3

THE FATEFUL GEOGRAPHY OF RELIGION

If language is the mucilage of culture, religion is its manifesto. Any revelation of identity through language happens only when the speaker begins talking, and even then that identity remains in doubt except perhaps to the most experienced ear. Is that skilled KiSwahili speaker a Mijikenda from the Kenya coast or a Kamba from the interior? Is that cultivated French speaker a citizen of Senegal or a resident of Paris? Did those fellows at the bar in São Paulo mix some Brazilian terms with their Japanese, and are they mobals rather than visitors?

Religious affiliation is another matter. Hundreds of millions of people routinely proclaim their religion through modes of dress, hairstyles, symbols, gestures, and other visible means. To those who share a faith, such customs create a sense of confidence and solidarity. To those who do not profess that faith, they can amount to provocation. For the faithful, religion is the key to identity. And such identity is part of the impress of place. Religion and place are strongly coupled, not only through the visible and prominent architecture of places of worship but also because certain orthodox believers still proclaim that their god "gave" them pieces of real estate whose ownership cannot therefore be a matter of Earthly political debate. To some, the Holy Land is a place where Jesus walked. To others, it is a gift from God. To the latter, it is worth dying for.

Countless millions have perished for their faith, but comparatively few for their language. Dutch schoolchildren of a former generation used to learn the story of a captured boatload of medieval mercenaries plying the Zuider Zee. To a man, the captives claimed to be Dutch. The captain of the boarding party had a simple solution: any real Dutchman would be able to pronounce the word *Scheveningen*, a fishing port on the North Sea coast. Those who got it right were given amnesty. Those who failed were thrown overboard and drowned. It is an unusual tale. Language, dialect, accent, and syntax can confer advantage, open (or close) doors to opportunity, and engender social judgments. But they are not historically linked to mass annihilation.

There is nothing in the religious dimension of culture to match or mirror the phenomenon of multilingualism. The Baha'i movement, based on a religion founded in the mid-nineteenth century by a Persian prophet, asserts the ultimate and inevitable convergence of all of humanity's belief systems, but despite its intellectual appeal and worldwide dissemination, its global impact is negligible. Other "universalist" religious movements have had even less unifying influence. Whereas children learn their parents' language and then, depending on their circumstances, are taught to, seek, or are compelled to widen their linguistic horizons, religious indoctrination has the opposite goal and effect. By the time they are able to read and write, children of religious households are enmeshed in the ritual and dogma of their parental faith, and only a tiny minority later convert to another religion. To watch seven- and eight-year-old boys bloody themselves in imitation of their Shi'ite elders as they march in the annual Ashura pilgrimage to commemorate the death in A.D. 680 of the prophet Muhammad's grandson is to realize the depth of this inculcation.

It is, however, just one (albeit extreme) manifestation of a global phenomenon whose effects are ultimately similar. The precepts of the faith may be implanted through rote learning of the entire Quran, as happens in Islamic schools called *madrassas*, by evangelical education in Christian "Sunday Schools," or by teachings based on notions of reincarnation in Buddhist seminaries, but the results tend to be the same: an often unquestioning belief in received religious dogma and an inability (for reasons discussed later) to tolerate, or even consider, alternative convictions. This intolerance is a key factor in the perpetuation of any religion and the sustenance of its domain, but its intensity varies, not only between but also within the faiths. Religion can constitute a dominant ingredient in the power of place, and that power varies geographically.

Again unlike language, religious belief and sectarian adherence entail sensitivities easily injured. Criticism of one's language or dialect tends to be internalized, and ethnic slurs can arouse wider resentment. But nothing matches the passion incited by religious insult or humiliation. What is seen as a minor instance of freedom of expression in secular context may be regarded as a capital offense by those

who view themselves as defenders of their faith. The interpenetration of religions—through migration, proselytism, commerce, military action—not only complicates the global religious landscape, but increases the probability of insult, intended or otherwise.

Religion's global geographic variation, like that of language, is changing. Even as Christian evangelicals challenge major denominations in their historic redoubts and Sunni and Shia Muslims compete in the Islamic domain, religious conservatism, also referred to as fundamentalism or revivalism, is rising worldwide. In this form, religious priorities are invading political arenas in many countries. As a result, religion is turning into a countervailing force, roughening rather than flattening the landscape of globalization.

RELIGION AND ECOLOGY

As is the case with human languages (yes, there are others), the global mosaic of religion is dense and varied. Taking into account all local belief systems as well as world religions, the total number runs into the thousands; and here, too, the species-richness gradient makes its appearance, but with a twist. Given the large number of small human communities in low-latitude tropical forests in South America, Africa, Southeast Asia, and New Guinea, it is not surprising that these ecological environs have engendered numerous belief systems. Higher latitude zones, including deserts such as the Kalahari and Gobi, have fewer communities living in larger, often emptier spaces (nomadism, obviously, is not a rainforest pursuit). In the moister tropical zones, moreover, a substantial majority of local and stable communities have developed polytheistic belief systems, worshipping numerous deities and spirits and attaching religious connotations to ancestors, animals, and plants. Peoples of the desert and steppe, on the other hand, tend to be monotheistic, believing in the existence of one deity only, although some also acknowledge lesser gods and adversaries such as devils and dragons. As in the case of languages, the religions that dominate the world map today are those originating in the drier higher latitudes, not those of the rainforest. You are not likely to find a missionary from Papua trying to convert Belgians to his faith. But it is no surprise to find Mormon missionaries from (desert) Utah among the forest dwellers of Africa or South America.

Cultural geographers and anthropologists noted such regional contrasts a long time ago, and initially drew conclusions about relationships between climate and "civilization" that reflected the unconstrained racism of their times. Anthropologists talked of mid-latitude (European) ecosystems producing superior cultures; geographers hypothesized about "environmental determinism" that ensured intellectual excellence, religious and moral superiority, family values, and personal virtues. One of the leading geographers of his time, Ellsworth Huntington, summed it up in a textbook this way: "The people of the cyclonic regions rank so far above those of other parts of the world that they are the natural leaders.... [T]he contrast between the energetic people of the most progressive parts of the temperate zone and inert inhabitants of the tropics ... is largely due to climate" (Huntington, 1940). Nazi Germans seized eagerly upon such scholarly confirmation of Aryan supremacy, and colonial powers saw in it a justification for their "civilizing" and Christianizing missions. The horrors of the Second World War and, in its aftermath, growing doubts about the colonial venture contributed to the virtual demise of cross-cultural research based on (or even remotely related to) ecological factors. For about a half century, most anthropologists focused on the customs and rituals of particular peoples and eschewed comparisons; cultural geographers distanced themselves in every possible way from the legacy of environmental determinism.

Not until the past decade did serious research again begin to address the question that had led Huntington and others astray: in what ways are cultural traditions and ecological circumstances interrelated? Among the key catalysts in this reconsideration was the appearance of a neo-determinist work by a highly respected scholar whose scientific accomplishments ensured its credibility (Diamond, 1997). Another came when a prominent and admired economist, less encumbered than geographers by disciplinary sensitivities, focused on climate as the key factor in the perpetuation of poverty and the continuation of conflict in poverty-stricken areas of the world (Sachs, 2006). A third factor was the growing realization that the wholesale rejection of environmental determinism had virtually halted research in an arena that, when appropriately investigated, would yield important insights into the fates and fortunes of human societies, ancient and modern.

Some of this research related directly to the question of religious traditions and their spatial variation. Anthropologist Melvin Ember

concluded that the gods of monotheistic societies in rainforest environments (of which there are some) tend to be far less controlling or threatening than those invented by desert dwellers, whose deities and dogmas often represent punishment and retribution (Ember, 1982). He reported that desert societies are more likely to be centralized, hierarchical, and militant, and that their omnipotent gods impose their judgments through promises of heavenly or hellish afterlives. The status and role of women, too, differ markedly. Among traditional rainforest peoples, women commonly ensure the stability and continuity of communities because several generations live in the same or nearby village; they may play important roles in local trade and other communal activities and are far less likely to be regarded as inferior. In many traditional desert cultures, women not only do most of the heavy work but are dominated by men who control their lives, conceal their persons, and isolate their activities. It follows that attitudes toward sex and marriage are more relaxed among forest dwellers than among those in the desert.

On what Mackinder called the World Island, where the great monotheistic religions were to arise, the link between dry environs and monotheism probably emerged with the earliest herding economy, when livestock, and especially cattle, became the first substantial property of value owned by humans, and men were the owners and defenders. Patrilineal descent systems led to monotheism: resources in the form of livestock, pastures, and water could only be expanded at the expense of others, for which God provided the vindication. Polytheistic farmers, male and female, must be overpowered, and controls put on women, in effect making them property of men as well. In the Americas, indigenous cultures living in arid environments never developed herding economies; most combined some farming with hunting and gathering and remained matrilineal, including the Iroquois.

What are the wider implications? Robert Sapolsky writes that ours is a planet "dominated by the cultural descendants of denizens of the drier world. At various points [they] have poured out of the Middle East, defining large parts of Eurasia…subjugating the native populations of the Americas, Africa, and Australia. As a result, ours is a Judeo-Christian/Muslim world, not an Mbuti-Carib-Trobriand one.…The desert mind-set, and the cultural baggage it carries, has proven extraordinarily resilient in its export and diffusion throughout the planet." He adds that rainforest traditions are not only less likely to spread, but also less resilient when uprooted. Not just languages, but also belief systems are being lost as "rainforest cultures, with their fragile pluralism born of a lush world of plenty, deliquesce into the raw sewage of the slums of Rio and Lagos and Jakarta" (Sapolsky, 2005).

If this seems to overstate the case, notably in terms of the "lush and plenty" of rainforest environments whose ecological fluctuations can pose severe existential challenges to communities inhabiting them, there can be no doubt that the power of place is substantially defined by belief systems, and that the most powerful of these arose beyond the forested tropics. The resulting process of dissemination continues today. Just what the future of religion is in megacities such as Lagos and Jakarta remains an open question, but it is clear that the faiths of the forest will play no role in these urban cauldrons.

RELIGION ON THE MAP

Although the map of world religions, like that of world languages, is of necessity a generalization, it does accurately portray the dominance of comparatively few belief systems over much of the inhabited planet and the crowding of many others into smaller and shrinking domains (figure 3.1). It is further possible to carry the language-family analogy into the religious context, because the dominant religions (Christianity and Islam, but also Hinduism and Buddhism) can be viewed as discrete families, even though their members (sects, denominations, orders) may not always be on good terms.

Cultural geographers and others studying the spatial and functional properties of religions are confronted by fast-changing patterns, even at the level of scale represented by figure 3.1. The map shows that the two dominant religions prevail over approximately 70 percent of the planet's inhabited territory. Christianity, a family of faiths that had its origins in the Middle East, is today the leading religion in the global core and in contiguous lands in the Americas and Eurasia. Islam, born six centuries later on the Arabian Peninsula, is the prevailing religion in the global periphery. Christianity spread into Europe, became the state religion of the Roman Empire, and dispersed worldwide on the wings of colonialism and migration even as

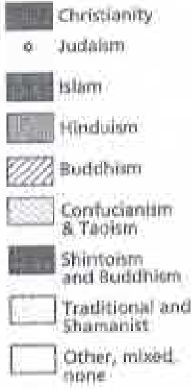

Figure 3.1. The domains of the major religions. At this scale, the map cannot display sectarian divisions or even significant religious minorities (such as the large Muslim presence in Hindu-dominated India). In tropical Africa, Christianity is the leading non-indigenous faith. Confucianism and Taoism are belief systems rather than religions in the traditional sense.

it split along sectarian lines. Islam brought to the heart of the World Island a burst of creative energy that forged a domain extending from Iberia to India and from Eastern Europe to Western Africa. To this day, the geographies of the two global religions are starkly different: Christianity disseminant and scattered, Islam contiguous and concentrated. Only Islamic Malaysia and Indonesia reflect a time when Islam, too, rode the waves.

What the map does not show are the numbers. Christianity still lays claim to the largest number of adherents, some 1.6 billion by latest reports, but many of Christianity's churches stand in countries that are losing population as well as interest in the teachings of the faith. Islam's followers are variously reported to number somewhere between 1.2 and 1.3 billion, and Islam is gaining rapidly because the populations in its part of the periphery are still increasing faster than the global average, and because Islam's appeal among disadvantaged and disaffected locals continues to grow. Today, the largest Muslim state lies not in the Islamic heartland of Southwest Asia, but on the islands of Southeast Asia.

Neither Islam nor Christianity, however, prevails in the two largest population clusters on the planet. Islam has a significant foothold in India, where Muslims constitute 14 percent of the population, and Christian religions are making inroads in China, where data are

unreliable but estimates suggest that eight percent of the population may have been converted. But between them, India's Hinduism and China's domestic belief systems account for about one billion adherents, although (and here the map makes an important point) their spatial extent, in global terms, is comparatively limited. From the map it appears that western China is mainly Muslim or Buddhist, but compare figure 3.1 to figure 1.2, and one is reminded that the overwhelming majority of Chinese live in the eastern one-third of their country. The entire combined Islamic-Buddhist area in western China (including Tibet and Xinjiang) contains fewer than 30 million of China's 1.3 billion people, and the Chinese presence among the indigenous inhabitants is approaching half the total population there.

By what it can—and cannot—show, the map identifies three kinds of belief systems. The genuine global (and globalizing) religions, of which Christianity and Islam are the two giants, have the widest distribution across the planet. Buddhism, also a global religion in historic terms, has far fewer adherents (under 400 million currently) but, as the map reveals, is also widely disseminated, its major presence dominating several states in Southeast Asia. Judaism, with fewer than 20 million members, was present at, and infused, the birth of both Christianity and Islam, but at the scale of figure 3.1 its presence is barely discernible despite its global diffusion. The regional (sometimes called ethnic) religions include Hinduism, more than twice as numerous as Buddhism but much more confined spatially; the Chinese belief systems; and other local faiths such as Jainism, which arose in South Asia in the sixth century B.C. in reaction to the cruel and ritualistic practices of early Hinduism; Sikhism, which emerged about five centuries ago, also in India, as a movement to combine the best features (and negate the worst) of Hinduism and Islam; and Shintoism, a blend of Buddhism and local beliefs that became the state religion of Japan in the nineteenth century. And for want of a more satisfactory rubric, the numerous smaller, often shamanist religions of the equatorial forests and other remote locales are referred to as traditional religions, mapped as such on figure 3.1 but, at a larger scale, shown to be surviving in areas far beyond the tropics.

Although figure 3.1 unavoidably delimits religious realms and sectarian regions by sharp lines, such discreteness is rare on the ground. The Muslim minority in dominantly Hindu India may be the largest cultural minority in the world, but it is only one of hundreds of such minorities living on the other side of religious divides marked on the map by lines. Albania is nominally Christian Europe's only Muslim-majority country today, but significant Muslim minorities inhabit other European countries, and should Kosovo's independence drive succeed, Muslim majority will be proportionately larger even than Albania's. When it comes to sectarian divisions, the mosaic becomes even more intricate. On the by-county map of the United States, the Southeast is predominantly Baptist, the Northeast significantly Roman Catholic, the upper Midwest Lutheran, the interior West Mormon. The complexities of the sectarian map of Iraq have only recently come to Americans' attention; these involve far more than a Sunni–Shi'ite split belabored by politicians. Numerous smaller sects complicate the cultural mosaic of Iraq, voiding any notions of a three-way split of the country.

And the map, as noted, is changing rapidly. The revival of the Russian Orthodox Church in the post-Soviet era is only one manifestation of this ongoing process; the expansion of Islam in Europe is another. In Africa, the traditional religions are losing not only to Christian missionary activity, but also to the advance of Islam along what has been called Africa's "Islamic Front" (de Blij, 2005). It has been suggested that today's map of world religions will someday represent but a transitional stage in the evolution of philosophy and science, but for the present it represents the outlines of a formidable challenge to those born in the shadows of its minarets, pagodas, steeples, and shrines.

Figure 3.1 is a legacy of millennia of religious maturation, and the scholarly quest for the origins of religious belief is as riveting as the search for the "original" language ancestral to all. That geolinguistic search, as noted in chapter 2, may be fruitless as well as pointless; languages probably arose independently in numerous locales, and several gave rise to enduring families. In the case of religion, the issue has recently become a matter of public as well as academic interest as scholars have come to view its relatively recent birth (in context of humanity's emergence some 170,000 years ago) in evolutionary and neurological as well as philosophical and moral terms (Dennett, 2006). This research has shifted focus from the quest for evidence of ancient religions and their influence on later ones—was Zoroastrianism the first monotheistic belief system and was it the source of that principle implanted in Judaism and Christianity?—to other arenas,

including genetics and neuroscience. In any case, it is no more probable that there was a single ancestral religion than that there was an original matriarchal tongue. Belief systems emerged in response to competition and challenge, provided advantage and explanation, and guided behavior and convention. They did so under widely varying environmental and social circumstances and evolved into numerous forms, among which a half dozen gained primacy.

ON EURASIA'S EASTERN FLANK

After three millennia of interaction and competition, one might expect that the planet would be showing evidence of a religious convergence, a softening of the dictates of place. But consider the two wings of Eurasia and the opposite seems to be the case. The major Chinese belief systems, prominently including Confucianism and its approximate contemporary, Taoism, arose about the same time as Zoroastrianism in Southwest Asia and Buddhism in South Asia, a time of extraordinary philosophical creativity in the mid-period of the first millennium B.C. Yet the Chinese belief systems were and are not theistic; Kongfuzi, as Chinese *pinyin* spells Confucius, was not a prophet who dealt in promises of heaven or threats of hell. Rather, he disavowed the divine ancestry of China's rulers, disdained supernatural mysticism, and focused his teachings and work on the downtrodden, the weak, and the landless. Kongfuzi tutored the poor, thus ending the aristocracy's exclusive access to knowledge (and hence power), and taught that human virtues, not godly connections, should determine a person's place in society. Although revered as a spiritual leader after his death in 479 B.C., it was his practical guidance, encompassed in a mass of philosophical writing, that became the roadmap for the People of Han and for China over the centuries that followed.

In truth, a substantial part of the work attributed to Kongfuzi did not come from his pen, although he did author what has become known as the Confucian Classics, 13 texts that formed the basis for education and demeanor in China for two millennia. A blend of Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist thinking (Buddhism reached China during the Han Dynasty, long after Kongfuzi's death) became China's state ethic if not a circumscribed faith. In turn, local belief systems, of which there were many, merged with the national creed to create, as figure 3.1 suggests, a region of Chinese religions.

Some maps drawn in the West show China as atheist or nonreligious, which reflects the viewpoint of their cartographers. True, Chinese belief systems do not involve an omnipotent deity or assurances of an afterlife of the kind guaranteed by Christianity or Islam. But elements of Taoist philosophy survive in Chinese religious thinking in the form of *Feng Shui*, the art and science of organizing living spaces and structures in such a way as to channel favorably the life forces that are presumed to exist in nature. To accomplish this, those affecting the land, from builders to gravediggers, consult *geomancers*, who know the desires of the powerful spirits of ancestors and dragons as well as tigers and pandas. When a new building is planned in Hong Kong or Shanghai, the architects and engineers will know how to place it, where to put the entrance, and what the best approach route is. Fail to consult the geomancers, and one risks misfortune or worse.

China's rulers have always had a difficult relationship with Han subjects who strayed from the national ethic to embrace an alternate faith, and with minorities who adhere to other religions as a matter of tradition. Mao Zedong not only wanted to expunge the imprint of Confucianism from China's cultural landscape; he also declared communist China to be an atheist state on the model of the Soviet Union. The Communist Party's minions tirelessly pursued any citizens suspected of covert religious activity, and among Han Chinese the Cultural Revolution effectively wiped it out. But China, as was the Soviet Union before it, remains a multicultural empire, and the vast country includes minorities not only speaking non-Chinese languages but also practicing non-Chinese religions. As figure 3.1 shows, Lamaist Buddhism prevails in the "autonomous regions" of Tibet (Xizang) and the adjacent province of Qinghai, and the forced exile of the Dalai Lama remains a dark shadow over Beijing's administration. And China has 10 Islamic minorities numbering about 25 million Muslims, among them the restive Uyghur of Xinjiang in the far west whose demonstrations and occasional acts of violence have been met by repression and executions. Muslim schools there are tightly monitored and their student numbers severely limited. Things have gone better in the more restrained Hui community of 10 million centered on the city of Linxia, where more than 80 mosques serve the faithful who have learned to balance their Islamic beliefs with their Chinese

citizenship (Yardley, 2006). On the other hand, the sensitivity and insecurity of China's communist rulers has been on revealing display in their near-hysterical suppression of the Falun Gong, a quasi-Buddhist self-improvement movement whose organized activities, ranging from mass calisthenics to educational gatherings, were deemed a threat to the state.

Allegiance to Christian faiths among Han Chinese is what troubles the Beijing regime more. Roman Catholicism had some surviving underground adherents when the market reforms began three decades ago, when they were encouraged to come out into the open. Ever since, though, Catholics have been carefully monitored, and Roman Catholic priests must be approved by the government, which has led to disputes with the papacy. The still-potent power of the Vatican, on vigorous display in countries of the global core, is anathema to Beijing.

The Pacific Rim economic boom that transformed the eastern littoral of Han China in one generation could, in all likelihood, not have happened the way it did had China been in the grip of a strong religious hierarchy. In this sense East Asia was indeed "flat"—internal mobals and external globals could meet in the common quest for economic advantage, facilitated by political decree, without having to deal with monks, mullahs, or ministers. None of the major players on this field had religious baggage heavy enough to slow the reforms. China's geomancers had a field day in the burgeoning cities on and near the Pacific coast, but renascent Confucianism had no impact on the economic boom. American companies and Japanese investors knew better than to add religious issues to the commercial stew. None of the many minority locals who took jobs in the mushrooming cities was impelled by religious fervor to demand social change. What happened on the western Pacific Rim is often referred to as a miracle, but the miracle was more than just economic.

THE WEST: COLLISION OF CULTURES

At the opposite end of Eurasia, migration is also playing a major role, but in an economic and political transformation of a different kind. As figure 3.1 shows, Europe's Christian history, involving bitter medieval sectarian conflicts, yielded a dominantly Roman Catholic south, a mainly Protestant north, and a largely Orthodox east. No longer visible on the contemporary map, except in small remnants in the east, are the centuries of Islamic rule over much of Iberia early in Islam's ascent and over Eastern Europe in its later heyday. Over more than a hundred years, including most of the twelfth century, European religious and political leaders organized a series of Crusades to confront Islamic rule in the so-called Holy Land, wresting control of Jerusalem from the Muslims, losing it again, but establishing footholds in the Levant that would open the door to later European penetration.

The sectarian fragmentation of Christianity began early and continues to this day; the three major divisions of the faith are only the broadest outlines of this fracture. Christianity had become the state religion of the Roman Empire, but the empire soon broke apart, and the church centered on Constantinople (now Istanbul) went its own way as the Orthodox (Eastern) Church. In the west, Rome became the center of the Roman Catholic Church and the papacy, and much of Western Europe fell under its increasingly authoritarian rule. The inevitable reaction came during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries with the teachings of Luther, Calvin, and other "protestant" reformers. Civil wars among Christians, involving the most terrible cruelties recorded in painful detail by artists of the time, cost hundreds of thousands of lives as the Protestant movement grew steadily stronger.

Europe's resultant north–south split carried over into the colonial Americas, where southern lands were colonized by southern (Catholic) Europeans and northern areas afforded refuge to Protestants seeking an escape from war and oppression (figure 3.1). In Europe itself, the scientific revolution beginning in the sixteenth century created the basis for the Enlightenment, the emergence of rationalism in philosophical and political thought. Now the basic tenets of Christianity, not just the dogma of one sect or another, came under intellectual scrutiny, and concepts of God and nature were freely discussed. Among the results of this discourse was the spreading realization that without sectarian coexistence, all else Christian, and indeed European, would be at risk.

The Enlightenment set in motion the gradual secularization of European cultures, earlier in the more Protestant north but also in the south, where the Roman Catholic Church today continues to lose its influence over national policies covering marriage, birth control, abortion, and other personal practices. Whether in the mainly Protestant

north or in the dominantly Catholic south (though hitherto less so in the east), Europeans are abandoning their churches and living secular lives, responding to surveys by stating their disdain for irrelevant Biblical narrative and medieval ritual. In Britain in 2007, only 6 percent of the nominally Christian population identified itself as regular churchgoers. Disillusionment arising from the Second World War undoubtedly accelerated this trend, but more practical issues—later marriages, weaker families, costlier living, urban pressures, uncertain futures—also mattered. Europe in the aftermath of the war was not only shattered but also disheartened, its economies ruined and its prospects shadowed by the Soviet-communist partition. Rather than religious rededication, it was economic revival, spurred by the Marshall Plan and ensured by the Treaty of Rome, that became Europe's preeminent goal.

Into this postwar disarray entered an element not confronted in Europe since the collapse of the Ottoman Empire: Islam. While the People's Republic of China was closed and shuttered to outsiders (except for a few Soviet "advisers"), Europe lay open to the world and needed labor. Again unlike China a generation later, Europe's workers came from external sources, including colonies and former colonies near and far. China's internal labor movements created logistical but few cultural problems. Europe attracted a Muslim influx at a time when Islam was in vigorous doctrinal evolution. Even as Christian churches stood virtually empty, Islamic mosques rose above traditional townscapes. Robes and burqas made their appearance on city streets; arguments erupted over headscarves for women and prayer rooms in the workplace. Countries that had incorporated and accommodated other immigrants (for example, from the Malukus and Suriname in the Netherlands, from West Africa and the West Indies in the United Kingdom) found themselves facing a different challenge with the arrival of more self-segregating, religiously more proactive mobals from Morocco and Algeria, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

It is revealing to view this influx in the context of the geography of Islam's sectarian evolution in the postcolonial period. Just as Europeans had laid their own sectarian differences essentially to rest, and the European Union could peacefully engage in a debate over whether its Christian heritage should even receive mention in the draft constitution, Europe found itself enmeshed not only in Christian–Islamic disputes, but also in the sectarian conflicts roiling Islam itself. There is a medieval echo in the intensifying Sunni–Shi'ite split in Islam, exacerbated by the American intervention in Iraq and the end of the Sunni dictatorship there. While the issue of the succession to the Prophet Muhammad lies at the source of it and is therefore ancient Arab history, its geography was altered fatefully when, early in the sixteenth century, the ruling Persian (non-Arab) dynasty was persuaded to designate Shia Islam as the state religion of an empire that extended from present-day Iraq and Azerbaijan across Iran to parts of Afghanistan and Pakistan. In the absence of this decision, Shi'ites probably would have continued to constitute small, scattered minorities in a Sunni-dominated religious realm. But today, some 15 percent of all Muslims are Shias, Shi'ite Iran lies at the core of a large, contiguous sectarian domain, and growing Shi'ite minorities exist in neighboring (as well as more distant) countries from Saudi Arabia to Syria and from Lebanon to Yemen.

Meanwhile, technologically capable, energy-rich Iran's assertive leadership in pursuit of nuclear power and in opposition to Israel dismays Sunni governments near and far. In the decade before it invaded Kuwait, Sunni-ruled Iraq fought a bitter war against Iran costing an estimated one million lives in which the Iranians sacrificed countless child-soldiers; had Iran possessed nuclear weapons, the toll would undoubtedly have been many times higher. In the first decade of the twenty-first century, Iran not only pursued nuclear capability but, through its belligerent president and with the blessing of the religious establishment, preempted the Sunni position on Israel. Furthermore, Iran sponsors and funds the terrorist organization Hizbullah, which, in Lebanon, has carved out a veritable state-within-a-state that proved capable of prolonged combat with Israel in 2006.

These frictions and conflicts became part of the European scene as the Muslim influx accelerated. Decades before the aftermath of 9/11 enmeshed European governments in the campaign in Afghanistan, and long before the American invasion of Iraq provided justification to Islamic terrorists for their violent acts, Europe had become part of the battleground of Islam. The Turkish immigration to Germany, creating a minority now approaching four million, came without historic colonial entanglements, but about one-fifth of the total were Kurdish, transplanting long-standing Turkish–Kurdish animosities onto German soil. The majority of France's five million Muslim immigrants came from formerly colonial Algeria in the wake of a bitter war for

independence, and among them were significant numbers of Berbers as well as Arabs. Spain's colonial involvement with Morocco as well as its proximity to North Africa contributed to the legal as well as illegal immigration of more than a million Moroccans, although many more moved north to France, Belgium, and the Netherlands. The United Kingdom's Muslim population originates from numerous Muslim countries (or countries with Muslim minorities) once part of the British Empire, including Pakistan, India, Nigeria, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka.

Western (and southern) Europe received immigrants from other source areas as well, but those from countries or areas where Islam is the exclusive religion brought with them especially heavy doctrinal baggage. The early indoctrination of children is not unique to Islam among religions, but no other major religion imposes its dogmas and divisions on the young as stiflingly as does Islam, and none segregates and relegates women to the same degree. Certainly there are comparable instances of extremism in other religions (Dawkins, 2006). But Islam's fervid recruitment and its demand of intense commitment put pressures on children, and especially boys, that are unmatched. These young locals find themselves in a social web in which unquestioning submission to authority, faith-based education, limited horizons, and frustrated aspirations become daunting obstacles when they seek new opportunities as migrant mobals.

These problems are worsened by the circumstances in which these immigrants find themselves in Europe. European governments have tried various systems to accommodate their mobals, and with some success; in Britain, for example, Hindu and Sikh communities have exhibited striking upward mobility. Not only did these South Asian groups leave their historic rivalries mostly behind, but their members tend to support each other in their aspirations in the United Kingdom. On the other hand, British "mosque committees are often dominated by factions pursuing sectarian rivalries that have South Asian origins.... [C]lans try to preserve a rural tribal outlook and prevent talented younger people from obtaining positions of responsibility. Not surprisingly, radical voices that insist that loyalty to a global Islamic faith take precedence over allegiance to the British state enjoy growing appeal" (Gallagher, 2007). Not only do Europe's Islamic mobals find themselves repelled by what they see as a decadent, irreligious society, but many are additionally thwarted by their own imams and their conservative allies, sustained by the global Wahhabist network and its vast fiscal resources. To them, notions of a flat world are simply irrelevant, and thousands have returned, radicalized by clerics advocating a global *jihad*, to fight the decadent West in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Although Europe's Muslim influx has created opportunities for Islamic extremists to plan and execute terrorist acts, and while such acts, including the 2004 Madrid train bombings and the 2005 London subway murders, undoubtedly contribute to Europeans' misgivings about the future, a far more important struggle is under way whose outcome will have a vital impact on Europe's social, political, and economic future. About 70 percent of Britain's 1.6 million Muslims are less than 40 years old, and the percentage for Western and Southern Europe as a whole is not much lower. A growing number of resident Muslims are no longer mobals, having attained citizenship and had children born in Europe. The fact that the young perpetrators of the London attacks included several British-born Muslims who had gone to public schools, played local sports, and showed few signs of unusual maladjustment shocked the nation, especially when their connections (and terrorism-related travels) to their ancestral homelands were revealed.

European governments are reconsidering the merits of multiculturalism and appear to be realizing that exceptional group rights for ethnoreligious (read Islamic) communities may produce leaders in those communities who gain and retain power by obstructing internal diversity and by isolating their followers from European society. By converting potentially integrationist mobals back into subservient locals, these leaders are transferring the most inflexible and retrograde properties of their faith from their conservative homelands to a Europe that still carries the scars of its own sectarian wars half a millennium ago. It is a battle of divergent principles in a realm whose indigenous population is shrinking and many of whose inhabitants have reflectively lost faith in faith—only to be confronted by the vigor, demographic as well as religious, of an unending stream of immigrants with an unshakable belief in belief. Those who ask "A Muslim Europe?" as did the *Atlantic Monthly* in 2005 are not guilty of hyperbole (Savage, 2004). Europe's economic, political, and social future is now inextricably enmeshed in Southwest Asia's past.

A GLOBAL ENDARKENMENT?

The contest between Islam and other faiths takes many forms in various regions of the world, and Europe is only one part of what is in effect a global stage for it. Even as Islam's sectarian divisions generate intra-Islamic conflicts ranging from political quarrels to deathly violence, and states, tribes, and clans in the Islamic world have long and continuing histories of internecine strife, Islamist movements confront Roman Catholics in the Philippines, Chinese secularists in Xinjiang, Buddhists in Thailand, Russian rule in the Transcaucasus, Indian control over Kashmir, Ethiopian power in the Horn of Africa, and other adversaries from Sudan to Sulawesi. Muslim mobals are arriving in countries far from the Muslim world—in Chile, Brazil, South Africa, Australia—and minarets rise in Lima, Buffalo, Vienna, Seoul, Saigon. There was a time when Islam diffused chiefly by contiguous expansion. Now it is spreading by relocation as well.

Islam's progressive contact with the rest of the world is subjecting the faith to scrutiny and analysis unprecedented in its history. The Quran and the Hadith are being read and examined as never before. The religion's (and its scriptures') designation and treatment of women have become topics of intense debate. How does a host country respond when an imam declares in a sermon before a males-only assembly that the beating of women is not only allowed but encouraged by the Quran (2:234) when such violence is against the law of the land (Bouazza, 2002)? Why does Islam, alone among the major religions, mark conversion to another faith as apostasy, punishable by death? Why is there no outcry among Sufi (moderate) Muslims when an Indian author of Muslim descent is subjected by an Iranian *ayatollah* to a *fatwa* authorizing his murder, as happened in 1989? Why cannot Muslims tolerate discourtesy, however outrageous, as represented by the cartoons depicting the Prophet Muhammad published by a Danish cultural magazine in 2006, and respond without violence and threats? How can significant minorities (and a few majorities) of surveyed Muslims express approval or "understanding" of terrorist acts on the basis of historic misdeeds going back as far as the Crusades?

To be sure, the mountainous intellectual topography of Islam has some high as well as many low points, and the questions just raised can be answered in part by citing the "demonstration effect"—the need to be seen to express solidarity with one's cohorts and ensure approval from religious leaders as a matter of self-preservation in community or clan. But the aggregate effect is to focus global opinion on Islam's low points. It is not true that having exceptional talent, productivity, ambition, or judgment is universally perilous in Islamic society; but it does entail risks measurably greater than in other religious contexts. In 2002, an Iranian court sentenced a university professor to death for publishing a proposal advocating an Islamic Enlightenment, but he was saved (for a jail term) when thousands of students took to the streets in protest. That such a sentence could be handed down at all is indicative of the steep incline between the vast depths of religious dogma and the few heights of rationalism in this historic and civilized society. Here is one reason why the number of books published per capita in the contiguous Islamic realm is about one-ninth of that of Europe. And here is a reason why hundreds of thousands of talented Iranians have made a success of their lives in non-Islamic societies.

The impractical notion of an Islamic Enlightenment (or Reformation) has been the topic of many a treatise in the post-9/11 period, but before adherents of other faiths take it upon themselves to issue such a prescription, they should perhaps consider developments in their own religious domains. In recent years the exposure of endemic pedophilia has revealed what is surely one of the darkest chapters in the annals of the Roman Catholic Church, not only in America but also in Europe; in Ireland "it is now estimated that the *unmolested* children in religious schools were very probably in the minority" (Hitchens, 2007). Christian critics who are quick to castigate their Muslim cohorts in Saudi Arabia for the treatment of the Islamic kingdom's women might refocus their attention on the misdeeds perpetrated in the cathedrals and churches of their own faith.

From the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism in America to the rise of Hindu "nationalism" in India, and including Judaic and even Buddhist orthodoxy, religions over the past generation have taken on a reactionary tinge, a back-to-basics posture that in some ways resembles the very dogmatism for which Islam supposedly needs an Enlightenment. Christian fundamentalism continues to burgeon as a powerful political as well as religious force in America, where the same activists who promote literal interpretations of Biblical texts and who indoctrinate children at the earliest opportunity also demand that these same children, in their schoolrooms, have a "choice" between evolutionary theory and so-called intelligent design.

Such fundamentalist revivalism is not confined to the geography of America's new "Bible Belt"; it may have a southern and southeastern core, but it has adherents nationwide. Some education leaders in the State of Kansas wanted to introduce intelligent design in the classroom; a major courtroom battle was needed in Pennsylvania to stave off a similar initiative. Nor is it limited to America, where Christianity faces none of the erosion it confronts in Europe. In 2005, the Minister of Science and Education in, of all countries, the Netherlands proposed an "academic debate" to consider how intelligent design "might [even] be applied to schools and lessons" (Enserink, 2005).

A significant consequence of the unlamented demise of Soviet communism is the revival of the Russian Orthodox Church in a society with constitutional but brittle separation between church and state. Church leaders are engaged in a vigorous campaign to insert religious dogma into public-school curricula, arguing that children should be exposed at a very early age to Orthodox tradition and liturgy. They have succeeded in implanting Russian Orthodox chaplains in the military and cast other faiths, including other Christian denominations, in unfavorable light. The leader of the church, Patriarch Alexy II of Moscow, often asserts that Orthodox beliefs and "the Slavic soul" are one and the same, and that the former is the spiritual and cultural foundation of the latter. Therefore, he argues, all Russian children must know about Russian Orthodoxy in order to understand the nation's history and heritage.

The Russian Orthodox Church has become a powerful player in the politics of a culturally plural and residually secular society, and surveys indicate that the church is gaining ground even as followers of Islam and Buddhism, two other faiths of historic presence in the country, are relegated to lower status. Impressively robed clergy are prominent at official government functions, and many people in the streets can be seen to wear crosses. Nevertheless, school administrators in Russia's nearly 90 regions have some leeway in yielding to church pressure, so place still makes a difference: in a very general way, the greater the distance from Moscow, the less pervasive the power of the religious bureaucracy.

Some observers suggest that the resurgence of Christian fundamentalism, which accelerated in America after 9/11 and has impelled electoral candidates to court radical preachers and their legions of followers, is in large part a reaction to the global ascent of militant Islam and its terrorist threat. But Christian conservatism also is a response to the rise of modern popular culture, much of which borders on the obscene. As a vehicle of cultural globalization, "concerts" involving onstage nudity, sexual innuendo, foul language, and other displays of decadence are deemed a threat to social standards and "family values" not only in conservative societies in the global periphery but also in religious circles in the global core. China's secular regime tries to control (to some extent) the content of such displays; the religious reaction in parts of the Western world is to go back to basics, whatever these may be perceived to be. Concepts of morality vary across cultures, but threats to it tend to elicit similar responses.

And religious horizons are being darkened in other areas of the world as well. In India, Hinduism has for millennia been faith as well as way of life, its fundamental doctrine that of karma, involving the transferability of the soul. All beings, animals as well as people, have souls and are arranged in a hierarchy determined by their behavior in past and present lives; good behavior leads to promotion, bad behavior to demotion. Thus the principle of reincarnation is a cornerstone of Hinduism: mistreat an animal in this life, and chances are that you will *be* that animal in a future life. The ideal is to keep moving up the ladder and then to escape from the eternal cycle through union with Lord Brahma, the creator. Although Hinduism is often referred to as a polytheistic faith and there seem to be countless gods in its pantheon, the other prominent ones—Lord Vishnu the preserver, Lord Shiva the destroyer, Lord Ganesh the elephant god—their wives, and the many lower ones, are all manifestations of the creator, Lord Brahma. And while it is often said that Hinduism has nothing equivalent to a Bible or Quran, it does have a holy book, the Bhagavad-Gita, a guide to the faithful and a chronicle of the gods.

Hinduism's incarnation-based reward system may encourage good behavior, but it also places a massive burden on those who are lowest on the ladder of life, because it implies that the lowest castes have themselves (in an earlier life) to blame for their condition. These people, once called "untouchables" but now referred to as *dalits* ("oppressed" or "broken"), are among the world's most disadvantaged locals and comprise as much as 15 percent of India's population. About 40 percent of the population are designated as backward castes, one important step above the lowest, and perhaps 20 percent are upper castes, at the top of which are the Brahmans, men in the priesthood

(non-Hindu minorities constitute the remainder). Successive Indian governments have tried to help the lowest castes, with greater effect in urban than in rural areas. In the thousands of isolated villages in the countryside, dalits are often made to sit on the floor of their classroom (if they go to school at all); they are not allowed to draw water from the village well because they might pollute it; and they must take off any footwear when they walk past higher caste houses. But in the cities, the lowest castes have reserved places in schools, a fixed percentage of State and federal government jobs if they qualify, and a quota of seats in State and national legislatures.*

India has a history of clashes between its Hindu majority and large (15 percent) Muslim minority, but Hinduism's image has long been pacific and nonconfrontational. Centuries ago, India was under Muslim domination, but colonialism and partition created a dominantly Muslim Pakistan and Bangladesh and a Hindu-dominated India. While Hinduism had diffused into Southeast Asia before the colonial intervention, Buddhism and Islam overwhelmed it there and left isolated Hindu outposts, of which the Indonesian island of Bali is in many ways the most significant. But when the British colonists transported Indian workers to far-flung places such as South and East Africa, Malaysia, Fiji, and Guyana, Hindu holy men made no effort to proselytize or convert locals to Hindu beliefs. To this day, Hinduism remains an ethnic religion; religious conversion is not an issue when Hindu mobals arrive as intercultural migrants.

It is all the more troubling, therefore, that this placid religion has been infused with a vigorous nationalism that is altering the social landscape of India (and, not incidentally, the map of India itself). India is a multicultural country in every sense of that term, but a concept called *Hindutva*—Hinduness—has become the rallying cry of religious conservatives who want to remake India into a society in which Hindu principles will be standard. Hindutva enthusiasts want to impose a Hindu curriculum on the schools, change the currently flexible family law in ways that would make it unacceptable to Muslims, control and inhibit the activities of missionaries of other faiths, and forge an India in which non-Hindus are essentially outsiders. A powerful political party adopted these ideas and had notable electoral successes, although the good news is that its appeal has recently waned. Nevertheless, Hindutva retains a large core constituency and has taken on the trappings of a Hindu version of religious fundamentalism (Fernandes, 2006).

Certainly the ever-present tension between Hindus and Muslims plays a role in this development, a tension heightened regularly by disputes with Pakistan over Kashmir and periodically by terrorist attacks that Indians blame on Pakistani Muslims, such as the terrible train bombings in Mumbai (pre-Hindutva name: Bombay) in 1993 and 2006. One of the worst incidents of domestic strife, in Gujarat State in 2002 where more than 1000 Muslims were killed by rampaging Hindu mobs, came at the height of the first wave of Hindu-nationalist fervor and was not followed by appropriate prosecution of the perpetrators. Some observers refer to India as "one of the three largest Muslim countries in the world," but of course it is nothing of the sort any more than Bangladesh is one of the largest Hindu countries in the world (Sen, 2006). India's enormous Muslim minority of more than 160 million has little formative influence on the politics of state. Moreover, it fares poorly in economic as well as social terms: in some of India's States, education and poverty indicators show Muslims falling behind even dalits (Sengupta, 2006). Less than 4 percent of Muslims complete secondary school. India's Muslim minority has a small number of wealthy and successful globals (including the scientist who developed India's first nuclear weapon), a huge mass of poor locals, and almost no middle class. But India is a democracy, and so the country's poor Muslims vote overwhelmingly against the upper caste party that espouses Hindutva. The implementation of the Hindu fundamentalists' program would spell trouble for a society whose tolerance for diversity is *sine qua non*, but India is not immune to the radicalism of the Endarkenment.

Proponents of Hindutva, however, may meet their match in India's chaotic and corrupt democracy. Reverting a multicultural country as vast as this to rules as rigid as Hindutva's is likely to prove impractical and may produce a backlash not just among non-Hindus but among Hindu globals and mobals as well. Indeed, globalization seems to be having a reverse impact on one of Hinduism's key tenets, vegetarianism. In 2006, India's National Sample Survey reported that the country's per-capita consumption of poultry meat had doubled in

* When the term "state" appears in this book, it refers to a country, for example the state of India. When it is capitalized, as in the State of Michigan, it refers to a constituent part of a country. Thus the State of Queensland is part of the federal state of Australia.

five years and that the consumption of other meats was also rising. The trend was attributed to dropping prices, ready availability, and the growing stream of Indian globals and mobals traveling overseas where they could more easily ignore the religious strictures of home. While the conservative Bharatiya Janata political party (BJP) railed against such violations of Hindutva's code, growing economic interaction with the rest of the world was even eroding Hinduism's taboo against the consumption of beef and water buffalo meat, production of which was rapidly rising.

For India's locals as well as mobals, the country's current economic rise spells hope. Jobs for which Indians used to leave the country are now arriving in the automobile factories of Chennai and the supermarkets of Delhi (Luce, 2006). So strong is the need for Indian engineers that salary gaps between local and overseas jobs are shrinking. The burgeoning telecommunications industries may not pay anything like their American or European counterparts, but mobals preferring not to emigrate have made Bangaluru (Bangalore) the high-tech capital of India. And here's evidence of the flattening world for globals: recent American college graduates are arriving in India for corporate training, having spurned U.S. jobs in favor of experience in the periphery and a future in an Indian high-tech firm. Still, before we jump to conclusions regarding India's own flattening, consider this: the internal migration stream from India's mostly poverty-stricken countryside to its job-producing cities is just one-tenth the size of China's. In India's 600,000 villages, hundreds of millions of locals begin their lives malnourished, impoverished, and without the education that would give them the chance to escape from deprivation and indoctrination. In 2008, nearly half of all of India's children under five remain underfed and an estimated 250 million citizens survive on less than one dollar per day. For them, the factories of Chennai and the office parks of Bangaluru might as well be on Mars.

If religious fundamentalism can afflict a faith as avowedly peaceable as Hinduism, what of Buddhism, whose image of tranquility and contemplation would seem worlds away from assertive Islam and Christianity? Buddhism (like its even more life-venerating cognate, Jainism) is a philosophy of life, an ethical system more like Confucianism than a religion in the Muslim or Christian sense. This is not to say that Buddhism does not have its vigorous advocates; the father of the faith, whose life spanned most of the fifth century B.C., proclaimed his distaste for Hinduism's caste system and preached that salvation could be achieved by anyone through self-knowledge, self-control, and virtuous living. Growing up as a prince in a small kingdom in what is today Nepal, he was appalled by the misery he saw around him, and as the Buddha (the enlightened one) he chose to lead by example. He taught tirelessly, traversing South Asia and gathering a relatively small but devoted following.

Buddhism had its Shi'ite moment when its philosophies, a couple of centuries later, came to the attention of a powerful South Asian emperor, Asoka. Not only did Asoka commit himself to run his kingdom in accordance with Buddhist principles; he also sent missionaries to carry the Buddha's message to distant lands and peoples. It is possible that, late during Asoka's reign, there may have been more Buddhists in South Asia than Hindus, and it is certain that Buddhism later diffused far and wide: west toward the Mediterranean, south into Sri Lanka, north into Tibet, and east as far as Korea, Vietnam, and Indonesia. But even as it spread abroad, it began to lose steam in its source area. Hinduism revived, and the arrival of Islam dealt Buddhism severe setbacks throughout its domain.

As time went on, Buddhism split into numerous branches, of which the two leading ones are meditative Mahayana Buddhism, prevailing today from Vietnam to Japan and whose followers regard the Buddha as a divine savior, and Theravada Buddhism, dominant in Southeast Asia from Myanmar to Cambodia and visible in the cultural landscape through its dramatic pagodas and the saffron robes of its monks. The Lamaism of Tibet and Zen Buddhism of Japan are other manifestations. Unlike other sect-fractured religions, however, Buddhism has no history of sectarian strife. And over the past two centuries or so, Buddhism has proved its global appeal, gaining adherents in the Western world even as it was under pressure from communist and other autocratic regimes in its latter-day East and Southeast Asian strongholds.

Religious radicalism has not inflamed Buddhism as it has other global religions, and in that sense Buddhism has evaded the Endarkenment plaguing other major faiths. But Buddhist-dominated societies have been (and are) in conflict with followers of other belief systems, and it is clear that Buddhists, too, can abandon their principles in the face of threats and provocations. Still, such conflicts do not take on the religious intensity historically associated with the two largest

religions. In Sri Lanka, whose population is 75 percent Buddhist, the majority confronts a mainly Hindu (Tamil) minority fighting for an independent state and a smaller Muslim minority caught in the middle. While the war is bitter and costly, it has never taken on primarily religious overtones, although Buddhist monks do engage in public demonstrations in support of the government side and play an increasingly obstructionist role in blocking government concessions to the Tamil rebels. In Thailand, where the overwhelming majority of the people adhere to Buddhism, a conflict has developed with the small Muslim minority in the southernmost provinces, on the border with (mainly Muslim) Malaysia. While the Islamic side proclaims this to be a case of religious oppression, the Thai government sees it as a matter of national security. Americans recall the self-immolation of Buddhist monks during the Indochina War; their protests were political, not religious, and their expectations were not of virgins in paradise, but of altered conduct on Earth. Their dramatic suicides were not aimed at American forces or innocent civilians. No attacks were launched against Vietnam's Christian churches in the name of Buddhism.

Nevertheless Buddhism, when it is the society's dominant faith (as it is not only in Sri Lanka but also in Myanmar, Thailand, Cambodia, Bhutan, and, of course, Tibet) or where it retains significant strength, as is the case in Laos, where about half the people adhere to it, makes a major mark on the cultural landscape through distinctive architecture as well as modes of dress. This is especially the case in the broad swath of Theravada Buddhism that extends across southern Southeast Asia, and in the monastic Lamaism of Tibet, where huge mountaintop monasteries dominate the countryside. It is less so in Vietnam, where most of the approximately 50 percent of the population that identifies itself as Buddhist adheres to Mahayana rules, which do not require service as monks or nuns and involve personal rather than demonstrative meditation and worship. In Thailand and Myanmar, the pagodas and stupas of Theravada Buddhism create striking, gold-infused vistas that confirm its dominance of the culture.

Indeed, Buddhism is recognized as the official belief system in Cambodia and as preeminent in Thailand, has special status in Sri Lanka, and in its Mahayana form is the state religion of the remote mountain kingdom of Bhutan. In Thailand, where more than 90 percent of the people are followers of the Theravada school, the national charter states that the government "must patronize and protect Buddhism and other religions." Ironically (because it is perhaps the most devoutly Buddhist society of all), it does not have such recognition in Myanmar, whose military regime has plunged the country into social malaise and economic ruin, where joining a monastery is about the only hope for job-seeking youngsters. If the streets of Myanmar's towns seem to be full of monks of all ages, it is because religion in some ways is the largest industry and monasteries provide minimal sustenance and some protection for their entrants. The Buddhist establishment had been remarkably passive in the face of the generals' excesses, even with hundreds of its order languishing in jail for nonviolently expressing their views, but in 2007 the situation changed when thousands of robed monks took to the streets in protest, flanked and cheered by tens of thousands of citizens. Ultimately it was to no avail. Citizens died in the streets, the protests faded, and the regime prevailed once again.

That even placid Buddhism is not immune from radicalization was underscored in Thailand following the outbreak of strife in its six southern (Muslim-majority) provinces, referred to earlier, where neither violent repression nor attempted conciliation could subdue an Islamic insurgency. As it happened, this issue arose during a crisis in the national government, resulting in the drafting of a new constitution. Buddhist nationalists (as they called themselves) demanded that the wording of the existing charter be strengthened in favor of Buddhism, arguing that the faith was under threat and required stronger government protection. This was accompanied by the spectacle of thousands of monks in religious garb marching behind elephants (the Thai national symbol) through the streets of Bangkok, representing a conservative clergy that is infusing Theravada Buddhism with a nationalist strain inconsistent with the precepts of the faith (*Economist*, 2007b). This crisis, too, waned, but not before a vein of radicalism was exposed in Buddhist activism.

Buddhism is often seen as the kindest of the major religions, but it shares with Hinduism the notion of demotion on the incarnation ladder as punishment for sins in a previous life. A nun caring for an abandoned, deformed child will believe that the child's disfigurement is evidence of dreadful misdeeds in a past life, tempering her sympathy. Nevertheless, Buddhism's sects are not at war with each other, Buddhist monks tend to lean to persuasion rather than conversion, and nothing comparable to Hindutva has arisen in the countries and cultures where Buddhism is the prevailing belief system. Some

critics of Buddhism point to Jainism as the "enlightened" version of Buddhism, acceptable to even the fiercest critics of religion, but in truth Buddhism's essentially passive doctrines contribute little to the deadly sectarian divisions of this world (Harris, 2004).

Locals in Buddhist societies are no more programmed to proselytize their beliefs among adherents to other faiths than are Hindus or Sikhs. Although Buddhism has outliers in countries beyond its core area (for example, in Taiwan, South Korea, and Hawaii), Buddhist mobals tend to find no Buddhist communities in the world cities to which they migrate; the communities to which they move tend to be Vietnamese or Thai or Cambodian first and Buddhist (an often distant) second. Although Buddhist religious leaders naturally seek to assemble and instruct their adherents in such settings—the exiled Dalai Lama produces a steady stream of philosophical writings aimed at his own followers as well as a wider audience—they make no concerted effort to convert others to their beliefs. In general, they accommodate rather than confront behavior seen as decadent or depraved. Buddhist society in Thailand tolerates the country's notorious sex industry; its leaders leave no doubt as to their disapproval, but no Buddhist morality squads descend on Pattaya or Phuket to put robes and veils on bar women and drag off their male clients.

The twenty-first century Endarkenment, therefore, afflicts Islam and Christianity primarily and globally and Hinduism secondarily and locally. Other religions and belief systems have their revivalist (to use Islam's favored term) sectors with, as in the case of Judaism's Orthodox movement, disproportionate political power; but it is the Islamic and Christian domains into which the overwhelming majority of locals are born and from which the greatest number of mobals originate. By the time they interact, many have been radicalized by the internal conflicts of their faith and by the exhortations of fundamentalists capitalizing on interreligious strife. By seeking to implant their creeds through proselytism or compulsion in areas dominated by other beliefs, they complicate an already tense cultural mosaic and drive the world toward the cataclysm some of their own scriptures anticipate. Religion is in some ways the most powerful among the powers of place; religious convergence and interactive moderation would mitigate the cultural stresses associated with it. As it is, religious fervor intensifies, worsening social divisions and countering progress toward the flatter world of globalization.

4

THE ROUGH TOPOGRAPHY OF HUMAN HEALTH

If we made a map of the world showing locales with prevailing good public health as mountains and areas with poor health as valleys, the resulting global topography would look rough indeed. The unequal distribution of health and well-being across the world is matched by inequities of health within individual countries, even inside regions and provinces. Whatever the index, from nutrition to life expectancy, from infectious disease to infant mortality, the geography of health displays regional variations that add a crucial criterion to the composite power of place. If it is obvious that the medical world is not flat, the question is whether the landscape of human health is flattening out.

Certainly health is a matter of natural environment, cultural tradition, genetic predisposition, and other factors, but power has a lot to do with it as well. In general, the poorest and weakest on the planet are also the sickest. The fact that, in the twenty-first century, 300 million people suffer from malaria and more than one million (mostly children) die every year has as much to do with figure 1.1 as it does with tropical environments and adapting vectors. The rich and medically capable countries of the core never sustained a coordinated campaign to defeat (or at least contain) malaria, a disease of the periphery of much lower priority than maladies of the mid-latitudes. Medical research in the United States and elsewhere did produce treatments for victims of the deadly HIV/AIDS pandemic that has taken more than 25 million lives over the past three decades, most of them in Subsaharan Africa, but those costly remedies are reaching far too few sufferers outside the global core.

The obvious link between persistent poverty and endemic disease, so evident from virtually any medical-geographic map of the global periphery, was one of the key factors that spurred all 191 members of the United Nations in 2002 to sign the UN Millennium Declaration, among whose eight Development Goals are the reduction of child