



The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization

Richard W. Bulliet

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Conventional wisdom maintains that the differences between Islam and Christianity are irreconcilable. Pre-eminent Middle East scholar Richard W. Bulliet disagrees, and in this fresh, provocative book he looks beneath the rhetoric of hatred and misunderstanding to challenge prevailing--and misleading--views of Islamic history and a "clash of civilizations." These sibling societies begin at the same time, go through the same developmental stages, and confront the same internal challenges. Yet as Christianity grows rich and powerful and less central to everyday life, Islam finds success around the globe but falls behind in wealth and power.

Modernization in the nineteenth century brings in secular forces that marginalize religion in political and public life. In the Christian world, this simply furthers a process that had already begun. In the Middle East this gives rise to the tyrannical governments that continue to dominate. Bulliet argues that beginning in the 1950s American policymakers misread the Muslim world and, instead of focusing on the growing discontent against the unpopular governments, saw only a forum for liberal, democratic reforms within those governments. By fostering slogans like "clash of civilizations" and "what went wrong," Americans to this day continue to misread the Muslim world and to miss the opportunity to focus on common ground for building lasting peace. This book offers a fresh perspective on U.S.-Muslim relations and provides the intellectual groundwork upon which to help build a peaceful and democratic future in the Muslim world.

The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization Details

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Edwina Shaddick says

Astounding in breadth and depth. I definitely need to re-read this

Nuruddin Azri says

On how print press create a new authority. The author also give a glimpse of commentary on Huntington's Clash of Civilisation, Bernard Lewis' What Went Wrong and Said's Orientalism. The author invites the readers to search for a common ground between Islam and Christian civilisation (just the same tone as in Shaykh Abdallah Ben Bayyah's book; Al-Irh?b: At-Tasykh?s wa At-Tahl?l). But this one is more to the historical lens.

May says

Coming soon.

Andrew says

I thought Bulliet brought up some good points, especially in rejection to Bernard Lewis' infamous "What went wrong." The fact of the matter is we need to honestly look at our own history before passing judgment on the Muslim world's current issues, and realize there's actually quite a bit of imitation running both ways. I'd recommend it as a quick read for people in Middle East Studies, but it's probably not that relevant for many outside that sphere.

Jared Morningstar says

Great conceptual approach for understanding the historical unity between Islamic and Christian civilizations. Bulliet traces the path that the West / Christendom and the Middle East / Islamic civilization have taken since ~600AD and shows how the sibling civilizations were continuously responding to the same types of historical developments. What sets them apart is their different responses to the challenges they faced. In this, he highlights the historical importance of the 'Ulama in Muslim society and shows how their role as interpreters of the Sharia was what allowed tyrannical political power to be kept in check until the modern period. Another theme that Bulliet tied in at this point was the importance of justice, rather than liberty, in the consciousness of Muslims – both historically and still today.

A worthwhile read for anyone trying to understand modern interfaith relations between Muslims and Christians in light of the current world political context. Bulliet definitely goes far beyond a simple post-colonial approach and digs deep into history and politics.

???????? says

sumaiyya says

So far the book is great. It's a little intense but portrays a very clear history of scholarship in Islam and parallels it with Christianity. It then discusses where things went awry and why we're in the current situation

we are today. I'm not completely done yet but when I do I'll post something more thorough

sara says

some really interesting concepts...the later chapters are more interesting than the earlier ones....not the easiest, but short read

Hamish Cameron says

If you're interested in the relationship between "the west" (and in particular American foreign policy) and the Muslim world, this is mandatory reading.

Alaa says

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Cyrus Faizee says

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Racheal says

Bulliet makes some incredibly interesting and very unique points in this book. The problem is that they are so disorganized and also that he tends to ramble on about the less interesting stuff too often. Still. Worth at least skimming for the few gems he offers on understanding Islamo-Christian relations.
