

Pope Francis: Islam and Christianity Share the Idea of Conquest

Pope Francis continues to astonish. He has just said, in [an interview with the French Catholic paper La Croix](#), that “the idea of conquest is inherent to the soul of Islam.” As far as his understanding of Islam goes, this is a marked improvement over his disturbing statement, back in [November 2013](#), that the “Koran is a book of peace” and “Islam is a peaceful religion.” Now he at last recognizes – how could he not, after yet another year of Muslim bombs and bloodletting all over the place? – that Islam has something to do with “conquest,” that is, spreading Islam by conquering non-Muslim lands. He must have been doing some reading, possibly even learning more about the life and works of that prophet and warlord, Muhammad.

But then, remembering to act as advocate for Islam, he immediately supplies a preposterous *Tu Quoque* against Christianity (and thus against himself), claiming that “it is also possible to interpret the objective of Matthew’s Gospel, where Jesus sends his disciples to all nations, in terms of the same idea of conquest.” The “same idea of conquest”? What is the similarity between peaceful missionaries armed only with the Bible, sent out to persuade the pagans, and the armed might of Muslim Arab armies waging Jihad, with a religious mandate to subdue by force the Infidels, and then to present them with a stark choice: to be killed, to be at once converted (no complicated theological discussions needed), or to endure the dismal and deliberately humiliating condition of dhimmi, with its many social, economic, and political disabilities? The sleight-of-word that would treat the two ways of spreading the respective faiths, as both involving “conquest,” is bizarre. The Pope does not say outright that

the objectives *are* the same; with pusillanimity aforethought, he says “it *is possible* to interpret the objective[s] in terms of the same idea of conquest.” But the “objective” of Muslims conducting Jihad is to subjugate and impose; the “objective” of those Christian disciples sent out to spread the Gospel was to persuade.

The Pope also demonstrates a desire to rescue Islam from suspicion: “Today, I don’t think that there is a fear of Islam as such but of ISIS and its war of conquest, which is partly drawn from Islam.” On what basis does he make this claim? Pope Francis claims there is fear only of ISIS, and not of Islam “as such.” But when non-Muslims are polled in France, in Germany, in Great Britain, in Italy, in Poland, in Denmark, in Sweden, as to whether they fear Islam, or are suspicious of Muslims, the answer increasingly is Yes, despite the frantic efforts of members of the media and political elites (and now Pope Francis) to substitute ISIS for Islam. Europeans are coming to understand that ISIS is merely Islam on stilts, a version that attempts to mimic the behavior and beliefs of the earliest Muslims. And why does Pope Francis claim that ISIS’ war of conquest is “*partly* drawn from Islam”? It is based entirely on Islam; had there been other, non-Islamic sources for ISIS’ ideology and its acts, you can be sure the Pope would have identified them.

The Pope says nothing about where the current “conquest” by Muslims is most in evidence – Europe itself – and by what means. He fails to discuss the duty of Jihad in Islam, or how Jihad can be conducted using whatever instruments are available and effective. In Western Europe, the most effective instrument at this point is not combat, *qitaal*, but the seemingly inexorable growth in Muslim numbers. Conquest need not be by force of arms; demography will do. Far from expressing any alarm over this amazing Muslim invasion of Europe, the Pope repeatedly has discussed the duty he thinks Europeans have to take in more and more of these Muslim

migrants. And he is careful to minimize differences (between Islam and Christianity) where they are great, and exaggerate differences (between Islam and ISIS), where they are small. Both his heart, and his rhetoric, are in the wrong place.

Then there is the Pope's duty to not misrepresent the past. It appears that he is willing to pass over in silence the role of Christianity in Europe's history, in order – so he must think – to win temporary favor from Muslims in the present, and attain that famous interfaith dialogue on which he keeps placing his hopes. When asked why he never refers to the “Christian roots” of Europe, Pope Francis said he “sometimes dreads the tone [of those who mention those roots], which can seem triumphalist or even vengeful.” This objection is difficult to comprehend. The Pope refuses to make a simple statement of fact, which even the most convinced atheist could not deny; indeed, the Pope does not deny the “Christian roots” of Europe. Instead, he just won't mention it, in his tender solicitousness for Muslim sensibilities, and his worry that because some people at some time have mentioned Europe's “Christian roots” in a tone he describes as “triumphalist or even vengeful,” then he, Pope Francis, should refrain from mentioning those “Christian roots,” because he just might, you see, remind people of those who in the past have sounded “triumphalist or even vengeful.” And then, to complete the absurdity, he alludes to the Original Sin of White Western Christianity, Colonialism. Mention of “Christian roots” takes on, he claims, “colonialist overtones.” How? The “Christian roots” of Europe antedate colonialism by some 1600 years. The Pope, in a straightforward and sober tone, should be able to acknowledge those “Christian roots” of Europe without worrying about non-existent “colonialist overtones.” Don't expect this Pope, by the way, ever to dare to recognize that the most successful example of colonialism in world history is that of Islam itself, where the colonized are taught to despise or forget their own pre-Islamic histories.

Is it really too much for the Pope to describe the differences between conducting Jihad and spreading the Gospel? Is it beyond him to proclaim the role of Christianity in Europe's history, without sounding "triumphalist or even vengeful" or smuggling in "colonialist overtones"? If he doesn't feel up to it, why not cut to the chase and try another solution: hand over the Papacy to the ghost of the islamochristian Arab Edward Said? What better way to win the trust of Muslims, so that the "dialogue" the Pope keeps hoping for can at long last begin? Or, taking a different tack, in an I-have-a-dream mode, why should Pope Francis not reverse course and ask for some history lessons from his predecessor, and put that dialogue-chasing on permanent hold?