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Flow of Flesh, Reach of Spirit

ON FAITH - WASHINGTON POST - WILLIS ELLIOTT

The West is in a religio-political war not of our choosing. The enemy is not Islam but a violent movement within Islam, a movement many Muslim leaders repudiate. For this movement, this week's "On Faith" question doesn't make sense: "To what extent are problems in the Middle East about religion and to what extent are they about politics? Does it matter?" But to us—especially to us Americans with our "separation of church and state"—the question *does* make sense. And it both does and doesn't matter.

The realities are the same whether or not one tries to sort them into separate piles marked "Religion" and "Politics," so the question doesn't matter. Indeed, it's important that one view the realities binocularly before using the religion-or-politics monocles. But the secondary truth is that the sorting is an analytic necessity for understanding, deciding, and acting.

My title addresses two abiding binocular realities about the human condition and suggests the use of each to illumine the anger, anxiety, and anguish of the Middle East.

1. Into every form of life God has breathed *the impulse to survive and thrive*. This fundamental truth, which reaches highest awareness in our species, was elegantly stated by Darwin in the last paragraph of the first edition of THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES: "There is a grandeur in this view of life" as "having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one...from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being evolved."

In humanity, this impulse produces PEOPLE-FLOW, the flow of flesh into streams of family / clan / tribe / nation / international organizations. The cover of my book FLOW OF FLESH, REACH OF SPIRIT has a photograph of four hands "flowing" up the rough bark of a tree—one hand for each of the four generations of my family, the tiny top-hand being of our first-born. The book's thesis is that in all people-flows from the least (the bio-family) to the largest (all humanity on earth at any one moment), every human being reaches out for more meaning than matter can provide, and that "spirit" is the best word for this *reaching*, this longing (as the Bible puts it) for God.

2. Water flows downward wherever possible, and people flow over the earth by the gravity of opportunity. What motivates people-flow is this *impulse to survive and thrive*, an urge which has in itself no moral or religious content any more than in an amoeba; and it presses all available powers to overcome resistances to success.

3. The major resistances to people-flows are other peoples. Big peoples flowing into big peoples cause human tsunamis. Big peoples flowing over little peoples elicit, from below, cries of "*Injustice!*"

4. One accurate description of Middle East history is the flow of big peoples (of the big rivers—the Nile, the Tigris, and the Euphrates) over the little peoples on the land-bridge which the Romans called Palestine.

5. In 1947-48, the organizationally biggest people (the U.N.) flowed a middle-size people (the world's homeless Jews) over part of a little people (the Arabs of Palestine). The 1947 Partition Plan—to keep the Jews from claiming the whole of Palestine—specified that the Arabs in the part of Palestine not to be flowed over by Jews would be free to form the State of Palestine, and the Arabs in the part to be flowed over were to live with the injustice by leaving or remaining in what became the State of Israel. The day the British left in 1948, the State of Israel was born. (Palestine was mainly Arab, though Jewish immigration had been increasing for five decades.)

6. For six decades, the flowed-over Arabs have refused to swallow the injustice, have tried by every means available to destroy the State of Israel, and have lived the increasing misery of bitter memories instead of the prosperity of a State of Palestine which they could have declared when the Jews declared the State of Israel. From scores of instances of flowed-over peoples, history offers the wisdom of *non-violent options* where violence offers no lively hope of deliverance from the injustice. But the Palestinians have not availed themselves of this wisdom.

7. All of the above, except Darwin's God-comment, could be put on the "Politics" pile. I've been talking the politics of the history-long power of big peoples to determine little peoples' lands and lives. *Religion can't be given full credit or blame for any of it*. However, religion's "reach of spirit" can help little people burn the fuel of hope rather than the fuel of hate. (If it were not so, the Bible couldn't have been written.)

8. But now comes a tragic reality which we must put on the "Religion" pile. It is the Islamic land-doctrine that once in Muslim hands, a territory must remain Muslim. To let it fall into "infidel" hands would be a sin against Allah: *permitting the State of Israel to exist is sinning against Allah*. The Islamist inflation of this Islamic land-doctrine spotlights the Palestinian Arab plight as a poster for jihadist expansionism, the push to eliminate "dar es harb" (infidel war-territories) so that the whole world will be "dar es islam" (Muslim peace-territory) under a world-empire caliphate—the war-goal negatively motivated by blaming the Muslim world's troubles on the West, and positively motored by restorationist-romantic fantasies of the glorious Muslim past and by the delusion of a paradisaical destiny even for suicide-martyrs.

9. Living toward that final victory, Islamists today seethe with hatred for non-Islamic societies in which they live—societies unsubmitive to the widened rule of "dhimmitude" that such Muslims have the divine right to *dominate* such societies (extending the Islamic law that in Muslim societies, non-Muslims have the status of a disadvantaged *underclass*).

I loathe war, and daily pray the Lord's Prayer for the world's deliverance from it. But we cannot excuse ourselves from the Islamist war against the West. This religio-political war, launched by radical Muslims determined to advance their views by violence, must be fought, as nonviolently as feasible, by all who believe that violence is—everywhere and always—inimical to the "reach of spirit."

Comments

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While islam is being critized for being global and wanting to spread globally (via Jihad by the coming khilafah state) , the west is blinded on their own global onlaught to forge their (ideology of democtism and capitalim) . just see how many wars were fought for that ? how many lives lost and how many hopes were shaterd while the western coutries are after the spread of this capitalist system which worth nothing .

well islam is inevitable . and the khilafah state is equally so . i am optimistic that humanity will welcome the neww wrld order of the khilafah , let hizb ut tahrir say his word and do it .

by the way the muslim ummah is now more than ever detemined to put back khilafah in place ..

it is only a matter of time before we muslims succed peacefully in that owsome project .

Bringem on

POSTED BY: [ABU HUSAM](#) | OCTOBER 2, 2007 11:30 AM
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POSTED BY: [ABU HUSAM](#) | OCTOBER 2, 2007 11:28 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Muslims who want to live under Islamic Sharia law were told on Wednesday to get out of Australia, as the government targeted radicals in a bid to head off potential terror attacks.

A day after a group of mainstream Muslim leaders pledged loyalty to Australia and her Queen at a special meeting with Prime Minister John Howard, he and his Ministers made it clear that extremists would face a crackdown. Treasurer Peter Costello, seen as heir apparent to

Howard, hinted that some radical clerics could be asked to leave the country if they did not accept that Australia was a secular state, and its laws were made by parliament. "If those are not your values, if you want a country which has Sharia law or a theocratic state, then Australia is not for you", he said on National Television. "I'd be saying to clerics who are teaching that there are two laws governing people in Australia: one the Australian law and another Islamic law that is false. If you can't agree with parliamentary law, independent courts, democracy, and would prefer Sharia law and have the opportunity to go to another country, which practices it, perhaps, then, that's a better option", Costello said.

Asked whether he meant radical clerics would be forced to leave, he said those with dual citizenship could possibly be asked to move to the other country. Education Minister Brendan Nelson later told reporters that Muslims who did not want to accept local values should "clear off". Basically people who don't want to be Australians, and who don't want, to live by Australian values and understand them, well then, they can basically clear off", he said.

Separately, Howard angered some Australian Muslims on Wednesday by saying he supported spy agencies monitoring the nation's mosques. Quote: "IMMIGRANTS, NOT AUSTRALIANS, MUST ADAPT. Take It Or Leave it. I am tired of this nation worrying about whether we are offending some individual or their culture. Since the terrorist attacks on Bali, we have experienced a surge in patriotism by the majority of Australians."

"However, the dust from the attacks had barely settled when the 'politically correct' crowd began complaining about the possibility that our patriotism was offending others. I am not against immigration, nor do I hold a grudge against anyone who is seeking a better life by coming to Australia." "However, there are a few things that those who have recently come to our country, and apparently some born here, need to understand." "This idea of Australia being a multi-cultural community has served only to dilute our sovereignty and our national identity. And, as Australians, we have our own culture, our own society, our own language and our own lifestyle." "This culture has been developed over two centuries of struggles, trials and victories by millions of men and women who have sought freedom" "We speak mainly ENGLISH, not Spanish, Lebanese, Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Russian, or any other language. Therefore, if you wish to become part of our society. Learn the language!" "Most Australians believe in God. This is not some Christian, right wing, political push, but a fact, because Christian men and women, on Christian principles, founded this nation, and this is clearly documented. It is certainly appropriate to display it on the walls of our schools. If God offends you, then I suggest you consider another part of the world as your new home, because God is part of our culture."

"We will accept your beliefs, and will not question why. All we ask is that you accept ours, and live in harmony and peaceful enjoyment with us."

"If the Southern Cross offends you, or you don't like "A Fair Go", then you should seriously consider a move to another part of this planet. We are happy with our culture and have no desire to change, and we really don't care how you did things where you came from. By all means, keep your culture, but do not force it on others. "This is OUR COUNTRY, OUR LAND, and OUR LIFESTYLE, and we will allow you every opportunity to enjoy all this. But once you are done complaining, whining, and griping about Our Flag, Our Pledge, Our Christian beliefs, or Our Way of Life, I highly encourage you take advantage of one other great Australian freedom, 'THE RIGHT TO LEAVE'." "If you aren't happy here then LEAVE. We didn't force you to come here. You asked to be here. So accept the country YOU accepted." Maybe if we circulate this amongst ourselves, Canadian and American citizens will find the backbone to start speaking and voicing the same truths !

"My response is DIRECT-CONFRONTATIONAL: (1) Use war-language (as in my first sentence and last paragraph: "...a religiopolitical war...."); (2) Represent the West as victim (the end of my first sentence: "not of our choosing."); (3) Emphasize that we prefer to fight the war with non-violent weapons (as in my last sentence, fight "as nonviolently as feasible");"

1)The Islamic fundamentalists are used to war language. It's what they expect, and if so used will turn to their compatriots and say 'you see? didn't I tell you that's what they'd say?' It plays right into their hands.

Talk to them in ways that they DON'T expect. Humanize both sides. Show them the aftermath that their actions have on their own culture and families.

2) We were attacked on 9/11. It could have been prevented. Did we have to respond? yes- but Iraq had absolutely nothing to do with it. Iraq was a choice. A horrible choice, by someone who claimed to 'speak to God'. The result of which ensures danger for us for years to come. Al-Quaeda is now world famous, and is now the name slapped onto any group with a grudge against the west. They should have been marginalized by the west instead of made into this bigger than life brand name that is now attracting more members than the group itself ever had. Bin Laden is now the de facto spokesman for anything anti American.

Whatever claim we had to 'victimhood' went out the window the day we set foot on Iraqi soil.

3) Non violently? With more Americans dead now than actually died in New York, Washington and Pennsylvania? How many innocent Iraqis killed and families ripped apart by our own actions?

4) You want the 'wedge' between Islam and Islamic fundamentalists to be Christianity. Leave the proselytizing out of it. Use their own religion to show that their actions have nothing to do with what religion could be about.

I don't understand your arrogant stance in saying that you are somehow more nuanced/reasoned or better at providing solutions than anyone else. There seems to be a lot of puffing yourself up to prove your 'learnedness', when in fact it's just bloviation.

POSTED BY: PRIVER | SEPTEMBER 17, 2007 8:32 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

In Europe and U.S., Nonbelievers Are Increasingly Vocal

By Mary Jordan
Washington Post Foreign Service
Saturday, September 15, 2007; Page A01

BURGESS HILL, England -- Every morning on his walk to work, high school teacher Graham Wright recited a favorite Anglican prayer and asked God for strength in the day ahead. Then two years ago, he just stopped.

Wright, 59, said he was overwhelmed by a feeling that religion had become a negative influence in his life and the world. Although he once considered becoming an Anglican vicar, he suddenly found that religion represented nothing he believed in, from Muslim extremists blowing themselves up in God's name to Christians condemning gays, contraception and stem cell research.

BY DATE 2007
Jan Feb Mar April
May June July Aug
Sept Oct Nov Dec

Previous Years: 2006 BY FAITH
Muslim
Jewish
Christian
Hindu
Buddhist

"I stopped praying because I lost my faith," said Wright, 59, a thoughtful man with graying hair and clear blue eyes. "Now I truly loathe any sight or sound of religion. I blush at what I used to believe."

Wright is now an avowed atheist and part of a growing number of vocal nonbelievers in Europe and the United States. On both sides of the Atlantic, membership in once-quiet groups of nonbelievers is rising, and books attempting to debunk religion have been surprise bestsellers, including "The God Delusion," by Oxford University professor Richard Dawkins.

New groups of nonbelievers are sprouting on college campuses, anti-religious blogs are expanding across the Internet, and in general, more people are publicly saying they have no religious faith.

More than three out of four people in the world consider themselves religious, and those with no faith are a distinct minority. But especially in richer nations, and nowhere more than in Europe, growing numbers of people are actively saying they don't believe there is a heaven or a hell or anything other than this life.

Many analysts trace the rise of what some are calling the "nonreligious movement" to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks. The sight of religious fanatics killing 3,000 people caused many to begin questioning -- and rejecting -- all religion.

"This is overwhelmingly the topic of the moment," said Terry Sanderson, president of the National Secular Society of Britain. "Religion in this country was very quiet until September 11, and now it is at the center of everything."

Since the 2001 attacks, a string of religiously inspired bomb and murder plots has shaken Europe. Muslim radicals killed 52 people on the London public transit system in 2005 and 191 on Madrid trains in 2004. People apparently aiming for a reward in heaven were arrested in Britain last year for trying to blow up transatlantic jetliners. And earlier this month in Germany, authorities arrested converts to Islam on charges that they planned to blow up American facilities there.

Many Europeans are angry at demands to use taxpayer money to accommodate Islam, Europe's fastest-growing religion, which now has as many as 20 million followers on the continent. Along with calls for prayer rooms in police stations, foot baths in public places and funding for Islamic schools and mosques, expensive legal battles have broken out over the niqab, the Muslim veil that covers all but the eyes, which some devout women seek to wear in classrooms and court.

Christian fundamentalist groups who want to halt certain science research, reverse abortion and gay rights and teach creationism rather than evolution in schools are also angering people, according to Sanderson and others.

"There is a feeling that religion is being forced on an unwilling public, and now people are beginning to speak out against what they see as rising Islamic and Christian militancy," Sanderson said.

Though the number of nonbelievers speaking their minds is rising, academics say it's impossible to calculate how many people silently share that view. Many people who do not consider themselves religious or belong to any faith group often believe, even if vaguely, in a supreme being or an afterlife. Others are not sure what they believe.

The term atheist can imply aggressiveness in disbelief; many who don't believe in God prefer to call themselves humanists, secularists, freethinkers, rationalists or, a more recently coined term, brights.

In Depth

Multimedia

Photos, videos and panoramas of religious events and trends around the world.

Global Religion

An occasional look at how globalization is redefining world religions.

Jerry Falwell

The television evangelist and founder of the Moral Majority died May 15.

Open House

A glimpse inside houses of worship in the Washington area.

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"Where religion is weak, people don't feel a need to organize against it," said Phil Zuckerman, an American academic who has written extensively about atheism around the globe.

He and others said secular groups are also gaining strength in countries where religious influence over society looms large, including India, Israel and Turkey. "Any time we see an outspoken movement against religion, it tells us that religion has power there," Zuckerman said.

One group of nonbelievers in particular is attracting attention in Europe: the Council of Ex-Muslims. Founded earlier this year in Germany, the group now has a few hundred members and an expanding number of chapters across the continent. "You can't tell us religion is peaceful -- look around at the misery it is causing," said Maryam Namazie, leader of the group's British chapter.

She and other leaders of the council held a news conference in The Hague to launch the Dutch chapter on Sept. 11, the sixth anniversary of the terrorist attacks in the United States. "We are all atheists and nonbelievers, and our goal is not to eradicate Islam from the face of the earth," but to make it a private matter that is not imposed on others, she said.

The majority of nonbelievers say they are speaking out only because of religious fanatics. But some atheists are also extreme, urging people, for example, to blot out the words "In God We Trust" from every dollar bill they carry.

Gaining political clout and access to television and radio airtime is the goal of many of these groups. With a higher profile, they say, they could, for instance, lobby for all religious rooms in public hospitals to be closed, as a response to Muslims demanding prayer rooms because Christians have chapels.

Associations of nonbelievers are also moving to address the growing demand in Britain, Spain, Italy and other European countries for nonreligious weddings, funerals and celebrations for new babies. They are helping arrange ceremonies that steer clear of talk of God, heaven and miracles and celebrate, as they say, "this one life we know."

The British Humanist Association, which urges people who think "the government pays too much attention to religious groups" to join them, has seen its membership double in two years to 6,500.

A humanist group in the British Parliament that looks out for the rights of the nonreligious now has about 120 members, up from about 25 a year ago.

Doreen Massey, a Labor Party member of the House of Lords who belongs to that group, said most British people don't want legislators to make public policy decisions on issues such as abortion and other health matters based on their religious affiliation.

But the church has disproportionate power and influence in Parliament, she said. Foreexample, she said, polls show that 80 percent of Britons want the terminally ill who are in pain to have the right to a medically assisted death, yet such proposals have been effectively killed by a handful of powerful bishops.

"We can't accept that religious faiths have a monopoly on ethics, morality and spirituality," Massey said. Now, she added, humanist and secularist groups are becoming "more confident and more powerful" and recognize that they represent the wishes of huge numbers of people.

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While the faithful have traditionally met like-minded people at the local church, mosque or synagogue, it has long been difficult for those without religion to find each other. The expansion of the Internet has made it a vital way for nonbelievers to connect.

In retirement centers, restaurants, homes and public lectures and debates, nonbelievers are convening to talk about how to push back what they see as increasingly intrusive religion.

"Born Again Atheist," "Happy Heathen" and other anti-religious T-shirts and bumper stickers are increasingly seen on the streets. Groups such as the Skeptics in the Pub in London, which recently met to discuss this topic, "God: The Failed Hypothesis," are now finding that they need bigger rooms to accommodate those who find them online.

Wright, the teacher who recently declared himself a nonbeliever, is one of thousands of people who have joined dues-paying secular and humanist groups in Europe this year.

Sitting in his living room on a quiet cul-de-sac in this English town of 30,000, Wright said he now goes online every day to keep up with the latest atheist news.

"One has to step up and stem the rise of religious influence," said Wright, who is thinking of becoming a celebrant at humanist funerals. He said he recently went to the church funeral of his brother-in-law and couldn't bear the "vacuous prayers of the vicar," who, Wright said, "looked bored and couldn't wait to leave."

Now, instead of each morning silently reciting a favorite nighttime prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord, and by thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers . . ." (from the Anglican Book of Common Prayer), he spends the time just thinking about the day ahead.

He said his deceased mother, a Catholic, was comforted by her faith: "It kept her going through difficult times," particularly when his father left her when he and his sister were young.

"I really don't know how I will react if something really bad happens," he said. "But there is no going back. There is nothing to go back to."

Not believing in an afterlife, he said, "makes you think you have to make the most of this life. It's the now that matters. It also makes you feel a greater urgency of things that matter," such as halting global warming, and not just dismissing it as being "all in God's plan."

He called himself heartened that the National Secular Society, which he recently joined, is planning to open chapters at a dozen universities this fall. The rising presence of the nonreligious movement, he said, is "fantastic."

"It's a bit of opposition, isn't it?" he said. "Why should these religious groups hold so much

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | SEPTEMBER 17, 2007 2:14 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The enemy is religion,pure and simple.

Its impossible to live in a rational world rationally,when so many are brainwashed into believing in the existence of a heaven and a hell and a god, all of whom exist in some part of the natural world called the supernatural.

This is raging lunacy.Its our imaginations working overtime to make us feel good and comforted,and less scared of death.

God is an infantile dream,and an infantile attempt to make sense of existence;and it comes from the infancy of our species,when we were justified for believing utter nonsense.We didn't know any better back then.We know better now. God is just a celestial Teddy Bear for the ignorant and fearful.

POSTED BY: NICHOLAS | SEPTEMBER 17, 2007 11:39 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

R.T.STALLGISS:

Good exchange: you got my point, I got yours.

Of course you are correct that the Islamists aim to irritate us into violent responses which then they can use to "prove" that the West is upping the ante on its victimization of the Muslim world.

My response is DIRECT-CONFRONTATIONAL: (1) Use war-language (as in my first sentence and last paragraph: "...a religiopolitical war..."); (2) Represent the West as victim (the end of my first sentence: "not of our choosing."); (3) Emphasize that we prefer to fight the war with non-violent weapons (as in my last sentence, fight "as nonviolently as feasible"); and (4) Wedge between Islam & violent Islamism, in hope of alliance with the former against the latter (in my second sentence, this: "The enemy is not Islam....").

You criticize my nuanced, realistic, pro-nonviolent policy; but you make no counter-proposal. You leave me with the worry that you are nonparticipant, like the little old gentleman who said, "Don't vote, it only encourages them."

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT, PANELIST | SEPTEMBER 16, 2007 5:52 PM
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Excellent and thought provoking analysis! The idea of "flows" seems to adequately describe the most salient aspects of the historical situation and uses language that is scientific and sociological rather than religious.

There's one part of this essay that sets me to thinking... the last paragraph. It's hard for me to put my finger on, so let me ramble a bit and see if I can pin it down.

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The Dawkinsians among us are keen on scientific conceptions of cooperation... such as those described in game theory. The "Tit-For-Tat" strategy is commonly seen as a simple but highly effective strategy, especially when dealing in a highly aggressive defection environment. This is also known as "live and let live" in some circles.

When someone *defects*, it results in a death spiral of retaliatory defections that in some cases becomes a war of attrition... a contest of wherewithal, will and endurance. This sort of all-out war was the actual Cold War policy of "Mutually Assured Destruction" that guaranteed peace despite instilling fears of nuclear armageddon.

My contention is that it is this sort of war that the Islamists seek to start. It seems they have a "Tit for Tat with allies and slander" strategy as follows: (1) Enter a Tit-for-Tat equilibrium ecosystem (2) propagate an "alliance" within the ecosystem that commits allies to retaliate (jihad) against any individual who threatens any member of the alliance (3) Every once in a while (1 to 5% of the time), secretly slander another player (preferably a non-ally infidel kafir, but failing that, a dhimmi) and induce them to retaliate. (4) point to their (tit-for-tat inspired) retaliation and identify them as a violent defector that needs to be eliminated by the alliance. The alliance members then overwhelm the accused individual and eliminate him through mass aggression.

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Ok, so I guess what I am trying to say is that the jihadi's WANT us to use the language of war. They want us to use the language of retaliation so they can quote our statements to their jihad alliance members and inspire their grand mass retaliation against the Great Satan.

You said "I loathe war, and daily pray the Lord's Prayer for the world's deliverance from it. But we cannot excuse ourselves from the Islamist war against the West. This religio-political war, launched by radical Muslims determined to advance their views by violence, must be fought, as nonviolently as feasible, by all who believe that violence is —everywhere and always—inimical to the "reach of spirit.""

I guess I am hearing you say, "we need to fight them because *they* started it." It seems to me that part of their whole strategy is to get us to say that.

I am not at total clarity on this but I think I conveyed my point. They want us to make this a religious issue and "Declare war on all of Islam" so that they can invoke their divine right to retaliation.

Peace,
RT

POSTED BY: RICHMOND T. STALLGISS | SEPTEMBER 16, 2007 4:34 PM
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