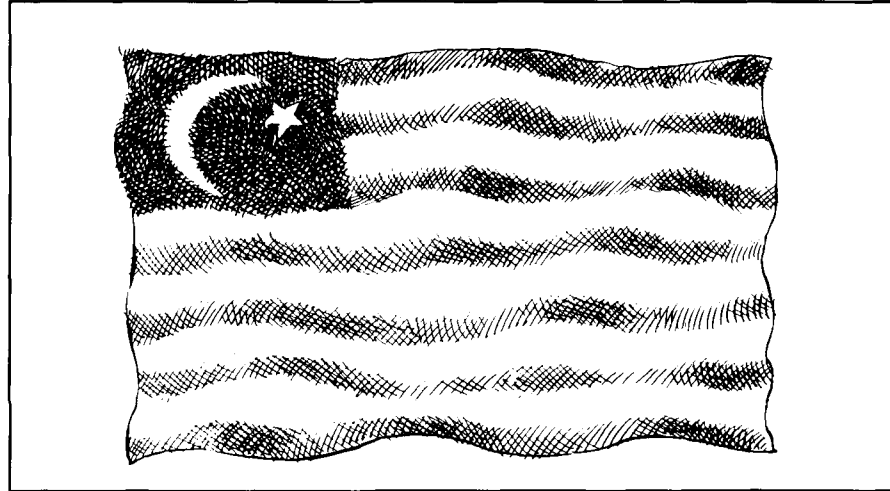


Insurgent Islam and American Collaboration

by James George Jatras



The cultural schism between the Western and Eastern halves of European Christian civilization—marked principally by their respective religious traditions, Roman Catholic and Protestant in the West and Orthodox in the East, may or may not prove fatal. One issue stands above all others in determining the outcome: the Islamic resurgence that has rapidly come to mark the post-Cold War era. For the East, which borders on the Muslim world, the problem continues to be, as it has been since Islam first appeared in the seventh century, primarily one of direct, violent confrontation, which today stretches from the Balkans to the Caucasus, and throughout Central Asia. For the West, on the other hand, the problem today is primarily internal, a result of ideological confusion (which in many instances leads to active collaboration), coupled with demographic infiltration.

Last year, the county board of Loudoun County, Virginia, just a few miles down the road from the federal capital, granted a zoning variance, over vigorous local opposition, to facilitate the construction of a new Islamic academy. The institution is one of a number being constructed nationwide, and it will cover some 100 acres, include elementary, middle, and high schools, feature an 800-bed dormitory, and grace the rolling hills of the Virginia horse country with a 65-foot mosque dome and an 85-foot minaret.

County residents opposed the academy on a variety of grounds, notably the loss of tax revenue on land that was otherwise zoned for business uses and the security threat posed by the school, either from Muslims who would be attracted to the county or from the possibility that anti-Saudi Islamic groups might see the academy as a tempting target. But the critics' central issue—and the one that highlights Western incompre-

hension of the phenomenon in question—was the character of the Saudi regime, which, according to the school's bylaws, exercises total control, to the extent that the school is part of the structure of the Saudi Ministry of Education: an establishment of a foreign sovereign on American soil. Indeed, the Saudi ambassador is *ex officio* chairman.

Predictably, as soon as Saudi Arabia and Islam became the issues, progressive opinion responded that rejection of the school would be intolerance of "diversity." One county resident displayed a crescent and star in the window of her home to show symbolically that "Islam is welcome here." The ever-vigilant *Washington Post* weighed in with an editorial blasting opposition to the school as "religious intolerance" and "the worst kind of bigotry" on the part of retrograde denizens of the Old Dominion. "Ugly statements that have been made in public meetings on the issue have run the range of mean-spiritedness," sniffed the *Post*, "with some residents asserting that the school should be rejected because 'the Saudis execute their own people who convert from Islam.'"

In point of correction to the *Post's* sarcastic quotation marks, the 1997 U.S. Department of State Report on Human Rights Practices states the following about Saudi Arabia:

Freedom of religion does not exist. Islam is the official religion and all [Saudi] citizens must be Muslims. . . . Conversion by a Muslim to another religion is considered apostasy. Public apostasy is considered a crime under *Shari'a* law and punishable by death.

So which is more "ugly" and "mean-spirited"—the fact that the Saudis do indeed behead those who abandon Islam or that Loudoun citizens have been tactless enough to take note of that fact? One witness before the county board testified that her daughters, who are U.S. citizens, have been prevented from leaving Saudi Arabia for over 13 years because, as women, they

James George Jatras is a policy analyst at the United States Senate. The views expressed here are his own and do not represent any Senate member or office.

may not travel, even though the elder one is now an adult, without their Saudi father's permission. The girls have been forcibly converted to Islam and can only look forward to their eventual marriage, for which their consent is at best a formality.

Fawning by Loudoun County authorities extended even to a blatant disregard of the county's own laws. A Loudoun ordinance defines a private institution as one that is neither funded nor controlled by any government: On both counts, the Loudoun Islamic academy fails. Yet the county board rejected testimony by a former board member—the author of the relevant ordinance—that the academy was not a private institution. No matter. Today, neither Loudoun County, nor the Commonwealth of Virginia, nor the United States would be able to create and run an educational institution based on any religious doctrine. But a foreign government—a government that is every bit as bigoted, intolerant, and ugly as the *Post* wrongly accused the school's critics of being—may do so.

Especially illuminating in the Loudoun controversy was the position of local Christian social conservatives, who stayed neutral or even supported the academy. In the dimmer recesses of the American Christian mind, the only concern was what precedent denying the variance might set for private Christian schools, or the availability of public vouchers. The importation of *Shari'a* into a once-Christian commonwealth seemingly registered not at all in evangelical minds blissfully unaware of Islamic aims. But as Bat Ye'or wrote in *The Decline of Eastern Christianity Under Islam*,

The Islamist movement makes no secret of its intentions to convert the West. Its propaganda, published in booklets sold in all European Islamic centers for the last thirty years, sets out its aim and the methods to achieve them. They include proselytism, conversion, marriage with local women, and, *above all, immigration* [emphasis added]. Remembering that Muslims always began as a minority in the conquered countries ("liberated," in Islamic terminology) before becoming a majority, the ideologists of this movement regard Islamic settlement in Europe, the United States, and elsewhere as a chance for Islam.

The element of willful blindness in Western perspectives on Islam cannot be overestimated. So deeply embedded is the notion that all religions are fundamentally the same that evidence to the contrary is simply wished out of existence. When the Ayatollah Khomeini states that

Muslims have no alternative . . . to armed holy war against profane governments, . . . the conquest of all non-Muslim territories. . . . It will be the duty of every able-bodied adult male to volunteer for this war of conquest, the final aim of which is to put Koranic law in power from one end of the earth to the other . . .

such utterances are as little heeded as were similar statements by Lenin during the Cold War. After all, Khomeini is a known "fundamentalist." Surely, his statements cannot be held against the moderates, the "mainstream," who represent "real Islam," whose beliefs and values are not so different from ours—can they? The contention that Khomeini and his ilk are in fact Islam's historical "mainstream" not only is dismissed but

is considered evidence of a dangerous "Christian fundamentalism," which is every bit as bad as the Muslim variety, probably worse. The growing number of Muslims in America (Islam, according to some claims, has already overtaken Judaism as the nation's largest non-Christian religion) and the irrefutable presumption of Muslim peaceableness have set the stage for Islam to become both a social and political force. Under the Clinton administration, Islam has made major strides to join denatured, humanized Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism in their semi-established status as kindred denominations of a single American civic creed, symbolized by Hillary Rodham Clinton's sponsorship last year of the *Eid al-Fitr* end-of-Ramadan celebration at the White House.

Likewise, the idea that Islam shares an Abrahamic pedigree with Christianity and Judaism, that we are all, in the Islamic phrase, "peoples of the book," is now almost universally accepted. But suppose that, during the early Christian era, a pagan philosopher from Athens had claimed to have received a vision from a divine messenger to the effect that Zeus/Jupiter, the Greco-Roman "father god," was the one and only God—in fact, was the same God the Father worshipped by the Christians; that the Christians had corrupted their Scriptures to hide the fact that Jupiter had been worshipped by Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, and Jesus; that only the self-proclaimed prophet's recitation of his own vision was authoritative; that the rites and sacred places of the Olympian gods (the Eleusinian Mysteries, the Delphic Oracle) had always pertained to Jupiter alone and indeed had been established by earlier Abrahamic prophets; and that those who had surrendered their will to Jupiter were commanded to wage holy war under his thunderbolt symbol on "infidels" who resisted the divine will. Is there any doubt that Christians then would have rejected the supposed kinship of the new teaching to their own faith as quickly as today's Christians rush to accommodate Islam?

There is little doubt that Islam's god is the former chief deity of the polytheistic Arab pantheon, stripped of his consorts and offspring—a variation on the moon god common throughout the ancient Middle East, among the Babylonians known as Sin (the Sinai peninsula is probably named after him) and among the Sumerians as Nanna. Among the pagan Arabs, he was usually called simply "the god," *al-ilah*: Allah. The moon god Allah, whose crescent symbol today caps mosques the world over, headed a pantheon of over 300 lesser divinities, including three daughters called Lat, Uzza, and Manat. In fact, the controversy over *The Satanic Verses* by Salman Rushdie centers upon an embarrassing (and historically documented) episode during Muhammad's evolving "revelation" (after his death collected as his Koran—*Qur'an*, "recitation") in which he admitted the possibility of retaining the three daughter-goddesses under his new dispensation. He later rescinded this idea as having been of false—"satanic"—inspiration. Muhammad (the son of Abdallah, "slave of Allah," a further attestation of the deity's pre-Islamic origin) was of the Quraysh tribe, the custodians of the Meccan shrine to the pantheon known as the *Ka'bah* ("cube"), which houses a black stone (probably a meteorite) that Muslim pilgrims continue to venerate. Pilgrims also perform other pre-Islamic pagan rites such as stoning the devil at Wadi Mina and partaking of the waters of the Zamzam well.

In short, Islam is a self-evident outgrowth not of the Old and New Covenants but of the darkness of heathen Araby. Despite ludicrous historical suggestions to the contrary (such as the idea that the *Ka'bah* was built by Abraham), Muslim apologists have

strained to find evidence in the Bible that a new prophet would arise *after* Jesus, seeing Muhammad in obvious prophecies of the Holy Spirit (that were fulfilled on Pentecost) or of the Second Coming of Christ. One could find no better refutation of Islam's efforts to appropriate Christian Scripture (here, Matthew 24:27) than that of the 14th-century Byzantine saint, Gregory Palamas, to his Turkish captors:

It is true that Muhammad started from the east and came to the west, as the sun travels from east to west. Nevertheless he came with war, knives, pillaging, forced enslavement, murders, and acts that are not from the good God but instigated by the chief manslayer, the devil.

St. Gregory's answer is no less devastating to Islam's self-depiction as a pacific creed. Islam was born in violence, from Muhammad's sanction of raids of pillage and plunder (starting with attacks against his own Quraysh tribe, which initially rejected his revelation) to his savage execution of hundreds of men of the Qurayzah clan (which professed Judaism) and the enslavement and forced concubinage of their women and children. From its inception, first within Arabia and then against all unbelievers, Islam has been unthinkable without its mandate for violence, war, terror—in a word, *jihad*—itself codified in Muhammad's Koran (notably Sura 9:29). Today, Islamic apologists in America have been quick to latch on to the vocabulary of grievance, denouncing the association of Islam with its violent past (and present) as “stereotyping,” “bigotry,” and “ignorance.” Even American elementary school texts have been rewritten to suggest that once-Christian Egypt, Syria, and Palestine became Muslim because their conquerors were “invited” in; Muslims are quick to remind Christians of the Crusaders' later “aggression,” but they do not consider as aggression their own unprovoked seizure of the Christian Middle East.

In the application of *jihad*, as documented by Bat Ye'or and others, Islam divides the world into two domains, or “houses”: the House of Islam (*Dar al-Islam*), where Islam rules and *Shari'a*, the law of Allah, has been realized; and the House of War (*Dar al-Harb*), where the rebellious unbelievers persist in their (or rather, our) lawlessness. In Islamic terms, we subdued Christians are *harbi*, and as such we have no legitimate right to our lands, our property, or even our lives, which by right belong not to us but to the Muslims; that which we now have we enjoy only until Islam becomes strong enough to impose *Shari'a*. As the highly respected and influential 14th-century authority Ibn Taymiyya explained:

These possessions [i.e., the things taken away from the non-Muslims upon their conquest] received the name of *fay* [war booty] since Allah had taken them away from the infidels in order to restore them to the Muslims. In principle, Allah has created the things of this world only in order that they may contribute to serving Him, since He created man only in order to be ministered to. Consequently, the infidels forfeit their persons and their belongings which they do not use in Allah's service to the faithful believers who serve Allah and unto whom Allah restitutes what is theirs; thus is restored to a man the inheritance of which he was deprived, even if he had never before gained possession.

It is worthy of note that Ibn Taymiyya is particularly revered by the Wahabi sect, which is the ruling doctrine of Saudi Arabia; students at the Saudi-controlled Loudoun Islamic Academy will no doubt receive benefit of his wisdom. But Ibn Taymiyya's sentiments are not unique to him. On the contrary, Bat Ye'or quotes comparable passages from Islamic sages of many eras and locales, from the time of Muhammad to the present day.

Surveying the long history of the Islamic assault on the Christian world, it is sobering to consider how close the latter has come to annihilation on more than one occasion. In the initial offensive during the first decade after Muhammad's demise, Christendom lost its birthplace in the Levant, with the front of the East Roman Empire only being stabilized at the approaches to Asia Minor. Meanwhile, the Arab armies swept west from conquered Egypt, subduing the whole north coast of Africa and crossing into Visigothic Spain in 711. They were finally stopped by the Franks under Karl the Hammer at Poitiers in 732, the centenary of Muhammad's death. The conversion of the Turkish tribes to Islam in the ninth century lent *jihad* renewed impetus; the erosion and final collapse of East Roman power opened the eastern door to Europe in the 14th century, and the Ottomans were turned back only at the gates of Vienna in 1683. The site of the first high-water mark at Poitiers and the later one at Vienna are only some 700 miles apart—so narrow has been Christendom's brush with extinction!

The Turkish defeat at Vienna marked the beginning of two centuries of remission during which European technology, particularly military technology, seemed to have resolved the contest between the Cross and the Crescent decisively in favor of the former. During the 19th century, the Christian nations of the Balkans—the only conquered Christian lands since the Spanish *reconquista* in which the Muslims had not yet reduced the indigenous population to a minority, as they had in Egypt and Syria, or eliminated them utterly, as in the Maghreb—cast off their Muslim masters, and by the end of World War I, most of the Muslim world (with the exceptions of the Arabian heartland itself and of a truncated Turkey which had adopted the modernizing, secular ideology of Kemalism) was subject to European rule. But at the very time that Europe achieved its military and geopolitical advantage, the moral and religious decline that culminated in the autogenocides of 1914 and 1939 had become evident. Having found in their grasp places their Crusader predecessors had only dreamed of reclaiming—Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Antioch, Alexandria, Constantinople—effete and demoralized European governments made no effort to re-Christianize them and, within a few decades, meekly abandoned them.

The moral disarmament of contemporary post-Christian Europe is now nearly universal. If, in the more remote past, Bourbon France had made common cause with the Sublime Porte (the scandalous “union of the Lily and the Crescent”) against Habsburg Austria, the arrangement at least had the virtue of cynical self-interest: Catholic France was hardly expected to praise the sultan's benevolence as part of the bargain. But by the 1870's, Disraeli's obsession with thwarting Russian ambitions in the Balkans prompted the Tories' unprecedented depiction of Turkey as tolerant and humane even in the face of the Bulgarian atrocities. Even so, Britain's Christian conscience, prodded by Gladstone's passionate words, was sufficient to bring down Lord Beaconsfield's government in 1880.

After World War I, with the installation of nominally “pro-

Western” governments in many Muslim countries fashioned from the wreckage of the Ottoman Empire, the West seems to have convinced itself of the existence of benign Islam. Indeed, the promotion of “moderate” Muslim regimes—especially those willing to make peace with Israel, and, even better, those that have a lot of petroleum—has become a linchpin of U.S. global policy. Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Turkey, Pakistan, Morocco, the Gulf states, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Nigeria, Indonesia, and a few others have become the darlings of U.S. policy, valued as supposed bulwarks against “fundamentalism” of the Iranian variety (Iran itself having lately been a member of the favored assembly). Operationally, this means not only overlooking the radical activities of the supposedly “moderate” Muslim states—for example, Saudi Arabia’s and Pakistan’s support for the Taliban regime in Afghanistan (whom even the Iranians denounce as dangerous fanatics), and assistance by virtually all Islamic nations to the thinly disguised radical regime in Sarajevo—but also a consistent American bias in favor of the Muslim party in virtually every conflict with a Christian nation. The most prominent exception to date has been a pro-Armenian tilt in the Nagorno-Karabakh question, a function of Armenian-Americans’ early cultivation of Congress, but this anomaly will undoubtedly soon shift to Azerbaijan’s favor under the combined pressure of the Turkey/Israel lobby, of residual Cold War antipathy for Russia (seen as Armenia’s main protector), and of American oil companies fixated on an energy El Dorado in the Caspian Basin.

It is hardly a surprise that business executives who would sell their grandmothers to Abdul Abulbul Amir for oil drilling rights would see the world as a reflection of their balance sheets, nor is it a surprise that secular, socially progressive opinion is viscerally anti-Christian. What is not expected is that so many Western Christians, Americans in particular, are willing to believe the worst about their Eastern Christian cousins, who, only lately freed from Islamic (and later, in most cases, communist) servitude, are desperately attempting to avoid a repeat of the experience. Today, when all of the Russian North Caucasus is subject to plunder and hostage-taking raids staged from *Shari’a*-ruled Chechnya, when not just Nagorno-Karabakh but Armenia proper is in danger of a repeat of 1915, when Cyprus and Greece receive unvarnished threats to their territorial integrity on a weekly basis for the offense of purchasing defensive weapons, and when the borders of Serbia are rapidly approaching those of the *pashaluk* of Belgrade in order to appease America’s new friends in Bosnia and Kosovo, organized Roman Catholic and Protestant sentiment in America overwhelmingly sides with non- and anti-Christian elite opinion in its pro-Muslim, anti-Orthodox tendency.

For example, in 1993, statements were issued by a number of Roman Catholic, Protestant, and Anglican spokesmen in the United States urging military intervention on behalf of the Islamic regime in Sarajevo. “We are convinced that there is just cause to use force to defend largely helpless people in Bosnia against aggression and barbarism that are destroying the very foundations of society and threaten large numbers of people,” wrote the chairman of the U.S. Catholic Conference, at a time when the Muslim beneficiaries of the intervention were not only impaling Serb POWs on spits but also were slaughtering Roman Catholic Croats by the hundreds in an offensive in central Bosnia. “What is going on in Bosnia is genocide by any other name,” observed a prominent Baptist spokesman. “The ghosts

of Auschwitz and Dachau have come back to haunt us. If we do nothing we are morally culpable.” “Those of us who opposed the Gulf War believed that war was not the answer,” opined the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church, “but today we find ourselves confronted with an evil war, the sure elimination of which may be possible only by means of armed intervention.” Thus did the high-minded guardians of the West’s Christian integrity give their blessing for NATO to aid the resumption of *jihad* in Europe. Granted, they were to some extent victims of the melodramatic media coverage that has characterized the Balkan war, but that is not much of an excuse: Who told them to believe everything dished up by CNN?

In a previous article in *Chronicles*, I have noted that Western anti-Orthodox bias, which I have dubbed Pravoslavophobia, rarely means antipathy for Orthodoxy as such. Most serious Protestants and Roman Catholics often have a fairly positive attitude toward Orthodox Christianity as a morally conservative and liturgically traditional bulwark within the spectrum of Christian opinion. Perhaps it has been so long since Western Christians have had to defend themselves physically as *Christians* (as opposed to Americans, Englishmen, Germans, etc.) that they just do not understand those for whom it is a current concern.

On the other hand, there are Westerners for whom antipathy is based on the traditional Orthodox character of the front-line states bordering on Islam. Indeed, from this viewpoint, the desire of these countries to avoid not only Islamicization but Westernization as well is a major count against them. Though differing in the specifics, the overall attitude toward Orthodox nations today is strongly reminiscent of that of the West toward the East as the dying Byzantine, Bulgarian, and Serbian states faced Ottoman conquest in the 15th century. The West then was explicit: We will help you only if you renounce Orthodoxy and adopt Roman Catholicism. The Orthodox East is being told today that unless they unquestioningly submit to the West’s tutelage in political, social, moral, and economic matters—the collective “religion” of the Enlightenment heritage—they again will be thrown to the wolves. In fact, the West will even help the wolves to devour them.

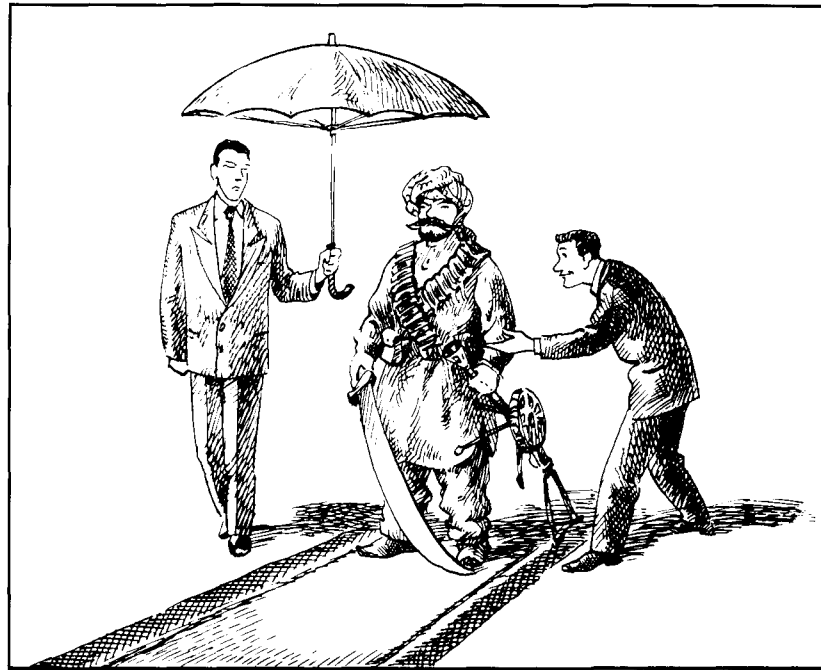
The immorality, not to mention the stupidity, of this should be obvious. Maybe Christians will never come to agreement on doctrinal matters; maybe the East will insist on retaining its distinctive religious and cultural heritage. Whatever happens, the survival of Orthodox Christian civilization in the East should be hardly less important to the West than to the Orthodox themselves, and indeed over the long term, the West’s own fate may depend on it. The fact that the West cannot recognize this reality is evident in the forest of minarets going up mainly in Western Europe but also now in North America.

Some Christians see the Muslim influx primarily as an opportunity for evangelization, and indeed we should never neglect to share the Gospel, the only *real* liberation, with Muslims, who should not, as individuals, be held responsible for the violent system into which they were born and of which they are—perhaps more than anyone else—victims. At the same time, in light of the growing volume of Muslim immigration, Western Christians will soon find out—maybe sooner than they think, given Western birthrates—that confronting the Islamic advance has become, as it has always been for Eastern Christians, a simple matter of physical survival. But by that time, it may be too late for the West as well.

◀

A Quiet, Little Jihad?

by Harold O. J. Brown



In late summer last year, two United States embassies in East Africa were the target of murderous bomb attacks by Islamic terrorist groups. After ordering two retaliatory missile attacks on installations presumed to be connected with militant Islamic extremism, President Clinton hastened to assure the American people that he has nothing against Islam, which he called “a religion of peace.” In November, Islamic militants reacted violently to the progress of peace talks between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization with a series of terrorist attacks on Israelis, apparently with the intention of provoking a severe reaction by Israel. Again, we were assured that, contrary to the widespread impression, Islam is a peace-loving religion.

Now, it is true that Islam has many variants, although not so many as Christianity, and it would be false to say that the *jihad* is a fundamental element in the Muslim faith, or at least a universally fundamental one. Christianity has had its Crusades and crusaders, and at one point, all of Western Christendom seemed to be focused on crusading in the East, but a simple glance at world history shows that the expansion of Islam is far more directly due to military action than is the spread of Christianity.

Generic Christians and other gentiles of our day do not hold any faith passionately enough to fight for it and find it hard to believe that adherents of another religion could actually do so in this modern age. We call our own age “post-Christian” with a certain contented smugness and proclaim it with strident voices: to borrow an expression from Père R.-L. Bruckberger,

“like eunuchs proud of being castrated.” Most Christians would not think of fighting for the cause of the Christ that they are supposed to revere; they are comforted by St. Paul’s statement, “God has called us to peace” (1 Corinthians 7:15), although the context refers not to religious war, but to religious differences within a marriage.

Whenever Christians actually do take up arms in a religious context against Muslims, they are denounced in no uncertain terms by much of the Western political and media establishments. During the Lebanese civil war, it was “right-wing Christian militias” against the Muslims. In most Western reports on the former Yugoslavia, it is the Eastern Orthodox Serbs who are regularly excoriated, while the Muslim “Turks” (as the Serbs call their fellow ethnic Slavs who converted to Islam under the Turkish domination) and ethnic Albanians are eulogized as freedom fighters. Even most Jews tend not to want to recognize the religious dimension of the problems that Israel has with the mostly Muslim Palestinians.

This naive insouciance with respect to Muslim aggressiveness is possible only if one is determined to disregard both history and present-day experience. Paul warns—in another context, it is true—“If the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle?” (1 Corinthians 14:8). At an interfaith meeting in 1995 held in Aiken, South Carolina, Boston College professor Peter Kreeft called for an “ecumenical *jihad*.” The “five kings of orthodoxy”—Roman Catholicism, Eastern Orthodoxy, evangelical Protestantism, conservative Judaism, and (presumably non-fundamentalist) Islam were to unite to defeat the virulent forces of secularism. Unfortunately for Professor Kreeft’s metaphor, *jihad* is defined as “a holy war waged on behalf of Islam as a religious duty,” or “a bit-

Harold O.J. Brown is religion editor for Chronicles and a professor of theology and philosophy at Reformed Theological Seminary in Charlotte, North Carolina.