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**Will Obama preach the American sermon to Hu?**

In President Obama's meetings with [**Chinese President Hu Jintao**](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/special/artsandliving/chinavisit/index.html?hpid=topnews)this week, should discussion of human rights and religious freedom be on par with economic and environmental issues, or should human rights and religious freedom be secondary matters?

1. Human rights, religious freedom and environmental issues are the three points in *America's current sermon* to the world. Instead of being paid for preaching it, we pay a stiff price for doing so. But we should preach it.

2. And we should preach it everywhere, adapting it to "local conditions" without compromising it, but aware that in many areas of the world this sermon *threatens stability*. Of course, since governments have nightmares about instability, we can get ourselves killed for preaching our essentially destabilizing sermon. In fact, we are getting ourselves killed for preaching it.

3. *Jesus* almost got himself killed for preaching a destabilizing sermon (in the Gospel of Luke, 4.14-30) against ethnocentrism, and did get himself killed for preaching the destabilizing message that this is God's world and God - rather than the religious and political authorities of this world - should and will be ruling it. / *John Wycliffe and William Tyndale* got themselves killed for preaching the destabilizing message that the Bible should be in everybody's hands (and translating and publishing it to that end). / *Martin Luther King Jr*. got himself killed for preaching his dream of a racism-free America.

4. Let's face it. The dream of governments is a passive population, and their nightmare is of enemies defined as domestic or foreign *disturbers of the peace*, defined as the status quo. To be friends of a better future, preachers of change must pay the price of being enemies of the present "powers that be."

5. American "exceptionalism" as pride is a shame upon us. But as a political singularity, it is a responsibility. We honor our Founding Fathers as destabilizers, upsetters of the status quo, stirring up the people by preaching freedom from the British Crown in the name of a superior authority, the Creator of human beings and of human rights with the freedoms necessary to the exercise thereof. *America turned the world upside down* by learning to regard trouble-makers, disturbers of the peace, as heroes. This set the tone for the American mind and way of life, which have two characteristic values:
(1) Trust is more wisely put in*the Creator of human rights*than in government. (Religious freedom is necessary.)
(2) Hope lies less in stability than in*innovation*. (Human rights are necessary.)

6. Lacking the historic soil in which these two American values sprouted and have developed, the world is - though wistful about their fruits - *frightened* by these values. And when we preach religious freedom and human rights, as to be faithful Americans we must, the fear may turn to hate. Today, by no will of ours, we are at war with those whose hatred has turned to sporadic tactical violence against us.

7. Now to the question: In his current White House conversations with the president of China, should President Obama skip the American sermon in the interest of getting economic and other business done? Or marginalize it to the agreed-on agenda? Or give it equal time with that agenda?
(1) *Obama is the sermon in shoes*, and China's leaders know it. I have confidence that he will preach America's sermon, in few words firmly but humbly spoken - preach it as America's president should preach it, appropriately to the occasion.
(2) China's communist-capitalist government has, with its people, an unwritten covenant, each saying to the other, "You don't disturb us, we don't disturb you." In reverse of its increase in some Muslim countries, the persecution of Christians in China has declined to wariness. And*xenophobia has declined* as economic prosperity has increased.
(3) As China continues to prosper,*eagerness to join the world community* may generate a movement for the adoption of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Well, it's OK to dream, isn't it?)

**BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT  |  JANUARY 18, 2011; 7:48 PM ETSAVE & SHARE:                       
PREVIOUS:**[**ECONOMICS, HUMAN WELFARE INEXCTRICABLY TIED**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/pamela_k_taylor/2011/01/economics_and_human_welfare_inexctricably_tied_1.html)**| NEXT:**[**HUMAN RIGHTS CRUCIAL BUT COMPLEX**](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/david_wolpe/2011/01/human_rights_crucial_but_complex.html)

**Comments**

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Willis Elliott said: "Human rights, religious freedom and environmental issues are the three points in America's current sermon to the world."

I think it would be nice if this were true, but in reality there is no single "American sermon". Many Americans are committed to the three points in Elliott's hypothetical sermon, but many are not and many are loudly preaching other less lofty sermons.

Elliott said, " And we should preach it everywhere, adapting it to "local conditions" without compromising it...". I agree, but we should begin by presenting a high quality example here at home. We should walk our talk in the USA. And while we should freely express our beliefs and ideas concerning these "sermon topics" we should in NO WAY try to force their acceptance or implementation in other countries. #1: We can't do it. #2. We shouldn't.

Elliott seems to say that the tone of American life is based in two notions, one of which is that it is wiser to place "more trust in the CREATOR OF HUMAN RIGHTS than the government. #1 It is not particularly apparent that Americans have great trust in some divine creator and #2. the only creators of human rights are certain humans who came before us, not some misterious divinity.

Elliott concludes: " As China continues to prosper, eagerness to join the world community may generate a movement for the adoption of the UN's Universal Declaration of Human Rights. (Well, it's OK to dream, isn't it?)" Not a bad dream for China and for the good old USA.

**POSTED BY: CECILG | JANUARY 22, 2011 12:35 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Your response is too rambling, Mr. Elliott. The numbering, while useful as a method of driving several linked points home by forcing the reader to read each in turn, yet in conjunciton, doesn't work here. Mostly because your point drifts from inflammatory comments towards our own government to preaching the "American sermon" at another government while implying our own government is worthy of emulation. Which is it?

Also I feel the need to point out that this country was in fact not founded on any religous (re: Christian) ground. See[**the Treaty of Tripoli**](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Tripoli), which passed through the United States Congress via a unanimous vote, something which has only occurred three times in our nation's history.

While I think your final point is in line with the general concensus, i.e. China needs a lot of work and we need to show them the way, I think your advocation of dissonent preaching for it's own sake, as far as I can tell, is dangerous, unwarrented and unnecessary.

**POSTED BY: VISIONFROMAFAR | JANUARY 21, 2011 12:48 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

HERE is a LIST OF "WHITE-HOUSEs" The CHINA STATE VISIT (Party, charade, Parade or Détente):

Excerpt: "Michelle Obama chose a red Alexander McQueen gown with black details for the state dinner"

[**http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/China\_State\_Visit.pdf**](http://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/China_State_Visit.pdf)
\_\_

i [WE] checked the list to see if me name is on it; but no Dice.

Interesting Note: NOT One Of The 'GUESTS," includes The Presz wore a **DALAi-LAMA Costume?**? BUT

What WE [i] did notice was that 1/2 of Those on 'The-List' (Not Schindlers) Had "Cups In Hand', not Hat's for the SINO Alien's a/k/a the Real 'TIGERs" (No more "PAPER TiGERS" ). Note: i once Road a Lama, and it spit in me face.

Oh Those wretched PULTOCRATICS! (Even Obama is a Millionare Now); WElcome to the Club, aye!?

Hope They save me some cake.

**POSTED BY: LETITBE | JANUARY 19, 2011 8:55 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**

Amazingly STUPID article!

**POSTED BY: DRWASDRWAS | JANUARY 19, 2011 2:32 PM****REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT**