuds, crusades, and world wars—and Islam has finally begun its fifteenth century.

10. Slouching Toward Medina

THE ISLAMIC REFORMATION

"IN THE NAME of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful," the IranAir pilot intones as our plane glides to a stop at Tehran's Mehrabad Airport. There is a nervous shifting in the seats around me. The women sit upright, adjusting their headscarves, making sure their ankles and wrists are properly covered, while their husbands rub the sleep from their eyes and begin gathering the belongings their children have scattered in the aisle.

I lift my head to look for the two or three faces I have been carefully observing since boarding the plane in London. They are the younger, single passengers on board, men and women who, like me, are in their late twenties or early thirties. They are dressed in ill-fitting clothes that look as though they were purchased in secondhand stores—awkward long-sleeved shirts; dull slacks; unadorned head scarves—all meant to appear as inoffensive as possible. I know this