

(Read now) The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization

## The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization

*Richard Bulliet*

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#355398 in Books Richard W Bulliet 2006-02-01Original language:EnglishPDF # 1 8.26 x .43 x 5.58l, .51  
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**Richard Bulliet : The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Important ReadBy Marion B CateThis is an important reality check on all the fear-based BS being said about Arabs and Islam.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A different viewpointBy Anne RothThis Middle East scholar has offered a different view of how we might perceive the dialogue/wrangle between Islamic countries and "Western" countries based in a religious background. I agree with his understanding, since so much of the political rhetoric about Islamic countries has utterly ignored the bedrock of their

faith tradition.<sup>2</sup> of 3 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting  
By Matthew Smith  
This is a very nuanced approach at analyzing the evolution of these two religions. What makes the author's approach so interesting is that it looks at both religions together and juxtaposes the two so that the reader can see how both shaped and were shaped by history, culture, geography and each religions own idiosyncrasies that came with the growth of both religious movements. This method shows the reader that neither was isolated, but both were actually in constant contact which influenced the growth of both movements. Whether it was Chistianity (and Judiasm) laying the ground work by acclamating peoples to the idea of monotheism which eventually allowed for Islam to make a smooth transition within its eventual spheres of influence, or whether it was the technological inovations that helped lead Europe into the enlightenment, both movements have greatly influenced each other. The author's discussion of the differences between each religion's approach to governance actually goes a long way in explaining the differences between the two. Whereas Christianity directly confronted and faught wars with the political elites, Islam generally refrained from direct confrontation with the political establishment preferring an imperfect ruler to the potential anarchy of a civil war between the religious elite and the political elite. This meant that Europe was racked with the very anarchy and devastation that Islam's more acquiescent stance avoided in the Middle Ages. While Europe was languishing during the Thirty Years war, the areas under Islamic influence were flourishing. Of course later on these destructive wars helped Europe to centralize and create the first modern states later on that helped Europe to eventually move into ascendancy. On the other hand Islam has not decided its course, and instead their is an uneasy wedding of corrupt regimes propped up by religious legitimacy. The problem being that the religious elites lose their legitimacy by condoning these despotic and corrupt regimes, and since Islam lacks the centralization of religious authority, Islam is seeing a crisis of authority. The author looks at Middle East scholarship as well. He makes the case that most experts tend to look at the Middle East and Islam through the Western point of view. This often times has lead Western scholars to see only what they wanted to see from the beginning. The problem is this doesn't take into account that these societies have a different set of values and a different trajectory in their evolution. A Western-centric approach sees the Western style as the ideal and presupposes that Muslims will see this as well, and therefore will seek to emulate the West. This approach fails to understand that they may not see us as the ideal, but instead may seek to incorporate their own values and ideals into a synthesis with those Western ideals they find virtuous. This means that, while Islam and societies with Islamic majorities are moving, the direction in all likely hood will not be the same direction as the West. In the end this is only one way to look at these two religious movements, and what I really like is that the author is honest in his approach. In the very title the author makes clear that this is not the only way to analyze these movements. The author is simply making a case, and his case is quite compelling. I highly recommend this book.

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.

From Publishers Weekly  
Bulliet, a history professor at Columbia University and a former director of the Middle East Institute, offers a short, insightful book about Islam and Muslims that actually provides hope for the future. The book consists of four essays arguing that Islam and Christianity have tremendous common roots and history as much as, or more than, Christianity and Judaism. Bulliet also contends that Western Christian policymakers and commentators, when encountering Islam, have reacted with knee-jerk Islamophobia and generalizations rather than thoughtfulness. Bulliet envisions a future, 20 years off at least, where Islamic countries will have active democracies. He also debunks the popular view that Islam has an inherent separation of church and state problem; Christians have had similar issues in the past, as he shows with the Church of England and other examples. Bulliet's optimism which is backed up by solid arguments is alluring, particularly where his counterparts can offer only gloom-and-doom scenarios. Bulliet's most brilliant insight, which comes in the last chapter, is the recognition that those Islamic movements on the fringe eventually become the center of Islam. The new leaders of Islam probably those on the edge now, who have shown more diverse, tolerant attitudes have not yet been heard from, he says. Although portions are written densely, this book

is a quick, informative, and encouraging read. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. Richard Bulliet's *The Case for Islamo-Christian Civilization* re-examines most of the prejudices of the West about the Muslim world and Islamic politics (and about the West itself) and finds them not only wrong but wrongly conceived.... He argues that modern European and Muslim history are deeply intertwined and that one cannot be understood in isolation from the other, thereby launching a profound challenge to teachers, historians and policy-makers. (Juan Cole, University of Michigan *The International Journal of Middle East Studies*) [An] insightful book about Islam and Muslims that actually provides hope for the future.... this book is a quick, informative, and encouraging read. (Publishers Weekly) A clearly written book, aimed at the general reader... requires a place on the library shelf (Steve Young *Library Journal*) Presents a persuasive case for viewing Islam and the West... [a] brilliant new book (Emran Qureshi *Toronto Globe and Mail*) Seeks to bridge a gap between Islam and the West... His solution is to try to patch things up by emphasizing all that Islam and Christianity have in common. (Daniel Lazare *The Nation*) As Bulliet writes... there is a far better case for 'Islam-Christian civilization' than there is for a clash of civilizations. (Washington *Monthly*) Offers a rich lode of penetrating insights. (L. Carl Brown *Foreign Affairs*) A positive and challenging proposal, underscoring the importance of the phrases we use in defining our world. (Future *Survey*) Obviously, this is an important book with the important proposal to familiarize everyone with the term "Islam-Christian civilization". Let us take heed. (Murad Wilfried Hofmann *The Muslim World Book*) It deserves the widest possible readership, addressing as it does with wit and insight one of the most freighted issues of our times. (Malise Ruthven *Times Literary Supplement*) Bulliet's ideas are collectively imaginative and a major contribution... No reader will see the history either of Christendom or Islam in quite the same way. (Ronald Davis *Domes*) Great scholarship and vision... Bulliet offers rare insights in the Islamic and the (post)-Christian worlds. (Johannes J. G. Jansen *International History*) An excellent touchstone... this is not a volume that should be ignored. (John J. Curry, Ph.D. *Digest of Middle East Studies*) [A] wise and wonderful book. (Howard J. Dooley *Journal of World History*) [These essays] emanate from a fair-minded approach to strident debates - written, if you will, from the center. (*International Journal of Middle East Studies*)

About the Author Richard W. Bulliet is professor of history at Columbia University. A former director of the Middle East Institute and executive secretary of the Middle East Studies Association, he is the author of *Islam: The View from the Edge*, *The Camel and The Wheel*, and editor of *The Columbia History of the Twentieth Century*. He lives in New York City.