Infidels

A HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT BETWEEN CHRISTENDOM AND ISLAM

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Preface

I REMEMBER SITTING BESIDE A ROAD IN THE MIDDLE OF MOROCCO, alone and fearful. Two men in an ancient little truck stopped and asked, first in Arabic and then in French, where I was going. I told them, north, to Tangier, and then to Spain. As we drove, very slowly, we talked in a desultory way, but most of the journey was silent. But when we got to the city, they insisted that I stay with them.

These two brothers took me to their home, where I stayed for several days. They showed me the low life of the city, which was extensive, and we spent (it seemed) many hours in the suq, drinking Moroccan mint tea, for which I have never lost the taste. At night the power invariably failed, leaving the center of Tangier in darkness. The hubbub would stop for a few seconds, and then lights and candles would be lit, people shifting effortlessly from a modern to a more traditional pattern of life. Eventually, and with some reluctance, I said that I had to catch the boat to Malaga, and undertake another long walk to Granada. My new friends, Hassan and Mahmud, took me to the port and I left. I never saw them again, but that is where this book began.

This is the kind of experience that many travelers, men and women, have had. Later on the road I heard of people who had been robbed or held up in Morocco. From the stories I could tell that while some accounts were obviously true, others stemmed from some instinctive suspicion and from the consequent misinterpretation of a friendly gesture that can arise between "East" and "West." At the time I said nothing, thinking how foolhardy I had been. But subsequently I understood not just the hospitality of my two chance friends but also the risk that they had taken, picking up someone who might claim that they had stolen from him, or worse. This had not stopped them. Hassan and Mahmud saw only someone tired and thirstv.

The fear was real and so too was the friendship. Over the succeeding years researching in Spain and the Middle East, I read more and more about the deep antipathy between Islam and the Western world, about the violence and hatred that it generated. But as the pile of material grew, the clarity of this image diminished. So too did the connection between cause and effect. Often some occurrence, a massacre or some other act of violence, was rooted in particular events, but as often the trail petered out. The rationale just lay somewhere in the undifferentiated past. It was a given: the two worlds ("East" and "West" or, more accurately, "north" and "south," at all events "Christendom" and "Islam") were in opposition to each other. There were connections even longer in duration, such as the relationship between the Christian and the Jewish worlds, that often generated atrocity. But it was not the same. There was something quite specific in the meeting between Islam and Christendom that seemed to engender violence. The deep cause seemed hidden beneath the normal explanations, underlying political and economic rivalries, personal ambitions and vanities, chance and accident.

As a child I used to play a game called Chinese Whispers. There is a story from the First World War of a message being whispered down a trench, Send reinforcements, we're going to advance, and emerging at the end of the long line of soldiers as Send three and fourpence, we're going to a dance. In communications theory this would be an example of interference and dissonance. In our playground games, you passed on what you heard, never intentionally changing it (however absurd) before you whispered it to your pal. We never said to the next in line that the message seemed meaningless or stupid—at most we raised an eyebrow, but we repeated what we thought we had heard. The meaning obviously changed as the phrase traveled from person to person, but no one was consciously responsible for the distortion.

This aleatoric, or unintended, consequence is implicit in any act of communication. When Pope Urban II stood outside the cathedral of Clermont in 1095 and called for Christians to rescue Jerusalem, he did not have "the Crusades" in mind. He launched an idea to the

winds, trusting to the grace of God. But Urban had no control over the effects of his words. They echoed and resonated for centuries long after his own death.[1] This is the history of non-ideas, of Chinese Whispers. Yet the consequences in human terms of these fuzzy messages are fearsome. This book tries to trace a few of the myriad ways in which the Christian West has responded to the Islamic East. But even talking about the task is complicated. Words such as "West," "East," "Christendom," "Europe," "Islam" are so strongly contested that it is hard to get beyond them. Typing any of them felt uncomfortable, for I was only too aware that they could (and would) be misinterpreted. Since Edward Said eviscerated "Orientalism," no one can write on these topics with insouciance. These are now, indeed, things of which we cannot speak with any confidence.[2] For me the way through has been to focus on how hatred was communicated, rather than pursuing the why of insult and abuse.

This book covers a huge sweep, of both time and place. It begins in the seventh century and extends into the twenty-first. Its boundaries are Tamanarasset in Algeria to the south, and Vienna to the north, the Atlantic to the west, and the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the east. Occasionally, it strays outside those limits, but its center is the world connected with the Mediterranean. That is where I begin. Part One starts with the galley battle at Lepanto off the shores of Greece in 1571. At the time, many thought it the transforming moment in an already age-old conflict. It was not, and I go back to the first point of conflict—in Palestine nine centuries before. Parts Two, Three, and Four take, in turn, three areas—Spain, the Levant, and the Balkans—where Christianity and Islam existed side by side over a long period. Spain takes priority and pride of place. Perhaps the reason is that I understand that land better than the eastern Mediterranean or southeastern Europe. But while the story of the Crusades is well known, and recent tragic events have played a bright light upon the Balkans, Spain's history "of the Moors" remains in the shadows. Yet much of what happened in Spain had its echoes and connections elsewhere along the shores of the Mediterranean.

I am very conscious that a volume as long as this (or longer) could be written on each of those areas, and still not tell the whole story. This book follows a single thread—the antagonism between the Western Christian and the Mediterranean Islamic worlds, and even then I have space to consider only one aspect of the story. In Part Five I suggest how antagonism was spread, and how it has lasted into the present.

There are other powerful terrors about which I could have written. Western fears of people with dark skins, or malign prejudices in the West extending to half the human race, that is, women, both tempted me. These too, like the fear of Islam, have altered over the centuries but have not been eradicated by enlightenment. Moreover, they appear here, weaving in and out of the long antagonism to Islam. But at least with Islam, there was a starting point, a chronology, that gives some shape to the story. Events, like the storming of Jerusalem in 1099, the capture of Constantinople in 1453, the surrender of Granada in 1492, the battle of Lepanto in 1571, and the obliteration of the Twin Towers in 2001, have a visible consequence. We can read them and see how they made an impact on the human imagination.

Part of the how lies in the structures and mechanisms of language itself. A major part of language is communication by the human voice. Another part lies in the qualities of physical texts, handwritten or printed. Images, on the page or on the screen, are another form of language, whose rules are completely different from the spoken or the written word. The transmission of misunderstanding has in the past involved a mixture of all three. Now, with film and television, and the Internet, there is a completely new recombination of image, sound, speech, and, sometimes, text. It is still mysterious to us. I have taken only part of this spectrum from a longer history. My story began with the power of the spoken word and handwritten text in the seventh century and (I had intended) would end with a world dominated by the printed word and the printed image on the cusp of the twentieth century. Yet from the moment that my wife called me to the television to watch the burning towers in New York on September 11, 2001, I

sensed that this was no longer possible. In the days following that catastrophic act of mass murder, a long-dormant style of public communication was revived. Before that day we spoke and wrote with one set of assumptions. Afterward, we did things rather differently. This is not a value judgment, but simply an observable fact. We had shifted into a new register.

"Register" describes the sort of talk or writing that is suitable for particular situations.[3] The words that bounce around a locker room are different from those you will hear at a church social. Neither form would be appropriate to the other situation. Humans are extraordinarily well adjusted to using the correct register for different circumstances. So, faced with an unparalleled situation on September 11, what register would have been suitable? For an apocalyptic situation, the president of the United States and his advisers chose an apocalyptic register. This was the end of the world as they had known it, and a new and darker age had been ushered in. However, this instinctive dialogic shift did not have quite the results that were intended, nor did each subsequent attempt to use the new register prove wholly successful. One unexpected consequence was that it connected directly to the long-dormant memories that form the subject of this book.

I had just finished the bulk of this book and so recognized other points at which "apocalypse" had been evoked, either deliberately or by accident. I thought of W. E. Gladstone in 1876, thundering like an Old Testament prophet at the bestial Turk. I thought also of Urban II speaking to the huge crowd at Clermont. Words, as Homer says in the Iliad, have wings.[4] With the Internet, e-mail, television, radio, movies, they can fly farther than they could in the days of print alone. Fueling these media with an ancient apocalyptic discourse can have unforeseen results. The novelist Douglas Adams told us in his Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy:

> It is of course well known that careless talk costs lives, but the full scale of the problem is not always appreciated.
>
> For instance, at the very moment that Arthur said "I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle," a freak

> wormhole opened up in the fabric of the space-time continuum and carried his words far far back in time across almost infinite reaches of space to a distant Galaxy where strange and warlike beings [Vl’hurgs and G’Gunvuntt] were poised [in conference] on the brink of frightful interstellar battle.
>
> … At that very moment the words “I seem to be having tremendous difficulty with my lifestyle” drifted across the conference table.
>
> Unfortunately, in the Vl’hurg tongue this was the most dreadful insult imaginable, and there was nothing for it but to wage terrible war for centuries.[5]

From the perspective of 2004 it seems that just such an interminable war (against evil) may be under way, not in fictional hyperspace but on earth.

If there is a moral in the events that I have described in this long history, it is that words and images are weapons. Where and what they will kill or wound we cannot know when we unleash them. Remember the old story: no point in worrying about the bullet that has your name on it, but be very worried about the one inscribed “to whom it may concern.”

Andrew Wheatcroft, 2002–04

CHAPTER ONE

"We Praise Thee, O God"

LEPANTO, 1571

ON AUGUST 14, 1571, A GIGANTIC SHIP'S PENNANT OF SILK DAMASK passed through the congested streets of Naples.[1] Embroidered to the pope's commission, it was the standard of Christendom, to fly from the tallest mast in the fleet of the Holy League as it sailed into battle. The pope's banner with a huge golden figure of Christ nailed to the cross loomed over the stocky Spanish soldiers who carried it in procession from the steps of the Church of Santa Clara. As the blue flag moved through the Neapolitan crowds, an unnatural stillness gripped all who watched it go by. An hour before, inside the church, the assembled nobles, officers, monks, and priests had stood silent and unmoving, all their eyes on the admiral of the Holy League, Don John of Austria. Arrayed in cloth of gold, scarlet satin, and white velvet, the young admiral knelt before the altar as the pope's representative, Cardinal Granvelle, handed him his staff of office and pointed to the great banner behind him. "Take these emblems," the cardinal exhorted, "of the Word made flesh, these symbols of the true faith, and may they give thee a glorious victory over our impious enemy and by thy hand may his pride be laid low."

Below the cross of Christ were the emblems of the king of Spain and of the Holy Father, Pope Pius V, with the badge of the Republic of Venice, all linked by a great golden chain, symbolizing the power of faith that bound them together. From that chain, in slightly smaller scale, hung the pendant crest of Don John.[2] The emblems marked a brief moment of unity. For the first time in more than a century, Christendom[3] had combined in force to do battle with the power of "Islam."[4] The war was sanctified, waged

under the protection of the golden figure of Christ. The pope had declared that those who fought in this struggle were to be granted the same plenary indulgences as earlier Crusaders fighting to secure the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. All who died in the shadow of this battle flag would be spared the worst rigors of purgatory.[5]

Eight hundred miles to the east a similar, if less public, ceremony had already taken place. From the treasury of the imperial palace in Constantinople, a bulky bundle wrapped in silk had been brought from Sultan Selim II to Ali Pasha, admiral of the Ottoman fleet. It also contained a flag, but one colored a vivid green instead of the lambent Christian blue. Even larger than the banner that Pope Pius V had entrusted to his commander, this was one of the most potent emblems of Islam. Upon its surface the ninety-nine names and attributes of God had been embroidered in gold. It was reputed that these were repeated no less than 28,900 times. The giant Kufic characters were surrounded and interlaced with endless reiteration of those same names, in a smaller script, so that from a distance the whole surface of the pennant appeared a shimmering network of golden filigree.[6]

The two commanders were opposites—in rank, status, and experience of life. Don John was the acknowledged natural brother of the king of Spain, Philip II, and the by-blow from a few months Emperor Charles V had spent with a young widow called Barbara Blomberg in the imperial city of Regensburg. Don John had come to Naples from fighting a savage war in the mountains of southern Spain, to command the largest fleet ever assembled by Christian Europe. He had never fought at sea before. By contrast, Ali, the Kapudan Pasha of the Ottoman fleet, was a veteran of galley warfare, feared throughout the Aegean and into the far west of the Mediterranean. His origins were more humble, as the son of a muezzin, a mosque servant who called the faithful to prayer.[7] But the two leaders, for all their differences, had much in common. They were like twin paladins from an epic poem: yearning for battle, chivalrous, and honorable. Fate decreed divergent destinies for them. One would die with a musket ball through the skull, his head then hacked off and stuck on the point of a pike. The other

would return in triumph, honored and feted, his victory celebrated with paintings, engravings, poems, coins and medals, essays and learned disquisitions through more than four centuries.

Stories of their encounter abound, some closely following facts, others embellished to make a better tale. Quite where history ends and legends begin is still unsure. The battle they fought in the Gulf of Lepanto has a double character: the event itself and its burgeoning afterlife. This afterlife, the mythic Lepanto, came to stand as a synecdoche for the contest between the Islamic and the Christian worlds. In deciphering the meaning of Lepanto, we may find a point of entry into those deeper mysteries. The greater struggle had deep roots. For almost a thousand years the Christian world had felt threatened by the power in the East. Sometimes, with the Crusades in the Levant, for example, in Sicily and in Spain, Christian Europe had taken war to the enemy. Over the centuries a brooding sense of Muslim threat came to mesmerize Christendom. By the sixteenth century conflict was accepted as the natural and inevitable relationship between East and West. Like a child's seesaw, the rise of the East required the fall of the West. In 1571, the two adversaries sat roughly in balance.

Scholars reinforced a common belief in the danger and evil of "Islam." The Muslims, according to the Venerable Bede, who wrote in the eighth century, were descended from Hagar, the prophet Abraham's concubine. Many Muslims believed that she and her son, Ishmael, lay buried under the Kaaba, the great black stone in Mecca, which was the focal point of the Islamic faith. Christians, however, were descended from Abraham's lawful offspring, Isaac. Worse still than the stain of bastardy, an even darker curse hung over the people of the East. Christians inferred that while all men traced their line back to Adam and Eve, the Muslims were the lineal descendants of Cain, thrust from the presence of God for murdering his brother Abel. For his crime, Cain bemoaned that he would "be a fugitive and a wanderer upon earth … and everyone who finds me will slay me."[8] They had been forced to dwell "east of Eden." Between the children of Cain and the other descendants of Adam, there could be only mutual slaughter and revenge for the

primordial crime of fratricide. So this struggle grew from a long tradition of atavistic hatred between the peoples of the West and East.[9]

What this meant in practice it is hard to say. Naturally, Christians in battle routinely insulted their enemies as the "sons of Cain," as "misbegotten," or "Antichrist." Muslims decried their enemies with equal vehemence. Conflict between East and West seemed permanent, inevitable, preordained, as much for the Christians as for the Muslims.[10] Yet it did not destroy the skein of mutual economic and political interests that dominated the Mediterranean and the Balkans, the border and boundary between the two worlds. Trade and commercial interests were constantly in play, especially in the case of Venice and the other city-states of the Adriatic, which preferred to negotiate with Muslim power rather than fight it.

The Christian powers in the Mediterranean had much to fear from an Ottoman Empire intent on expansion.[11] The desire for a great victory went beyond political calculations, and not only for the pope, the architect of the grand alliance. After the capture of Constantinople in 1453, many Christians were convinced that the triumphant advance of Islam could only be part of God's plan. The Islamic scourge was a means to chasten mankind to a better sense of its faults and flaws.[12] Were Christians being punished for the sins of declining faith and, latterly, schism? For more than a century Christian Europe had resisted the Islamic onslaught, but had won few decisive victories. What better sign of renewed divine favor could there be than a great and annihilating victory over the forces of darkness?

Victory was also much in the minds of Sultan Selim II and his advisers in Constantinople.[13] Although the armies of "Islam" had continued to press forward against the infidel, the pace of advance had slowed. Selim's grandfather and namesake had brought vast territories in Egypt, Arabia, and the Levant into the Ottoman domain. His father, Suleiman the Lawgiver, had captured the fortress island of Rhodes, Belgrade, and Budapest, and held the Hungarian plain almost to the walls of Vienna. Suleiman had destroyed the Kingdom of Hungary in a single day on the battlefield

of Mohacs in 1526. Yet Suleiman too had his setbacks. He twice failed to capture Vienna—in 1529 and 1566—and the island of Malta had withstood all the Turkish efforts at storm and siege. In the Mediterranean, the great naval battle in 1538 at Prevesa, just off the Greek mainland north of the Gulf of Lepanto, produced no decisive result.

The Ottoman state was built upon a theory of infinite expansion, and annual war to advance its frontiers. Without conquest it would decay. Moreover, all good Muslims were duty bound to extend the Domain of Peace, and that burden weighed heaviest upon the sultan. Selim II had committed himself to advance the boundaries of righteousness by seizing the island of Cyprus, which was under the rule of Venice. He used the pretext that privateers had sailed from the island to harry his shipping and the coastal towns of Anatolia. By late 1570, it seemed likely that the island would fall to his armies. Even so, he desired much more than the capture of an island. The sultan demanded a dramatic victory from his commanders, another Mohacs. Thus, his admiral, Ali Pasha, knew that he had to achieve the complete destruction of the Christian fleet, and return laden with trophies, slaves, and booty.

The two adversaries gathered their forces from far distant points in the Mediterranean. Throughout the summer of 1571, little clusters of ships moved toward the designated meeting points: Messina for the Christians commanded by Don John, the Aegean for the sultan's war fleet under Ali Pasha. They were galleys, a type of ship built for the specific conditions of the Mediterranean. Galley warfare occupied its own universe, utterly different from battles fought between the sailing ships of the Atlantic. Long, sitting low on the water, frail by comparison with their solid northern counterparts, war galleys appeared to be able to move regardless of the force or direction of the wind. Although these slender craft carried two or three large triangular sails, their main motive power was banks of oars that extended out forty feet or more from either side of the ship, both banks pulling in unison so that the boat moved forward swiftly in what seemed a series of rhythmic spasms. In their element, with a calm sea and a following wind, they

resembled gigantic water beetles skittering on their long legs over the surface of the water. Although the galleys were faster under sail than when they depended on their oars alone, their power of maneuver came from the rowers. It meant that a galley never risked being blown ashore onto a rocky coast, which was a constant danger for the clumsy deep-hulled merchant sailing ships. A galley could move almost as fast backward as it did forward and, with its shallow draft, could negotiate shoals that would strand other sailing vessels.

Over the centuries galleys had developed many forms, some designed to carry cargo, but by the mid–sixteenth century they were evolving for a single purpose: war. The Mediterranean war galley had been adapted over many generations, from the Greek triremes that destroyed the Persian fleet at the battle of Salamis, almost two thousand years before.[14] After 1500, some galleys acquired superstructures at bow and stern, to house guns and fighting men. But the essence of the galley remained the same. As in classical times, galleys were merely a floating platform from which men could board and overcome the crews of other ships, an insubstantial shell for carrying the oarsmen and men-at-arms. Originally, as in the rowing skiffs and caïques to be found in every Mediterranean port, each man had pulled his own oar, but this became a costly option since oars had to be made from expensive well-seasoned timber, much of it imported from northern Europe. From the mid–sixteenth century a new style of rowing appeared that reduced the number of oars. Three or four men, sometimes as many as five, would sit side by side on benches, all pulling in unison on a single massive sweep. It was easy thereafter to add more men to increase the force behind the oars.

The power of a war galley lay in its personnel.[15] Aboard each one would be a number of well-equipped professional fighting men, a battle crew.[16] On Muslim and Venetian ships, many among the rowing crew were also armed and would join the melee. Of the Venetian oarsmen, who were volunteers, those on the end of each bench had a sword and short pike close at hand, while the second man had a bow and a quiver of arrows. As the ships closed, they

would leave their oars to the third man and gather, ready to swarm across onto the deck of their victim. No merchant vessel loaded with cargo could hope to outrun a galley pursuing at full speed. Most tried, because the alternative was dire. The galley attack resembled that of a hawk swooping to snatch its prey. The sharp beak of the galley would come closer and closer to the fleeing ship, so close that the crew of the doomed vessel could see its nemesis preparing to board. At that point, many ships yielded; any that continued to run would be showered with arrows or musket fire and the crew killed. For reasons of economy the great bow guns of the attacking galley were rarely used.

Galleys were raptors, living off weaker and less well armed vessels.

> Like the carnivorous dinosaur the war galley dominated its environment. But like the dinosaur, it grew progressively larger and more powerful to compete with its own kind until, like the dinosaur, it became increasingly immobile. The tactical power of the Mediterranean war galley, with the teeth and jaws of Tyrannosaurus Rex, depended on a continuous supply of flesh and blood.[17]

Unless a galley could keep its rowing benches filled it could not survive. Much of the ceaseless raiding and predation was to seize not cargo but manpower. When a Muslim vessel took a Christian ship, all non-Muslims aboard would be immediately enslaved. Often the crew and any passengers would be the most valued prize. Some could be ransomed, and others sold for a good profit in the markets of North Africa or Constantinople.

If a Christian galley intercepted a Muslim ship, exactly the same transactions would take place. All non-Christians would be made prisoner and put to work at the oars. But Spanish, French, and Venetian ships preyed as frequently on the ships of other Christian nations. There were many excuses that would permit a war galley to seize a merchant vessel. They might search a Christian ship for “contraband,” claiming that the crew was trading with an enemy.

The Knights of St. John, sailing from their fortress island of Malta, were feared by all, Christian and Muslim alike. If they stopped a Christian ship in eastern waters, they would examine the cargo minutely for anything that could be termed illicit. When lacking anything more obvious, they were in the habit of uncovering "Jewish clothing" during a search, indicating that the ship was trading with the Jewish population of Muslim ports. This justified the expropriation of the whole cargo, and the enslavement of the crew.

Galley fleets became larger during the sixteenth century as trade grew along the shore, and the predators prospered. Mostly these were ships exclusively engaged in raiding, from ports such as Muslim Algiers, the greatest port on the Barbary (North African) shore, or from Christian Fiume, at the head of the Adriatic. Increasingly, the economy of the galley came to depend on slaves rather than freemen for the crews. By midcentury, almost every fleet, except that of Venice, which continued almost exclusively to recruit freemen, was rowed by slaves, prisoners of war, or convicts. On each ship, there would be more than 100 men, most chained to their rowing station, with sometimes a few oarsmen free to move within the constraints of the narrow deck. Most lived out their lives within the two feet allotted to them. They slept, ate, defecated, bled, suppurated, and often died at the same bench. Rats and cockroaches thrived in the decaying piles of food scraps mixed with ordure and urine that built up beneath their feet. A wise galley captain, knowing how rapidly epidemic disease would spread under such conditions, would regularly wash down the rowing decks of his vessel.[18] When the rats and lice had bred uncontrollably, the ultimate solution was to put the crew ashore under guard, unship the masts, fill the galley with stones, and sink it in the shallows until the deck and superstructure were wholly underwater. The vermin that could not, or would not, "desert the sinking ship" drowned.

At dead of night, in fog, or in the half-light of dawn, the presence of a galley was evident long before it became visible. The rank smell of the rowing deck could be detected at up to two miles'

distance. It was said that you could tell a former galley slave or sea soldier in later life by the excessively strong perfume he wore, as if to blot out the olfactory memory of earlier evil days. On a galley, rarely more than 150 feet in length, all the gradations and nuances of society were obscured by the miasma of filth and decay. The soldiers in half armor, the musket men and gunners, even the officers and commanders, were never out of contact with the degraded humanity that pulled the ship toward its destination.

However, for the chained men, whether slaves on the ships of the Ottoman sultan and the corsair captains of North Africa, or condemned prisoners on the galleys of the Most Catholic King of Spain or the Most Christian King of France, to serve at the oars was a form of living death. Their end might come in many ways. They were unlikely to starve, for it was not in the interests of any galley captain to lose his skilled rowers needlessly. Beans, corn, and a little meat, with wine on the Christian ships, were the staples, while buckets of freshwater were always available at each bench to slake the thirst of the rowers. Each man would drink about two liters a day at the height of the summer sailing season.[19] Once a rower had become conditioned to the life, and survived the first few months, his whole body adapted to the rhythm of the oars. Some oarsmen lasted for thirty years or more. Disease was the most likely end to their suffering, for cuts and wounds inevitably festered in such conditions. The weak, sickly, or moribund would simply be unchained and tossed overboard. Only the strokes could expect better treatment: strong and reliable pacesetters could bring a ship up to maximum speed more reliably than the whip of the boatswain.

In times of war especially the demand for rowers was insatiable, and there were never enough men to fill the benches. Many of the galley slaves were the victims of countless raids along the shores of the sea, where the great prize was human flesh. An imperial Ottoman galley would stand off the coast out of sight and the commander would order spies to scout the local settlements. Then at night a party would be sent ashore, to burn the villages, kill the old and very young, and round up as many of the able-bodied men

as could be found. The galley would be gone by first light, or sometimes a flotilla would descend on a region and stay for longer periods, spreading depredation for many miles around.

The men who filled the benches on most Christian warships were either Muslim villagers or prisoners of war. But they also included many Christians ground out through the machinery of the law. In Spain, debt, sedition, even petty crime could bring a sentence to the galleys. As the demand for oarsmen rose, so the flow of criminals through the courts who were condemned to the galleys increased.[20] Often those who had served their time at the oars and were due for release were held back.[21] These forzados, or pressed men, were technically free but in every other respect were treated as harshly as they had been before.[22] In France, the Catholic authorities sent a steady stream of Protestants to serve in the galleys, while the papal prisons were regularly emptied to fill the rowing benches. Yet others freely chose the life of the oarsman. The corsairs of the Barbary Coast were, in effect, the shareholders of a business enterprise, where they supplied their muscle power and risked their lives for part of the profits of their raids. The Slav Uskoks of Dalmatia were freemen under the protection of the Holy Roman Empire. They followed an old profession: banditry by sea had been a part of Mediterranean life for millennia.[23] Thus, on the same rowing bench there might be a free sailor, a prisoner of war, a slave, and a criminal serving a sentence of years of labor at the oars.

Skilled sailing masters regarded their crews like trained animals, knew their individual capacities and limitations. Each rowing bench would be balanced, for the fundamental skill of galley warfare lay in mixing new blood with experienced oarsmen. Men were chosen by their size, weight, and strength to produce the maximum power, and with this aim, though the conditions of life were harsh and degrading, few captains deliberately mistreated their crews. A naval gun in the mid–sixteenth century was deadly to around 200 yards, but a galley rowed at maximum speed could cover that distance in half a minute, much less time than it took to reload.[24] No galley crew could, however, sustain top speed for more than about twenty minutes, and exhausted or demoralized oarsmen for much less. It

was well known among captains that Venetian and North African galleys were considerably faster and more agile than those of Spain and France. In part it was a matter of design and the heavy deadweight of the large fighting crews the latter carried. But there was also a factor of spirit and morale. The Spanish ships, rowed exclusively by captives and convicts, consumed men as remorselessly as the silver mines at Potosi, which provided the money that built so many of the galleys. Neither the ships nor the mines were designed as a form of punishment and social control, but that is what they became. In Venice and the Muslim lands, a free oarsman could become a rich man from prize money. In Algiers or Constantinople, a Christian galley slave who "turned Turk" could end up as a galley captain or even as the admiral of the sultan's navy.[25]

Each imperial Ottoman vessel carried a complement of highly trained janissary infantry, some armed with sword or yataghan and others with the famous Turkish bow, which could penetrate almost any armor at 100 yards' distance. A skilled archer could fire up to six arrows a minute, with great accuracy. It took years of training to bend the bow and use it, and increasingly janissaries adopted the harquebus or musket used by their enemies. Janissaries did not normally expect to fight on board enemy ships. The galley served as their transport and usually they would be put ashore to fight a land battle or besiege a fortress. Some wore chain mail armor, but they scorned the plate cuirasses, greaves, and steel morion helmets worn by the Spanish soldiers. In any depiction of a battle of the period, there was no doubt as to which were the Christian forces and which the Muslim. Steel helmets, breastplates, and shields on one side, and turbans and flowing robes on the other. These differences developed not just from distinct tactical and strategic demands, but from divergent attitudes to war.

The Christians possessed a wonder weapon, as potent as the Greek fire of earlier centuries.[26] In the fleet that was slowly assembling at Messina were six galleys quite unlike any in the Ottoman flotillas. From her long experience of Mediterranean warfare Venice had by inspired improvisation created the weapon

that would prove decisive. Standing out above all the other vessels at anchor were six tall heavy ships, quite different to the low sleek war galleys that surrounded them. These were galleasses, heavy broad-beamed sluggards propelled partly by sail and partly by huge oars, each pulled by seven men or more. The galleasses were a hybrid between the Mediterranean type of warship and the sailing vessels of the Atlantic.[27] Above the rowing deck, all along each side, was a range of heavy cannon which could deliver a broadside of shot that could shatter a more lightly built galley. These were to be floating fortresses, weapons unique to Venice.

The galleasses had not yet been tried in battle. Yet one galleass had the firepower of five ordinary galleys, and Don John was convinced that the six in his fleet would, under the right conditions, give him the edge over the Ottomans.[28] When, finally, the great armada sailed from Messina, he ordered that all the ships should proceed at the lumbering pace of the galleasses so that he would not come to battle without the advantage of this secret weapon. Why only the Venetians had developed a ship that could devastate the most powerful galley afloat will never be known. Perhaps it was simply that the materials were to hand. Laid up in the Arsenal were ten large merchant galleys, which were no longer in use for trade with the East. The Venetians also had an abundance of bronze cannon and, putting the two together, created the galleass.

It is unlikely that the Ottomans would have developed the galleass on their own, although they were quick to build them once they had seen their power in battle. It was not through lack of skill and knowledge—Turkish gunners and siege artillery were of high quality. Rather, it was that they knew their way of war was superior. It was bound up with codes of honor that equated only very imprecisely with European notions of chivalry. In the West, honor was a concept that pertained only to the topmost layer of society; most of mankind stood outside the codes of chivalric conduct. It was considered absurd for anyone not bound by noble origins to adopt knightly graces. So Miguel de Cervantes, who was one of the thousands waiting for Don John in Messina harbor (and who was to lose his arm in battle at Lepanto), would make his

eponymous hero, Don Quixote, a madman in his neighbors' eyes.[29] His insanity lay in living by the ancient rules of knighthood that did not apply to him. But in the fleet of Ali Pasha, even the most humble Muslim fighting man was a Quixote, trapped in the spider's web of honor: loyalty to family, to tribe, to God constrained his every move. The Christian fleet gathered at Messina had been made holy warriors only by papal decree, an event notable for its extreme rarity. For the most part war, even in a good cause, did not carry that weight of divine sanction.[30] But every Muslim soldier and sailor was, lifelong, bound to struggle in God's cause. Nor was it just a matter of ends, but also of means. The Holy Qur'an, which many had learned by heart, told them clearly: "Surely Allah loves those who fight in His Way in ranks as if they were a firm and compact wall."[31] The lowliest foot soldier was honored and remembered for how he had fought and not merely because he had been victorious.[32]

The battle at Lepanto would mark a defining moment in the struggle between Christendom and Islam: on the Christian side, war was fast becoming secularized. Where once the pope had decreed (ineffectually) that the crossbow was not to be used in conflicts between Christians, now no barriers were placed on any engine of war, however frightful.[33] The galleass was remarkable not for its technology, but for the ease with which it was created, adopted, and immediately used in battle. In the Muslim ranks, by contrast, every innovation could become a matter for argument and even resistance. Honorable war was still fought with the weapons known to the Qur'an—swords, spears, lances, bows and arrows. The good Muslim soldier was the man who leaped into the breach or onto the deck of an enemy vessel without armor and only the strength of his arms to protect him. Guns and artillery were necessary, but carried no mark of courage. Perhaps for this reason few of the developments and innovations in gun technology emerged in the Islamic world.[34] Implicit if unstated was the general belief that it was better to fight in the right way and lose a battle than to fight without honor. Europeans might talk about traditions, caste, and honor, but quietly discarded them in practice—occasions such as

when officers courteously invited their enemy to fire first became legendary precisely because they were so rare.[35] In contrast, the armies of “Islam” might adopt new weapons but were increasingly hobbled by their ancient ethic.

IT TOOK MORE THAN THREE WEEKS FOR DON JOHN TO GET HIS unwieldy armada under way. He crossed from Naples to the port of Messina on August 23, 1571, and his arrival was the excuse for elaborate ceremonies and extended celebrations. Sicily was determined not to be outdone by the cities on the mainland. A huge building of marbled stucco, ornate with suggestively symbolic pictures of Victory and Divine Favor, was quickly built, occupying most of the open ground at the landing place. Tethered under its arches was a warhorse with saddle and stirrups chased in silver, and reins of silver chain. Mounted on this lavish gift from the city, Don John rode into Messina, past huge cheering crowds, to the Cathedral of La Nunziatella, followed at a distance by his entourage. At intervals along the streets were towering triumphal arches, and his procession was showered with flower petals from the balconies above, which made a sweet-smelling slime on the ground below. Then, the festivities over, he waited with increasing frustration for the last of his command to arrive. Little had been done to put the fleet on a war footing. Don John found that no one knew where the Turkish fleet had gathered, so he dispatched a squadron of galleys under a trusted Spanish captain to discover its location. It was thought that the enemy had assembled somewhere off the long eastern coast of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas, but no one was sure precisely where, or how many ships would confront the fleet of the Holy League.

As the young commander tried to unify the Spanish flotillas with the papal contingent under Marc Antonio Colonna and with the Venetian ships of the veteran Sebastiano Veniero, he soon recognized that the fragile alliance might not survive the strain of too much delay. There were daily street fights between the holy

warriors from different cities or nations. Moreover, with some 80,000 men confined in the harbor and city, there was always the danger that epidemic disease could ravage the ranks. Yet he dared not depart until his fleet was at full strength, and every day new ships continued to arrive: the Venetian contingent from Crete rowed into Messina, as did more Spanish ships filled with troops recruited in Germany. Among the last to appear were the twenty-two galleys hired by the king of Spain from Genoa, commanded by Gian Andrea Doria, and the three great galleys of the Knights of Malta.

In the weeks at Messina, Don John quickly discovered that the Venetians loathed the Genoese, mistrusted the Spaniards, and resented the Knights of Malta. Every appointment he made immediately caused feelings of slight and anger among those not chosen. There were mutterings that he inevitably favored the Spaniards, that he was delaying the advance, thereby allowing the Ottomans to ravage Venetian possessions. Each further day of delay caused partisan feelings to fester more strongly, and it was with relief that on September 16, with the scout ships returned and the weather fine, he gave the order to set sail. He wrote to his mentor and adviser, the veteran soldier Don Garcia de Toledo, that the enemy

> is stronger than we in the number of his vessels, but not so, I believe, in quality of either men or vessels. So, I sail, please God, tonight for Corfu and thence according to what I shall hear. I have with me two hundred and eight galleys, twenty-six thousand troops, six galleasses and twenty-four [supply] ships. I trust our God will give us victory if we meet the enemy.[36]

The pope had sent Bishop Odescalchi to Messina to bid his ships Godspeed. The bishop brought with him spiritual fortification for the holy warriors in the form of an Agnus Dei “of great size and beauty.” This was a wafer or biscuit mixed with balm and consecrated oil. A pope blessed only a certain number of these in the first year of his pontificate, and thereafter only once every seven years. It was stamped with the image of a lamb “reclining upon a

book, bearing a banner with the sign of the Cross and surrounded by a border with the words ‘Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us.’ ”[37] It was a powerful Christian talisman, giving its possessor protection from storms at sea, earthquakes, lightning, the plague, the falling sickness, sudden death, and devils. The nuncio also carried documents containing various auspicious prophecies, written by the seventh-century Bishop Isidore of Seville, that a Holy League would be formed under a Spanish leader, who would defeat and scatter the enemies of Spain and Christ. He also brought with him the pope’s private assurance that the young commander would undoubtedly gain his own kingdom as a reward for victory. But despite these assurances of divine support and protection, Don John had some doubts about the prospects of the fleet.

As each contingent arrived he inspected it, and despite his assertion to Don Garcia de Toledo, he discovered that not all his ships were of the best quality, nor were the fighting crews as strong as their numbers suggested. His best fighting ships were the Spanish galleys, which were a little larger, heavier, and more solidly built from well-seasoned timber than the Venetian and papal vessels. Their decks were crowded with well-trained and heavily armored Spanish and German infantry. The Venetian ships looked impressive, with their sleek lines and the speed to take on even the fastest of the Ottoman galleys. But Venice’s reputation was not wholly merited. In her Arsenal she indeed had the capacity to build the hull of a galley in a single day, but the Queen of the Sea was rarely in possession of a stock of spars, oars, and sailcloth sufficient to run at full strength. Venetian galleys were too often built quickly of second-rate timber and inadequately fitted out. Much more perilous under battle conditions was the lack of volunteers, which had made it difficult for Venice (which would not use Muslim galley slaves) to crew her ships, or to provide a full contingent of soldiers. Fortunately, Don John had seasoned Spanish troops in excess of his own needs, and he persuaded Veniero to take them aboard his ships. Accepting a Spanish battle crew in the days before Lepanto was regarded as an ignominious admission of weakness for

a Venetian commander, and Veniero acquiesced only with the greatest reluctance.

Finally, in the early morning of September 16, 1571, the fleet began to move out of Messina. As the ships of the Holy League rowed out, dressed overall with war banners, flags, and pennants, their crews saluted the papal nuncio and the little knot of clergy standing at the edge of the harbor wall. As each ship passed, the church dignitaries made the sign of the cross, blessing the enterprise; in response the crew cheered. Like bees emerging from a hive, the line of ships seemed never-ending, until, standing out a little from the land, the greatest array ever assembled in the name of Christendom finally formed up for the journey east. As it headed south to round the little Cape of Porto Salvio, to anchor on the second night off Cape Spartivento, the fleet received the first definite news of the Turks.

A small ship, sailing from the village of Gallipoli in the narrow Brindisi peninsula, at the heel of Italy, came alongside Don John's flagship and reported that twenty-four Muslim galleys had occupied the harbor of Santa Maria on the Adriatic coast, south of Otranto on the Italian side, while a larger contingent had raided Corfu. But the location of the main body of the Ottoman ships was still a mystery. Had it retired to its principal harbor at Prevesa, just south of the narrows on the eastern side of the Adriatic? Or separated into raiding squadrons to harry the Balkan ports, or Crete, or the Spanish islands and coast, all now denuded of protection? The Christian fleet moved farther east, mindful that it might be attacked at any moment by some, or all, of the Muslim ships. On September 21, it halted at Cape Colonne: the ships were advancing at about fifty nautical miles a day, hampered by the need to keep the slower supply vessels and the galleasses with the main body. There the commanders learned that the bulk of the Ottoman fleet was still moored at Prevesa, waiting for instructions from the sultan on where to attack.

With his enemy only a few days' sail away, Don John wanted to press forward as fast as he could across the Adriatic to Corfu. But as the weather worsened, every attempt to negotiate the Strait of

Otranto was thwarted. Some ships were blown onto the rocks and holed, others lost masts and rigging. Although galleys could row into an adverse wind, this sapped the rowers' strength, and the last thing a commander wanted was to arrive at the point of battle with a dispirited and exhausted complement of oarsmen. It was not until September 27 that the fleet finally crossed the narrow sea lane to moor in the channel between Corfu and the mainland. It found the town in ruins.

A Turkish squadron raiding up the Adriatic almost to the outer islands of Venice had ravaged Corfu on its return south. It ransacked the island's main town, destroyed churches, hacked heads off saints' statues. But the Turks had made no impression on the citadel, which the Venetians had built up over two centuries. After several fruitless attacks, and the loss of three galleys, they sailed on. However, while their houses were being destroyed, the islanders learned that the whole Turkish fleet was not in the lagoon of Prevesa, but farther south in the more open waters of the Gulf of Lepanto. Don John immediately dispatched Gil de Andrade with his scout ships to ascertain whether the Ottoman fleet was still at anchor and how large it was. Then he called a council of war on board his flagship, the Real. His inclination was to push forward and risk all in an immediate battle with the Ottoman fleet, but the council of war was divided. Some members were unwilling to hazard everything in the lottery of a battle, and favored laying siege to some major Turkish fortress. Others suggested trying to draw out the enemy fleet from the protection of the harbor at Lepanto into more open waters. While the council was still in session, news came from de Andrade that the Turkish fleet was riddled with sickness, and not at full strength. Don John put it to the vote and all agreed that the whole Christian armada should attack at once and destroy the enemy in the Gulf of Lepanto.

In the curious parallelism that surrounds the events of 1571, at that moment the Ottoman commander, Ali Pasha, was also holding a council of war with his captains, and their opinions were divided in a roughly similar manner. Hassan Pasha, a bey of Algiers, spoke for the overwhelming majority. He acknowledged that the scouts

had told them that this was the largest fleet they had ever seen. But he recalled how at Prevesa (in 1538) and at the island of Jerbi, off Tripoli (in 1560), the infidels had faded under Turkish attack. He believed that they were cowards, without spirit, and would flee here, as they had done in the past. The opposite view was presented by Hamet Bey, who suggested it would be a mistake to underestimate the power or unity of the Christians, and that Don John, although young and inexperienced, had proved himself in the war against the Moriscos (Muslims forcibly converted to Christianity) in the Alpujarras mountain range of southern Spain. The Ottoman fleet had everything to gain by playing a waiting game, under the protection of the guns of the Lepanto fortress.

Ali Pasha himself favored an immediate attack, and his resolve was hardened by the long-awaited orders from the sultan. Selim ordered the fleet to capture the Christian ships and to bring them immediately as trophies of war to line the waters of the Golden Horn, below his palace of the New Seraglio in Constantinople. The order admitted no dissent, and all doubters were silenced. The council came to a precipitate end, and the captains returned to their ships to prepare for battle. The efficient Ottoman commissary quickly stocked the hundreds of ships with food and water, and with large quantities of powder and shot, while Ali summoned more troops from neighboring garrisons. He speedily added 10,000 janissaries and 4,000 other troops to his fighting crews.

Meanwhile, the fleet of the Holy League moved south. By October 3, it was off Prevesa, but its advance was halted by high seas and adverse winds from the south. October 4 and 5 were spent battened down, riding out the storm. While the fleet was at anchor, a small vessel heading north from the island of Crete to Venice brought terrible and unexpected news.

Every Venetian in the fleet knew that the Ottomans were besieging the town of Famagusta in Cyprus. The island's capital, Nicosia, had fallen a few months after the invasion of July 1570. Twenty thousand inhabitants had been slaughtered when the Turkish troops broke into the city, and the rest of the islanders submitted to avoid the same fate. Only the small port city of

Famagusta refused to surrender and held out in the hope of relief from the sea. Within hours of the fall of Nicosia, Turkish horsemen were riding around the walls of Famagusta, taunting the inhabitants with the heads of the leading citizens of Nicosia impaled on their lance points. However, Marcantonio Bragadino, the governor in Famagusta, had prepared his command to withstand a long siege and it was clear that the city would resist, despite the frightful example of Nicosia's fate. By the early spring of 1571 more than 100,000 Turks had gathered around Famagusta.[38] It seemed that it could not hold out for long. But for four months the 4,000 defenders beat back every assault until attacks in July 1571 breached the walls in six places, and the troops in the garrison were reduced to their last barrels of gunpowder.[39] Faced with certain defeat, Bragadino sought an honorable surrender. The terms agreed on August 1 with the Ottoman commander, Lala Mustafa, were unusually favorable: the Venetians secured protection for the remaining citizens, while the garrison would be evacuated to the Venetian island of Crete.

The Turks had lost more than 50,000 men in the capture of Nicosia and Famagusta. The terms granted were remarkable, especially after the massacres at Nicosia. On August 4, Lala Mustafa summoned Bragadino and his staff to his camp. The Venetian commander, wearing the purple robe of a senator, rode out from Famagusta under an ornate parasol (against the searing heat) at the head of his officers and with a bodyguard of forty harquebusiers. He was, according to the records, "serene … without fear or pride." At the meeting, the Ottoman commander accused him of breaching the agreement for the city's surrender and demanded hostages. Bragadino responded that this did not form part of the terms. Then, at a prearranged signal, janissaries rushed into the tent and overpowered the Venetians. Outside, the senator's escort had already been disarmed.

The subsequent events were played out for the benefit of the Ottoman army gathered in a huge mass around Lala Mustafa's encampment. It seems unlikely that Bragadino expected to survive the surrender, or to see the treaty honored. The Ottomans usually

repaid resistance with death, and to allow the defenders to retire with their arms in hand and flags flying was almost without parallel.[40] On previous occasions the Ottomans had invariably slaughtered or enslaved the bulk of their captives, sparing only a few for ransom, or to take the news back to their enemies.[41] After the battle of Mohacs, Sultan Suleiman had “sat on a golden throne” while his soldiers decapitated thousands of prisoners. The Venetians were playing a grim but well-understood role in a gory traditional drama. The performance was designed to be exemplary, and to satisfy the sultan in Constantinople that the long and costly siege had not been in vain. Bragadino’s officers and staff were beheaded in front of him, so that a rivulet of blood flowed across the hard dry ground and washed over his feet. Then he was ceremonially disfigured, with his nose and ears hacked off like a common criminal.

Surgeons stanched the flow of blood and made sure that the wounds did not become infected. Bragadino was cared for solicitously over a period of two weeks and allowed to recover his strength.[42] Meanwhile, his remaining troops, not knowing what had happened to their leader, had marched out of Famagusta to the galleys to leave for Crete, in accordance with the treaty. At the harbor they were taken and enslaved, and chained by hand and foot to the oars in the Ottoman galleys. The final act was designed to make a mockery of the Venetians and to strip their commander of all the attributes of nobility. After prayers on Friday, August 17, the Ottoman army gathered on the siege works that surrounded the city. Bragadino was brought out before them, still wearing his senator’s robe. He was forced to his hands and knees, and a mule’s harness was put on his back, with a bridle and bit in his mouth. Two heavy baskets filled with earth were loaded onto the harness, so that he bent under their weight. He carried them to repair the breaches in the Ottoman earthworks made by the fire from his own guns. Throughout the morning he was led back and forth in front of the troops, in and out among the tents, whipped forward and abused by the mass of soldiers. Each time he passed the Ottoman commander’s tent, he was forced to prostrate himself and eat a

mouthful of the dusty soil.

Later in the day the scene transferred to the harbor. The senator was hauled to the topmast of a galley, in front of all his former troops, now galley slaves. He hung in chains without nose and ears, twisting at the masthead under the hot sun. Lowered to the ground, he was taken to the marketplace and tied to a whipping frame, where all the people of Famagusta could witness his humiliation. Then, as the sun fell past its apogee, after he was "hung up by the heels like a sheep," an Ottoman butcher began the slow process of flaying him alive, removing the skin intact.[43] The chronicle recounts that Bragadino died when the skinner's knives reached the "height of his navel." The grisly task completed, the butcher scraped the hide clean of fat. Lala Mustafa and his troops watched the whole process in silence. On the next day the skin of Bragadino was stuffed with straw and neatly sewn up like a huge doll. Mounted on his own horse and paraded through the streets under the senatorial parasol, Bragadino's simulacrum rode in a parody of his departure from the city on August 4. His skin was next hung from the yardarm of Lala Mustafa's galley, and was still dangling there like a flag, but by now tanned by the weather, when the triumphant conqueror of Cyprus returned to the waters of the Golden Horn. Its final destination was the galley slaves' prison (bagnio) in Constantinople, where it was hung as a mute warning to any who thought to resist or rebel.

This theater of cruelty was partly, to adopt Voltaire's phrase, "pour encourager les autres." The Ottomans ritually degraded not only the body of Bragadino, but Venice herself.[44] By showing their power over him, dragging him down from the pedestal of authority, they had humiliated their enemy. All knew that only a comparable act could erase the shame. When six years earlier at the siege of Malta the Turks had cut the hearts from the corpses of the knights and floated their naked bodies down toward the citadel on rafts, the Maltese commander, La Vallette, had responded in kind. Scores of Turkish prisoners were brought up onto the battlements, to have their heads cut off in full view of their comrades, and to be fired from La Vallette's canon into the Turkish lines. He had neutralized

one insult with another. But after Famagusta, as yet there had been no rejoinder.

This was the news brought to the fleet of the Holy League waiting fogbound between the islands of Cephalonia and Ithaca. It stilled any remaining doubts about the need for a battle, which would now, additionally, revenge the death of Bragadino and repay his humiliation many times over. As soon as the fog lifted sufficiently for the fleet to move safely, in the early hours of Sunday, October 7, the whole armada advanced into the open sea, in the mouth of the Gulf of Patras, and some forty miles from the entrance to the well-protected harbor of Lepanto. With the mainland coast in sight, Don John sent two fast ships forward down the gulf to discover if the Ottoman fleet was still at anchor. If it was, it would not slip past the mass of Christian ships rowing down the narrowing gulf toward the straits before Lepanto.

To the north, as the Christian galleys pushed into a stiff breeze, lay the high mountains of Acarnia; to the south, the lowlands of the Morea. The winds came off the high ground, veering back and forth, so the sails on the galleasses could not be used, and the whole fleet slowed to the rowing pace of these ungainly vessels. Shortly after dawn the fleet halted, and moved into the battle formations designated by Don John. He also gave orders that the rams, or spurs, mounted on the prow of each war galley should be cut away. These stout wooden structures were designed to hook into the side of an enemy ship, providing a platform along which boarders could advance. But the spur made it difficult to maneuver the bow guns, which alone had the capacity to cripple an enemy vessel. Don John's strategy was not to capture the Ottoman fleet but to destroy it. He intended to use his heavy guns to smash the lighter hulls of the Ottoman vessels, boarding where necessary, but first sending as many ships and crews as possible to the bottom of the sea. But the order gave a deeper message to his men: cutting away the spurs was equivalent to throwing away the scabbard of his sword, signifying that it would not again be sheathed unbloodied.

No one had any prior experience of marshaling so large a fleet into battle. Moreover the six galleasses were new and wholly

untried weapons. The forthcoming conflict would be like no other at sea, but Don John planned to fight in the open waters of the Gulf of Patras much as he would have fought a cavalry battle on land. However, the scale was vast: the fleet extended in a line for almost four miles end to end. Don John divided the hundreds of galleys into four divisions: the center, which he oversaw in person; two wings; and behind this line the reserve, commanded by a trusted Spaniard, and intended to staunch any breach made by the enemy. The battle tactics were simple: in front would be the six galleasses, and the galleys of the Holy League would row forward at a steadily increasing pace behind them. Once the firefight began, the rowing rate would rise until the galleys covered the last few hundred yards in less than a minute, until they smashed into the enemy, also advancing at full speed. Then all semblance of strategy would vanish in the melee of hand-to-hand fighting. The great danger was that the fast and maneuverable Ottoman galleys would break through the line and swarm around the Christian ships on every side, rather in the way that on land Turkish horsemen would pull down armored Christian knights by weight of numbers.

Although he had never fought at sea, Don John knew his enemy. The war in the Alpujarras, from house to house, from village to village, had taught him that even Muslim peasants would die rather than yield or retreat.[45] The lesson of innumerable galley battles was that once the hardy Muslim fighters gained a foothold on the opponent's decks, then the chances of survival were small. As a last act before the fray, he ordered that all his ships should be rigged with boarding nets, to act as a fence all along the sides above the rowing decks. The nets would not stop boarders, but they would slow them down, giving the defending crew time to rally. The only effective protection against the rush of the janissaries was firepower. On the Real he trained a force of 300 men, armed with the heavy Spanish harquebuses and muskets, to fire in volley if the enemy did succeed in boarding. But ultimately Don John could not control the flow of the fight on his ships. Success would depend on the spirit and morale of his men. In the early morning light, in a fast small fregata he traversed the line of stationary ships back and

forth, shouting encouragement to the crews and soldiers, telling them that God was with them, and reminding them of the fate of Bragadino, for whom they would wreak revenge upon the bodies of their enemy. Cheers rose as he passed each ship. He had ordered that every Christian convict oarsman should be freed so that they could join the Crusade, while Muslim rowers were double-chained, by both hand and foot, to the oars.

Only the best of his soldiers were equal to the Ottomans, and the advantage lay with Ali Pasha, with fresh troops rested, well fed, and eager for battle. Don John's victory at Lepanto was due to the supremacy of the gun.[46] He had placed the six galleasses in front of his line at intervals, confident that their firepower would disrupt the Ottoman line of battle. As well as the heavy guns, he crammed them full of marksmen with muskets. Later pictures of the battle show the ships bristling with gun barrels, like the spines on a hedgehog. Success would depend on Ottoman willingness to be drawn into the killing zone around these floating fortresses. But if the Ottomans retreated, drawing Don John's ships farther down the gulf toward the guns of the Lepanto fortress, then the dynamics would alter. There was already a stiff breeze and the sea was running against the Christian ships. The more his oarsmen exhausted themselves, the greater chance that the advantage would slip to the Turks. As in all battles, chance and providence were in command.

From daybreak, however, divine favor seemed to manifest itself. It was a Sunday, the feast of St. Justina, and on each of the ships there was a monk or priest to provide spiritual support; Don John had long before ordered that mass was to be celebrated before any battle began. On every deck, the men stood in their armor with their weapons, then knelt for the holy office. Wisps of incense rose from each ship, scenting the air before being carried away by the wind. As the mass began, the Ottoman ships came into sight of the great Christian fleet, and observing the calm and stillness of the ships at rest in the water, thought that terror now gripped the Western armada. On Ali Pasha's vessels, extended in a long line like the Christians opposite, drums started to beat and the thousands of

waiting soldiers to chant as one the verses from the Holy Qur'an, with the steady refrain "Allahu akbar," "God is great." They stamped their feet and clashed their swords on their shields. On the ships that had musicians, cymbals and horns added to the swelling sound.

Western histories of these minutes contrast the respectful religious "silence" of the Christian fleet with the raucous "din" of the Ottoman ships. But the events were in fact exactly parallel. On the Western ships, the single voices of priests led the worship, surrounded by silent praying masses. On the Ottoman ships, the community of the faithful made their own "rough music." Each ceremony, however, reinforced a single belief. Whoever died in the fight to follow was destined for heaven, the Christians (as their priests reminded them) with the pope's certificate declaring that they would be freed from the pain of purgatory, the Muslims with the verses of the Qur'an echoing in their ears, certain that paradise awaited them. But to Christians at prayer, the noise from the ships only a mile or so away across the water seemed savage and barbaric. Those same histories that noted Turkish barbarism, however, also reported an act of honor and chivalry by Ali Pasha. As Don John was ordering the Muslim galley slaves to be chained to their oars, to live or die with their ships, the Ottoman commander went down onto the rowing deck of his flagship, the Sultana, and stood among the Christian galley slaves. Speaking in Spanish, he said to them, "Brothers, I expect you today to do your duty by me, in return for the good treatment I have given you. I promise you that if I am victorious, I will give you freedom; and if not, your God will give it to you."[47]

Even in those last moments before Ali Pasha gave the order to advance, some of his commanders argued, as had Don John's officers when they heard reports of the size and power of the Ottoman fleet, that they should avoid a battle. It would be wiser to retreat under the guns of the Lepanto fortress and tempt the Christians to battle in the narrow waters of the inner gulf. But Ali Pasha was determined not only to sail out and engage the enemy but to make contact directly with Don John. With the wind behind

him, just before noon, he ordered the ships to row swiftly forward toward the enemy line, with his own vessel heading straight for the Real, which was now flying the great blue banner of the Holy League. As they came within range of the galleasses, cannon fire began to batter the Ottoman vessels. The wind changed: now the Ottoman crews were rowing hard into a heavy sea, while the Christian ships were borne forward by the breath of heaven.[48] Turkish galleys sank under the shelling from the galleasses, first from their forward guns and then from their broadsides. Seeing the damage, Ali Pasha ordered his ships to steer clear, but this fractured the Ottoman formation, as they funneled through the gaps between the galleasses.[49] Instead of his line of ships smashing as one into the Christian galleys, the impetus was lost.

Across a span of almost a mile at the center of the battle, ships closed and grappled. Sometimes Ottoman rams crashed into the enemy ships, sometimes the masts and rigging became entangled. The soldiers poured fire onto their opponents. Many of the Christian ships were studded with Turkish arrows, while on the Ottoman vessels the decks were pitted with musket fire. The boarding nets ordered by Don John proved their worth as they filled with Ottoman dead and dying caught in the mesh. Then janissaries leaped onto the nets, hacking at the tarred strands with knives or yataghans until they were speared or shot. More and more followed to a certain death, and continued slashing until eventually the nets hung in limp tatters. Christians boarding Ottoman galleys found that while their enemy had no nets, they had greased the ships' rails and walkways with olive oil or honey. Turks, fighting barefoot, had a better grip on the deck than the Spanish or German infantrymen, well shod and armored. Arrows fired from Turkish bows in their thousands were as deadly at close range as musket fire, and any Christian who slipped and fell would be dispatched by a dagger thrust from the Ottoman sailors and irregulars in the melee.

Ali Pasha had failed to press his initial advantage, and the sting of the Ottoman assault was drawn. In galley warfare, the first impact and the first assault were usually all-important. Now, the ships of

the two commanders were locked together, the Sultana embedded in the forequarter of the Real. But although he had faltered in the first moments, Ali had a plan to overcome the greater firepower of his opponent. Behind the Turkish flagship was a flotilla of galleys and little galiots, their decks crammed with janissaries. Linked together by ropes and gangplanks, they fed reinforcements up into the killing ground on the deck of the Sultana. However many men the Spanish musketry might blast away, more and more Turks came on board. Both commanders believed that the outcome of the battle would, ultimately, turn on their personal encounter. Like Don John, Ali had selected a force of men armed with harquebuses, to act as his shock force, while he himself stood on the poop of his galley, with a great recurved bow, with which he coolly shot down onto the Real. He watched Don John, in his black armor chased with silver, come down onto the deck of the Holy League flagship to lead his harquebusiers and swordsmen. They threw gangplanks across the narrow gap to the Sultana, after clearing the deck of Ottoman soldiers with a succession of volleys, and swarmed on.

But then a great weight of fresh janissaries pressed forward and forced them back onto their own deck. Again the Christians massed and charged. As the janissaries wavered, Ali came down onto the deck to stiffen his men's resolve. In the turmoil, he was struck a glancing blow to the head by a musket ball and fell. Again the Christians pushed forward, and one of them, recognizing the Ottoman leader if only by the richness of his dress, hacked off his head and took it to Don John, caught in the midst of a firefight elsewhere on the deck. In seconds the battered head of Ali Pasha was impaled on a pike and held high for all to see, as Spanish veterans surged forward against the now demoralized Turks. The area around the mainmast was secured, and the green banner of Islam torn down. A pennant with a crucifix was brought from the Real and hauled up to the topmast of the Sultana.

While the heart had gone out of the Ottoman fight in the center, it was still being fought with increasing ferocity on the two wings. Desperate battles took place on the decks as the galleys locked, and men died in their thousands. The waters of the gulf were marbled

rust red with blood. Some Ottoman galleys fled from the Venetians, who were plainly going to give no quarter, and beached. The Venetians pursued them ashore, killing all the fugitives. One man, lacking any better weapon, killed his adversary on the ground by thrusting a stout stick deep into his mouth until he was still. More often, Christian ships stood off and sank their enemies through gunfire, watching while all aboard drowned. In the heat of the early afternoon sun, bodies floating in the water began to swell up with gas until they bobbed about like corks.

By four in the afternoon the battle was over. More than 7,500 Christians had been killed, but the Ottoman losses exceeded 20,000. More than 15,000 Christian galley slaves were freed from Turkish captivity, but the ships they had rowed, for the most part, survived as little more than hulks.[50] A few galleys on the Ottoman right wing, led by the corsair Ulich Ali, once a Christian, escaped, but the rest of the huge fleet was either sunk, crippled, or seized. There were many captives and a vast amount of booty. Immediately the Christians began to recall the signs of divine favor. The banner of the Holy League, flying on Don John's flagship, was unscathed, hit by neither shot nor arrow, although the mast and surrounding spars were riddled. By contrast, the great green flag from Ali Pasha's Sultana had been almost shot to pieces, so that much of the elaborate Kufic script was unreadable. Not a single priest or monk on the Spanish ships had been killed or wounded, although they had been in the thick of the fighting. And all remembered how the wind that had blown hard into their faces suddenly dropped and reversed to carry them forward at the decisive moment. Of the numerous crucifixes on the ships, not one had suffered any damage, though a musket ball had hit close by the side of one of them. Others remembered what Don John had said to them in the hour before the battle began: "My children, we are here to conquer or to die as Heaven may determine. Do not let our impious foe ask us, 'Where is your God?' Fight in His holy name and in death or in victory you will win immortality."[51]

From the moment that the battle ended, mythmaking began. As the Christian fleet, towing its prizes, rowed slowly back to the

mouth of the gulf and anchored at Petala, they left behind a scene of desolation.

> For miles around the victorious fleet the waves, as eyewitnesses asserted, were reddened with blood, and were strewed with broken planks, masts, spars and oars, with men's bodies and limbs, with shields, weapons, turbans, chests, barrels, and cabin furniture, the rich scarf of the knight, the splendid robes of the Pasha, the mighty plume of the janissary, the sordid rags of the slave, and all the various spoils of war. Boats moved hither and thither amongst the floating relics, saving all that seemed valuable except the lives of the vanquished.[52]

From the fleet at anchor, Don John dispatched a fast galley to take the news to King Philip, together with the Sultana's tattered green banner. Sometime later he sent the sultan's personal flag to the pope, and to Venice and the emperor in Vienna a detailed account of the great victory. But King Philip was not the first to hear as Don John had planned. On October 17, a galley sailed into the harbor of Venice, firing its guns, and trailing banners in the water. It anchored off St. Mark's Square, and curious onlookers could see Turks walking on the decks. There was a moment's panic, as people thought the Turks were once again attacking the city. But soon the truth became clear: these were Venetians dressed in the spoils of victory. The news spread almost instantly through the whole city, and four days of rejoicing began. Church bells rang continuously day and night and great fires were lit in the streets, with food and wine provided for the people.

The anniversary of Lepanto, St. Justina's Day, was declared a holiday in perpetuity. Hundreds of odes and orations were quickly written and declaimed, the first of a torrent of verse and commemoration in many of the languages of Europe. From that moment the battle became an allegory, where all the details of the conflict acquired an additional significance. In these presentations the listeners heard how Don John and the noblemen of Venice destroyed the ravening wolf, the raging bull, the fearsome dragon

and hydra of the East. They had killed the beast. As the news of the battle spread, various miraculous events were recalled. At four in the afternoon, at the very moment the battle ended, the pope had suddenly stopped work, walked to the window, opened it, and listened intently. Then, closing the window, he said to his treasurer, “God be with you, this is no time for business but for giving thanks to God, for at this moment our fleet is victorious.”[53]

King Philip II first had intelligence of the battle, it was said, by a messenger from Venice on October 29, while he observed the service of vespers from the curtained gallery overlooking the palace chapel. Over time, the story of this moment was embellished to give weight to the deeper meanings that had become attached to the battle. In 1605, seven years after the king’s death, an account was published that described how Philip II had been at prayer, during the service of vespers, in the Cathedral Church of San Lorenzo.

> Don Pedro Manuel, a gentleman of the bedchamber, entered; with a perturbation of look and manner, which showed that something great had happened, he said aloud to his Majesty, “Sir, the courier of Don John of Austria is here, and he brings news of a great victory.” Yet the magnanimous prince neither changed his posture nor showed any emotion, it being a great privilege, amongst others, of the House of Austria never to lose, happen what may, their serenity of countenance and imperial gravity of demeanour. The vespers being over, he called the prior and ordered that the Te Deum Laudamus should be sung for thanksgiving, with prayers of the Church suitable for the occasion.[54]

The circumstantial detail, the naming of the gentleman of the chamber, and the location within the great baroque Church of San Lorenzo are compelling. Tour guides in the palace once pointed to the very seat occupied by the king at the moment the news arrived. Yet the church was not consecrated until 1586, fifteen years after Lepanto.

When the king eventually received the report from Don John on the evening of November 2 in El Escorial, he was surrounded by his family and courtiers. The messenger, Don Lope de Figueroa, had traveled slowly, because he had been badly wounded in the battle, but also because he had been feted in every town through which he passed.[55] The popular rejoicing for Lepanto was not limited to the nations that had participated directly in the battle. Even in France, where for political reasons the Most Christian King preserved good relations with the Ottomans, there were processions and church services in the smallest of towns and villages. In Protestant England, there were days of exuberant celebration in London. German towns went wild with delight. Perhaps for the last time, the sense of universal participation in a holy war transcended the chasm between Catholic and Protestant.[56]

WITHIN DAYS OF THE STORY FIRST BEING TOLD IN ANDALUCIA, “LEPANTO” was being reenacted as a play in the caves of the Sacromonte in Granada.[57] In such “accounts,” moral truth mattered more than factual verisimilitude.[58] What happened at Lepanto was compounded partly from the event itself and partly from the subsequent myths with which it was overlaid. Accurate details of the battle became widely known—from memoirs and pamphlets, or from stories told by travelers. Some of the profusion of woodcut images that appeared throughout Europe stuck to a remarkable degree to the factual truth. A pamphlet circulating in Germany within months of the battle had on its cover a depiction of a galleass at the moment of first contact. Its great guns belched smoke from its sides. The boarding nets and boiled leather shields were in place. The Turkish galleys were smashed to pieces; the sea was filled with turbaned figures and with wooden shields, blazoned with the crescent, floating on the surface of the waters.[59] The response to the battle and the meanings drawn from it—its resonance—were extended, both in time and in place. For Sir Richard Lovelace, writing a century after Lepanto, it had become an eponym or shorthand for

Christian triumph: “When the sick Sea with Turbants Night-cap’d was; / … This is a wreath, this is a Victorie.”

Lepanto was remembered in many different ways. Rome celebrated the return of Marc Antonio Colonna with a triumph worthy of a Caesar. He rode to the Capitol on a white horse, followed by long lines of soldiers and captive Turks, shackled in pairs and dragging heavy chains, all wearing his red-and-yellow livery.[60] Another Colonna, Honorato, and his heroism in the battle are still commemorated each year in the little hill town of Sermonetta. Messina, which had greeted the returning fleet with tournaments and a vast catafalque to honor the dead, commissioned a huge gilded statue of Don John from Andrea Calamach. The admiral still stands to this day, his left foot on the severed turbaned head of a Turk, while all around the story of Lepanto is told in bas-relief. The Signoria of Venice commissioned Tintoretto, Pietro Longo, Andrea Vincentino, and Antonio Vassilachi to make a series of paintings for the Sala dello Scrutinio in the Doge’s Palace. In the city churches and the Arsenal, the Holy League and the divinely ordained victory were recalled in altarpieces, paintings, and marble plaques. The aged Titian, who had declined to produce a commemorative canvas for Venice, succumbed to King Philip. In a huge painting (Allegory of the Battle of Lepanto), the king is the dominant figure, offering up his infant son Don Ferdinand (born in the months after Lepanto) to heaven. Winged Victory hands down the victor’s laurels, while in the foreground a trussed-up Turk, his weapons and turban lying on the ground beside him, and a burning galley fleet in the background point to the great triumph.

The official memory of the battle was consolidated. In March 1572, the pope decreed that the feast of the Rosary should be celebrated on the anniversary of Lepanto. In the cathedral of Toledo a banner captured at Lepanto was displayed annually on the day of the battle, and a service of thanksgiving held. In churches throughout Christendom, the day of Lepanto was recalled long after the details of the battle had been forgotten. As a “site of memory,” it had great attraction: it demonstrated Christian unity. Subsequently, only the relief of Vienna from a Turkish siege in

1683 showed Christendom responding in a similar fashion, with a single voice. If the Protestants did not take part in Lepanto, few condemned it as a papistical triumph. It possessed a personable hero and a diabolical enemy, which is perhaps why it continued to feature in tracts and pamphlets for more than a century after.

More distant still in time, the Catholic man of letters G. K. Chesterton wrote his epic "Lepanto," in which Don John "has set his people free," not only righting the wrongs of his own day, but providing a message for the future.

> The North is full of tangled things and texts and aching eyes,
> And dead is all the innocence of anger and surprise,
> And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty room,
> And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer face of doom,
> And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in Galilee,—
> But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea.
> Don John calling through the blast and the eclipse
> Crying with the trumpet, with the trumpet of his lips,
> Trumpet that sayeth ha!
>   Domino gloria!

This theme of continuity—of the continuing battle with the world of "Islam"—had a precise context in 1911. As Chesterton's "Lepanto" was being published, and six days after the anniversary of Lepanto, the army of Italy landed in Libya to seize the last remnant of Ottoman territory in North Africa. A few days before, far away in the Adriatic, the Italian navy had attacked and sunk Turkish gunboats at Prevesa, another site of memory, for this was where Don John had anchored in the days before Lepanto.[61] With the Treaty of Ouchy, signed on October 15, 1912, Italy completed the Christian "reconquest" of North Africa, so that European nations dominated the entire southern seaboard of the Mediterranean, from Egypt to Morocco. "Lepanto," at least in Chesterton's eyes, was an active and current crusade, not some event plucked at random out of a dead past.

The resilience of Lepanto also bound itself to the popular

imagination. The annual pageants of Christians and Moors celebrated Christian victory for centuries in towns and villages on the eastern coast of Spain, and in Corsica.[62] Old memories were revived or reconstructed, as in the huge Moresca held at Vescovato in Corsica in 1786 in honor of the new governor, the comte de Marbeuf. There, 160 dancers in elaborate costumes enacted an epic tale of Christian triumph.[63]

This cycle of celebration and the memory of victory had no direct counterpart in the Islamic world. There the catastrophe at Lepanto was mourned as an act of divine will. The contemporary chronicle of the battle laconically recorded that "the Imperial fleet encountered the fleet of the wretched infidels and the will of God turned another way."[64] When he received the news, the sultan raged and wished to order the execution of all the Christians in his domains. But he was easily dissuaded, to the degree that we might suspect that his anger had primarily a histrionic purpose. It was not the Ottoman tradition to make a lasting memorial out of victory or to chasten themselves with the remembrance of defeat. Triumph or catastrophe were in the hands of God. Selim II's chief minister, the grand vizier Mehmed Sokullu, even suggested to the Venetian emissary Barbaro, who met him a few days after the news of the battle reached Constantinople, that the Christian triumph was meaningless:

> You come to see how we bear our misfortune. But I would have you know the difference between your loss and ours. In wresting Cyprus from you, we deprived you of an arm; in defeating our fleet, you have only shaved our beard. An arm when cut off cannot grow again; but a shorn beard will grow all the better for the razor.[65]

Of all the great victories won by Ottoman arms, only the capture of Constantinople by Mehmed II was remembered and commemorated in the manner of the West celebrating Lepanto, and then without the pictorial and textual effusion that the Christian victory generated. As a result, it embedded itself less firmly into the

domain of history and memory.

For Christians, the tales of Lepanto contained a double message about Islam. On one side there was Lala Mustafa, the commander in Cyprus, Bragadino's cruel and bestial nemesis. He exemplified the traditional Christian perception of the Muslim. But on the other was the noble enemy, the Ottoman commander at Lepanto, Ali Pasha. There was a long Christian tradition, back to the time of the Crusades and the stories of King Richard's chivalrous opponent, Saladin, of respecting a strong enemy. Ottoman sultans such as Suleiman the Lawgiver were also honored for their martial and civic virtues, even if those qualities sat alongside the image of cruelty. But unlike Saladin and Suleiman, Ali Pasha was not redeemed by success. He failed: his nobility of behavior was personal and not a consequence of his role or office. When he went down among his galley slaves and spoke words of comfort to them, he behaved as should a Christian. This was clearly the unvoiced assumption of the Western narratives that recorded his conduct.

Don John regarded him with respect. He took Ali's two young sons, captured on the Ottoman flagship Sultana, under his personal protection. He sent their tutor, who also survived, back to Constantinople with a letter to their mother, saying that they were safe and well cared for. Eventually, after one of the boys had died from a chance illness, Don John returned the other to his family without payment of the large ransom that would have been traditional. This was not simply the courtesy to be expected of one commander to another. I can think of no other case in the same century that provides a parallel. Like Ali Pasha, Don John was moving past the boundaries of character and relationships prescribed for both Christians and Muslims.

More persuasive of these ambiguities than Don John and Ali was Miguel de Cervantes, a veteran of La Naval (as the battle came to be known to the Spaniards). Lepanto was only the beginning of Cervantes's encounter with the Muslim world. In 1575 he was captured by an Algerian corsair almost in sight of the French coast. His experience of five years in the slave prisons of Algiers became the core of the long "Captive's Tale" in his novel Don Quixote. But

more important than the events described is the manner in which Cervantes undermined the whole sense of the embattled relationship between the domain of "Islam" and the Christian world. In the book, he presents himself as only the second author and also the first reader of the whole story of Don Quixote. He uncovered the first author and the ur-text by chance. As Cervantes tells it, one day in Toledo he came across a boy selling a bundle of old papers.

> Now, as I have a strong propensity to read even those scraps that sometimes fly about the streets, I was led by this, my natural curiosity, to turn over some of the leaves: I found them written in Arabic, which not being able to read although I knew the characters, I looked about for some Portuguese Moor who should understand it; and indeed though the language was both more elegant and more ancient, I might easily have found an interpreter.

His interpreter read the title page out loud to him: "The history of Don Quixote de la Mancha by Cid Hamet Benengeli, an Arabian Author." Cervantes paid him to translate the entire text, which took six weeks, at a price of two quarters of raisins and two bushels of wheat. The mysterious and unseen Cid Hamet was not just a convenient cipher, like the exotic characters of Turks or Persians used to comment on the Christian world from some detached and external perspective.[66] The "Arabian author" wanders back into the text from time to time, and is there at Quixote's death. It is he who writes the final words of Quixote's epitaph:

> For me alone was Don Quixote born and I for him; he to act and I to record; in a word we were destined for each other … let the wearied and mouldering bones of Don Quixote rest in the grave [i.e., write no further sequels to his life] … in doing so thou wilt conform to thy Christian profession of doing good to those who would do thee harm; and I shall rest satisfied and perfectly well pleased, in seeing myself the first

author, who fully enjoyed the fruit of his writings, in the success of his design, for mine was no other than to inspire mankind with an abhorrence of false and improbable stories recounted in books of chivalry, which are already shaken by the adventures of my true and genuine Don Quixote, and in a little time will certainly sink into oblivion. Farewell.

Was this more than an audacious literary device? Cervantes did not share the stereotypical image of the Muslim. Take his presentation of Muley Malek in his play The Dungeons of Algiers, written about 1590:

A famous Moor
and in his sect and wicked law
well versed and most devout;
he knows the language of the Turks,
speaks Spanish and German as well
and Italian and French, sleeps
in a bed and eats at a table
seated in the Christian manner;
above all he's a great soldier
generous, wise and cool-headed,
adorned with a thousand virtues.[67]

Nor did William Shakespeare, Cervantes's near contemporary with whom he shared the date of his death, in his characterization of Othello, the Moor of Venice. "Muley Malek" could have served as a model for Othello.[68] Yet while Muley is all Moor, Othello is a double man, undoubtedly a Muslim Moor, and yet also a servant of Christian Venice. But for Cervantes to write as he did of Cid Hamet Benengeli, and to ascribe to him the writing of his own work, makes sense only if we understand the specific historical context. The first part of Don Quixote was published in 1605, the second in 1615. Between the two publications, Spain rid itself finally of the Moors' descendants, the Moriscos. Expelled from the kingdom of Granada after their rebellion was crushed by Don John, the

Moriscos were dispersed throughout Spain. All the misfortunes of the nation were blamed upon them. In a final act of ethnic cleansing, they were marched to the seaports in 1609 and shipped to Morocco.

To make the infidel Cid Hamet the "first author" of his work was unusual and, in these years, an especially daring move. Cervantes, from the events of his life—war, slavery, penury, prison, success, and finally, preparing for death in a monk's habit—knew that the division of the world into good Christians and bestial Muslims was false. Of the gulf between them he had no doubt, or that each was "infidel" to the other. But he was treated both worse and better in his Algerine slavery than at home in Christian Spain. His work was rooted in his own experience, but even those who had never set foot in a Muslim land were forced to struggle with the issue of the virtuous infidel.

> Tho' Arabs much to Rapine are inclin'd,
> Of Nature fierce, and Manners unrefin'd,
> Yet is King Halla [of Morocco] gen'rous, mild, and wise,
> And with the most applauded Heroe vies;
> Courteous, humane, and easy of Access
> This Monarch succours Merit in Distress.
> Tho' the great Prince rejects our Creed divine,
> His moral Virtues so illustrious shine,
> That he like some, who Rome's proud Scepter bore,
> Excells most Kings who Christ their Head adore.[69]

Lepanto lay at the heart of this skein of tangled meanings. It was a stunning victory, but as the Turkish vizier Sokullu foresaw, of passing political or military importance. Seven years after La Naval, at Alcazarquivir in Morocco, a Muslim army reinforced with Ottoman janissaries killed the king of Portugal, Dom Sebastian, nephew of Don John, and most of the Portuguese nobility.[70] Yet Alcazarquivir has vanished from the collective memory, while the recollection of Lepanto has been embellished and enhanced over the years. The meeting of Don John and Ali Pasha, with its

attendant cast of thousands, more than any other encounter in the sixteenth century between Islam and the Christian West presented the ambivalence and the endless ambiguities of the relationship between these worlds.