THE GHOSTS OF APPEASEMENT

CHRISTIAN REALISM AND THE RISE OF ISLAMIC FASCISM

BY

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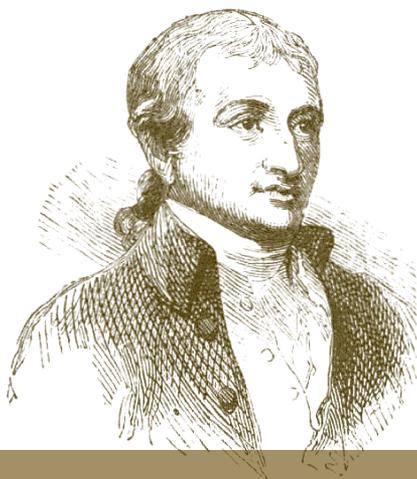
"To see things as they are, to estimate them aright, and to act accordingly, is to be wise."

JOHN JAY

AN INTRODUCTION

Among the principal founders of the American republic, John Jay was arguably the most religious and socially conservative. His life and public service bear witness to a man motivated and animated by an ethic of neighbor-love. Evidence of his selfless dedication and duty to his country is demonstrated by his continuous public service from his entry into national politics at the First Continental Congress in 1774 to his retirement from public life in 1801. Jay's resumé includes service as a Member of Congress, Chief Justice of New York, President of the 2nd Continental Congress, Minister to Spain, Peace Commissioner, Foreign Secretary of the Congress, Chief Justice of the United States, Special Diplomatic Envoy to Great Britain, and Governor of New York.

Jay's public service however, did not end with government service. Throughout his career and to the end of his life he was active in many religious, moral, and charitable causes including: the abolition of slavery, the reorganization of the Anglican Church in America, and the distribution of Bibles throughout the world by the American Bible Society.

The John Jay Institute for Faith, Society & Law was founded to foster and perpetuate the legacy of its namesake by developing leaders like Jay for the future. As a para-academic center, it is committed to the exploration of the relationship of faith and public life. Its mission is to prepare Christians for principled public leadership. Toward this end the Institute's primary program is a residential academic fellowship for college graduates with a vocational interest in public affairs. As an ongoing curricular component of the fellowship, the *John Jay Institute Lecture Series* provides an educational forum for Christian reflection on national and international political issues of moment.

ABOUT THIS ESSAY

Today radical Islamism or what some have identified as "Islamic Fascism" presents a challenge, even a clear and present danger, to Western Civilization. The civil society, political institutions, and constitutional order that America inherited from Christian Europe and further developed are now threatened by a religiously fanatical ideology. The pressing question for the West is how to respond. Are there any lessons in history from which we may glean insight?

Amid tumultuous realities of European politics, a nationally prominent lawyer and executive cabinet level officer wrote a lengthy opinion-editorial as a parody about the meaning and aims of politics and the state. In this essay the author describes a land where peace, love, and tolerance reign. Material resources are plentiful and shared equally by all. Health care is universal. Socially, the essayist's country had even achieved near sexual equality with women being admitted to the priesthood as well as to combat roles in the military. The name given to this fanciful county is: *Utopia* (derived as a Latinization of the Greek words οὐ or "not" and τόπος

or "place," hence: no place. But the author may have also had a pun in mind because *Utopia* could also be the Latinization of εὐτοπεία or "good place" using the Greek prefix ευ or "good," instead of ού. Sir Thomas Moore, the Lord Chancellor of England, was its author. He wrote *Utopia* or the "no place"/ "good place" in the year 1516. The work later influenced the political vision of Karl Marx in the 19th Century.

Historically, Christians have been susceptible to utopian political visions. Misguided eschatology about the nature of the Kingdom of God has led many believers down the path of illusionary idealism. The Munster prophets of the Reformation era; the Fifth Monarchy Men, Levellers, and Diggers during the English Puritan Revolution; the Quakers, Shakers, and Amana and Oneida colonies of America's 19th Century social reform movements; the Social Gospellers of the American progressive movement; and the Christian pacifists on the eve of World War II were all influenced in various ways by utopian conceptions of social order.

Mr. Joseph Loconte believes that utopianism still guides political idealists in the present day, that well-meaning Christians are misled by its illusions, and that a strong dose of Christian realism in the face of radical evil would be a good starting point for grappling with matters of national defense and foreign policy, particularly as they relate to confronting radical Islamism. In his lecture that follows, the Distinguished Visiting Professor at Pepperdine University's School of Public Policy and Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C., presents on the topic of "The Ghosts of Appeasement: Christian Realism and the Rise of Islamic Fascism."

—THE EDITORS

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BY JOSEPH LOCONTE

Let me begin, if I may, with a few lines from Tolkien's *Lord of the Rings:*

> *A mortal, Frodo, who keeps one of the Great Rings,*
> *does not die, but he does not grow or obtain more life,*
> *he merely continues, until at last every minute is a*
> *weariness. And if he often uses the Ring to make himself*
> *invisible, he fades: he becomes in the end invisible*
> *permanently, and walks in the twilight under the eye*
> *of the dark power that rules the Rings. Yes, sooner or*
> *later…the dark power will devour him.*

Whatever we may think of America's war on radical Islam, there is a darkness to this ideology that shocks the conscience. I believe we've seen this darkness before, or at least something like it.

In the fall of 1940, the landscape across the Atlantic must have looked surreal. The German military machine, devastated and humiliated barely 20 years before, was on the move. *Wehrmacht* tanks occupied major European capitals. France, arguably the lead power in the region, had collapsed almost overnight. Thousands of British troops barely escaped with their lives at Dunkirk. German bombers were terrorizing London.

At one point President Roosevelt asked Winston Churchill what the conflict should be called. The British prime minister replied at once: the unnecessary war. "There never was a war more easy to stop than that which has just wrecked what was left of the world from the previous struggle," he wrote much later. "Virtuous motives, trammeled by inertia and timidity, are no match for armed and resolute wickedness."[1]

Of all the lessons to be drawn from the Second World War, perhaps none is more apt for our own time: The failure to face international terrorism realistically only invites dangers on our own shores. My point here is not that Nazism is exactly the same kind of threat as radical Islam. My point is that the inertia and timidity of the democracies in the face of European fascism did not arise out of a vacuum. It grew from the soil of a political and religious ideology. That ideology is utopianism. And it is alive and well in our contemporary culture.

At its heart, utopianism is the denial of radical evil. It is a naïve vision of social and political life that ignores the realities of history and human nature. Though it is an age-old temptation in politics and religion, utopianism reached a high-water mark in the years after the First World War. Utterly revolted by the carnage of that conflict, thousands of ministers vowed never to support American entry in another European war.

Most political leaders felt the same way. They hailed the League of Nations as the surest way to keep the peace. By 1928, fifty-nine nations had signed the Pact of Paris, promising to abandon war as a tool of national policy. Editors at *The Christian Century,* the leading religious journal in America, opined, "Today international war was banished from civilization." Not quite banished: Within a decade, most of the nations that signed the pact would be mobilizing for war.

The utopianism of the era produced a "fog of peace" that engulfed political

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1   Winston Churchill, Memoirs of the Second World War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1959), p.1, 87.

and religious leadership on both sides of the Atlantic. By the late 1930s, this outlook had severely weakened the resolve of the Western democracies to resist a new form of tyranny—the rise of the fascist totalitarian state.

FASCISM WITH AN ISLAMIC FACE

What does this have to do with America's present struggle against radical Islam?

Quite a lot, I think. There are no exact historical parallels, of course. And there's always a danger of mining the historical record for partisan or ideological reasons. That usually leads to bad history and bad politics.

Yet there are enough similarities between European fascism and radical Islam—what many now call Islamic fascism—to revisit the lessons of that decade of appeasement.

True, European fascism elevated the State above all else, while today's Islamists regard the State as a means to an end: the establishment of a vast, borderless caliphate. Nevertheless, Mussolini's motto—"*niente al di fuori dello Stato, nulla contra lo Stato* ("nothing outside the state, nothing against the state")—aptly describes the totalitarian desires of Osama bin Laden and his allies.

An American observer, writing in 1939, saw in fascism "a deliberate return to barbarism." The new barbarians share much with their European counterparts: a remorseless savagery, an obsession with blood and death, and a utopian vision of purity and power. If we just consider, for example, the Iranian president's vow to "wipe Israel off the map," or the recent plot to blow up 10 airliners bound for the United States, or the *Time* magazine photo spread of Lebanese boys, arms outstretched like Hitler Youth as they pledge martyrdom for Hezbollah—do we not see the stigmata of fascism?

It is not only the Bush administration or political conservatives who make the charge. Christopher Hitchens, the leftist intellectual and columnist for *Vanity Fair*, described the appearance of "fascism with an Islamic face" within days of the 9/11 attacks. Bernard Lewis, one of the greatest living Islamic scholars, has traced the influence of the Nazi party on the Islamist movements in the Middle East.

French philosopher Bernard-Henry Levy has employed the phrase to reject the suggestion that "Arab humiliation" somehow justifies Islamist rage: "Arab or Muslim fascism deserves, in my view, to be condemned just like any other fascism." And Farid Ghadry, president of the Reform party of Syria, has taken to task those who "defend these Islamic fascists" and "fail to confront the true attackers of Islam."

It's worth remembering that "Christian Europe" enabled the growth of fascism in the 1920s and 1930s—in states such as Austria, Belgium, Croatia, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Spain. Indeed, the fascist virus even managed to invade the bloodstream of the Christian church.

Immediately after seizing power in 1933, Hitler and his National Socialist Party infiltrated the state-supported Protestant churches in Germany. Soon church bells bore Nazi swastikas, crosses were draped in Nazi flags, and a new priesthood — the "storm troopers of Jesus" — preached martial sermons of racial purity and holy martyrdom. In Slovakia, a Catholic monsignor emerged as the fascist dictator. In Croatia, the *Ustache* openly presented itself as a Catholic movement.

Why fascism found support among political and religious leaders professing Christianity is a complex and much-disputed issue. Yet it's clear that many fascists, Hitler pre-eminent among them, were masterful at enlisting religious imagery to advance their vision of a re-moralized and re-militarized society. The "Aryan Christian" movement—call it Christian

fascism—swept through Germany and other parts of Europe with blitz-krieg-like efficiency.

If fascism could entice and manipulate the Christian religion as it did in the 1930s, why is it hard to imagine it could pervert the religion of Islam? If liberal political regimes could accommodate an ideology of militarism and racial supremacy, surely Islamic states are no less inclined to tolerate the theology of suicide and spiritual supremacy of the new fascists.

THE UTOPIAN FALLACIES

With all of this in mind, it's essential that we consider the core beliefs and attitudes of the utopians of the 1930s, and how they enabled the military aggression of Hitler and his allies. For I'm convinced that the utopian spirit is alive and well, and it's affecting the way many religious and political leaders view the threat of radical Islam.

So, three lessons from a previous era of struggle, three responses, and some thoughts on the way forward.

First, the utopians were obsessed with the failings of the Western democracies, especially the United States and Great Britain.

Peace activist A.J. Muste compared the Allies to "the men who tortured and killed the victims of the Inquisition," mistakenly believing they were advancing the cause of God.

Even as Hitler launched his *Blitzkrieg*, for example, editors at *The Christian Century* savaged "the mistaken and irrational assumption" that the Allied cause could be "a war for the preservation of anything good in civilization." As late as November 1941, the editors declared an Anglo-American alliance

to defeat Nazism as "a war for imperialism."

The Rev. John Haynes Holmes, a progressive minister in New York, spoke for many when he called Hitler the "incarnation of our nationalistic, capitalistic and militaristic era." A German victory, he intoned, should be viewed as "the punishment for our transgressions."

Does that sound familiar?

Immediately after the attacks of 9/11, the Rev. Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson blamed gays, feminists and civil libertarians for inviting Divine judgment on America. Their utopian vision sees America as the new Israel, bound by a covenant relationship with the God of Abraham; the attack was a sure sign that America was thumbing its nose at the agreement. Under this vision, Islam is viewed as a club in God's hands to deliver spiritual discipline. This is the right-wing version of contemporary utopianism.

There is a left-wing: After 9-11, Jim Wallis and *Sojourners* magazine produced a manifesto called "Confessing Christ in a World of Violence." It was signed by scores of theology professors, ethicists and church leaders. The document rejects the "crude distinctions" being made between Islamic radicalism and Western democracy. "The distinction between good and evil does not run between one nation and another, or one group and another," the petition reads. "It runs straight through every human heart."

For some, there are no distinctions at all between America's democratic leaders and the leaders of al-Qaeda. Listen to Bruce Bartlett, a columnist and self-described libertarian. "This is why George W. Bush is so clear-eyed about al-Qaeda and the Islamic fundamentalist enemy," he says. "He believes you have to kill them all. They can't be persuaded, that they're extremists, driven by a dark vision. [Bush] understands them because he's just like them."

Historian Arthur Schlesinger Jr. calls President Bush "a fanatic" because of his use of moral and religious language. "The most dangerous people in the world today," Schlesinger writes, "are those who persuade themselves that they are executing the will of the Almighty."

Michael Kinsley, editor of *Slate* magazine, claims that American-style democracy means "violence, anarchy, foreign occupation, arbitrary arrests, torture of prisoners, suppression of dissent and random deaths."

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas of Duke University seems to have the same blinkered moral vision. Hauerwas launched his anti-American jeremiad while human remains were still being recovered from Ground Zero. He saw a terrible day of reckoning ahead: "I think that when America isn't able to rule the world, that people will exact some very strong judgments against America—and I think we will well deserve it."

These thinkers join a chorus of voices who compare the United States to imperial Rome and Nazi Germany. This is how utopians talk—outraged utopians, that is. Their perfectionism impairs their ability to distinguish between flawed democracies and outlaw regimes.

Second, utopians of the 1930s looked primarily to the economic and political causes of fascist aggression.

The Rev. Earnest Fremont Tittle, leader of the peace movement in the Methodist Church, joined many who speculated that Nazi aggression owed its intensity to the Treaty of Versailles. Germany, he wrote, "may be provoked by bitter belief…that there is now no peaceful way of solving a desperate economic problem."

Editors at *The Christian Century* held out hope that Hitler's Germany might "give the rest of the world a system of interrelationships better than the

trade-strangling and man-exploiting system of empire capitalism."[2]

Who are their modern counterparts?

Writing in *The New York Times Book Review,* political scientist Ronald Steel scolds administration hawks for ignoring "the essentially political causes of terrorism."

Feisal Abdul Rauf, a New York-based Imam, finds sympathy for the view of Osama bin Laden as a politically frustrated Robin Hood.

"Had bin Laden had the opportunity to run for political office in Saudi Arabia," Rauf writes, "he might have gained elective office and would then have had the opportunity to busy himself in the effort to build his nation and shape its direction." How bin Laden was actually busying himself in Afghanistan in the run-up to September 11 gets little attention.

Many Christian thinkers seem equally prone to these materialist assumptions about extremist Islam. The Rev. Tony Campolo, a leading "progressive" evangelical minister, railed against America in the days after the 9/11 attacks: "There's a swamp out there called poverty and injustice…Osama bin Laden is our fault!"

The United Methodist Council of Bishops issued a document explaining that peace and security would arrive, they wrote, "when all have access to and enjoy food, housing, clothing, medical care…and a living wage." No mention of how a living wage might tame bin Laden's cult of death.

The Rev. Bob Edgar, former General Secretary of the National Council of Churches, offered his "Beatitudes of Peacemaking." To Edgar, the "axis of evil" is composed not of rogue states or religious movements, but the "pandemic of poverty" and "the environmental degradation of planet earth."

In September of 2005—four years after the attacks in New York and

2 "Hitler's Victory," *The Christian Century,* June 26, 1940.

Washington—England's House of Bishops released a report that never mentioned the horrific intentions of Osama bin Laden in the course of its 100 pages. Instead, al-Qaeda is likened to the Irish Republican Army. As the bishops put it: "Terrorism, however destructive, has to be understood, first of all, in political terms." The real problem, they imply, is U.S. foreign policy. Their solution is "a political settlement" that "meets some of the terrorist concerns."

Young men who blow themselves up at wedding ceremonies, who dismember civil servants, who set off bombs in mosques, who murder women commuting to work, who behead children on their way to school, who open fire on playgrounds and soccer stadiums, do not have "concerns."

They have ambitions, stated openly and repeatedly: the eradication of all Western influence from Muslims lands; the forced conversion or elimination of alleged infidels; the establishment of a Taliban-like dictatorship extending from Iraq to Indonesia; and the use of nuclear weapons against civilian populations to help achieve this vision.

Modern utopians view Islamic terrorism as a response to unjust social conditions. They reject the possibility that something more fundamental is at work, something profoundly immoral, craven, and without conscience —something irredeemably wicked.

Third, the utopians of the 1930s believed that diplomacy was the best way to tame the terrorist temptation.

If you've studied 20th century history at all, you've probably seen that iconic photograph of British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain, waving the paper agreement with Hitler to avoid war. The 1938 Munich Pact was, of course, the betrayal of Czechoslovakia into Nazi hands. Yet it was almost universally hailed as a triumph of "reason over force."

Peace in our time. A masterstroke of international diplomacy, declared the churches. "The peace of Munich was possible," claimed Catholic thinker John LaFarge, "because of the habits and methods of peacekeeping learned through two decades of international discourse in the halls of the League of Nations."

Others knew better. Protestant theologian Karl Barth, who fled Hitler's Germany to Switzerland, wrote in his diary: "Catastrophe of European liberty at Munich." Winston Churchill, still considered a warmonger and political pariah, called the Munich Pact a "total and unmitigated defeat" for the cause of peace. "They could have chosen shame or war with honor," Churchill said. "They chose shame. They'll get war, too."

Yet, the utopian arguments continued even as the Nazi war machine conquered most of the European continent. The name and the ethics of Jesus were constantly invoked to oppose U.S. military engagement.

The Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick, of New York City's Park Avenue Baptist Church, condemned the war against fascism as "the denial of everything Jesus taught…For the United States to become a belligerent in this conflict would be a colossal and futile disaster" (January 1941). The Rev. Albert Palmer, a leader in the Congregational Christian Church, admitted that global domination by the Nazis would probably follow an invasion of Britain—yet remain untroubled by the prospect. "Can military force do much against soul force which folds its arms and bides its day?" he asked. "Without military opposition, the Hitlers wither away."

And who are their counterparts in the war on Islamic fascism?

MoveOn.org, a left-wing organization closely tied to the Democratic Party and liberal religious groups, issued this warning just before the U.S. war on Afghanistan: "If we retaliate by bombing Kabul and kill people oppressed

by the Taliban, we become like the terrorists we oppose."

Likewise, Princeton theologian Mark Taylor called the U.S.-led war on Afghanistan "imperial retaliatory terrorism."

 Cosmologist and ethicist George Ellis, winner of the 2004 Templeton Prize, suggested that after the 9/11 attacks President Bush should have offered to meet with bin Laden in "some neutral country" so the terrorist leader could explain his actions.

"If that had been what had happened…it would at least have had a chance of producing a totally different outcome," Ellis said. Exactly what outcome he had in mind is unclear.

The Rev. Dr. Susan Thistlethwaite, president of Chicago Theological Seminary, said the United States should "seek repentance and forgiveness" in response to the 9/11 attacks. "Justice, not mindless revenge against more innocents," she said, "must be the focus of Christian ethics as we seek for ways to uphold moral leadership."

These utopians reject the notion that America and the West are engaged in a war for civilization. As one church manifesto declared: "The Bush Administration should put down the muscle of weapons and employ the muscle of the heart."

THE CHRISTIAN REALIST RESPONSE

If all this represents the utopian response to Islamic fascism, what might a more realistic strategy look like—a response grounded in what we might call Christian realism?

First, the Christian realist insists on measuring the moral gulf between flawed

democracies and fascist aggressors.

It's important to acknowledge our own nation's failures and temptations to hubris, even in wartime. We should never, for example, try to dismiss abuses such as those at Abu Ghraib prison as a fraternity prank, as some conservatives did. That's not statesmanship. But neither is it a high act of statesmanship to compare the scandal of Abu Ghraib to the Soviet gulag, as one Democratic senator did.

This is the lie of moral equivalence, and it has nothing to do with the ethics of the Bible. It is utopianism that generates this kind of talk— he embittered utopian who rages against America while refusing to call evil by its name.

It was precisely this posture among his liberal colleagues that so angered Reinhold Niebuhr. Recall that Niebuhr ran for Congress in 1930 as a Socialist; he never hesitated to point out America's social and political sins. Nevertheless, he was no moral cynic.

"Whatever may be the moral ambiguities of the so-called democratic nations…" he wrote, "it is sheer moral perversity to equate the inconsistencies of a democratic civilization with the brutalities which modern tyrannical States practice." Niebuhr decried the self-interested policies of the democracies. Yet he was among the first to argue that Nazi aggression was fueled by "a pagan religion of tribal self-glorification."

It's also worth remembering that President Roosevelt, one of liberalism's central figures, had no qualms about making the same argument. Here's how FDR described the stakes in a radio address of May 1941: "Today the whole world is divided between human slavery and human freedom, between pagan brutality and the Christian ideal."

Who are those who stand in the Christian realist tradition today?

The editors at *The New Republic*, to their credit, grasp plainly what is at stake. "No, it was not Islam that took the towers down," they wrote just after 9/11. "But it was not Episcopalianism either. The terrorists are waging a war of ideas, and the ideas upon which they are acting are ideas in the Islamic tradition…There are those who wish to deny the religious character of al-Qaeda's violence, so as to transform bin Ladenism into another variety of anti-colonial protest."

As Paul Berman summarizes it in *Terror and Liberalism*: "We have all the evidence in the world…to conclude that Islamism in its radical version of the present poses every imaginable danger."[3]

Statesmanship grounded in moral realism must, in fact, imagine the danger. It must remind Americans—calmly and with intellectual integrity—of the nature of the threat we face. This is not the politics of fear; it is the politics of moral clarity. The statesman can never ignore the religious character and the existential danger of Islamic fascism.

Second, the Christian Realist pursues economic and social justice, but not by denying the existence of radical evil.

War critics in the 1930s misread the fundamental causes of fascist aggression. From 1938 to 1941, American Protestant groups issued no less than 50 statements about how to achieve a just and durable peace. There was lots of talk about debt relief and economic assistance. Barely a handful of these manifestos argued that the defeat of Nazism was essential to international justice.

The Christian Realists avoided that mistake. They argued that Germany's economic grievances were real enough, but were being exploited by violent men with demonic ambitions. Read Lewis Mumford's "The Barbarian Alternative" of 1939 — his summary of the fascist mindset. Their hatred of

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3 Paul Berman, *Terror and Liberalism*, p.158.

democracy, hatred of civilization, their delight in physical cruelty—it sounds like a recruiting manual for Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda.

Thus it makes sense for the Bush Administration to invest billions of dollars to confront the AIDS pandemic in Africa, to support debt relief, and to prod developing nations toward economic and political reform with its Millenium Challenge Account. As we learned from Afghanistan and Sudan, failing states become breeding grounds for Islamic radicalism.

"The blatant venality and injustice of repressive regimes foster anti-modernist and religious fundamentalist movements of rage against the West," argues a recent USAID report. "The only way to prevent or reverse the threats that flow from bad governance is to foster stable, effective democratic governance."

Yet none of this is to be confused with rationalizing terrorist rage. Listen to former N.Y. mayor Rudy Giuliani, in the days after 9/11: "Let those who say that we must understand the reasons for terrorism come with me to the thousands of funerals we're having in New York City," he said. "There's no moral way to sympathize with grossly immoral actions. And by doing so…a fertile field has been created in which terrorism has grown."

Finally, the Christian Realist argues that you cannot win "hearts and minds" without defeating the ideology of Islamic fascism on the battlefield.

Some argue that the Bush Administration's approach to terrorism—the willingness to use force to help establish democracy in the Middle East— is a revival of Woodrow Wilson's idealism.

There's truth in this charge. Some White House officials have badly understated the challenge of building decent and democratic societies in Afghanistan and Iraq.

Winston Churchill probably would have had some strong words for them: "Never, never, never believe any war will be smooth and easy….The statesman who yields to war fever must realize that once the signal is given, he is no longer the master of policy but the slave of unforeseeable and uncontrollable events."

Yet recall one of the central conclusions of the 9/11 Commission Report, the most authoritative government study of the terrorist threat to the United States. The bi-partisan commission agreed that Islamic extremists are bent on the conversion or elimination of non-Islamic people in the United States, Europe, the Middle East and beyond.

Their hatred of Western civilization, in other words, is a consequence of a utopian, triumphalist, religious ideology. "Bin Laden and Islamist terrorists mean exactly what they say," the Commission concludes. "To them America is the fount of all evil, the 'head of the snake,' and it must be converted or destroyed."

If that assessment is right, then diplomacy alone cannot defeat this enemy —it must be defeated militarily. That means hard choices about intelligence gathering, domestic surveillance, detention facilities and the use of force. It requires a measure of realism to admit these unpleasant facts.

"Ambiguous methods are required for the ambiguities of history," wrote Niebuhr. "Let those who are revolted by such ambiguities have the decency and consistency to retire to the monastery, where medieval perfectionists found their asylum."

There was a strong dose of Niebuhr's moral realism in the words of Nouri Al-Maliki, the Iraqi Prime Minister, during his recent address to Congress. Iraq has become, in his view, a central battleground in the war on terrorism. "Do not think that this is an Iraqi problem," he said. "This terrorist front is a threat to every free country in the world."

Whatever you think of the U.S. role in Iraq, any approach to terrorism that ignores these warnings is deeply impoverished. It produces a political theology that helps to rationalize terrorist rage. It paves the road to a policy of appeasement, a road the West has been down before.

Nevertheless, we have a new generation of appeasers. We hear their voices daily—in Baghdad, Paris, Madrid, Riyadh, Rome, Los Angeles, New York, Washington, and, earlier this year, in London—when British authorities uncovered the plot to blow up 10 trans-Atlantic airliners bound for the United States.

You'll recall that a coalition of 38 Islamic organizations and politicians in Britain took out newspaper ads warning that such terrorism would continue until the U.K. changed its foreign policies toward Iraq and Israel. Many critics of the Bush Administration's war on terror make essentially the same argument. They should heed the words of British Transport Secretary Douglas Alexander, who fired back at the appeasers: "No government worth its salt should allow its foreign policy to be dictated to under the threat of terrorism."

There is much more that can and should be done diplomatically to win hearts and minds in the Muslim world. But appeasement to achieve security?

This is the fog of peace. So how do we lift this fog?

We need to return to first principles. Despite some good intentions, the utopians have absorbed a number of sub-Christian views about human nature and the mission of the Church in a fallen world.

The Christian Realist begins by recognizing the persistence of radical evil.

"Make no doubt of it," warned Lewis Mumford. "The relapse into barbarism is a recurrent temptation." The realist understands the power of evil to overwhelm the human heart. Call it extremism, call it radical Islam, or

call it Islamic fascism. Christian author C.S. Lewis, in another context, described the source of this sickness as the utter corruption of conscience —the "ruthless, sleepless, unsmiling concentration upon self, which is the mark of Hell."

This suggests a spiritual dimension to the war on terror. Yet this insight demands a practical vigilance: British Prime Minister Tony Blair, for example, warned last week that the threat from homegrown terrorism would last "a generation." So Britain's MI5 domestic intelligence agency is keeping under surveillance 1,600 suspects in 200 terrorist cells. This ideology does not rest, and neither can we.[4] The Christian realist reminds us of the persistence of radical evil.

In waging this war, the Christian Realist also distinguishes between the role of the Church and the role of the State.

The Church aims to create a spiritual community grounded in the law of love. The State seeks to maintain justice in a secular society that rejects the divine law.

Biblical realism does not seek to make the ethics of the Sermon on the Mount a road map for U.S. foreign policy. It is one thing for believers, in civil society, to "turn the other cheek" when they're the victims of evil. It is quite another to call on government to give evildoers a free hand to slap the cheek (or to cut off the head) of one's neighbor.

This is the deep flaw in the posture of theologians such as Stanley Hauerwas, who says he feels no need to offer a policy to combat global terrorism. "My only response is I do not have a foreign policy. I have something better— a church constituted by people who would rather die than kill." It's theme repeated endlessly, in one form or another, by progressive church leaders.

Yet this "theology of love" offers no practical help to the neighbor in need

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4   Alan Cowell, "Blair Says Homegrown Terrorism is Generation-Long Struggle," *The New York Times*, November 11, 2006.

—whether he's the Jew at Auschwitz or the Kurdish woman in northern Iraq or the Sufi villager in Western Sudan. In other words, it is a theology of love divorced from the Biblical demands of justice—which means it is not a theology of love at all, but a posture of pious indifference toward suffering and evil.

At exactly the moment when fresh thinking about the Christian "just war" tradition is urgently needed, progressives have abandoned the concept altogether. But this is no time to confuse the perfect peace of the Kingdom of Heaven with the struggle for relative justice among the Kingdoms of Earth.

Protestant reformer Martin Luther argued that "every lord and prince is bound to protect his people and to preserve the peace for them. That is his office; that is why he has the sword." Theologian Karl Barth, writing to Christians in Great Britain, then under siege from German air attacks, said the State "would be failing in its duty as an appointed minister of God…if it failed to defend the bounds between Right and Wrong by the threat, and by the actual use, of the sword."

Likewise, Reinhold Niebuhr flogged American theologians for invoking Jesus' command to "love thy neighbor" to justify American detachment. "This form of pacifism is not only heretical when judged by the standards of the total gospel," he wrote. "It is equally heretical when judged by the facts of human existence."

A HIGHER GOAL THAN PEACE

By denying these facts, by rejecting the reality of radical evil, by confusing the roles of church and state, the utopians are succumbing to an old temptation: They've allowed their hatred of war to blot out all other virtues.

It's worth remembering that orthodox Christians have never viewed peace

as the highest good. There are other goods: empathy, courage, sacrifice, and an iron will to protect the innocent from great evil. A just peace may be the final result of these pursuits, God willing. But if peace is made the supreme goal, if it consumes all other virtues, it becomes an idol—and a snare to the statesman as well as the saint.

Like the campaign of the 1930s, the great danger of the utopians today is their effort to persuade democracies to ignore the true nature of Islamic barbarism—and to throw down our defenses in the name of peace.

William Manchester, the great Churchill biographer, put it this way: "The first Allied response to the Nazi regime had been prompted by the universal loathing among decent men of modern war's senseless slaughter," he writes. "But revulsion is a frail foundation for a foreign policy."[5]

Frail indeed. Today it would all but guarantee the erosion of freedom and security across entire continents. President Bush, in a visit to the concentration camps in Poland a couple of years ago, warned strongly against that course. "The death camps still bear witness," he said. "They remind us that evil is real and must be called by name and must be opposed. All the good that has come to this continent—all the progress, the prosperity, the peace—came because beyond the barbed wire there were people willing to take up arms against evil."[6]

As George Orwell once warned: "People sleep peaceably in their beds at night only because rough men stand ready to do violence on their behalf."

RECOVERING MORAL COURAGE

This realist response to terror requires a reality check of its own. Our best theologians—St. Paul, Augustine, Luther—have always emphasized our

5   Manchester, *The Last Lion*, p.205.
6   President George W. Bush, Remarks by the President to the People of Poland, Wawel Royal Castle, Krakow, Poland, May 31, 2003.

mixed motives in every noble endeavor and our limited ability to achieve our goals in a world awash in sin. Our war against terror will not make the world safe for democracy. As Jean Bethke Elshtain puts it: "Augustinian realism offers no assurances that we can make the world safe for anything."

Nevertheless, triumphalism is not the greatest danger at this political moment. The greater danger is utopianism, one of the oldest impulses in both politics and religion, now back with a vengeance. It seemed to slip into decline with the fall of Soviet Communism. But the events of 9/11 have exposed its resilience: Aside from extremist Islam, no ideology represents a more serious threat to the health and even survival of American democracy.

Defeating this utopianism means recovering the wisdom and resolve of those who recognized the supreme malevolence of their own day. Only a handful of leaders realized the demons that Nazism had let loose in the world. Few could imagine the sacrifices that would be required to meet them. And fewer still dared to predict the consequences of shrinking back from the duties assigned to America, Great Britain and their allies.

Then, and now, the darkness must be confronted.

The earlier darkness was national and race-based. The darkness we face today is supra-national and faith-based. If we fail to reckon with the nature of this threat, if we try to appease it, it will devour us—and everything else that is decent, and noble, and honorable that stands in its way.

"Do not suppose this is the end," warned Winston Churchill, in a speech to the House of Commons after Munich. "This is only the beginning of the reckoning. This is only the first sip, the first foretaste of a bitter cup which will be proffered to us year by year unless by a supreme recovery of moral health and martial vigour, we arise again and take our stand for freedom as

in the olden time."

We cannot wait for perfection or for the absolute purity of our motives before we rise to take our stand. We must take it. We will stumble, we may lose our way. But we must take it. Against this evil, we must stand for freedom.

"This is a chapter of ancient history which it might be good to recall," says Gandalf as he explains to Frodo the exploits of the Elves in their struggle to resist the Dark Lord from the Tower of Mordor. "Yes, this is a chapter of ancient history which it might be good to recall, for there was sorrow then too, and gathering dark, but great valour, and great deeds that were not wholly vain."

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION:

1. According to Mr. Loconte, what lesson from World War II is most relevant for confronting the ideology of terrorism today?

2. What is utopianism? How did it inform the public debate about entering World War II?

3. What is Islamic Fascism?

4. Itemize and explain Mr. Loconte's catalogue of utopian fallacies.

5. What is "Christian Realism" and how does it differ from utopianism in responding to Islamic Fascism?

6. What does Mr. Loconte mean by the phrase "persistence of radical evil"? What is radical evil and how might its existence inform foreign and defense policies?

7. How does Mr. Loconte explain and differentiate the roles of church and state? Why does he think the differentiation of church and state roles is important?

8. According to Mr. Loconte, where is peace in the hierarchy of Christian values? How might the prioritization of Christian values inform foreign and defense policies?

9. How does moral courage apply to public policy?

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