

Christianity, the Left's perennial scapegoat

by Conrad Black



I have received and gratefully replied to a great many messages, all favourable, about my column here last week criticizing House of Commons Motion 103. This initiative, unofficially supported by the government, falsely claims that Parliament can and must “quell ... a rising climate of hate and fear” in Canada. I disputed that there was such a climate, or that there was either a need or ability vested in Parliament to “quell” it. I did not impute motives to the authors and supporters of the motion, or comment on the parallel request that Parliament assert Islam’s positive contribution to civilization.

In fact, I think it is disquieting that the government is whipping up this alarm that is not justified, accusing, in effect, the population it represents of a level of sectarian intolerance of which it is not guilty. And it is no business of the Parliament of Canada to dispense Olympian judgments on the value to civilization of different religions. Nor can the Muslim community blithely demand that the entire non-Muslim

world express unshakeable confidence in the pacific intent of Islam, when its scriptures are relentlessly violent and tens of thousands of Islamic terrorists are constantly massacring the innocent on every continent except Antarctica, with the vocal or tacit approval of a number of Muslim governments.

I would normally leave it there, but am moved to elaborate by the letter on March 1 in this newspaper of Dr. Sam Sussman of, as it was styled, the "University of Western University." Dr. Sussman took me to task for my statement that "For all its historical failings, Christianity has a much less violent history" (than Islam). He wrote: "That statement is categorically false. Christendom is filled with blood-curdling violence. Has Black by-passed the Inquisition, Crusades, Wars of Religion, the subjugation of women and the Holocaust?" Sussman continued that there had been apparently papal "justification for the slaughter of Jews and black slavery ... rationalized in the name of Christianity (which had been) responsible for a cataclysm of unbridled violence, ruin, and devastation." He reached his stirring climax that "What the Jews suffered under Islamic sovereignty in the past and currently does not compare to the murderous onslaught the Jews endured under the Greeks, Romans, and Christian Europe."

This is the most outrageously false and grossly defamatory collective libel on nearly 40 per cent of the world's population that I have ever read in a serious newspaper or book. It is also the most egregious example I have seen of the addiction of a small minority of Jewish academics to exaggerate vertiginously the proportions of the Inquisitions, distort the motivation and nature of the Crusades, assimilate Nazis to Christians, and monopolize the status of wronged people for the Jews in the last 2,500 years of history. It is, in the words of the eminent Nazi and apostate Christian, Dr. Joseph Goebbels, The Big Lie.

Not to whitewash any of, as I described them, Christianity's "historical failings," the Inquisitions resulted in a few

thousand deaths, did not exclusively involve Jews, and were generally easy to avoid with a professed conversion of convenience. The Crusades were commissioned with the unexceptionable motive of liberating the Holy Land from the tyrannical bigotry of Islam; some of them were conducted with corrupt purpose and brutal methods, and the whole project failed, but Jews weren't the chief victims of them. The Wars of Religion were almost all wars of national or cultural aggrandizement, and the Jews were essentially bystanders and didn't care whether the local majority was Protestant or Roman Catholic. Women have been exalted by Christianity and Sussman must imagine that Christian women are chattels of their husbands, flogged if even their faces are visible, much less their limbs, and denied education and access to serious occupations, as is the case for countless millions of women in the Muslim world today.

Along with the pretense that whatever the ancient Greeks did (and it was almost nothing in reference to the Jews, and had nothing to do with Christianity), these are collectively defamatory falsehoods. What really mobilizes me to write this rejoinder are the assertions that Christians were responsible for slaughtering Jews and enslaving blacks "in the name of Christianity" and for "a cataclysm of unbridled violence, ruin, and devastation" and for the Holocaust. Again, I do not diminish in the slightest the crimes of medieval Western European regimes in anti-Semitic discrimination, nor of the Eastern European pogroms through to the late 19th century. But Christian Europe and America was in fact responsible for almost all the progress of civilization in the last 700 years, including the abolition of slavery in the non-Islamic world and a few places in Africa. There was some "violence, devastation, and ruin," but it wasn't "unbridled," very little of it was honestly attributable to Christians or Christian motivations, and not much of it was directed against Jews.

All of this could be endured with reasonable equanimity, and

the Christian world is accustomed to the sometimes unjust brickbats of agitated minorities, but attempting to lay at the door of Christianity the responsibility for the Holocaust is beyond reasonable expectations of toleration. The Holocaust, which if defined as all those who died in Nazi death camps, included six million Jews and six million non-Jews, and was perpetrated by the Nazi leadership which was as hostile to Christianity as to Jewry, persecuted Christian principles with the same satanic fervour that it attempted to extirpate Judaism. And it was only defeated by the perseverance and statesmanship of the leaders of the world's principal Christian nations, and by the bravery of their fighting forces, who gave their lives in great numbers to, in Churchill's words, "sponge, purge, and blast from the surface of the earth, every trace of Hitler's infected and corroding fingers."

It was the heroic resistance of the British Commonwealth under Churchill's leadership, and the vision and courage of U.S. President Roosevelt in "making war without declaring it" on Hitler, that drove Hitler to attack Russia and Japan and Germany to make war on the U.S., which made the defeat of Nazism and deliverance of the European Jews possible. And their strategic genius assured that the Soviet Union would take 90 per cent of the casualties and 99 per cent of the physical damage in subduing Hitler, while France, Germany, Italy (and Japan), were gathered in or restored as flourishing democratic allies of the West.

There has never been a satisfactory explanation of Hitler's anti-Semitism, but he somehow persuaded himself that even if Germany lost the war, it would win by exterminating the Jews of Europe. Roosevelt told the leaders of American Jewry on Dec. 8, 1942, that they could write any declaration condemning Nazi infamies they wished and affix his name to it, but that Hitler was "an insane man," we were facing "a national psychopathic case" and that the only way to end the atrocities

was to win the war. Of course the war was not provoked or sustained exclusively by the desire to spare the Nazis' victims, but ending and punishing the barbarities of Nazism – made, as Churchill said, “more sinister and more protracted by the lights of perverted science” – were among the chief war aims. The United States accepted more Jewish refugees than all other countries combined, and Pius XII, who was not without his faults, sheltered all the Jews of Rome during the German occupation, condemned Nazi and Japanese barbarities, and undoubtedly saved the lives of hundreds of thousands of Jews.

The Christian secular and religious leaders were not blameless, but they were authentic and distinguished defenders of the civilization Nazism assaulted, and it is not the place of Dr. Sussman or anyone else to assimilate them to the Pagan and diabolical evil of Nazism, under the spurious rubric of them all being Christians of different factions. Nor does a glance at Islamic history or a perusal of the Koran and the New Testament sustain for an instant his preposterous claim that Christianity is more violent than Islam. Not that it is particularly relevant, but when the Jews had their own jurisdictions, before being overborne by more numerous neighbours, they were not averse to violence themselves, including David and Solomon. And the Christians were subject to a good deal more violent (and relatively unprovoked) oppression than were the Jews by the Romans, until most of the Romans, and most of the Jews, chose to become Christians. The Christian democratic leaders of the West in the 20th century secured the destruction of Nazism and the implosion of international Communism, the liberation of occupied Europe, the salvation of the Jews, and the redemption of Germany from Nazi evil. Canada played a distinguished part in all of this.

My status as a philo-Semite is well-known, including by every leader of Israel starting with Menachem Begin, but that status, which I wear proudly, does not obligate me to endure in silence collective libels on my co-religionists and my

heritage, and particularly not from a local academic who should know the difference between a Muslim terrorist and a Christian proselytizer, and between Christian democracy and Nazism. Shame, Dr. Sussman; you dishonour your great people.

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