An Islamic Reformation?

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Introduction

Comparing Reformations

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The Christian Reformation is a hot topic in many Muslim societies. In Iran, for example, author Hashem Aghajari became an international celebrity after speaking on this theme in June 2002. Aghajari argued that, like medieval Christianity, religion in the Islamic Republic of Iran had become bureaucratized and hierarchical. Iranian Muslims of the fifteenth Islamic century ought to embark on a "project of Islamic Protestantism," just as fifteenth century Christians had done. He described "Islamic Protestantism" as "a rational, scientific, humanistic Islam. It is a thoughtful and intellectual Islam, an open-minded Islam."[1]

Aghajari was arrested soon thereafter, and sentenced to death by the religious establishment that he had criticized, becoming an icon for Islamic reform around the world. In Malaysia, columnist Matahati Mazeni Alwi wrote that Aghajari stuck a "dagger into the heart of the theocratic Islamic state" and worried that Malaysia's Islamic opposition might also be harboring theocratic designs.[2] In California, web-editor Shahed Amanullah hoped that Aghajari "has brought the conservative ruling class to their knees."[3]

Aghajari's case was unusual in its setting: a Shi'i country with a constitution placing religious scholars at the head of state. But his argument was far from unique. Around the world, numerous Muslim authors make use of the analogy with the Christian Reformation, and have done so since the nineteenth century, as have Western observers of Islamic reform movements.

This volume examines the analogy from several perspectives, asking: What are some of the most significant transformations and developments taking place in the contemporary Middle East? Do the various reformist individuals and movements in the Middle East today constitute a reformation of Islamic society as such? To what extent are changes or prospects in Muslim societies similar to the Christian Reformation? How useful is such a comparison? The last section of this chapter introduces these analyses. Meanwhile, the first section examines the

historical usage of the analogy itself: When did it emerge, what forms does it take, and what purpose does it serve, for Muslims and non-Muslims?

Historical Usages of the Reformation Analogy

It is impossible to trace the origins of the Reformation analogy with any certainty. Nonetheless, it is clear that the theme was visible by the beginning of the twentieth century, both among Muslims and among Western, typically Protestant Christian, observers of Islam. On the Western side, the analogy grew out of the long-standing polemical tradition that treated Islam and other religions as inferior to Christianity.[4] It was only with the rise of modern intellectuals, trained outside of the seminary, that a new form of comparative religious studies emerged, one less explicitly intended to discredit other people's faiths. Certain Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century, for example, "tended to make Mohammed almost a good Protestant and in any event a perceptive enemy of the Curia Romana"[5]—though other Enlightenment thinkers continued the older tropes of hostility.[6] In the late nineteenth century, the founder of the "scientific" study of religion urged researchers to adopt a scholarly identity distinct from theology, to compare faith traditions while "claim[ing] no privilege, no exceptional position of any kind, for his own religion, whatever that religion may be."[7] The field of religious studies never fully resolved the tension between theological and nontheological approaches,[8] but the appeal to "scientific" standards, at least in some quarters, opened a space for creative comparisons across faith traditions.

It was in this context that the Reformation analogy emerged. In 1881, for example, British poet and publicist Wilfred Scawen Blunt (1840-1922) likened "Wahhabism"—an outsiders' term for the Muwahhidun (Unitarian) revivalist movement founded by Muhammad ibn 'Abd al-Wahhab in eighteenth century Arabia—with Protestant Christianity: "Just as the Lutheran reformation in Europe, though it failed to convert the Christian Church, caused its real reform, so Wahhabism has produced a real desire for reform if not yet reform itself in Mussulmans."[9] Another author used the same analogy in 1916 to make the opposite point: "Just as the Protestant Reformation was followed by a counter-reformation in Roman Catholicism, so Wahabism [*sic*] was the instrument for arousing the Sunni Moslems."[10] Numerous observers have likened Islamic revivalism to Christian Puritanism, focusing on shared features such as asceticism, simple garb, a work ethic, restrictive sexual mores, opposition to secularism, and a foregrounding of religion in everyday life.[11] An early example appears in a Turkish newspaper in 1924: "Wahabism [*sic*] in its relation to Islamism [*sic*] is like Protestantism as compared with Catholicism. It does not admit the Moslem faith except when purged of certain practises and symbolic manifestations. No beautiful mosques, no ornamental tombs!"[12] As Islamic

radicalism has become increasingly prominent in world politics, mass media commonly describe it as "puritanical," using the analogy implicitly.[13]

On the Muslim side, "Wahhabis" have remained uninterested in comparisons with the West—their writings focus exclusively on Islamic precedents. The first Muslims to take up the analogy, rather, were Islamic modernists seeking to reconcile Islamic faith with Western values and institutions.[14] As in Christianity, Islamic scholarship has a long prehistory of polemical comparative religious studies.[15] Also as in Christianity, this tradition shifted with the emergence of a new class of intellectuals who adopted an identity distinct from, and hostile to, that of the traditional seminarians. Enthusiastic about Western-style learning—in combination with Islamic education—these new intellectuals were open to cross-religious analogies such as the Islamic Reformation.

If Western observers saw developments in Islam that resembled Christian history, however, Islamic modernists saw the reverse: developments in Christian history that resembled Islam. Their prime use of the analogy held that the Reformation moved Christianity closer to the values and practices of the pure, initial Islam, and "Martin Luther was often considered [by Islamic modernists of this period as] a latter-day Muslim anxious to combat superstitions and restore religion to its original progressive nature."[16] The most prominent Islamic modernist of the period, Muhammad 'Abduh of Egypt (1849-1905), was one of many authors to make this argument:

> In the west the desire for knowledge intensified and concern grew to break the entail of obscurantism. A strong resolve was generated to curb the authority of religious leaders and keep them from exceeding the proper precepts of religion and corrupting its valid meanings. It was not long after that a party made its appearance in the west calling for reform and a return to the simplicities of the faith—a reformation which included elements by no means unlike Islam.[17]

Similarly, the most prominent South Asian Islamic modernist, Muhammad Iqbal (India, 1877-1938), suggested that the West had come to resemble Islam not just through the Reformation, but also through democratic political theory:

> Luther, the enemy of despotism in religion, and Rousseau, the enemy of despotism in politics, must always be regarded as the emancipators of European humanity from the heavy fetters of Popedom and absolutism, and their religious and political thought must be understood as a virtual denial of the Church dogma of human depravity. The possibility of the elimination of sin and pain from the evolutionary process, and faith in the natural goodness of man, are the basic propositions of Islam, as of modern European civilization, which has, almost unconsciously, recognized the truth of these propositions in spite of the religious system with which it is associated.[18]

In Iqbal's view, Luther and other Christian reformists realized Islamic values independently, even "in spite of" their Christianity. A leading Turkish modernist, Ziya Gökalp (Turkey, 1876-1924), took the comparison even further, claiming that the Protestant Reformation was in fact inspired by Islamic ideals:

> When we study the history of Christianity, we see that, following the Crusades [eleventh-thirteenth centuries], a new movement started in Europe, which was then acquainted with Islamic culture. This movement aimed at imitating Islamic civilization and religion. It penetrated Europe with time, and finally culminated in Protestantism as a new religion entirely in contra-distinction to the traditional principles of Christianity. This new religion rejected the priesthood, and the existence of two kinds of government, spiritual and temporal. It also rejected the papacy, the Councils, the Inquisition—in short, all institutions which had existed in Christianity—as contrary to the principles of Islam. Are we not justified if we look at this religion as a more or less Islamicized form of Christianity?[19]

This approach seems to have dwindled as the twentieth century proceeded. It often contained an implicit call for Muslims to imitate the Christian Reformation and return to the pure roots of Islam, but some made this call for imitation explicit. In so doing, they adopted the Western version of the Reformation analogy: comparing Islam with Christianity rather than Christianity with Islam. Today, it sounds peculiar to hear the equation of Protestantism and Islam, as though Islam were the yardstick against which other religious traditions might be measured. But it has become generally acceptable to equate certain Islamic trends with Protestantism, taking Christian history as the point of reference.

Sayyid Jamal al-Din al-Afghani (Iran, 1838-1897), for example, said he "cannot keep from hoping that Muhammadan society will succeed someday in breaking its bonds and marching resolutely in the path of civilization after the manner of Western society."[20] The sole cause of Western civilizational progress, Afghani argued, was "the religious movement raised and spread by Luther."[21] Indeed, the idea that "Islam needed a Luther . . . was a favourite theme of al-Afghani's," and Afghani may have seen himself as that Luther.[22] Similarly, the Indian reformer Sayyid Ahmad Khan (1817-1898) proclaimed that "the fact is that India needs not merely a Steele or an Addison, but also, and primarily, a Luther."[23] This sentiment was echoed by Fath 'Ali Akhundzadah (1812-1878) in the Russian Empire[24] and Abdullah Cevdet (1869-1932) in the Ottoman Empire,[25] both of whom used the reformation analogy as a cover for atheism. More devout was Musa Jarullah Bigi (Russian Tatarstan, 1875-1949), who argued that the Christian Reformation was responsible for civilization itself:

> through reformers like Martin Luther, the Christian world entered on the path of progress; meanwhile, through religious scholars and leaders such as Ibn Kemal [Kemalpasazâde, Turkish scholar, circa 1468-1534] and Abu al-Sa'ud [Ebussu'ud Efendi, Turkish religious leader, circa 1491-1574], the Muslim world went into decline. That is, while the civilized world progressed through the freedom of reason, through the captivity of reason the Muslim world declined.[26]

Writing in 1925, Habib Allah Pur-i Riza (Iran) argued that Shi'i Islam needed a "sacred revolution" with "thinkers like Luther and Calvin."[27] Muhammad Rashid Rida (Syria-Egypt, 1865-1935) cited the need to combine "religious renewal and earthly renewal, the same way Europe has done with religious reformation and modernization."[28] Iqbal, who identified Islamic elements in Protestantism in 1909, as quoted above, identified Protestant elements in Islam two decades later: "We are today passing through a period similar to that of the Protestant revolution in Europe, and the lesson which the rise and outcome of [Martin] Luther's movement teaches should not be lost on us."[29]

Optimistic supporters of the modernist Islamic movement felt that it heralded the beginning of a Protestant-style Reformation. Hadi Atlasi (Tatarstan, circa 1875-1940) claimed that "there was an urgent need for a Muslim 'Luther' in order to save the Muslim world, but whatever the reason was, no such person appeared until . . . the 'Muslim Luther,' the renewer [Shihabuddin] Marjani [Tatarstan, 1818-1889] appeared among the northern Muslims, at the end of the thirteenth century [nineteenth century A.D.]."[30] Marjani was widely hailed as the founder of Islamic modernism in Russia. Similarly, Wilfred Scawen Blunt noted that Muslim reformers, including his friend 'Abduh, "stand in close resemblance to the 'Reformers' of Christianity; and some of the circumstances which have given them birth are so analogous to those which Europe encountered in the fifteenth century that it is impossible not to draw in one's mind a parallel, leading to the conviction that Islam, too, will work out for itself a Reformation."[31] By the late twentieth century, at least one author, the secularist Syrian thinker Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm, suggested that enough of an Islamic Reformation had taken place to have generated a "counterreformation," led by the Muslim Brotherhood and similar movements.[32] In contrast, some conservative Muslims have employed the analogy disparagingly in accusing various reformists and radicals, including the Muslim Brotherhood, of acting like Muslim Luthers.[33]

But the Islamic Reformation analogy is constantly reinvented. A century after the analogy first emerged, sociologist Jose Casanova identified Reformation-like changes occurring in "the very recent past": "if there is anything on which most observers and analysts of contemporary Islam agree, it is that the Islamic tradition in the very recent past has undergone an unprecedented process of pluralization and fragmentation of religious authority, comparable to that initiated by the Protestant Reformation."[34] It is interesting—perhaps ironic—that this most recent and widespread use of the analogy by Western observers occurs amidst doubts in historical studies that the Reformation forms a coherent or discrete period at all. A recent textbook, entitled *The European*

Reformations, explains the plural in its title by stating that "In more recent scholarship this 'conventional sense' of the Reformation [as a unified period] has given way to recognition that there was a plurality of Reformations which interacted with each other: Luther, Catholic, Reformed, and dissident movements."[35]

Nonetheless, by the late twentieth century, observers identified a new crop of Muslim Luthers, as previous candidates failed to fulfill the role of generating a full-blown Reformation. Anthropologist Dale Eickelman has argued that a best-selling 1990 book by Syrian author Muhammad Shahrour (born 1938) "may one day be seen as a Muslim equivalent of the 95 Theses that Martin Luther nailed to the door of the Wittenberg Castle church in 1517."[36] Journalist Robin Wright reported in 1995 that "both supporters and critics now call [Abdolkarim Soroush, Iran, born 1945] the Martin Luther of Islam."[37] Another journalist has attached the label to Tariq Ramadan (Switzerland, born 1962), the grandson of Muslim Brotherhood founder Hassan al-Banna (1906-1949) and author of the book *To Be a European Muslim*.[38] A third has singled out a female scholar in Egypt, Su'ad Salah, who heads the Islamic law department of the al-Azhar's women's college.[39] Yet another maintains that an Islamic political party, Turkey's Justice and Development Party, "could usher in an Islamic version of the Protestant Reformation."[40] A recent critique of Middle East and Islamic Studies argues that these fields "were so preoccupied with 'Muslim Martin Luthers' that they never got around to producing a single serious analysis of bin Laden and his indictment of America."[41] The point may or may not be accurate, but it is worth noting that conservative journalists have been as eager as liberal academics to search for Muslim Luthers.[42]

While there seem to be a growing tendency to analyze the Islamic Reformation as a present fact,[43] most studies treat the subject in the conditional rather than the present tense. Numerous authors have suggested that Islam is on the verge of a Reformation. For example, the jurist Asaf Ali Asghar Fyzee (India, 1899-1981) maintained that "if the complete fabric of the *shari'a* is examined in this critical manner [in the interest of social justice and social well-being], it is obvious that . . . a newer 'protestant' Islam will be born in conformity with conditions of life in the twentieth century, cutting away the dead wood of the past and looking hopefully at the future." Fyzee calls this new "protestant" Islam, "Liberal Islam."[44]

Similarly, the famous Iranian reformer, 'Ali Shari'ati (1933-1977), held that Islam "is living at the end of the Medieval period," comparable to the position of Christian thinkers who "found their new destiny by destroying their old faith, and transforming traditional Catholicism to a protesting, world-minded, political, and materialist Protestantism."[45] Shari'ati urged Muslims to embrace "an Islamic Protestantism similar to that of Christianity in the Middle Ages, destroying all the degenerating factors which, in the name of Islam, have stymied and stupefied the process of thinking and the fate of the society, and giving birth to new thoughts and new movements."[46] Hashem Aghajari's speech of June 2002, quoted at the start of this chapter, amplified these themes on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of Shari'ati's untimely death. Similarly, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im (Sudan, born 1946) has suggested that "today, Islam is in a period of pre-Reformation," arguing that Islamic fundamentalism is "our counter-Reformation [that] is the prelude to the Islamic Reformation"[47]—though he has stressed that "an Islamic reformation cannot be a belated and poor copy of the European Christian model. . . . It will have to be an indigenous and authentically Islamic process if it is to be a reformation at all."[48] Ahmad Bishara maintains that the aim of the liberal political group in Kuwait he heads, the National Democratic Movement, is "to reform Islam the way Martin Luther reformed the Catholic church."[49] Ali Mazrui (Kenya-U.S., born 1933) and Alamin Mazrui (Kenya-U.S., born 1948) muse that "It would be particularly fitting if the Martin Luther of the Islamic Reformation turned out to be a woman, posting her 95 theses of reform not on the door of a Wittenberg mosque but universally on the Internet."[50]

The British newsweekly, *The Economist*, has been particularly active in promoting this theme of an impending Islamic Reformation, which appears in numerous articles since the 1980s. In 1994, for example, the magazine wrote:

> It is now, in the moon-regulated calendar of Muslims, the year 1415. In the Christians' year 1415, at the Council of Constance, the conservatives who were trying to stamp out the beginnings of the Reformation burnt Jan Hus at the stake, and arranged for John Wycliffe's bones to be dug out of their English grave and tossed onto a fire. And yet, by 1436, a Hussite army had forced a first concession out of the conservatives; by the 1470s the printed bibles made possible by Gutenberg's press were spreading through Europe; by 1506 Zwingli was preaching in Switzerland; and in 1517 Martin Luther nailed his theses to the church door at Wittenberg. And, remember, things go much faster now.[51]

The same article went so far as to create a "Reformation check-list" of similarities between "Islam's 15th century, which on the Muslim count began a few years ago," and "the Christian 15th century, the period Europe went through shortly before the Reformation." The items included: 1) "disillusionment with both the religious and the political apparatus of the old order"; 2) "an almost cosmic sense of despair"; 3) "a powerful desire to put things right by going back to the roots of the faith"; and 4) "an enriching stimulus from outside."[52] The *Economist*'s use of the analogy was amplified amidst the furor over Salman Rushdie's *Satanic Verses* and the death sentence imposed on him: "Since the Reformation the western world has got used to hearing such things said, for each listener to agree of disagree with as he wishes. The Muslim world has not yet gone through a Reformation."[53] "Reformation" in this context seems to refer to a reconsideration of the religion's doctrine and practice that not only sets into

motion a process of fragmentation of religious authority, but also an increasing privatization of religious belief.

In his influential work *The Clash of Civilizations*, Samuel Huntington argues that while "in its political manifestations, the Islamic Resurgence bears some resemblance to Marxism, . . . [a] more useful analogy . . . is the Protestant Reformation":

> Both are reactions to the stagnation and completion of existing institutions; advocate a return to a purer and more demanding form of their religion; preach world order, and discipline; and appeal to emerging, dynamic middle-class people. Both are also complex movements, with diverse strands, but two major ones, Lutheranism and Calvinism, Shi'ite and Sunni fundamentalism, and even parallels between John Calvin and the Ayatollah Khomeini and the monastic discipline they tried to impose on their societies. The central spirit of both the reformation and the Resurgence is fundamental reform.[54]

While Huntington points out many of the same indicators as the *Economist* and sees similar levels of conflict resulting from this Reformation, he is less willing to posit secularism—or the privatization of religion—as an outcome. Among the important legacies he predicts are an increased awareness of religio-cultural distinctiveness and commitment to Islam; a "network of Islamist social, cultural, economic, and political organizations" and, possibility further in the future, "disillusionment with political Islam, a reaction against it, and a search for alternative 'solutions.'"[55] Like other societies that Huntington sees as grappling with modernity, the primary outcome of this Islamic Resurgence-Reformation will be "indigenization"—that is, a form of cultural assertiveness, where actors reject Western sources of development and "find the means of success within their own society, and hence accommodate the values and culture of that society." In the case of Muslim majority societies, "indigenization" means a "re-Islamicization" that "is not a rejection of modernity," but rather "a rejection of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West."[56]

Some authors, by contrast, feel that an Islamic Reformation is not just around the corner. Typically, this argument appears in a context of hostility towards Islam, where the inability to undergo a Reformation is presented as a condemnation of the religion. For example, Syed Kamran Mirza of the Institute for the Secularization of Islamic Society (ISIS) likens contemporary Islam to "a raging fever in its most acute phase," badly in need of Reformation through "sustained critical scrutiny," and laments that "the prospect for such a Muslim reformation is currently remote."[57] As a U.S. newspaper columnist wrote in 1978: "Christianity came to terms with modern science, industry and society only after the Protestant Reformation and a thousand lesser shocks. Islam, however, has not had a Reformation—and probably will not."[58] However, in 1992 the foreign editor of the same newspaper entertained the more "hopeful

view" expressed by a French official: "It is possible, [the French official] said, that the fundamentalists [in Algeria] will play the same purifying—and ultimately modernizing—role that the Protestant Reformation played in Europe. [The official] cited Max Weber's famous argument, in 'The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism,' that the 17th-century Protestant fundamentalists paved the way for the development of modern political and economic institutions in Europe."[59] Another author has commented on the repeated failures of Reformation predictions: "Since the Enlightenment broke the lock of medieval prejudice against Islam, the reform of Islam had been declared inevitable, even imminent, by a parade of visionaries and experts. The current representation of Islamic fundamentalism as a portent of democracy has opened another chapter in this cyclical saga of hope and disillusionment."[60]

And then there are those who reject the Reformation analogy entirely. Some view the analogy with suspicion, maintaining as Tareq al-Suwaidan, a Muslim Brotherhood leader and host of popular Islamic programs on Arab satellite TV does, that "from [liberal Muslims calling for a Reformation's] point of view, reformation means dropping Islam."[61] Another common trope holds that Islam has no clergy in the Catholic Christian sense of divine representatives and shepherds of souls. As a result, Muslims have no target against which to stage a Reformation, so the analogy fails. In a famous debate between Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri (Morocco, born 1936) and Hassan Hanafi (Egypt, born 1935), for example, both thinkers agreed, despite their many differences, that "Islam is not a church that we can separate from the state."[62] Some authors have contended that Western "Orientalists, and more particularly those who are Protestants, cannot free themselves from what might be called the inevitability of the Reformation."[63] Indeed, all teleologies that view other cultures as recapitulating the history of one's own culture—including modernization theory and Marxian historical materialism—remain vulnerable to similar criticism.

Nonetheless, the Reformation analogy continues to be proffered, both by Muslims and non-Muslims, with even greater frequency since the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. One year later, for example, the Center for the Study of Islam and Democracy hosted a panel discussion in Washington, D.C., on the question "Does Islam Need a Reformation?" Six days later and less than half a mile away, the newly established Global Policy Exchange convened "A Conversation on the Theme, An Islamic Reformation?" at the National Press Club. More recently, the editor of the *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* has asserted the distinctiveness of Islam's Reformation, while calling for a Reformation, nonetheless: "the Muslim East should be allowed to undertake its own reformation, which would inevitably result in the reorientation and rationalization of religious values and beliefs of Muslims, and must hence, take the form of an Islamic reformation."[64]

Assessing the Analogy

"Reformation" is usually employed to refer to a transformation linked with recognition of the need to overhaul institutions, practices, and ideas of religious authority. As such, reformation suggests both social and intellectual dimensions. Both dimensions are dealt with in the chapters that follow, but the authors differ in their assessments of how this characterization might best be applied to Islamic societies. The widespread and longstanding usage of the Reformation analogy makes an examination of the subject worthwhile. However, to understand to what extent the analogy is accurate and useful, let us draw out three themes in the Reformation analogy, each of which is both found in the history of the use of the comparison and employed by various contributors to this volume.

The first theme might be termed "contextualist" and maintains that it is neither possible nor productive to compare transformations that are occurring the Islamic region. This view is articulated by Abdelwahab El-Affendi in an essay entitled "The Elusive Reformation." According to El-Affendi, many social scientists who attempt to account for the lack of democracy in Muslim countries by pointing to "prepolitical" factors such as Islam reach the conclusion that what is then necessary is a "Reformation" or "radical intellectual and ethical orientation of Islam."[65] Yet, in regard to the issue of liberal democracy, the Reformation of Islam is neither the problem, nor the solution: "an 'Islamic Reformation' is neither necessary nor sufficient for enabling Muslims to build stable and consensual political institutions."[66] The task for social scientists is, in his view, to understand not the extent to which a broad-based consensus exists among members of a community which allows for "consensual popular rule" (his definition of liberal democracy).

In this volume, the contextualist view is best represented by the contribution from Salwa Ismail (chapter 4). Despite the fact that revisionist writings working in both Western and Muslim traditions have questioned accounts of the lives and missions of Jesus and Muhammad, Ismail maintains that the Muslim revisionist thinkers she highlights are best understood through reference to the historical and discursive context out of which they arose. Only then can one accurately determine the aims of Islamic reformists, assess their relative importance, and gauge the response they have generated. In Ismail's view, using an analogy with the European reformation as a point of reference tends to create totalizing views of Islam and place Islamic societies on an anachronistic historical trajectory. Comparison with the Reformation period in Europe detracts from and, in this case, serves to obscure the unique negotiations between secular and sacred taking place in the reformist projects of contemporary Egyptian historical revisionists.

A second view, which might be termed "critical comparativist," holds that the European Reformation is useful as a point of comparison, but only in very

specific ways. For example, in her contribution, Michaelle Browers (chapter 3) argues that the analogy is only productive in a very limited sense and, in the end, the comparison may call into question more about the popular view of the Protestant Reformation than it reveals about the Reformation emerging in Islamic societies. Focusing on contemporary Islamic thinkers whose training does not place them among the traditional *'ulama* and whose thought builds upon but is distinct from the modernists of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, Browers discusses the similar hermeneutical focus of reformers in contemporary Islamic and sixteenth century Christian contexts.

Charles Kurzman (chapter 4) is considerably less hesitant about the comparison when applied to one particular case. According to Kurzman, the 1979 revolution in Iran has had the effect of transforming Shi'i religious scholars into a hierarchal institution with administrative authorities that even many Iranians regularly compare to the "church" and "clergy" in Catholic Christianity. Specifically, Iran's jurist-ruler (*vali-ye faqih*) and his followers have sought a monopoly of interpretative authority such that to cast themselves as the sole legitimate interpreters of the true faith and have become the focus for contemporary Iranian reformists.

Most of the chapters presented here represent a third theme, which might most properly be termed "comparativist." This view is both more convinced that an Islamic reformation is either well under way or has already occurred, and the most adamant in deeming the example of the Protestant Reformation as a productive basis for understanding recent transformations in Islamic societies. In an updated version of an article that was very influential in generating the current interest in the comparison among American and European scholars, Dale Eickelman (chapter 1) points to "the combination of mass education and mass communications" as an important material factor that is transforming both the means and manner of challenging, bypassing, and recreating traditional religious authority in the Muslim world. Eickelman describes how increasing literacy, satellite television, audio and video cassettes, and the Internet are contributing in various ways to an expanding marketplace of views and an emboldened public sphere.

Felicitas Opwis (chapter 2) looks at the changes advocated by leading Sunni jurists in the area of legal theory in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and the conditions that inspired them and finds strong parallels with the Reformation of sixteenth century Western Christianity. Although, like Eickelman, Opwis emphasizes the importance of educational reforms and the printing press as contexts for reform, the legal basis of the Islamic Reformation that Opwis identifies seems much less dramatic, slower, and harder to pinpoint—and at times more reactionary—than that characterized by Eickelman. In contrast to Browers' focus on contemporary interpreters, Opwis places most significance on an earlier generation of Islamic reformists, such as Muhammad Abduh, Rashid Rida, Jamal al-Din al-Qasimi, and Mahmud Shaltut, who used a concept

of social interest (*maslaha*) as the basis of their *ijtihad*. Thus, for Opwis, the Islamic Reformation has already occurred.

Mark Sedgwick (chapter 6) also points to the increasing emphasis on various forms of *ijtihad* at the expense of *taqlid* as indicative of the diminished authority of the traditional schools of Islamic jurisprudence. However, Sedgwick finds greater evidence for a process of reformation in the nineteenth century in the consequences of that reformation. According to Sedgwick, the eclipsing of Sufi beliefs and practices in Muslim societies holds parallels with the eclipse of central elements of Catholic beliefs and practices in early Protestantism. Sedgwick finds the eclipsing of Sufi authority most apparent in the response of the Budshishiyya, a Moroccan Sufi order that has enacted what Sedgwick characterizes as an important, albeit limited, counterreformation. Since the 1960s, the Budshishiyya's counterreformation has met success in confronting the anti-Sufi stereotypes generated by the Islamic reformation—stereotypes similar in many respects to early Protestant stereotypes of Rome—and reestablishing Sufi practices and beliefs among elites.

The contributions of Ernest Tucker (chapter 7) and Nader A. Hashemi (chapter 8) are most explicitly built upon a comparison between the Reformation in Europe and transformations under way in Muslim countries. In a comparison of the Anabaptists of Münster in the 1530s and the Talibans of Afghanistan in the 1990s, Tucker finds that, despite the very different outcomes of these two movements, each group displayed a similar "primitivism" in their response to a period of religious crisis. Münsterites and Talibans both dealt with change by attempting to "purify" and "cleanse" religious truth of worldly elements, both articulated religious doctrine in "consciously naïve and extremist" ways, and each dealt similarly with women and with other religious forces that opposed them.

Hashemi also uses the sixteenth century as the focus of his comparison for the lessons he argues it provides for Muslim societies dealing with modernization and religio-political conflict. Like the Reformation in Europe, the Reformation taking place in the Middle East promises to be complicated, with reformist trends emerging among counterreformation forces. But Hashemi's longer view of history suggests that trends like "fundamentalist" Islamic should not be seen as antimodernization or regressive, but as genuine response to social transformations and as part of a process that in the long-term effect may portend significant political development for the region.

Notes

1. Ayelet Savyon, "The Call for Islamic Protestantism: Dr. Hashem Aghajari's Speech and Subsequent Death Sentence," *The Middle East Media Research Institute Special Dispatch Series* 445, 2 December 2002, www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=subjects&Area=reform&ID=SP44502 (24 March 2003).

2. Matahati Mazeni Alwi, "The Case of Hashem Aghajari: Islamic State Vision Comes Full Circle," *Malaysiakini*, 30 November 2002, www.malaysiakini.com/columns/20021130013683.php (24 March 2003).

3. Shahed Amanullah, "Human Rights in the Muslim World: Still a Long Way to Go," *alt.muslim*, 9 December 2002, www.altmuslim.com/world_comments.php?id=843_0_22_0_C (24 March 2003).

4. Norman Daniel, *Islam and the West: The Making of an Image* (Edinburgh, Scotland: Edinburgh University Press, 1960); R. W. Southern, *Western Views of Islam in the Middle Ages* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1962).

5. Kenneth M. Setton, *Western Hostility to Islam, and Prophecies of Turkish Doom* (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1992), 54.

6. Perhaps most famously, Voltaire's *Mahomet, or Fanaticism* (1745). Other examples can be found in Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978).

7. Donald Wiebe, *The Politics of Religious Studies: The Continuing Conflict with Theology in the Academy* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), 19.

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14. See selections in Charles Kurzman, ed., *Modernist Islam, 1840-1940: A Source-Book* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

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32. Saqir Abu Fakhr, "Trends in Arab Thought (Interview with Sadek Jalal al-Azm)," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27 (1998): 70.

33. Kanlidere, *Reform within Islam*, 56; Mohammed Al-Abbasi, "Protestant Islam," n.d., 65.39.144.73/ISLAM/misc/pislam.htm (24 March 2003).

34. The quote continues: "Unlike the sectarian tendency of Protestantism to garment into separate communities, however, Islam has been able to preserve its identity as an 'imagined community.'" Jose Casanova, "Civil Society and Religion: Retrospective Reflections on Catholicism and Prospective Reflections on Islam," *Social Research* 68 (2001): 1041-81.

35. Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Oxford: Blackwell), 9.

36. Dale F. Eickelman, "Mass Higher Education and the Religious Imagination in Contemporary Arab Societies," *American Ethnologist* 19 (1992): 643-55. Similar claims are made in Dale F. Eickelman, "Islamic Liberalism Strikes Back," *MESA Bulletin* 27 (1993): 163-8; "Inside the Islamic Reformation," *The Wilson Quarterly* 22 (1998): 80-89; "The Coming Transformation of the Muslim World." *MERIA Journal* 3 (1999): 78-81; "Islamic Religious Commentary and Lesson Circles: Is There a Copernican Revolution?" *Commentaries = Kommentare: Aporemat* 4 (1999): 121-46; "Islam and the Languages of Modernity," *Daedalus* 129 (2000): 119-35; and "Muhammad Shahrour and the Printed Word," *ISIM Newsletter* 7 (2001): 7. See also Dale Eickelman and Jon W. Anderson, "Print, Islam, and the Prospects for Civic Pluralism: New Religious Writings and their Audiences," *Journal of Islamic Studies* 8 (1997): 43-62; "Redefining Muslim Publics," in *New Media in the Muslim World: The Emerging Public Sphere*, ed. Eickelman and Anderson (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1999), 1-18.

37. Robin Wright, "Islam's Theory of Relativity," *Los Angeles Times*, 27 January 1995: 1, 10-11. Wright makes similar claims in "Islam and Liberal Democracy: Two Visions of Reformation," *Journal of Democracy* 7 (1996): 64-75; "Iran's New Revolution," *Foreign Affairs* (January-February 2000): 133-45; and *The Last Great Revolution: Turmoil and Transformation in Iran* (New York: A. A. Knopf, 2000), 33. Others have contested the analogy, arguing that Soroush is more like Islam's Erasmus than its Luther, remaining within the system even as he criticizes it. See L. Carl Brown, "Review: Reason, Freedom, and Democracy in Islam," *Foreign Affairs* 79 (2000): 148; Mahmoud Sadri, "Attack from Within: Dissident Political Theology in Contemporary Iran," *The Iranian*, 13 February 2002, www.iranian.com/Opinion/2002/February/Theology (24 March 2003).

38. Paul Donnelly, "Tariq Ramadan: The Muslim Martin Luther?" *Salon.com*, 15 February 2002, www.salon.com/people/feature/2002/02/15/ramadan/index_np.html (24 March 2003). Peter Ford quotes Ramadan using the phrase "Islamic Reformation" in describing what is required for Islam to modernize and embrace scientific and social changes in "Listening for Islam's Silent Majority," *Christian Science Monitor*, 5 November 2001. Tariq Ramadan is author of *To Be a European Muslim* (Markfield, U.K.: The Islamic Foundation, 1998).

39. Gretel C. Kovach and Carla Power, "Changing the Rule of Law," *Newsweek* (30 December 2002): 66.

40. Robert D. Kaplan, "Reform Party: Can Turkish Islamists Save Islam?" *The New Republic* 227 (16 December 2002): 13.

41. Martin S. Kramer, *Ivory Towers on Sand: The Failure of Middle Eastern Studies in America* (Washington, D.C.: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2001), 56.

42. Rod Dreher, "Inside Islam: A Brave Muslim Speaks," *National Review Online*, 8

January 2002, www.nationalreview.com/dreher/dreherprint010802.html (24 March 2003); Thomas Friedman, "An Islamic Reformation," *New York Times*, 4 December 2002: A31.

43. This is the premise of *Shaping the Current Islamic Reformation*, ed. Barbara Allen Roberson, (London: Frank Cass, 2003). The book's chapters were originally published in a special issue of *Mediterranean Politics*, 7:3 (2002).

44. Asaf A. A. Fyzee, "The Reinterpretation of Islam," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, ed. John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 189.

45. 'Ali Shari'ati, *Man and Islam*, tr. Fatollah Marjani (Houston: Free Islamic Literature, 1981), 106.

46. 'Ali Shari'ati, *What Is to Be Done?*, ed. and tr. Farhang Rajaee (Houston : Institute for Research and Islamic Studies, 1986), 25.

47. Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, "The Islamic Counter-reformation," *New Perspectives Quarterly* 19 (2002): 31-2. This article was originally published in spring 1987 and then republished by *NPQ* after the events of September 11, 2001. An-Na'im's is author of *Toward an Islamic Reformation: Civil Liberties, Human Rights, and International Law* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1996).

48. "Blood and Irony," *Economist*, 11 September 1993: F34.

49. Quoted in Yaroslav Trofimov, "As Taliban Falls Inside Afghanistan, So Do Islamic Rules Beyond Order," *Wall Street Journal*, 31 December 2001: A10.

50. Ali Mazrui and Alamin Mazrui, "The Digital Revolution and the New Reformation," *Harvard International Review* 23 (2001): 55.

51. In a similar vein, John Esposito has suggested that "Reformation in Islam is inevitable. . . . But Muslims are faced with having to do it in a very compressed time." See Nicholas D. Kristof, "Stoning and Scripture," *New York Times*, 30 April 2002: A29. In a recent book W. R. Clement deemed an Islamic Reformation "imminent" and warned that it would continue to "affect the rest of the globe in nasty ways." See *Reforming the Prophet: The Quest for the Islamic Reformation* (Toronto: Insomniac Press, 2002), 11.

52. Brian Beedham, "It Is Now the Year 1415," *Economist*, 6 August 1994: 14-16.

53. "Islam's Arrow of Death," *Economist*, 11 March 1989: 42. An earlier use of the analogy in regard to the same issue is found in "If Rushdie is Killed," *Economist*, 25 February 1989: 12-13.

54. Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), 111.

55. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 121.

56. Huntington, *Clash of Civilizations*, 94, 101.

57. Syed Kamran Mirza, "Why Critical Scrutiny of Islam Is an Utmost Necessity," *Free Inquiry* 22 (2002): 45-46.

58. Joseph Kraft, "The Limits of Islam," *Washington Post*, 5 December 1978: A21. Almost a quarter of a century later another writer for the same newspaper made the opposite claim: "Just as Gutenberg's printing press helped spread the ideas of the Protestant Reformation, the Internet, e-mail and jet travel are now giving Muslims unprecedented access to knowledge of their religion and the world." See Caryle Murphy, "In the Throes of a Quiet Revolution," *Washington Post*, 12 October 2002: B9.

59. David Ignatius, "Islam in the West's Sights: The Wrong Crusade?" *Washington Post*, 8 March 1992: C1.

60. Martin Kramer, "Islam vs. Democracy," *Commentary* 115 (January 1993): 35. More recently, Kramer has articulated similar sentiment, with considerably more sarcasm: "The reformers, who have always been a small minority, are today even worse off than they were a half-century ago: today, terrorists threaten to kill them. By all means, let us pray five times daily for an Islamic Reformation. But let us admit that there is no Luther in sight who could inspire them." See Kramer's remarks in Francis Fukuyama, Nadav Samin, and critics, "Controversy: Modernizing Islam," *Commentary* 114 (December 2002): 17.

61. Quoted in Trofimov, "As Taliban Falls": A10.

62. Hassan Hanafi and Muhammad 'Abid al-Jabiri, *Hiwar al-Mashriq al-Maghrib: Talih Silsila al-Rudud wa al-Munaqashat* (East-West Dialogue: Followed by a Series of Replies and Debates) (Casablanca: Dar Tubqal, 1990), 45.

63. A. L. Tabawi's "English-Speaking Orientalists: A Critique of their Approach to Islam and Arab Nationalism, Part I," *Islamic Quarterly* 1-2 (1964): 41.

64. Louay M. Safi, "Editorial: Overcoming the Cultural Divide," *American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences* 18, no. 1 (2002): vii.

65. Abdelwahab El-Affendi, "The Elusive Reformation," *Journal of Democracy* 14 (2003): 34.

66. El-Affendi, "Elusive Reformation": 38.