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Blood On Their Hands

By E.G. Vallianatos

I have been living in the United States for most of my life. I arrived in Chicago from a Greek island on August 9, 1961. I went to college, married, found a job, had two children – the whole catastrophe. But I am still here.

I could probably claim I understand this country just a little. I went to school in Illinois, Wisconsin, and Massachusetts. I taught college at Wisconsin, California, New York, Louisiana, and Washington, DC. I am a historian with a passion for traditional cultures and nature. I am still Greek.

I keep asking questions trying to grasp what makes people so gentle and yet, most of the times, so violent. That always brings me to the Greek tragic poet, Sophocles, who said, 2,500 years ago, man is the most dangerous being on earth.

That hazardous nature of man received a dose of additional poison with the triumph of monotheism. The Greeks had a wonderful polytheistic religion that rarely if ever incited them against other people just because these non-Greeks worshipped different gods than they did.

This global religious peace was shattered forever with the victory of Christianity in the fourth century and Islam in the sixth century. These one-god faiths, daughters of Judaism, spread their doctrines by the sword. The Christians, in particular, were responsible for the unforgettable evil of “extirpating” the Greeks, my ancestors, and their culture. That crime was so horrendous that sunk the Western world into a millennium of darkness.

The criminals of 9/11 were like those Christians who did the Greeks in – premeditating the atrocity, flying airplanes onto the World Trade towers and the Pentagon, while the Christians had the black-robed monks smash the temples of the Greeks. But both Christians and Moslems spared nothing for the killing of the enemies of their god.

These faithful Moslems had blood on their hands from Islam, a religion not different from Christianity or Judaism, in its doctrinal position of claiming to be the faith of the *only* god in the universe. Unlike the Greeks who were tolerant of religious pluralism because they were pious to several gods, the Moslems, Christians and Jews are totalitarian because they believe they are the chosen people of the *only* god in the cosmos.

That fanaticism is even the ruling passion of sects within each of the monotheistic religions, and not merely during centuries of heresies and crusades, by far the most barbarous page of Western history.

David Benke, a Lutheran minister, prayed for the victims of 9/11 with representatives of other faiths. He thought he did the right thing, but he was wrong. Lutheran clergymen charged him with heresy. They want to stop him from preaching and they are determined to have his “collar removed.” They want to punish David Benke because his example might give someone the idea that “all religions are equal.”

Fanaticism, pure and dangerous.

To weaken fanaticism and to avoid a repeat of 9/11, it is necessary to get away from the monotheistic and, by necessity, military sirens of anti-terrorism, a path surely leading to the destruction of our democracy. What we must do instead is to grow up.

Question monotheism and its inherent fanaticism. We have to maintain the strict separation of church and state in the United States, which I consider the greatest value of living in this country. But, clearly, the time is now for Christians, Moslems, and Jews to rethink their religion, discarding dangerous dogmas about exclusivity towards a divinity or truth.

E.G. Vallianatos is writing a book on the war of Christianity against the Greeks and a study of Greek history since the Argonauts. He is the author of three books, one on Greek history and two on agrarian issues.