

Why Do Progressives Hate the West So Much?

President Trump was right to defend the West, a civilization which goes back to the Homeric epic and the Hebrew prophets, and having been baptized by Christ, is “not the property of any particular race but the universal aspiration of humankind”...

In an essay for *The Atlantic* earlier this month, Peter Beinart, an associate professor of journalism and political science at the City University of New York, attacked President Trump’s Warsaw speech for its repeated reference to “the West” and to “our civilization.” According to Mr. Beinart, President Trump referred to “the West” ten times during his speech and to “our civilization” five times. For Mr. Beinart, who evidently shares the racial obsession of most “progressives,” all such references to the West and to “our civilization” are racist. He states that Mr. Trump’s “white nationalist supporters will understand exactly what he means” when he uses such terms and that, therefore, “it’s important that other Americans do, too.”

Mr. Beinart then proceeds to educate his American readers about what President Trump means by “the West” and by “our civilization.” The West “is not a geographic term,” he informs us, reminding us that Poland is further east than Morocco and that France is further east than Haiti. Continuing the geography lesson, he points out that Australia is further east than Egypt, yet Poland, France, and Australia are all considered part of “the West,” whereas Morocco, Haiti, and Egypt are not. So far, so good. We are all agreed that the West, in this context, is not merely a geographical thing.

Next Mr. Beinart reminds us that the West is not an ideological or economic term either. India is the world’s

largest democracy and Japan is among its most economically advanced nations. And yet, says Mr. Beinart, "no one considers them part of the West." This might also seem a point on which we can agree, unless by "the West" we mean the sort of globalist hegemony in which the G-20, global corporations, the World Bank, and the IMF rule the world in the name of an "economically advanced" ideology, an ideology which indubitably has its roots in Western political philosophy, albeit a philosophy which is the cankered fruit of a decaying "West." In this ideological sense, we can say that Japan and India have become westernized insofar as they embrace the sort of "capitalism" that leads to global corporatism. Such a view could even be seen as a form of western economic imperialism. Mr. Beinart is not interested in this definition of the West because it precludes his being able to characterize President Trump's use of the word as "racist," which is really the point that Mr. Beinart wishes to make.

The West is, Mr. Beinart insists, "a racial and religious term": "To be considered Western, a country must be largely Christian (preferably Protestant or Catholic) and largely white." It's important at this point in Mr. Beinart's argument that we catch his sleight of hand. With a quick rhetorical change of direction, he will now discuss the "racial" and the "religious" as scarcely distinguishable synonyms, an implication which is accentuated by the title of his essay ("The Racial and Religious Paranoia of Trump's Warsaw Speech"). The implication is that to be "religious" in an orthodox Christian sense is simultaneously to be racist.

Where there is ambiguity about a country's "Westernness," it's because there is ambiguity about, or tension between, these two characteristics. Is Latin America Western? Maybe. Most of its people are Christian, but by U.S. standards, they're not clearly white. Are Albania and Bosnia Western? Maybe. By American standards, their people are white. But they are also mostly Muslim.

In order to justify this juxtaposition of the “racial” and the “religious,” Mr. Beinart reminds us of the influence of Steve Bannon on “Trump’s civilizational thinking,” quoting a 2014 speech by Mr. Bannon in which he celebrated “the long history of the Judeo-Christian West’s struggle against Islam” and praised “our forefathers” for having “bequeathed to us the great institution that is the church of the West.”

Let’s look at Mr. Beinart’s dexterous sleight of hand a little more closely; in slow motion, so to speak. He is suggesting that the struggle of Christians against the militaristic expansion of Islam from the early middle ages right through to modern times is not merely a struggle for religious and political freedom but is “racial.” When Charles Martel, way back in 732 AD, defeated an Islamist army, which had invaded Spain and most of France during the previous twenty years, advancing as far as Poitiers and Tours, he was not defending Christian civilization from a murderous military invasion but was somehow being a racist. When, almost eight hundred years later, in 1529, the people of Vienna defended their city from the siege placed upon it by the Islamic imperialist, Suleiman the Magnificent, they were not defending their homes and their families, and their faith and their freedom, they were being racist.

And what of the numerous people of impeccably non-white heritage who have fought the good fight for Christendom and have been canonized by the Church as saints? The website Catholic Online (www.catholic.org) lists no fewer than 937 of them. From an orthodox Christian perspective these saints are beacons of the West, the heroes of Christendom. It might be argued by those who are as racially obsessed as Mr. Beinart that some of these so-called black saints were from north Africa and might not be technically black but Arab. From a Christian perspective, it doesn’t matter whether they are black, white, or any of forty shades of grey in between. To be of the West is to be part of Christian civilization. It’s a

question of creed, not of colour. In other words, the juxtaposition of “racial” and “religious” is not merely a sleight of hand but an outright lie.

The irony is that Mr. Beinart and his ilk are as “religious” as the rest of us. It’s just that they worship different gods. “Every president from George H.W. Bush to Barack Obama emphasized the portability of America’s political and economic principles,” enthuses Mr. Beinart. “The whole point was that democracy and capitalism were not uniquely ‘Western’. They were not the property of any particular religion or race but the universal aspiration of humankind.”

In point of fact, contrary to Mr. Beinart’s belief, “democracy” and “capitalism” *are* uniquely “Western,” insofar as they began in the West, though they are not uniquely or originally “American” as he seems to imply, the former having its origins in ancient Greece and the latter originating in England. They are, however, not applicable to the West alone but have become global phenomena, much as Christendom has become a global phenomenon. Mr. Beinart goes further, applying a proselytizing religious zeal to the principles of “democracy” and “capitalism,” which are “not the property of any particular religion or race but the universal aspiration of humankind.” Whether we are as keen to bend the knee to such abstract Western concepts as those in which Mr. Beinart places his faith, we can agree that the West is for everyone, regardless of any accident of birth. The West, as understood by Christians, is the flowering and flourishing of a civilization which goes back to the Homeric epic and the Hebrew prophets, and having been baptized by Christ, is “not the property of any particular race but the universal aspiration of humankind.”

President Trump was right to defend such a civilization, even if he doesn’t really know what it is, and Mr. Beinart is wrong to accuse him of racism when he does so. It is Mr. Beinart and not Mr. Trump who sees everything in terms of an unhealthy

obsession with race, reducing everything to the level of skin colour. Perhaps he should look at the log in his own eye before criticizing the perceived splinter in anyone else's perspective. Once he follows such sound Christian advice, he might stop being the proverbial pot calling the kettle black.

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This article was first published by the Imaginative Conservative. Read the [original article](#).

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