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THE CLASH OF TWO DECADENT CIVILIZATIONS: TOWARD AN HEBRAIC ALTERNATIVE

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Part I: The Decadence of Islam

Daniel Pipes, an admirer of Islam, would deny that Islam is decadent. Yet we read in his *Militant Islam Reaches America* (2002) the following assessment of the Islamic world:

Whatever index one looks at, Muslims can be found clustering toward the bottom, whether in terms of military prowess, political stability, economic development, corruption, lack of human rights, health, longevity, of literacy... Muslims also lag when one looks at the Nobel Prize winners, Olympic medalists, or any other or any other easily gauged international standard. There is a pervasive sense of debilitation... As a Muslim religious leader in Jerusalem put it, “Before we were masters of the world and now we are not even masters of our own mosques.”¹

This assessment appears to be confirmed by the Syrian army magazine, *Jaysh a-Sha`b* (The People’s Army), which, on April 25, 1967, published an article referring to Islam as one of the “mummies in the museums of history”.² And yet, this mummy, if intellectually dead, is otherwise alive. Sectarian strife, violence, insurrection, and terrorism erupt repeatedly throughout the Islamic world. This turbulence is described in a study of some 50 countries in which Muslims reside; and it matters not whether these Muslims constitute an overwhelming majority or only a tiny minority. The study was published in 1983 by Dr. Pipes.³ It makes no difference whether the Muslims are *Sunni* or *Shi`ite* Muslims, Arabs or non-Arabs, or even whether they are “fundamentalists”, “traditionalists”, “reformists”, or “secularists” – the story is the same.

The story was well known to the late Professor Yehoshafat Harkabi, a former head of Israel Military Intelligence. Writing before the Six-Day War of June 1967, Harkabi refers to Islam as a “combatant”, “expansionist”, and “authoritarian” creed. “The idea of the *jihad* ,” he says, “is fundamental in Islam,” in consequence of which “hatred”, “hostility”, and “conflict” are endemic to Arab culture.⁴ Intensifying this hostility, “There are many examples in Arab national literature of comparisons between the Arabs and other peoples, of self-glorification by denigration of others.”⁵ Moreover, and of

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profound significance for those seeking to make peace with any Arab regime, “the use of falsehood”, “distortions of the truth”, and “misleading slogans” are typical of Arab political life. Such is the Arab’s inordinate pride and aspirations that “defeats become victories, history is rewritten...and slogans for the future are endowed with hypnotic power.” Harkabi goes so far as to suggest that mendacity is “second nature” to the Arabs, that one may rightly regard “falsehood as an expression of [Arab] national character”. For support he quotes an Arab-born but liberated sociologist, Sonia Hamady: “Lying is a widespread habit among the Arabs, and they have a low idea of truth.”⁶

No wonder Western Orientalists (apologists aside) are sometimes disconcerted by the apparent lack of objectivity on the part of Muslim scholars concerning the *Qur`an* and the collection of (not entirely reliable) Reports, the Sunna, of what Muhammad said and did.⁷ All of these are included in Islamic law, the *Shari`ah*, which prescribes amputation of the hand for theft and enslaves half of humanity – women – wherever it reigns. No less significant, all four schools of Islamic law – *Hanafi*, *Hanbali*, *Shafi`i*, *Maliki* – agree that *jihad* commands offensive war against infidels. The Armenian genocide, perpetrated in the Anatolian and Arab provinces of the Turkish Empire (1915-1917), was programmed by *Shari`ah* laws decreed in the eighth century and still not revoked.⁸

Hence it is all the more astonishing that even Western-educated Muslims (with an exception to be mentioned later) ignore the violent and bloody character of Islamic history, now thoroughly documented by Bat Ye`or in *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations Collide*. These educated Muslims (and their numerous apologists among American academics⁹) emphasize the “tolerant” and “peace-loving” nature of Islam and describe the Muslim treatment of non-Muslims in idyllic terms.¹⁰ They write about Islam and Islamic history in utter disregard for factuality; they live, as it were, in a dream world intoxicated by their own illusions.¹¹ But meanwhile many people in the West and not a few in Israel have also succumbed to illusions – to put it kindly. Pipes writes:

Westerners, and some Israelis, tend to discount the anti-Israel vitriol of Arab leaders as so much rhetoric. “These are only words”, is how Shimon Peres puts it: “Let them talk.” Others take refuge in the belief that the populations over which demagogues preside are rather more pacifically disposed. As [former President] Jimmy Carter has remarked, “the Arab people need and want peace.” But if anything, the opposite appears to be the case: quite a few Arab dictators show greater flexibility in their thinking than do their subjects.

In the topsy-turvy world of Middle East politics, peace depends largely on Arab despots who keep popular passions in check; but even in this region of autocracy, populations ultimately have their way (as will be shown in a moment).

Pipes asks, “What accounts for this seemingly permanent enmity?” and answers:

Historical memory is one source, fed by the belief that once a land has been conquered and settled by Muslims, it becomes part of an inalienable Islamic patrimony [the *umma*], its loss a robbery that one day must be made good. Three full centuries after the whole of Spain fell to Christians in 1492, Muslims continued actively to dream of a restoration; in Muslim eyes, writes the distinguished scholar Bernard Lewis, this was Islamic ground, “wrongfully taken...and destined to be returned”. Where Israel is concerned, there are two further insults: not only the possession by an alien people of sacred Islamic places in Jerusalem, but their possession by Jews, a historically impotent group now insufferably powerful.

Together, the role of historical memory and the passionate intensity of Arab political feeling may account for the special volatility of the Arab political sphere, in which even the most drastic actions – annihilating a state and scattering or killing its people – *have long been accepted as commonplaces*. The Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem, established by the medieval Crusaders, was destroyed in the 12th century and its subjects were dispersed, an accomplishment *that still serves as a model for modern Arabs*.¹²

That the author of these revealing passages should now deny, after September 11, a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West, is mystifying, more so because he knows very well that *neither personal nor political freedom appears in the Arabic lexicon*.¹³ This obscurantism is also dangerous, for it minimizes the enormous challenge confronting the West – especially Israel, surrounded as it is by Arab-Islamic regimes. Turn, therefore, to a novelist, who, unlike academics and journalists, has a license to write candidly about ugly things.

In his 1985 novel, *The Haj*, Leon Uris has the famous Orde Wingate say:

...every last Arab is a total prisoner of his society. The Jews will eventually have to face up to what you're dealing with here. The Arabs will never love you for what good you've brought them. They don't know how to really love. But hate! Oh God, can they hate! And they have a deep, deep, deep resentment because you [Jews] have jolted them from their delusion of grandeur and shown them for what they are – a decadent, savage people controlled by a religion that has stripped them of all human ambition...except for the few cruel enough and arrogant enough to command them as one commands a mob of sheep. You [Jews] are dealing with a mad society and you'd better learn how to control it.

The novel's central character, Haj Ibrahim, confides to a Jewish friend:

During the summer heat my people become frazzled... They are pent up. They must explode. Nothing directs their frustration like Islam. Hatred is holy in this part of the world. It is also eternal... You [Jews] do not know how to deal with us. For years, decades, we may seem to be at peace with you, but always in the back of our minds we keep up the hope of vengeance. No dispute is ever really settled in our world. The Jews give us a special reason to continue warring.

Uris has the cultured Dr. Mudhil elaborate:

We [Arabs] do not have leave to love one another and we have long ago lost the ability. It was so written twelve hundred years earlier. Hate is our overpowering legacy and we have regenerated ourselves by hatred from decade to decade, generation to generation, century to century. The return of the Jews has unleashed that hatred, exploding it wildly... In ten, twenty, thirty years the world of Islam will begin to consume itself in madness. We cannot live with ourselves...we never have. We are incapable of change.

Later in the novel (as if he were commenting on what Genesis 16:12 says of the descendents of Ishmael) Mudhil remarks:

Islam is unable to live at peace with anyone... One day our oil will be gone, along with our ability to blackmail. We have contributed nothing to human betterment in centuries, unless you consider the assassin and the terrorist as human gifts.

Some pundits may call Uris a “racist”. They lack the novelist's sensitive but clear-headed understanding of Arab culture. Unlike apologists, Uris appreciates the tragedy of a few insightful Arabs who know they are trapped in the decadence of a savage culture, which Bat Ye'or calls “A Culture of Hate”.¹⁴

* * *

What happens to a culture in which hate is a chronic principle? When that principle gains ascendancy, as it has in Islam, it tends to close the Muslim's mind. It breeds intolerance.¹⁵ It precludes self-criticism and undermines any incentive to understand and learn from non-Muslims. Contrast Judaism. Kindness (*Hesed*) is a fundamental Jewish principle. Although we shall plumb the depths of this principle later, suffice to say for the present that kindness prompts the Jew not only to help, but to understand and learn from non-Jews. It therefore enlarges his mind and makes him tolerant toward

others. Accordingly, whereas Jews speak of righteous Gentiles whose place in heaven is assured, Muslims designate as evil everything that is not Islam and consigns all infidels to hell (something Muhammad may have learned from Christians).

Not that Muslims have not borrowed from the West. From time to time various Muslim states have adopted certain Western laws and institutions, but these borrowings cannot be logically and psychologically integrated into an Islamic country without profound changes in the *Shari`ah* as well as in the cultural mentality of the Muslim masses. Bernard Lewis puts it this way:

The Egyptian constitution, for example, was adapted after that of Belgium and provided for a limited parliamentary monarchy. When things went badly wrong, Egyptians very naturally judged parliamentary institutions not by the Belgian or other Western European originals, but by the local imitation administered by King Faruq and the pashas.¹⁶

Faruq was overthrown by the Free Officers Society in 1952. A military dictatorship was eventually established under Gamal Abdal Nasser, who held that the Egyptian masses were not ready for democratic institutions. Apparently, they remain unprepared to this day. Lewis ruefully remarks that attempts at modernization in the lands of Islam (apart from Turkey) have “left a string of shabby tyrannies, ranging from traditional autocracies to new-style dictatorships, modern only in their apparatus of repression and indoctrination.”¹⁷

The West’s parliamentary institutions simply clash with 14 centuries of political autocracy on the part of Muslim rulers on the one hand, and of religious thralldom on the part of the Muslim masses on the other. In fact, this religious thralldom is more impervious to change than political autocracy. Hence, no Muslim ruler should be expected to institute a “Protestant Reformation” that would make parliamentary institutions viable.¹⁸ Bernard Lewis cites an interesting example that took place in Tunisia in 1960:

President Habib Bourguiba put forward the interesting idea that the month-long fast of Ramada, with the resulting loss of work and production, was a luxury that a poor and developing country could not afford. For a Muslim ruler simply to abolish or disallow a major prescription of the holy law is unthinkable. What President Bourguiba did was to try to justify its abolition in terms of the holy law itself. This law allows a Muslim to break the fast if he is on a campaign in a holy war, or *jihad*. Bourguiba argued that a developing country was in a state of *jihad* and that the struggle to obtain economic independence by development was comparable with a defensive war for national independence. In pursuit of this argument he proposed to abolish the rules whereby restaurants, cafes, and other public places were closed by day and by night during the month of Ramadan and oblige them to keep normal hours. In support of this new interpretation of the law, he tried to obtain a *fatwa*, a ruling, from the mufti of Tunis and other religious authorities. The religious authorities refused to give him what he wanted. The great mass of the people observed the fast despite the president’s dispensation, and Bourguiba was finally compelled to beat a more or less graceful retreat. Even an autocratic socialist head of state, in pursuit of so worthy an end as economic development, could not set aside a clear ruling of the holy law.¹⁹

No wonder various Orientalists maintain that the *Shari`ah* has become a patchwork of petrified laws and contradictions resulting from the haphazard borrowings of Western legal systems.²⁰ Muslims devoted to the *Shari`ah* find it exceedingly difficult to adapt this body of antiquated law to the demands of the modern, technological society. “The *Qur`an* is inadequate as a basis for legislation,” said Nilufer Narli, a professor of sociology at the Boazici University in Istanbul.²¹

Here it should be noted that Islamic law does not recognize corporate legal persons: there are no Islamic equivalents to such Western entities as the business corporation, the trade union, the professional association, the college, the church, the political party. (This is why Muslim states lack “civil society” – those sources of initiative and independence that can check the ever-encroaching power of the state, especially a state governed by the *Shari`ah*.²²)

To compound the confusion, whereas the Libyan government lashes all adulterers, Pakistan lashes unmarried offenders and stones married ones. And while the Sudan imprisons some and hangs others, Iran adds other punishments, including banishment.²³

And so the Islamic world is in disarray. Quite apart from the age-old conflicts between *Sunni*, *Shi`ite*, and *Sufi* Muslims, the *Shari`ah* has been put into partial practice only in the most conservative states – Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the Sudan. Because it has been ignored or has less than paramount authority, the *Shari`ah* has engendered civil war in Algeria and has placed Egypt under the constant threat of terror by the Muslim Brotherhood. (We shall have more to say about the *Shari`ah* in Saudi Arabia later.)

While Western students of Islam speak of the archaic nature of Islamic law, hardly any go to the fundamental cause of its obsolescence, namely, this: ***the Shari`ah is not rooted in the infinite wisdom of God, for only a body of laws so rooted can enable jurists to reconcile permanence and change.*** Which means that the decadence of Islam is the inevitable consequence of its not being based on divine revelation – and ***this is the ultimate reason for Islam's hatred not only of the West, but of modernity, which places the divinity of the Qur`an in question.***²⁴

Contrary to what may be gleaned from legions of Orientalists, it may well be that what most infuriates believers and impels them to slaughter or subjugate or degrade or convert unbelievers is the dim and discomfiting awareness that their holy of holies is not all that it pretends to be. Perhaps this, more than anything else, prevents them from appropriating, without turmoil, the blessings modernity has to offer mankind.

Actually, modernization has occurred in much of the Islamic world, but without any conceptual framework. Modernization has occurred through the influence of the cinema, music, clothing, satellite antennas, that is, through the globalization of culture (largely American). The trouble is that while modernity intrudes into the Muslim's daily life, it has also frustrated attempts to make the *Shari`ah* a living and coherent system of law. Olivier Roy writes:

The masses who follow the Islamists...live with the values of the modern city...they left behind the old forms of conviviality, respect for elders and for consensus, when they left their villages. These followers are fascinated by the values of consumerism, imparted by the shop windows of the large metropolises; they live in a world of movie theaters, cafes, jeans, video, and sports...²⁵

The contradictions with the *Shari`ah* arouse two fundamentalist reactions:

One...is the tendency that is ever setting the reformer, the censor, and the tribunal against the corruption of the times and of sovereigns, against foreign influence, political opportunism, moral laxity, and the forgetting of sacred texts. The other tendency, more recent...is that of anti-colonialism, of anti-imperialism, which today has simply become anti-Westernism – from Cairo to Tehran... The targets are...foreign banks, night clubs, local governments accused of complacency toward the West.²⁶

These contradictions not only arouse hatred between diverse fundamentalists and diverse reformists, but it makes all these factions more conscious of and hostile toward the West – the *bette noir* of intra-Muslim conflict.

Roy distinguishes between “fundamentalists” and “neo-fundamentalists”. Fundamentalists, usually called “Islamists”, have in many respects been Westernized. They would apply the *Shari`ah* to the political space – the state, the economy, urbanization, etc. They deem the state a necessary condition for believers to achieve complete virtue. Here they are trapped in a vicious cycle, for as Roy observes, the state they envision presupposes the complete virtue of its members.²⁷ As for the neo-fundamentalists, they would shrink the space of the *Shari`ah* to the family and the mosque.

To avoid a common misunderstanding, it should be noted that Islamic fundamentalists, unlike their Christian namesakes, embrace not only their Scripture, the *Qur'an*, but also their post-*Qur'anic* traditions, including the *Shari'ah*, which is their primary concern.²⁸ Nevertheless, the *Qur'an* is sacrosanct even among Muslim reformists; in fact, it continues to endow Muslim secularists with cultural pride and identity. Roy offers stunning proof:

The [1991 Persian] Gulf War showed that even among secular, Westernized, and “democratic” Muslim intellectuals [who reject the *Shari'ah*] there was a conscious choice, whether tortured or enthusiastic, in favor of Saddam Hussein, who all agreed was a dictator...a bad Muslim.²⁹

What animated their support of Hussein (despite his having violated one of the strongest taboos of inter-Arab politics by invading Kuwait, a friendly Arab state) is a

profound, pervasive, and passionate hatred of the West and all it represents, as a world power, as an ideology, as a way of life... It is a hatred so deep that it has led those who feel it to rally to any plausible enemy of the West – even a racist like Hitler who despised Arabs, [and] an atheist like Stalin who suppressed Islam...³⁰

Again we see that Muslims are trapped in a “culture of hate”.

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Let us now make explicit the following facts. The *Shari'ah* cannot tolerate the segmentation of society that results from the separation of religion and state – the private groups and institutions that intervene between the state and the family. Nor can it tolerate the fragmentation of the *umma*, the worldwide Islamic community, which is divided into more than fifty sovereign nation-states.

Neither fundamentalists nor reformists have developed any political philosophy to deal with these disturbing facts, for which they are all too ready to blame on the West. Animated by hatred, they harbor a murderous desire for revenge against Europe's former colonialism and America's present hegemony in *Dar al-Islam*. The terrorist bombing of the Twin Towers in New York and of the Bali nightclub in Indonesia – symbols of Western mastery and secularity – was not the first manifestation of this hatred.³¹

Whatever Islam's achievements, its rulers and believers have been slaughtering and oppressing men, women, and children in the name of Allah from its very inception. `Abdallah Laroui (1933-), a professor of history in Rabat, admits that

...the Caliph, even in the brilliant periods of Muslim empire, governed according to his own good pleasure; conquered people were persecuted; the state had no other end than the exploitation of subject populations...it was a reign of violence, fear, the unlimited power of one, and the slavery of all. The Caliph, shadow of God on earth, respected neither the life nor property of his subjects, and his violence, punctuated by brief and bloody revolts, resembled that of all who ruled over the ancient land of Asia.³²

It could not be otherwise given *Qur'anic* doctrine and Islam's military success in history. The empire Islam established within a hundred years of Muhammad – an empire that crossed three continents – involved the subjugation of an untold number of Christian, Jewish, Persian, and Buddhist communities. This history of bloodshed is viewed by Muslims as a validation of Muhammad's revelation. This is why Islam, unlike Judaism and Christianity, has always been preoccupied with military power and success.

But today the Muslim's overweening pride, his sense of cultural superiority, and his confidence in Allah's reward of the faithful has been shattered by Western dominance. This dominance casts doubt

on the truth of Muhammad's revelation and therefore alarms as well as infuriates the Muslim soul.³³ For the traditional Muslim, religion provides not only universal significance; it also constitutes the ultimate basis of and focus of his identity and group loyalty.³⁴ Islamic hatred of the West must therefore be understood in metaphysical as well as in political and psychological terms.

This hatred may be veiled among Muslim "moderates", or it may explode in the rage of Muslim "extremists". One thing is clear: the barbarism perpetrated on September 11 was gleefully celebrated in the Muslim street throughout Islamdom. That gruesome display makes the distinction between "moderates" and "extremists" problematic. Bernard Lewis writes:

Even when Muslims cease believing in Islam, they may retain Islamic habits and attitudes. Thus, among Muslim Marxists, there have been both ulema [doctors of law] and dervishes [popular mystics] defending the creed and proclaiming the (revolutionary) holy war against the (imperialist) infidel... Even when the faith dies, loyalty survives; even when loyalty fades, the old identity, and with it a complex of old attitudes and desires, remains, as the only reality under the superficial, artificial covering of new values and ideologies.³⁵

It follows from the preceding that many "moderates" may be or become quiescent "extremists". Daniel Pipes suggests as much when he quotes the following spokesmen: (1) Algerian secularist Said Sadi: "A moderate Islamist is someone who does not have the means of acting ruthlessly to seize power immediately." (2) Osmane Bencherif, former Algerian ambassador to Washington: "It is misguided policy to distinguish between moderate and extreme Islamists. The goal of all is the same: to construct a pure Islamic state, which is bound to be a theocracy and totalitarian." (3) Mohammad Mohaddessin, director of international relations for the People's Mojahadin in Iran, a leading opposition force: "Moderate fundamentalists do not exist... It's like talking about a moderate Nazi."³⁶ Although these statements refer to "Islamists" and "fundamentalists", these labels refer to the Islam of the *Qur'an* and *Shari'ah*. As Henri Boulad, an Egyptian Jesuit, and a specialist in Islam, states in an article, "*L'Islamisme, c'est l'Islam*" (Islamism is Islam):

This statement is perfectly consistent with history and geography, with the Koran and the sunna, with the life of Muhammad and the evolution of Islam, with what Islam says about itself. I reject the position of people – Muslims or Christians – who bury their heads in the sand like ostriches...refuse to see the situation objectively, or take their wishes for realities, on behalf of dialogue and tolerance.³⁷

Islamism is a cauldron of seething hatred born in Islam. Dr. Pipes presciently warned in 1983:

Keeping Muslim citizens tranquil in *Dar al-Harb* requires constant vigilance... Too much tolerance or too much strictness spells trouble... The "political indigestibility" of Muslim subjects makes them a permanent source of concern to non-Muslim rulers.³⁸

It would be misleading to conclude, however, as do complacent American commentators, that the destruction of the Twin Towers and the attack on the Pentagon were motivated merely by envious hatred of America's material wealth and power. Muslims disdain and fear American secularism and commercial imperialism, which they see spreading throughout the world and which they regard as an attempt to undermine the Islamic way of life.³⁹ They view America as the "Great Satan", the great Tempter. They not only regard America as decadent but they also dream of America's destruction as a means of restoring Islam's former glory. What they cannot accept, of course, is their own decadence.

The Islamist and neo-fundamentalist attempts to overcome this decadence are doomed to failure. Olivier Roy explains:

First of all, Islamization will mean the destruction of the social space between the state and the family. The Islamic society to which neo-fundamentalism refers never existed... What the Islamists advocate is not the return to an incomparably rich classical age, but the establishment of an empty stage on which the

believer strives to realize with each gesture the ethical model of the Prophet. The only place for conviviality here is the family, which is also, but only for men, the only place of pleasure...

What new urban space [can Islamism offer]? We see it in Saudi Arabia. It is an empty space, with neither cinemas nor cafes, only teahouses and restaurants. The streets are patrolled by religious militia, responsible only for enforcing good behavior and imposing religious practice (prayer and fasting). The only space for retreat is the family. But these are no longer the families of the rural world, in which women participate in the work and there is a popular, living culture. The modern family is mainly a place of consumption: television, videos, and so on. The Islamists will never stop the flow of this consumption, precisely because the *Shari`ah* protects family privacy. And what is circulating in the urban family is the opposite of the Islamic way of life: it is the product of the West.⁴⁰

There is no Islamist “culture”, and it is futile to blame the West for this decadence. Islamic civilization declined long, long ago. “It has been a long time,” says Roy,

...since Christianity was Islam’s other... The culture that threatens Muslim society is neither Jewish nor Christian; it is a world culture of consumption and communication, a culture that is secular, atheist, and ultimately empty...⁴¹

True, but this “culture” was spawned by the West.

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No one learned in the classics and in Nietzsche will deny the decadence of the West, whose relativism permeates legions of half-educated intellectuals.⁴² To speak of the decadence of a world religion, however, is a more delicate matter. But inasmuch as Islam has become the seedbed of international terrorism, and seeing that Muslims, including women and children, have been dispatched as human bombs to murder unbelievers, only to be exalted as holy martyrs throughout Islamdom, it is hard to escape the conclusion that Islam has become a descent into depravity and may well be in its death throes. Born in violence, this militant creed, in its pathological hatred of the West, is now destroying itself, indeed, has become a death cult.

Can it be that the dogmatic absolutism of Islam is precisely what is necessary to bring to an end the equally dogmatic relativism of the West? Can it be that Islamic hatred is the antidote to the indifferentism of the West born of that relativism?

Part II: The Decadence of the West

Relativism will be the epitaph on the gravestone of the West. Ironically, the prevalence of relativism is largely a consequence of the West’s greatest intellectual achievement: mathematical physics. The West is trapped in a fundamental dilemma. On the one hand, it regards mathematical physics as the paradigm of knowledge. On the other hand, mathematical physics can tell us nothing about how man should live. The reduction of science to quantitative analysis renders it incapable of telling us anything about the rich, qualitative world of sense-perception and human values. Unlike classical and medieval science, modern science discards all considerations based on aesthetic and ethical principles. Distinctions between the beautiful and the obscene, the good and the bad, collapse into mere emotions or subrational forces. In other words, the discovery of mathematical laws of nature automatically implies the subjectivity and relativity of everything not susceptible to exact measurement. Welcome to relativism.

Although Nietzsche was a relativist, he recognized that relativism is symptomatic of decadence. His paradoxical position may be summarized as follows: Relativism is true but deadly, therefore relativism is false! Why? Because relativism stifles any incentive to pursue a world-historical goal, a psychological precondition of which is belief in the absolute worth of that goal. In other words, relativism undermines the will to creativity on a monumental scale. Hence relativism is deadly, contrary to Life – logically true but existentially false, for Life transcends logic.

Relativism is also a product of democracy whose cardinal principles, freedom and equality, lack ethical and rational constraints. The West boasts of democracy, ignorant of how it constitutes a basic cause of western decadence. I define decadence as a retreat from life to death resulting from an inability to confront evil, since evil itself is linked to death. “I have placed before you today life and good, and death and evil...” (Deut. 30:15). To confront evil one must first recognize its existence and then be committed to its eradication. Whether a nation influenced by moral relativism can succeed in a protracted conflict with evil is questionable.

Despite the evidence presented in Part I, various spokesmen in the democratic world deny the existence of a civilizational clash between the West and Islam. To acknowledge such a clash one would then be confronted by the question of whether Western civilization is preferable to Islamic civilization. One might even have to face the question of whether Islam has become a vehicle of evil. But such questions are precluded if one is tainted, however subtly or unconsciously, by relativism.

The intrepid Daniel Pipes has assembled a wealth of information confirming the clash of civilizations that he denies. To minimize the appearance of such a clash, Dr. Pipes states in the preface to the 2002 reprinting of his 1983 book, **In the Path of God: Islam and Political Power**, that “militant Islam [is] best understood not as a religion but as a political ideology.” To the contrary, Islam has always been a political ideology. The late and learned Ayatollah Khomeini observed that

...the *Qur`an* contains a hundred times more verses concerning social problems than on devotional subjects. Out of fifty books of Muslim tradition there are perhaps three or four which deal with prayer or with man’s duties towards God, a few on morality, and all the rest have to do with society, economics, law, politics and the state...

“Islam,” according to the same authority, “is political or it is nothing.”⁴³

As the very subtitle of Pipes’ book – *Islam and Political Power* – suggests, and as its content makes obvious:

However much institutions, attitudes, and customs have changed, the Muslim approach to politics derives from the invariant premises of the religion and from fundamental themes established more than a millennium ago.⁴⁴

Surely the most conspicuous theme of that religion, manifested throughout Islamic history, is none other than *jihad* – as Pipes himself demonstrates in a November 2002 article critical of American professors who deny this doctrinal and existential fact!⁴⁵ To contend that Islam and the West are not involved in a clash of civilizations when the former is steeped in absolutism, while the latter is mired in relativism, is a dangerous caution symptomatic of declining confidence in the absolute justice of one’s cause. Relativism and decadence have many shades and degrees.

Benjamin Netanyahu denied a clash of civilizations in the Middle East when he addressed a joint session of Congress shortly after his becoming Israel’s Prime Minister in 1996. Although both Pipes and Netanyahu may be concerned about the canard of “racism”, one may suspect additional motives in the case of Mr. Netanyahu. Like most politicians, Netanyahu has long been engaged in the soporific “rhetoric of peace”, which compels him to project the illusion of “peaceful coexistence” between the Jewish state and its autocratic Islamic neighbors. This illusion would be dispelled were he to admit of

a clash of civilizations; for then, instead of a politics of anesthesia, he would have to face the reality of evil, be committed to its *eventual* destruction, and design a strategy to hasten this objective.

Muslims have never had any doubts about the conflict between Islam and the West. As previously implied, they have always divided the world into the territory of *Dar al-Islam*, where Islam reigns, and the territory of *Dar al-Harb*, where infidels reign, but which the *Shari`ah* requires Muslims to conquer in the name of Allah. Hasan al-Banna (1906-1949) of Egypt writes:

The Western way of life – bounded in effect on practical and technical knowledge, discovery, invention, and the flooding of world markets with mechanical products – has remained incapable of offering to man’s minds a flicker of light, a ray of hope, a grain of faith, or providing anxious persons the smallest path toward rest and tranquility.⁴⁶

A leading Egyptian journalist, Muhammad Sid-Ahmed, said in 1994: “There are unmistakable signs of a growing clash between the Judeo-Christian Western ethic and the Islamic revival movement, which is now stretching from the Atlantic in the west to China in the east.”⁴⁷ A prominent Indian Muslim predicted in 1992 that the West’s “next confrontation is definitely going to come from the Muslim world. It is in the sweep of the Islamic nations...that the struggle for a new world order will begin.”⁴⁸

Samuel Huntington comments:

On occasion in the past, Muslim leaders did tell their people: “We must Westernize.” If any Muslim leader has said that in the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, he is a lonely figure. Indeed, it is hard to find statements by any Muslims, whether politicians, officials, academics, businesspersons, or journalists, praising Western values and institutions. They instead stress the differences between their civilization and Western civilization, the superiority of their culture, and the need to maintain the integrity of that culture against Western onslaught... They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent, and immoral... Increasingly, Muslims attack the West not for adhering to an imperfect, erroneous religion...but for not adhering to any religion at all. In Muslim eyes, Western secularism, irreligiosity, and hence immorality are worse than the Western Christianity that produced them.⁴⁹

Huntington has been criticized for having a monolithic view of Islamic civilization. After all, there are Iranian, African, and Indonesian variations of Islam, each representing an autonomous cultural dimension. Nevertheless, the clash between Islam and the West is obvious, as Bernard Lewis made explicit three years before Huntington’s 1993 essay “A Clash of Civilizations?” appeared in *Foreign Affairs*. Where Huntington errs is in his identifying the “West” with “Western civilization”. I shall return to this issue later, as well as to his provocative statement that **Western Christianity produced Western secularism and irreligiosity**. Here I merely want to emphasize Huntington’s candid statement that Muslim hatred of the West will be found not only among fundamentalists but also among those whom many in the West (like Daniel Pipes) would regard as “moderates”.

This said, we can now reveal an unknown reason for the Muslim hatred of the West, one relevant to the decadence of Zionism. Thus, under the date line January 9, 1930, the Cairo newspaper *al-Fatah* (note the name) makes the following remark about European colonizers:

The real danger approaches us from the spiritual war that Europe is methodically conducting against the spirit of the Orientals in general and of Muslims in particular, with the aid of its philosophical books, its novels, its theaters and films, and its language. The aim of this concerted action is of a psychological nature – *to cut off the Oriental peoples from their past*.⁵⁰

Without a past there is no history; without a history there is no cultural or national identity. The loss of cultural identity is precisely what Muslims so much fear and hate about the West. Notice, however, that what foreign colonialists had allegedly done in Egypt is exactly what ultra-secular Jews have in fact been doing to their own people in Israel: *depriving them of cultural or national identity*. They have sought to deJudaize public education in Israel and to transform the Jewish state into a “state of its

citizens”. If these ultra-secularists were to succeed, so that Israel did indeed become a “state of its citizens”, then this irreligious state could become an even greater threat to Islamic civilization – reason for Muslims to strive for Israel’s destruction!

Israel’s ruling elites have willfully refused to acknowledge the clash of civilizations described by Lewis and Huntington. They live in a constant state of denial. No matter how often Jewish women and children are murdered by Arab Muslims, no matter how much Jews and Israel are vilified in the Arab-Islamic media – including Egypt’s – they refuse to take Islam seriously as a murderous religion whose adherents are dedicated to Israel’s annihilation. They close their eyes to the fact that Israel’s rebirth and independence and ascendancy constitute a violation of Islamic doctrine, a trespass on Islamic territory, an assault on Islamic pride, hence an intolerable provocation and outright challenge to every Islamic leader. Thus, in a lecture sponsored by the Arab League in Cairo, `Abd al-Rahman al-Bazzaz, Professor of Law at the University of Baghdad, who later became Iraq’s Prime Minister, declared:

The existence of Israel nullifies the unity of our homeland, the unity of our nation and the unity of our civilization, which embraces the whole of this one region [*Dar al-Islam*]. Moreover, the existence of Israel is a flagrant challenge to our philosophy of life and the ideals for which we live, and a total barrier against the values and aims to which we aspire in the world.⁵¹

Israel is viewed by Muslims as an outpost of the West, the bearer of all the evils mentioned by Huntington, to which add the West’s contempt for the past and its denial of trans-historical truths and values. The clash between the West and Islamic civilization hinges on this point: the historical relativism of the West makes history meaningless and purposeless. Thus Shimon Peres, who wants Israel to be a “state of its citizens”, could make the mindless and egotistical statement: “I have become totally tired of history, because I feel history is a long misunderstanding.” For Muslims (as well as for Christians and observant Jews), absolute truth was revealed at a supreme moment in history and endowed human life with meaning and purpose.

But now I must correct Huntington’s misleading impression that the West and Western civilization are synonymous. Western civilization is a thing of the past: it has succumbed to multiculturalism and feminism.⁵² The Great Books of Western civilization are disappearing from university curriculums, and, with this, the idea of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful. A senseless drive for equality dominates academia where the Bible, classical Greek philosophy, Shakespeare, Black studies, gay history, and “rap” music are just texts with equally valid perspectives.

While universities also treat feminism as a major contribution to knowledge, feminist organizations attack some of the basic values and ideas of Western civilization. They support not only all abortion rights including partial-birth abortion, but also lesbian rights, gay rights, and same sex marriages. This permissiveness, together with the removal of women from the home to the workplace – the result of careerism and of sheer economic necessity – has had pernicious consequences for the family and society. As Aristotle understood, it is in the family where children are taught self-control and concern for others. It is in the family where they learn modesty, honesty, and respect for authority. These virtues they later manifest as adults in society at large. Of the many forces disintegrating the family, not the least is feminism. The family, however, is the heart of the Great Tradition.

The decline of the Great Tradition has brought in its wake a depressing vulgarity and mediocrity. No longer are the thoughts of statesmen influenced by the ideas of Plato and Aristotle, or their speeches by the oratory of Demosthenes and Cicero. (Political oratory has been reduced to spin.) No longer does the Old Testament with its eternal verities and examples of great men inspire the West. The Great Tradition, which inspired Lincoln and Churchill, has receded into the background. In the absence of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful, what else can motivate men but a paltry egoism? Indeed, this all-too-human tendency has been sanctified by the social sciences. These disciplines are preoccupied not with greatness, but with measuring and predicting the behavior of the common man.

The seed of this decay was planted by Machiavelli, the father of democracy and the founder of modern political science.⁵³ For Machiavelli, all the emotions, including love, are self-regarding. Hence egoism or self-interest is the motivating principle of politics.

As is well known, Machiavelli separated morality from politics. If morality is defined as acting from a motive larger than self-interest, the separation of morality and politics logically follows. But to separate morality from politics is to sever morality from the laws of the state. The laws of the state will then serve the interests of those who control the state – in a democracy, the elected representatives of the people. Let us be clear on this point: If self-interest is the motivating principle of politics, the representatives of the people, who supposedly serve the people’s interests, will do so only when those interests coincide with their own. All talk about the “public interest” or the “common good” will be nothing more than a façade that politicians employ to conceal their own personal interests. The façade was dissipated long ago. Cynicism reigns, especially among students who have been taught in the social sciences that egoism is the paramount principle of human behavior, as Machiavelli laid down five centuries ago.

It required centuries to undo the teachings of the Great Tradition, a tradition that took its bearing on what is noble, on the highest goals of human life. Not that egoism was ever absent from the affairs of men. But a political science that takes its bearing on what is base or ordinary cannot but lower the goals of human life. The hedonism of the West is to be understood in this light. Machiavelli, the father of modernity, is also the father of its decay.

Modernity has metamorphosed into post-modernism. The secular humanism of which the Renaissance boasted has been stripped of ethical content. The distinction between the human and the subhuman has all but vanished. How ironic that Islam should assault the West with human bombs!

* * *

The decline of the West obviously implicates Christianity, one of the pillars of Western civilization. There are three aspects of Christianity that need to be noted. First, the Christian precepts “love your enemies”, “resist not evil”, and “turn the other cheek” mark Christianity as an apolitical religion, in contrast to Islam, emphatically a political religion from the outset. (Muhammad founded and governed a political regime, promulgated laws, commanded armies, etc.) Second, Christianity portrays itself as a religion of love, which can hardly be said of Islam. (However, the Christian massacre and torture of Jews, especially during the Crusades and the Inquisition, places in question the Christian concept of love, of which more later.) Third, unlike Islam with its *Shari`ah*, Christianity is antinomian. This third point needs to be elaborated.

Strange as it may seem, Christian antinomianism is a basic cause of secularism in the West (as Huntington cryptically implies). By jettisoning the Talmud, the Church had to adopt and, at the same time, desacralize the partially religious but pagan laws of Rome if Christianity were to survive and be accepted in the pagan world. By limiting itself primarily to “spiritual” matters, Christianity leaves its adherents subject to the shifting laws of the state; and of course the laws of one state may not only contradict those of another, but they may also foster irreligion and thus clash with Christianity.

The separation of Christian morality and public law in the West deprived the law of any sanctity and authority while depriving morality of the support of law. The consequence is evident throughout Europe and America – rampant immorality and lawlessness.

Meanwhile, the separation of Christian morality and public law has made Christianity less and less relevant to the daily social and economic activities of men. As for the behavior of so-called Christian

nations, like all nations, they are animated by economic interests and the lust for power and prestige. Their moralistic professions are sheer hypocrisy. Thus, while individual Christians may be pious, the nations of which they are citizens are often quite vicious. Ponder these words of Rabbi Isaac Breuer, one of the great Jewish philosophers of the twentieth century:

Christianity addresses itself directly and solely to the individual in complete disregard of nations and of their role as basic elements of history. To the suffering individual, the victim of injustice and oppression, Christianity promised reward or salvation in the life hereafter, or in the beyond of history when nations would (supposedly) cease to exist. It urged the pious Christian to turn the other cheek, to resist not evil, instead of seeking to steer his nation on the path of justice. Hence the Christian individual and his nation drifted farther apart. Christian Europe has presented this interesting phenomenon: while individual citizenries of the nations abandoned paganism to become Christian, the nations comprising these very citizens remained pagan [as witnessed by how those nations participated in the *Shoah*]. The dogma, “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s...” armed the wicked, for the State was Caesar. It arrogated to itself absolute sovereignty and recognized no moral law but self-interest.⁵⁴

In Judaism, there is no Caesar and there is no Church. Nor is there any split between law and morality. In Jewish morality, the Divine Will appears not in an abstract manner, as in Christianity, but in the concrete and rational precepts of the law – the *Halacha*. What took the place of law in Christianity, and what was to govern human behavior, were not moral laws but “moral precepts” and “love”. Both are problematic. Moral precepts are vague generalities. Belief in such precepts leaves mankind with the problem of applying them to diverse circumstances, which requires judicial reasoning linked to a coherent body of laws. As for love, nothing is more dangerous than this emotion when charged by religiosity without the restraints of law. How often has the “religion of love” tortured and slaughtered men to save their souls?⁵⁵

Christianity’s abandonment of law ironically anticipated and facilitated Machiavelli’s project – the separation of morality from politics! The “religion of love” has thus contributed to the morally neutral politics of the West: not love of the good, not hatred of evil, but increasing indifference. We see this indifference in the moral equivalence that underlies the West’s attitude toward Israel and her Islamic enemies. Perhaps this attitude is the punishment of a nation whose ruling elites abandoned moral law when they shook the bloodstained hands of Yasser Arafat. The decadence of the West has infected Israel and hinders the renaissance of Hebraic civilization, to which I now turn.

Part III: Hebraic Civilization

In the all-too brief discussion of Hebraic civilization that follows, we shall want to keep in mind previously mentioned flaws in Islam and the West. Regarding Islam: its *Qur`anic* hatred, which stultifies the mind, and its rigid legalism, which frustrates attempts to reconcile permanence and change. Regarding the West: the failure of Christian love and precepts to compensate for its antinomianism, and the egoism resulting from the Machiavellian separation of morality from politics.

* * *

The key to understanding Hebraic civilization will be found in the Torah *parasha*, *Lech-Lecha*, which portrays the character of the first Jew. God says to Avram: “Go for yourself – away from your land, from your birthplace, and from the home of your father, to the land that I will show you.” (Genesis 12:1) Avram is first presented as the archetype of selfhood, of individuality. But later his name is changed: the letter *Hei*, representing God, is added to Avram’s name and he becomes Avraham.

Whatever else his name means (of which, more later), Avraham is the personification of kindness – *Hesed*.

At first glance, there seems to be a tension between selfhood or self-concern and kindness, concern for others. But this is not so in Avraham, as Rabbi Matis Weinberg, who has plumbed many secular disciplines, will explain.

Hesed-kindness is a profound commitment to Life itself, a commitment that may lead to confrontation, conflict, and even war if such are required to assure Life's definitive triumph. *Hesed-Kindness*: examine the word. *Kind* means "of one type"; the deepest *kinship* of all, a shared existence. [What makes *Hesed-kindness* possible, what makes *mankind* possible or gives all men a common source of existence is their creation in] the *Image of God* (Genesis 1:27). What clearer statement of monotheism could be made in a word!⁵⁶

Now let us consider a unique soliloquy in which God explains why He feels so attached to Avraham:

I love him because he enjoins his children and household after him that they cherish the path of God; that they do charity and justice in order that God brings to Avraham what He promised (Genesis 18:19).

Rabbi Weinberg comments: "But surely 'doing charity' – the *Hesed* which became the hallmark of Avraham for all time – surely *Hesed* must by its very *definition* be driven by selflessness and altruism? Not at all."

The man of *Hesed* *cares for his own self*... (Proverbs 11:17)

"Self-denial," says Weinberg, "is not associated with *Hesed*. If anything, it is a hallmark of cruelty":

The man of *Hesed* cares for his own self, and he who troubles his own flesh is cruel. (Proverbs 11:17)

Rabbi Weinberg admits that what he has thus far said will appear "somewhat subversive" and "outrageous":

Is the Torah seriously suggesting that *Hesed* is meant to be selfish? Is it possible that God would not have loved Avraham had he told his children to keep God's ways "for the sake of Heaven" instead of "so that God can bring Avraham his blessings"? After all, the focus on acquiring "blessings" actually violates a primary element in service of God:

One should not say: I will perform the *mitzvot* of the Torah and study its wisdom so that I can obtain the blessings written therein... (Rambam, Mishne Torah, Hilchot Teshuva, 10:1)

"Is it really possible," asks Weinberg,

that Avraham would have failed his test had he insisted on meeting his challenges out of pure love instead of "for himself"? If so there appears to be an awful contradiction here, for Avraham is held up as the model of service "for the sake of Heaven" – the paradigm of man motivated by pure love.

As the Rambam says:

The one who serves out of love, will work at Torah and *mitzvot* and walk the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive whatever – neither from fear of harm nor to secure benefits – he simply does Truth because it is Truth. The benefits will follow in its wake – eventually... This is the level of Avraham *avinu*, to whom God referred as "My lover" (Isaiah 41:8) because he did nothing unless out of love... (ibid.)

Again Rabbi Weinberg:

I believe that we find all this confusing only because we make many culturally biased – and dangerous – assumptions regarding the nature of *Hesed*. The truth is that these two pictures of Avraham are not contradictory but fully complementary, and each is conceivable only and entirely in light of the other. This is the central teaching of the *parasha* [Torah portion] and of the Avraham model, and only in

grappling with its subtleties can we begin to understand what God wanted from Avraham – and what Avraham achieved.

Lech-Lecha describes the job that needs to be done; Rambam describes the motivation for doing it. The **motivation** for Avraham's service to both God and man was pure love. Its **objective** needed to be the consummation of Avraham's own self. But such a motivation can exist only in light of such an objective, and such an objective can only be consummated through such a motivation: if you have not both, you can have neither.

Here is where Judaism departs from both Christianity and Islam. Christianity and Islam praise selflessness and condemn selfishness. Self-sacrifice for the sake of God is the crowning achievement of the Christian saint and the Muslim martyr. Rabbi Weinberg sees, in Avraham's *Hesed*, something far more profound, a love of God and man that affirms selfhood and therefore Life as the essence of Creation.

"Selflessness", some preach, is a *sine qua non* of the kind of love expressed in Avraham's *Hesed* and in his service for the sake of heaven. But in reality, selflessness precludes love. Love, as Rambam defines above, implies being "without ulterior motivation", having no external concern whatsoever. "The one who serves out of love, will work at Torah and *mitzvot* and walk the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive whatever..."

The motivation must come from **within**. If I want to "get something out of it", then clearly I am driven by something that exists outside myself, something **ulterior**. But the only thing that is not ulterior in any way, the only thing "internal", is my own self. And therein lies the problem of selfish selflessness.

A person who does not experience his own self as significant, who finds personal existence meaningless, cannot possibly be moved by anything but "ulterior" motives. He is always trying to "get" something – and all the significance and meaning he manages to wheedle out of life is a lie, because it comes from **outside** his own life. The truly and completely selfish individual is the "selfless" individual – such a one must live on the selves of others in fearful predation. He uses God and other people to find what he cannot himself find within.

Rabbi Weinberg approaches his conclusion:

History (and for many, personal experience) makes this observation cruelly clear. Those who seek selfless dedication to others, whose objective is to save the world, who make love a religious goal – those have been more successful at mass-murder, terror, and pillage than any Mafia. Only those who are the "servants of God" have succeeded, and continue to succeed, in ruining the lives of countless millions in a sea of blood, tears and, at very least, personal misery.

...To taste true love, to participate in *Hesed's* love of pure existence, it is absolutely essential to be "*The man of Hesed*", who "*cares for his own self*". Because the only existence we directly know and experience and love is our own... Either *Hesed* is an expression of love for one's own life or it is based on the worst of ulterior motives – a base and sinful attempt to steal significance.

Hesed of the nations is a sin (Proverbs 14:34); ...they do it only to establish their own significance (Bava Batra 10b).

Summarizing his illuminating commentary, Rabbi Weinberg writes:

Lech-Lecha inoculated Avraham and his nation against the ravages of selfish religiosity that destroys the service of God. *Lech-Lecha* protected those who embraced it from the hateful destructiveness to which such religion inevitably leads. *Lech-Lecha* created a tradition of *Hesed* based solely on love of life and safeguarded a people from the dangerous lie of selflessness which seeks to destroy all the meaning of Creation.

Here we transcend Christianity, Islam, and the West. Hebraic civilization transcends altruism and egoism. Here we have a civilization based on *Hesed*, on a love of Life, on creativity, which is why the Jewish people are known even by Gentiles as the most creative people in history.

Life is creativity. Thus, when the Torah says “God created man in His own image,” this means that just as God is creative in an infinite way, so man is creative in a finite way. This creativity involves a synthesis of reason and free will. By itself, reason is reducible to logic, which is passive. But since it coexists with free will, *reason is also the organ of emphasis on novelty*.⁵⁷ As logic, reason sees that novelty must have as its background that which is perennial or unchanging, otherwise novelty will be lost in mere transience and lose all value. Reason in its fullness is therefore dialectical: it prompts man toward conservatism and creativity; it enables him to reconcile permanence and change; its function is to promote the Art of Life.⁵⁸ (It is in this light that we are to understand the relationship between the Written Torah, which is fixed, and the Oral Torah, which applies what is fixed to that which is changing.) The reconciliation of permanence and change is the secret of Jewish law and of Hebraic civilization. As any Talmud student knows, Jewish law is intended to *educate* the individual, to challenge his mind, such that *creativity, conviction, and voluntary obedience* may follow. The aim of Torah education is to liberate man in such a way that he does freely what nature does blindly, both obeying the laws of God. A great German poet spoke Jewish wisdom when he wrote:

Dost thou seek the highest perfection?
Plants can teach thee.
What they are willy-nilly,
Thou canst be by thy own free will.⁵⁹

Jewish law is an education in freedom. Because it reconciles permanence and change, its scope is unlimited. Hence, Rabbi Isaac Breuer, who received a doctor of law degree from the University of Strasbourg, could maintain, without chauvinism, that Jewish law “is as comprehensive as any codification of the whole complex of private and public law of a living modern state can possibly be.”⁶⁰ Far from being “defunct” – the word is that of Daniel Pipes, who mistakenly likens Jewish law to Islamic law – the *Halacha* has always been a living and creative system of law.⁶¹ As I have elsewhere written:

Like other legal systems, Jewish law has various branches, for example, civil and criminal law, public and administrative law. Extant Jewish legal knowledge includes 7,000 volumes or 300,000 instances of case law dealing primarily with the social and economic problems of Jewish communities dispersed throughout Europe and North Africa. Prior to the Emancipation in the eighteenth century, these communities possessed juridical autonomy and creatively applied Jewish law to the most diverse social and economic conditions. The enormous body of case law resulting therefrom is being organized at various Israeli universities, and not merely for its historical interest, but for its potential relevance to contemporary problems.⁶²

Remarkably, Jewish legal experts in the United States have created a new institute that will educate jurists and others about Jewish law and promote the application of its teachings to contemporary legal disputes and other modern-day problems. The institute was applauded by President George W. Bush as an important means of promoting “good character and strong values”. Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia, in a letter to the institute, acknowledged that Jewish law is one of the “most highly developed systems”. One lawyer recently filed a brief to the Supreme Court based on the Talmud’s view of capital punishment.⁶³

Here is a marvelous example of how Judaism has served the best interests of mankind. But this is implied in the name and deeds of the first Jew, of whom the Torah says: “*you shall be the father of a multitude of nations,*” (Genesis 17:5) and “*all the nations of the world shall be blessed through your descendants.*” (22:18).

Contrary to the God of Islam, who commands Muslims to destroy nationhood by placing all nations under the *Shari`ah*, the God of Israel is infinitely more liberal. He creates unique nations as well as unique individuals; and He wants each to pursue its own perfection in peace. This nations can do only if they abide by the “genial orthodoxy” known as the Seven Noahide Laws of Universal Morality. But God, in His infinite wisdom, saw that mankind would need something more. And so He created an exemplary nation, Israel, and endowed this nation with a unique system of laws which has enabled the Jewish people to unite *particularism* and *universalism*. Only when this system of laws is creatively re-established will Israel present to mankind the example of a nation in which freedom dwells with righteousness, equality with excellence, wealth with beauty, the here and now with love of the Eternal.

Summary and Conclusion

The clash between the West and Islam is a clash between two decadent civilizations. The decadence of the West is manifested in multiculturalism and feminism on the one hand, and moral relativism and the disintegration of the family on the other. This decadence, more pronounced in Europe than in America, is spreading throughout the globe via “pop culture” and threatening all tradition-based societies. Muslims see this decadence far more clearly than Israel’s intellectual elites, today’s most uncritical exponents of secularism. These Jews do not see that the triumph of secularism in the twentieth century led to the bloodiest war in human history, including the Nazi Holocaust. They do not see that one consequence of that war, the demise of colonialism, has led to the resurgence of Islam, which, in reaction to the West’s secularism, now threatens the remnants of civilized society everywhere.

The West has no cure for the malaise of Islam, for the democratic freedom of which the West boasts lacks rational constraints as well as moral substance. Of course the West can offer Islam scientific technology, but this too is morally neutral. Scientific technology arms tyrants as well as democrats, as was seen in the Second World War, and as we now see in the civilizational conflict between the West and Islam. The West as well as the East is blind to its own flaws. Only the Jews have the answer, but its manifestation awaits the restoration of Hebraic civilization in a New Israel.

Endnotes

- ¹ Daniel Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, New York: W.W. Norton, 2002, pp. 5-6.
- ² See Bernard Lewis, *Islam in History*, 2nd ed., Chicago: Open Court, 1993, p. 5. It should be borne in mind that Syria, like Iraq, is a secular state.
- ³ Daniel Pipes, *In the Path of God: Islam and Power*, New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2002 edition, Chapter 9.
- ⁴ Yehoshafat Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, Jerusalem: Keter, 1972, p. 133.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 138.
- ⁶ Ibid., p. 348.
- ⁷ See John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1982, p. 182.
- ⁸ Bat Ye’or, *Islam and Dhimmitude: Where Civilizations and Collide*, Fairleigh Dickenson University Press, 2002, p. 371.
- ⁹ The leading apologist is John L. Esposito, *Unholy War: Terrorism in the Name of Islam*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. x-xi, who claims that fundamentalists have “hijacked Islam for their unholy purposes”. See also his *The Islamic Threat: Myth or Reality*, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999, 3rd ed., Chapter 6. Esposito, a liberal democrat, concludes that the Islamic threat is a myth. In response, see Daniel Pipes, “*Jihad and the Professors*”, *Commentary*, November 2002.

- ¹⁰ In contrast to Bat Ye'or, even the doyen of Islamic scholars, Bernard Lewis, treats Islam's persecution of infidels rather politely. See his *The Multiple Identities of the Middle East*, New York: Schocken, 1998, p. 128.
- ¹¹ See G. E. Von Grunebaum, *Modern Islam: The Search for Cultural Identity* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962, p. 47.
- ¹² Daniel Pipes, "The Long Life of Arab Rejectionism", *Commentary*, December 1997 (italics added).
- ¹³ Op. cit., Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, pp. xiii-xiv, 29-30, 47; op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, Chapter 25.
- ¹⁴ Bat Ye'or, "A Culture of Hate", *National Review*, August 2, 2002.
- ¹⁵ See Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? Western Impact and Middle Eastern Response*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2002, p. 114, who compares Christian tolerance unfavorably.
- ¹⁶ Op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 416.
- ¹⁷ Op. cit., Lewis, *What Went Wrong?*, p. 151. See also Olivier Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994, pp. 194-195.
- ¹⁸ Turkey is a special case. The Ottoman Empire had just dissolved when Kemal Ataturk separated religion and state. This did not change the *Shari'ah*. Also, Turkey is tied to Europe, and if this were not the case, it would probably revert to type, judging from the resurgence of "Islamism".
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 149-159.
- ²⁰ According to Malcolm Yapp, fundamentalists "are strictly traditional in their formulations [of the law] and modern in their practice and they care little for the resulting contradictions". Cited in op. cit., Pipes, *In the Path of God*, p. 130.
- ²¹ *New York Times*, November 24, 2002. For a contrary view of the *Shari'ah*, see op. cit., Donahue and Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition*, pp. 261-271.
- ²² See op. cit., Lewis, *What Went Wrong*, pp. 10-112
- ²³ See op. cit., Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, p. 82.
- ²⁴ See Abraham Geiger, *Judaism and Islam*, New York: KTAV Publishing House, 1970, p. 19, who writes:
- At first, simply and solely on account of the Jews, the Qubla, or place towards which prayer was to be made, was changed by Muhammad to Jerusalem from Mecca, the spot which the ancient Arabs had always regarded as holy; and it was only when he recognized the fruitlessness of attempting to conciliate the Israelites [i.e., to win them to Islam] that he changed it back to the former direction...
- The order in which he [Muhammad] gives the prophets [sic] is interesting, for immediately after the patriarchs he places first Jesus, then Job, Jonah, Aaron, Solomon, and last of all David [Sura, 4:161]. In another passage [Sura, 6:84-86] the order is still more ridiculous, for here we have David, Solomon, Job, Joseph, Moses, Aaron, Zachariah, John, Jesus, Elijah, Ishmael, Elisha, Jonah, and Lot! The incorrect spellings of the names of these prophets [sic], as well as the parts which [Muhammad] assigns to them in history, proves that he had never even looked into the Hebrew Scriptures.
- ²⁵ Op. cit., Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, pp. 3-4.
- ²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. x.
- ²⁸ Op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 402.
- ²⁹ Op. cit., Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, p. 8. Compare op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, pp. 405-406.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 410.
- ³¹ See Steven Emerson, *American Jihad: The Terrorists Living Among Us*, New York: Free Press, 2002, Chapter 3.
- ³² Op. cit., Donahue and Esposito, *Islam in Transition*, p. 144.

- ³³ See op. cit., Pipes, *In the Path of God*, p. 182.
- ³⁴ See Bernard Lewis, *Islam and the West*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1993, p. 136.
- ³⁵ Op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 7.
- ³⁶ Op. cit., Pipes, *Militant Islam Reaches America*, pp. 46-647; op. cit., Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, p. 41, defines “moderates” in secular Islamic regimes as those who are “partisans of reIslamization from the bottom up (preaching, establishing sociological movements) while pressuring leaders (in particular through political alliances) to promote Islamization from the top (introducing the *Shari`ah* into legislation) ...” But if the government should take an anti-Islamic stance unaffected by peaceful protest, revolution becomes a right and an obligation.
- ³⁷ Cited in Op. cit., Bat Ye’or, *Islam and Dhimmitude*, p. 339.
- ³⁸ Op. cit., Pipes, *In the Path of God*, p. 167.
- ³⁹ See op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 271.
- ⁴⁰ Op. cit., Roy, *The Failure of Political Islam*, pp. 195-196.
- ⁴¹ Ibid., p. 203.
- ⁴² See Allan Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind: How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today’s Students*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1987; Dinesh D’Souza, *Illiberal Education*, New York: Free Press, 1991.
- ⁴³ See op. cit., Lewis, *Islam in History*, p. 403, who writes: “Khomeini was working within the historic and religious traditions of Islam.” Ibid., p. 399.
- ⁴⁴ Op. cit., Pipes, *In the Path of God*, p. 63. See p. xi of said preface, to which contrast pp. 63, 93, and 118 of the book itself.
- ⁴⁵ See note 7 above.
- ⁴⁶ See op. cit., Donohue and Esposito (eds.), *Islam in Transition*, p. 79.
- ⁴⁷ Cited in Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations*, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1997, p. 213.
- ⁴⁸ Ibid.
- ⁴⁹ Ibid.
- ⁵⁰ Cited in von Grunebaum, p. 161 (italics added).
- ⁵¹ Cited in Harkabi, *Arab Attitudes to Israel*, p. 97. See also Lewis, “The Roots of Muslim Rage”, *The Atlantic Monthly*, September 1990, pp. 48-60.
- ⁵² For a profound study of this subject, see James Kurth, “The Real Clash”, *The National Interest*, October 1994.
- ⁵³ See Paul Eidelberg, *Beyond the Secular Mind*, New York: Greenwood Press, 1989, Chapter 1.
- ⁵⁴ Isaac Breuer, “Judaism and the World of Tomorrow”, in Leo Jung (ed.), *Israel of Tomorrow*, New York: Herald Square Press, 1949, 2nd ed., pp. 87-91.
- ⁵⁵ See Abraham Isaac Kook, *Orot*, Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1993, pp. 105-106, Bezalel Naor, trans.
- ⁵⁶ The following exposition is drawn from Matis Weinberg, *Frameworks* (Genesis), Boston: Foundation for Jewish Publications, 1999, pp. 61-66.
- ⁵⁷ See Alfred North Whitehead, *The Function of Reason*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1929, p. 20.
- ⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 4.
- ⁵⁹ See Samson Raphael Hirsch, *Judaism Eternal*, 2 vols.; London: Soncino Press, 1956, Vol. I, p. 187. The present author has taken the liberty of substituting the word “perfection” for “greatest”.
- ⁶⁰ Isaac Breuer, *Concepts of Judaism*, Jerusalem: Israel Universities Press, 1974, p. 31.
- ⁶¹ Op. cit., Pipes, *In the Path of God*, p. 42. Later he writes: “The Jewish experience indicates that legalist forces, however strong, numerous, and well-organized, will fail, for they are defying the prevailing ethos of the age, antinomian Westernization.” (p. 198) Pipes is obviously ignorant about Jewish law (see, his Acknowledgments, p. xv). Nor does he seem to appreciate the significance of the high birthrate of religious

Jews in Israel, and how this cannot but affect the future composition and legislation of Israel's Knesset (provided Israel solves the Arab demographic problem).

⁶² Paul Eidelberg, *Jewish Statesmanship: Lest Israel Fall*, ACPR Publishers, 2000; University Press of America, 2002, p.106.

⁶³ See *The Jerusalem Post*, November 10, 2002, p. 3.

