

Archbishop Le Gall Genuflects to Islam

by Hugh Fitzgerald



The Archbishop of Toulouse, Robert Le Gall, has weighed in on Macron's defense of freedom of expression and the subsequent world-wide Muslim rage against him. And the Archbishop, instead of supporting Macron, and that freedom that the French hold dear, has come down on the side of thin-skinned, murderous Muslims. The story is here: "Prophet Muhammad cartoons 'an insult to Muslims and Christians alike', French archbishop says," [Rahnuma Daily](#), November 1, 2020; Robert Spencer made some brief remarks on it [here](#).

A French archbishop has warned of the dangers of publishing offensive cartoons, noting there are limits to freedom of expression amid renewed tensions between France and the Muslim world.

We all know the dangers of offending Muslims. We've heard

about, and some have seen, the severed head of Samuel Paty that his killer displayed on social media. We remember the killings at Charlie Hebdo. Stephane Charbonnier, the editor of the magazine, knew exactly the danger he was running in publishing cartoons of Muhammad that would offend Muslims, but he wanted to defend the imperiled freedom of expression and explained that he preferred to “die standing rather than live on my knees.” Archbishop Le Gall is altogether different from “Charb.” He’s a profile in cowardice. He’s ready to yield, quite content to genuflect before his new Muslim masters.

The Archbishop of Toulouse Robert Le Gall said he opposed the publishing of caricatures insulting Islam’s Prophet Muhammad, saying “there are limits to freedom of speech”.

Yes, there are “limits to freedom of speech,” but they are not the limits Archbishop Le Gall has in mind. In France, making fun of religious figures is not among these limits. The expression of murderous hatred, the incitement to violence, is not protected by freedom of expression. The only limits to freedom of speech in the Western world are about hate speech (e.g., antisemitic or racist hate speech) and calls for immediate violence or, in the American constitutional context, “imminent lawless violence” (in American constitutional law, this is known as the Brandenburg test, from a 1969 Supreme Court case).

But neither Samuel Paty, nor President Macron, expressed any hatred or incited violence against Muslims. The only people – hasn’t the Archbishop Le Gall noticed? – who have been spewing out hatred, calling for the murder of others, even for the mass murder of tens of millions of French people, are the Muslims themselves. Charlie Hebdo wanted to make fun of the figure of Muhammad, as it had in the past made fun of Jesus and Moses without incident. Twelve people, nine of them the paper’s cartoonists, were murdered by Muslim fanatics, the Kouachi brothers, who didn’t think anyone anywhere had a right

to make fun of Muhammad. Samuel Paty only wanted to discuss several of those Charlie Hebdo cartoons in the context of a middle school class on freedom of expression; he was solicitous of the feelings of his Muslim students and suggested they might want to leave the classroom during this particular part of the discussion. He was not endorsing those cartoons, but using them as a point of departure for a discussion of freedom of expression. For using the Muhammad cartoons, in class, he was decapitated by a Muslim fanatic, Abdoulakh Anzorov. What will this mean for future classes to be given in French schools on freedom of expression? Will the teachers dare to endanger themselves by using materials that Muslims might find offensive? The Muslims will have won in their war over "limits to freedom of expression," if enough people agree with Archbishop Le Gall's craven capitulation.

Archbishop Le Gall no doubt blames the cartoonists for their own deaths; they didn't respect the "limits to freedom of expression" that Islam had set and that he thinks the rest of us should observe, for otherwise we'd only be causing trouble. We are the ones who are responsible for the violence by Muslims, not the Muslims themselves, who are only exhibiting what Archbishop Le Gall thinks is a perfectly understandable reaction. Paty was at fault for choosing to use Muhammad cartoons as part of his classroom discussion; he ought to have been more careful not to offend Muslim sensibilities. Why? Because otherwise they might come to kill you, which is what happened to Samuel Paty. Archbishop Le Gall thinks French Infidels have got to limit their freedom of expression whenever it might offend Muslims. In the land of the Rights of Man, don't exercise some of those rights – of speech, of expression, of conscience – as you did before. Now it's time to avoid trouble. Get with the program. Do what the Muslims demand.

"These are considered an insult to Muslims and Christians alike and they should not be spread further. We all see their

results,” he said in comments to France Bleu radio station, according to an Arabi21 report.

Archbishop Le Gall is making things up: how are the cartoons of Muhammad “an insult to Christians”? Does he know of any Christians – other than his timorous self – who find those cartoons insulting? After the *Charlie Hebdo* killings, hundreds of thousands of French people came out to protest against those who killed the cartoonists; no one proclaimed that he (or she) had felt “insulted” by the cartoons. The Archbishop’s pusillanimity, in the face of Muslim threats, has been dressed up by him as a thoughtful Christian cleric’s “sharing of the pain” felt by Muslims over a putative insult to the Prophet. He can’t explain the real reason for his latest statement: he’s terrified.

The latest attempts by Muslims to scare the French into abandoning their right of free expression began with demands for the firing of Paty – the principal refused – and of an apology by the school’s principal for Paty’s use of the Muhammad cartoons. This, too, was refused. After Paty’s beheading, when Macron delivered his stout defense of freedom of expression, things escalated, with Muslims worldwide, including the leaders of Turkey, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, calling for a boycott of French goods. This then became a call for the mass murder of the French. First, former Prime Minister of Malaysia Mahathir Mohamed claimed that Muslims would be well within their rights, given how the French had treated Muslims, to kill “millions” of them. And then a Pakistani cleric went Mohamed one better: in a video posted on his official YouTube channel, the politician and Islamic scholar Allama Khadim Hussain Rizvi called on the Pakistani government to declare Jihad against “those who slander the Prophet Muhammad” in the wake of the *Charlie Hebdo* cartoons affairs. He demanded that Pakistan use nuclear weapons: “Today, France is challenging you [the government of Pakistan]. Why have you kept the tenth atom bomb hidden? Use

that atom bomb. Use that atom bomb. Declare a Jihad. Let everyone [in France] die." Apparently Archbishop Le Gall was unperturbed by these Muslim threats of mass deaths; what worried him was the French spirit of resistance, given voice by Macron, to Muslim attempts to make France abandon the freedom of expression whenever Muslims might claim to feel "insulted."

"There are limits to freedom of expression and we should realise that we do not have the right to insult religions," he added.

No, Archbishop Le Gall, you are wrong. In the advanced West, the West of the Rights of Man, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we do have the right to "insult" religions. Any and all of them. We don't have the right to call for the murder of people of various religions, nor to incite other kinds of violence against them. But we can criticize or mock their ideology, their holy books, their central figures. This is protected speech.

If Pope Francis were not himself so confused and compromised in his understanding of Islam – he has assured us all that "authentic Islam has nothing to do with violence," a remark that dozens of Qur'anic verses, and 1,400 years of violent Jihad, flatly contradict – perhaps he would discipline the Archbishop of Toulouse. One hopes that Le Gall's fellow clerics in France will take issue with his remarks; they should not let them pass unanswered. These clerics should now make it a point to celebrate and praise Macron's stout defense of free speech, in a pointed rebuke to Archbishop Le Gall.

The limits to freedom of expression in the Western world are not, despite the craven insistence of Archbishop Le Gall, to be set by those hypersensitive, hysterical, and murderous Muslims who think they have a right to dictate their own rules of behavior to the world, rules which include not ever making

fun of the Prophet Muhammad, who must be treated by everyone with the greatest respect – or else boycotts, murder, and even mass murder may be the result and, if so – according to many Muslims and also to the capitulationist Archbishop Le Gall, *it will be the Infidels' own fault.*

First published in