

tradition about the practices of Israelite enemies, there are other clues that suggest at least the possibility that the Transjordanian peoples were acquainted with human or child sacrifice. One notes that the Deir 'Allā inscriptions from the mid-eighth century BCE, which relate to a certain prophet Balaam (compare the biblical non-Israelite prophet of the same name in *Nm.* 22–24), have several key words that might indicate child sacrifice was practiced in the region (e.g., *nqr* “sprout” or “scion” for a human sacrificial victim, *mlk* as the word for a kind of offering). In fact, child sacrifice constitutes a highly debated topic in modern scholarship concerning the Phoenician and Punic world.

PRIESTS AND PROPHETS. *Jeremiah* 48:7 refers to priests of Kemosh, but evidence for other cultic practitioners is unknown. It has been suggested that line 32 in the MI, “Kemosh said to me, ‘Go down, fight against Ḥawronen,’” indicates divination of some sort, requiring a prophet or the like to obtain an oracle or vision from the deity. The hiring of Balaam by King Balak of Moab to curse the Israelites in *Numbers* 22–24 perhaps also indicates that the Moabites used seers and diviners.

SACRED WARFARE AND DIVINE INTERVENTION. In the MI, King Mesha says he dedicated to Kemosh the Israelite inhabitants of the cities 'Aṣaroth and Nebo. The idea of sacred battles and a consecrated massacre of peoples (including men, women, and children) is shared with the Hebrew Bible's theological accounts of the Israelite conquest of Canaan, in which Yahweh is said to demand such a destruction (with use of the root *ḥrm* in, for example, *Dt.* 7:2, 20:16–17; *Jos.* 6:17–19, 21; *1 Sm.* 15:3; compare line 17 of the MI). In fact, the MI can actually be seen as a religious document that has the same theological tone and envisions the same divine involvement in human affairs as the Hebrew Bible.

AFTERLIFE. There is no textual evidence for Moabite beliefs in an afterlife. However, the Iron Age II rock-cut tombs at Dhībān from around the time of Mesha contain mortuary goods such as pottery, jewelry, and at least one anthropoid clay coffin, suggesting a Moabite concern for proper burial with an eye to needs in the afterlife. There has also been some speculation that since Kemosh was perhaps associated with the gods of the netherworld, Moabites might have believed in some form of continued existence after death.

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TAWNY L. HOLM (2005)

MODERNISM

This entry consists of the following articles:

ISLAMIC MODERNISM
CHRISTIAN MODERNISM

MODERNISM: ISLAMIC MODERNISM

As is the case with a number of other Islamic discourses, it can be hard to locate the precise boundary of Islamic modernism. Few Muslims explicitly self-identify as “Muslim modernists,” instead referring to themselves simply as Muslims, Muslims involved in the process of reform and renewal, Muslims committed to democracy, or even Muslims intent on reviving the original spirit of Islam. In this essay, Islamic modernism is defined as those discourses of Islamic thought and practice in the last two centuries in which modernity itself is seen as a viable category to be engaged and drawn upon, not merely dismissed or used as a foil to define oneself against. In other words, advocates of Islamic modernism are not simply modern Muslims but those Muslims who see something (if not all) of modernity as a constitutive element of their worldview and practice.

As is the case with other intellectual and religious traditions, Islamic engagements with modernity have been neither static nor uniform. Traditions ranging from the revivalism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the rationalizing and Salafī tendencies of the early twentieth century, as well as liberal movements of the twentieth century onto the progressive Muslim movement of the twenty-first

century, can all be discussed under the broad parameter of Islamic modernism. At times, it has been difficult to locate the boundary between Islamic modernists and some nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Salafī thinkers. While both advocated fresh interpretations of the Qurʾān, the modernists tended to engage modernity explicitly, while many Salafīs couched their language in terms of the “righteous forefathers” (*al-salaf al-salih*), the generation of Muslims living with and immediately after the Prophet Muḥammad in the seventh century. As the Salafī movement has become more intertwined with Wahhabism in the later half of the twentieth century, the overlap between modernists and Salafīs has greatly been reduced.

The discourse of modernity itself has not stayed static, as it has come under severe critique and contestation from feminists, environmentalists, Marxists, subalterns, and others. As the discourse of modernity continues to change, so do the Muslims’ engagement with modernity.

There has also been a long-running tendency among Western journalists and even some scholars to look at the more conservative articulations of Islam (such as those of some traditional religious scholars) and even Muslim extremists as somehow representing “real” Islam. Subsequently, these same sources have not adequately engaged Muslim modernists, who are unfairly dismissed as lacking a constituency or influence. Even more problematic is the view that any explicit reimagining of Islam is no longer proper Islam. Lord Cromer, the British high commissioner in colonized Egypt, once said: “Islam reformed is Islam no longer.” That attitude misses out on the vigorous and dynamic debates that are going on within not only modernist circles but also much wider segments of Muslim societies.

WESTERNIZATION AND ISLAMIC PARADIGMS. Part of the difficulty in establishing the proper boundaries of Islamic modernism has to do with the way that the legacy of Islamic thought in the modern era is conceived. Many Western scholars (such as Bernard Lewis and others) have seen modernity as the exclusive offspring of the West. As a result, they approach any other civilization that engages modernity through the lens of “westernization.” There is no doubt that the encounter with Western institutions and thought has had a profound impact on Islamic modernism both positively (emphasis on human rights, constitutional forms of government, adoption of science, etc.) and negatively (colonialism, support for autocratic regimes). At the same time, many of the issues that Islamic modernism engages today, such as human rights, democracy, gender equality, and the like, are truly seen as universal struggles. Furthermore, most Muslims who engage these issues frame their own discourse not as a borrowing or “influence” from Western discourses but rather as a part of indigenous Islamic interpretations. Positioning the Muslims’ struggles in these universal arenas as perpetually derivative vis-à-vis Western paradigms robs them of their own legitimacy and dynamism.

The above debate is also related to when one begins the history of Islamic modernism. The older paradigm that viewed Islamic thought as being hopelessly stagnated before being jolted into a renaissance by its interaction with European colonialism is now critiqued by many scholars. Without diminishing the profound experience of responding to the shock, inspiration, and violation of the colonial experience, it is also important to realize that some of Islamic modernism also taps into important reform traditions such as Shāh Walī Allāh of Delhi (d. 1762) and many others that predate the full-blown experience of colonialism.

Many Muslim modernists have readily acknowledged their interactions with Western models, institutions, and figures. At the same time they have been careful to cast their movement in decidedly Islamic terms. Perhaps the most common strategy for presenting modernism as an indigenously and authentically Islamic movement is through the framework of *ijtihād*. *Ijtihād* initially had a narrower meaning, referring to the process whereby Muslim jurists would arrive at rulings for unprecedented cases. Modernists have gradually expanded the definition of *ijtihād* to mean critical, independent reasoning in all domains of thought. In other words, the proper domain of *ijtihād* was taken to be not just Islamic law but rather all aspects of thought. In an egalitarian move, modernists often hold that it is not just jurists but all Muslims who have the responsibility to carry on *ijtihād*. The majority of Islamic modernist writers emphasize the need for *ijtihād*, often juxtaposing it polemically against *taqlīd*. As with *ijtihād*, modernists often came to reinterpret *taqlīd*. *Taqlīd* had originally meant simply following a school of Islamic law, or a designated authority (*marjaʿ*) in the case of Shīʿī Muslims. For modernists, who wished to highlight independent critical reasoning, *taqlīd* came to mean blind imitationism, becoming a symbol of everything they held to be wrong with Islamic thought.

Like many other Muslims, modernists have also cast their own struggles as perpetuating the spirit of the Qurʾān and the teachings of the Prophet Muḥammad. Modernists often insist that the egalitarian spirit of the Qurʾān in areas ranging from women’s rights to religious pluralism should take precedence over more conservative later rulings. The distinction between essence and manifestation (universals and particulars, or other similar dichotomies) is a common motif in the history of modern religious thought. Many modernists also argue for a situated and contextualized reading of the Qurʾanic revelations.

Modernists find Qurʾanic precedence for their own critique of tradition-embedded injustice by pointing to Qurʾanic voices (such as Abraham and Muḥammad) who challenged their own community, which had insisted on continuing “the ways of the forefathers.” In appealing to prophetic legitimization, many modernists have recorded the conversation between Prophet Muḥammad and a companion named Muʾadh ibn Jabal (d. 627). Muʾadh stated that if he found no explicit guidance in the Qurʾān or the pro-

phetic *sunnah*, he would rely upon his own independent reasoning. While the systematic nature of this anecdote may well belie a later juridical desire to legitimize their own methodology, it has served as a powerful tool for modernists to sanctify their own appeal to *ijtihād*.

Modernists also tapped into other traditions of Islamic legitimacy that predated the encounter with Europe. One of their most powerful means of legitimizing themselves was by adopting the title of “renewer” (*mujaddid*), which recalled a statement attributed to the Prophet Muḥammad: “God sends to this nation at the beginning of every century someone who renews its religion.” In doing so, modernists could lay claim to carrying the mantle of Islamic renewal, following established masters such as Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (1058–1111) whose *Iḥyā’ ‘ulūm al-dīn* (*Revivification of Religious Sciences*) had explicitly evoked the theme of rejuvenation and renewal after death and stagnation.

RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY. The crisis of contemporary Islam is inseparable from the struggle over defining Islam and the concomitant question of who gets to define Islam, using what sources and which methodologies. The question of authority in Islam is today—and has always been—a contested one. It has often been noted that there is no formal church structure in Islam, thus making the base of religious authority more fluid. However, the lack of a formal structure of authority does not mean that there is *no* religious authority in Islam. Competing groups of Muslims claim authority for themselves by appealing to religious language and symbols. Foremost among them have been the religious scholars (*‘ulamā’*) and the mystics (Ṣūfīs) of Islam. However, Sufism is a contested category today, and many in the Muslim community who gravitate towards Salafism view Ṣūfīs with skepticism. For example, the mainstream Muslim organizations in the United States, such as the Islamic Society of North America (ISNA) and the Islamic Circle of North America (ICNA), avoid almost all mention of Sufism (and also Shiism). Ismā‘īlīs, particularly those under the leadership of the Aga Khan, are arguably the most cosmopolitan and modernity accommodating of Muslims, yet they too are seen by some conservative Sunnī Muslims as suspect.

The majority of Muslims turn to the *‘ulamā’*, religious scholars, for religious guidance. However, many *‘ulamā’* today are ill equipped to handle the more sophisticated aspects of modernity. Traditional *madrasah* institutions in many Muslim-majority countries no longer offer the highest level of critical thought. Whereas these institutions historically attracted the brightest minds in the community, today they are often a haven for those who have been unable to gain admittance to more lucrative medicine, engineering, and computer science programs. By and large, there are very few *madrasahs* for the training of *‘ulamā’* in a curriculum that takes modernity in the sense of engagements with modern philosophy, sciences, politics, economics, and the like seriously. Ironically, while it is precisely modernist Muslims who are often best suited to handle those decidedly modern pa-

rameters, many community members view the same scholars with some skepticism because modernists are not usually products of the *madrasah* system. This skepticism of the community members reveals a great deal about the presuppositions of many contemporary Muslims regarding the “purity” of Islamic knowledge and how it may be “contaminated” by Western training. Ironically, this compartmentalized view of knowledge contradicts both medieval philosophical notions and certain contemporary rigorous interpretations of Islam. As early as the ninth century, the philosopher al-Kindī had stated: “We should not be ashamed to acknowledge truth and to assimilate it from whatever source it comes to us, even if it is brought to us by former generations and foreign peoples.” This epistemological pluralism is also echoed in the works of the Iranian modernist intellectual ‘Abd al-Karim Soroush, who states: “I believe that truths everywhere are compatible; no truth clashes with any other truth. . . . Thus, in my search for the truth, I became oblivious to whether an idea originated in the East, or West, or whether it had ancient or modern origins.”

The vision of Islam espoused by many modernists is a more liberal, inclusive, humanistic, and even secular interpretation of Islam that is greatly distrustful of Islamist political discourses. By “secular” what is intended is a model of social relations in which the boundaries between religious discourse and political legitimacy are not collapsed, not one in which one would seek an exile of the religious from all of the public domain. The modernists’ suspicion of models of government that base themselves on Islamic discourses often provides their critics with ammunition to accuse them of laxness of religious practice. Whether it is warranted or not, modernists have often been perceived as being less observant than their conservative coreligionists.

THE TWENTIETH CENTURY. One of the characteristics of the modernist movement in the twentieth century was its trans-regional, translinguistic, and transnational character. While figures such as ‘Abduh and Rida worked in Egypt, others such as Sayyīd Aḥmad Khān, Muḥammad Iqbal, and Fazlur Rahman hailed from South Asia. Figures such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī moved with seeming ease from Iran and Afghanistan to the Ottoman Empire. One could mention other well-known figures such as the Malaysian Chandra Muzaffar, Indonesians Aḥmad Ḥassan and Nurcholish Madjid, the Algerian/French Mohamed Arkoun, and American Amina Wadud to give a sense of its global reach.

Still, moving toward and into the twentieth century, a few Islamic modernists stood out above the rest. Almost all later modernists engaged the following figures explicitly or implicitly.

Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī (1838–1897). Along with his disciple ‘Abduh, al-Afghānī is seen as the most important of the nineteenth-century Muslim modernists. When in the Sunnī Arab world, he adopted the name Afghānī to distance himself from his Iranian Shī‘ī heritage. He was instrumental in arguing for a vision of Islam that adopted modern sci-

ences. He is a good example of the ambiguity many modernists have vis-à-vis realpolitik, now supporting the British imperial forces, now opposing them.

Muhammad ‘Abduh (1849–1905). Along with al-Afghānī, he published the highly influential *al-‘Urwa al-wuthqa* (*The Firmest Handle*), a title that harkens back to Qur’an 2:256. Initially exiled from Egypt, ‘Abduh eventually returned to head al-Azhar. Generally considered the most influential of the nineteenth-century Muslim modernists in terms of his impact on later thinkers, ‘Abduh was responsible for many reforms in the educational system.

Rashid Rida (1865–1935). Rida was a link between ‘Abduh and twentieth-century modernists. His *al-Manar* was one of the most important means for disseminating modernist ideas. He too talked explicitly about the need for renewal (*tajdid*) and renewing (*tajaddud*), connecting it back to the aforementioned *ḥadīth* that God sends a renewer (*mu-jaddid*) at the beginning of every century.

Muḥammad Iqbal (1877–1938). Iqbal is widely credited for having been the philosophical inspiration behind the creation of the state of Pakistan. One of the few Islamic modernists with serious interest in poetry and mysticism, he is remembered for having argued for the importance of dynamism in Islamic thought. His widely influential *The Reconstruction of Religious Thought in Islam* simultaneously harkens back to Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī as it pushes the discourse into the twentieth century.

Fazlur Rahman (1919–1988). A British-trained scholar of Islam, he highlighted the importance of educational systems in the reinvigoration of Islam. For the last twenty years of his life he taught at the University of Chicago, beginning a long legacy of exiled Muslim intellectuals who took up teaching posts in Europe and North America. A fierce critic of fundamentalism, Rahman is usually acknowledged as the doyen of Islamic modernism in the latter half of twentieth century. Unlike many modernists, Rahman was profoundly steeped in the tradition of Islamic philosophy, especially that of Mullā Ṣadrā (d. 1632).

PROGRESSIVE ISLAM. The most significant development in modernist Islamic thought in the last generation has been the various understandings of Islam that go under the rubric of “progressive Islam.” Fully immersed in postmodern critiques of modernity, progressive Islam both continues and radically departs from the 150-year-old tradition of liberal Islam. Many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century modernists generally displayed an uncritical, almost devotional, identification with modernity and often (though not always) bypassed discussion of colonialism and imperialism. Progressive understandings of Islam, on the other hand, are almost uniformly critical of colonialism, both in its nineteenth-century manifestation and in its current variety. Progressive Muslims develop a critical and nonapologetic “multiple critique” with respect to both Islam and modernity. That double engagement with the varieties of Islam and modernity,

plus an emphasis on concrete social action and transformation, is the defining characteristic of progressive Islam today.

Unlike their liberal Muslim forefathers (who usually were *forefathers*), progressive Muslims represent a broad coalition of female and male Muslim activists and intellectuals. One of the distinguishing features of the progressive Muslim movement as the vanguard of Islamic (post)modernism has been the high level of female participation and leadership. This is particularly the case in Western countries, where a majority of Muslims who self-identify as progressive are female. The majority of progressive Muslims also highlight women’s rights as part of a broader engagement with human rights.

Progressives measure their success not in developing new and beatific theologies but rather by the amount of change for good on the ground level that they can produce in Muslim and non-Muslim societies. As Safi and a number of other prominent authors noted in the volume *Progressive Muslims: On Justice, Gender, and Pluralism* (2003), this movement is noted by a number of themes: striving to realize a just and pluralistic society through critically engaging Islam, a relentless pursuit of social justice, an emphasis on gender equality as a foundation of human rights, a vision of religious and ethnic pluralism, and a methodology of nonviolent resistance.

Muslim libera(c)tion. Progressive Muslims perceive of themselves as the advocates of human beings all over this world who through no fault of their own live in situations of perpetual poverty, pollution, oppression, and marginalization. A prominent concern of progressive Muslims is the suffering and poverty, as well as the full humanity, of these marginalized and oppressed human beings of all backgrounds who are called *mustad’afūn* in the Qur’anic context. The task of progressives in this context is to give voice to the voiceless, power to the powerless, and confront the “powers that be” who disregard the God-given human dignity of the *mustad’afūn* all over this earth. Muslim progressives draw on the strong tradition of social justice from within Islam from sources as diverse as Qur’an and *ḥadīth* (statements of the Prophet Muḥammad) to more recent spokespersons such as ‘Alī Sharī‘atī. The Qur’an itself specifically links fighting in the cause of God (*Sabīl Allāh*) to the cause of *mustad’afūn*.

The methodological fluidity of progressive Muslims is apparent in their pluralistic epistemology, which freely and openly draws from sources outside of Islamic tradition, so long as they serve as useful tools in a global pursuit of justice. These external sources include the liberation theology of Leonardo Boff, Gustavo Gutiérrez, and Rebecca Chopp, as well as the secular humanism of Edward Said, Noam Chomsky, and others. Progressive Muslims are likely to combine a Qur’anic call for serving as “witnesses for God in justice” (Qur’an 42:15) with the task of a social critic to “speak truth to the powers.”

As is the case with many feminists and African-American scholar-activists, progressives do not accept the di-

chotomy between intellectual pursuit and activism. Whereas many (though not all) of the previous generations of modernist Muslims were at times defined by a purely academic approach that reflected their elite status, progressive Muslims realize that the social injustices around them are reflected in, connected to, and justified in terms of intellectual discourses. They are, in this respect, fully indebted to the majestic criticism of Edward Said. A progressive commitment implies by necessity the willingness to remain engaged with the issues of social justice as they unfold on the ground level, in the lived realities of Muslim and non-Muslim communities.

Progressive Muslims follow squarely in the footsteps of liberation theologians such as Leonardo Boff, who in his *Introducing Liberation Theology* deemed a purely conceptual criticism of theology devoid of real commitment of the oppressed as “radically irrelevant.” Boff recognized that *liberação* (liberation) links together the concepts of *liber* (“free”) and *ação* (“action”): there is no liberation without action. The aforementioned *Progressive Muslims* (Safi, 2003) volume states: “Vision and activism are both necessary. Activism without vision is doomed from the start. Vision without activism quickly becomes irrelevant” (pp. 6–7).

This informed social activism is visible in the many progressive Muslims organizations and movements, ranging from the work of Chandra Muzaffar with the International Movement for a Just World in Malaysia, the efforts of Farid Esack with HIV-positive Muslims in South Africa, and the work of the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, Shirin Ebadi, with groups such as the Iranian Children’s Rights Society. Progressive Muslims are involved in an astonishing array of peace and social justice movements, grassroots organizations, human rights efforts, and the like.

Toward an Islamic humanism. At the heart of a progressive Muslim interpretation is a simple yet radical idea: every human life, female and male, Muslim and non-Muslim, rich or poor, “northern” or “southern,” has exactly the same intrinsic worth. The essential value of human life is God given and is in no way connected to culture, geography, or privilege. A progressive Muslim agenda is concerned with the ramifications of the premise that all members of humanity have this same intrinsic worth because each member of humanity has the breath of God breathed into them: “And I breathed into humanity of my own spirit” (*wa nafakhtu fihi min rūhī*) (Qur’an 15:29 and 38:72). This identification with the full humanity of all human beings amounts to nothing short of an Islamic humanism. In this global humanistic framework, progressives conceive of a way of being Muslim that engages and affirms the full humanity of all human beings, that actively holds all responsible for a fair and just distribution of God-given natural resources, and that seeks to live in harmony with the natural world.

Engaging tradition. Progressive Muslims insist on a serious engagement with the full spectrum of Islamic thought and practices. There can be no progressive Muslim movement that does not engage the textual and material sources

of the Islamic tradition, even if progressives themselves debate what those sources should be and how they ought to be interpreted. Progressives generally hold that it is imperative to work through inherited traditions of thought and practice: Sunnī, Shī‘ī, Šūfī, juridical, philosophical, theological, mystical, poetical, “folk Islam,” oral traditions, and others all must be engaged. In particular cases they might conclude that certain preexisting interpretations fail to offer Muslims sufficient guidance today. However, they can only faithfully claim that position after—and not before—a serious engagement with the tradition.

Social justice, gender equality, and pluralism. Justice lies at the heart of Islamic social ethics. Time and again the Qur’an talks about providing for the marginalized members of society: the poor, the orphan, the downtrodden, the wayfarer, the hungry, and so forth. Progressive Muslims believe that it is imperative to translate the social ideals in the Qur’an and Islamic teachings in a way that those committed to social justice today can relate to and understand. For all Muslims there is a vibrant memory of the Prophet repeatedly talking about a real believer as one whose neighbor does not go to bed hungry. Progressives hold that in today’s global village, it is time to think of all of humanity as one’s neighbor.

Progressive Muslims begin with a simple yet radical stance: the Muslim community as a whole cannot achieve justice unless justice is guaranteed for Muslim women. In short, there can be no progressive interpretation of Islam without gender justice. Gender justice is crucial, indispensable, and essential. In the long run, any progressive Muslim interpretation will be judged by the amount of change in gender equality it is able to produce in small and large communities. Gender equality is a measuring stick of the broader concerns for social justice and pluralism. As Shirin Ebadi, the 2003 Nobel Peace Prize winner, stated, “Women’s rights *are* human rights.”

Progressive Muslims strive for pluralism both inside and outside of the *ummah*. They seek to open up a wider spectrum of interpretations and practices marked as Muslim and epistemologically follow a pluralistic approach to pursuit of knowledge and truth. In their interactions with other religious and ethnic communities, they seek to transcend the arcane notion of “tolerance” and instead strive for profound engagement through both commonalities and differences.

Progressives and *jihād*. The pervasive discourse of *jihād* has become thoroughly associated with Islam, to the point that one may legitimately ask whether the term can be redeemed. Both Muslim extremist groups such as al-Qā‘idah and Western Islamophobes in fact do use the term to mean a holy war. On the Muslim side, one can point to the public statement of Usāmah bin Lādin: “In compliance with God’s order, we issue the following *fatwa* to all Muslims: The ruling to kill the Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country. . . .” Scholars of Islamic law have been quick to point out that the very parameters of this alleged

“*fatwa*” violate both the letter and the spirit of Islamic law. At the same time, one has to acknowledge that bin Lādin supports his own recourse to violence through the discourse of *jihād*. This same sentiment is reflected on the Western Islamophobic side, where many Christian evangelicals are recasting centuries old polemic against Islam in a new guise.

Progressive Muslims counter both the Muslim extremists’ and the Western Islamophobes’ definition of *jihād*. Instead, they hold firmly to the notion that *jihād* is key, not in the sense of holy war and violence but rather in its root meaning of resistance and struggle. In this regard, progressives in the Muslim community emphasize the responsibility to engage the wider social order by confronting injustice and inequality, while always remembering that one must do so in a nonviolent way. In doing so, they are the heirs of both Muslim visionaries such as the mystic Rūmī (“Washing away blood with blood is impossible, even absurd!”) as well as exemplars of nonviolence such as Gandhi, Martin Luther King Jr., and the Dalai Lama. This new understanding of *jihād*, which seeks to uphold resistance to well-entrenched systems of inequality and injustice through nonviolent means, is one of the key contributions of progressive Muslims. Building on the comments of religious figures such as the Dalai Lama (in his Nobel acceptance speech), they recognize that even terms like “peace” are insufficient when peace is not connected to justice and the well-being of humanity. The goal is not simply peace in the sense of absence of war but rather a peace that is rooted in justice.

Also revealing their indebtedness to American voices of social justice, many progressive Muslims are also inspired by Martin Luther King Jr. For these Muslims, King embodies speaking out for justice from the depth of a religious commitment, from the very midst of a faith community to that community and beyond. Thus, he is a great source of inspiration for many progressive Muslims to be voices of conscience speaking not in the wilderness but in the very midst of society. Progressives thus seek to be voices for global justice speaking firmly and powerfully to the powers that be while perpetually affirming the dignity of all human beings.

AN ISLAMIC REFORMATION? Modernist Muslims are often asked whether their project constitutes an “Islamic reformation.” They answer the question in both the affirmative and the negative. It is undeniably true that there are serious economic, social, and political issues in the Muslim world that need urgent remedying. Much of the Muslim world is bound to a deeply disturbing economic structure in which it provides natural resources such as oil for the global market while at the same time remaining dependent on Western labor, technological know-how, and staple goods. This economic situation is exacerbated in many parts of the modern Muslim world by atrocious human rights situations, crumbling educational systems, and worn-out economies. Most modernist Muslims would readily support the reform of all those institutions.

However, the term *reformation* carries considerably more baggage than that. In speaking of the “Islamic reformation,” many people have in mind the Protestant Reformation. It is this understanding that leaves many Muslims uneasy. Theirs is not a project of developing a “Protestant” Islam distinct from a “Catholic” Islam. Most insist that they are not looking to create a further split within the Muslim community so much as to heal it and to urge it along. For this reason, iconic figures such as Shirin Ebadi eschew the language of “reform” and “reformation,” instead calling for a return to a real, just Islam.

A global phenomenon or a Western Islam? It would be a clear mistake to somehow reduce the emergence of progressive Islam to a new “American/Western Islam.” Progressive Muslims are found everywhere in the global Muslim *ummah*. When it comes to actually implementing a progressive understanding of Islam in Muslim communities, particular communities in Iran, Malaysia, and South Africa *lead*, not follow, the United States. Many American Muslim communities—and much of the leadership represented in groups such as Islamic Circle of North America, the Islamic Society of North America, and the Council on American-Islamic Relations—are far too uncritical of Salafī (if not outright Wahhābī) tendencies that progressives oppose.

Wahhabism is by now a well-known, puritanical reading of Islam that originated in eighteenth-century Saudi Arabia. It was not until the discovery of oil in Saudi Arabia that Wahhabism had the financial resources necessary to import its evangelical mission all over the world, including to the United States. In spite of their exclusivist ideology, Wahhābīs have had a great working relationship first with the British and since the 1930s with the U.S. administration. Lesser known is the Salafī movement, which represents an important school of Islamic revivalism. Salafīs espouse a “return” to the ways of the first few generations of Muslims, the “righteous forefathers.” Central to their methodology has been a recentering of Qurʾān and *sunnah* of Prophet Muḥammad. It would be a mistake to view American Muslim organizations such as ISNA and ICNA as Wahhābī. On the other hand, interpretations of Islam such as Shiism and Sufism are largely absent from these organizations, and the representation of important and contested issues such as gender constructions tends to reflect a conservative, Salafī orientation as well. It is in opposition to both Wahhabism and Salafism that many Muslim progressives define themselves.

One also has to acknowledge that the European and more importantly the North American context has provided a fertile ground for the blossoming of progressive Islam. Many participants in this young movement have found a more hospitable and open environment in the North American milieu than in Muslim-majority areas. Even the contested public world of post-9/11 America still offers great possibilities for conducting public conversations about difficult matters of religion and politics. It would be hard to imagine those critical conversations taking place freely and openly in

many Muslim countries. Also one has to acknowledge the significance of North American educational establishments, as well as many fruitful cross-pollinations with liberal religious institutions, human rights groups, and the like.

Challenges to Islamic modernism. Muslim modernists face a whole host of challenges. Many modernists have profound internal disagreements about issues ranging from hermeneutical approaches to Qurʾān and *ḥadīth*, women's rights, and others. More problematic is the ongoing question of modernity versus the hegemony of the West. Many modernists have wrestled with the question of how to incorporate political institutions, science, and the like from the same Western civilizations that have continued to colonize and exploit much of the Third World, including many Muslim-majority countries.

Some initial phases of Islamic modernism became entangled in apologetic presentations of Islam in which Islam was idealized and imagined as an initially perfect system that had only been sullied through the misogyny and stagnation of later Muslim generations. That presupposition does not enable one to deal constructively with problematic questions in the Qurʾān or the lifetime of the Prophet and the early companions, even as it dismisses useful resources in later developments.

Other challenges are external. Muslim modernists do not have a natural institutional home other than academia and some media outlets. They have continuously struggled to find a home in the *madrasah* systems, although in some places they have achieved a measure of success because of the efforts of Muḥammad ʿAbduh and others. In other cases, they live in exile (Fazlur Rahman and Naṣr Abū Zayd, for example) for having been persecuted in their homeland. Politically they have often come under attack from a number of directions: state authorities who find the modernists' political critiques disturbing; secularists who are puzzled by the modernists' continued involvement with Islam; traditional religious authorities whose own understanding of Islam is undermined by the modernists. In spite of all the above, some modernists such as Fazlur Rahman and Iqbal have the strange designation of being the target of persecution as well as large-scale admiration.

In conclusion, it is clear that Muslims are entering yet another age of critical self-reflection. Given the level of polemics and apologetics, it is extraordinarily difficult to sustain a critical level of subtle discourse. Yet these Muslims today are not merely initiating social transformation, they are reflecting much wider processes at the same time. They are well situated to provide the most balanced and critical synthesis of Islam and modernity.

SEE ALSO Jamāʿat-i Islāmī; Muslim Brotherhood; Wahhābiyah.

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MODERNISM: CHRISTIAN MODERNISM

The related terms *liberalism* and *modernism*, when occurring in a religious or theological context, are usually no less imprecise than when used with other references. As T. S. Eliot put it: “Liberalism is something which tends to release energy rather than accumulate it, to relax, rather than to fortify. It is a movement not so much defined by its end, as by its starting point; away from, rather than towards, something definite.” Accordingly the content of a set of doctrines or principles described as liberal depends upon that of the “orthodoxy” from which such liberalism diverges, or which it relaxes or qualifies. Much the same applies to *modernism*, which refers not simply to what exists today but to something deemed to be distinctive of today or of the more recent past, and so to be commended as such, in contrast to what represents a settled tradition or a historic inheritance. Defining both terms therefore presents difficulties, and an understanding of what either signifies is best reached by observing how in fact the word has been used, and in particular by recording agreement as to what it at least denotes.

The word *liberalism* was employed early in the nineteenth century to designate “the holding of liberal opinions in politics or theology.” Theologically the word did not at first have a favorable connotation. Thus Edward Irving stated in 1826 that whereas “religion is the very name of obligation . . . liberalism is the very name of want of obligation.” John Henry Newman went further and spoke in 1841 of “the most serious thinkers among us” as regarding “the spirit of liberalism as characteristic of the destined Antichrist.” Liberalism itself he stigmatized in 1864 as “false liberty of thought, or the exercise of thought upon matters in which, from the constitution of the human mind, thought cannot be brought to any successful issue, and therefore is out of place.” More succinctly, Newman condemned it as “the anti-dogmatic principle.”

Gradually, however, this view point changed with the broader adoption by theologians of opinions more or less

critical of received dogma or traditional interpretations of scripture. Employment of the word *liberalist* came instead to be a mark of approval, in opposition to attitudes referred to pejoratively as traditionalist, dogmatist, or even obscurantist. Moreover, liberalism was taken to signify a readiness not only to modify or actually negate certain doctrines or beliefs usually associated with received religious teaching but also to propagate views of a more positive nature, such as the necessity for freedom of inquiry and research and the conviction that new knowledge, when soundly based, will not prove subversive of fundamental religious truth but rather be a light by which to clarify and enhance such truth. Hence to be identified as “liberal” was regarded as a compliment by an increasing number of Protestant thinkers and scholars in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

At about the same time the term *modernism* gained currency, especially in Anglican circles, as an alternative, and preferable, designation for such theological liberalism. However, *modernism* has long been accepted in a stricter sense as indicating a type of “progressive” theological opinion to be found in the Roman Catholic Church during the pontificates of Leo XIII and Pius X, and many would now consider usage of the word best limited to this latter sense. “Liberal Catholicism” also designates certain tendencies in nineteenth-century Roman Catholicism, notably in France. Its concern, however, was more political and social than theological.

Attitudes that could in some sense be characterized as liberal or modernist have been recurrent throughout the history of Christian thought, but the movements or tendencies that usually carry one of these epithets are of nineteenth- or twentieth-century occurrence, and in the interest of clarity the present entry will observe this restriction.

The immediate intellectual background of theological liberalism was the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, with its striving for political, social, and cultural liberty. The criterion of “enlightened” judgment was the use of reason, in which the mysteries of religious faith were prone to seem mere relics of the ignorance and superstition of the past. Deism became the widely prevalent expression of this largely negative standpoint. A new era opened with the later philosophy of the century’s greatest thinker, Immanuel Kant, who sought by an analysis of the nature of knowledge itself to offer a rational justification for faith. But the answer he produced in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1781) was such as to destroy the long-established “natural” theology that most Deist as well as orthodox thinkers regarded as fundamental. In its place he put the witness of the moral consciousness: belief in God was to be seen, philosophically, as a postulate of “practical,” or moral, reason. The scientific understanding could not prove the existence of God, but the will, as the faculty of the moral life, required it. Kant’s own philosophy of religion—or, more correctly, his philosophy of the Christian religion—was embodied in his suitably entitled *Religion within the Limits of Reason Alone*, one of the main sources