

The History of How Religions Change.
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People on both ends of the political spectrum are stumbling around in their concern about Islam's future. On the conservative side is the belief that the West is at war with the Muslim world. This is true. The West is responding to Islamic radicalism's war against not only the West, but against secular Muslims themselves.

On the liberal side is the mistaken view that Islam is just a religion like other religions and given enough time will modernize. Islam is not just a religion; it is also a political ideology, and has been since its origin. The separation of Church and State that we now take for granted in the West is not accepted by Islamists at all. This is why we are seeing nation-states in the Arab world melting down, while Islamists take over, creating what they hope to become a super-Muslim empire called the Caliphate.

What makes many Muslim immigrants so dangerous in the modern West is not the basics of Islam, the benign "Five Pillars of the Faith," which require daily prayer, charity, a month of fasting, acknowledgement of the oneness of God, and a once-in-a-lifetime pilgrimage to the homeland of their faith. The danger comes from a revival movement to emulate the warlord phase of the Prophet Mohammad's life in the 7th century. All the violence, the fervor, the delusion of re-conquest, and rejection of modern human rights values, comes from Islam's religious texts.

This conflict was experienced in the Christian world in the 16th century too, and after all the bloodshed and violence, religion never regained its former power. During the early 16th century, several key events changed everything: the invention of the printing press, an increase in popular literacy, and the unwillingness of literate people to accept the Catholic Church's monopoly of religious interpretation. They could now read for themselves.

A German monk, Martin Luther, rebelled against Catholic practices. He left the church and had the Bible translated from Latin into the language of his country, German. In England, because of a disgruntled king who could not get a Catholic divorce from a queen who bore him no male heirs, he too left the church and established his own church. He also accepted a hitherto forbidden act, the translation of the Bible into English.

Readers of the Bible found no mention of nuns, monks, popes, indulgences, or any of the other institutions that formed the Catholic Church. They saw that Christianity was not the same as the institutional church. The resulting protest movements across Europe gave rise to Protestantism and a century of vicious religious wars over the future of Christianity. Catholic Spain responded with an Inquisition aimed at burning dissidents and demanding conformity. Protestant states, such as England, defended themselves by hunting down what they considered an internal Fifth Column, Catholic conspirators. Catholic France rounded up and murdered a rising tide of French Protestants.

Ultimately, religion as a compulsory institution, lost out. People could join or leave non-violent religious sects at will. The United States, founded on Enlightenment principles, was the first country to separate church and state because together they create bad religion and a worse state.

Islam, frozen in the 12th century, is going through the pain of modernization. Murderous Islamists reject the concept of voluntary religion. They demand uniformity of belief and practice, and reject all modern values except for bombs, bullets, communications, and modern medicine (including Viagra) for their leadership. But groups such as the Council of Ex-Muslims in Britain (CEMB) has been deluged with Tweets from tens of thousands of secret ex-Muslims around the world, too many for fanatics to kill for "apostasy."

Militant Islam is the world's enemy, not just the West's. Radicalized immigrants are a fifth column, doing damage to both secular Muslims and their host countries. For Muslims to thrive in the West (and hopefully in their own countries), they must make religion voluntary, putting loyalty to country ahead of loyalty to religion. Until "apostasy" no longer matters, there will be many more ex-Muslims. This is how a religion dies.

675 words

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