“Your brethren who live in the east are in urgent need of your help . . . the Turks and Arabs have attacked them . . . I, or rather the Lord, beseech you . . . to carry aid promptly to those Christians and to destroy that vile race from the lands of our friends . . . Moreover, Christ commands it . . . All who die in battle against the pagans, shall have immediate remission of sins. This I grant them through the power of God.” -- Pope Urban II’s “speech against the infidels,” at the Council of Clermont, France, November 27, 1095, according to the version of Fulcher of Chartres.

With those words spoken 919 years ago next month, Pope Urban II lit the fuse in a series of wars that would see the often violent deaths of hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of men, women, and children of the Muslim and Jewish faiths. While the First Crusade began as a campaign to take back the Holy Land from Muslim invaders, it would give way to six more major Christian crusades over the next two centuries. If it had been possible to conduct a global survey of non-Catholics between the years 1096 and 1291, the overwhelming majority of the earth’s population undoubtedly would have defined Christianity as a violent religion, whose holy book inspired zealots to brutally slaughter non-believers on the promise of eternal salvation. It also doesn’t take much to imagine how abhorrent Christianity would have appeared if the worst atrocities of the most zealous crusaders were played day after day on the World Wide Web.

But that, of course, is the special providence of Islam today.

The Internet has come of age since 1989, when Iran’s Supreme Leader, the Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, called for the death of British author Salman Rushdie for his novel, The Satanic Verses. Since then, the Web has been filled with images of hate from extremists in every religion, from the Jewish extremist who killed 29 unarmed Palestinians praying inside a mosque in 1994, to the Christian extremists in the U.S. who loudly interrupt military funerals with anti-gay diatribes, to the Buddhist mob (including monks) who slaughtered more than 200 Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar in 2013. But no religion has been scarred more by its fundamentalists the past quarter-century than the one practiced by 1.6 billion people worldwide. From women imprisoned in full-body burkas to planes flown into buildings to barbarism dispensed at the end of a knife because beheading with a sword is deemed too clean, every Muslim-led atrocity of the past 25 years has made it that much harder for mainstream Muslims to argue convincingly that Islam is a religion of peace.

It is that uncertainty that scares people. It scares people in Canada, where a Canadian-born, Muslim convert shot and killed a soldier at Ottawa’s National War Memorial last week, the second such shooting in three days. It scares people in Belgium, where a Brussels man returned from fighting for ISIS in Syria to shoot and kill three people at a Jewish Museum last May. And it definitely scares people in Great Britain, where two British-born Muslim converts were convicted of butchering and then beheading a British soldier with a meat cleaver on a busy London street in May of 2013.

For all of the savagery in headlines today, the experience of England shows that Islam’s most effective tools for establishing new footholds in Western cities might just be a passport and a marital bed. As improbable as it would have seemed 25 years ago -- and as xenophobic and paranoid as it undoubtedly sounds to every Westerner who rolls their eyes at the phrase, “the Islamization of Europe” -- the fact is that migration patterns and high birthrates have combined to turn Islam into Europe’s fastest-growing religion. And it has people here worried.

In this country that gave birth to the Anglican Church, the most popular name given to newborn boys is no longer Oliver or Harry -- it’s Mohammad. As the Times of London reported in January, “more than one in ten babies born in England and Wales today are Muslim.” Among Brits over 85, less than one-half of 1 percent claim the same.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the Muslim population of England and Wales -- both legal and illegal -- has more than doubled. Meanwhile, three in four of the reported 100,000 Brits who have converted to Islam in that time are women. At this rate in 10 to 15 years, Britain will have more Muslims than Christians.

Again, any reasonable person would ask: So what? After all, this is one of the most multicultural nations in the
world. To suggest that it’s dangerous merely to have more Muslims in Britain -- the vast majority of whom are just as sickened by extremism as everyone else -- is not the British way. So what gives?

The first problem is that the cultural gap is widening. Unlike generations of immigrants across the globe, including Muslims, who have worked to become part of the culture and fabric of welcoming nations, many of today’s newly minted British Islamic fundamentalists aren’t just disinterested in following the laws and cultural norms of Britain -- in many ways, they seem openly hostile to them.

It’s not just that parts of England today feel as closed as Saudi Arabia or that even non-Muslim women endure angry slurs in some neighborhoods for failure to wear head-scarves. Public opinion polls reinforce that sense of “other” -- like the 2009 poll that was revealed as part of the WikiLeaks stash of U.S. diplomatic cables, which found that every third British Muslim student supported killing in Islam’s name; or the 2006 poll which found that four in ten British Muslims hoped that Britain would one day adopt the draconian Sharia law.

The second problem is the increasing frequency with which extremism is hitting close to home.

Maybe you heard about the nine men arrested here in September for their association with a banned terror group. Maybe you heard about the so-called “Trojan Horse Affair” in which extremist Muslim governors in Birmingham embedded themselves in secular schools -- putting up posters, according to the Telegraph “warning children that if they didn’t pray they would “go to hell”” while teaching girls that “women who refused to have sex with their husbands would be “punished” by angels “from dusk to dawn.”” Or maybe you heard about the fundamentalists who were caught in August handing out pro-ISIS propaganda on London streets, as Newsweek reported.

Again, Islam isn’t the only religion that has noisy extremists and it’s certainly not the only religion linked to crimes against society -- as the abuse of at least three generations of children at the hands of Catholic priests or the ultra-orthodox Jews in Israel who reportedly spit on girls as young as eight that they deem to be immodestly dressed can sadly attest.

But Islam is the only religion for which 500+ British Nationals have gone to fight in Iraq and Syria, as British Home Secretary Theresa May recently revealed. The concern is not necessarily what they are doing over there but what they could potentially do back here when they return, especially at a time when the U.S. and Britain’s re-involvement in Iraq has given jihadists new reason to target the West.

The third problem comes when Western societies give in to this sense of “other” and allow separate societies to exist according to their own values without regard to secular law.

Today in England, according to a 2009 study by the independent think tank Civitas, there are at least 85 Sharia courts that impose a standard of human rights on women that is anathema to British law. Left unchecked, it can lead to the kind of tragedy that has befallen the town of Rotherham, where at least 1,400 mostly white girls between the ages of 12 and 16 were allegedly seduced with drugs and alcohol and then raped and forced into prostitution by Muslim immigrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh over a 16-year period. Police officials reportedly took a hands-off policy to the local Muslim community and refused to follow up on leads -- a sickening phenomenon that also played out among Pakistani communities in other cities, according to articles published by Times reporter Andrew Norfolk.

“As long as secular society offers an attractive alternative, which it’s failing to do for many now, young Muslims will be drawn to (fundamentalism),” says journalist Charles Glass, a long-time friend and former chief Middle East correspondent for ABC News. “The fundamentalist impulse is a death gasp, a rejection of modernity that will fail as much as modernity is able to succeed.”

Until then, it won’t be so easy to dismiss those who fear the Islamization of Europe. If this is what the first 25 years of jihad looks like, it’s hard to imagine where the next 25 will lead -- or what Europe and the world will look like when it’s finished.