

My Name is Nobody: Religious Fanaticism is a Western Tradition

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Theme: [History](#), [Religion](#)

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Amidst all the handwringing across the political spectrum, commentators of every type decry the deplorable conditions that prevail in the parts of the world that have been under attack by the US, NATO, and the historic colonial powers of Europe: Britain and France. That is to say the actions for which the wealthiest countries on Earth, concentrated in the North Atlantic region, are jointly and severally responsible. However, the vast majority of the text generated on this subject is truly tiresome.

While nearly everyone is willing to say that the nature of the violence prevailing in the Middle East and various parts of the “Dark Continent” (the ignorance displayed with respect to Africa only verifies that whites still consider Blacks next to worthless) is horrible, it is conspicuous that nobody is willing to face a fundamental fact. Religious fanaticism is essentially a European and Anglo-American tradition.

The French colonised Algeria and deliberately gave the archconservative Islamic clerics the job of policing Algeria’s native population.[1] That was an essential part of their control over the country. The British colonisers historically sought out the peoples in Africa who were most susceptible to their puritan form of Christianity and educated them to dominate the rest of the ethnic groups in their colonies. This was in fact the main function of missionaries throughout the Euro-American colonial enterprise.[2] Europe itself was created by the process of imposing Christianity with the sword and the Inquisition. The Roman pontiff extorted money and manpower for over three centuries to subdue the Eastern Christian (Orthodox) church and dominate the Middle East. A militarised bureaucracy emerged from a Greco-Roman sect and declared itself the universal church. Based upon all manner of forged documents and brute force, the Roman Catholic Church undertook to drive adherents of Islam from the Iberian Peninsula, southern France and the Levant. The more honest historians of those periods admit that Islam was more tolerant of other religions than Roman Catholicism ever was. The institution of anti-Semitism became part of the Spanish and Portuguese monarchies’ enrichment strategy after the Islamic rulers were expelled.[3]

This is by no means ancient history. Thus US regime, in particular, sponsored missionaries to destroy the culture of Native Americans while the US Army was annihilating any that dared to resist. The US oil dynasties, e.g. Rockefeller, Pew, Mellon, have spent billions funding reactionary Protestant missionaries throughout the world whose job it has been to depopulate areas for Christ (help the indigenous get closer to the Christian god by dying early) so as to seize land and mineral rights.[4] Various Pentacostalists were notorious supporters of military dictatorships in Brazil, Chile, Guatemala, and elsewhere- not only preaching but collaborating with the secret police.[5] South African apartheid could not have been so enduring without the Christian missions who helped soften resistance and even helped expropriate land from Blacks throughout the country. As one wag said, the Christian

missionaries brought us the Bible and took everything else.[6]

In the great wave of national liberation that started in Ghana and Egypt and Mesopotamia after World War II, movements were born that comprised all the religious groups in those countries.[7] Their models were the “enlightened” secular states anticipated by their leaders— many of whom had been educated in Europe and North America. Without exception secular states were formed throughout Africa and the Middle East— with the exception of the European settler-colonial regime in what is now called Israel. Of course whites in South Africa imitated this move by Black Africans but instead created states whose official religion was white supremacy.

From the very beginning the West— mainly Britain, the US and France— did everything in their power to destroy these newly independent states or to burden them with ethnic dictatorships. The latter were simply a result of re-creating the indirect rule regime of colonial days and installing a quasi-remote control mechanism: arms supplies for the old favourite clique so that it could suppress the rest of the population. Where ethnic division was not so easy, religion used.

Only ethnic or religious fanaticism— an essential trait of the imperial elite— could endow a minority in any of these countries with the capacity to rule other ethnic or religious groups as ruthlessly as the colonisers had done.

There is a guiding principle for the use of extremists to enforce imperialism today. It is based on a division of labour. A small group of religious fanatics, take the Saudis and their like, can be cheaply bought.[8] Then by arming them to the teeth and granting them every conceivable immunity it is possible to continue the exhaustive exploitation of the country and its population. Truly pious fanatics are only interested in enough money to satisfy their immediate passions. Therefore they have no interest in “economic affairs”. This was especially true when the British and US oil cartel installed the house of Saud to rule the populations wandering about the massive oil fields. In return for fanatical religious tyranny (and loads of cash for a tiny family), the entire Arabian Peninsula was surrendered to Aramco. In the case of Iran, Britain got control over all the oil by arming a dictator who pretended to be a monarch. The US continued this legacy by usurping Iran’s democratic aspirations. Carter and Reagan secretly supported the reactionary Islamic clerics in 1979 as a means of preventing— or so they thought— a resurgent nationalist movement with the fall of the Shah. (Sometimes plans do not work perfectly.)

At the same time Carter— at least the people who actually ran his administration— started the wave of fanatical reactionary Islam in Afghanistan— to crush a secular regime there and indirectly attack the Soviet Union.[9] This campaign continues unabated. The Anglo-American elite together with their vassals and the settler-colonial regime in Palestine have been using the tried and true tradition of religious fanaticism to promote their own religion: fanatical capitalism. One cannot function without the other because they are in essence two sides of the same historical coin.

Since threat manufacture is the main function of the mass media— even on the so-called Left— even those who write for the progressive (no one can say the “c” or “s” words) media have to maintain some illusions, distortions or misconceptions. Whether they go by the name Islamic fundamentalists or Islamicists or Al Qaeda or ISIS or (*Wahhabist* is rarely used because that would directly implicate Western vassal Saudi Arabia) whatever name is fashionable, nobody seems ready to call these forces what they are: mercenaries and

missionaries for capitalist fanaticism, the global extremism that the US Empire now forces everyone to accept as universal, esp. since 1989. Instead of the real names, the media gives us pseudonyms to disguise the lies and to help us lie to ourselves.

It would take too long to cite all the supposedly well-meaning articles that try to tell us that the threat to Syria is a somehow uncontrollable “Frankenstein” or even an independent force, which we must all oppose. Of course people who work in the well-paid or otherwise privileged elements of the digital and analogue propaganda machines would at least suffer professionally if they called things by their right names. Others avoid stating the obvious because they are simply too ignorant or uninformed to write or say more than what everyone else is writing and saying. Truth be told, if you read the “liberal press” every day it does soften your brain- if only because to speak differently would make you very odd at most parties.

Many years ago I watched a film that was considered at the time slightly pornographic, **Last Tango in Paris** (1972). In this film an older man and a young woman meet regularly in an empty flat for sex. In fact the sex is often quite rough- which was probably why it had an adult rating at the time. In Bertolucci’s film the man, Paul, is played by Marlon Brando. Maria Schneider plays Jeanne. The two meet regularly and anything is allowed except to ask the names. That is to say they meet anonymously. One day the rule is broken and the names said. The next time they meet Jeanne comes with her father’s revolver and kills Paul.

What is the moral of the story? Paul and Jeanne lived those hours in that Paris flat and anything was possible, except identification. When Jeanne learned that the man with whom she had had sex so often, often even painfully, had a name and could name this man. Everything else that she had experienced became nameable. The choice became clear continue to suffer or destroy that which was causing the suffering. It was no longer possible to simply walk away.

This is the situation in which we find ourselves when we follow the continuous circular complaints of our current condition. (Alliteration intended.) As long as those we allow to describe our world and the supposed reality in which we live are permitted to anonymise the facts; to suppress the identities at the root of the violence being done in the name of this universal fanatical religion- *capitalism*— with its current fanatical manifestations in the imperial mercenary armies of Africa and the Middle East- we will be held in awe, held unable to contemplate action.

By action I do not presume to know what the best course is. I do not know if there is enough protest to stop things- but we haven’t protested enough. I do not know if things are so difficult that we have to cower before the almighty military, psychological and economic war machine, euphemistically called the 1%.

However, I am sure that as long as names are not named, we will not get to the root of the problem that threatens us more than CO₂ or greenhouse gas. Given the gravity of the real threat- the threat posed by this fanatical “economic religion” and its masked mercenaries- it seems clear to me that the refusal to name names is not accidental.

Notes

[1] See the discussion of the Algerian War of Independence by the French officer who wrote the

textbook on counter-insurgency there. David Galula, *Pacification in Algeria 1956-1958*, originally published by RAND Corporation in 1963.

[2] See *Church Clothes: Land, Mission and the End of Apartheid*, 2004, for a discussion of mission, especially in Africa.

[3] See *inter alia* Alexandre Herculano, *History of the Origin and Establishment of the Inquisition in Portugal*, trans. John C. Branner, 2003

[4] Gerald Colby and Charlotte Dennett, *Thy Will Be Done: The Conquest of the Amazon: Nelson Rockefeller and Evangelism in the Age of Oil*, 1996.

[5] Rubem Alves, *Protestantism and Repression*, 2007

[6] A similar quote is attributed to Desmond Tutu: “When the missionaries came to Africa they had the Bible and we had the land. They said ‘Let us pray.’ We closed our eyes. When we opened them we had the Bible and they had the land.”

[7] Upon assuming the leadership of the newly independent Republic of Ghana (1960), Kwame Nkrumah initiated meetings in Accra, which were intended to form a “united states of Africa” by helping to found the Organisation of African Unity. Nkrumah was deposed in 1966 with the aid of the CIA. See *inter alia* John Stockwell *In Search of Enemies*, 1984. Gamel Abdel Nasser sought a similar approach through the United Arab Republic (with Syria 1958-1962) and support for pan-Arab unity—essentially based on unity of the Arabic-speaking peoples. The Arab Socialist Ba’ath parties (Iraq and Syria) in what had been British Mesopotamia since 1918 were founded in 1947 as Arab nationalist, socialist and anti-imperialist parties. Muammar al-Gaddafi was also a younger member of this generation of nationalists who led a bloodless coup, which expelled the British-sponsored King Idris (1969) and expelled both US and British troops from the country.

[8] Wahhabism became the political ideology of the house of bin Saud when it adopted Abd al-Wahhab (1703-1792). The Saudi state promotes the teachings of Wahhab not only its official religion but as the only legitimate form of Islam. The domination by the house of bin Saud of the entire Arabian Peninsula was established in the 1930s with the help of the British and Americans, with the Americans promoting the new Saudi state with the formation of the Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). See John Blair, *The Control of Oil*, 1976.

[9] Carter’s national security advisor and CFR member Zbigniew Brzezinski is on record as saying how proud he still is of that policy.

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