

Mary Anne Perkins  
Christendom and European Identity



# Religion and Society

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The Legacy of a Grand Narrative since 1789

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For Anthony



As soon as we define man as apart from [the] natural world, the question of our identity, collective and individual, begins to arise. We begin to tell ourselves stories about who we are. We draw an imaginary line around ourselves and say, this is my space, my territory, this is where I belong. The attributes of that space decide the way we see ourselves. But our ancestors' space was also imaginary, and we are the children of the physical and mental journeys they undertook.

[Hilary Mantel]

The difference between . . . post-Christian Western historians and their Christian predecessors is that the moderns do not allow themselves to be aware of the pattern in their minds, whereas Bossuet, Eusebius, and Saint Augustine were fully conscious of it. If one cannot think without mental patterns – and, in my belief, one cannot – it is better to know what they are; for a pattern of which one is unconscious is a pattern that holds one at its mercy.

[Arnold Toynbee]

