

# Learning to Live With Radical Presbyterians

*by* Con Chapman

Despite the havoc they have wreaked and the flight delays they have caused, there is a new, more nuanced attitude towards those pejoratively referred to as “Islamofascists” abroad in the West these days.

Consider Faisal Ahmad Shinwari, a judge who banned women from singing on television, threatened to outlaw cable TV, and upheld the death penalty for two journalists who criticized Afghanistan's turn towards Islam.



*Fareed Zakaria*

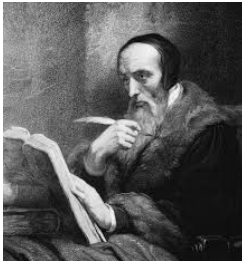
The proper attitude towards such a reactionary, says Fareed Zakaria, author of *The Post-American World*, is not to condemn reflexively, but to consider him in context. Remove him, and you lump a comparative moderate in with the jihadists. Leave him in place, and there's a chance he'll shut down “Rob and Big” and other MTV reality shows. Now *that* would be progress.



*Rob & Big: From left to right, Big, Rob*

The proponents of this pragmatic line of thinking say a more tolerant approach will succeed where force has failed to persuade terrorists to abandon the religious fanaticism that keeps them out of the community of civilized nations.

It's certainly worth a try. After all, it worked with Presbyterians.



*John Calvin: "Snnf-do I smell popcorn?"*

Presbyterianism, founded on the theological teachings of John Calvin in Scotland, is a mainline Protestant denomination in America, but in its formative years it raised the hackles of Anglicans, Catholics and just about every other religion it came into contact with. Its adherents were stereotyped as humorless, sexless enemies of free thought and inquiry. In an 1822 letter Thomas Jefferson reported that in his village of Charlottesville, where Presbyterians were one of many denominations, "all mix in society with perfect harmony." Where Presbyterianism prevailed "undividedly," he noted, their "ambition and tyranny would tolerate no rival" and they succumbed to a "fever of fanaticism."

Sound familiar?



*Jefferson: "Sorry--I don't date Presbyterian chicks."*

Don't get me wrong. I know some very nice Scots Presbyterians—in fact I married one. But I truly believe that Islamofascists can be persuaded to temper their dogmatic tendencies, just as the Presbyterians were.

Take beheadings, a barbaric form of execution that is applied without trial by Islamic radicals. Before they switched to the more enlightened approach of hanging, beheading was the preferred method of capital punishment among Edinburgh's Presbyterians. The resulting portable body part was then used as a decoration on the gates of the city. Click on “Outdoor Accessories and Pillows” at the Pottery Barn website for a current selection of Presbyterian patio headware.

*"Honey, could you light the Dissenters Head Lamps, please?"*

As standards of Presbyterian decency rose over time, a more humane technique was adopted; the decedent was beheaded *after* being hanged.

The monolithic outlook of Islamofascists, which drives them to seek a world-wide caliphate founded on *Shari'a* law, finds echoes in Scottish history as well. In 1564, two men who had

merely toasted the King of England's health were whipped, nailed to gallows and cut to the bone with razors. To make the punishment fit the crime, their tongues were drawn out to full length and bound with sticks and thread.

Turning on its head the notion that, if you can't say anything nice, don't say anything at all.



*Presbyterian Pool Party: "Hey you kids--no dunking!"*

Consider the punishments handed out to those who violate restrictions on sexual activity in Islamic countries—the public stonings and floggings for adultery and fornication. Now compare and contrast, if you will, Sir John Herring, who at the dawn of the 14th century in Scotland burned his daughter and her lover alive, while they were still in the house. So much for Scottish thrift.

Over time, Presbyterians moderated their views on the proper punishment for what we today consider “victimless” crimes. By the end of the 16th century the laws of Scotland reflected a three-tiered sentencing guideline for fornication: a forty-pound fine for the first offense, eight days in prison for the second, and three duckings in the “foulest pool in town” for subsequent violations.

No wonder Scottish birth rates are low.

So it is possible that over time the hard edges will be sanded off the radical Islamofascists of today and their descendants will become just as pacific as Presbyterians, who nowadays invite infidels to Sunday morning coffee hours and hold church basement sock-hops.



*Sock hop!*

This is not to say that all of the violence has been bred out of the Scots Presbyterians, however.

When my wife reads this, she's going to kill me.

