

CHARLIE HEBDO AND THE MEDIA ARE COWARDS

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The publisher of Charlie Hebdo, Stephane Charbonnier, was among the 12 people killed in Paris on January 7 last year. The New York Times described him as a “staunch left-wing activist, raised in a family of communists.” He was also an unrelenting bigot.

Charb, as he was known, did not deserve to be shot, but attempts to lionize him are grossly misplaced. Make no mistake about it, he was no martyr—he was a narcissist who deliberately taunted people of faith in a vile fashion.

Now Charb’s successor—eight of the staffers were killed in the massacre—Laurent “Riss” Sourisseau, is capitalizing on the killings by publishing an anniversary issue.

On the cover of the newspaper is a depiction of a blood-soaked God carrying an assault weapon; it appears under the headline, “The assassin is still out there.” In case there is any doubt who he means, he explains it in his editorial: God is to blame.

Looking back on what happened, Riss condemns “fanatics made stupid by the Koran, but also bigots from every religion who wished upon us the hell they believe in, because we dared to laugh at religion.”

If the “holy rollers” are the bad guys (this is the term favored in some translations to describe the “bigots”), then the good guys are atheists like him. He ends his editorial by noting, “The convictions of the laity and of atheists can move more mountains than the faith of believers.”

There are many things wrong with this picture. To begin with, Riss is a coward. If he had any guts he would not put "God" on the cover—he would put Muhammad. If the killers were Christians, it's a sure bet he would grace the cover with a depiction of Jesus—not a generic "God."

Furthermore, it is nothing but cowardly not to call the guilty by their name: It was radical Islamic terrorists who killed the innocent, not anyone else. But Riss can't even complete a sentence about the killers drawing inspiration from the Koran without also indicting the "holy rollers" from other religions.

Riss is also clueless. Charlie Hebdo was not hated because it dared to "laugh at religion": it was hated because it engaged in pornographic attacks on beloved religious figures—depictions so obscene that no newspaper or TV station would show them. That's not fun—it's deliberately insulting the faithful.

He is just as clueless to argue that the laity and atheists are to be treasured for changing history for the better. Perhaps he never heard of Hitler, Stalin, Mao, and Pol Pot. They were all mass-murdering atheists who persecuted the Catholic Church and punished those who belonged to any religion.

Moreover, Riss is just as narcissistic as his predecessor. When admonished by a cartoonist from Le Monde to "take into account the feelings of other people," he snapped, "What about my feelings as an atheist?"

He did not cite a single person, from any religion, who consistently inflames the passions of atheists by portraying them in a vulgar manner. But Catholics should take note of his pledge to publish fewer caricatures of Muhammad: look for him to balance his work at their expense.

The media are just as cowardly. In their account of what

happened last year, Money.cnn.com and the Daily Beast use the term “terrorists” without identifying their Islamic roots. Similarly, Scotland’s The Herald and France’s The Connexion discuss “attacks” without ever mentioning that they were Islamic attacks.

Politico, the Washington Post, and NBCNews.com prefer to speak about “extremists” but never say what religion the extremists followed. New Europe brands the killers “fundamentalists” but never cites Islam.

The Independent.com tells us who was to blame: “three armed men.” If you think that is cowardly, consider that both England’s The Guardian and our own Newsweek settle for discussing two “brothers” who did the killings. Best of all is the New York Times: it chalks up the Islamic terrorist attacks as the work of “gunmen.” Must be those NRA types.

Political correctness is not just a bad idea—it’s pernicious. When Christians act badly, their religious identity is often mentioned in news reports. But if Muslims murder in the name of Allah, they are reduced to gunmen. Real journalists report the news—they don’t manipulate it. Too bad there are so few real journalists left.