TONY AND TOYNBEE

Tony Blankley, the erudite editorial editor of The Washington Times, certainly knows his Toynbee. I can attest to this, with all 12 volumes of Arnold Toynbee's masterwork, *A Study of History*, residing on my bookshelf.

Toynbee studied the rise and fall of entire civilizations rather than individual countries or ethnic groups. His model for the success and failure of civilizations was challenge-and-response. Those that rose to a challenge flourished, while those that didn't failed.

Tony, however - who is both my neighbor and friend of long standing - focuses on one of the most fascinating yet little understood insights of Toynbee's model: that *without* challenges, a successful civilization will stagnate and culturally implode.

It is such focus that gives Tony's book, The West's Last Chance: Will We Win The Clash of Civilizations?, its intellectual depth.

No challenger to Western Civilization has arisen in over 400 years. The 17th, 18th, and 19th centuries saw the West colonize the world. The great struggles of the 20th century were *within* our civilization: Marxism, Communism, Nazism, Fascism were invented right here in the West.

We of the West have been so world-dominant for so many centuries that now, Tony points out, "there is nothing to measure ourselves against, except our own ideals." The only authorities worth questioning are "our own: Christianity, capitalism, materialism, white people, even unprecedented democratic politics." The only civilization worth despising is ours, condemned as "racist, sexist, materialist, homophobic, and imperialist."

The result is that the West is "performing acts of *auto-da-fé* [burning a heretic at the stake] on our own values." This causes conservatives endless anguish - but what they don't understand, Tony is arguing, that such civilizational self-condemnation is the necessary result of no challenge to the West for hundreds of years.

In other words, Western Civilization will die unless there is a challenge to it. Islam, the whole civilization or culture of Islam with Jihadism as its most extreme manifestation, has become that challenge. "In the strangest possible irony," writes Tony, *Jihadism is giving the West a "chance to regain its faith in itself."*

The last challenge to come from outside the West was also from Islam. After the tide of Arab imperialism was turned back in 15th century Spain, the Ottoman Turks took up the call of Jihad, plundering southeastern Europe for slaves and booty. The Islamic threat to Europe was stopped at Vienna, where the German-Austrian-Polish forces led by Polish King Jan Sobieski defeated the Ottoman invaders on September 12, 1683.

Now the challenge of Islamic Jihad has arisen once more to provide the West with the challenge it needs to survive.

It won't be defeated in a single battle on a single day. A comprehensive strategy with a panoply of tactics is needed, which is too long to list here. Most important of all is the will to conduct such a strategy, the will to wage war against the Jihadis as seriously as we waged war against the Nazis and Soviets

This will come, Tony predicts, not from the intellectual elite but by the "regular, common, working people of Europe and America." Let's hope he's right. Because the War on Jihadism is *not* the greatest challenge to Western Civilization in the 21st century.

Jihadism is only the practice round, the preliminary bout. The Main Event to come is China. Taking on Islam is our training for taking on the Chicoms. By using Jihadism to regain our faith in our civilization and then triumphing over it, we equip and prepare ourselves for an even more difficult and consequential struggle.

We need, then, to look upon Jihadism and the Islamic threat to the West as *a literally necessary evil*. We *need* the threat, for without this challenge, our civilization will dissolve.

As Toynbee concluded after studying all of the civilizations of history: "Civilizations die by suicide, not by murder."

As Tony concludes, Jihadism is providing us with the opportunity to reclaim our soul and culture, for the West to recover its fighting faith. "Challenge and response is the history of man. Islam has made the challenge and the response is up to us."