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Faith + Doubt = Progress

ON FAITH - WASHINGTON POST - WILLIS ELLIOTT

Faith and doubt are the legs on which the collective human mind walks.

While faith and doubt are not in dialectical tension inside each of us as individuals--some of us are faith all the way down, some are unbelief all the way down--human groups progress in human values by faith-doubt conversations among their members. Such groups walk on two legs, one marked FAITH and the other DOUBT.

Some of the most creative and humanly useful among us--men and women who are obviously good news to humanity--are inwardly as free to doubt as they are to believe...

...free to DOUBT. Most of the hell in the world is produced by human beings who have no doubt that they are right, that what they believe is not only true but certain, and that any who disagree with them are not only wrong but evil. And if they call upon heaven-or-earth authorities to ratify their convictions, the news they produce is apt to be even worse. But also...

...free to BELIEVE. Mother Teresa believed that on the faces of the dying in the gutters of Calcutta she saw the face of Jesus, a face that was to her--as a Christian--a call to relieve their body-and-soul suffering.

Less than two hours before I got this week's "On Faith" question, I responded to a highly creative New York City playwright who is worried that "Bellevue [a mental hospital] will get me. Whom am I to tell, safely, that I heard Jesus speak to me through the crucifix on the altar of (and he named the Manhattan church)?"

What's this? Jesus speaks to that playwright (who has only a modest record of being good news to humanity in Jesus' name) and says not a word to Mother Teresa (despite her world-class record of being good news to humanity in Jesus' name). What are we to think? That the playwright needed the personal experience of hearing Jesus speak, but that that Roman Catholic nun was doing just great without needing the boost of such a special personal religious experience?

Now to the QUESTION: "In her letters, Mother Teresa expressed doubts about the existence of God and lamented the absence of a personal sense of Jesus's love in her life. Does this make you think more or less of her? To what extent is doubt a part of religious faith?"

1. I think more of her for her frank, down-to-earth, matter-of-fact, self-divested HONESTY. God gave our species the powers and wills to believe and to doubt, and she was good at both.
2. What a witness she was to storgic love, the love that does its **duty** despite doubts! From her teenage commitment to Christian service, she never wavered from the work. In the Bible, FAITH is directional behavior even before, and sometimes in the absence of, BELIEF. The Bible's wisdom includes the insight that more than we believe into a new way of behaving, we behave into a new way of believing. The Bible's authors sail by *the wind of the Spirit* even though their belief-boats are leaky. It's a category-error to criticize their boats without oneself feeling the wind they felt, the wind of the Spirit, the wind Mother Teresa usually felt but sometimes--becalmed--awaited.
3. I think more of her because she didn't think much of herself except as a SERVANT of who and what was more than herself. The "who" was God, whom she had trouble conceiving of except in his incarnation in Jesus, her Savior, Lord, and model of servanthood. The "what" was the Church, in which she lived and moved and had her being as a "member" (Latin-English for organic part) in the Body of Christ.
4. I think more of her because she didn't sweat the small stuff, including her personal experiences and opinions. Precisely because caring for the dying was her *Big Stuff*, her theological opinions and even her religious experiences were, to her, comparatively *small* stuff. (Not that she considered Christian doctrine unimportant: for her it was fundamental in the sense of foundational.)
5. I think more of her because she MODELS, for us all, getting on with our God-assigned task of being good news to one another and to the good earth no matter the differences inside our heads. She confronted every obstacle to that task with courage, including the courage both to doubt and to doubt her doubts. And for her, Jesus said it all when he said, "Love God and everybody, even your enemies."

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | AUGUST 31, 2007; 8:59 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:

Comments

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Anyway. I do hope you turn back up to read this stuff, Rev. Elliot.

I know you tend to see the world in all-or-nothing terms, wars and enemies and absolutes.

You said you wanted to learn about what 'makes us tick,' ...yeah, doubtless to use to some perceived 'advantage,' ...but, hey.

To us, this ain't a war.

One thing I know about us is, well, we have no need or desire to religiously 'conquer,' and... We ain't going anywhere. (well, neither are you, necessarily, to our mind.)

Sometimes, in the interest of building bridges, I try to impress that. ...your all-fired urgency to Have The One True And Authoritative Belief Right Now And Forever just isn't a real need to us.

Gods know that if They could find me where I was without word one of Wicca or Neopaganism, They don't need me out there advertising.

Certainly, I never expected to end up being the kind of person that even *talks* like this, when I touched down in this life with a head full of another.

But... here are *my people.* I know *your* world well enough, all the lies and needs and accusations and ...the good that's in you despite treating life like you're dancing on the edge of 'the Pit' and often feeling the need to stay out by thinking you're 'throwing others in.'

My people just want to live. We've always been here.

Maybe in another life, you'll join *our* Dance yourself, or someone else's.

But no hurry.

What's urgent are justice, even fellowship, *here.* Right now.

I know many Christians who don't *need* to keep trying to cast my people as villains out of a book, or as otherwise-awful people. To oppress, suppress, and repress others to feel 'justified' in the face of fears of Hell and promises of 'eternal reward.'

You can't separate your desire to rule everyone from these fears, try as you might.

I suggest there's better in you. I've seen that, too.

I've been among you, and might well be again. ;)

One thing about 'Pagan religion' is, well, someone thought they could cut us off from the Gods by breaking traditions and imposing rules and hurting a lot of people.

It's not only a bad thing to do, we know darn well it *doesn't work.*

We're still here.

That's part of our religion, too. We have no need or desire to 'abolish' yours.

Yours doesn't have that kind of power, and there's no reason to believe ours would or should, even if we foolishly wanted to try.

But we have a birthright in this world, and that you can't take away, either.

"We have trusted no man's promise
We have kept to just ourselves
We have suffered from the lies in all the books upon your shelves

And our patience and endurance
Through the Burning Times and now
Have given us the strength to keep our vow

We won't wait any longer
We are stronger than before.

You thought you had destroyed the memory of the ancient ways.
But still we light the balefires every year on Solstice days
And on Beltane Eve and Samhain you may find us on the hill
Invoking once again the Triple Will.

We won't wait any longer."

-Gwydion

Maybe, Bible guy, we're those *neighbors* your Teacher told you about. Maybe... what he had to say about *enemies* was in case you felt you had any.

Maybe "love" is a lot simpler and more direct and honest than what you've made of it to serve your spiritual 'war.'

Maybe that's something a few of us learned while being someone like *you.*

S'all right. If you let it be.

Spiritually, we got all the time in the world.

Crashing or corrupting a civilization cause you can't hack uncertainty, though, ...always leads to major bummers.

And waste.

We *don't* have a lot of time, by those criteria.

Time to make good on the promises of *this* civilization.

Cause those won't wait any longer, either.

May be you see *us* as the 'angry children...' No wonder. Your children are pretty angry, actually.

But the feeling's pretty mutual just lately.

I'd see better fellowship between our faiths.

That means, sooner or later, you're gonna have to stop trying to see us through the pages of a book and meet your neighbors.

Neighbor.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 4:32 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Seeing as how the Druids and Celts' teachings were all handed down orally and considered anything written to be of little to no use to others, all we have to go on in someone else's outside ideas of what the Druids were all about. Sort of like me as a former Jew attempting to explain Christianity to someone who's never heard it before. Except in that case it was from someone who set out to conquer them.

The Bible evolves? I wasn't aware of this. Are the fundamentalists who keep using it to justify the lesser status of ANY minority aware of this?

Here's something interesting though. If the Bible evolves these days, who is to say that it didn't evolve at that time out of the stories of Amenophis, Isis or other cultural mythologies that existed at the time? In one's training to be a theology scholar, are there any classes about where the influences of the Biblical authors may have come from?

I guess what bothers me most about this panelist is that he is so quick to label others 'hypocrites' by attributing to others things that they never said. And then says 'I hate your god/dess'. I thought people who consider themselves teachers, ministers, authors should be above such pettiness. How is that proving your 'God is Love' point? Especially when you decry Pagans as 'NonAmerican?' It really saddens me that someone of your standing cannot even attempt to learn something about those who are different from them.

We are part of the living embodiment of what was stated in the Declaration- 'ALL men are created equal'. not 'all those who don't think like Mr. Elliott.' And in my readings of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States I have yet to find the word 'Biblical laws' anywhere in the text.

And I have never understood why the good Christianity or any other religion does must be 'glorified.' Why does Christianity need credit for the good things its adherents do? I would never dream of shouting about the things I try to do for others in my everyday life. Why not do it for the sake of doing it? If you make an impact on someone for the better they will remember that and return it to you or maybe pass it on. Why cannot that be reward in itself?

POSTED BY: PRIVER | SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 3:29 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hee, Terra. Nice one.

"Don't tread on me." :)

Now, Reverend, just for a bit to add, you've got to be careful where you throw the word *hypocrite* around. You're the one who makes absolutist arguments from authority: certainly, the secular argument against the assertions "The Founding Fathers Wanted This To Be Exclusively a Christian Nation" doesn't *depend* on Jefferson being "perfect" by modern standards. If anyone's does, yours do: certainly that fact doesn't strengthen *your* case:

In fact, they *tried* to abolish slavery immediately, but it just wouldn't have been practicable cause of the South, there'd have been no United States at all: meaning, the principles were there from the beginning, they just couldn't live up to it, yet. As for their personal decisions, well. Who can say.

You claim I 'deny Biblical evolution,' ...no, not really. I point out that it's *fundamentalists and conservatives like yourself* that cling to a lot of old and unapplicable stuff, especially when it comes to taking your view of modern Pagans from what the Bible and other biased sources *said about ancient ones.*

Just today there was an article on another site claiming how 'Thou Shalt Not suffer a Witch to live' *should in fact be taken to refer to us.*

If you want to evolve, go ahead.

If you can learn to live with us with civility and justice and equality, what else you believe isn't our problem.

Frankly, the Founding Fathers built in a system for the *Constitution* to evolve: to preserve and *expand* liberties and freedoms in changing times, not for someone to come along and say, "This is *meant* to be for conservative Christians and straights *only.*"

It's for *we the people.*

If they'd wanted it to be a Biblical nation, there's no disputing they were articulate people. They could have *said.* Clearly. In the Constitution.

The Druids certainly were massacred by Rome *because they were a force for social and cultural cohesion capable of uniting and coordinating the tribes.* Rome's policy of 'divide and conquer' required each tribe to cut separate deals against their neighbors. The only reference to 'human sacrifice' is in Casear's self-serving De Bello Gallico, and is dubious indeed, except in order to justify breaking Rome's policy of respect for other religions and make the victory seem all the more necessary and justified.

As for Christianity's arrival in Europe and the islands, it certainly wasn't as complete and sudden (and peaceful) as it's often made out to be, which isn't to say there were no Christians there... in fact, they were welcomed, often as not, a hospitality repaid with some very nasty things.

In your haste to call us 'hypocrites,' you've failed to actually understand our positions on things, or give us credit for a consistency in them.

Frankly, no, we're not the ones claiming our way is perfect. Nor that we're defending an 'authority' which must have its flaws ignored in order that everyone might 'obey' that authority.

The fact that 'hypocrisy' exists, and is particularly rife in the intolerant authoritarians of your religion doesn't undercut the argument that that authority *doesn't* rule us.

You assume we're arguing *for* a rival authoritarian idea, it seems. (The Constitution is our *social* contract, and it has *built in* evolutionary mechanisms, as well as *unalienable rights* that even religious voices can't take away: that's why it starts with a mention of 'endowed by their Creator' (without specifying who that is, remember that in a Deist view, this concept is not the same as the modern right-wing Christian one, though it may encompass it. In the Deist context, I have no problem associating that with the Great Goddess or other views we hold, even if I don't believe 'Creation' is 'Artifice'.)

Personally, I have every personal and intellectual reason to be 'sour on your religion.' That doesn't mean we can't all live together as Americans. It's really when you drag all this stuff into politics and society and call us 'Satanic' and 'hypocrites' (for standards and premises we don't hold) and all manner of other things that incite against us the hatred you speak of and all that comes from it.

You say 'God is Love' in one breath, and in the next say he and you 'hate' us.

And if you want to level accusations of hypocrisy right and left, you ought to do better than 'mixing it up in your head.'

Who's the hypocrite, here?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 2:01 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Rev. So when we as a nation kill a murderer or a rapist that is what? Vengeance. But when Pagan countries did it, it's human sacrifice? So how many of your ilk has said a prayer for someone waiting for the gas chamber, so that his soul would go to your god? You see all Pagans as the same. That is like saying the Christians of year 1 is the same as those 2000 years later. It's like saying the Greek Orthodox Church is the same as the Southern Baptist. American Pagans are even different then British ones.

You have the jealous and angry god...not us.

You have no knowledge of us. None. All we have is what we see in the words and deeds of your fellow Christians. And as far as hypocrisy? Look in the mirror.

Sam Harris and his "ilk" is correct. Religion can not create what is not within a person. How exactly do you think we Pagans are created? How do you think that we are fast becoming the third largest religion in this country? I and all the Pagans of my generation were born and raised in Christian households...I just got two new students who were both raised Strict Catholic in Southern Louisiana. You think that their Catholic religion was what filled their spiritual needs? If it did they would not have been led to me. We are born with the ideas of right and wrong...of either caring about others or not. How many people born into loving, caring families turn out to be unibombers and crazed cannibals? How many Atheists have been loving parents and community leaders as well as given the world discoveries that enriched all our lives?

People have held up the bible and used it as their excuse for anything they wanted to do. There also are wonderful folks that gain from their love of Christianity also...my daughter is one of them...as is many of my family and many of my friends. I can very much love those of other religions and respect their choices and their gods. I do not hate. But I can point out the falsehoods. Just like I do not see my faith as pure and totally without nut cases and crooks...the big differences between us is...I will call them out. I will call out those who claim some direct line to the First man and woman that stared at the moon. Our myths are myths...our Gods do not walk on water...they are water.It's the High Priestesses that walk on the water. ;)

I have never claimed perfection for the Iroquois, and wish you to find where I did. You said that your religion was the founding agent of this nation...and the oldest democracy. I proved you wrong. I will say that yes...it certainly was enlightenment...but exactly where does your religion fit into that?

Tom Paine, wrote the pamphlets that brought on most of what the founders fought for. Contributing fundamentally to the American Revolution, the French Revolution, and the struggles of Britain's Industrial Revolution, Thomas Paine was one of the most remarkable political writers of the modern world and the greatest radical of a radical age. Through his Common Sense pamphlet and the Crisis papers, he inspired Americans not only to declare their independence and create a republic; he also emboldened them to turn their colonial rebellion into a revolutionary war, defined the new nation in a democratically expansive and progressive fashion, and articulated an American identity charged with exceptional purpose and promise.

Paine was inquisitive, gregarious, and compassionate, yet strong-willed, combative, and ever ready to argue about and fight for the good and the right. The story is told of a dinner gathering at which Paine, on hearing his mentor Franklin observe, "Where liberty is, there is my country," cried out, "Where liberty is not, there is my country!" A workingman before an intellectual and author, Paine developed his revolutionary beliefs and ideas not simply from scholarly study but all the more from experience -- experience that convinced him that the so-called lower orders, not just the highborn and propertied, had the capacity both to comprehend the world and to govern it. And addressing his arguments to those who traditionally were excluded from political debate and deliberation, not merely to the governing classes, he helped to transform the very idea of politics and the political nation.

At war's end Paine was a popular hero, known by all as "Common Sense." And yet he was not finished. To him, America possessed extraordinary political, economic, and cultural potential. But he did not see that potential as belonging to Americans alone. He comprehended the nation's history in universal terms -- "The cause of America ... is the cause of all mankind" -- and believed that the actions of his fellow citizens-to-be were filled with world-historic significance. "The sun never shined on a cause of greater worth," he wrote. "'Tis not the affair of a city, a county, a province, or a kingdom but of a continent -- of at least one-eighth part of the habitable globe. 'Tis not the concern of a day, a year, or an age; posterity are virtually involved in the contest, and will be more or less affected even to the end of time, by the proceedings now."

America's struggle had turned Paine into an inveterate champion of liberty, equality, and democracy, and after the war he went on to apply his revolutionary pen to struggles in Britain and France. In Rights of Man, he defended the French Revolution of 1789 against conservative attack, challenged Britain's monarchical and aristocratic polity and social order, and outlined a series of public-welfare initiatives to address the material inequalities that made life oppressive for working people and the poor. In The Age of Reason, he criticized organized religion, the claims of biblical Scripture, and the power of churches and clerics. And in Agrarian Justice, he proposed a democratic system of addressing poverty that would entail taxing the landed rich to provide grants or "stakes" to young people and pensions to the elderly.

Paine is known as The Lost Founder. His pen and wit was his sword. His words and energy flamed the politicians into action.

What you do not like is that he loved freedom and equality without belief in your religion. When you get down to it, the conservatives were those against fighting for a Free America. They believed in the right of the monarchy...kind of reminds me of today...

The Romans cut down the sacred Groves and killed many Druids, not because of human sacrifice...but the Druids were the Priests, Counselors and Warriors of the Celts. There was one writer that claimed human sacrifice... That writer Julius Caesar had never been to the Celtic Lands and never met a Druid. While there has been writers that claimed that the Druids did do ritual killings of criminals. I am sure with less pain and terror than those accused of Witchcraft, being gay, Jewish or Heresy went through.

Druids were called snakes...that Patrick was said to have gotten rid of. There has never been snakes in Ireland...

Bring Back the Snakes

© 1997, 2001 c.e.

words by Isaac Bonewits

music trad. ("My Bonnie Lies Over the Ocean")

'Twas on a bright Midsummer's evening,
An old woman I chanced for to see.
She grabbed both my shoulders and shook 'em,
Saying, "Bring back the snakes to me!"

Bring back, bring back, bring back the snakes to me, to me;
Bring back, bring back, O bring back the snakes to me!

"My land was a jewel most blessed,
My people both happy and free,
Till the preachers came in with their crosses,
And drove all the snakes out to sea."

Bring back, bring back, bring back the snakes to me, to me;
Bring back, bring back, O bring back the snakes to me!

"Yes, 'snakes' was the word that they used then,
For the masters of all druidry,
Whom they murdered, converted or banished,
As threats to their new tyranny."

Bring back, bring back, bring back the snakes to me, to me;
Bring back, bring back, O bring back the snakes to me!

"Now it's past fifteen centuries later,
The results now are clear for to see;
Ireland was better off Pagan,
So bring back the snakes to me!"

Bring back, bring back, bring back the snakes to me, to me;
Bring back, bring back, O bring back the snakes to me!

Then the old woman's face started changing,
Every country and race I could see.
She said, "All lands are better off Pagan,
So bring back the snakes to me!"

Bring back, bring back, bring back the snakes to me, to me;
Bring back, bring back, O bring back the snakes to me!

Rev. You are an elder and as such I respect you, but I do have some knowledge of my own as an elder. You make it profoundly clear that you are not respectful of our right to believe as we wish. You see your faith as being all love and light...while we who have been on the sword point of it see another side. We are the Snakes of America...and you will make the claims that the enemies of the Druids made...Do not call war on us. We have warriors that know how to use swords...lol.

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 12:32 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TERRA GAZELLE & PAGANPLACE:

Thank you for your long posts. Short ones would have disappointed me—given me less chance to learn about you & me & what makes us tick.

After sleeping on what you (plural) said & mixing up in my head what you (distributive singular) said, I'll make a few remarks from memory (not having the time to reread your posts):

1 You have nothing good to say about hypocrisy, which is the belief-&-behavior distance--unconscious or conscious--between an ideal & the actual. Jefferson as idealist could write that we're all "created equal" & then actually arrange that after his death, his debts would be paid by selling off his slaves. America is a democracy, but at the time of my birth my mother could not vote. We all should have some good things to say about druidism, but the Roman military had to use violence to get England's druid priests to stop bloody human sacrifice.

2 You're both adults, but like kids you make excuses for your side & demand the best in the other side. (E.g., you criticize the ancient Israelite amphictyony for its imperfections, but have nothing but praise for the Iroquois one.) Every day I read the Bible in Hebrew, Greek, Latin, & German—but I could hardly recognize it from your genetic-fallacy descriptions. It's against human sacrifice & slavery, & for the equal dignity of women & men, & for loving everybody (even including your enemies!) as well as yourself, & for centering life in God, for "God is love"—but of course that's the Bible at its best, its most evolved state. You are hypocrites in affirming natural evolution & denying biblical evolution: you quote from earlier stages of the Bible & say it's what "the Bible teaches"!

3 Sam Harris & his ilk claim that human morals & rights have no need of religious grounding, but Jefferson disagreed. He said morals & rights must be grounded in human dignity, which (in the Declaration of Independence) he grounded in God (as understood in light of Bible+Enlightenment, the pervasive religion of America's Founding Fathers)—God, who "created" us "equal" & "endowed" us with "rights." (As you know, that grand old hypocrite died a sour old man whose late-life letters have a French-Enlightenment tone—he having abandoned the Bible+Enlightenment tone pervasive among the Founding Fathers [of whom Tom Paine, a lifelong village-atheist type, was not one]).

4 You (which of you, I can't remember) are so concerned NOT to credit Christianity for anything good that you claim that that religion didn't even get to England before the 7th century! The citizens of St Albans would laugh at you. Their city is named after a Christian martyr who died (as Wikipedia rightly says) before 324 AD. (The town was founded on the martyr's death-site.)

But enough for now. Sorry I don't have the time to revisit your posts for more detailed responses. And sorry you are both so sour on my religion.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | SEPTEMBER 5, 2007 9:33 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Paganplace,
There are people that make me proud to be Pagan...and you are one of them.

Blessed be...

terra

And, you, Reverend...

Frankly speaking, if Christians are so willing to lie about us *now,* to try and justify and incite harm and injustice in the name of your religion *now,* what makes you think we're going to give overmuch credence to what was said by your predecessors *then?*

We don't see clarity or divine justice or authority *there,* ...we see the same old agenda with the same old obvious ulterior motives and manipulations.

Now, ancient Paganism wasn't all pretty and 'PC' *then,* either. But neither were Judaism, nor Christianity, nor any of the others.

We're modern people now and in modern circumstances, and if you're actually afraid of us sacrificing babies and not just trying to 'win' a 'war,' ...then you'd have to understand we a) *don't* use your Bible as a source, and b) Don't think that way about such things anyway.

One thing about our modernity is we know that doesn't work, and if we, especially as Wiccans in particular, have sacred writ in the way you think of it, we have it right from the Goddess that She demands nothing of sacrifices.

This, I think, was on the way out in the Pagan world when Christianity came along, for reasons that were kind of involved: but that's also why the idea of Jesus as a 'substitute' sacrifice kind of caught on. Sacrificial animal imagery is all over the Bible. And, frankly, a lot of people it caught on with couldn't afford to make them personally, anyway.

Thing is, your brand of Christianity wants to make *everyone* a human sacrifice, in that metaphorical way. The 'damned' as by nature already being burnt-offerings, but some 'elect few' might be saved by submitting to certain authorities.

This, I think, is a very human idea, but not a good one.

Like in your endless witch-trials, (what's burning or hanging (or just marginalizing or starving or bombing) a disbeliever or heretic 'sinner,' *but* a human sacrifice to your God, anyway, all fancy talk aside?) ...there's a lot of projection of *your* ideas of 'hate' onto innocent people.

We're *people,* Reverend, not 'God-haters serving an evil opposition to "God."'

Perhaps you don't remember where it goes when people start saying so.

But you could look to the lands your Abrahamic lot call 'holy' the last thousand years or so for a hint.

The Founding Fathers knew this, the horrors of Christian holy wars in Europe being a not-exactly-distant memory, ...many did not hold to a Christianity you'd recognize, seeing a Creator and divine Presence and Providence and all those other concepts that got spun back into Fundie-style Christianity, but your *religion,* no, they didn't see it the way you mean when you say "Christian."

The reason the Witch Trials have become one of our founding myths... closely associated with Thanksgiving and our troubled relationship with the Native Americans and all, is cause they were *important.*

The Puritans wanted to get *away* from religious corruption in Europe, and ended up stained by *what they brought with them.*

It took time for the Western world to shed those fears and spectres of 'Someone's different, they must serve a 'Hater of God,'

...And the Founding Fathers, as a rule, knew this.

I don't think that's something you really want to start trying to bring back from the grave.

Cause we really *are* different from you, Reverend.

It's *your* story that doesn't change.

Blessed be if you can.

wandering back in. Sorry to pose questions and then not be around, Rev. Elliot.

On this:

"Now, Pp, why do I bother to lay all this on you?

(1) Because I think you're open & fair-minded enough to read it. (2) Because I want to encourage conversation between commenters and panelists. (That's why I identify myself here as "Willis E. Elliott, panelist." Not because I'm "pompous," as one commenter accused me of being.)"

Well, I definitely respect you joining the discussion, here. I certainly don't see it as any more 'pompous' to identify yourself as a panelist than it is, perhaps, to *be* one, though, you do kind of carry a sense of an unfounded smugness about a lot of your assertions. I think it'd be more 'pompous' *not* to join in. :)

(Cotton Mather, however, was *hardly* a hero in the witch trials, have you read what he *wrote*? Gods. Trying to draw a line between 'church and state' in 17th century Salem is certainly odd, since there *was* no real such distinction as this was regarded: in fact, they believed their idea of 'witchcraft' was in fact a crime as real as larceny or assault *because* that's what the religion insisted.)

Saying the Bible 'hates' the 'ritual killing of babies' as though that had anything to do with spreading hate in modern times yourself, though, that's not a defense, that's a *re-offense.*

Heck, the Bible *tells* people to ritually-kill their children if they're 'uppity.'

But not to indulge too much of that.

I speak of ...really, your accusations.

And, in fact, the *hate* you say "God" has for the Goddess.

Yeah, from *your* perspective, you might think that.

That doesn't make it true.

You certainly can't use it to insist that we or in fact the Goddess *hate* your God.

Or try to associate us with baby-killing characters from your own book at every oblique opportunity?

You know what can happen when someone believes it when someone like you says something like that, and has a load on, is cognitively-impaired by mental illness, or is having a bad day?

This is something Pagans have to look over our shoulders about every day, and it's not even true.

That's why it's often hate-speech, as you say you and your God hate.

Just cause you can't tell religion from the Divine doesn't mean that *we* can't.

Certainly, we don't believe your religion's claims to represent the 'Only' God who somehow hates 'other' Gods can be 'true,' ...that just doesn't make sense.

To us, you conflate a tribal, fearful, jealous idea of *a* God with the idea of "God," ...the summation of the divine in the universe, say.

We don't hate your God, we just don't believe *you.*

And we're not characters out of your book. Never were.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 4, 2007 11:53 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

You are saying that the hebrews that kept slaves was part of Democracy? That selling your daughter was democracy? That buying wives or stoning them was democracy? That invading a people that have not harmed you, killed and looted was all democracy? Don't tell the Iraqis.

Sorry not the democracy I want.

When the Witch Trials happened Church was state. That is why it failed..you could be put in the stock for missing church. The only reason the Witch Trials stopped was that the girls accused the Governor's wife.

And equal before the law...not church and not Christian God. The founders had a chance to make this a "Christian" country...they declined. Spain states in their constitution that it is a Christian country. We do not. And no where is this stated.

Madison and seconded by the Congress stated that this was not in any way founded on the Christian religion. So where in this is there a doubt?

Our Common Law came from England, it arrived in England in the Fifth Century from the Anglo Saxons..Pagan Anglo Saxons. Christianity did not enter England until the 7th century.....

Mr. Elliot just what does your church have to do with America being the primary supporter of human rights? I remember those who had the bible in one hand and a noose in the other daring black men to try to vote. I remember a little girl that had to be escorted into a school while good Christian southern folks screamed and threw things at her....or dogs sent out after little children and the water hoses...to keep that race down, using the bible. It was used to keep black people as slaves. Heck the bible was used to keep women from voting or entering what was then a "man's" world. The only reason this nation has been the beacon for human rights was that there was a seperation of church and state and it was a nation of laws and not church.

What do we have now? Now that there is a pResident that talks to god...and gets answers. War and less rights, torture, disapparences, secrecy, lies...and this is a Christian administration. Sorry but it reminds me of the Witch Trials...inprisonment and toture. Cluster bombs dropped on innocents, DU tipped so that in the years to come mutilated babies will be born dead or to die. How many more of our soldiers will suffer in the years to come from depleted uranium in their system? And this from a Christian believer...

As far as Founders being Christian...Jefferson, Franklin, Cornelius Harnett are listed as Deist, a few are listed as Unitarian and about 15 or so are listed as not known. I would not say Paine or Jefferson could be considered any kind of Christian. Believing in a god does not a Christian make.

Thomas Paine-

The evidences of Paine's disbelief in Christianity, as a revealed religion, are irrefutable, as shown by the following extracts from his writings:

"I do not believe in the creed professed by the Jewish church, by the Roman church, by the Greek church, by the Turkish church, by the Protestant church, nor by any church that I know of. My own mind is my own church" (Age of Reason).

"All national institutions of churches, whether Jewish, Christian, or Turkish, appear to me no other than human inventions set up to terrify and enslave mankind, and monopolize power and profit" (Ibid.).

"Each of these churches shows certain books, which they call revelation, or the word of God. The Jews say that their word of God was given by God to Moses, face to face; the Christians say that their word of God came by divine inspiration; and the Turks say that their word of God, the Koran, was brought by an angel from heaven. Each of these churches accuses the others of unbelief; and, for my own part, I disbelieve them all" (Ibid.).

"But some perhaps will say, Are we to have no word of God, no revelation? I answer, Yes; there is a word of God; there is a revelation.

"The word of God is the creation we behold ... It is only in the creation that all our ideals and conceptions of a word of God can unite. The creation speaketh an universal language, independently of human speech, or human language, multiplied and various as they be. It is an ever-existing original, which every man can read. It cannot be forged; it cannot be counterfeited; it cannot be lost; it cannot be altered; it cannot be suppressed. It does not depend upon the will of man whether it shall be published or not; it publishes itself from one end of the earth to the other. It preaches to all nations and to all worlds; and this word of God reveals to man all that is necessary for man to know of God.

"Do we want to contemplate his power? We see it in the unchangeable order by which the incomprehensible whole is governed. Do we want to contemplate his munificence? We see it in the abundance with which he fills the earth. Do we want to contemplate his mercy? We see it in his not withholding that abundance even from the unthankful. In fine, do we want to know what God is? Search not the book called the Scripture, which any human hand might make, but the Scripture called the creation" (Ibid.).

"What is it the Bible teaches us? -- rapine, cruelty, and murder. What is it the Testament teaches us? -- to believe that the Almighty committed debauchery with a woman engaged to be married, and the belief of this debauchery is called faith" (Ibid.).

"It is the fable of Jesus Christ, as told in the New Testament, and the wild and visionary doctrine raised thereon, against which I contend. The story, taking it as it is told, is blasphemously obscene" (Ibid.).

"As to the Christian system of faith, it appears to me as a species of Atheism -- a sort of religious denial of God. It professes to believe in a man rather than in God. It is a compound made up chiefly of Manism with but little Deism, and is an near Atheism as twilight is to darkness. It introduces between man and his Maker an opaque body, which it calls a Redeemer, as the moon introduces her opaque self between the earth and the sun, and it produces by this means a religious, or an irreligious eclipse of light. It has put the whole orbit of reason into shade" (Ibid.).

The intellectual part of religion is a private affair between every man and his Maker, and in which no third party has any right to interfere. The practical part consists in our doing good to each other. But since religion has been made into a trade, the practical part has been made to consist of ceremonies performed by men called priests ... By devices of this kind true religion has been banished, and such means have been found out to extract money, even from the pockets of the poor, instead of contributing to their relief" (Letter to Camille Jordan).

"No man ought to make a living by religion. It is dishonest so to do" (Ibid.).

"Who art thou, vain dust and ashes, by whatever name thou art called -- whether a king, a bishop, a church, or a state -- that obtrudest thine insignificance between the soul of man and his Maker?" (Rights of Man).

"Any system of religion that has anything in it that shocks the mind of a child, cannot be a true system" (Age of Reason).

"To do good is my religion."

"I believe that religious duties consist in doing justice, loving mercy, and endeavoring to make our fellow- creatures happy" (Age of Reason).

Paine's unbelief was life-long. In his "Age of Reason" he says: "From the time I was capable of conceiving an idea and acting upon it by reflection, I either doubted the truth of the Christian system or thought it to be a strange affair."

Thomas Jefferson

Millions of innocent men, women and children, since the introduction of Christianity, have been burnt, tortured, fined and imprisoned; yet we have not advanced one inch towards uniformity.

-Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782

But it does me no injury for my neighbor to say there are twenty gods or no God. It neither picks my pocket nor breaks my leg.

-Thomas Jefferson, Notes on Virginia, 1782

Where the preamble declares, that coercion is a departure from the plan of the holy author of our religion, an amendment was proposed by inserting "Jesus Christ," so that it would read "A departure from the plan of Jesus Christ, the holy author of our religion;" the insertion was rejected by the great majority, in proof that they meant to comprehend, within the mantle of its protection, the Jew and the Gentile, the Christian and Mohammedan, the Hindoo and Infidel of every denomination.

-Thomas Jefferson, Autobiography, in reference to the Virginia Act for Religious Freedom

Question with boldness even the existence of a god; because if there be one he must approve of the homage of reason more than that of blindfolded fear.

-Thomas Jefferson, Letter to Peter Carr, August 10, 1787

Believing with you that religion is a matter which lies solely between man and his God, that he owes account to none other for his faith or his worship, that the legislative powers of government reach actions only, and not opinions, I contemplate with sovereign reverence that act of the whole American people which declared that their legislature should 'make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof,' thus building a wall of separation between church and State.

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to Danbury Baptist Association, CT., Jan. 1, 1802

History, I believe, furnishes no example of a priest-ridden people maintaining a free civil government. This marks the lowest grade of ignorance of which their civil as well as religious leaders will always avail themselves for their own purposes.

-Thomas Jefferson to Alexander von Humboldt, Dec. 6, 1813.

The whole history of these books [the Gospels] is so defective and doubtful that it seems vain to attempt minute enquiry into it: and such tricks have been played with their text, and with the texts of other books relating to them, that we have a right, from that cause, to entertain much doubt what parts of them are genuine. In the New Testament there is internal evidence that parts of it have proceeded from an extraordinary man; and that other parts are of the fabric of very inferior minds. It is as easy to separate those parts, as to pick out diamonds from dunghills.

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to John Adams, January 24, 1814

Christianity neither is, nor ever was a part of the common law.

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to Dr. Thomas Cooper, February 10, 1814

In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own.

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to Horatio G. Spafford, March 17, 1814

All eyes are opened, or opening, to the rights of man. The general spread of the light of science has already laid open to every view the palpable truth, that the mass of mankind has not been born with saddles on their backs, nor a favored few bootied and spurred, ready to ride them legitimately, by the grace of God.

-Thomas Jefferson, letter to Roger C. Weightman, June 24, 1826 (in the last letter he penned)

Seems that Jefferson also believed that religion does not bring equality or knowledge.

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | SEPTEMBER 4, 2007 1:23 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Terra:

ALL of America's Founding Fathers said positive and negative things about Christianity (& almost everything else!). "Shall I go into what some of our founding fathers have said about [in praise of] Christianity?"

Further, your statement that "the biggest percentage" of the Founding Fathers "were not Christian" is more than the reverse of the truth. Can you name even one who was not Christian? Of course they had various ways of being Christian, as we Christians today have. And of course some made occasional statements so pro-Enlightenment as to seem anti-Christian; but that was within the dynamic tension of their Bible+Enlightenment religion. All of them were birth-Christians; none was a convert to any other religion.

Democracy? As for your saying "there has never been a democracy created by a monotheistic religion," democracy was practiced, says the eminent scholar of the Hebrew Scriptures / Old Testament Norman Gottwald, by the tribes of Israel prior to David's kingship. And of course in Enlightenment literature there are Greek and Roman political elements. Ben Franklin was impressed by the Iroquois federal-idea, and used that tribal amphictyony as supportive in the argumentation for the "U.S." confederation of states.

Further, your split between religion and "human rights and a feeling of fairness" is false. You must know that the U.S.A. has been and is the world's primary promoter of human rights; and the push toward a government in which all are "equal before the law" emerged from the Bible+Enlightenment religion of our Founding Fathers.

The Witch trials of Salem? That was "state," not "church." The church (in the person of Cotton Mather) finally convinced the court to put a stop to it.

As for hating other human beings, for us Christians Jesus rules it out by the a fortiori of his commandment, "Love your enemies." (Please reread what I said about hate: it had nothing to do with how people feel toward or treat one another.)

Terra, it isn't just that you and I have different historical perspectives. It is that you are so extensively misinformed.

Mr. Elliot...

As far as the founders NOT being Pagan you are right...But the biggest percentage also were not Christian. They saw what Christianity had done to Europe and wanted none of it.

As far as it goes, they gained more from the Iroquois Confederacy...which if you do not know is the Oldest Living Participatory Democracy in the world. And if you do not know...they are Pagan.

On June 11, 1776 the leaders of the Conferacy was in the meeting hall of the Continental Congress...

Not only were the American Indians of the Six nations involved in the creation of our democracy so was ancient Rome and Greece...There has never been a democracy created by a monotheistic religion. Religion has NEVER formed a government of equality. It has come from human rights and a basic feeling of fairness.

You talk of child sacrifice...and where do you get that in todays or even all Pagan religions? Just like there are Christian snake handlers, does that mean all Christians like to dance with serpents?

Your religion had it's chance to form a government in this nation when the pilgrims landed...they failed.The Witch Trials of Salem was a trial of your religion's idea of equality and governance. On one case a Mother, Sarah Good was accused of Witchcraft, with her Four year old daughter Dorcas. Dorcas had been arrested on March 24th, during her arrest she said her mother was a witch. Sarah was hanged July 19th. Her daughter was later released from the prison, but was said to not be worth anything after her time in chains.

So Mr. Elliot, I do not hate you, your religion or your god...but do not expect me to accept your version of history, or what makes our government set the goal of equality.

Or shall I go into what some of our founding fathers have said about Christianity?

terra

Bide the Wiccan law ye must, In perfect love, in perfect trust. Eight words the Wiccan Rede fulfill: An ye harm none, do what ye will. What ye send forth comes back to thee, So Ever mind the Rule of Three. Follow this with mind and heart, And merry ye meet, and merry ye part.

Where in our Laws is there hateing others? The Rede is not the only guide we have...but it says in few words what we are taught.

The Goddess Recieves

"The Goddess graciously receives to her bosom all that comes into existence, regardless of faith or belief. She holds however a special place for those who practice the Ways of Honor. May I always harvest favor as I strive towards enlightenment, I cast off the chains of prejudice and hatred, I reach beyond violence and bigotry, I seek a balance of lasting inner peace, In Her name".

For all those who hate...

I pity you, for you are missing out. What kind of man of a God that is supposed to reach out in peace...admits to hate?

terra

Christopher Hitchens yesterday (PBS' "In Depth") said that one day he became aware that he didn't believe and couldn't believe (in his birth-religion,Christianity). He was, not by conscious choice, on OUTSIDER.

Now, Pp, we human beings may just go along to get along, or try to MAKE SENSE of our birth-religion or of our conversion-religion (our new way of seeing & living in the world). Hot converts try to impose their (new) religion on other people by attacking alternative religions as NONSENSE & worse (in Hitchens words, "white noise" & "poison"), Typically, converts deny the term "religion" to their new position: "religion" is the nonsense people of other religions call sense. "Reason" is the term these aggressive anti-"religious" converts--e.g., Christopher Hitchens, Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, Daniel Dennett--use to describe the religion they are trying to impose on other people.

The irony here is double. These converts out of their birth-religions (1) TRUST "reason" as the replacement for the faith-object of their birth-religion (so they're still living by faith), & (2) USE logic to "rationalize" their new paradigm (picture of how things really are in the cosmos & in life). Einstein saw through that: reason, he said, is a servant of intuition, not a master of insight.

A common characteristic of these currently popular hot converts to atheism is that none of them is, professionally, a scholar of religion. We professional scholars of religion smile at their bumbings but scowl at their irrational influence in the name of reason.

Now, Pp, why do I bother to lay all this on you?

(1) Because I think you're open & fair-minded enough to read it. (2) Because I want to encourage conversation between commenters and panelists. (That's why I identify myself here as "Willis E. Elliott, panelist." Not because I'm "pompous," as one commenter accused me of being.)

(3) Because I want to clear up some misunderstandings.

1 While a person may have MANY ways of seeing the world (i.e., philosophies), a person can have only ONE way of living in the world, one home-center. You with the Goddess, me with God, Hitchens/Harris/Dawkins/Dennett with "Reason."

In what here I'm cutting/pasting from your 9.1.07 / 8:15pm, you seem unaware of this centering on perceived reality: "They got *only one* (unquestionable) 'sacred drama' to play out, (whether it fits or not) ...and any deviation from it is supposed to bring down wrath and chaos and Gods-know-what-but-we-don't-wanna-know."

"Only one," yes. Only one God (the "mono" in "monotheism" means not one but "only"). (Other deities are empty idols [of course including your Goddess.] Only one true cosmic-historic Story, a parabola of Creation, Fall, Redemption (Jesus as Savior-God), Consummation (fulfilling the Lord's Prayer).

2 HISTORICALLY, I said Paganism is "unAmerican" in the sense that it was non-participant in the religion of our Founding Fathers, which was a combination of Bible & Enlightenment. Many of you Pagans overread me to accuse YOU personally of being unAmerican. Again, my meaning in context was unAmerican as nonAmerican--but you took it to mean antiAmerican!

3 HISTORICALLY, God and the Goddess have been enemies, hating each other. True devotees of either have participated in this hatred (which is what I meant when I said you & I hate each other's deity). This "hatred" is life-rejection of one life-path in favor of another--as Jesus said following him included "hating" your family. Obviously, Jesus excluded hatred as rejection of anyone: he made no exceptions to the rule of goodwill: "Love your enemies."

Another nuance on "hate" is that historically,

the divine alternatives do not even exist except as false ideas: you Goddess-worshippers deny that God exists, we God-worshippers deny that the Goddess exists...so what is actually hated is the other's behavior...

...one instance; In Micah 6:7b the Bible loathes/hates/rejects the pagan practice of the ritual killing of babies. In the very next verse, this prophet has this to say: God has told you "what is good. What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with you God?"

Thanks for listenin', Pp!

Grace and peace--
Willis Elliott

4

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | SEPTEMBER 3, 2007 1:10 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I mean, not to harp, there, Reverend, but in your own article you talked about how great you are 'loving even your enemies...'

But, you hate the Goddess... Not like She even did anything to you... certainly not that you'd recognize...

But still you hate...

And you want to shape American policy based on this?

If you hadn't noticed all the Christian followers on other threads aping your 'Pagans Hate God' line ?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 8:18 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Lil Pagan platitude for you I think Lady Terra may have mentioned to you:

Hate's a cup of poison you drink from hoping it'll hurt someone else.

What you been drinking, Reverend?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 7:39 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Gee.... Awful quiet...

I'm still kinda curious about the Reverend's self-described 'hate.'

Tsk, tsk, child. Err.. Reverend.

You... 'hate' the Goddess. Interesting.

Apparently, in the same way as you imagine I 'hate' your God.

Not getting the impression you're too innocent and illiterate to know what *hate* *is...* though we hear a lot of people in Christianity talking like hate can tell the difference between a 'sin' and a 'sinner...'

Particularly when a human head with hate in it is involved.

Do you know what it is to *hate,* Reverend?

It's not a state to be pursued or lauded or trumpeted.

Your hate has taken more from me more times, cost me more loss, than I could count or measure.

But, no, it's not *hate* to say so Or say why.

I don't hate you, or your God.

You talk like you got a pretty spiffy life, there, Reverend.

Where's *your* hate come from?

What you got cause to *hate* me, or the Goddess, or *anything* for?

Way I figure it is, for a Reverend, you either got a funny idea what hate is, or a funny idea where to put it.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 7:32 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I dunno, Shirley, apparently this guy hates Someone he isn't supposed to believe is real at all, yet is apparently assured I must *hate* someone he *does* believe in, despite his own beliefs saying it takes special faith to think *his* Someone exists at all, and despite the fact I don't believe "God" has anything to do with what he says in the first place.

What can I say?

Everyone's a critic.

:)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 4:09 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I love the way you added this up. Even Christ doubted, so why wouldn't anyone, with any intelligence.

POSTED BY: SHIRLEY SEDALNICK | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 3:50 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I love the way you added this up. Even Christ doubted, so why wouldn't anyone, with any intelligence.

POSTED BY: SHIRLEY SEDALNICK | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 3:50 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I love the way you added this up. Even Christ doubted, so why wouldn't anyone, with any intelligence.

POSTED BY: SHIRLEY SEDALNICK | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 3:50 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"...we behave into a new way of believing." I can attest that this statement puts into perspective my current faith challenge.

POSTED BY: MORRIS S. | SEPTEMBER 2, 2007 12:06 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

See what I mean, Terra?

We all, to one extent or another, live the 'myths and worldviews' we choose. If you treat certain myths and doctrines as *microcosms of a perceived macrocosm,* then you might see why they're all fussed about everyone emulating a model of 'family' around which all order and sense in the universe (in the form of the unpredictable and inconsistent dictates of a demanding-but-incoherent father) must revolve...

This model has a place for, say, queer kids to have 'manhood' or 'wifely submission' beaten into them, likely through terrible suffering, but the one thing the parallel real-life abusive family cannot accept is *there being a real world out there that ain't like that.*

We're the quirky-ditzy aunts and worldly uncles in their world, perhaps. We've got to be there, for some limited function, as well as serving to be scorned as a negative example... but not really-acknowledged, and we certainly aren't supposed to put our nose in 'family' business or suggest that the kids are getting smacked around too much by speaking up at the holiday dinner. :)

They think we must 'hate God' because that's not only their myth, they need to believe there's no world *outside* that myth.

They got *only one* (unquestionable) 'sacred drama' to play out, (whether it fits or not) ...and any deviation from it is supposed to bring down wrath and chaos and Gods-know-what-but-we-don't-wanna-know.

It's *hard* for them to understand, (whether or not they had a lousy childhood or what form it took) that... maybe out here life ain't about a blithe "My God is love, cause I only see good stuff" or a defensive, "My abusive God is abusive cause he loves! Abuse is love! Injustice is Ultimate Justice! Irrationality is reason! Holy War will bring peace! Republicans care for the poor!"

Etc, etc.

You can't save anybody from themselves.

But you don't have to live in their world, either.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 8:15 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, Terra, maybe he 'knows not what he doeses. :)'

Many Christians are taught that what they're doing is in fact the opposite of what they're obviously, to us, doing.

Comes out like a sort of spiritual Stockholm syndrome: either to be imposed or embraced, "This pain and confinement must be right, or else I'd be a victim, so identify with the bad situation. Insist it's right, defend it."

Etc.

Look at their 'exorcisms' and the like.

Under other circumstances, it'd be called 'torture,' but they call it 'grace' when someone's just that beaten down that the acquiescence takes over. It's a function of our primate instincts, and people will spend a great deal of time rationalizing it, ...no one is immune to this, trust me.

It's why it's done, for one cause or another. It *appears to work.*

In fact, the idea of 'defending the faith' is all predicated on the idea *someone else* is going to come try and torture you or something. ...it's projection, just like they think we 'Hate God' simply for ...not joining the fray.

It's parallel to when domestically-abused people will spend great mental effort on trying to appease and stabilize the situation.... doesn't make any damn sense to someone outside, but it's all about our instincts.

The very instincts that some want to deny and claim we live in pure reason. Maybe under an absolute father and submissive mother and sacrificed suffering son... all of whom are supposed to be emulated in one way or another when the 'world' (or relationships between people) get all messed-up. "If only you obeyed, I wouldn't do these horrible things," says the "Father" ..."Listen to your father" says the "Blessed Mother." "If I suffer a lot, I'm OK," says the Son or Blessed Virgin.

Abusive dynamic.

If they can't figure out it's not 'hate' or 'doom or damnation for all' to not participate, well...

Prolly ain't really about us, anyway.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 7:28 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Paganplace...

I was just told by another Pagan that I should not be tiffed when a Christian discriminates against us...we should just take it with the view that they do not know any better...I say it's time we taught them.

Why is it that when we say we are not Christian then we must automatic hate the Christian God? It's their god, not mine....I don't ask that anyone convert to Paganism..if anyone does it is not because they have been brow beaten into it, or even that anyone asked them to come to our "Wiccan Church."

Elliot hates our Goddess...fine She still loves him, as "Her love is poured upon the Earth", No if's or's or but's. Love is unconditional...Hate our Lady and She will still shine Her light on you. It is only you that will suffer as hate is a cup of poison you drink and expect your enemy to sicken of.

And to Elliot, Pagans are the enemy. Why? What has the Goddess done to him?

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 6:40 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I mean, this whole "You hate God, you evil people! You'll be sorry when you die!"

I mean, if the Universe were Christian, I'd just be like, walk up to St. Peter, be like, "Still working reception, are you?"

"No F'n jokes, Irish, I heard em all."

Etc, etc. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 5:24 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hey, you, Heyyou.

You worship a cross and a book, not the Divine.

See how easy that is to say?

Doesn't make it true.

Neither do your mischaracterizations of Pagan belief mean we 'worship the creation.'

We actually have our own view of the Divine: we don't *separate* the 'substance' of the world from the *spirit* of the world.

To say we choose between is simply your own ignorance.

And, hello, Reverend Elliot. I haven't been online a lot this week, but thanks for ...kind of addressing me.

You say:

"You hate my God & I hate your Goddess, but our religious differences have nothing to do with our equality as American citizens."

Except at times, in your rhetoric.

When you said we should be excluded from public office or equal protection under the law, or the same consideration in the military, I don't think your assertion about what your opinion means is borne out in your actions, though.

As for saying, that I 'hate your God,' there's some further inflammatory rhetoric you spew out there.

I don't *believe* in your God, (as advertised, at least) but I don't 'Hate God.'

I'd say, though, that if you by your own words "Hate my Goddess," then *you* are saying *you* hate at least *half* of "God." :)

"Again, congratulations on reading me! The only hopeless readers are those who read only for confirmation."

We'll see about the writers, ...and your own reading comprehension (not that my writing was terribly good this week, concentration was off) soon enough. :)

You insist in many posts that only belief in your God as presented in your religion can make someone a good person... yet you here praise a *nonbeliever* and say that the disbelief didn't matter... as long as she's a member of the group supposed to obey you.

I still see inconsistency, there, between your political agenda and what you claim is religious (and even historical) truth.

The Founding Fathers didn't believe in your Bible in your way, either. In fact, one made a rather conspicuous attempt to pare it down.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 4:27 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Terra, this is how you hate God: You worship the creation.

POSTED BY: HEYYOU | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 3:07 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Mr. Elliot,

First off...as far as Paganplace hateing your god, I doubt that. Hate is not our thing, it seems to be yours. You hate our Goddess? Unlike

us, who know about your god, you know nothing about our Goddess..it is the Christians that seem to have the ability to hate what they do not know.

There is much we hold against Christians, but I for one do not hold it against your god or your religion. I believe that religion brings out into the open what we are on the inside. Those who hate another's god without knowing that god is telling more about themselves than about their religion.

Paganplace has had just cause for her feelings, while you sir, do not. Tell me, what Pagan has told you you deserved the worse for all eternity? What Pagan has disrupted your worship? What Pagan has called you humiliating names?

We face discrimination up to the Whitehouse...and you hateing our Goddess is just one more grief.A little grief, but another that builds.

We do not hate you...your god or your religion...but I detest your bigotry. But...

Goddess Bless you.

Terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | SEPTEMBER 1, 2007 12:46 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Ah, so you can read me Eclati-on lingo! Ya Ya. Duce a Gita ZeitGeist Moment! Gim me Fricht! Ya Ya!

P.S., What did the Nun tell the Priest?

"Nun Of this and Non Of That Father, O.K.?" Oh;

What is the Difference Between a Lame-Duck, Donkey & Elephant? The Same Shiat! And There is nothing Sunni about It!

Happy Labor Day. remember, If You see Something Say Something. I'm Going to Nathans hot Dog tonight and watch the Fireworks at Coney Island 9:20 Pm!! Enjoy!

POSTED BY: JA JOZ | AUGUST 31, 2007 4:57 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"Please quote Pre-Apocalyptic other's lightly and give Us more of your Original StallGeist self, so to speaketh."

It is important that one's contribution to the conversation be sufficiently framed in the context of the existing conversation. The points one is trying to make are generally not evident without reference to the questions being asked. ... It is therefore important to put the Zeitgeist before the Stallgeist, so to speak.

The above Bible quotes set the tone for a response to the atheist proposition that Christians are ideologically robotic.

Clearly Jesus cried out "Where are you, God?" Clearly Psalm 22 is the whole of the thought being expressed on the cross... the thought of "oh crap, I am surrounded by my enemies and do not know where God is or how I will be rescued from this current calamity.

While reading these two passages, Stalgiss resonates with the thoughts of previous writers, "God hears and saves"

-RT

POSTED BY: RICHMOND T. STALGISS | AUGUST 31, 2007 4:40 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Here are a few other data points to consider:

Mark 15:3 4And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? which is, being interpreted, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

Psalm 22

1My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

2O my God, I cry in the day time, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

3But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

4Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

5They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

6But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

7All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

8He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

9But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

10I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

11Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.

12Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.

13They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

14I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

15My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

16For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

17I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

18They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

19But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

20Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

21Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

22I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

23Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

24For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

25My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

26The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

27All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

28For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.

29All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

30A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

31They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

POSTED BY: RICHMOND T. STALLGISS | AUGUST 31, 2007 2:58 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Gosh Colin, you sound pretty sure of yourself there.

You are thinking in cliches:

* Christians = Ideological Robots

* Atheists = Clear Headed Logicians

It is almost as if you are afraid of nuance.

I say it's perfectly normal for perceptions not to make sense at first ... reality emerges into our perspective as we put all the pieces together. Just because it doesn't make sense to you doesn't mean it's illogical.

Peace,

RT

POSTED BY: RICHMOND T. STALLGISS | AUGUST 31, 2007 2:51 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

It seems that Christians are making a virtue of what they fear most. Doubt. Doubt has always been violently discouraged by the supernaturalists in the past. People were

killed for doubting the party line on religion, or tortured until they recanted and "saw the light".

The whole point of faith is that because it makes no sense, because it defies all logic and reason, we have to push sense aside and simply go into faith mode.

Faith means not having to make sense. Just believe.

Just believe there's a God and a Heaven and life everlasting for ever and ever amen. Just believe, and you are saved from death. Have no doubt. Have faith instead of doubt.

But, as a species, we are getting too smart to swallow this nonsense. Our early ancestors knew nothing. We know infinitely more. Doubt is here to stay, and will inevitably become more common amongst thinking people, until it pushes religion onto the sidelines of society, along with astrology, palm reading, numerology, phrenology, and UFO-ology.

POSTED BY: COLIN | AUGUST 31, 2007 2:11 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Very true rev. We need faith to say the universe, anything we see is really there. That's just the beginning. What does it mean?

Mother T demonstrates that atheists are just as charitable, perhaps more so than the most devout believer. She obviously didn't get much help from God.

POSTED BY: BGONE | AUGUST 31, 2007 1:50 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

My eyes glazed over, it must be the brilliance of those eclat photons.

j/k

:)

:)

:)

Peace,

RT

POSTED BY: RICHMOND T. STALLGISS | AUGUST 31, 2007 12:30 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

PAGANPLACE:

Thank you for not quitting reading me after your first highly negative impression of me from my dissociation of paganism from the founding American religious synthesis of Bible + Enlightenment. In your comment above, you reveal your misunderstanding of what I said, & of me: I did not say "everyone in America is supposed to believe in the Christian God." Nor did I say that we are not all "equal Americans." You hate my God & I hate your Goddess, but our religious differences have nothing to do with our equality as American citizens. Again, congratulations on reading me! The only hopeless readers are those who read only for confirmation.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | AUGUST 30, 2007 4:07 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I wonder how that squares with Reverend Eliot's idea that... everyone in America is supposed to believe in the Christian God... But if a Christian he likes doesn't believe in the Christian God, regardless of what 'good works' they do, they shouldn't be equal Americans.

Seems to me there's a couple different standards what 'doubt' or 'disbelief' mean, depending what 'group' you belong to.

Doubt is too often treated as a question to which there's only one acceptable answer. I've even heard some say Mother Theresa is bound for Hell for some reason.

I think there's a lesson about how belief itself is treated.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 30, 2007 1:53 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)
