

# The Islamophilia of King Charles

He has long seen Islam as a reactionary corrective to Western modernity.



**TIM BLACK**  
**ASSOCIATE EDITOR**

22nd July 2025

Topics **IDENTITY POLITICS** **POLITICS** **UK**

Want to read spiked ad-free? Become a [spiked supporter](#).

Among those attending the 40th anniversary bash for the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, one guest stood out – King Charles III.

The presence of the UK's sovereign at an Islamic studies institute was hardly a surprise, however. And not just because he is the centre's patron. Charles, it is fair to say, is an unabashed Islamophile. He may have claimed some three decades ago that, as king, he intended to be the defender of faith – rather than the defender of *the* faith as his official role has it – but there is definitely one faith that he prefers above all others. And it's not that of the Church of England.

Charles's near Orientalist fascination with Islam is not a new story. There were even rumours in the mid-1990s, circulated by the grand mufti of Cyprus no less, that the then prince had secretly converted to Islam during a trip to Turkey (which beats getting your teeth done). The palace promptly dismissed the rumours as 'nonsense', but their very existence was a testament to the extent to which Charles was cleaving ever closer to Islam.

This Islamic turn has always been entwined with Charles's deep-seated animosity towards Western modernity. Towards its immense social and technological gains – from greater freedom to science's growing mastery of nature. As the head of a pre-modern institution, grounded in the antiquated notion of the divine right to rule, Charles's animosity to modernity is not exactly a shock. But what has always separated Charles from his tight-lipped, public-service-oriented predecessors has been the extent to which he has publicly endorsed reactionary ideas about how the world should be organised. There has been his long-standing, plant-whispering embrace of all species of greenism. And, intertwined with his fervent environmentalism, there is his embrace of Islam.

The seeds were likely sown while he was an undergraduate at Cambridge University in the mid-to-late 1960s. Studying archaeology and anthropology, he found himself drawn to non-Western cultures as alternatives to Western modernity. His ideas really took root during the 1980s, when South African author Laurens van der Post introduced him to an obscure school of philosophy known as Traditionalism. This pushed all of Charles's reactionary buttons. Pioneered by a little-known French philosopher called René Guénon, Traditionalism castigates the soulless materialism and moral disorder of the modern world – blaming the Enlightenment for separating us from 'the sacred' – and looks to the religions of the East, and to Islam in particular, for an alternative.

## Enjoying *spiked*?

Why not make an instant, one-off donation?

We are funded by you. Thank you!

£2	£5	£20	£50
Choose an amount			

**DONATE NOW**

Charles's basic position echoes that of Guénon. Indeed, when the future king addressed [the Traditionalist 'Sacred Web' conference in 2006](#), he praised Guénon's 'critique of the false premises of modernity', and argued that humanity had been 'uprooted' by social and material progress, and was now leading itself through 'our ignorance and arrogance... towards catastrophe'.

Like Guénon, Charles has consistently drawn on Islam to attack Western society. He did so most famously in his 1993 lecture, '[Islam and the West](#)', delivered at the very same Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies he attended last week. Charles spoke of understanding why Muslim societies reject 'materialism' and 'consumerism'. He said that while we may think that 'television, fast-food and the electronic gadgets of our everyday lives... are a modernising, self-evidently good, influence... The fact is that our form of materialism can be offensive to devout Muslims – and I do not just mean the extremists among them.'

Charles was not making a case for mere cultural relativism, different strokes for different folks. He was actively championing the Islamic worldview as superior to that of the post-Enlightenment West. It 'can teach us today a way of understanding and living in the world which

Christianity itself is the poorer for having lost', he said. 'Western civilisation has become increasingly acquisitive and exploitative in defiance of our environmental responsibilities', he continued, before claiming that 'we can relearn from Islam' a 'wider, deeper, more careful understanding of our world'.

Time and again over the past few decades, Charles has returned to this theme, pitching Islam as a corrective to the modern world. In a 1996 speech, subtitled '[Building Bridges Between Islam and the West](#)', he said that Islam could 'help us in the West to rethink, and for the better, our practical stewardship of man and his environment'. And in another speech delivered at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, this time in 2010, he said Islam possesses 'one of the greatest treasures of accumulated wisdom and spiritual knowledge available to humanity'. This, he said, had been obscured by a drive towards 'Western materialism'. For Charles, then, secular, materialistic Western society is the problem and Islam is the solution.

While Charles has wielded Islam as a cudgel to attack the inhabitants of the modern West – for being too free, for refusing to bow down before ‘sacred’ nature and no doubt before the king, too – he has also defended Islamic societies from criticism. In his 1993 lecture, he described objections to Islamic societies’ sometimes less-than-liberal attitudes towards women as a ‘Western prejudice’. More strikingly, he has consistently minimised the threat of Islamism. In the same 1993 lecture, he claimed that the Western public’s fear of ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ was little more than bigotry – a bigotry born of conflating isolated examples of violent Islamic extremism with a broader religious ‘revivalism’, fuelled by ‘the realisation that Western technology and material things are insufficient, and that a deeper meaning to life lies elsewhere in the essence of Islamic belief’.

It should perhaps come as no surprise that Charles seems to also think that Islam should be beyond criticism – and that those who mock, ridicule or raise objections against it deserve what’s coming to them. In 2006, after the publication of cartoons depicting Muhammad in a Danish newspaper sparked worldwide riots leading to at least 200 deaths, Charles defended the rioters. ‘The recent ghastly strife and anger over the Danish cartoons shows the danger that comes of our failure to listen and to respect what is precious and sacred to others’, he told an audience at Al Azhar University in Egypt.

According to author Martin Amis in 2014, Charles even refused to defend his own subject, Salman Rushdie, after Iran’s Ayatollah Khomeini declared a fatwa against him in 1989, following the publication of *The Satanic*

*Verses*. Amis told *Vanity Fair* that Charles said he would not offer support ‘if someone insults someone else’s deepest convictions’. Quite the opposite, it seems. In 2003, at the Islamic Foundation in Leicestershire, Charles met up with someone called Chowdhury Mueen Uddin. Uddin, a member of Jamaat-e-Islami, had played a key role in organising the protests in Britain against Rushdie.

All this goes some way to explaining Charles’s fairly evasive official statement on the 20th anniversary of the London 7/7 bombings. Steadfastly omitting any reference to the Islamist motivation of the terrorists, he claimed the attacks showed the importance of ‘building a society where people of all faiths and backgrounds can live together with mutual respect and understanding’. Listening to Charles, one could be forgiven for thinking it was our fault – our lack of ‘mutual respect’ and understanding – that four young jihadists decided to detonate explosives on Tube trains and a bus.

This, then, is Britain’s king. A figure whose deep rejection of the social, political and material gains of modernity has apparently driven him

towards Islam – or at least his Traditionalist-inflected version of it. So immersed is he in his reactionary, religious dreams that he now struggles to recognise the threat of Islamist terror even when it is literally exploding on our streets.

The Islamophilia of King Charles is fast becoming all of our problem.

**Tim Black** is associate editor of *spiked*.

---

## HELP US HIT OUR 1% TARGET

*spiked* is funded by you. It's your generosity that keeps us going and growing.

**Only 0.1% of our regular readers currently donate** to *spiked*. If you are one of the 99.9% who appreciates what we do, but hasn't given just yet, please consider making a donation today.

**If just 1% of our loyal readers donated regularly, it would be transformative for us**, allowing us to vastly expand our team and coverage.

Plus, if you donate £5 a month or £50 a year, you can join [our supporters](#) and enjoy:

- Ad-free reading
- Exclusive bonus content
- Regular events
- Access to our comments section

The most impactful way to support *spiked*'s journalism is by registering as a supporter and making a monthly contribution. Thank you.

ONE-TIME

MONTHLY

ANNUAL



£5 per month

£12 per month

Other amount

CONTINUE



## COMMENTS

# Want to join the conversation?

Only *spiked* supporters and patrons, who donate regularly to us, can comment on our articles.

JOIN TODAY

LOG IN