

amazing. Of course there were the typical anti-American brats calling Bill and Scott “stupid white men” and uneducated academics raving about the lack of liberals in the debate, but, more than ever, there were young people responding with favor to a predominantly right-wing discussion. They lashed out at our liberal readers, “What’s with all the peace and love crap? You sound like a bunch of pathetic hippies.”

This wasn’t a group of already established conservative kids making a cameo on our Web site and our magazine’s letters page just to bash liberals. These were a new group of kids sick of how “intellectually lazy” (to quote the Hipublicans) the Left had become. They weren’t necessarily for invading Iraq. They just wanted to discuss the pros and cons in a rational and calm forum, without the liberal hyperbole of their peers. I felt like Dr. Frankenstein—“It’s alive! IT’S ALIVE!”

And it wasn’t just VICE’s readership. Suddenly it had become fashionable to link liberalism with weakness and conservatism with honesty. Underground film iconoclast Vincent Gallo (“Buffalo 66,” “Palookaville,” “Goodfellas”) is now quoting Nixon and Reagan as if they were Wordsworth and Yeats. Fashion photographer Terry Richardson (Gucci, Sisley, Levi’s) is showing up at conservative book launches and publicly trashing Clinton. Even high-school students are getting in on the act, like the southern Californian artist collective called Sofia that made t-shirts and panties with the illegal-immigrant-crossing logo on them.

You wouldn’t have seen anything like this five years ago, but now it seems that the reality of the boomers’ liberalism is slowly starting to affect the livelihood of Generation X. The joy of mass immigration is easy to talk about when you live in the suburbs and benefit from cheap housecleaning, but when you are going to schools that are 50 percent Spanish

and watching your education slip through your fingers, you tend to be a little more pragmatic. The same goes for affirmative action. Who was laughing the loudest when Jayson Blair was exposed? The journalism students who were forced to intern for us because they couldn’t get paying jobs in the mainstream press.

These kids, the New Conservatives, don’t have the luxury of idealism that even the youth of the 1980s had. Due to the overwhelming glut of information on the Internet and an unprecedented barrage of marketing, these young people are more aware and more cynical than any generation that came before. Within this group, more and more are embrac-

ing conservatism. They are admittedly few—I would estimate that only 12 percent of our readers would dare call themselves conservatives—but that is at least twice what it was five years ago. Finally, the dumb community’s days are numbered. They are slowly but surely being replaced with a new breed of kid that isn’t afraid to embrace conservatism. I’m not saying I had anything to do with this newborn counterculture, but I do have this strange compulsion to start handing out cigars to all my friends. ■

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*Gavin McInnes the co-founder of VICE, a youth culture brand that was founded in Montreal and is now based in New York City.*

## Thrown to the Lions

Mideast Christians are more endangered than ever.

By Daniel McCarthy

“THROUGHOUT THE HOME are understated pieces of Christian iconography: a small portrait of Christ, a Virgin Mary figurine in the kitchen and a wallet-sized photo of an Eastern Orthodox priest attached to a mirror in the bedroom.”

The words are Jonathan Finer’s, writing on the front page of the *Washington Post*, and the description is of a residence in Baghdad that once belonged to the deposed Iraqi regime’s most famous Christian, deputy prime minister Tariq Aziz. That Aziz, a member of Saddam Hussein’s inner circle, was a Christian, and apparently a serious one, gives some suggestion of the place Christianity had in pre-liberation Iraq. But something else that Finer reports may give an even better picture: sitting on a desk in

one of Hussein’s palaces, in what was evidently a child’s room, was an Advent calendar. Far from being persecuted, Christianity in Hussein’s Iraq was a visible presence even within the dictator’s own household.

Iraq’s Christians have been less than visible to the American public. Indeed, Christian minorities everywhere in the Middle East have received little attention from the public and the press, while U.S. policymakers have acted with indifference to fate of the region’s Christians. Israel, confronted with suicide bombers and hostile nations near and far, has garnered considerable sympathy and support from Americans, and from evangelical Christians most of all. But the Middle East’s own Christians, faced with

similarly grave dangers, have attracted little concern. What is more, the Christians of the area have no Israel, no nation, of their own: they are minorities in every country in which they live. Their plight deserves our attention, especially when the United States's own actions risk making the region an even more dangerous place to practice Christianity.

Where Christian persecution in the Middle East is concerned, it is not clear that the United States is on the side of the angels. Under Saddam Hussein, Christians in Iraq were free to practice their faith. Now that the U.S. has deposed him, Christians face the threat of an Islamic revolution that will reduce them to the level of their co-religionists in Iran. But even Iran, charter member of President Bush's "Axis of Evil," seems positively liberal compared to U.S.-ally Saudi Arabia. And while the U.S. is in bed with Saudi Arabia, the most religiously tolerant Arab state in the region, Syria, is a potential target for "regime change."

There have been Christians in these lands from the faith's earliest days. These are some of the oldest churches in the world. It was in Antioch—Antakya in modern Turkey—that, according to the New Testament, the followers of Jesus were first called "Christians." Today there are 10-12 million Christians in the Middle East; Muslims outnumber them by more than 10-to-1. Christian denominations include Eastern Catholic Churches—like Chaldeans in Iraq and Maronites in Lebanon—that resemble Eastern Orthodox Churches but are in communion with Rome; several Eastern Orthodox Churches proper, with sees at Istanbul, Jerusalem, and elsewhere; and many Protestant denominations as well, in addition to a few very old schismatic denominations that can only be classified by themselves. The rites of several of these churches are still conducted in Syriac, a language closely related to the Aramaic that Christ spoke.

In most of the nations of the Middle East these Christians live in a state of "dhimmitude," as recognized religious minorities under Islamic law. The Koran designates Christians, and also Jews and Zoroastrians, as "Peoples of the Book," who have received partial revelations;

otherwise establishes wide-ranging freedom of religion. There is no state religion, proselytizing is legal, and Assad generally leaves the country's 1.7 million Christians (10 percent of the population) alone. Religious institutions must, however, register with the government.

## NOTHING RESEMBLING WESTERN-STYLE RELIGIOUS LIBERTY EXISTS IN THE REGION, EVEN IN THOSE STATES WHERE ISLAM IS NOT THE OFFICIAL RELIGION.

as such, Muslims are not supposed to convert them forcibly or otherwise overtly mistreat them, although "Peoples of the Book" are not accorded the same status and rights as Muslims. In those states where Islam is the official religion, proselytizing by other religions is usually forbidden, and a Muslim who converts may find himself ostracized, jailed, or—in Iran and Saudi Arabia—even executed.

Nothing resembling Western-style religious liberty exists in the region, even in those states where Islam is not the official religion. Lebanon, for example, whose general population is 30 percent Christian and whose Muslim population is divided among several denominations, reflects its divisions with a constitution that specifies that the president must be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim, and the Speaker of the Parliament a Shi'ite Muslim. Conversion from one faith to another is legal in Lebanon, but religion is still very much a political issue. Identification cards specify the holder's religion.

Ironically, the U.S. has found itself at odds with the two most religiously neutral governments in the Middle East, the rival Ba'athist regimes of Saddam Hussein in Iraq and Bashar al-Assad in Syria. The Syrian constitution specifies that the president must be a Muslim, but oth-

Saddam's Iraq, with between 500,000 and one million Christians out of a total population of 23 million, was broadly similar to Assad's Syria, except that Islam was the official state religion and proselytizing was prohibited. In that sense Iraq's Christians were under more restrictions than their neighbors in Syria, but in other ways Hussein posed as a patron of Christianity. He ruthlessly suppressed any outbreaks of Islamist violence against Christians, and he provided inexpensive materials to Christians for building churches. He was also known to give money, as illustrated by a story reported by the Associated Press in March, that Saddam Hussein had the key to the city of Detroit, a gift from the city after Hussein donated \$250,000 to an expatriate Iraqi church in Michigan in 1979.

Not that all of Hussein's actions toward Christian communities were well intended. Toward the end of his regime, Iraqi Christians came to fear that they were seen as a "Western" influence within the country and, by extension, as an enemy of Hussein. In February 2002, Hussein put all priests and church property under the jurisdiction of his Ministry of Islamic Property, a move that outraged the expatriate Chaldean Catholic community. But an April article in the *Christian Science Monitor* quoted Iraq's Armenian Archbishop Avak Asadourian, interviewed

after the fall of Baghdad, as saying that Christians “enjoyed total religious freedom and there was no religious discrimination.”

Since Hussein was overthrown, instances of discrimination and violence against Christians have proliferated. On

tain rights. There are reserved seats in Iranian parliament for Christians and other “Peoples of the Book,” and although they are not allowed to run, they can vote in the country’s presidential election. In theory, Christians and other religious minorities can have their own

who live in Saudi Arabia, according to the U.S. State Department’s 2002 International Religious Freedom Report, some seven million are foreigners, and many of them are Christians. The same report cites the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops as estimating that there are between 500,000 and a million Catholics in the country. There are large Ethiopian and Filipino communities of immigrant workers. These are some of the people who fall afoul of the Mutawwa’in. International Christian Concern, an organization that monitors Christian persecution around the world, has reported, for example, that in 2002 five Ethiopian Christians were tortured in two separate incidents in the Bremer Deportation Center, before ultimately being sent back to Ethiopia.

The State Department’s 2002 International Religious Freedom Report details several similar episodes, including the arrest in April 2002 of 26 Christians after Mutawwa’in raids on two private residences. But don’t think that just because the U.S. State Department publishes a report that mentions such abuses that that means they are taken into account in making U.S. policy. Despite the recommendations of its own Commission on International Religious Freedom, the State Department refused to add Saudi Arabia to the list of “Countries of Particular Concern” for violations of basic religious liberty. Both Iran and Iraq made the list in 2002, but Saudi Arabia did not.

There are several readily recognizable factors contributing to Saudi Arabia’s exceptional religious intolerance. It is, after all, the Muslim homeland and holy land, and the Wahhabi ideology endorsed by the House of Saud is quite radical. Yet the House of Saud has little room to maneuver for fear of upsetting even more radical elements, including the followers of Osama bin Laden, who find the royal family to be insufficiently devout—for allowing U.S. troops on

## ISLAMIC LAW, SHARIA, IS STRICTLY ENFORCED. MUSLIMS WHO CONVERT TO CHRISTIANITY MAY BE PUT TO DEATH.

May 10, Britain’s *Daily Telegraph* reported the murder in Basra of two Chaldean Catholics who had been involved in selling liquor, an entirely legal and legitimate business under Saddam Hussein but one that would be illegal under Islamic law. A week later, the *Seattle Times* carried a story about an Iraqi Christian who had been evicted from his home because his Muslim landlord no longer felt obliged to rent to Christians. The story quoted the man’s wife as saying, “I think we were better off under Saddam.” In the lawlessness that has ensued since the collapse of Hussein’s government, many Christians have fled Shi’ite-majority areas of the country, such as Basra, for cities like Mosul with larger Christian populations.

In the short term, an Islamic revolution would make matters worse for Christians in Iraq than for those in neighboring Iran; in the long term, it might result in conditions nearly identical to those in the Islamic Republic. Iran is one of the most religiously repressive countries in the region. Islamic law, Sharia, is strictly enforced. Muslims who convert to Christianity may be put to death, and suspected apostates have faced everything from employment discrimination to detainment and torture. Even in Iran, however, the Christian minority—less than 1 percent in a country that is 99 percent Muslim—has cer-

tain rights. There are reserved seats in Iranian parliament for Christians and other “Peoples of the Book,” and although they are not allowed to run, they can vote in the country’s presidential election. In theory, Christians and other religious minorities can have their own private schools, although in practice the government imposes several bureaucratic hurdles. The printing of Christian literature is outlawed, and Christian testimony in court counts for only a fraction of the worth of a Muslim’s testimony. Some Christian denominations, particularly evangelicals suspected of proselytizing, are subject to considerable police harassment.

Christian life in Iran is severely circumscribed, but Christianity is at least legal and accepted. Such is not the case in Saudi Arabia. As in Iran, in Saudi Arabia apostasy is punishable by death, although it not always is. Also as in Iran, printing Christian literature is prohibited. But unlike in Iran, Christians in Saudi Arabia are effectively barred from practicing their religion at all. Public forms of worship that are not Islamic are illegal in Saudi Arabia. Theoretically, Christians are allowed to observe their religion in the privacy of their own homes, but in practice even this right is often violated by the kingdom’s religious police, the Mutawwa’in. Christians meeting in private for prayer groups or Bible study have been subject to arrest by the Mutawwa’in. Some who have been arrested have been beaten, tortured, and deported from the country.

Officially, Saudi Arabia has no Christians. All citizens of the kingdom must be Muslims. But of the 17 million people

holy soil, among other things. This situation minimizes the prospects of Saudi Arabia liberalizing any time in the near future. For the United States to make the kingdom the latest addition to the "Axis of Evil" would surely only do harm, further inflaming radical Islamic sentiment in the country. But the Bush administration's refusal even to list Saudi Arabia as a "Country of Particular Concern" speaks volumes about the place that the plight of the Middle East's Christians occupies in the hierarchy of the administration's regional priorities.

On the bright side, Saudi Arabia is not the norm for Arab states. Others may put limits on the freedom of Christians to meet, publish literature, or proselytize, but none of the kingdom's neighbors is anywhere near as repressive. Jordan's Christians, roughly 6 percent of the population, have prospered and are disproportionately well represented in education, government, and the media. Proselytizing is forbidden, but Muslim apostates face only informal penalties. Yemen, Oman, Kuwait, and the United Arab Emirates all discourage proselytizing and put some restrictions on Christians, regulating such things as where public services can be held and whether or not literature can be sold or distributed, but otherwise Christians are unmolested.

Qatar is more restrictive and, like Saudi Arabia, prohibits non-Muslims from holding public worship, but unlike Saudi Arabia, Qatar does not persecute Christians for meeting and holding services in private. Bahrain, on the other hand, is one of the more liberal Arab states—proselytizing is discouraged, but bookstores are free to sell Christian literature, and the country's small Christian community is subject to little interference.

But legal restrictions on religious practices tell only part of the story. A country like Egypt illustrates many of the other forms that religious discrimi-

nation and outright oppression of Christians can take. Islam is the official religion of Egypt, and the country is under Sharia—but a form of Sharia that places few legal burdens on Christians and other "Peoples of the Book." The Egyptian constitution guarantees freedom of religious belief and practice, and even proselytizing is legal. On paper, Egypt may seem to be relatively hospitable to Christians.

In practice, however, the Egyptian government constrains the rights of the Coptic Christian minority (between 6 percent and 14 percent of the population) in various ways. Building permits needed for the construction or repair of churches are often held up. In the meantime, it is common for a mosque to be built near the site of the proposed church—and

Egyptian law prohibits the building of a church within 100 feet of a mosque. Christians are also systematically underrepresented in the government and the media, and Christian voters have been harassed at the polls.

The most serious violation of the rights of Christians in Egypt is the tendency of police and other authorities to look the other way when Muslim gangs—or even outright terrorists—kidnap, rape, or murder Christians. In particular, Christian girls have been abducted, raped, and "married" to their Muslim captors. Although Egypt has laws that prohibit minors from getting married without their parents' permission, the parents of Christian girls forcibly married to Muslim men have found it very difficult to obtain justice from the authorities.

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U.S. ally Turkey is in several respects quite similar to Egypt. Although not known for the sort of violent attacks against Christians found in Egypt, in Turkey, as in Egypt, Christians often find themselves refused building permits and in Turkey, too, zoning laws and other ordinances have been used to inconvenience Christians. What's more, as a Jan. 10 article in *Christianity Today* reported, "[A]uthorities forbid Christians on Turkey's southeastern border with Syria, Iraq, and Iran to teach [Syriac-Aramaic]—nor can their schoolchildren learn any subject in it. Christians in Syria, by contrast, legally teach and worship in that language."

Over 99 percent of the Turkish population is Muslim; there are estimated to be fewer than 75,000 Christians in the entire country. Its constitution is secular and guarantees freedom of religion, yet Christians are still subject to abuses. Turkey, which is applying for membership in the European Union, might otherwise seem like a model for other states in the region, a successful "Westernization" of a majority-Muslim state. That even Turkey should discriminate against what few Christians it has serves as a rebuke to those in the West, and in the Bush administration in particular, who dream of building Western-style liberal democracies in the region.

One might expect the most Western-like state of all in the Middle East, Israel, to be markedly different from its predominantly Muslim neighbors. And indeed it is—but there are a few similarities, too. Christian proselytizing is legal in Israel, in contrast to the Islamic world, but there have been moves to change this. Ultra-orthodox parties in the Knesset have several times introduced legislation to restrict missionary activity. In 1998 one such bill even had the sponsorship of a Labour M.P., but the measure was soundly defeated, as have been subsequent anti-missionary

proposals. The most recent was a 2001 bill that would have set a three-month prison sentence for anyone sending unsolicited mail, faxes, or e-mail for the purposes of proselytizing.

Attempts to pass anti-missionary laws have failed, but Israeli officials have found other ways to dampen Christian activity. Often this bureaucratic harassment takes the form of officials refusing to grant or renew visas for clergy or seminary students to enter the country. For example, the Catholic news agency Zenit reported on March 24 that Israel was withholding visas from 86 priests and other religious personnel, ostensibly on security grounds. (70 of those awaiting their visas were from predomi-

## **POLARIZING THE REGION BETWEEN CRUSADERS AND JIHADISTS WILL MEAN DISASTER FOR THE CHRISTIANS OF THE MIDDLE EAST.**

nantly Arab countries.) The Israeli government has also refused to recognize the election of the Irineos I as the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, on suspicion that Irineos harbors sympathies for the Palestinian Authority. The withholding of recognition has meant, among other things, that Irineos has been unable to obtain visas for guests he wishes to invite to the Holy Land.

This amounts to little more than a nuisance for Israel's Christians; such things are small compared with the abuses of Christians that occur in even most moderate Arab countries. When political and economic freedoms are taken into account, Israel certainly does live up to its reputation as the most Western nation in the region. Even so, religion is not a matter of political indifference in Israel and in Israel too, where religion comes into play in politics, formally or informally, Christians lose out.

The history and demographic make-

up of the Middle East both argue against the prospects of religiously neutral liberal democracies taking root there any time soon. U.S. attempts at nation building put the area's Christians at grave risk, as we are seeing now in Iraq. So what can the U.S. do?

We can begin, like the Hippocratic Oath, with the injunction to "first do no harm." Christians have survived in the Middle East for nearly 2,000 years. In most places they have reached an uneasy but stable living arrangement with their Muslim countrymen. As bad as things are for these Christians, they could be much worse. Aggressive U.S. intervention in the area has little hope of bringing an unknown religious tolerance

to the region, but it can certainly inflame Islamic radicalism. Polarizing the region between Crusaders on the one hand and Jihadists on the other will mean disaster for the Christians of the Middle East. It does not matter to the likes of Osama bin Laden that Christians are as much natives of the Middle East as Muslims are and indeed have a longer tradition. Christians will still be seen as Westerners and enemies.

The U.S. may have other concerns in the Middle East beyond just the fate of its Christian minorities, but at the very least American policymakers should think carefully before acting in a way likely to cause more suffering. Certainly Western-style democracy for the people of the Middle East should not come at the expense of the lives of the region's Christians. ■

*Daniel McCarthy is a writer for LewRockwell.com.*

# The Coming Diversity Crack-up

Mass immigration compounds the affirmative-action injustice.

By Steve Sailer

THE SUPREME COURT'S decision endorsing race and ethnicity as valid factors in choosing law students at the University of Michigan is just a fading echo from the past, according to veteran conservative commentator George F. Will. A tidal wave of Hispanic immigration is washing away "a vanished America's problems with a binary, black-and-white understanding of its racial composition." In his June 24 column, headlined "A Crude Remedy for a Disappearing Problem," Will also rejoiced that "rapidly rising rates of intermarriage further the wholesome blurring of the picture of the nation." He summed up, "Demographics, not constitutional litigation, are determining the destiny of a post-racial America."

A quantitative approach, however, suggests a more disturbing picture, one illustrated by the title of a 2002 book published by the late UC Santa Barbara historian and political scientist Hugh Davis Graham: *Collision Course: The Strange Convergence of Affirmative Action and Immigration Policy in America*. Without reforms, mass immigration will make ethnic preferences an increasingly contentious and racially divisive issue for future generations.

The key variable in predicting how disruptive reverse discrimination might eventually become is the "racial ratio." This novel measure refers to how many whites there are to shoulder the cost of preferences relative to each legally protected minority member. All else being equal in this zero-sum game,

as the proportion of whites to minorities shrinks due to the demographic changes Will celebrates, the higher the cost of affirmative action per individual white, and thus the more resentment whites will feel toward minorities.

This racial ratio is directly analogous to the well-known ratio of workers per retiree that is central to debates over the future of Social Security. Yet, this whites-per-minority concept is almost unknown in discussions of affirmative action.

Although the Social Security issue places the interests of the young and the old at odds, their being each other's children and parents alleviates some of the callousness of the conflict. In contrast, fewer family ties exist to temper racial and ethnic struggles, which is why they are so rightly feared.

If the current rules remain, the racial ratio will plummet for the rest of the century. Simultaneously, the electoral power of whites will fall, making it harder for them to obtain redress of their growing grievances through the normal political channels.

This portends a volatile future for the Republic. White alienation will very likely elicit white-nationalist activism, as in Europe in recent years. The authorities will in turn crack down by imposing ever more stifling political correctness, driving white nationalists underground, with uncertain but probably unpleasant consequences.

How did we start down this road?

The Nixon administration invented racial quotas in 1969 to integrate segre-

gated craft unions. At that time, there were almost eight whites for every black, so the average cost per white of giving a boost to blacks in payback for generations of exploitation during slavery and Jim Crow was relatively small.

In the 1970 Census, African-Americans made up 90 percent of the then-recognized minorities, and Americans to this day still tend to think of preferences as applying primarily to blacks.

In 1973, however, the Nixon White House created the Asian racial and Hispanic ethnic categories. Meanwhile, in 1965, Congress had loosened up immigration again after restricting it tightly since 1924. Almost no one thought about the long-term interaction of immigration and quotas. So, federal bureaucrats driven, according to historian Graham, "not only by the country's history of past discrimination but also by the vagaries of chance, historical accident, logical contradiction, and inadvertence," extended affirmative action to Asians and Hispanics.

Nobody offered much of an explanation for why immigrants who chose America, presumably warts and all, should immediately qualify for special treatment at the expense of many native-born citizens, but then not many people bothered to ask either. Americans just found it more interesting then, as now, to argue over affirmative action for blacks.

The 1980 Census found 181 million non-Hispanic whites and 46 million "protected minorities," resulting in a racial ratio of 3.9 whites for every minority.