

Pope Francis Condemns Antisemitism But Again Misses the Elephant In the Room

by Hugh Fitzgerald



In a meeting with world Jewish leaders, Pope Francis deplored the recent upsurge in antisemitism around the world.

Pope Francis told a visiting US Jewish delegation on Monday of his concerns about rising antisemitism and the importance of educating against prejudice.

The Pope tells his Jewish visitors from the Wiesenthal Center about his concern over “rising antisemitism,” but says nothing about the source of that increase. Is he not interested in that question, or does he suspect what the answer is, and prefers to ignore it? For as anyone paying attention knows, the increase in antisemitism is a result of the tens of millions of Muslims who have been allowed to settle in the West, where they bring with them, undeclared in their mental

luggage, a virulent antisemitism that can be found in dozens of Qur'anic verses. While all non-Muslims are described in the Qur'an as "the most vile of created beings," the Jews are singled out as the greatest enemies of the Muslims. Robert Spencer has compiled a list of Qur'anic verses specifically about the Jews: "The Qur'an depicts the Jews as inveterately evil and bent on destroying the wellbeing of the Muslims. They are the strongest of all people in enmity toward the Muslims (5:82); as fabricating things and falsely ascribing them to Allah (2:79; 3:75, 3:181); claiming that Allah's power is limited (5:64); loving to listen to lies (5:41); disobeying Allah and never observing his commands (5:13); disputing and quarreling (2:247); hiding the truth and misleading people (3:78); staging rebellion against the prophets and rejecting their guidance (2:55); being hypocritical (2:14, 2:44); giving preference to their own interests over the teachings of Muhammad (2:87); wishing evil for people and trying to mislead them (2:109); feeling pain when others are happy or fortunate (3:120); being arrogant about their being Allah's beloved people (5:18); devouring people's wealth by subterfuge (4:161); slandering the true religion and being cursed by Allah (4:46); killing the prophets (2:61); being merciless and heartless (2:74); never keeping their promises or fulfilling their words (2:100); being unrestrained in committing sins (5:79); being cowardly (59:13-14); being miserly (4:53); being transformed into apes and pigs for breaking the Sabbath (2:63-65; 5:59-60; 7:166); and more."

Condemning what he called the "barbaric upsurge of antisemitism," the head of the Catholic Church assured the visitors from the Simon Wiesenthal Center – a Jewish human rights NGO based in Los Angeles – of his commitment to combating bigotry and discrimination against the Jewish people.

"I never tire of strongly condemning antisemitism in all its forms," the pope said.

When has the Pope ever condemned antisemitism “in all its forms”? He has said nothing, ever, about “bigotry..against the Jewish people” that is inculcated in Muslims by the Qur’an itself. When he says he “never tires of strongly condemning antisemitism in all its forms,” what is he talking about? When did he ever even suggest that, just possibly, there might be something in Islam itself that promotes antisemitism, just the way certain Christian texts had done before *Nostra Aetate*? When has he said that there might be antisemitic texts in Arab and Muslim schoolbooks that should be removed? When has he ever criticized any sermon by any imam for promoting hatred of Jews, such as those by his friend Ahmed al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, with whom he last February signed a document entitled “Human Fraternity for World Peace and Living Together”? He met again with Al-Tayeb at the Vatican in November, where they solemnly discussed “enhancing cooperation to spread tolerance, the principles of human brotherhood, and the culture of living together.” Bomfoggery. Did the Pope think to ask Al-Tayeb about the Qur’anic verse that describes non-Muslims as “the most vile of created beings”? Of course not. Can the Pope really be so ignorant of Islam, or does he merely wish to keep on claiming what is clearly false, that “authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence,” in the hope that it might thereby become true? And which explanation, do you think, would be more intolerable?

Did no one in the vast bureaucracy of the Vatican ever inform the Pope that Ahmed Al-Tayeb is a virulent antisemite? Al-Tayeb has said this about the Jews: “You shall find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers to be the Jews and the polytheists.” To an interviewer who said that “the Jews say they are the Chosen People,” Al-Tayeb replied: “That is why the Jewish religion is closed to others. They have no proselytism. They consider themselves to be the best creation, the Chosen People.” When the interviewer said “They [the Jews] consider everybody else to be inferior to them...” Al-Tayeb

replied: "Extremely inferior. They even have very peculiar laws. For instance, they are allowed to practice usury with non-Jews. Some things are not allowed among Jews, but are allowed between Jews and non-Jews. They practice a terrible hierarchy, and they are not ashamed to admit it, because it is written in the Torah – with regard to killing, enslavement, and so on [of non-Jews]....These practices and beliefs [of the Jews] have made people, even non-Muslims, hate them."

Al-Tayeb has in another interview said that "a most devious and malicious plot was hatched [by the Jews] to plunge this dagger [i.e., Israel] into the body of the Arab world." Sheikh Al-Tayeb said that "if it were not for Israel, there would be no problem, the region would have prospered." Al-Tayeb has blamed Jews for ISIS and other jihadist terrorists, has declared "the issue of antisemitism is a lie," and has given his support to homicide bombing in the wake of the 2002 Passover bombing in Netanya. Yet this is the man with whom Pope Francis has met with on several occasions, to discuss, and sign a solemn document, with, on the subject of "tolerance, world peace, and living together."

The pope explained that he had stood in silent reflection when he visited Auschwitz in June 2016.

Silent reflection "allows us to hear the cry of humanity," Pope Francis said, in order to "preserve memory."

The pope added: "Without memory, we will destroy the future."

True enough. But what memory needs to be preserved? Not just that of the Nazi murders, or of pogroms in Russia, but also the memory of 1,400 years of Islamic conquest of many lands and many peoples, and the subjugation of those peoples, who were given a choice of death, conversion to Islam, or the status of dhimmis, which entailed acceptance of many onerous conditions, of which the Jizyah tax is the best known. Does the Pope know anything about Islamic history, aside from what

Ahmed Al-Tayeb tells him? Does he know how Christians and Jews fared under Muslim rule? Can he really be so ignorant, or has he decided to create an alternate reality because he fears offending Muslims today, and thinks that if he offers a distorted version of Islam, as tolerant and peaceful and brotherly-lovable, that somehow that version will be accepted by Muslims themselves? Does he care that in so doing, he is also misleading non-Muslims?

Endorsing initiatives based upon “integration, research and understanding of the other,” Pope Francis pointed to the “Nostra Aetate” declaration of 1965 as a model for reconciliation.

The declaration – a milestone in relations between the Catholic Church and the Jewish faith – had highlighted the “rich spiritual heritage common to Jews and Christians,” the Pope said.

A similar approach was needed today to “sweep away hatred,” the pope told his guests.

“We must help those who are victims of intolerance and discrimination,” he concluded.

The Pope wants to “sweep away hatred.” Fine. But one has the worrisome feeling that he is referring not to the real hatred of antisemitic (and anti-Christian) Muslims, but to the factitious hatred of “Islamophobes.” Is it ignorance, or calculation, that explains his refusal to speak about the antisemitism of Muslims? Who does he think are the “victims of intolerance and discrimination” who need help today? And how does one “sweep away [the] hatred” of Islamic antisemitism without examining its textual roots, in dozens of Qur’anic verses?

Did those Jewish visitors to the Vatican come away satisfied, or were they, rather, disquieted at the Pope’s seeming

obliviousness to Islamic antisemitism? Perhaps they should now send a collective letter to the Pope, thanking him for his sincere desire to fight antisemitism, but also noting that, according to a study by the Anti-Defamation League, Muslims in Europe display levels of antisemitism three times higher than that of non-Muslims. In France alone, a dozen Jews have been murdered by Muslims. Many Jews in Europe are now afraid precisely because of attacks by antisemitic Muslims. The Wiesenthal Center officers might ask the Pope to explain forthrightly how he intends to deal with this reality, and whether passing over Muslim antisemitism in silence, as he has persistently done in the past, only makes matters worse.

The Pope needs to decide just how much about the surge in antisemitism he can bear, or dare, to utter. So far, his record on Islam, a faith scrubbed clean for its Vatican closeup, has been deplorable. We can only hope that the Pope will finally come round and, after so much papal prevarication, try the truth. What worked for Him, Pope Francis, might work for you.

First published in