

Jan Jaap de Ruiter



The Dutch Party for Freedom

An Analysis of Geert Wilders' Thinking on Islam

Rozenberg Publishers

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Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye,
but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?
Matthew 7: 3.

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τί δὲ βλέπεις τὸ κάρφος τὸ ἐν τῷ ὀφθαλμῷ τοῦ ἀδελφοῦ σου,
τὴν δὲ ἐν τῷ σῷ ὀφθαλμῷ δοκὸν οὐ κατανοεῖς;

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WARTIME

There's been a lot of talk about Geert Wilders ever since he started his own party, the Dutch Freedom Party. He is prominently present in Dutch politics and that is how the world got to know him. His party has been very successful, and from October 2010 until April 2012 it supported the minority government of Liberal Conservatives and Christian Democrats led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte (Liberal Conservative) in exchange for a number of demands. Wilders and his party entered the political arena with very strong opinions on Islam and Muslims, basically expressing the view that Islam is not a religion but an ideology. Muslims may be moderate, Islam never is. Islam, he claims, is a threat to Dutch society, to Europe, to the whole world even. When Geert Wilders and his party decided to support the minority government, they could not but also focus on less eye-catching dossiers of a socio-economic nature. The minority government had been in power for a little over a year when Wilders' party discovered a new issue that would attract everybody's attention. In February 2012, it put up a website where people could vent their complaints about Eastern Europeans. Even though the website caused an enormous row, in particular in the European Parliament, the party did not withdraw it. Also in February 2012, the Freedom Party started negotiations with the two government parties on major extra budget cuts deemed necessary due to the financial crises in the world. Much to the annoyance of his fellow-negotiators, Wilders pulled out at the last minute, claiming that now that the necessary calculations had been made by the Bureau for Economic Policy

Analysis (CPB) he could not live with the financial consequences the cuts would have for his voters, and the government fell. In the weeks before the elections, on 12 September 2012, the Freedom Party focused virtually entirely on 'the Evil that is Europe'. Muslims or Eastern Europeans were apparently no longer an issue. The parliamentary elections of 12 September 2012 resulted in a major blow to the Freedom Party, which lost nine of its 24 seats. It was the second blow to hit the party, the first one being the downfall of the Rutte government, which was primarily caused by party leader Wilders. Both events marked a major loss of political power for the party. This did however not result in the use of a milder discourse when it comes to the Party's policies and focus on Islam and Muslims. On the contrary. The appearance of the movie *The Innocence of Muslims* in September of 2012, followed by the French *Charlie Hebdo* cartoon affair, and the killing of American ambassador Stevens in Benghazi in Libya caused a worldwide wave of protests, indignation and violence, on both sides, i.e., the anti-Islam block and Muslims themselves, but party leader Wilders' comments on what was happening were in no way less harsh in tone than before.

Geert Wilders' book, *Marked for Death. Islam's War Against the West and Me* appeared in the spring of 2012. Given its title, it obviously centers round the classic Freedom Party theme of Islam and its title is quite personal. The book received some media attention, both in the United States, where it was published, and in the Netherlands. However, the amount of attention was far less than issues related to Wilders had received previously. I do not know the reasons behind this, but having read the book, and given the permanent bashing of Islam and Muslims, in particular on the Internet, I feel the need to respond to it. Books, however unnoticed they may be at first, can gain considerable influence once the public has discovered them.

I am not unfamiliar with Wilders and his Freedom Party. In 2010, Freedom Party MP Martin Bosma published a book called (in translation) *The Fake Elite of the Counterfeiters. Drees, the Extreme Right, the Sixties, Useful Idiots, the Wilders Group and Me*. This book presents a detailed description of what the Freedom Party stands for. It contains what I have called its ideology. I responded to this publication in March 2012 by publishing (in translation) *The Ideology of the Freedom Party. The Evil Good and the Good Evil*. In it, I analyze the concepts and ideas lying at the basis of Wilders' party. Basically, there is a handful of points that it holds very strong views on. Its

ideology is based on a strictly applied good-evil scheme, adapted from the Biblical verse 20 of Isaiah 5, quoted by Mr. Bosma on the first pages of his book, and alluded to in the title of my book, and it runs as follows: 'Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter'

With this verse in mind, the ideology of the Freedom Party regards Christianity, Jews and Israel, monoculturalism, and ordinary people as good, whereas Islam, leftist political parties, multiculturalism and the elite are considered evil. There are hardly any exceptions to the rule.

I was not surprised to encounter the same black-and-white thinking in *Marked for Death. Islam's War Against the West and Me*. Wilders follows the path of his party ideologue Bosma. Apart from it being written in English, the book differs though from Bosma's in terms of focus. For reasons that so far have remained obscure to me, it appears to be directed at an American audience rather than the Dutch population, whose elites would have no problems reading it, while most of it would escape the common man and woman. It was suggested, when the book came out, that it could be seen as a public application by Wilders for membership of one of the famous American think tanks, which Ms. Hirsi Ali, a former Liberal Conservative MP in the Netherlands, had joined as well. I do not know if there is any truth to this, and frankly I am not particularly interested in this question either. I find it much more important that Wilders' book in the English language should receive feedback, and in English as well. From a broader perspective, I notice that Wilders is not the only one who is active in framing this Islamization claim. It is part of a very strong current, manifesting itself in particular on the Internet. Even if Wilders were to disappear from active politics, his ideology will not disappear with him.

Marked for Death. Islam's War Against the West and Me consists of 13 chapters, preceded by a foreword by Mark Steyn, a Canadian journalist. It ends with notes and an index. The present pamphlet reviews *Marked for Death* in four small chapters, focusing on key concepts arising from it: *Truth, Culture, Ideology* and *Solution*. The present section, *Wartime*, precedes these four; the concluding section is called *The Speck in Your Brother's Eye*.

The title of this pamphlet was taken from the Gospel of Matthew (7:3)

where Jesus says: *'Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?'* It was this verse that crossed my mind when I was reading Wilders' book. The author is so utterly convinced of his mission and the evil nature of his adversary that he loses sight of reality. Now, everybody has the right to write whatever they want, everybody has the right to express their views, I do not contend that, but I do feel that this book should not remain unchallenged. Should the thoughts of this book find their way into a political program and actually be carried out, the inevitable result would be war: Not a war started by Islam against the world and Geert Wilders, but a war against Islam, a war against Muslims.

In essence, Wilders' strategy is similar to the perceived strategy of Islam: to combat this religion, or, in his terms, this ideology, until it ceases to exist, as he tells us in the last chapter of his book. What Wilders demands of Islam and Muslims, is quite unambiguous: They are to disappear; to cease to exist. His writings contain a disastrous message to the world, as disastrous as Wilders perceives Islam to be. I hope that his program will never be realized and that this pamphlet will in some way be able to contribute to that.

TRUTH

Marked for Death contains 217 pages and the words 'truth' or 'true' are mentioned in it at least eleven times. As an academic I am suspicious of the word 'truth'. I teach my students that undoubtedly there is such a thing as the truth, but that each one of us, including those we see as great thinkers, has their own concept of what the truth is. It was Socrates who postulated that what we see around us is not the real world, that what we see is but an image of it and that we can in effect hardly see reality and if so only with a great deal of effort. Philosopher Immanuel Kant argues that basically we cannot know things, we can only guess at what 'reality' is, at what is 'real'. Friedrich Hegel does not rule out man fully knowing things, but foresees perfect knowing as a result of a long development the end of which we have not reached as yet. The apostle Paul also claims that as yet we do not know things fully (1 Corinthians 13: 12): *'For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall understand fully, even as I have been fully understood'*.

Knowing things, knowing reality is not only a subject that occupies the minds of academics, thinkers, philosophers and theologians. It concerns each one of us. If asked to describe an event they have witnessed, different people tend to give different versions of it and may disagree with each other's interpretations. This is not limited to daily events, but also goes for major events in people's countries or for things happening in the world. Some may blame the present economic crisis on the irresponsible beha-

vior of banks, while others may claim with equal force that the crisis has been caused by mass immigration.

Man is aware that there is something like the truth, but cannot come to an agreement on what truth is, what it consists of. Never in the history of mankind have there been societies that were uniform in terms of what was considered the truth. Sure, there were and are societies where regimes impose their truth on the people, but ultimately none of them have succeeded in convincing everyone. There will always be individuals who disagree, who have different views on things. It must be a blow to all those who believe in '*the truth*', but the truth is that there is simply no such thing as the one and only truth.

Having said this, we should not object to people venting clear opinions. There is absolutely nothing against people expressing their interpretation of reality, their interpretation of the truth. All I would demand from people in this respect is that they take into consideration that when they express their views and opinions, they should realize that there are other people whose truths may be different from theirs. And here we have a problem. Because while wise people will indeed realize that other truths exist beside their own, there are also people who do not want to accept the truth of their fellow men, and will even want to impose their own truth on their brother. This can lead not only to arguments, but also to conflicts, and ultimately to war. History is full of examples of wars based on religion or ideology. The challenge for mankind is to respect the multiple interpretations of the truth in order to maintain peace.

Religious people and politicians have a strong inclination to embrace a one and only approach to the truth. This is understandable. If you believe in God or in Jesus, you simply cannot have any doubts about this, because if you do, you are not a believer any more. As a politician you do not make a very strong case if you promote your views and at the same time relativize them by putting them into perspective. It would render you incredible as a politician. The bottom line both for religious people and for politicians is that, yes, they are free to express their strong convictions with regard to their own truth, but they cross an ethical line if, when they have obtained or hold power, they impose their truth on others, threatening them with undesirable consequences if they do not obey. A good religious person

and a good politician know this and act on the principle of tolerance.

This elaborate introduction makes clear where I stand. I acknowledge that each person is entitled to their own truth, but I do want to make myself heard to those who claim theirs it is the one and only truth and I would want to make myself heard even more if they wanted to impose their truth on others. In particular those holding power or wielding major religious or political influence in a given society should heed this warning. It is live and let live. Tolerance is the key word.

Now let us turn to the instances where Geert Wilders in his book talks about the truth. The first time he uses the word 'truth' in his first chapter, called *The Axe Versus the Pen*, he puts it in inverted commas: '*There is no better metaphor to illustrate the difference between Western values and the "true faith of Islam" than the difference between a pen and an axe*' (p. 4). Wilders makes it quite clear that he has no intention of even so much as tolerating his opponent's truth being different from his: the faith of Islam is 'true' in inverted commas, in other words: It is not true. He confirms this statement by writing on the following page (p. 5): '*Armed only with our pens, we must defy Islam's axes and knives. We must continue to speak our minds, knowing there is nothing more powerful than the truth. That is why we write our books and speeches, draw our cartoons, and make our movies and documentaries. The truth will set us free. That is what we really believe.*' Wilders does not juxtapose his truth with Islam's truth. He denies Islam's truth and states that there is only one truth, his own. The question obviously is what exactly his truth consists of. Let us therefore look at other instances where the truth is mentioned in *Marked for Death*.

In the same first chapter, Wilders deals with the speech on Islam that American President Obama gave in Cairo on June 4, 2009. In this speech, Obama declared that '*he consider[ed] it part of [his] responsibility to fight against negative stereotypes of Islam wherever they appear*' (p. 13). Wilders' reaction to this statement is: '*But what if these so-called "negative stereotypes of Islam" are the truth – will you denounce people for telling the truth?*' Here Wilders' truth comes out: The negative stereotypes of Islam are the truth. Its violent character, its wish to impose itself on others and conquer the world, as he points out later in the book, this is the truth about Islam. This truth is something negative, something evil, as Wilders declares in the last

chapter of his book, called *How to Turn the Tide*: 'Islam is one of those evil empires and it too will collapse once people begin telling the truth' (p. 209). Wilders reminds us of the fact 'that Islam is not the truth and that we have no obligations to this ideology' (p. 126). Wilders is being very outspoken here. Because of the simple fact that Islam is not the truth, we do not owe it anything. And not only is Islam not the truth, it is evil.

Speaking the truth, he says, is not an easy task. 'Sometimes speaking the truth invites physical threats, persecution, or the loss of money or power' (p. 130). When you express yourself and receive hostile reactions that can be the price you have to pay. For quite a while now, Wilders has been living under police protection due to anonymous threats. This is a well-known fact in the Netherlands, but he never really spoke about it. In *Marked for Death*, he is no longer silent about it and in the last part of the book he even goes into the personal conditions he is forced to contend with. 'It is the price for speaking the truth about Islam' (p. 143). Here Wilders touches on a subject I discussed earlier: Each person is entitled to their own truth, but crosses a line when they want to impose their truth on others, or physically fight others who cherish conflicting opinions. In being threatened and forced to surround himself with bodyguards, Wilders is experiencing his opponents' defying his truth. He expresses his views on Islam, gets threatened as a result and experiences what can happen if intolerance reigns. Faced with a situation like that, one would expect Wilders not to react in a fashion similar to that of his opponents. He knows from experience what can happen if people believe in their own truth one hundred percent, cannot accept opposition to it, and act violently based on this strong belief. But Wilders, in his turn, does the exact same thing as his opponents. He denies Islam its claim to the truth.

There is only one truth, and that is Wilders'. He could have opted for a less strict reaction to Islam. He could have chosen to attack the consequences of Islam's perceived evil nature and avoid the 'truth' discussion. Had he opted for combating the negative characteristics of Islam, and not its 'universal truth' claim, he might have won more support, as there are more voices in the world that criticize Islam and Muslims. But he chooses not to and instead adopts the same approach as that perceivably taken by his adversary. Both envy the light in each other's eye.

His personal, explicitly expressed interpretation of the truth has quite a

number of consequences for the perceived evil character of Islam. To give an example, in his fourth chapter, called *In the Dark Doorways*, he goes into the concept of martyrdom in Christianity and Islam. Christian martyrdom, so he explains, 'refers to suffering unto death for the sake of faith' (p. 64). Islam's, he goes on to argue, is different: 'Islamic martyrs are not those who suffer and die for the truth, but those who are killed while making others suffer and die.' What it comes down to is that martyrdom in Islam consists of blowing oneself up, and taking with one as many infidels as possible. In Christianity, the martyr surrenders to his enemy and allows him to slay him. The difference is clear. An Islamic martyr is basically egocentric; a Christian martyr is unselfish.

Closer inspection, however, soon reveals that 'the truth' is much more complex than this. The holy wars that Christian crusaders fought were considered legally permissible. They were called Just Wars, the Latin term being *Bellum iustum*. Christian thinkers like Augustine of Hippo and later Thomas Aquinas ideologically underpinned the Just Wars. In Just Wars, attacking and killing the physical enemies of the Christians was permitted, and the Christians that fell in such wars were considered martyrs as they died as fighters in God's cause. Martyrdom in Islam, as perceived by Wilders, is thus found in Christianity as well. Similarly, the selfless martyrdom that Wilders relates exclusively to Christianity can be found in Islam as well. During Nasser's reign in Egypt many Muslim Brothers were put into Concentration Camps and died for the sake of their faith. Now, I am well aware of the fact that the subject of martyrdom in both religions is a thorny issue. But in both cases, martyrdom is not quite as selfless as it is supposed or made out to be. Wilders' black-and-white interpretation of martyrdom for the two religions does not do either of them justice. His interpretation is a consequence of his own truth and his denial of the truth of Islam.

In his chapter three, called *Islamofascism*, the title itself already does not offer much hope for a respectful debate with Islam, Wilders discusses the rules of warfare: 'Ideological and theocratic regimes have made "the universal truth" (as they see it) into a political ideology, they do not obey rules of warfare. Prisoners are slaughtered and the concept of betrayal applies to those who renounce the side that pretends to be the vehicle of truth' (p. 38). The idea is that there are rules of honor in warfare but that Islamic regimes do not obey them. The implication obviously is that Western governments,

who, according to Wilders, are the bearers of the best culture in the world, a point that I elaborate on in the next chapter; do respect the rules of warfare. Once again, his claim is easy to refute. In the First World War, both Germany and the Allies used poison gas against each other; as decades later Iraqi dictator Saddam Hussein did against his own population and against the Iranians in the Iran-Iraq war from 1980-1988. The Americans used chemical weapons in Vietnam. No belligerent nation ever stuck to the *'noble rules of warfare'*.

In the example on warfare we touch on an important aspect of Wilders' truth that was already briefly mentioned at the beginning of this book: Islam is not a faith, Islam is an ideology. *'Islam is not just a religion ... but primarily a political ideology in the guise of a religion'* (p. 25). In Wilders' book, ideology is something reprehensible. Ideology implies tyranny. Ideology is not the truth. In Wilders' perception, ideology is evil, and nothing good can come out of it. He relates it, and this will be discussed more extensively in the *Ideology* chapter; to Nazi Germany, to the Soviet Union and also to France in the days of the Revolution. Islam should therefore not be treated *'more leniently than other political ideologies like communism and fascism just because it claims to be a religion'* (p. 26). An approach like that has quite a number of consequences. He puts it short and not so sweet: *'That is the crux of Islam: it is an ideology of global war'* (p. 78). Surprisingly, he attenuates his view of Islam as a violent ideology by stating that *'I am talking about the ideology of Islam, not about individual Muslim people. There are many moderate Muslims, but that does not change the fact that the political ideology of Islam is not moderate – it is a totalitarian cult with global ambitions'* (p. 26). If I were a Muslim and intent on a dialogue with Wilders, I would lose all hope after reading such a statement. I may be moderate; I may be open to others, to other people's truths, but none of that changes the fact that my faith, my *'ideology'* is violent and not the truth. It blocks all possible communication and therefore any hope of creating a *modus vivendi*.

In this chapter, we established what the truth is in Wilders' view: Islam and ideologies in general are evil and do not possess any truth. Having heard what Wilders considers evil, one wonders what he believes is good. In the next chapter, called *Culture*, I will try to find this out.

CULTURE

The following quote is unequivocal about where Wilders stands in regard to what can be considered the best possible culture in the world. When discussing Western civilization he states: *'When you compare the West to any other culture that exists today, it becomes clear that we are the most pluralistic, humane, democratic, and charitable culture on earth'* (p. 31). Specifying his claim he refers to the *'Judean-Christian civilization'*, which he recognizes is *'no doubt imperfect'* but of which *'it is unfair to denounce its faults in a historical vacuum'* (p. 31). Wilders claims Western culture is superior to all other cultures by comparison, but fails to specify which other cultures it is supposed to tower over, apart of course from Islam. Not a word on for instance Asian, i.e., Chinese, Japanese or Korean, cultures. And does Western culture include the Balkans, or Russian culture or Christian African culture? I will come back to these questions later in this chapter.

In his chapter five, *The Yoke of Ishmael*, Wilders makes some interesting remarks on allegedly superior Western culture. Pages 80-85 deal with the creation of the state of Israel and here he explains why he *'always feel(s) at home in Israel: it is animated by the same spirit that made Western civilization great – that of the soldier protecting the frontier and the pioneer settling the land'* (p. 84). In the lines preceding this sentence Wilders writes: *'Their (the Jewish settlers') spirit is the spirit of the West, the spirit of the pioneers who settled America and spilt "their blood ... in acquiring lands for their settlement," as Thomas Jefferson wrote in 1774'* (p. 84). Both quotes refer to violence.

They speak of soldiers and of blood that was spilt in acquiring lands. This contradicts what Wilders said earlier and which was discussed in the chapter on *Truth*, namely that the West should be defended with the word and the pen and not with axes and knives, weapons used by Islam. Or do these lines perhaps require a different interpretation? That superior Western civilization established itself using violence, but that once settled the need to use violence disappeared? This suggestion appears to be corroborated by what we read on page 120: *'Our commitment to truth, human dignity, and a just and honorable defense of the West do not permit us to resort to bloodshed or to give in to despondency.'* Are we supposed to infer from this that the West no longer uses violence?

Some pages later, Wilders discusses the influence of books like the Koran, the Bible and Adolf Hitler's *Mein Kampf*. He argues that *'most people in the West are fair-minded and educated enough that they can't be incited to commit violence against a group of people just by reading some book'* (p. 122). The West is clearly inhabited by peace-loving people who would never settle their arguments using force. But Wilders is not completely blind. *'There is,'* he says, *'a minority of easily impressionable people who can be incited, and this danger is magnified when people believe they are reading a book ordained by God'* (p. 122-2). Here Wilders is talking reality. But does he give examples of such people being misled and using violence? Does he refer at all to the Roman Catholic Inquisition, which, inspired by the Scriptures, burnt apostates by the thousands, or to Protestant convictions that found their way into laws that ultimately led to condemning homosexuals and witches to death? And what about the Christian-inspired anti-Semitism that led to the harassment and persecution of millions of Jews through the ages in virtually all European nations? No, Wilders does not have much more to say than just that *'the Bible ... shaped all of Western civilization'* (p. 123). And indeed, I would say, it did. Wilders' idea is that the Christian West has led us and is still leading us to peace and any relation with violence is accidental. In the course of history, only a few individuals have resorted to violence inspired by the Bible, but the majority of us Westerners have always been rational, respectful people.

Wilders having thus established the fact that Western civilization is superior and peace-loving, we are not surprised to read the following quote: *'The West never "harmed" Islam before it harmed us. It was Islam which took*

the Middle East, Christian Northern Africa and Constantinople by aggressive wars of conquest' (p. 134). The West was attacked by 'these aggressive Muslims' and thus simply had to act. Western civilization would never take the initiative and start 'aggressive wars of conquest' itself, now would it? I would like to connect the last quote to the earlier ones, which speak of this Western spirit that made Western civilization great, the blood that was spilt acquiring lands. And where was it that the West acquired lands? Right, in the Americas and Australia. Western explorers travelled the world, 'discovered' the New World, and spread their superior Western culture. With the word? With the pen? We know that this was not the case. The West conquered half the world and depopulated large parts of it through violence and diseases. Levene (2005) gives a shocking account of what happened. The Indians (Native Americans) in Northern America, the aboriginals in Australia, the Tasmanians on Tasmania Island, all of them underwent the presumed blessings of Western civilization. The Tasmanian people were decimated in less than 80 years after their 'discovery'. When the British landed on Tasmania in the early 1800s, there were approximately 4,000 to 5,000 people living on the island. In 1876 not a single original inhabitant of the island was left alive, due to Western violence and diseases. Australia as a whole registered a 97% loss of its aboriginal population and Mexico lost 'some 18,75 million of its number in the period 1520-524 downwards to a brink of around 1 million in 1605' (p. 10). Whether we want to acknowledge it or not, the West has committed a worldwide genocide, one of the, conveniently, forgotten genocides of history.

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Now Wilders hates cultural relativism, he rejects the idea that all cultures are equal and from this point of view condemns Westerners criticizing their own culture: 'Westerners who disdain cultural relativism, who are willing to denounce barbarism when they see it, and who believe that the West, indeed, is the centerpoint of civilization today, are dismissed as haters' (p. 135). But criticizing one's own culture does not mean rejecting one's own culture. I would consider it a sign of strength to be willing to acknowledge the weaknesses of one's own culture. In fact, those who do so should be praised by Wilders as he strongly suggests that Muslims should do the same: 'What is needed in Islamic countries is not a change in leadership, but for Muslims themselves to renounce Islam and liberate themselves from the ideology's mental prison' (p. 209). This goes very far indeed: Wilders suggests that Muslims should give up their religion, which, of course, is unacceptable

to them. I will come back to this suggestion in the last chapter of this book. But if we were well-disposed towards the intention behind this advice, we could conclude from it that he considers self-criticism to be a good thing. Why then would this not apply to the bearers of the best civilization on earth?

Another regrettable aspect of Wilders' claim that Western culture and civilization are the best in the world today is that it is hardly ever mentioned as an independent statement. It is virtually always mentioned in comparison with the perceived evil nature of Islam. On pages 80-85, Wilders, as I mentioned before, deals with the creation of the state of Israel. He reports on the migration to Israel of Jewish communities living in Arab countries after it was founded in 1948. He labels them refugees and states that '*No one talks about the Jewish refugees anymore because they quickly made new lives for themselves in Israel, Europe and America, even though many of them had arrived penniless*' (p. 82). Wilders wants to make it clear that there is no point in dwelling on the past. His motto is '*Look to the future*'. He also mentions '*the Germans who were expelled from the Sudetenland and the lands east of the Oder and the Neisse rivers, the Greeks who were expelled from the Aegean coasts of Anatolia*' and other such cases. All of these people let bygones be bygones and got on with their lives. Islamic and Arab countries, on the other hand, are eternally, it seems, postponing a solution to the issue of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and 1967. What keeps them from permanently settling down and getting integrated in countries like Lebanon, Syria and Jordan? Why do these governments refuse to settle things, like the Jews once did, and the Germans and the Greeks? Well, this, Wilders observes, has to do with '*a strong characteristic of Islam: it nurtures resentment, passing it on from generation to generation*' (p. 82). '*Islam*', he continues, '*still complains about the Crusades, as if France would still moan about the Hundred Years' War...*' (p. 82). I would agree that at some point one has to come to terms with the past, one has to stop brooding over it; one has to look to the future, however difficult that may be. But is this mentality of being prepared to leave things behind you, forgetting about the past, letting bygones be bygones, a specifically Western characteristic? Does it mean that the West is not suffering from any kind of memory syndrome?

28 June 1389 is the date of the Kosovo Battle, which took place near *Kosovo Polje*, Black Bird's Field, where Serbian warriors were slain by Ottoman

armies. This battle has been commemorated each year ever since, right to this day. In 1914, it was on this specific day that the heir to the Austria-Hungarian throne, Grand Duke Franz-Ferdinand, was killed by Serbian terrorist Gavrilo Princip, which eventually led to the outbreak of the First World War. In a speech in Kosovo Polje in 1987, then leader of Serbia, Slobodan Milošević, proclaimed that no one had the right 'to beat up' the Serbian part of the population in Kosovo, which at the time was dominantly inhabited by -Muslim- ethnic Albanians. The Serbs in Kosovo complained about the abuse they were forced to undergo from the Muslim majority. It was this speech that later marked the start of the Kosovo war in 1999.

Apparently, people from the Balkans do not forget. Particularly when it comes to battles with Muslims, even when these go back as far as 1389. Are the Muslims to blame then for the 1999 war? Who caused the Muslim population of Kosovo to flee in 1999? Was it not Mr. Milošević's 'Christian' Serbian armies? And are we to conclude that the Eastern Orthodox Balkans, having such a hard time forgetting about the past, are not part of Western civilization? That Western civilization consists solely of countries like, say, the United States, Britain, France and Germany? And supposing the inhabitants of these countries are so good at forgiving and forgetting, what about the German people who once lived in what is now Western Poland and the former Sudetenland. Are they at peace with what happened to them right after the Second World War? How come there are numerous associations whose members long for the days when their ancestors were still living in these regions? How come the Scottish people still cherish sentiments of independence from the English? Why do they not simply accept the fact that they are part of the United Kingdom? An even more telling example is the tragedy of Northern Ireland. Why did it take so long before the people of Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic accepted the partitioning of the island in 1922? Is it not another example that flatly contradicts this presumed Western spirit of forgetting about the past and moving on, as it took 30 years of bloodshed and more than 3,000 people killed before finally a fragile balanced peace was established? And what about the continuous battle going on between the Basks and the Spanish authorities? Why do they not settle their dispute in the 'go-for-it' spirit of the West? And am I mistaken in sensing perhaps a wee bit of resentment when reading on page 134 of Wilders' book that '*the West never "harmed" Islam before it harmed us*' and that it was 'Islam which took the Middle

East, Christian Northern Africa and Constantinople by aggressive wars of conquest?' The Middle East, Christian Northern Africa and Constantinople belonged to us, to the civilized West. And they, the aggressive Muslims, took them from us. But this happened more than a thousand (Northern Africa and the Middle East) or more than 500 (Constantinople) years ago! Is it not about time to forgive and forget, which after all we are so good at? Wilders' Party ideologue, Mr. Bosma, in his book that I mentioned above, argues that the fall of Constantinople in 1453 was the incentive to establish the forerunner of what is now the Dutch Parliament. He recalls that with the entrance of the Freedom Party into the Dutch Parliament in 2006, the Parliament's original mission had been restored: the fight against Islam. This interpretation of history, apart from it being highly contestable, does it not contradict this Western spirit of forgetting the past and moving on?

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Let me give another example of the perceived superiority of Western civilization. In his chapter four, Wilders talks about a trip he once made to the Middle East and how he became *'fascinated by the decorative splendor of a copy of the Koran that was for sale'* (p. 58). He bought the book, took it home, read a translation of it and was utterly disappointed. *'I expected to find injunctions to "love thy neighbor" and other commandments similar to those in the Bible, but instead I found the spite of a god who hates'* (p. 58). In these same pages, he describes how tolerant Jews and Christians are with regard to adulterous women, quoting Jesus who said: *'He that is without sin among you, let him cast the first stone'* (p. 59, John 8:7). Muslims, by contrast, still stone adulterous women to this day. Now, I do not contend that in some Islamic regions women are indeed stoned. Every single woman stoned is one too many. But the stoning of adulterous women is not a general practice in the whole Islamic world. On the contrary, most Islamic countries abhor stoning. The implicit message though, that Christianity only preaches love and an absence of violence is an overstatement. True, the key message of the Bible is to love thy neighbor as thyself, but unfortunately there are many other verses in the Bible that have incited individual people, religious institutions and entire states to use violence.

An example of an individual inspired by the Bible to commit atrocities is Norwegian mass murderer Anders Behring Breivik, who killed 77 people on a mission that was inspired by the words of Jesus. In his 2083 *European Declaration of Independence* he declares the following in his section 3.149:

'...in the New Testament, Jesus commanded His disciples to buy themselves (swords) and equip themselves.'

Luke 22:36: *'Then said he unto them, "But now, he that hath a purse, let him take it, and likewise his scrip: and he that hath no sword, let him sell his garment, and buy one"'*

Matthew 26:52-54: *'Then said Jesus unto him, "Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?"'*

If you read those verses in context they support the position of self-defense. Jesus told Peter it would be committing suicide to choose a fight in this situation, as well as undermining God's plan to allow Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection.

Jesus told Peter to put his sword in its place – at his side. He didn't say 'throw it away'. After all, He had just ordered the disciples to arm themselves. The reason for the arms was obviously to protect the lives of the disciples, not the life of the Son of God. What Jesus was saying was: *"Peter, this is not the right time for a fight."*

In the context of cultural conservative Europeans' current war against the cultural Marxist/multiculturalist elites and the ongoing Islamic invasion through Islamic demographic warfare against Europe, every military action against our enemies is considered self defense. There will be much suffering and destruction but eventually we will succeed and may be able to start rebuilding'.

Wilders and his party have repeatedly stated that they consider Mr. Breivik to be a lone wolf, a lunatic, a psychopath who represents only himself. Wilders denied any link with Mr. Breivik's thinking and the latter's violent interpretation of the Scriptures. Still, Mr. Breivik can be considered one of the few exceptions whose existence Wilders does not deny when he writes that there is this small minority in the West that is seduced to use violence after reading a book, in this case the Bible. Let us leave aside

deranged individuals, and take a closer look at what history tells us. The Thirty Years' War (1618-1648) in Central Europe, largely characterized as a religious war between Catholics and Protestants, led to enormous losses in the population with estimates for Germany of 25 to 40 percent. The Eighty Years' War (1568-1648) between Catholic Spain and the predominantly Protestant Netherlands, apart from being a struggle for independence, was a religious war as well. More recently we have seen the complex conflict in Northern Ireland between Protestants and Catholics taking a death toll of more than 3,000 persons.

26 Teachings in the Bible lead to verbal violence and occasionally to physical harm as well. What are we to think of the Westboro Baptist Church in the United States, which, basing itself on the Bible, states that God hates all homosexuals and that they will go to hell? Maybe the following example is more telling. Why do women still die as a result of illegal abortions in Catholic countries like Poland and Ireland? Why do these countries deny women the right to control their own bodies and the life they carry? Is it not the strong pressure and influence of the Catholic Church that is to blame for that? And what about African Anglican Churches who condemn homosexuality as a Western invention, as a result of which African gay people risk losing their lives when they venture to come out? Or are African Anglicans perhaps not part of superior Western culture?

It is true, Christianity ordains its believers to love their brothers and sisters. But it is equally true that Islam preaches a merciful God. In 2005 I published a collection of essays on what I called *The Statistics of Religions. Essays on the Judaic-Christian-Islamic Tradition of our Country*. In it I reported on my counting the number of occurrences of certain words in the Bible and the Koran. The Koran far outnumbered the Bible, both in absolute and in relative terms, in the number of times the words 'mercy', 'forgive' and 'forgiver' were mentioned. The word 'war' occurred far more frequently in the Bible than in the Koran. The bottom line is that both scriptures can be and should be interpreted as books of peace and love and mercy, but equally that both contain verses and words that are less peace-loving, and that the reality is that there are interpreters that choose to focus on the dark side of both books.

Am I showing myself to be a reprehensible cultural relativist here? Un-

doubtedly. But I do wish to underline that I do not want to do away with religions, Christianity or otherwise. Religions promote worthy human values and they should continue doing that. Religions, however, should also abide by the dogma that it is God who punishes or rewards, not people. Religious people should strive for a happy afterlife, while at the same time respecting those who do not believe in such ideals. Many Christians walk the path of non-violence, as do many Muslims. But history shows us that both religions have very dark pages in their histories and the challenge for them is to make violence-free religion a reality. In fact, religions have an advantage over ideologies which seek to establish paradise here on earth, and which have cost millions of lives. I will go into this matter in the next chapter. For the moment, I must conclude that the arguments that Wilders adduces for the superiority of Western culture can be countered by equally strong arguments to the contrary. As always: the truth lies somewhere in the middle. Reality is neither black nor white.

IDEOLOGY

28

Wilders regards Islam as an ideology: '*...Islam is not just a religion, as many Americans believe, but primarily a political ideology in the guise of a religion*' (p. 25). '*the political ideology of Islam is not moderate – it is a totalitarian cult with global ambitions*' (p. 26). If Islam is an ideology, its followers cannot be said to be believers. Still Wilders never refers to Muslims as being adherents of an ideology. He does not give them a new name like '*Islam ideologists*' for instance. He goes on calling them Muslims but obviously for him the term Muslim has a different meaning than it has for the average reader, who regards Muslims as adherents of a religion. The confusion only grows when we learn that Wilders makes a weird distinction between Islam on the one hand and its followers, the Muslims, on the other. He states that '*there are many moderate Muslims, but that does not change the fact that the political ideology of Islam is not moderate*' (p. 26). '*We are fortunate that the majority of the world's 1.5 billion Muslims do not act according to the Koran...*' (p. 26). Islam is evil; Muslims who do not fully implement Islamic ideology are not necessarily evil. Could this mean then that Muslims can be good? This is not what Wilders is saying here but it is what he is implying, either intentionally or not. In the end, making a distinction between the ideology and its followers can only lead to disaster. Because, ultimately, the followers are all potential instruments of this evil ideology and as such a danger to world peace. If Wilders' view of evil Islam and its potentially evil adherents were to become part of mainstream political thinking and acting, would that not

create a huge risk of these followers becoming the objects of violence? Would it not create a situation where the people, or even the authorities, convinced of the risk Muslims constitute, will act accordingly and start oppressing and chasing them? It is for this reason that I find Wilders' artificial distinction between ideology and its followers a highly dangerous one. And in fact, reading Wilders' book, in particular chapters 5 and 6 on the history of Islam, and the last chapter where he presents his view on the (future) path to follow in respect to Islam one notices that where he speaks of 'Islam', he cannot but mean 'Muslims'. When he claims that Islam with its jihad caused the deaths of millions of people in India (p. 89), my question to him would be: *'Who, in your opinion, was it that killed in India? Was it Islam? Or was it Muslims?'* The distinction proposed by Wilders is ultimately untenable. Ideologies do not kill. It is people who kill. His hatred is not directed at an ideology, it is directed at people, at Muslims.

Following Wilders' view that Islam is an ideology we are not surprised to find that he considers it an ideology like communism or fascism. Islam should therefore not be treated *'more leniently'* than the other two, *'just because it claims to be a religion'* (p. 26). At the end of his second chapter, he refers to methods, described later in this pamphlet, to *'stop the Islamization of Western civilization'* (p. 27). In my chapter called *Solution*, I will go into the details of the proposed methods. In the present chapter, I will continue by giving an overview of how Wilders sees Islam and its history as an ideology that seeks to conquer the world.

Geert Wilders' Freedom Party is not known in the Netherlands as a party that cherishes the values of multiculturalism or the multicultural society. In his book, party-ideologue Martin Bosma states that in multicultural societies neighbors no longer care for each other, while monocultural societies are characterized by social stability (p. 187-189). In fact, monoculturalism has given mankind the best it has ever had and in this regard Mr. Bosma specifies the values that characterize it, such as hard work, discipline, honesty and efficiency (p. 187). In his view, multiculturalism is a whip that Leftist parties have lashed our society with, and the cause of many conflicts and social problems in the Netherlands today. Is it not remarkable then, to say the least, to learn that Wilders looks very favorably on another multicultural society: that of the Arab cities of Mecca and Yathrib, later Medina, in the period just before Islam was born. When he talks about the

birth of Islam he describes the Meccans as *'multiculturalists avant la lettre'*. They were pluralistic and tolerant, willing to accommodate new religious groups' (p.34), and *'peace-loving'* (p. 38). In 622, the prophet Mohammed left for Yathrib (Medina), *'that was just as tolerant as Mecca'*. *'Yathrib was a tolerant, pluralist, multicultural oasis where Jewish, Christian, and pagan tribes lived together peacefully'* (p. 165). Then both cities regrettably came under the tyranny of the prophet and his followers. Their inhabitants thought that by accommodating the Muslims, they would be able to integrate them into their pluralistic societies: it did not work out that way. They lost their freedom forever. The message is that this will happen to us as well if we do not stop the Islamization of the world.

Islam subsequently spread over the world and in the end conquered an area stretching from Spain to the borders of China. All of the conquered peoples became the victims of the aggressive ideology of Islam and its destructive influence. Wilders also refers to the fall of Alexandria in 640 AD. *'Islam had little consideration for science'* and thus *'the Arabs ... deliberately burned down its 900-year-old library'* (p. 55). Wilders here quotes the Arab leader, Caliph Omar: *'They (the books) will either contradict the Koran, in which case they are heresy, or they will agree with it, so they are superfluous'* (p. 55). There are some interesting observations to be made with regard to the example of the book burning in Alexandria. Wilders starts by saying that *'Islam had little consideration for science'*, but he subsequently uses the word *'Arabs'*, i.e., Muslims, to refer to the persons who executed the actual burning, instead of opting for a passive construction like *'and the library was deliberately burned down'*. Here we once again encounter the consequences of the artificial distinction Wilders makes between Islam and Muslims. Islam is evil, Muslims not necessarily, but in fact it was Muslims that spread the evil ideology of Islam and it was Muslims that apparently burned the books in the Library, not Islam as Islam is not a living person. If you are out to find blame, it is impossible to blame Islam and not blame the bearers of Islam, the Muslims. Even though not all 1.5 billion of them act in accordance with the *'aggressive'* Koran, they can, if they want to. Does it not therefore make more sense to be outspoken and to point not to Islam, but to its adherents, the Muslims? Do not get me wrong here. I am not in favor of blaming all Muslims for all the crimes that have been committed by Muslims. On the contrary. But what Wilders is doing here is blatantly hypocritical. He fabricates this confusing distinction between Islam and Muslims,

while, basically, what he really wants to say is that in the end all Muslims are evil. Why not simply do away with this artificial barricade and speak out on the issue? In the last chapter of his book he puts a definite end to this embarrassing charade when he says, that, in the end, all Muslims, both the extreme ones and, surprisingly enough but perhaps not so surprising after all, the moderate ones as well, should renounce their Islamic identity. If that were realized, the whole 'Islam-Muslim' distinction dissolves and will have become useless, but only after having fulfilled a very useful purpose in the path toward it.

Having established the anti-intellectual nature of Muslims while dealing with the burning of the Library of Alexandria, Wilders continues by presenting his views on the contribution of Islam to history. Historical studies show that Muslim scholars passed on – parts of – the classical Greek Byzantine heritage to Western Europe. After Islam came to Egypt, Syria and Iraq, scholars set out to translate the works of Greek scientists and philosophers into Arabic, which later on were translated into Latin in cities like Toledo in Spain, and in Italy. But Wilders' version of what happened is quite different. He states that *'comprehensive translations of Aristotle, and other ancient Greek philosophers were made at the Mont Saint-Michel monastery in Normandy half a century before Arabic versions of the same texts appeared in Islam-occupied Moorish Spain'* (p. 56). In his opinion, the only science that Islam actually contributed to was that of astronomy. This would have had everything to do with the importance of the establishment of time and place because of the Islamic requirement to perform prayers and fasting at particular times and *'for determining the Qibla, the direction toward the Kaaba shrine in Mecca, which Muslims must face when they pray'* (p. 57). As an example of Western voices claiming that it was Muslims that passed on the Greek Byzantine intellectual heritage, Wilders chooses to single out the name of Nazi scientist Sigrid Hunke, member of the SS think tank, the *Germanistischer Wissenschaftseinsatz* (German Science Service), who claimed that *'the West owes its development to a "pioneering, civilizing Islam" that supposedly transmitted Greek philosophy back to Europe'* (p. 56). Wilders does not fail to mention as well that Mrs. Hunke was made an honorary member of the Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs at Cairo's Al-Azhar University, although he does not supply us with the source of this information. He is not surprised that Mrs. Hunke expressed these views, given her Nazi background. Mrs. Hunke wrote a book called *Allahs Sonne über dem*

Abendland (Allah's Sun over the Occident) and Nazis, so Wilders maintains, were fascinated by Islam (see below as well). He therefore 'regrets' the fact that Mrs. Hunke's '*flawed thesis has become widely accepted by Western leaders anxious to pander to Islam's grandiose pretensions*' (p. 57). Here Wilders is discrediting an important aspect of Islamic-Western relations. To him, the classical Greek Byzantine heritage was passed on to us by Christian monks and not by Muslim scholars and translators. The only people defending the latter interpretation of history were Nazi '*intellectuals*' and later on contemporary Western leaders apparently followed the Nazi interpretation of history.

One of Wilders' favorite cards obviously is the Nazi one. In the arguments concerning our classical heritage, Wilders links Islam as well as '*Western leaders*' to National Socialism. He does not specify who these leaders are or were and to what political affiliation they belong(ed), but one can imagine that he is aiming in particular at leaders with a leftist political background, Wilders generally being very critical of the Left, which, in his perception, has opened our borders to Islam and to '*mass immigration*'. Nazism and Islam to him are thus closely related and in his view present-day socialism is deeply influenced by both. These are important lines of thinking both with Mr. Bosma, the Freedom Party's ideologue, and with Wilders. Connecting Islam and socialism with Nazism is a strategic move to discredit both and to add substance to their claim that we are heading for an 'Islamization of the world'. How did they put all this together?

In his chapter three, called *Islamofascism*, Wilders claims that the Nazis recognized in Islam '*a kindred soul*' (p. 42). Albert Speer, Nazi Germany's Minister of Armament and Hitler's '*Reichsarchitect*', supposedly wrote in his diaries that Hitler regretted that the prophet Mohammed had not come to the Germans and he quoted Adolf Hitler as saying: '*It's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. Why did it have to be Christianity with its meekness and flabbiness?*' (Speer, 1969, p. 42; translation by Wilders). It is true, that Adolf Hitler in his inner circle condemned Christianity for its meekness. In his politics, however, he did not go so far as to ban Christianity from society. He himself never formally renounced Catholicism, the religion of his ancestors. In his book, Bosma, the Freedom Party-ideologue, also refers to the Hitler quote on Christianity (p. 251). What is interesting is that neither Wilders nor Bosma quotes Mr. Speer in full. Bosma presents the quote as

follows (original German quote followed by English translation):

'Wir haben eben überhaupt das Unglück, eine falsche Religion zu besitzen. (...) Auch die mohammedanische Religion wäre für uns viel geeigneter als ausgerechnet das Christentum mit seiner schlappen Duldsamkeit (p.110).'

'It 's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. The Mohammedan religion too would have been much more suitable than Christianity of all religions, with its meekness and flabbiness'.

Bosma put some dots (...) in the quote to indicate to the reader that he left out part of it, obviously because he does not deem that part important for his argumentation. This way, quoted out of context as it were, it can be interpreted as Hitler preferring Islam and wanting to get rid of Christianity. The point has been made: Nazism and Islam are two of a kind.

But the full quote puts quite a different angle on things, when we read the part that has been left out:

'Warum haben wir nicht wie die der Japaner, die das Opfer für das Vaterland als das Höchste ansieht?' 'Why don't we have that (the religion) of the Japanese, who consider sacrificing themselves for their country as the ultimate honor?'

The full quote then reads as follows:

'Wir haben eben überhaupt das Unglück, eine falsche Religion zu besitzen. 'Warum haben wir nicht wie die der Japaner, die das Opfer für das Vaterland als das Höchste ansieht? Auch die mohammedanische Religion wäre für uns viel geeigneter als ausgerechnet das Christentum mit seiner schlappen Duldsamkeit (p. 110).'

'It 's been our misfortune to have the wrong religion. 'Why don't we have that (the religion) of the Japanese, who consider sacrificing themselves for their country as the ultimate honor? The Mohammadan religion too would have been much more suitable than Christianity of all religions, with its meekness and flabbiness.'

Hitler supposedly implied that any religion would have been better than Christianity: the Japanese religion or Islam. The correct interpretation of

Hitler's' quote would therefore first of all be that he felt Christianity was too soft and weak, and not so much that he admires Islam but rather that he would have preferred it or any other 'heroic' religion to Christianity. Now, I also put this argument forward in the first version of my publication *The Ideology of the Freedom Party. The Evil Good and the Good Evil* (2012), which first appeared as a series of articles published on the Internet (www.nieuwwij.nl) from May to November 2011. As Wilders published his book in April 2012 I would venture to assume that he took notice of my criticism on his party ideologue's crippled quotation and decided to use the same quote in a way less susceptible to criticism. The parts of the passage that he quotes neither contain the part referring to Islam nor the one about the religion of the Japanese. He refers to Speer's diary in general terms. He uses what he needs to use to make his point, and the point has been made: the link between Islam and Nazism. In the next few pages, Wilders continues in the same vein. The message is clear: Islam and Nazism are natural friends. Nazism has been beaten, Islam not yet.

The relationship between Islam and leftist parties today is of a different nature than the one between Islam and Nazism. While describing the fall of the city of Yathrib (later Medina) to the prophet Mohammed and his followers in 622, Wilders refers to the so-called Ansar, the (Arabic word for) helpers, Yathribians, who became allies of Islam. *'Today, Islam finds its ansar in Western leftist and other fellow travelers who ferociously attack Islam's critics and other defenders of Western civilization'* (p. 176). In Wilders' eyes, the Western Left has been subdued by Islam and is being used as its instrument to Islamize the world. This view is expressed in Bosma's book as well. To top it all off, Bosma claims that the present Left is the actual heir of Hitler's' political party, the NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party). Consequently, a modern political party like the Dutch Labor Party, led between April 2010 and February 2012 by Jewish ex-mayor of Amsterdam Job Cohen, stands in the same line as Hitler's NSDAP. For those who can hardly believe that this is seriously being asserted, I refer to the Freedom Party Election Program of 2010, where it says that each year on the fourth of May the Netherlands commemorate *'the liberation of the (national) socialist occupation'* (1940-1945). The site puts the word national in parentheses, implying that the Netherlands suffered from five years of socialist occupation and terror. It is remarkable that Wilders does not explicitly mention this particular line of thought in his book, but this

can easily be explained. Surely, if modern Western labor parties and thus Western labor governments as well, are to be considered Hitler's heirs, this would imply that the Israeli Labor governments from the late forties to the seventies and Mr. Tony Blair's British Labor administration should be seen as Hitler's soul mates, which not only is a ridiculous thought but also quite a risky claim to put in a book published in the United States, a loyal ally of both countries mentioned.

Once he has established that Islam is a reprehensible ideology, and closely allied to Nazism besides, we are not surprised to find that Wilders elaborately discusses its violent past and present. I would like to pick out a number of instructive examples. In his fifth chapter, called *The Yoke of Ishmael*, Wilders enumerates the multiple genocides 'Islam' has committed in the course of its history. He claims that, based on the calculations in Indian historian Lal's (1973) work, 'the population of India dropped from 200 million in 1000 AD to 170 million in 1500, with 60 to 80 million Indians dying as a direct result of jihad' (p. 89). Wilders gives a vivid description of all of the massacres that took place during the jihad in India, and subsequently adds cynically that 'Islam still burns with indignation over the Crusaders' attacks' (p. 89), the idea being that Islam does not regret the millions it killed, but is still whining over the relatively insignificant events that took place during the Crusader raids in the Middle East. Note that the subject of the sentence quoted is once again Islam, an ideology that apparently manages to experience and show the human feeling of indignation. Of course, what we should really read here instead is another grammatical subject: Muslims, flesh-and-blood humans, for only humans can burn with indignation.

35

In his treatment of what happened in India, Wilders refers to the Crusades. In doing so, he tackles a thorny issue. After all, the Crusades were an initiative of the Christians, and one that cannot exactly be characterized as being a conquest through the word and the pen. On the contrary. But of course Wilders knows he can expect comments like the following: Aren't the Crusaders guilty of killing and plundering as well? Well yes, they are indeed, Wilders concedes when he writes: 'While Islam committed innumerable massacres as it swept through Asia and the Middle East, it should be noted that the Crusaders committed their own excesses in Palestine' (p 90-91). But, he hastens to add, there is a difference though: 'Christians did not find sanction for their atrocities in Christian scripture; neither the Bible nor

the example of Christ's life command Christians to kill unbelievers. The Koran and the example of Muhammad's life, however, do' (p. 91). Wilders is realistic enough to acknowledge that *'most people today, even most Christians, will acknowledge that many Christians throughout history committed terrible crimes in the name of Christ'* (p. 19), but the line of thought is that Christians know that this *'violates Christian doctrine'* (p. 19). *'A Christian who proclaims hatred to any group of people violates Christian principles. Not so with the Muslims'* (p. 20). In short: Muslims (not: Islam) kill because their ideology tells them to; Christians kill too, but they are not instructed to do so by their religion. What a relief!

An interesting turning point in the description of the violent history and nature of Islam is the following. While discussing the upcoming European supremacy over the world in the seventeenth century and after, with Islamic countries falling into the hands of Russia, Britain, France, Italy, Spain and the Netherlands, Wilders comes up with the following insights: *'when all seemed lost... Allah saved Islam, orchestrating what in Islamic eyes must look like two miraculous events: the outbreak of the French Revolution and the West's development of an unquenchable thirst for oil'* (p. 112). Allah paradoxically was the driving force behind the French Revolution. It was this Revolution that destroyed confessional structures in France and elsewhere in Europe. It was Maximilien Robespierre who replaced the Catholic faith and God by a metaphysical deism. In Wilders' words, this is the same Revolution that *'revamped Islam at a crucial moment when its resources were diminishing due to its lack of innovation, the decline of its dhimmi population, (i.e., Jews and Christians), and dwindling influxes of new slaves'* (p. 113). Wilders' line of reasoning is that Islam by itself does not stimulate development and creativeness. It relies on dhimmis and slaves to live and survive. Now that at the end of the eighteenth century dhimmis and slaves had been exploited to the bone, Islam needed new resources and innovations: the French Revolution supplied them. One of the dogmas of the French revolutionaries was the complete submission of all the people to the all-powerful state. The French showed the Muslims how they had been capable of submitting their own people and virtually all the European nations on the Continent to the principles of their ideology. It rang a bell and stimulated the Muslims to once again become aware of their glorious past, or in Wilders' words: *'In a sense, Islam encountered a "kindred soul" in Western totalitarian revolutionary thinking'* (p. 113). The line of reasoning is complex. Wilders is convinced

of the aggressive nature of Islam. Islam had somehow, paradoxically, and against its nature, fallen asleep in the ages preceding the French Revolution. God saved Islam by, paradoxically again, allowing the anti-religious French Revolution to take place. The French, coming to Egypt in 1798, made the lethargic Muslims recall their glorious past. They felt newly inspired and rose in order to try to restore their once so magnificent empire.

Wilders rejects the French Revolution. He reproaches French Revolution-inspired and Enlightenment thinking elsewhere in his book for its totalitarian character. The French Revolution may have given birth to the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen, the basis of the present Charter of the United Nations, Wilders still condemns it for its totalitarian character, which resulted in terror. He calls Revolutionary France an '*ideocratic state*' and groups it together with other '*ideocratic*' states: '*... such states –whether revolutionary France, the Soviet Union or Nazi Germany – exterminated their perceived enemies with guillotines, gulags and gas chambers*' (p. 32). Not a word in his book on the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or the principle of the equality of man, which were fruits of this revolution as well.

The French Revolution was nothing but evil and it is this evil that woke up that other sleeping evil. '*Islam began from the nineteenth century onward parroting Western revolutionary jargon, adopting Western technological and scientific innovations, and embracing the belated industrial revolution that Western colonial administration was bringing to the Islamic world – all with the goal of advancing jihad and world domination*' (p. 114). This sounds like a paradox again for a religion that for the first 1200 years developed itself quite independently, but apparently that situation had changed. The key issue for Wilders is that '*exposure to Islam is ultimately fatal to us, but for Islam, contact with the West is a vital lifeline. Without the West, Islam cannot survive*' (p. 116). This last element gives the West an unexpected dominant position over Islam. All it needs to do is cut its ties with Islamic countries and Muslims in general and Islam will not survive. But then again, one may wonder what '*West*' exactly Wilders is talking about. Is it the secular, liberal West, the West as it developed itself from the principles of the French Revolution, and thus in Wilders' terms, the despicable West? Or is it the West as created by the Jewish-Christian tradition, so dearly cherished by the author? But can the secular West and the Jewish-Christian West be regarded

as two separate entities? More on this in the final chapter of this pamphlet.

SOLUTION

The title of Wilders' last chapter speaks for itself: *How to turn the tide*. Having established in the twelve preceding chapters the evil character of the would-be religion of Islam, its devastating effects on the history of the world and the threat it poses to world peace today, it is now time to come up with a solution. The seventeen pages of this final chapter gives us Wilders' view on how to turn this tide and of the different parts of the solution, I find the following the most telling: '*Muslims must defeat Islam*' (p. 212). This sounds a bit strange and not really feasible, but from Wilders' perspective it is quite logical. Islam is not a religion; it is, under all circumstances, an aggressive ideology that seeks to conquer the world. People who follow this ideology are Muslims. But a real Muslim, in Wilders' eyes, is one that follows the tenets of Islam and complies with what they require him to do in the full devastating sense of the word. Those who do not strictly and fully follow them are in fact no longer Muslims in the true sense of the word. This then is the answer to the question why Wilders did not assign a new term to Muslims who are not fully '*observant*'. He makes a distinction between Islam and Muslims and now we understand what it is he wants to say. A real Muslim is the one who acts in full compliance with the aggressive ideology of Islam. Those who do not do so are in fact not Muslims or are so no longer. In Wilders' own words: '*People who reject Islam's violent, intolerant, and misogynistic commandments may be moderates, but they are not practicing "moderate Islam" – they are not practicing Islam at all*' (p. 212). Having read this quote, my question is why Wilders has a problem with

what he calls moderate Muslims, if they are in fact, as he says himself, no longer Muslims. If they are not Muslims, they fall outside the scope of Islam, and as such no longer constitute a danger. Naturally, Wilders does not go into this implication of his logic. We will see below that Wilders wants all Muslims, moderate or not, to 'defeat Islam'.

We might ask ourselves what would be the impact if 'Muslims' were to actually 'defeat' Islam? Wilders has the answer: *'If they (Muslims) could liberate themselves from the yoke of Islam, if they would stop taking Muhammad as a role model, and if they got rid of the hateful Koran, they would be able to achieve amazing things'* (p. 212). Earlier in the book he states: *'If only they could liberate themselves from Islam, they, too, could become prosperous and free nations'* (p. 65). Take some time as a reader to consider the full impact of these words. Imagine for a minute that the same advice was given to Christians: *'If they (Christians) could liberate themselves from the yoke of Christianity, if they would stop taking Jesus Christ as a role model, and if they got rid of the hateful Bible, they would be able to achieve amazing things'*. This is in fact what Wilders is asking Muslims to do. Renouncing the Koran and renouncing following the example of the prophet Mohammed, two key elements in Islam. But if you take away the Koran, and do away with the prophet, what would Muslims be left with? To what can they cling in order to live their lives, as they believe they should if there is no longer a Holy Book and no Holy Prophet? Would they really be inclined to do so just because Wilders says that *'in liberating themselves from Islam, they will ensure a happier life for themselves and their children, and a safer, more peaceful world for the rest of us'* (p. 212)? Now we can also understand the impossibility of answering the question formulated above why moderate Muslims, who are in fact not Muslims at all, should 'defeat Islam.' Wilders' 'solution' of renouncing the Koran and the Prophet cannot but apply to all Muslims as for all Muslims the Koran and the Prophet are essential. Here Wilders takes off his veil. His distinction between moderate and extreme Muslims is made only to ultimately 'lure' all Muslims into accepting his solution.

I think I am not exaggerating if I claim that the solution Wilders offers is ridiculous and belongs to the world of fairies. It is dangerous even. What Wilders is doing here is to strip the Muslims' of their very identity. He robs them of their essential self and offers nothing in return except the vague promise of a happier life for themselves and their children. How are they

supposed to realize this? On what are they to subsequently base their values? Is the hidden message that they should convert to Christianity? Wilders does not make this suggestion.

Suppose we gave Wilders' solution a shot, how should it be implemented? How are we going to convince the Muslims to denounce the kernels of their faith? Wilders offers us a number of suggestions in his 13th chapter and in other parts of the book. His solution is centered around four points (p. 213-215). *'First, we must defend freedom of speech'. 'Second, we must reject all forms of cultural relativism'. 'Third, we must stop the Islamization of the West'. 'Fourth, we must cherish our national identity'.* The consequences if these four criteria were to be realized are evident. Wilders describes them in clear terms. Immigrants in the West must assimilate to Western societies, adapt to their values, and abide by their laws. Or in Wilders' words: *'If you subscribe to our laws and values, you are welcome to stay and enjoy all the rights our society guarantees'* (p. 214). But he also presents the consequences if you do not adapt and abide by these laws: *'If you commit crimes, act against our laws, or wage jihad, you will be expelled'* (p. 214). Mind that Wilders does not say that such people are to be jailed and/or fined. No, they are to be expelled, whereas normally in a democratic state no one is expelled for breaking the laws. Apparently there are two different judicial systems operating here, one for *'us'* and one for *'them'*.

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Let us take a look at some more consequences. Islamic schools must be closed down, *'for they are totalitarian institutions where young children are indoctrinated into an ideology of violence and hatred'* (p. 214). At present, there are around 40 Islamic elementary schools in the Netherlands. They all fall under the control of the Ministry of Education and whereas they were doing badly some years ago, teaching and output numbers have improved over the last few years. Furthermore, the construction of new mosques, *'which Islam regards as symbols of its triumphs must be forbidden'* (p. 214). *'A free society should not grant freedom to those who want to destroy it',* and consequently *'every halal shop, every mosque, every Islamic school and every burka'* constitutes a threat (p. 214). On an international level, Wilders suggests that *'Western nations should refuse to make any financial contributions to the UN'* (p. 215). The point here is that Islamic nations have their own version of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the so-called Cairo Declaration, which formulates Human Rights in accordance with the Sha-

ria, Islamic law. The Islamic states that support this Cairo Declaration must be expelled from the UN and until the time this is effectuated Western Nations should stop their financial contributions to this organization. The chapter describes in abundant detail the solution Wilders has to offer for the Islam problem in the Netherlands and the world.

If I were a Muslim seeking full integration in the West, in Europe, in the Netherlands, I would be utterly discouraged. I am asked to renounce my Islamic identity, however meager that eventually may be, and I have to face the disappearance of Islam from the public and private space. I could only live a life here if I accommodated fully to the West. Wilders blames Muslims for wanting to Islamize the world; he himself is doing the same thing by obliging Muslims to westernize fully. Mohammed and Fatima have to change into John and Mary, not only in name, but also inside.

A key question, also tackled in the preceding chapter, is what exactly this Western culture looks like that Wilders cherishes so highly. An answer to this question is presented below. But before we go into this, let us first take a look at how Wilders' political party has been trying to implement its program in the Netherlands.

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In the 2010 parliamentary elections in the Netherlands, Wilders' Freedom Party obtained 24 of the 150 seats. The Liberal Conservatives and Christian Democrats, together occupying 52 seats, invited the Freedom Party to officially lend their support to a minority government of these two parties in exchange for certain concessions, thus securing a minimal majority in Parliament of 76 seats. This construction held from October 2010 until the fall of the cabinet in April 2012, when the Freedom Party pulled out the plug, refusing to put its signature under new government cuts that had to be implemented due to the ongoing global financial and economic crises. When the minority government was installed with the support of Wilders' party, it issued a statement in which Islam was mentioned in the very first sentence. It said that Liberal Conservatives and Christian Democrats regarded Islam as a religion while the Freedom Party considered it an ideology. The parties involved had agreed to disagree. In any decision it took, the government was dependent on the support of Wilders' party, so as not to lose its majority in Parliament. On issues of migration, carefully avoiding mentioning the terms Islam or Muslims, the Freedom Party asserted itself,

claiming and obtaining as a concession for its support that the central-right government would pursue a much stricter migration and integration policy. In doing so, however, it collided with European laws to which the Netherlands had committed itself. Carrying out the intended policies would mean breaking up treaties, which would require the consent of all 27 members of the Union. Given these circumstances, the endeavors of the government did not have the intended results. Still, government services silently acted in accordance with the strict suggestions and proposals of the Freedom Party.

The policies implemented with regard to refugees and asylum seekers resulted in their being detained, even children, and in the massive violation of international law. A study carried out by Siebers and Mutsaers (2012) indicates that there is a large degree of convergence between migrant-hostile voices like Geert Wilders' and everyday practice in carrying out Dutch government policies towards migrants. These are voices and policies that increasingly fit the concept of ethnic cleansing. The authors of the study propose using the concept of low-intensity ethnic cleansing to capture the increasingly militaristic way in which these policies and voices are framed.

Freedom Party MPs are known for expressing their opinions clearly, in many cases in abusive and insulting language. A strong example is the so-called '*kopvoddentax*' (literally 'head rags tax'). In September of 2009, Wilders presented the proposal in Parliament to tax Muslimas wearing headscarves in public. He did not use the normal term to refer to this item of clothing, but instead used the deliberately abusive and contrived term head rag for it. He never seriously meant to impose such a tax, for which there would never be a parliamentary majority anyway. He just meant to insult wearers of the scarf and to intimidate them. Wilders' proposal in 2007 to shoot young Moroccan gang members in the city of Gouda in the kneecaps should be interpreted in the same way. Gouda, an old Dutch city (in the deep polders of the country) famous for its cheese, has a sizable Moroccan community whose younger members were causing trouble and harassing people. In 2008, the Freedom Party suggested sending in the army to tackle the problem. Not the pen or the word to solve this problem, which Wilders preaches as the proper way of the West, but the use of the weapon instead. There are far more instances of aggressive discourse than these, another one being Mrs. Stassen, Freedom Party representative in the province of Limburg, calling mosques '*palaces of hate*'. Mentioning all of

them would take up too much space here.

What is more important is the question to what extent Wilders and his party influence Dutch politics, and Dutch society. When I presented my other book on the party, *The Ideology of the Freedom Party. The Evil Good and the Good Evil*, I stressed in the Dutch media that maybe we were not only facing this perceived Islamization of the country, but a 'Freedom Party-ization' as well (my apology for the unhappy term). In the numerous meetings and debates I have taken part in, I could sense the influence of the Freedom Party's racist ideology. Muslims no longer feel welcome in the Netherlands. They hide. They keep their heads down. Some assimilate so completely that they have become more Dutch than me, at the same time realizing, now more than ever, that they are ultimately not accepted in our society. Numerous other books and publications on the rise of the Freedom Party have seen the light. NEXUS director and public intellectual Rob Riemen does not mince words. In a recent publication he makes it quite clear that he considers the Freedom Party a contemporary form of fascism. This provoked an enormous row and Mr. Riemen was criticized heavily for saying it but he maintained his point of view and his pamphlet (in translation) *The Eternal Comeback of Fascism* (2010) sold very well. My Bachelor student of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Henk Bovekerk, wrote his BA thesis (2012) on the question whether the Freedom Party should be considered as fascist in the terms of Robert Paxton's book on fascism (2004). In his own words: *'The PVV does not use physical violence, but its rhetoric is at times highly combative. It carries the same message as early twentieth-century fascist violence: that only the Freedom Party is tough enough to save the nation from hostile threats. Such militant rhetoric can give its supporters the idea that violence is justified, and regrettably it has done so in the recent past'*. Bovekerk concluded that the Freedom Party can be placed in what Paxton refers to as the third stage of fascism. His thesis was never meant for publication, but in January 2012 the media got wind of it and Mr. Bovekerk and myself and my colleague professor Jan Blommaert as his supervisors were met with sneers and threats. It goes without saying that the Freedom Party wants to avoid any comparison with the fascist parties of the thirties like Adolf Hitler's NSDAP. That is why they claim it is not them but the present Left-wing parties that are the true heirs of this fascist, or (national) socialist tradition, a point that I dealt with in more detail above. The question to what extent the Freedom Party's discourse influences

people, people's choices and in particular the Muslims' position in the Netherlands is not an easy one to answer. How can it be proven empirically that Muslims not only feel intimidated but also that they are actually experiencing the negative consequences of this discourse on a personal level as well? Siebers and Dennissen (2012) proved convincingly that Muslim people in the context of their work are facing the dark consequences of the prevailing anti-Muslim attitudes in the Netherlands, an immediate consequence of Wilders' utterances and politics. In their study, they show that statements made in Dutch politics and the Dutch media by people like Geert Wilders trigger discussions among colleagues at work, with majority colleagues reproducing these statements and employees with a Muslim and Moroccan background having or feeling the need to defend themselves. Wilders' stigmatizing discourse is reflected in these discussions, which eventually fuel acts of discrimination and result in exclusion of colleagues with a Moroccan and Islamic background. The study shows how statements by Wilders fuel discrimination and exclusion in work settings.

Rejecting any form of violence, Wilders tells us that the weapons with which Islam ideology should be combated are the word and the pen. Fighting what you believe to be wrong using the word and the pen is a noble goal and nobody will contend it. But nevertheless words can cause severe psychological damage. Will Muslimas not feel insulted to the bone when their scarves are referred to as '*kopvodden*', head rags? The term is in fact more offensive than can be brought out in an English translation, since the use of the Dutch word '*kop*' (rather than '*hoofd*') is offensive as well, as it is normally reserved to refer to the heads of animals. Another instance of offensive use of language, and like the previous one uttered by Wilders himself in the Dutch Parliament, is his reference to Muslim Labor Party voters as Islamic voting cattle. One could argue that Parliament is the place par excellence of free speech and that every MP has the right to state anything he or she wants. But here is a party whose leader claims in his *Marked for Death* that the pen and the word, and Christian values in general should be the guideline for our thoughts and actions, and whose Party ideologue Mr. Bosma writes in his book that values such as modesty, respect and discipline are highly valued by the party and should be the criteria to act upon (p. 187). The sad truth is that there is no party in Parliament so rude and insulting as Wilders' party, blatantly contradicting the principles expressed in their own books. In this context, it should not come as a surprise that Wil-

ders and the other MPs of his party hardly ever participate in discussions. They have been and still are invited by virtually all societal organizations, NGOs, universities and TV talk shows, but the number of times they have actually participated in an open debate with the public, with intellectuals, can be counted on the fingers of one hand. I myself have tried over and over again to come into contact with Mr. Bosma, whose book I discussed in my book. It never happened. He never ever responded. On April 17, 2012, I was on national television in Pauw & Witteman, the most popular late-night talk show in the Netherlands, and I invited him then and there on camera to finally accept my invitation to enter into a debate with me: he has remained silent. The party clearly is not interested in taking part in public debates and the reason for this is plain. They simply cannot afford to, for fear of losing voters. Their claims are too easily refuted. They would lose such debates. The party's policy is thus to remain in its own secure world, spread its message to the public from there in a most insulting way, and thus try to achieve the solution formulated by Wilders in his book.

THE SPECK IN YOUR BROTHER'S EYE

The title of this pamphlet contains words spoken by Jesus, admonishing us to take a good look at ourselves before we judge others. I believe that Wilders' and his party's discourse and ideology are not innovative or new at all, and that they fit seamlessly in the world's history of religions and ideologies characterized by a strained relationship with violence, be it psychological or physical. I am not going to get into a discussion about what is a religion and what is an ideology. Both can mean a lot to people and both have a special vision or view of the world, the universe, and the questions of life. Both strive for ideal societies, religions all do so with regard to the afterlife and, if possible, here on earth as well; ideologies are restricted to the latter:

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Wilders is very outspoken on Christianity, Islam and the ideas that fuelled the French Revolution. He praises the first and considers the second and third evil by nature. Still, the three of them have more in common than Wilders wants us to believe. In what follows I would like to draw a concise comparison between the three, formulating their respective goals, and subsequently discussing the ways in which the three aim to realize these goals. The discussion I present is in no way exhaustive.

Christianity is characterized by a strong sense of millenarianism. Christ clearly stated in his teachings that his kingdom is not of this earth. It is in heaven and Christians should live their lives in such a way that they deserve to get to heaven in the afterlife. To attain heaven they will have to

adhere to the principles of Christianity, which basically entails no more than behaving in accordance with the commandment to love your neighbor as yourself, and do unto others as you would be done by. Love, one could say is the basic tenet of Christianity. Today there are over 2 billion Christians in the world.

Islam likewise cherishes an afterlife, maybe even more so than Christianity. In Islam, the basic tenet is solidarity. All Muslims are equal in the face of Allah and Muslims must take care of each other. They form one big family and the poor and the needy are to be taken care of. In the afterlife, Muslims too are judged on their behavior and accomplishments here on earth and God himself decides who can enter paradise and who cannot. Today there are over 1.5 billion Muslims in the world.

The principles of the French Revolution are threefold: liberty, equality and fraternity. It was the first time in history that politicians came up with the idea of 'the equality of all people'. The philosophy of the Revolution, as expressed in particular in Jean-Jacques Rousseau's work, formulated this principle of the equality of all people. With liberty of conscience and choice, and with fraternity and equality, mankind would be able to create a paradise on earth. It was a tempting and alluring perspective. A non-religious way of thinking (I am avoiding the word ideology) was presented to people and unlike religions it promised heaven on earth. The principles of the French revolution have resulted in present day liberalism and (Labor) socialism, which have the sympathy of billions of people in the world and which form the basis of many governments, especially in the West. It goes without saying that people can be Christians or Muslims and at the same time have liberal or socialist political views.

Taking them at face value, an innocent reader learning of these three views of the world would undoubtedly greet them with enthusiasm. Who would oppose such laudable ideals and not want to follow (one of) them? Unfortunately, their histories are not quite as uplifting. When we take a look at the history of Christianity, Islam and the French Revolution, we discover that all three of them are marked by very dark chapters indeed.

Many are the Christians that were inspired by the words of the last book of the New Testament, the Book of Revelation. Revelation contains a very

outspoken millenarist view of the end of times, when the earth will suffer enormous waves of violence and blood will flow knee-high. This book in the past and present has been an inspiration to many Christians aiming to establish paradise on earth or to help God speed up the realization of paradise in the afterlife. The result of this was that minor and major Christian movements and sects have resorted to violence aimed at the opponents of Christianity. The world had to be purified, cleansed of the elements of evil, and in this vein the Catholic Church, considering itself sacrosanct, in the Middle Ages set up the Inquisition, persecuting infidels like the Cathars and 'crypto' Jews. Influenced by Protestant orthodoxy, city courts burnt or hanged witches and homosexuals in seventeenth and eighteenth century Western Europe. Modern Christian movements, in particular those in the United States, stood and still stand up against the Federal Government, considering it the Antichrist, and even revert to violence, as evidenced by the Waco massacre in 1993 and the Oklahoma attack in 1995. Numerous are the groups that cherish violence to this day in order to realize a pure, Christian United States of America. The Anglican Church is bitterly divided on its position with regard to homosexuality. In particular in African countries like Uganda, the anti-homosexuality discourse is very strong indeed and gay people there face serious consequences, even death, if they dare to come out. And it goes without saying that the numerous child abuse scandals in the Catholic Church are outrageous.

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Islam in its turn from its very beginning failed to stick to the principles of solidarity and mercy as preached in the Koran. The coming of the prophet Mohammed to the oasis of Yathrib, later Medina, was in the end followed by the expulsion of the three Jewish tribes that lived in the oasis, their turning into slaves and even killing. When Islam had settled in the Middle East and North Africa and later in the Balkans, Jews and Christians were treated as second rate citizens, dhimmis. They had to pay extra taxes, were forced to wear certain clothing, were limited in their choice of professions, were hardly accepted in government positions and became the victims of Islamic rage in times of economic crisis. Today we are witnessing intensifying threats and terror aimed at Christians by Muslims in Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Palestine. In theocratic Iran, gay young men are hanged, often under the pretext of ordinary crimes like theft. The Al Qaeda movement killed nearly 3,000 people in the September 11 attacks and many, many more in Islamic countries. The custom of marrying off really young girls is a form of

child abuse.

More than once Wilders refers in his book to quotes from various American presidents on Christianity and Islam, one of them being Thomas Jefferson, who *'waged war against the Islamic Barbary states of North Africa in order to stop the pillaging of ships and the enslavement of more than a million Christians'* (p. 16). Jefferson is quoted several times by Wilders, stressing the former American president's allegedly anti-Islamic points of view and his support for the Christian cause. The problem with quotes is that in most cases they can be countered by other quotes from the same person. It was also Thomas Jefferson who said:

'Millions of innocent men, women, and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined, imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity. What has been the effect of coercion? To make one half the world fools, and the other half hypocrites. To support roguery and error all over the earth. Let us reflect that it is inhabited by a thousand millions of people. That these profess probably a thousand different systems of religion. That ours is but one of that thousand. That if there be but one right, and ours that one, we should wish to see the 999 wandering sects gathered into the fold of truth. But against such a majority we cannot effect this by force' (Jefferson, in Peden, 1954, p 160).

Jefferson clearly shows an attitude of cultural relativism, the very same cultural relativism that Wilders abhors so much. The quote does not need further elaboration. Mr. Jefferson knew how to judge the world's diversity of religions, he knew about their dark sides and the impossibility of wiping them out and replacing them by only one. Mr. Jefferson was a wise man that Mr. Wilders could have taken as an example to follow.

It did not take long before the French revolution, which began so full of hope for a better future, resulted in terror. The revolutionary council that governed France under the leadership of Maximilien Robespierre in the period 1793-1794 had more than 40,000 people killed. Ideology turned into nightmare and left Napoleon Bonaparte later with nothing but loathing for the term and its disastrous consequences. The principles of the French revolution led to liberalism and peace-loving social democracy, but they led to Marxism and communism as well. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels were

inspired by its principles of equality and fraternity when they developed their views on world history and the ultimate realization of a workers' paradise. History has shown us and is still showing us today how devastating the effects of Marxism and communism have been. Stalin's communist terror led to the deaths of at least a million Soviet citizens. Chairman Mao's Cultural Revolution killed half a million Chinese. Today we can still see the gruesome effects of communism in Cuba, and in North Korea in particular.

How in God's name can we explain all these aberrations? Why all this violence? What is it that turns people into such fanatics that they are willing to sacrifice everything and everybody to reach their goals? This pamphlet is not the proper place to answer this question; it would require a lot more paper. For the moment, it suffices to conclude that apparently there is something in man's nature that is inclined to fanaticism to realize certain goals, to secure heaven in the afterlife or create it here on earth. Any good religion or ideology should take this vile human inclination into account. But do they? Do Christianity, Islam and French Revolution include (enough) safeguarding elements to promote an approach without violence? Regrettably, the historical records of all three show many instances of followers being incited implicitly or explicitly to use violence or lines of approach that can be interpreted as such. I would say that a good religion or ideology will always be unambiguous in its commandments to its followers. Any spoken or written text that could be interpreted as allowing violence should never be part of a religion or ideology.

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The instances in the Bible, the Koran and the revolutionary writings that incite people to violence or that can be explained as allowing their followers to resort to violence in order to reach their goals are numerous. Reading in the Old Testament about the people of Israel travelling from Egypt to the Promised Land, one is stunned by the violence they are allowed to use against the peoples they encounter. Rock bottom is the killing of the Midianites. After a day of slaughtering people by the thousands, Moses is angry at the Israelites for not having killed adulterous Midianite women too, as he had ordered (Numbers 31:17). Earlier we saw that a modern killer like Anders Behring Breivik interpreted the words of Jesus in such a way that he considered them a license to kill. Koran verse 5 from Sura 9 incites Muslims to kill infidels: '*Kill the polytheists (or infidels or unbelievers) wherever you find them*' (9:5). Many Muslims, to this day, have taken these words literally and

acted on them, believing they are following a divine command. Finally, the words of Enlightenment philosopher Jean Jacques Rousseau were equally disastrous when he wrote in his *Contrat Social* that the citizen who does not want to bow to the will of the people or the community has a serious problem and will have to be killed:

'Again, every malefactor, by attacking social rights, becomes on forfeit a rebel and a traitor to his country; by violating its laws he ceases to be a member of it; he even makes war upon it. In such a case the preservation of the State is inconsistent with his own, and one or the other must perish; in putting the guilty to death, we slay not so much the citizen as an enemy'.

This onerous concept of the will of the people, which Robespierre used as justification for the Terror; and which was later adopted by communism, has led to the deaths of millions.

One may pose the question if there are no differences in intensity and frequency with which the adherents of the three religions and ideologies used and still use violence. If we conducted a historical study, a possible conclusion might be that Islam records the lowest number of victims fallen at the hands of its followers, followed by Christianity, followed in turn by French-Revolution spin-offs like communism. This might be one of the findings. Are we then going to judge the French Revolution and similarly inspired movements as being the most evil, followed by either Christianity or Islam? But what would be the point of such an exercise? The three will not cease to exist. We can, of course, establish the fact that some -isms are absolutely evil - fascism and National Socialism come to mind, having brought nothing but evil to the world. This, incidentally, is also why I have left these two ideologies out of my comparisons. They are just utterly bad. And my personal judgment of Stalinist and Maoist communism is also clear: I condemn both of them. Present-day social democracy, on the other hand, has a strong peaceful tradition. I would certainly not condemn this branch of French Revolution-inspired thinking. By the same token, I would not reject liberalism either. This argument leads me to another consideration. We established the fact that French Revolution-inspired thinking also laid the foundations for non-violent movements like the ones I mentioned earlier. There are people and movements that seek to realize the paradise of the Enlightenment through peaceful means, without taking recourse to

force or violence. Apparently, we cannot condemn the whole heritage of the Revolution. And what about Christianity and Islam? Do we not observe the same peace-loving convictions there as well? Are there not numerous Christians and Muslims that seek to realize their dreamed society in a peaceful manner? Are there not countless Christians and Muslims that independently and united in brotherhood seek the best interest of all people? Christianity is said to have gone through an enlightenment stage, as a result of which most Christians no longer take the violence in the Bible literally. There are Muslims who have likewise reconsidered the contents and message of their Koran even though Islam as a whole still has a long way to go in this respect. What happened to Christianity can also happen to Islam.

We cannot change the fact that there are different religions and ideologies in this world. Trying to wipe them out by force or through persuasion is impossible as American President Thomas Jefferson rightly observed. And we do not need to either. We can very well live with a peaceful Christianity, a peaceful Islam and peaceful French Revolution-inspired movements. This will demand from each and every one of us a tolerant and open attitude, first of all from the believers and supporters of the religions and ideologies themselves. They have a special responsibility to respect other people's views, opinions and lifestyles. We will, obviously, never realize a paradise on earth. This at least is what history teaches us. The only option open to people therefore is to strive for it in a peaceful way, respecting each other's love (Christian), solidarity (Islam) and equality (French Revolution) commandments. In short, I would promote tolerance in the building of societies and I would expect the same from religious authorities, politicians and governments. I realize that this is another ideal than that of creating a heaven on earth, but it is quite a bit easier to accomplish than millenarist views of an earthly or heavenly paradise.

It goes without saying that the views expressed by Wilders in his book on Muslims and Islam form an ideology in themselves and I am sorry for Wilders, but unlike in Christianity, Islam and the French Revolution, I cannot see anything positive in his thinking. In following Wilders' analysis of Islam and his evaluation of religions and ideologies, we have repeatedly been confronted with the question what Wilders' ideal society actually looks like. In his last chapter, he tells us that he highly values the heritage of *'Rome,*

Athens and Jerusalem' (pag.216). This gives us a clue. Rome and Athens stand for the classical heritage and Jerusalem for Judaism and Christianity. For obvious reasons he does not mention Paris. In a sense this is strange though or at least surprising, when we realize that Wilders grew up as a politician in a free and open democracy, which is, after all, built on the principles of the French Revolution. He mentions the word '*democratic*' in relation to the West in the following quote, which I already cited earlier: '*When you compare the West to any other culture that exists today, it becomes clear that we are the most pluralistic, humane, democratic, and charitable culture on earth* (p. 31).' But he labels this Western culture Judeo-Christian (p. 31) and rejects the accomplishments of the French Revolution, one of which is the establishment of democracy. Where, then, does democracy come from, according to the Freedom Party leader? Does not the very mentioning of the word imply that secretly he acknowledges its vital value for the West? Is democracy part of his dreamed society? I would really like to know if Wilders is striving for a Christian society, a Liberal society, or a mix of both. It is important in this respect to stress (once again) that one of the things that he considers absolutely vital and which he mentions in his last chapter is the freedom of speech. It is this freedom in particular that is a basic part of the heritage of the French Revolution. Regrettably, we are forced to conclude that Wilders does not paint a clear picture of what his dreamed society looks like in detail and this should not come as a surprise to us either. His is basically a one-issue party, his one and only mission is to rid the world of '*the evil of Islam*', to bring about a society, a world, without Islam, or one where Muslims have denounced their religion. Wilders' ideology is one of the negative kind.

Wilders pretends to be presenting a peaceful solution to the problem of Islam and Muslims. But how can this be brought about peacefully? Are the 1.5 billion Muslims on earth going to listen to his 'compelling' advice and renounce the Koran, the Prophet and thus Islam? It is at all possible to imagine that, if Wilders' program were to be carried out, this would not lead to resistance, violence, terror and bloodshed? Why should it be impossible for Muslims to work on a peaceful interpretation of the Koran? Why does Wilders not mention this option? Does history not show us in the examples of Christianity and French Revolution spin-offs like social democracy and liberalism that this is a viable scenario?

The solution Wilders presents involves a high risk of invoking violence, even if he states repeatedly that his program should be realized by the word and the pen. Who will give me the assurance that this would indeed be the case? Who can guarantee us that there will not be people who, like so many Christians, Muslims and French revolutionaries, will take up the sword and 'help' to realize their goals that way? Wilders' book brings us nothing new. Not only that, it is also completely counter-productive. Wilders' message is not like that of religions and ideologies, which not only have a negative but also a positive side. It is exclusively negative. He focuses on the shortcomings of the other; accuses the other of being violent by nature, and uses words that can easily be interpreted as allowing violence to fight the enemy. He acts in exactly the same way as he perceives his opponent does. He sees the speck in his brother's eye but fails to see the log in his own.

It may very well be that Geert Wilders will in due time give up his position as leader of the Freedom Party and leave the Dutch political arena. He might indeed, as was suggested, join an American think tank or travel the world spreading the message of the danger of Islam. Irrespective of where his career leads him, this will not mean that the anti-Islam discourse will die out. On the contrary, it is supported by numerous others and in particular on the Internet it is very strong. Therefore countering this ideology by arguments, by pamphlets like this, remains necessary.

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I hope the readers of Wilders' book in the English language will give my response to it some consideration as well. I am Dutch, like Wilders. The Netherlands is my country too. I believe my solution to '*the Muslim problem*' is a not only a different one but a better one as well: we should exercise tolerance, and respect each other in realizing our goals.

The truth that lies in the middle, the truth that may be grey, the truth that is not extreme and therefore maybe not attractive to believers and followers, the truth that brings peace, that is my truth.

NOTE

Verses I quote from the Bible are from the Revised Standard Version (RSV). It is the authorized revision (1946) of the American Standard Version (1901), which in turn was a revision of the King James Version, published in 1611.

Verses from the Koran are from <http://www.clearquran.com>.

The Bible and Koran quotes of Wilders and the Bible quotes of Breivik stem from other translations.

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