

Lecture 1

Dar al-Islam and Western Christendom

A. Religious and Historical Roots

- **1.** The Quran is to Muslims what Christ, not the Bible, is to Christians.
- **2.** Islam is based on sacred law called the shariah as well as mystical elements.
- **3.** The two civilizations created by the two Abrahamic religions, Islam and Christianity, have remarkable similarities and remarkable contrasts.
- **4.** Christendom is made up of Eastern and Western realms—Islam did not experience these same divisions in the same way.

- **B. The Geography of Dar al-Islam and Western Christendom**

- **1.** Islam and Western Christianity were marked by different geography.
- **2.** Western Christianity was more isolated by geography, whereas Islamic civilization was geographically much more extensive.

- **C. The Founding of the Two Civilizations**
- **1.** The Islamic world was marked by various ethnic groups and families of languages.
- **2.** Western Christendom was more homogenized in terms of ethnicity and language.

- **C. The Founding of the Two Civilizations**
- **3.** The Islamic world had greater diversity in these categories, its population including Arabs who are Semites, Persians who belong to the Indo- Iranian group, Turks who are Altaic, black Africans, and various South and Southeast Asian groups.
- **4.** The question of race was always different between the two civilizations, Islam paying little attention to racial differences.

- **D. The Significance of Arabic and Latin and the Role of Vernacular Languages in Each Civilization**

- **1.** Latin and Arabic played comparable roles in Western Christendom and *Dar al-Islam*, respectively.
- **2.** Latin, the language of the Roman Empire, was adopted as liturgical language by the Catholic Church in Europe and became also the language of learning.
- **3.** One cannot overemphasize the importance of Arabic in Islam; it is the sacred, not liturgical, language of Islam; Quranic Arabic corresponds in a sense to the body of Christ in Christianity.

- **D. The Significance of Arabic and Latin and the Role of Vernacular Languages in Each Civilization**

- **4.** Quranic Arabic is the external embodiment of the Word of God; wherever you are in the world the sacred rites of Islam are performed in Arabic—it is more analogous to Hebrew for Judaism than to Latin for Christianity.
- **5.** Many have argued that from the eighth to the fifteenth century, Arabic was the most important scholarly and scientific language in the world along with Persian (the other Islamic classic language).

- **E. Christianization and Islamization**

- **1.** Islam and Christianity have been subject to various interpretations: Islam (Sunnism and Shi'ism) and Christianity (Catholicism, Orthodoxy, and Protestantism).
- **2.** The Quran is the collected words revealed to Muhammad.
- **3.** Both Islam and Christianity are relatively recent religions and are heirs to more archaic faiths.

- **E. Christianization and Islamization**

- **5.** A unified Christianity replaced paganism by the age of Charlemagne, but outside of Arabia, the religions that Islam supplanted were never dismissed by Islam as pagan faiths—they were seen as earlier revelations and some of their members have survived as religious minorities within the Islamic world. So the dynamic of conversion was different in the case of the two religions.
- **6.** By the time of the death of Muhammad, the Arabs were unified for the first time in their history.

- **E. Christianization and Islamization**

- **7.** The idea that Islam was spread by the sword is not quite accurate, as a great dissatisfaction with imperial rule and oppression in the Byzantine and Persian Empires caused people to embrace Islam.
- **8.** The early spread of Islam was only the first phase; later it spread among the Turks, and also in India, China, and black Africa, mostly through Sufism and, to some extent, mercantile activity.