

Friday Night Theology, 23rd October 2009.
Questioning Question Time

In 1984, Jean-Marie Le Pen was given a slot on the French TV show *L'Heure de Vérité* (The Hour of Truth). At that time, his far right National Front party was in the electoral wilderness having won just 0.2% of the vote at the previous national election. In his appearance, Le Pen tried hard to remove the idea that he and his party were fascists and in the following election their share of the vote had jumped to 9.7%. According to the party, they got 30,000 new members and Le Pen later on described it as "the hour that changed everything".

The question, then, is whether a similar fate awaits Nick Griffin and the BNP following last night's *Question Time*. Certainly, Mr Griffin was trying to change the rhetoric that surrounds his party claiming that he had dragged them from the extremities to a more moderate place. And it is worth noting that despite all the papers today describing the *Question Time* audience as being universally against Griffin, the reality is that on two occasions last night he was in fact applauded by a small section of that audience.

On both of those occasions, it was for the same reason: he was attacking Islam. And this goes to the heart of his appeal to the British populace. He trades on the politics of fear. As Chris Huhne, one of the *Question Time* panellists put it in a comment piece in [The Independent today](#), the BNP's tactic is to "find a scapegoat and blame a minority for all our ills. Mosley and the British Union of Fascists blamed the Jews in the Thirties. Enoch Powell blamed the blacks in the Sixties and Seventies, and now Nick Griffin is trying to peddle hatred and fear against the Muslim community."

The relevance of all this to those of us whose desire is to proclaim the pure gospel of Jesus Christ and not the odious message of racism is to ensure that we do not similarly trade on a politics of fear. Such fear can certainly manifest itself in a hatred of Islam, but it can also be seen in an inappropriate defense of "Christian Britain." Surely, one of the things we know about the gospel is that people become Christians, not nations. And perhaps if we spent more of our time talking about the attractiveness of Jesus Christ, and a little less in defending our rights or demonising certain sections of the community, maybe more of those people would in fact embrace His glorious gospel.

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