Part I

Gender, Religion, and Politics: Contingent Relations

Chapter 1

Nativism and the Politics of Gender in Catholicism and Islam

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The contemporary global discourse on Islam as a fundamentalist, antimodern, undemocratic, and sexist religion shows striking similarities with the old discourse on Catholicism that predominated in Anglo-Protestant societies, particularly in the United States, from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century. Both discourses were based on four similar premises: (a) a theologico-political distinction between "civilized" and "barbaric" religions—that is, between religions compatible with Enlightenment principles and liberal democratic politics, on the one hand, and, on the other, religions grounded in traditions that resisted the progressive claims of the Enlightenment philosophy of history, liberalism, and secularism; (b) a nativist anti-immigrant posture that postulated the unassimilability of foreign immigrants due to their uncivilized social customs and habits; (c) transnational attachments and loyalties either to a foreign religious authority (i.e., the papacy) or to a transnational religious community (i.e., the *ummah*) that appeared incompatible with republican citizen principles and the exclusive claims of the modern nation-state; and (d) a set of moral claims about the denigration of women under religious patriarchies in contrast to their elevation by Protestantism. Any of these four principles may have been more or less salient at any particular time and place. It is their superimposition, however, that has given the anti-Catholic and anti-Muslim discourses their compelling effect.

The juxtaposition of Catholicism and Islam shows that the problems lie not only in simplistic depictions of a uniform "fundamentalist"

Islam that fail to acknowledge the extraordinary diversity one finds among Muslim societies in the past and in the present. Equally problematic and misleading is the essentialist construction of a modern secular West that fails to recognize Catholic Christianity as an integral part of the past and present of Western modernity. Every incrimination of Islam as a fundamentalist, antimodern, and anti-Western religion could have been directed justifiably against Catholicism not long ago. Moreover, most features of contemporary political Islam that Western observers find so reprehensible, including the terrorist methods and the justification of revolutionary violence as an appropriate instrument in the pursuit of political power, as well as legal structures subjecting women to a double standard of sexual morality, can be found in the not-too-distant past of many Western countries and of many modern, secular movements. Thus, before attributing these reprehensible phenomena all too hastily to Islamic civilization, one should perhaps consider the possibility that global modernity itself somehow generates such practices.

This chapter is structured in three parts. The first part examines the modern discourse on Catholicism as a fundamentalist antimodern religion as it developed in nineteenth-century Protestant, liberal, and republican-democratic contexts, with special focus on American anti-Catholic nativism. The second part examines the contemporary Western discourse on Islam and contemporary Muslim transformations from the comparative perspective of the analysis of Catholicism developed in the first part. The final section offers a tentative comparative sketch of what could be called the religious politics of gender within Catholicism and Islam.

The Catholic Discourse on Heretical Modernity and the Modern Discourse on Catholicism

As religious regimes, both Catholicism and Islam preceded and are likely to outlast the modern world system of nation-states. The very attribute *transnational* only makes sense in relation to the Westphalian system of sovereign territorial states that emerged in early modernity and eventually replaced the system of medieval Christendom. That system had been centered on the conflictive interdependent relation between the Roman papacy and the Holy Roman Empire. Of all the world religions, none had seemed as threatened at its core by the emergence of the modern world system of sovereign territorial states as the Roman church. The Protestant Reformation and the ensuing dissolution of Western Christendom undermined the role of the papacy as the spiritual head of a universal Christian monarchy represented by the

Holy Roman Empire. Not only did the papacy lose spiritual supremacy over Protestant territories and peoples, but it also lost control of the emerging national Catholic churches to Caesaro-papist Catholic monarchs (Casanova 1997).

One by one, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century, most of the transnational dimensions of medieval Catholicism receded or disappeared altogether. It is not surprising, therefore, that for centuries the Catholic Church remained adamantly antimodern and developed a negative philosophy of history, which conceptualized modern processes as so many heretical deviations from the Catholic ideal of medieval Christendom. But the lifeworld of Catholicism did not remain frozen in the past of medieval Christendom, nor were the Catholic reactions to so many modern developments (Counter Reformation, Counter Enlightenment, Counter Revolution, etc.) simply reactionary regressions to an unchanging tradition, but rather reactive attempts, often awkward ones, to fashion Catholic versions of modernity. Only a teleological normative version of a single progressive and unilinear Western modernity can construct such historical responses as fundamentalist reactions.

Ironically, it was the 1804 Concordat with Napoleon that served as the blueprint for the successive concordats with secular states, which allowed the papacy to regain control of the national hierarchies. In the course of the nineteenth century, as conflicts with the liberal state became endemic throughout Europe and Latin America, it became increasingly evident that it was easier to safeguard papal claims in Anglo-Saxon countries that had institutionalized freedom of religion than in Latin Catholic countries, even when Catholicism was officially established as the state religion. Indeed, Anglo-Saxon Protestant countries as well as countries such as Holland, Germany, and Switzerland, where Catholics constituted large minorities, became strongholds of modern Romanization and of a new liberal form of Catholic ultramontanism distinct from the integralist ultramontanism that was tied to the restoration of European monarchies.

The year 1870 marks the turning point in the process of reconstitution of a modern global Catholic regime. At the very moment when the Papal States were incorporated into the new Kingdom of Italy and the papacy was forced to renounce its claims to territorial sovereignty, the First Vatican Council reaffirmed papal supremacy. Through the control of the nomination of bishops, the papacy—progressively and for the first time in history—gained control over the national churches. Significantly, non-Catholic liberal states were the first ones to accept the transnational papal claims, while Catholic monarchs tried to preserve the old caesaro-papist claims of state supremacy. Instead of leading to the further weakening or even

extinction of the papacy, as was first feared, the loss of the Papal States led to the reconstitution of the Vatican as the highly centralized administrative core of a modern deterritorialized transnational religious regime, this time on a truly Catholic, that is, global-ecumenical, basis.

Protestant Anti-Catholic Nativism in the United States[1]

Notwithstanding fundamental differences and even mutual intolerance, there was something shared by practically all Protestant groups in colonial America—namely, virulent antipopery. Strict Calvinist and latitudinarian Armenian, High Church Anglican, and antinomian sectarian all viewed Rome and the Catholic Church as the "Anti-Christ" and the "Whore of Babylon." Indeed, at times, the external enemy, Catholicism, was the only thing that could cement internal Protestant unity. The ebbs and flows of anti-Catholicism in the colonies usually moved in unison with developments in England. The "Intolerable" Quebec Act of 1774 at first exacerbated anti-Catholic feeling. But revolution and independence actually brought a rare interlude in antipopery. Catholic republican patriotism, the high profile of prominent Catholics like the Carrols, the alliance with Catholic powers (France and Spain), the campaigns for religious freedom, the general religious decline, and the spread of Enlightenment ideas were all contributing factors. President Kirkland of Harvard, in his 1813 Dudleian lecture, could express the startling view that "we may . . . abate much of that abhorrence of papists which our fathers felt themselves obliged to maintain and inculcate" (Hennesy 1981: 117).

Given the disabilities under which Catholics had to function in most of the colonies, it is not surprising that they welcomed with enthusiasm the radically new dual constitutional arrangement of "no establishment" and "free exercise" inscribed in the First Amendment. In a letter to Rome in 1783, Catholic priests wrote that "in these United States, our Religious system has undergone a revolution, if possible, more extraordinary than our political one. In all of them free toleration is allowed to Christians of every denomination" (Hennesy 1981: 68). John Carroll, the first American bishop, reflected the consensus of the period when he drew a wall of separation between his role as a citizen and his role as the spiritual leader of American Catholics. Catholic laymen drew a similar line between their public secular and their private religious roles. This republican Catholicism represented the style of successful Catholic laymen, faithful to the church but fully at home in the world, who had learned, in the liberal tradition, to segregate their political, economic, and religious roles rigidly.

In his portrayal of Catholics in America, de Tocqueville had already tried to refute the widespread thesis of incompatibility between "Republicanism" and "Romanism," as well as the widely held perception on both sides of the French republican-laicist and monarchist-Catholic divide that Catholicism was incompatible with modern democracy and with individual freedoms. American Catholics, de Tocqueville observed, assented to the doctrines of revealed religion without discussion, while leaving political truths and civil matters open to free inquiry. "Thus, the Catholics of the United States are at the same time the most submissive believers and the most independent citizens" (de Tocqueville 1990, 1: 302). In his 1828 address to Congress, Bishop John England of Charleston offered the classic legitimation of liberal republicanism as well as his forward-looking vision of American Catholicism:

> You have no power to interfere with my religious rights; the tribunal of the church has no power to interfere with my civil rights. It is a duty which every good man ought to discharge for his own and for the public benefit, to resist any encroachment upon either. We do not believe that God gave the church any power to interfere with our civil rights, or our civil concerns . . . We desire to see the Catholics as a religious body upon the ground of equality with all other religious societies . . . We repeat our maxim: Let Catholics in religion stand isolated as a body, and upon as good ground as their brethren. Let Catholics, as citizens and politicians, not be distinguishable from their other brethren in the commonwealth.
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> (Greeley 1969:94; O'Brien 1989)

But John England's optimistic vision would not be realized, at least not until the 1950s. The competing vision of a Christian America, zealously pursued by Evangelical Protestantism, and the system of Protestant denominationalism that ensued did not allow for the acceptance of Catholicism as just another American denomination. "Romantic nationalist evangelicalism," that peculiar fusion of Evangelical Protestantism and American nationalism that grew out of the Second Great Awakening, was already well in place by 1830, at the time of de Tocqueville's visit to the United States (Miller 1965). The Reverend Heman Humphrey, president of Amherst College, expressed the new national consensus when in 1831 he celebrated "the true American union, that sort of union which makes every patriot a Christian and every Christian a patriot" (McLoughlin 1978:106). Catholics, however, were not included in the denomination "Christian," and romantic evangelicalism soon turned into anti-Catholic nativism.

The Reverend Lyman Beecher, president of Yale and father of the "New School" of New England Calvinism, became the leader of the anti-Catholic movement. In 1830, the year in which the first

anti-Catholic newspaper, *The Protestant*, appeared in New York, Beecher inaugurated his series of anti-Catholic sermons, linking Catholicism and despotism as the enemies of American republican principles (Billington 1938: 70). In one of his sermons, while visiting Boston in 1834, he warned:

> The Catholic Church holds now in darkness and bondage nearly half of the civilized world . . . It is the most skillful, powerful, dreadful system of corruption to those who wield it, and of slavery and debasement to those who live under it.
>
> (Hennesy 1981:119)

Soon thereafter, a Protestant mob, additionally incensed by a vogue of semipornographic publications revealing lascivious practices in popish nunneries and by lower-class resentment against a Catholic school that drew its pupils largely from upper-class families of Boston, burnt the Ursuline Convent school of Charlestown. Moreover, the massive immigration of impoverished Irish Catholics in the 1840s made American Catholics for the first time clearly distinguishable by class and ethnicity from their fellow citizens. Protestant anti-Catholic nativism soon began to acquire a sociopolitical shape in the American Republican Party of the 1840s and the Know-Nothing movement of the 1850s. The Reverend Horace Bushnell, the father of American liberal theology, warned Protestant America: "Our first danger is barbarism, Romanism next" (ibid.). He could have added: "Both happen to be Irish." Following an American Republican Party rally in Philadelphia on May 3, 1844, the Irish industrial district of Kensington went up in flames. On August 6, 1855, in Louisville, Kentucky, election day turned into "Bloody Monday" after the *Louisville Journal* had incited the Know-Nothings "to put down an organization of Jesuit Bishops, Priests and other Papists" and "to raise just as big a storm as you please" (ibid.). A few weeks later, Abraham Lincoln warned that if the Know-Nothings came to power, the Declaration of Independence would read "All men are created equal except Negroes, foreigners and Catholics." The Know-Nothings, however, soon disappeared as the moral energies of the Protestant crusade became absorbed in the antislavery movement and in the Civil War.

From the 1880s to the 1920s, as foreign immigration of European Catholics and Jews grew to even larger numbers, the familiar combination of themes of the Protestant crusade reappeared: evangelical revivalism, which aimed to once again Christianize America and save the world for democracy; the "social gospel" and progressive reform movements, linking temperance, women's suffrage, and child labor legislation; renewed anti-Catholic nativism, which found expression in the foundation of the American Protective Association in 1887, the expansion of the

Ku Klux Klan; and campaigns for immigration-restriction laws. Catholics, not surprisingly, saw themselves as the targets of yet another evangelical Protestant crusade. Progressive Protestants, by contrast, tended to view Catholics as the main obstacle to reform. Billy Sunday and other revivalists never tired of warning their congregations of the menace that the "hordes of foreigners" were posing to Christian America and of blaming the "foreign vote" for blocking Prohibition. Only "a great Anglo-Saxon majority," he warned, "could overcome this foreign influence" (McLoughlin 1978:140–78).

The ratification of Prohibition in 1920 turned out to be the final Pyrrhic victory of the Protestant crusade. The old evangelical coalition came together briefly just one more time at Al Smith's 1928 presidential campaign in order to block the entrance of popery into the White House. For all practical purposes, however, anti-Catholic nativism died with this election. To be sure, old Protestant prejudices lingered on, and Protestant-Catholic conflicts flared again in the 1940s and 1950s. But those were no longer the typical church-sect, majority-minority conflicts of the past, but rather the first signs of normal interdenominational conflicts (Wuthnow 1988; Greeley 1990). By the 1950s, the religious others—Catholics and Jews—had been incorporated into the system of American religious pluralism. A process of dual accommodation had taken place. America became a "Judeo-Christian" nation, and Protestant, Catholic, and Jew became the three denominations of a revised American "civil religion" (Herberg 1960; Bellah 1967). The election of a Catholic to the Presidency in 1960 clearly confirmed the end of anti-Catholic nativism. Before entering the White House, however, John F. Kennedy had to prove his worthiness before an association of Protestant ministers in Houston.[2]

While not as lengthy or as virulent as the American anti-Catholic nativist campaigns, similar *Kulturkämpfe* erupted in Protestant England, Holland, and Germany throughout the second half of the nineteenth century. All manifested the same combination of Protestant confessional, modern liberal, and nationalist prejudices against Catholicism as a retrograde, fundamentalist, and alien ultramontanist religion. Similar anti-Catholic caricatures appeared frequently in popular newspapers in all four countries, often depicting Catholic religious practices alongside the magical superstitious practices of "oriental" and "primitive" peoples. Catholicism was clearly viewed as the inner Orient, a primitive atavistic residue within Western civilization.

By the middle of the twentieth century, the old Protestant-Catholic cleavage that had run through all Western European societies and their colonies since the time of the Protestant Reformation had ceased to

exist. Three interrelated developments contributed to the geopolitical and cultural realignment:

1. The Cold War and the NATO military alliance led to a new harmonious relationship between Washington and Rome, putting an end to the old conflict between Republicanism and Romanism and establishing the basis for the new ideological conflict between the Christian West ("the free world") and the godless Communist East.
2. The project of European unification that led to the Treaty of Rome and the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1957, and eventually to a continuously expanding European Union, was based on two historical reconciliations: the reconciliation between France and Germany, two countries that had been at war or preparing for war from 1870 to 1945, and the reconciliation between Protestants and Catholics within a newly reconstituted Christian Democracy. The negative experience of Fascism had led Catholic parties, many of whom had evinced corporatist-fascist inclinations in the 1930s, to abandon the model of political Catholicism as a "third way" between bourgeois liberal democracy and atheist totalitarian communism and to adopt an unequivocal democratic identity. Ruling or prominent Christian Democrats in all founding countries (Germany, France, Italy, and the members of Benelux) played a leading role in the initial process of European integration.
3. The Catholic aggiornamento to secular modernity that culminated in the Second Vatican Council and is expressed in the two most important documents of the council: the Declaration on Religious Freedom (*Dignitatis Humanae*) and the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (*Gaudium et Spes*). The official recognition of the inalienable right of every individual to religious freedom, based on the sacred dignity of the human person, meant that the church had abandoned its traditional compulsory character and accepted the modern principle of disestablishment and the separation of church and state. *Gaudium et Spes* represented, in turn, the definitive acceptance of the legitimacy of the modern age and the modern world, putting an end to the negative philosophy of history that had characterized the official Catholic position since the Counter Reformation.

The aggiornamento led to a fundamental relocation of the Catholic Church from a state-oriented to a civil society–oriented institution. Moreover, the official adoption of the modern discourse of human rights allowed the Catholic Church to play a crucial role in opposition to authoritarian regimes and in processes of democratization

throughout the Catholic world. As Samuel Huntington has already pointed out, the "third wave" of democratization from the 1970s to the 1990s was primarily a Catholic wave (Huntington 1991; Casanova 1996:356–63).

One may draw three interrelated inferences from the narrative so far:

1. There was always some justification, based on the official position of the Catholic Church, for the anti-Catholic discourse. The church after all had resisted or judged negatively most modern historical developments—the Protestant Reformation, the modern secular state, the modern scientific revolution, the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, and the 1848 democratic revolutions—and had officially condemned as "modern errors" or heresies the discourse of human rights, liberalism, Americanism, and Modernism.
2. Yet, to a certain extent, Catholicism was also a construct and an effect of the anti-Catholic discourse, a discourse that can be traced back to the Protestant critique of Catholicism, through the Enlightenment critique of religion, through liberalism and secularism as critiques of the Ancient Regime and all the alliances of "throne and altar." Catholicism always constructed itself discursively in dialectic relation with the anti-Catholic discourse of the time. But the varieties of practices and mentalities within the lifeworld of Catholicism always surpassed the homogeneous discursive construct.
3. Irrespective of how one judges the old anti-Catholic prejudices, the swift and radical transformation of the political culture of Catholic countries as the result of the official reformulation of the religious teachings of the Catholic Church in Vatican II puts into question the notion of the unchanging essence of even a world religion as dogmatically structured as Catholicism. The premise of an unchanging core essence should even be less valid for other "world religions" like Islam, which have a less dogmatically structured doctrinal core or a more pluralistic and contested system of authoritative interpretation of the religious tradition.

Muslim Aggiornamenti?

As in the case of Catholicism before, the internal and external debates over the compatibility between Islam and democracy and modern individual freedoms is being internally and externally discussed in three separate yet interrelated debates:[3] (1) in debates over "Islamism," the transnational structure of the world of Islam and the alleged clash of civilizations between Islam and the West at the geopolitical level, with clear parallels with earlier debates on the clash between "Republicanism" and "Romanism"; (2) in debates over political Islam and over the democratic

legitimacy of Muslim political parties in Turkey and elsewhere, which—like their initially equally suspect Catholic counterparts—may establish new forms of Muslim Democracy, akin to Christian Democracy; and (3) in debates over the proper articulation of a Muslim ummah in immigrant diasporic contexts outside *Dar el Islam*.

1. Dar el Islam

As a transnational religious regime, Islam never had the highly centralized, hierarchic, and priestly-clerical structure of the Catholic Church. Against the often-repeated claim that Islam is "religion and state" and therefore knows no clear differentiation of religion and politics, even a superficial acquaintance with the complex history of premodern Muslim societies across three continents and over a millennium makes it abundantly clear that the patterns of relations and, indeed, differentiation between religious and political institutions and structures are as diverse as anything one finds in Latin Christendom or indeed in any other world religion (Lapidus 1996:3–27). Characteristic at least of Sunni Islam since the Abbasid Caliphate has been the de facto separation between the religious community of believers (the ummah) and the rulers, a separation that was symbolically represented in the separation between the caliph and the actual ruler, the sultan. Such a separation tended to legitimize any ruler who ensured the existence of the Muslim community and the upholding of the *sharia*. But such rulers in turn were rarely viewed as promulgators or guardians of the basic norms of the Islamic community. In a certain sense, the realm of statecraft and political rulership was detached from the Muslim res publica—that is, from the ideal realm of the ummah—as the arena of implementation of the moral order of Islam. According to Shmuel Eisenstadt, "This decoupling of an autonomous and vibrant public sphere from the political arena—or to be more precise from the realm of rulership— . . . constituted one of the distinctive characteristics of Muslim civilization" (Eisenstadt 2006: 452).

To a certain extent, all movements of Muslim revival in the history of Islam, particularly from the early modern period to the present, have been attempts to link up once again the religious community, the public sphere, and what we would call today the state, according to the pristine vision of the ummah during the prophetic age, when it entailed a fusion of the sociopolitical and religious communities. The fundamental challenge for all Muslim societies in the present is how to institutionalize this transcendent vision under modern democratic conditions and within a legal-constitutional state.

The European colonial expansion into "the abode of Islam" and the posterior globalization of the European system of nation-states

undermined the viability of all premodern forms of Muslim polities. The political world of Islam disintegrated throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like European Christendom before, Islam also became fragmented and territorialized into nation-states (Piscatori 1986). The dissolution of the caliphate following the collapse of the Ottoman Empire found little resistance throughout the Muslim world, particularly in predominantly Muslim countries. With the emergence of various forms of secular nationalism after World War II, it seemed as if the nation was becoming the primary imagined community also for Muslim peoples, replacing the old transnational imagined community of the ummah. It is increasingly evident, however, that in the last decades Islam is being reconstituted as a transnational religious regime and as a global imagined community. The proliferation of transnational Muslim networks of all kinds—the massive global proportions of the pilgrimage to Mecca, the establishment of global Islamic mass media, the expressions of global solidarity with the Palestinian people and other Muslim causes—can be viewed as manifestations of the contemporary globalization of Islam (Roy 2004).

But unlike the modern reconstitution of the papacy as the core of a deterritorialized transnational Catholic religious regime, the dissolution of the caliphate has created a void and a still unresolved crisis in the political image of Islam as a transnational religious regime. Three alternative models of organization of Islam and of the global ummah compete on the world stage among Muslim actors:

a. The predominant one and the one more in accordance with the world system of states is that of an international system of Muslim states in geopolitical competition with other state blocs and with Western hegemony. To a certain extent participation in this geopolitical competition has been the aim of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) since its founding in 1972. Virtually all states with majority Muslim populations now belong to the OIC. No other world religion has such an interstate organization. Yet the OIC has proved an extremely ineffective and noncohesive organization. Moreover, most Muslim states lack democratic legitimacy.
b. The diverse nonstate transnational Muslim groups, the *khilafist*, are the second example of organization of Islam and of the global ummah who are striving to reconstitute the caliphate or a global Muslim polity incorporating all the historical territories of *Dar el Islam*. The radical *jihadis,* who are willing to use spectacular terror across state borders, are the most prominent or at least have attained the greatest global prominence. In terms of numbers, those may be relatively small and rather isolated and loosely organized cells, but through their willingness to openly challenge the hegemony of the

Western powers, particularly the United States, and through the skillful use of Muslim rhetoric and symbols, they have captured the imagination and the sympathy of many disaffected Muslims throughout the world, particularly in the diasporas of radical Islam.[4]

c. Although usually overlooked by scholars, journalists, and political observers, the majoritarian currents of transnational Islam today and the ones likely to have the greatest impact on the future transformation of Islam are transnational networks and movements of Muslim renewal, equally disaffected from state Islamism and transnational *jihadism*. They constitute the networks of a loosely organized and pluralistic transnational ummah, or global Muslim civil society: from the "evangelical" Tablighi Jama'at, a faith movement highly active throughout the Muslim world and in Muslim diasporas, whose annual conferences in India represent the second largest world gathering of Muslims after the hajj, and other transnational *dawa* (missionary or evangelical) networks, to the neo-Sufist Fethullah Gülen's educational network, active throughout Turkey, Turkish diasporas, and the Turkic republics of Central Asia, and other Sufi brotherhoods such as the Mourids of West Africa who have also expanded their transnational networks into the Muslim diasporas of Europe and North America.

2. Political Islam

It is an undeniable fact that the majority of Muslim countries today have authoritarian political regimes and repressive states. Many of those regimes rely on the military and financial support of the United States and other Western powers. Many of them also claim to be "Muslim" states or seek the religious mantle of Islam as a source of political legitimation for the most diverse institutions and political practices. In fact, practically every political movement or project, in power or in opposition, throughout the Muslim world claims to be Islamic if not Islamist. It is this very fact of the apparently inevitable fusion of religion and politics in Muslim countries that has led so many external observers and experts to attribute a "fundamentalist" essence to Islam that allegedly makes it incompatible with the differentiated structures of modernity and with the privatization of religion supposedly required by liberal democracy (Lewis 1988; Tibi 1990).

The relevant question is whether one should attribute the widespread impulse found in the contemporary politics of Muslim countries to establish Islamic states to some Islamic essence that Muslims cannot relinquish without also abandoning their religious tradition and their identity; or, alternatively, whether, as pointed out by Talal Asad, it may not be rather the product of *modern* politics and the *modernizing* state

(Asad 1997:190). I am not in a position to evaluate the competing claims concerning the history of Islam, but since one finds "fundamentalist" impulses similar to symbiotic fusions of religions and politics throughout the history of nation-state formation in the Christian West, and today one finds similar "fundamentalist" impulses within Judaism in Israel, within Hinduism in India, and within Buddhism in Sri Lanka, I would be inclined to attribute the common "fundamentalist" impulse to the common context of nation-state formation, rather than to some common symbiotic fusion of religion and politics at the genesis of all these religions that has left an indelible mark in their makeup (van der Veer and Lehmann 1999; Marty and Appleby 1991).

I believe that a look at the ongoing contemporary reformulations of the Islamic tradition from the comparative perspective of the Catholic aggiornamento may be instructive. At the very least, it should serve to relativize constructions of a clash between "Islam" and "the West." The problem, so often reiterated by the critics, is not just that Huntington's thesis of the "clash of civilizations" rests on an essentialist conception of Islam, but that the construction of "the West" on which it is based is equally essentialist (Huntington 2004).

Moreover, in comparison with the clerical, hierarchic, and hierocratic centralized administrative structure of the Catholic Church, the Muslim ummah, at least within the Sunni tradition, has a much more conciliar, egalitarian, laic, and decentralized structure. The pluralistic and decentralized character of religious authority, which had always been distinctive of traditional Islam, has become even more pronounced in the modern age, when the traditional autonomy and authority of the *ulama,* as the local guardians of the religious tradition, has been challenged and curtailed from above by state government and from below by the democratization of knowledge and media. Actually, if there is anything on which most observers and analysts of contemporary Islam agree, it is the fact that the Islamic tradition in the very recent past has undergone an unprecedented process of pluralization and fragmentation of religious authority, comparable to that initiated by the Protestant Reformation.

In this respect, there is a crucial difference between the Catholic and Muslim transformations. The Catholic aggiornamento had the character of an official, relatively uniform, and swift reform from above that found little contestation from below and could easily be enforced across the Catholic world, generating as a result a remarkable global homogenization of Catholic culture at least among the elites. Islam, in contrast, lacks centralized institutions and administrative structures to define and enforce official doctrines, and, therefore, the ongoing Muslim aggiornamenti to modern global realities and predicaments are likely to be plural, with multiple, diverse, and often contradictory

outcomes. One should be open to the possibility that the Islamic tradition, its distinctive public discourse, and Muslim practices will inform and shape the type of civil society and the democratic institutions that may emerge in Muslim countries. There are multiple Western modernities, and there will likely be multiple Muslim modernities.

The contemporary transformation of Muslim politics in Turkey offers perhaps the best illustration of Muslim democratization and the most compelling refutation of Huntington's thesis (Casanova 2006b:234–47). Ultimately, the Kemalist project of constructing a modern Western secular Turkish nation-state from above was bound to fail because it was too secular for the Islamists, too Sunni for the Alevis, and too Turkish for the Kurds. A Turkish state in which the collective identities and interests of those groups that constitute the overwhelming majority of the population cannot find public representation cannot possibly be a truly representative democracy, even if it is founded on modern secular republican principles. But Muslim Democracy is as possible and viable today in Turkey as Christian Democracy was half a century ago in Western Europe. Secular Europeans, apprehensive of Muslim political parties, or of any other religious political party for that matter, seem to have forgotten that the initial project of a European Union was basically a Christian-Democratic one, sanctioned by the Vatican, at a time of a general religious revival in post–World War II Europe, in the geopolitical context of the Cold War when "the free world" and "Christian civilization" had become synonymous. But this is a forgotten history that secular Europeans, proud of having outgrown a religious past from which they feel liberated, would prefer not to remember. Moreover, practically every continental European country has had religious parties at one time or another. Many of them, particularly the Catholic ones, had dubious democratic credentials until the negative learning experience of Fascism turned them into Christian-Democratic parties.

Turkey has been patiently knocking on the door of the European club since 1959, only to be told politely to continue waiting, while watching latecomer after latecomer being invited first in successive waves of accession. Formally, it applied for membership in 1987. But until very recently there was no chance that Turkey could, or actually seem eager to, meet the EU's stringent economic and political conditions for membership. Only after the landslide victory of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) in November 2002 have the structural conditions been created to introduce the kind of constitutional, legal, and democratic reforms that make EU membership possible. The paradox, therefore, is that it is only the rise of Muslim Democracy in Turkey that has created the conditions for real democratization and authentic Europeanization (Yavuz 2006:224–55; 2003). A wide consensus has seemingly been reached among the

Turkish population, showing that Turkey is no longer a torn country on the issue of joining Europe and thus "the West."

What is less clear is whether the Europeans, the political elites as well as ordinary citizens, are willing at least to admit a modern Muslim democratic Turkey into the EU, if not to embrace it. Officially, Europe's refusal to accept Turkey so far is based mainly on Turkey's deficient human rights record. But there are some not-so-subtle indications that an outwardly secular Europe is still too Christian regarding the possibility of imagining a Muslim country as part of the European community. One wonders whether Turkey represents a threat to Western civilization or rather an unwelcome reminder of the barely submerged yet inexpressible and anxiety-ridden "white" European Christian identity. The public debates in Europe over Turkey's admission have shown that Europe is actually the torn entity, deeply divided over its cultural identity, unable to answer the question whether European identity, and therefore its external and internal boundaries, should be defined by the common heritage of Christianity and Western civilization or by its modern secular values of liberalism, universal human rights, political democracy, and tolerant and inclusive multiculturalism. Publicly, of course, European liberal secular elites cannot share the pope's definition of European civilization as essentially Christian.[5] But they also cannot verbalize the unspoken cultural requirements that make the integration of Turkey into Europe such a difficult issue.

The paradox and the quandary for modern secular Europeans, who have shed their traditional historical Christian identities in a rapid and drastic process of secularization that has coincided with the very success of the process of European integration and who therefore identify European modernity with secularization, is that they observe with some apprehension the reverse process in Turkey (Casanova 2006c:65–92). The more modern, or at least democratic, Turkish politics become, the more publicly Muslim and less secularist they also tend to become. In its determination to join the EU, Turkey is adamantly staking its claim to be, or its right to become, a fully European country economically and politically, while simultaneously fashioning its own model of Muslim cultural modernity.[6] It is this very claim to be simultaneously a modern European and a culturally Muslim country that baffles European civilizational identities, secular and Christian alike. It contradicts both the definition of a Christian Europe and the definition of a secular Europe.

3. Muslim Immigrant Diasporas[7]

The specter of millions of Turkish citizens already in Europe but not of Europe, many of them second-generation immigrants, caught between an old country they have left behind and their European host societies

unable or unwilling to fully assimilate them, only makes the problem more visible. Gastarbeiter can be successfully incorporated economically. They may even gain voting rights, at least on the local level, and prove to be model or at least ordinary citizens. But can they pass the unwritten rules of cultural European membership or are they to remain strangers, ultimately *Fremdarbeiter*?[8] Can the European Union open new conditions for the kind of multiculturalism that its constituent national societies find so difficult to accept? The question of the integration of Turkey in the EU is inevitably intertwined, implicitly if not explicitly, with the question of the failed integration of Muslim immigrants.

What makes "the immigrant question" particularly thorny in Europe, and inextricably entwined with "the Turkish question," is the fact that in Europe immigration and Islam are, or at least have been until very recently, almost synonymous. The overwhelming majority of immigrants in most European countries, the United Kingdom being the main exception, have been Muslims and the overwhelming majority of Western European Muslims are immigrants. This identification appears even more pronounced in those cases where the majority of Muslim immigrants tend to come predominantly from a single region of origin—for example, Turkey in the case of Germany, the Ma'ghreb in the case of France. This entails a superimposition of different dimensions of otherness that exacerbates issues of boundaries, accommodation, and incorporation. The immigrant, the religious, the racial, and the socioeconomic disprivileged other all tend to coincide. Moreover, all those dimensions of otherness now become superimposed upon Islam, so that Islam becomes the utterly "other."

After September 11, all kinds of developments—the global war on terror, the ever more visible proliferation of global Muslim discourses and networks, as well as the proliferation of global discourses on Islam and controversies over veiling and Islamic fundamentalism—have conflated, particularly in Europe, into a panic that can only be characterized as Islamophobia. Anti-immigrant xenophobic nativism, the conservative defense of Christian culture and civilization, secularist antireligious prejudices, liberal-feminist critiques of Muslim patriarchal fundamentalism, and the fear of Islamist terrorist networks are being fused indiscriminately into a uniform anti-Muslim discourse that practically precludes the kind of mutual accommodation between immigrant groups and host societies that is necessary for successful immigrant incorporation.

The parallels with Protestant-republican anti-Catholic nativism in mid-nineteenth-century America are indeed striking. Today's totalizing discourse on Islam as an essentially antimodern, fundamentalist, illiberal and undemocratic religion and culture echoes the

nineteenth-century discourse on Catholicism. What is new and different, however, is the strength of European secular identities. The drastic decline in religious beliefs and practices throughout Europe since the 1960s is accompanied by a secularist self-understanding that interprets the decline as normal and progressive, and therefore as a quasi-normative consequence of being a modern and enlightened European. It is this secular identity shared by European elites and ordinary people alike that paradoxically turns religion and the barely suppressed Christian European identity into a thorny and perplexing issue when it comes to delimiting the external geographic boundaries and to defining the internal cultural identity of a European Union in the process of being constituted.

The Religious Politics of Gender in Catholicism and Islam

1. General Theoretical-Analytical Reflections on Gender, Religion, and Modernity

The thrust of this chapter so far has been to offer a schematic reconstruction of the complex relation between Catholicism, as a transnational religious regime, and Protestant, liberal, secular modernity and to portray the aggiornamento as Catholicism's own attempt to fashion its own Catholic version of modernity.[9] The juxtaposition of the anti-Catholic discourse and the Catholic aggiornamento serves to underline the paradox of a religion that had been depicted for centuries as unchanging, traditionalist, and authoritarian playing a crucial global historical role in the third wave of democratization. The purpose of such a reconstruction was to put into question contemporary Western secular discourses of Islam as an essentially fundamentalist, antimodern, and undemocratic religion, by drawing parallels with nineteenth-century anti-Catholic discourses. The aim was not to offer any systematic or substantive comparison between Catholicism and Islam as religious regimes, but to suggest that viewing contemporary Muslim transformations as forms of Muslim aggiornamenti—that is, as plural and often antithetical attempts by Muslim individual and collective actors to fashion their own Muslim versions of modernity—may be analytically and hermeneutically more fruitful than consider such transformations as the civilizational resistance of fundamentalist Islam against an essentialist construction of Western secular modernity.

But is it not the case that when it comes to the religious politics of gender, both Catholicism and Islam turn out to be indeed basically similar radical versions of patriarchal fundamentalism or of fundamentalist patriarchy? Even assuming that one accepts as plausible the argument

presented so far, that the Catholic aggiornamento signifies a successful adaptation to and coming to terms with secular modernity, is it not the case that when it comes to issues of family structure and gender roles, gender equality, authority and power within the church, sexuality and reproductive health, bioethics and genetics, the Catholic Church, or at least its official hierarchy, remains anchored in an unchanging traditionalist, naturalist, and fundamentalist patriarchal position? Is not equally the female "veil" the most patent and poignant symbol of modern Islamic fundamentalism, the unequivocal and undisputed sign of Muslim patriarchy, of the oppression of women, of the heteronomous control of female bodies, and of the literal effacement of female individual identity and subjectivity?

I pose these questions in such a sharp and provocative manner in order to raise a flag precisely against any attempt to offer a simple and unambiguous affirmative or negative answer. Only from an unreflexive, Western-centric, liberal-feminist, teleological perspective on the liberation of "woman" (as a single universal historical subject), from religious patriarchy could one easily answer both questions in the affirmative. On the other hand, such warning by no means belittles the urgent historical need to subject both religious traditions to an internal radical feminist critique, reinterpretation, and reappropriation.

In the remainder of this chapter I suggest in a very schematic fashion the kind of issues that could be elaborated in a more systematic comparison of the challenges that modern gender equality presents to both Catholicism and Islam.

The religious politics of gender worldwide has become one of the most important issues facing global humanity and is likely to remain an issue of increasing relevance for the foreseeable future, if one assumes the validity of the following premises:[10]

1. That democratization, in the sense proposed by de Tocqueville, as the categorical principle of equality of ascribed conditions, is a modern, irresistible, universal, and "providential" force or drive; that the principle of gender equality is one of the last manifestations of this modern drive, so that the proposition that "all men and women are created equal" has become a global "self-evident truth"; that the task of somehow bridging the enormous gap between the norm of gender equality and the appalling reality of unequal worth, unequal status, and unequal access to resources and power is likely to remain one of the most important historical-political tasks and challenges for all societies; that while the drive to institutionalize the principle of gender equality may be general, its practices and effects—that is, the particular cultural, sociopolitical, and institutional arrangements—are likely to vary significantly across societies,

cultures, civilizations, and religions. After all, one of the most critical lessons of feminism has been to question the false universalism of the category of "human being," asserting instead women's difference. Similarly, one must remain reflexively on guard to question any false universalism essentially inscribed onto the category of "woman," "female emancipation," or "gender equality."

2. That sexuality is one of the most powerful, one could even say "sacred," dimensions of individual and intersubjective human life; that sexual intercourse entails not only a unique source of erotic pleasure but also a physical act of intimacy between two persons that may serve as the foundation for a life-long mutual commitment to marriage, and in addition has the potential for the creation of new life and is therefore the foundation for kinship structures and social reproduction; that sexuality is therefore simultaneously the most intimate expression of the embodied self and therefore the most private of affairs and the primary source of sociobiological reproduction and therefore a public affair that no society can leave unregulated. In particular the female body, because of its indispensable function in the pregnancy and gestation of new life, is caught in the middle of this tension between the private and the public dimensions of sexuality. Moreover, the modern sexual revolution entails a dual separation of sexuality and biological reproduction. Reflexive birth control through reliable techniques of contraception has freed sexuality from reproduction, while advances in reproductive technologies and biogenetics may potentially free biological reproduction not only from sexuality but also from all traditional forms of social reproduction through family and kinship.
3. That insofar as religions are discursive systems of beliefs and practices that offer structures of moral order, cultural meaning, and motivational purpose to individuals and collectivities through symbolic means of transcendence and spiritual communication with some higher extrahuman, supernatural, or divine reality, religions have always been involved in the task of regulating sexuality, biological and social reproduction, family structure, and gender roles in accordance with some transcendent principle posited as natural, sacred, or of divine origin. In particular, monotheistic religions, which claim a radically absolute divine transcendence as the source of universally valid and unchanging principles, face the challenge of having to apply hermeneutically those universal principles to changing circumstances. The radical change in circumstances produced by the modern democratic and sexual revolutions and the fundamental transformations in gender relations and gender roles that both entail present a particularly difficult challenge to the sacred claims of those traditions. In the remaining section of this chapter, I offer

a tentative sketch of some of those challenges from the comparative perspective of the different traditions of Catholicism and Islam.

2. Three Analytical Fields of Research on Gender and Religion within Catholicism and Islam

As a fruitful heuristic way of organizing the wide field of research on gender and religion, I am going to follow Birgit Heller's tripartite analytical differentiation between (a) the issue of "*women's status and roles* in different religious traditions"—that is, the kinds of institutionalized gendered religious divisions of labor within Catholicism and Islam as religious regimes; (b) "the subject of *cultural images, ideas, stereotypes and norms* about women" within the discursive religious traditions of Catholicism and Islam; and (c) "the question what *women as religious subjects* do and think"—that is, the question of the historical agency of Catholic and Muslim women today in the contemporary reproduction and transformation of their religious traditions (Heller 2001:357–59).

a. The Gendered Religious Division of Labor and Power Relations within Catholicism and Islam as Religious Regimes and as Symbolic Modes of Production

Sociologically one can view institutionalized religions as analogous both to polities, as systems of distribution of power, authority, and decision making within a community in relation to the sacred, and to economic modes of production, as symbolic modes of production, distribution, and consumption of the sacred and of religious goods. In both cases the obvious question is to what extent the system of power relations and the social relations of production are gendered and unequal—that is, whether men and women have unequal differential access to religious power and authority and unequal differential access to the means of production, distribution, and consumption of religious goods. The political analogy, at least, is by no means farfetched since after all the very word ecclesia in ancient Greek refers to the political assembly of citizens of the polis or city state, while the word ummah has analogous connotations of a sociopolitical community.

In the first place, as universalist salvation religions, both Christianity and Islam offer equal access to salvation and to holiness to male and female. There is no gender discrimination in the eyes of God. God is the source and model of equitable justice and fairness to all. Moreover, as loving Father and as "the Merciful and Compassionate," God may be said to express a feminine "preferential option" for the weak, the poor, the meek, the orphan, the widow. As high religions, however, the divine revelations have been linguistically and discursively embedded in patriarchal and androcentric cultures and societies.

In the prophetic/charismatic foundational age of both religions, nevertheless, individual women had particularly close access to Jesus and Muhammad and played important active roles that seemed to break with the patriarchal relations of their respective sociohistorical contexts. But as the charismatic foundational movements became routinized and embedded in established worldly regimes, the patriarchal principles once again became clearly dominant as organizational principles of both religions, and a gendered division of labor of unequal religious roles became institutionalized: priesthood in the case of the Catholic Church, the ulama in the case of Islam, as hierarchically differentiated and high-status religious roles are exclusively male.

While patriarchal, inasmuch as in its public dimensions it is primarily a male assembly, the ummah within Sunni Islam is more democratically organized, without a priestly/sacerdotal/clerical class and without the high differentiation of religious virtuosi/literati and ordinary people/laity typical of all high religions. Only within *Shi'ite* Islam do the ulama attain a highly differentiated, at times also hierarchically organized, structure. The Catholic Church, by contrast, is characterized by a dual system of highly differentiated and canonically regulated religious roles, the sacramental one between ordained priesthood/clergy and laity, and that between, on the one hand, the *religious* orders of monks, friars, and nuns who follow the higher evangelical calling, withdraw from the world (*saeculum*), and profess the vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience and, on the other hand, all the secular Christians (including the *secular* clergy) who live in the world. The dynamics of modern Western secularization, both the Protestant one of abolishing the differentiation between *religious* and *secular* roles and callings, and the Catholic/laicist one of giving primacy to *civil* over *ecclesiastical* (clerical) ranks, authority, and jurisdiction, were reactions against this dual Catholic system of differentiation.

The existence of similar male and female *religious* orders and the high number of female saints, particularly in the early church, would seem to indicate that there is indeed ungendered, universal access to religious salvation (*Ecclesia invisibilis)* within Catholicism. However, within the Catholic Church as *Ecclesia visibilis*, both as public assembly and as a hierarchically and bureaucratically organized episcopal church, the crucial differentiation is that between priests and laity. Priesthood, as the domain of sacerdotal/sacramental, magisterial, and administrative/canonical authority, is exclusively reserved for males. This is the fundamental issue of patriarchal gender discrimination within the Catholic Church. The discrimination is more blatant as traditionally the majority of the assembled faithful, and thus the majority of consumers of the religious goods distributed by the church, have been female, while the production, administration, and distribution of those goods have been almost exclusively in male hands.

The official response of the Catholic male hierarchy to the modern demand for female ordination has been that ordination is of divine origin and therefore unchangeable, since Jesus selected only males as his disciples, who are the links to the apostolic succession of episcopal male priesthood. This is perhaps a persuasive sociocultural argument of historical precedent in accordance with the patriarchal premises of the apostolic age, but it is not a very well-grounded theological argument with scriptural support. Indeed, the male character of the priesthood was such a taken-for-granted cultural premise throughout the history of the church that it was unnecessary to provide a serious theological justification for it. Only after the modern democratic revolution questioned any form of gender discrimination was a theological justification required, and it then became obvious that the body of discursive theological argumentation for it within the Catholic tradition is very thin. One should add that at least since the establishment of the charisma of office after the Donatist heresy (4 CE), it has been official Catholic doctrine that it is the sacramental charisma of the office—that is, the charisma of ordination that gives sacred dignity to the person of the priest, not the personal spiritual attributes, much less the bodily ones, of the individual.

Although the demand for female access to the ulama, the learned guardians of the Muslim tradition, does not seem to appear so urgent in Muslim societies, one can assume that the demand is likely to grow in the future, particularly within *Shi'ite* Islam, where the ulama have real hierarchically organized power and prestige. Within the Sunni ummah at least, there is no rigid differentiation between the religious clerical elite and the ordinary Muslim. In any case, with the modern universalization of literacy and the democratization of religious knowledge, the differential status and role of the ulama become even less marked. What may become increasingly noticeable is that the real differentiation within the ummah is not a religious one between clerics and laity, but a gendered patriarchal one between male and female Muslims. Penina Lahav's chapter in this volume explores this issue in the context of the United States.

b. Religion and Sexism: Images of Women in the Catholic and Muslim Traditions

It would be impossible and presumptuous to even attempt to summarize the state of scholarship and the contemporary debates on this central issue. Solely listing the most relevant literature and sources on both traditions would take many pages. This is the area in which the interface between "religion" and culture—that is, "the customary sphere"—is the greatest. This is also the area in which religion most clearly shows its "Janus face." Comparative historical research is

particularly relevant in this sphere not only because of the tremendous range and diversity of religious norms and cultural customs concerning gender but more importantly because both traditions, like all religious traditions, are equivocal and ambivalent and can therefore be used to legitimate and reinforce, as well as to challenge prophetically patriarchal customs and norms. Indeed, in the name of reverting to some pristine religious tradition, movements of religious reform, revival, or purification often tend to introduce and legitimate radical changes in the customary sphere.

Only through Abelard's method of *Sic et Non*, simultaneously affirming and denying every proposition, could one do justice to the contradictions, ambiguities, and ambivalences in the religious traditions. The very strong misogynist strand in the Christian tradition is undeniable and has been amply documented most critically by contemporary feminist theologians and religious scholars (Daly 1985; Ruether 1974; Fiorenza 1993, 1994; Malone 2000, 2001). But no serious scholar could claim that this misogynist strand is derived from the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth or deny that in its origins primitive Christianity represented an egalitarian countercultural trend against the patriarchal culture of the times (Greeley 2007). One could debate how to allocate fairly the blame for the later reversal to patriarchy, for the intensification of misogyny, or for the novel introduction of misogamy beyond the Jewish tradition, whether to attribute them to specific currents within Hellenism or Gnosticism, for example, or to particular *patres*, such as Paul, Tertullian, and Agustin. What is undeniable is that for two millennia the images of women and gender within the Catholic tradition have been produced and controlled by males and, what is most significant, mostly by celibate clerics. The persecution of witches in medieval Christianity and in early modernity offers the most damaging evidence of the way in which religious images could be used to sanctify the oppression of women. Only in the last decades have female scholars and religious activists begun to challenge in earnest the established patriarchal images and the male celibate control of those images (Fiorenza 1984; Ranke-Heinemann 1990). In most advanced capitalist Western countries the development of religious feminism was mostly a response to general secular trends in those societies, to the radical transformation in gender roles, to the advancement of women's liberation, and to the spread of feminist ideas and sensibilities. But in many so-called Third World countries, in Africa, Asia, and Latin America, religious feminism often presents a prophetic challenge vis-à-vis established patriarchal customs and gender roles (Reuther 1999:214–47; Oduyoye 1995).

Specifically within the Catholic tradition, the cult of Mary, the Virgin Mother of Jesus, Mother of God, and Mother intercessor of all believers, represents most paradigmatically the ambivalence in

woman's image, being simultaneously mother and virgin, and thus an unattainable ideal for all her sisters (Warner 1983; Greeley 1977). It is undeniable that the Virgin Mary in her myriad diverse vernacular representations has served as an iconic symbol of perpetual help to the most needy, the most marginal, and the most unprivileged, who in all cultures throughout the world happened to be oppressed women at the bottom of all hierarchies of power and privilege. What is debatable is whether such symbolic representation offers the anticipatory critical promise of transcendence and liberation in this world and in the next, or rather the otherworldly ideological compensatory opiate that serves to sanctify the status quo and quietist resignation.

Similar heated debates concerning the image of women within Islam and the role of Islam in legitimating and reproducing patriarchy and gender inequality within Muslim societies have erupted with great force in the last few decades. As in the case of Christianity, female scholarship has made the most important critical contributions to those debates (Ahmed 1992; Stowasser 1994; Wadud 1999; Mernissi 1991; Moghissi 2005). There is some consensus that the Prophetic Revelation and the *Sunnah* of the Prophet constituted an improvement in the situation of women when compared with the reigning conditions in the immediate pre-Islamic period in the Arabian Peninsula.

It is also widely accepted that Muhammad himself respected and trusted women and tried to facilitate equal participation of women in the religious life of the ummah. On the other hand, there is evidence of a rapid decline with the institutionalization of the early Muslim community, marked by what Jane Smith has termed a dual process of exclusion of women not only from leadership roles but from the communal aspects of religious life and their seclusion to a place apart from normal social intercourse with men (Smith 1985:19–35).

The most heated controversies, however, relate to the central role of women in modern processes of Islamization. Veiling, above all, has become the most salient, contested, and controversial emblem of contemporary global Islam. As Nilufer Gole has pointed out, no other symbol than the veil reconstructs with such a force the "otherness" of Islam to the West. Women's bodies and sexuality reappear as a political site of difference and resistance to the homogenizing and egalitarian forces of Western modernity (Gole 1996:1). Particularly in the West, the headscarf has become the symbol of fundamentalist Islam and of the oppression of Muslim women. Against such a simplistic liberal, feminist, and secularist reading of the meaning of the Muslim veil, anthropological phenomenological analyses of Muslim women both in Muslim societies and in immigrant diasporas have offered more nuanced, ambivalent, and contextual interpretations (Mahmood 2005; Meir-Housseini 1999). Saba Mahmood's chapter in this volume explores the problems

of such secularist readings of Muslim women's situation. Suffice it to point out that while France outlawed the wearing of headscarves in public schools in 2004 in the name of secularism and gender equality, the government of Turkey passed a controversial constitutional amendment in 2008 effectively lifting the ban on wearing the veil in universities and public schools by guaranteeing equal treatment from state institutions to those wearing scarves. Indeed, throughout the Muslim world, the veil has functioned as an emblem of the eruption of women in the public sphere after centuries of seclusion and as such as a symbol of their political, economic, and cultural emancipation, and above all as an expression of female agency and subjectivity.

c. Women as Religious Subjects, Historical Agents, and Political Actors

From a comparative perspective this may well be the most critical area of research insofar as it examines the historical agency of women in the contemporary reproduction, reinterpretation, and transformation of their religious traditions and their role in the contested politics of gender equality. The proliferation of feminist religious discourses within both Catholicism and Islam is undoubtedly the harbinger of radical transformations in both traditions. At the same time, the religious politics of gender are at the center of the internal contestations and debates within both traditions.[11] Women reading the sacred texts of their traditions with female eyes and with female sensibilities without the mediation, interpretation, and control of male clerical authorities is the first hermeneutic step, simple yet radical, on the road to female religious subjectivity and agency. At the same time, so-called fundamentalist religious movements in all religious traditions are active and reactive interventions and responses to the radical global transformation of gender relations. The politics of gender are at the core of fundamentalist religious politics everywhere. But the binary categories of Western liberalism, secularism, and feminism cannot that easily be simply grafted upon gendered religious politics even in Western contexts, not to speak of non-Western Catholic and Muslim contexts (Badran 2007; Naghibi 2007; Sharma and Young).

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the claims underlying pervasive anti-Catholic strands in European and American social and intellectual history, and the claims of a clash of civilizations between Islam and the West, in order to suggest parallels between developments in Catholic and Islamic cultures as aspects of modernity. From this vantage point claims that sexism is caused by or inherent in Islam can be seen to depend

on a narrow time frame and ignorance of other religious systems. In concentrating on gender in a comparative discussion of Catholic and Muslim modernities, I have moved beyond consideration of xenophobic outlooks to reference internal debates within sectors of each religious group. The contemporary existence of these debates within both Muslim and Catholic contexts indicates the utility of incorporating both religion and gender into analyses of political negotiations of modernity.

NOTES

1. Jose Casanova, "Roman and Catholic and American: The Transformation of Catholicism in the United States," 1992, 75–111.
2. Kennedy's speech was almost a replica of John England's address to Congress in 1826, offering the classic liberal position of radical separation between the private religious and the public secular spheres. Had the Second Vatican Council and developments in global Catholicism not interfered, this liberal position would probably have become the official position of the American Catholic Church. Instead, a radically new form of modern "public Catholicism" emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994) pp. 171—75.
3. Jose Casanova, "Catholic and Muslim Politics in Comparative Perspective," 2006a.
4. There are some similarities between transnational jihadism today and Catholic ultramontanism in the nineteenth century. Both were parallel responses of transnational religious groups to the threats of the modern system of nation-states and the political opportunities of globalization. But Catholic ultramontanism only turned politically violent in conjunction with integralist tendencies aiming to restore Catholic authoritarian monarchism against the liberal state, particularly against Republicanism, as in the case of the Carlist wars in Spain or counterrevolutionary Catholic monarchism in France. The Cristero rebellion in laic postrevolutionary Mexico had a similar character.
5. In his first book published as Pope Benedict XVI, *L'Europa di Benedetto nella crisi delle culture* (Siena: Cantagalli, 2005), but written still as Cardinal Ratzinger, he questions, in a brief passage, Turkey's EU membership given its Muslim culture and its lack of Christian roots. The book is dedicated to a critical reflection on the Enlightenment, secularism, and contemporary European culture.
6. On Turkish-Muslim modernities, cf., Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996); snapshots of Islamic Modernities, in Shmuel N. Eisenstadt, ed., *Multiple Modernities* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2002); and M. Hakan Yavuz and John L. Esposito, eds., *Turkish Islam and the Secular State. The Gülen Movement* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2003).

7. Jose Casanova, "Immigration and the New Religious Pluralism: A European Union/United States Comparison," in *Democracy and the New Religious Pluralism,* ed. Thomas Banchoff (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp. 59–83.
8. A controversy erupted in Germany because Oscar Lafontaine, the left Socialist leader, dislikes the euphemism *Gastarbeiter* (guest worker) and prefers to call the immigrant laborer *Fremdarbeiter* (foreign worker), the term used during the Nazi period.
9. On the concept of Catholic modernity see James Heft, ed., *A Catholic Modernity? Charles Taylor's Marianist Award Lecture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).
10. The relevant literature is already very vast. See, Darlene M. Juschka, ed., *Feminism and the Study of Religion: A Reader* (New York Continuum, 2001); Elizabeth A. Castelli, ed., *Women, Gender, Religion: A Reader* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Stephen Ellingson and M. Christian, eds., *Religion and Sexuality in Cross-Cultural Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 2002); Denise Lardner Carmody, *Women and World Religions (*Nashville, TN: Abingdon, 1979); Arvind Sharma and Katherine K. Young, eds., *Religion and Women* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994); Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad and Ellison Banks Findly, eds. *Women, Religion and Social Change* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1985).
11. For a good comparative survey, covering a good number of Catholic and Muslim countries, in response to the 1995 United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, see Jane H. Bayes and Nayereh Tohidi, eds., *Globalization, Gender and Religion: The Politics of Women's Rights in Catholic and Muslim Contexts* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001).

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