**WEEK 12: WRITING AND DISCUSSION ASSIGNMENT**

THE APPEALS OF CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM

According to Islamic teaching, Jews, Christians and Muslims are all “people of the book.” That means that not only do they share a belief in the same omnipotent god—Yahweh to the Jews, God to the Christians, and Allah to the Muslims—but also in a shared scripture. Christians who followed the Jews by a millennium accept the Hebrew Old Testament as God’s word, though they modify some of its teachings, and Muslims, who follow Christians by an additional half millennium or so, accept both the Old Testament and the Christian New Testament as scripture, but again modified.

But while Judaism remained the faith of a small tribe of people—then and now--Christianity and Islam emerged as global religions. Today, over half of humanity practice one of these two faiths or, at least, identify as members of them. Some of this spread had to do with later historical developments. Traders after 1000 CE spread Islam to South and Southeast Asia while Spanish conquistadores brought Christianity to the Americas 1500 years after Christ’s death.

But the early spread of these faiths—throughout the Mediterranean world in Christianity’s first centuries and across the Middle East and North Africa in Islam’s first centuries—had much to do with what these faiths offered people.

Your assignment this week is to read the website readings and the text and explain why these faiths spread in their early centuries. But just choose one—Christianity or Islam—and briefly explain (up to 200 words) what about them appealed to so many people. Or was their spread merely historical, that is, spread because of historical forces independent of what the faiths taught and offered? There are many possible answers, so focus on one or two reasons. This assignment is more to spark your thinking than to search for the absolutely correct answer. Do your best.

**Please submit the assignment via Blackboard by the beginning of class on Tuesday, April 20.**

Be prepared to discuss your answer in class.