

Pope Francis To ISIS: Tell Us What You Really Think

by Hugh Fitzgerald

Dada and Surrealism may have outlived their welcome in Parisian salons, but they have found a warm welcome on Papal planes, and at the Vatican itself. The Pope has yet again delivered himself of more of his no-longer-surprising, but always disturbing, comments on Islam. He has said in the past that Islam is a “religion of peace” and that “Islam has nothing to do with violence.” Last month at a press conference he finally recognized that there is indeed a “war” going on in the world, “but it’s a real war, not a religious war. It’s a war of interests, a war for money. A war for natural resources and for the dominion of the peoples.” That war, not a war mandated by the Qur’an, but a war that has nothing to do with Islam, is what the Pope insists is roiling the world today. It can’t possibly have anything to do with religion, for “every religion wants peace,” said a Pope who has chosen to forget centuries of religious warfare, between Protestant and Catholic, in Europe, and to overlook more than 1,400 years of religious warfare between Muslim and Christian, Muslim and Jew, Muslim and Hindu, Muslim and Buddhist.

How does he know that Islam is peaceful? Oh, he just knows. And he had a private meeting in May, a little “dialogue” where, as he put it, “the meeting is the message,” with Ahmed Al-Tayeb, the Grand Imam of Al-Azhar University, who assured him that Islam was as peaceful as all get out. No one in the Pope’s retinue brought up some of Al-Tayeb’s less soothing statements, such as this remark about Jews: “Since the inception of Islam 1,400 years ago, we have been suffering from Jewish and Zionist interference in Muslim affairs. This is a cause of great distress for the Muslims.” Al-Tayeb has also claimed that Jews consider non-Jews to be “extremely

inferior” and that Jews “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.”

These remarks are all part of the public record, located by a quick google click. But perhaps the Pope should have focused on Al-Tayeb’s remark that “the Quran said it and history has proven it: ‘You shall find the strongest among men in enmity to the believers to be the Jews and **the polytheists.**’” The “polytheists” in question are the Christians, especially the Catholic Christians, guilty of “shirk” (which deserves death in Muslim theology), that is, polytheism, because they believe in the Holy Trinity, which in the Muslim view ascribes “partners” to God. Most Christians, of course, do not think of Christianity as polytheistic, but it’s the Muslim view that matters here, and the Qur’anic injunction upon which it is based.

Reporters on the plane flying back to Rome from Warsaw asked the Pope why he never uses the word “Islam” to describe terrorism or other violence.

“It’s not right to identify Islam with violence. It’s not right and it’s not true,” he replied.

“I don’t like to talk of Islamic violence because every day, when I go through the newspapers, I see violence,” the pope said, in apparent reference to news of crime in the predominantly Catholic country of Italy.

“And these are baptized Catholics. If I speak of Islamic violence, then I have to speak of Catholic violence.”

So let’s try to get this straight. If, for example, a man in Milan kills his wife in a crime of passion, or a robber shoots a jeweler in Palermo, according to the Pope these are examples of “Catholic violence,” and the Pope feels that if he speaks “of Islamic violence, then I have to speak of Catholic

violence.” This is nonsense. The scope and scale of Islamic violence, over 1,400 years, leading to tens of millions of victims all over the world, are completely different in kind from the intra-family or criminal violence which the Pope wants us to believe proves that Catholic violence must be mentioned in the same breath as Islamic violence. The jihadists of Charlie Hebdo, San Bernardino, Fort Hood, the kosher market, Bataclan, Amsterdam, Madrid, London, and of course New York and Washington, were not acting in violation of Islamic norms but according to them, in furtherance of them, whereas the “baptized Catholics” who kill their wives or a jeweler during a robbery are violating Christian norms.

The clearest Islamic response to the Pope’s insistence that there is no such thing as a “war of religion,” that the war in question is, “like all wars” – in the Pope’s unwaveringly Marxist analysis – a war over resources of all kinds (natural resources, land, money, subjugation of peoples), is that which has just appeared in the 15th number of Dabiq, the magazine of the Islamic State. It is one long scream of hatred against Christians, the “arrogant disbelievers,” including by name Pope Francis, calling on Muslims to “pray for Allah’s curse to be upon the liars.” “Break your crosses” these Christians are urged, give up Christianity and embrace Islam:

“[Christians] have the option of trying to cling to the transient luxuries of this life, rejecting the truth in favour of either paying jizyah [tax] to the Islamic State or continuing to wage a futile war against it.

“Alternatively, they can heed the warning of Allah that the worldly life is not guaranteed even for those who pursue it at the expense of their salvation, and thus choose to embrace Islam, champion the truth, attain the mercy of their Lord, and enter the Gardens of Paradise.”

The article also warns those in the West that they will be “crushed” by the Islamic State, and the “war against Islam

will neither succeed nor benefit you. You will fail because you fight against those who have allied with Allah." And Dabiq foresees attacks all across Europe in this fight that will end in Islam's complete victory.

It continues: "Do you claim that Jews and Christians follow the right religion and that they will enter the kingdom of heaven? There is no proof for this." ISIS-inspired massacres in the US, including those in Orlando and San Bernardino, were committed, according to Dabiq, by Muslim "knights." calling those who carried out the killings "knights". One ISIS fighter – a convert from Christianity – encourages others to "follow the example of the lions in France and Belgium, the example of the blessed couple in California, and the examples of the knights in Orlando and Nice."

Thomas Williams has described Dabiq's frontal assault on Pope Francis:

"This is a divinely-warranted war between the Muslim nation and the nations of disbelief," the Dabiq authors state in an article titled "By the Sword."

*The Islamic State attacks Pope Francis by name for claiming that "authentic Islam and the proper reading of the Quran are opposed to every form of violence" –what he thought conciliatory, Dabiq finds offensive – for **"Francis continues to hide behind a deceptive veil of 'good will,' covering his actual intentions of pacifying the Muslim nation."** I wonder if this reaction will confuse the Pope still further.*

Pope Francis "has struggled against reality" in his efforts to portray Islam as a religion of peace, the article insists, before going on to urge all Muslims to take up the sword of jihad, the "greatest obligation" of a true Muslim.

Despite the obviously religious nature of their attacks, the article states, "many people in Crusader countries express

shock and even disgust that Islamic State leadership 'uses religion to justify violence.'"

"Indeed, waging jihad – spreading the rule of Allah by the sword – is an obligation found in the Quran, the word of our Lord," it reads.

"The blood of the disbelievers is obligatory to spill by default. The command is clear. Kill the disbelievers, as Allah said, 'Then kill the polytheists wherever you find them.'"

The Islamic State also reacted to Pope Francis's description of recent acts of Islamic terror as "senseless violence," insisting that there is nothing senseless about it.

"The gist of the matter is that there is indeed a rhyme to our terrorism, warfare, ruthlessness, and brutality," they declare, adding that their hatred for the Christian West is absolute and implacable.

The fact is, even if you were to stop bombing us, imprisoning us, torturing us, vilifying us, and usurping our lands, we would continue to hate you because our primary reason for hating you will not cease to exist until you embrace Islam. Even if you were to pay jizyah [tax for infidels] and live under the authority of Islam in humiliation, we would continue to hate you."

Has Pope Francis been shown any of this? What would it take for him to grasp its significance, and not try to find ways to dismiss it? Is he aware of how many Muslims, of every income and educational level, all over the world, have, despite great obstacles, managed to join ISIS, first in Iraq and Syria, then in Libya, and most recently, to become "knights" of ISIS in the West, committing their acts of mass murder and suicide in Europe so as to "strike terror in the hearts" of the Infidel enemy?

ISIS may be a “sick and twisted ideology” to non-Muslims trying to exculpate Islam itself, but it looks to many Muslims a lot like a particularly violent but doctrinally orthodox version of Sunni Islam, with the same Qur’an that all Muslims read, without any dilution of its message, or any nuance of niceness to please or fool non-Muslims. The Pope, instead of offering up his knee-jerk tu-quoque view that all religions are the same (Islam is peaceful, Islam has nothing to do with violence, the real Islam has nothing to do with terrorism) should set himself a course of study, beginning with the Western scholars of Islam of the non-apologetic school, such as C. Snouck Hurgronje, Henri Lammens, Samuel Zwemer, Joseph Schacht, and others who wrote during the century, roughly 1870 to 1970, before the Great Inhibition set in. That would enlighten him more than any meeting with Al-Tayeb. He owes it to his flock – he’s still their shepherd – not to lead them astray.

His recent comment that “if I speak of Islamic violence I have to speak of Catholic violence” inspired one exasperated Frenchman to create the hashtag @HausmannParis #PasMonPape which translates as “**#not my Pope.**” It’s the top trending hashtag in France, and in Belgium too. The Pope better watch out. By their hashtags shall ye know them.

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