

Rejected Halle Sez: December 8, 2002

### **What Hath God Wrought?**

In its editorial of Dec 8th the Register correctly challenges President Bush's characterization of Islam as "a religion of peace." It goes off the rails, however, in claiming for Islam a uniquely violent and predatory past and present.

Basic religious history easily refutes any such facile conclusions as to Islam's uniqueness in this regard.

### **Hinduism**

Fundamentalist Hinduism has been responsible for numerous acts of violence in India. During the Gujarat massacres last spring, more than 2000 Muslims were killed by rampaging mobs. Hindus in the ruling party have carried out massacres against against the Sikh minority in Kashmir, most recently in the village of Chattinghpora where 35 men, women and children were gunned down. The epidemic of lynchings of Dalits (untouchables) for the crime of attempting to covert to other religions provides stark evidence that violence is acceptable not only against those outside of the religion but as a means to imprison Hindus within a religion which denies their basic human rights.

### **Christianity**

While in recent years domestic fundamentalist Christians have limited their attacks to threatening and murdering women's health professionals, their proclivity for wholesale violence was made evident in Christian identity acolyte Timothy MacVeigh's murder of 250 workers in the Murrah federal building. Elsewhere in the hemisphere, Guatemalan President, the born again Christian Efraim Rios Montt murdered tens of thousands during the worst years of the eighties. Of course, the blood stained history of Christianity from the middle ages through the renaissance and after includes the Spanish inquisition, the forced conversions of indigenous peoples in the Americas, the Church's support for fascist states in Spain, Italy and Nazi Germany, and the crusades to mention only a few examples.

### **Buddhism**

The recent murder of the royal family of Tibet by its Crown Prince demonstrates that devout Buddhists, despite their august reputation in some circles, are by no means immune to violence. Of course, the Imperial Government of Japan made no secret of the consistency of devout Buddhism with some of the most savage massacres in recorded history in Nanking, the Phillipines and Indonesia, not to mention comfort girls and kamikaze pilots. In the post war period, the Buddhist government of South Korea has been no stranger to massacres, the crushing of the Kwangju uprising being the most notable example. Going back in time, the rulers of Burma, some of them Buddhist

monks have for centuries, been notable for their avarice, cruelty and war mongering. One king was described in a recent history as having fought "campaign after campaign to expand his realm. He caused bloodshed and suffering in the conquered regions and at home people starved because farmers were drafted into the army. (The king) seems to have been able to reconcile fighting expansionist wars with being a pious Buddhist."

## **Judaism**

On Feb. 25, 1994, Dr. Baruch Goldstein, an ultra-orthodox Jew opened fire in Hebron killing 29 defenseless worshippers. Rather than repudiate the killings, the far right Kach organization of which Goldstein was a member has set up a website to commemorate Goldstein,

<http://www.newkach.org/special/baruch/>

noting that "Over the years, (Goldstein's) grave has become a site of pilgrimage. Numerous people from all over the world come to pray and honor his memory. " Goldstein's massacre was one in a long line of massacres enacted in the establishment of a Jewish state. The current government, strongly supported by the orthodox Jewry both in Israel and in the United States has continued to engage in major human rights violations, according to numerous international organizations.

Fundamentalist varieties of all religions are invariably repressive, irrational, and violent. To single out fundamentalist Islam is simple religious bigotry.

The Register should know better and it should be ashamed of itself.