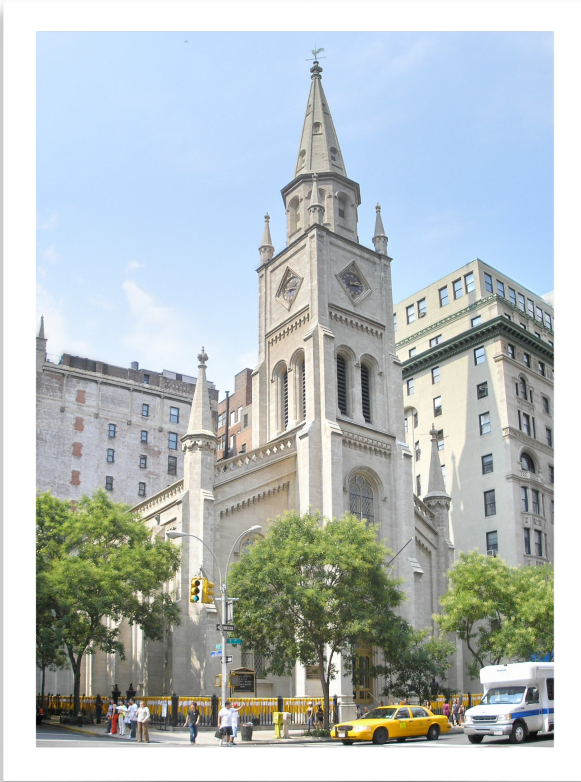


A Tempting Identification

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February 2007



[This interview](#) portrays a worthy study deriving from an inaccurate premise held by scholars at the [Center for the Study of Political Islam](#).

It is dishonest to create a rhetorical straw man and then demolish it, and it is not my intent to do that here. However, the near universal employment of the premise advanced by this Center, and its self-destructive consequences, invite me to answer that premise.

Every body of work has a premise it seeks to describe, demonstrate or explicate. Every cognitive act proceeds from an *a priori* regarding both the nature and the results of cognition. Question and answer belong to one another, they are interdependent, and one cannot exist without the other. This is the case for all types of cognition, all questions and all answers, whether it is realized consciously or not.

Knowing is a form of union. The Greek word *gnosis*, from which we have the English word knowledge, and which derives from the Sanskrit word *jnanam*, means cognitive, sexual and mystical union all at the same time. That union is meant by the word knowledge. Knowledge is of, by and for the whole being, whether plant, animal or person.

For a body of work to be useful in the sense of satisfying and thereby benefiting its workers as well as humanity in general, the premise or set of premises from which the work proceeds must be accurate. This means the premise must express both the essential reality and the existential condition of the object of cognition, the condition of the cognizer and the reality of the process of cognition (the "triple-thread").

The premise of this worthy and even useful study by the Center is inaccurate because it does not express the essential reality of Islam or does not express that reality in its unity with the existential condition of Islam.

A religion is a religion, not a politics. A politics is a politics, not a religion. This is the case for all religions and all politics.

Religion is one of the three functions of the dimension of spirit, which is the unity of power and meaning. The other two functions of spirit are culture, deriving from the freedom to create language and technology, and morality, the categorical imperative governing relations of persons with persons and persons with non-personal creatures who are, nonetheless, centered selves and must not be harmed for that reason, namely plants and animals.

Religion is the point at which the question of life is answered.

Culture, religion and morality are independent and interdependent functions of spirit. In all of their aspects, they participate, therefore, in the ambiguity of life. They can be distinguished but not separated. Life is a multi-dimensional unity.

Further, each function of spirit is dynamic within itself and in its relations with the others. None of the functions of spirit has the same concrete result continuously through history. Nor is it possible to identify a religion

with a culture or a morality, or a culture with a morality or a religion, or a morality with a religion or a culture.

Politics is one of the creations of culture. It cannot be identified with religion, although it is influenced by religion, and influenced dynamically over the duration of a culture.

Islam is one of the creations of religion. Christianity is another. Buddhism is another. Hinduism is another. Zoroastrianism is another.

Islam, like Christianity, is a religion, not a politics, and the trouble we are having is because a politics, imperialism by demonic clergy and scholars, is being wrapped with the name of a religion, Islam, and many are accepting that nonsense as fact.

That is genuine which insists on nothing. That is demonic which insists on ultimacy.

To premise Islam as a politics or, more discriminatingly, to premise Islam as a religion that includes a politics within itself, as itself, is inaccurate and self-destructive. The religious function is not the source of politics. The cultural function is. This is shown by the fact that more than one religion can exist in a culture, including culture influenced by Islam.

When a politics is tyrannical, that is a creation of culture, distorted culture, not a creation of religion. Every culture, regardless of what religion exists in it, has produced tyrannies. Indeed, religion, including Islam, is a frequent source of cries against tyrannical culture. But insofar as those cries become active opposition, that is politics, not religion.

Religion and morality produce their own forms of tyranny as distortions of themselves. This fact demonstrates their participation in the ambiguity of life. Neither culture, religion nor morality is free of demonic potential, which is the taking as ultimate of that which is not ultimate.

Nevertheless, a demonic distortion of a religion is not that religion. It is a demonic distortion of a religion. And when a demonic distortion of a religion becomes activity that is demonic politics.¹

The troubling of the world today is from the imperialism of demonic clergy and scholars. Islam has nothing to do with it, either in origin, in processes or in outcomes.

The premise that Islam is itself a politics or has a politics within it is self-destructive because it (1) hides from us the nature of the enemy and (2) accords the enemy a dignity, as representatives of a religion, with rights to respect he neither has nor deserves. These self-generated weaknesses encourage the enemy to set up shop and operate, with deference from the doctrine of "multiculturalism," in our own home.

In a long view of history, what possibly can be the meaning of that insanity? It is the question everyone is asking today. What accounts for the phenomenon of self-destruction? It is not native to cultures influenced by Christianity, although, as Freud points out, it is a constant

¹ There is salutary, necessary politics that is not demonic, though neither is it unambiguous. To say that politics per se is demonic is demonic. All existence participates in ambiguity. It is the quest for unambiguity that distinguishes religion from the other functions of spirit, even though that quest itself is not unambiguous.

presence in every individual, and even a positive one.² It came to the United States from across the seas, including involuntarily.

Regardless, the urge to self-destruction is a dependent urge, not independent of the dimensions of life or the structures of being. Therefore, it is never the last word, as the phenomenon of the persistence of religions demonstrates.

What then should be done with political movements that claim to be a religion and originate in a distortion of a religion? They should be treated as the lethal politics they are. In the present situation this includes anyone claiming to be on "*jihad*" or a member of any organization that promotes "*jihad*."

The demonic Shiite clergy and scholars of Iran and the demonic Wahhabi/Salafi clergy and scholars of Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Jordan and elsewhere, including the United States and Europe, are the source of trouble commonly attributed to "radical Islam," "Islamists," "terrorists," "Islamofascists," etc. Until these demonic clergy and scholars are taken down or neutralized the trouble will continue.

² The desire for death by self-destruction is a distortion of the positive, salutary desire for reunion with one's essential self, or put another way, the desire for unambiguous life. That desire seeks courageously to transcend the contingency, tragedy and anxiety that are integral to life. The deformation of that positive, salutary desire is the cowardly -- and delusively forlorn -- impulse to escape the contingency, tragedy and anxiety of life "and by opposing end [it]" (Shakespeare, *Hamlet Act 3, Scene 1*).

The desire for self-destruction ignores the fact that being is good, to include its contingency, tragedy and anxiety, which characterize also the thought, word and deed of self-destruction. Augustine: *esse qua esse bonum est*. It also ignores the fact that the power of being transcends and reunites within itself all contingency and finitude. Life roots (Tillich) or subsists (Calvin) in the power of being, which is expressed in the religious symbol of the Divine Life.

A veteran of Desert Storm informs me that the only fat people in Saudi Arabia are the "clergy."

Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom are steps toward accomplishing the take down or neutralization of the demonic clergy and scholars who define present-day Iran and Arabia. They are the source of "Islam"-denominated trouble worldwide. They claim to speak for Islam but that claim is a lie, they speak for themselves and their demonic impulses and goals.

In summary form, these are the further steps to be taken:

The imperialistic criminals humanity is defending itself against derive from two injustices in the political realm, specifically, two usurpations: the Saud family of the Hashemite family in the Hejaz and Shi'ite Arab families of Persian families in Iran. The United States and Great Britain supported the Sauds against the Hashemites in 1920 and failed to support the Persian families against the Shi'ite Arabs in 1979.

So we are complicit, from improper political philosophy and cowardice, I should say, in our own disquiet. In the case of the Sauds and Hashemites, we allowed ourselves to be misled by the father of the traitor Kim Philby, St. John Philby, an earlier socialist in MI6 himself once arrested on suspicion of treason.

By way of correcting mistakes, the United States and Great Britain are now teaching Middle Easterners the modes of earning peace through consultation and cooperation, which are foundation characteristics of a new era that is upon us.

Here are the realities that are also goals that have popular support in the vexed countries and those related to them:

1- The Hashemite family is to be restored to sovereign stewardship of the Hejaz, which brings with it Damascus, Baghdad and oil fields of current Iraq.

2- Leadership indicated by the Universal House of Justice, Haifa, Israel, is to be restored to sovereign stewardship of Iran (Persia).

3- Kurdish aspirations for nationhood are to be supported into actuality.

4- Afghan aspirations for national prosperity are to continue being supported into actuality.

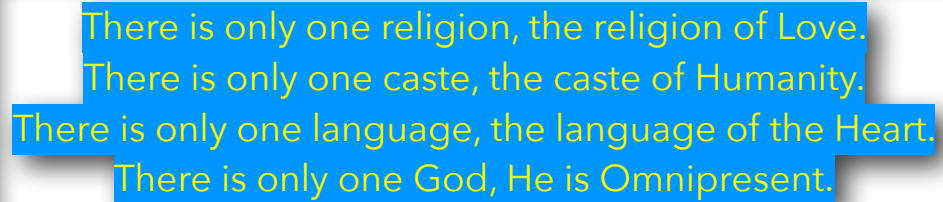
5- Consultation among India, the United States, Russia, Germany and Japan already guides the dimension of history and is to continue doing so for centuries.

The existential question that has been submitted to the adjudication of war, since there is no alternative venue for a decision, is whether there is more than one valid religion. There is. But very many espousing this religion or that assert that there is not. Therein exists the basis for conflict.

The answer was, is and always will be in the affirmative: Hinduism, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Islam and Christianity are valid religions and there are other valid religions having fewer adherents than these five have. The true religion (in Sanskrit, *Sanathana Dharma*) is the religion beyond religion. ³ Sathya Sai Baba expresses the reason this is so:

3 Paul Tillich speak of *Sanathana Dharma* as *the Religion of the Concrete Spirit*.

It is tempting but inaccurate to identify Islam as or as including a political system. Still, the folks at the Center for the Study of Political Islam are doing useful work. They raise the question and clarify some points.



There is only one religion, the religion of Love.
There is only one caste, the caste of Humanity.
There is only one language, the language of the Heart.
There is only one God, He is Omnipresent.

A.M.D.G.