

[http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis\\_e\\_elliott/2008/04/pope\\_benedicts\\_double\\_yes.html](http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2008/04/pope_benedicts_double_yes.html)

## Pope Benedict's Double Yes

**The Question:** *Pope Benedict's recent baptism of a well-known Italian Muslim has prompted criticism in much of the Islamic world. Has Benedict done enough to build bridges to Islam?*

Christianity and Islam are dynamic (missionary) rather than static (cultural) religions and have always experienced cross-conversions. In the new world of the emergent global mind, we can expect this two-way flow to increase. But there is this difference: If a prominent Christian converts to Islam, it won't cause a ripple: the Christian religion has no specific penalty against leaving. However, when this prominent Muslim converted to Christianity, "much of the Islamic world" is said to have complained: the Qur'anic-Muslim punishment for defection is death.

When Pope Benedict stood in the Blue Mosque beside its chief officer and prayed in the direction of Mecca, his action was a YES to Christian generosity toward the other religions, and when he baptized that Italian convert from Islam, his action said YES to Christian orthodoxy. His double yes gives him two sets of enemies and two sets of friends. All four sets will be chattering away during and after his visit to us Americans.

This combination of generous spirit and orthodox mind should not be misunderstood as double-mindedness, a duplicity the Bible severely condemns. Rather, it is an emergent from Rome's internal struggle, during and after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), between a Curia fearful of change and "fresh air" bishops and theologians (responsive to Pope John XXIII's pre-Council call to "open the windows and let in some fresh air").

On the fresh-air side was Augustin Bea, who came to be called "the cardinal of unity"—from 1960 to his death in 1968, the president of the Secretariat for Christian Unity. He was so close a friend of the great peasant pope, John XXIII, and so one in spirit, that one might speculate that at tea one day the two of them dreamed up the Second Vatican Council.

One story to add color. I worked with Bea on a project on which I had written a book. At the time, he was old and bent without having lost any of his gracious winsomeness and beautiful smile. One day, playfully, he put his hand on my shoulder and said, "Come, Dr. Elliott! I must show you what the rest of the Curia think of my new job!"

(A late paper of Vatican II was "Nostra aetate," dealing with the church and the other religions. Bea's "new job" was to add this to his ecumenical portfolio.)

When we arrived at his new office, he threw open the door and said to me "Enter!" The room was empty except for a single chair: his appointment was so recent that he hadn't yet moved in.

Now, I wish I'd continued his little drama and said, "Please sit down so I can see all the important Curia seated in one chair." But I, a Protestant-theologian guest, didn't have the courage (if that's the right word). I was awed as well as delighted in the presence of this truly great Christian—full of joy as well as knowledge, able to say an appreciative YES (as well as a critical NO) to today and tomorrow as well as to yesterday.

"Building bridges" is the metaphor in the current "On Faith" question. I can understand it in contrast, for example, to pulling up one's drawbridge. But it feels arrogant, as though I were those bridges' designer and building, the initiative being mine. Suppose those on the other side assume I want the bridges so they'll come over to my side (and be baptized!). Or suppose they fear I'll construct military bridges, for ease of attack. Or suppose they'd really like me to build bridges so they can have the fun of burning their end of them.

No, I prefer the internalization of the metaphor: How can I be, and help others be, a bridge of universal benevolence (even to "enemies," Jesus says) while vigorously maintaining my own personal-and-church witness to the truth of the gospel, the "good news" that God has come to the world in and as Jesus, whose death and resurrection is the world's best hope?

Whom can I point to as *embodying this orthodox generosity*(or generous orthodoxy)? First, Jesus. And if I were to ask Benedict whom he'd name next, it just might be Bea.

Like Bea, Benedict is a great German scholar of complex mind (and therefore easy to misunderstand). The year Bea died, Benedict (then Joseph Ratzinger) said, "Above...church authority...stands one's own conscience, which has to be obeyed first of all, if need be against the demands of church authority." That church is evolving slowly from the Roman "empire" to the Catholic "commonwealth." Pray for this man, and speak of him more generously than critically.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | APRIL 10, 2008; 1:54 PM ET

## Comments

Please report offensive comments below.

The Baptist Church is indeed a strange religion of the Protestant sect, full of superstition and erroneous doctrine. Working hand in hand with the apostate Catholic Church is stranger still.

If Dr. Willis doesn't know that Catholicism isn't Christian, he obviously doesn't know what Christianity is. The Catholic Church is drenched in the blood of thousands of Christians, Jews, and Muslims through religious wars, Crusades, and Inquisitions. The history of the Catholic church is rife with corruption, extortion, thefts, whoring, child molestation, and murders.

Jesus never killed anyone, neither did he advocate killing anyone, nor did he sanction killing anyone. He laid down his life rather than kill and commanded his disciples to follow his example. Christians, by definition, follow the example of Jesus Christ, who harmed no one at any time for any reason.

"No man can serve two masters."

"My sheep hear my voice and another master they will not follow."

POSTED BY: GIDEON | APRIL 22, 2008 12:50 AM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Anonymous that would be one of the advantages of being omnipresent... No need to run anywhere as you are already there.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 21, 2008 11:14 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Phil:

I know nothing about Mr. Allam that I haven't learned here. Without knowing anything about the personal life of any "convert" -- just some Mr X, I know one thing for sure. All converts to anything are looking to improve their lives here and now.

With that thought in mind I can and must guess that where Mr. Allam was swayed at the time he converted by the difference in how a Muslim is treated socially and, in turn economically, that job opportunities etc played a primary role in his decision.

Btw, I find nothing wrong with that or a Christian in Baghdad converting to Islam. Those who cannot fight them have little choice except join them. Maybe Mr. Allum for some unknown reason wanted to become a subject at this blog?

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 21, 2008 12:02 PM

[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Why is no one in this debate focusing on the desire of Mr. Allam to become a Catholic by accepting Jesus as his savior and seeking baptism. If he had not desired it, he would not today be a Catholic. No priest drags people into a Catholic church and baptized them against their will. Further, if I as a baptized Catholic decided to become an adherent of Islam no Catholic clergyman would kill me or call for my demise because of my conversion to Islam. At the least I would be prayed for a return to the Christian faith but killed, no.

POSTED BY: PHIL | APRIL 15, 2008 12:16 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Garyd:

Chinese-English dictionary.

tired, one who run in front of car  
exhausted, one who run behind car  
God, never tired, never exhausted, never run

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | APRIL 13, 2008 11:29 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The current article and the Papal baptismal act is and and was inflammatory.

The act of Conversion could have been done quietly and without fanfare. It could have been done either in a Mosque or in the Vatican, if it was done for a legitimate purpose. For it may be asked: What religious leader would deny such a genuine request? For surely the Priest involved in this process, if he was indeed a Priest, would only desire the best for the converting.

But the Conversion took place with as much fanfare as possible. This serves only one single purpose, Mr. Elliott: Generating wrath, just as you say. What kind of a religious leader, then, is the Pope, Mr. Elliott, if he promotes such deeds?

The story about the chair is a good one. It exposes how the poor who donate to the upkeep of their ministers have to pay for furnished offices: "What a pity, there's just a chair in the room!" Come to the east side, Sir, we are living under freeway bridges and burn such chairs for firewood.

POSTED BY: YANGPU6 | APRIL 13, 2008 2:26 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anon, one cannot lose what one never bothered to acquire in the 1st place.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 13, 2008 12:50 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Have the down and out really been robbed by the winners or was the money they lost only found? Finders keepers losers weepers.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | APRIL 12, 2008 1:01 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Paganplace:

Without down there can be no up.  
Without out there can be no in.

Without war there can be no peace?  
For sure, without losers there can be no winners.

The headlines read, "French bank loses 7 billion dollars"  
They could have read, "Somebody found 7 billion dollars"

Without losers there can be no finders, unless it's a robbery.

Things are never simple.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 12, 2008 11:39 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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By the way guys if you think that the Pope went to Turkey for just being in a Moslem country, you are very mistaken. He went there to unite the Christian Churches. He wanted to fulfill the wish of his predecessor who wanted to "breathe with two lungs".

The pope's prayer in the Mosque had no significance whatsoever.

His holiness the pope is a man of wisdom. He just wants to see Moslems converting to Catholicism; he wants to see the words of Christ spreading all over the Moslem world.

I heard the Germans are doing a good job in Bosnia!!

POSTED BY: VICTORIA THE CHRISTIAN ONE | APRIL 12, 2008 6:17 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Funny thing about all the froth Harold quotes, there's still this:

"Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding.  
Exalt her, and she shall promote thee: she shall bring thee to honour, when thou dost embrace her."

Once Holy Wisdom meant something to Book peoples.

Chokmah, I believe is the name. That 'Holy Spirit' that's turned into a synonym for 'Cognitively Overwhelmed Into Obedience' in so many churches, empires, and megachurches.

Could be an important part of your soul, there, oh-so-persecuted Christians.

Maybe if you get that back, you'll let the rest of us be.

Worth a try, I think, cause it seems the legions of the 'Prince of Peace' are spoiling for some kind of fight.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 12, 2008 12:19 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Hey, Rev. Elliot:

"the Christian religion has no specific penalty against leaving"

\*koff.\*

Would you care to test that hypothesis? You may find otherwise. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | APRIL 12, 2008 12:02 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Sorry begone your barking up the wrong tree I am not a dispensationalist. My world view doesn't require Israel to even exist in order for the second coming to happen.

As it happens to some extent all governments are corrupt they simply can't help themselves wielding power is always a corrupting experience if one is less wise and less powerful than God.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 11, 2008 3:50 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Isn't the ultimate purpose of life, to navigate the landscape of our existence and survive its destructive forces, to seek after and acquire knowledge about this existence using the tools of our senses, and the perceptions of the world they provide, and the consciousness of the world that they impress upon us, having evolved from the lower animals, this sensory apparatus for these purposes?

It might be plausible to assume a Providential Deity at the ground of all being; yet what you suppose everyone to take for granted, this "Creator God" whom I assume you would call Allah, is merely, the social heritage based on your cultural setting, and your physical landscape, but in no way automatically nor univervally knowable to all people, but only to specific people with this special inheritance, who have studied certain and specific written texts out of all the many other millions of texts available to all the many millions who know nothing of your own personal and individual tradition.

You know only what you have been told, in a very narrow field of speculative theology. And if you are not interested in knowing any more, then that is your choice, and I would consider you to be apathetic towards knowledge. But do not condemn others who do not share your apathy; nor even should you condemn others, who are as your mirror image, as apathetic with their personal setting and landscape, as you are with yours.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | APRIL 11, 2008 3:13 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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We're sorry for the technical difficulties. We think a system glitch is inadvertently blocking some perfectly acceptable comments. We are looking into the problem. We think it may have something to do with whether the comment is posted multiple times. Please be patient when you post a comment. Try to wait 5-10 minutes before posting again. Thank you.

POSTED BY: ON FAITH PRODUCERS | APRIL 11, 2008 3:01 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Garyd:

You're not suggesting the government of Israel is corrupt are you? Horrors!! God's chosen people with a corrupt government? Israel is in the middle east isn't it? Remember to always include "except" in your blanket observations.

Israel must be preserved so the world can come to a proper end. "On Faith" is in favor of the world coming to an end, I guess. All the righteous are for sure.

Corrupt governments do to have a way of just hanging around even after they have been put down by "just cause" operations and free election as well. Turns out the recent big fight in Iraq was over rights to steal oil for sale on the black market -like drug cartels fighting over who has the right to sell illegal drugs in what alley.

We'll know peace on earth is at hand when the pope baptizes the Rabbi in charge of the temple wall -talking about building bridges that is.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 11, 2008 1:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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So where should he have gone Mafouz? It is not permitted that an Infidel approach the shrines of Mecca nor would it have been safe for him to have gone anywhere else in Islamic lands.

Find me a government in the Middle East that isn't corrupt.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 11, 2008 8:41 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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the generosity and orthodoxy of mankind.

mankind is civil by nature (the way the creator god created mankind)mankind is generous by nature .

mankind is orthodoxyous by nature,the bottom line and the eternal truth about mankind is he/she is the creation of the creator god,every mankind is created from a tiny sperm,and the father of mankind(adam) was created from mud.

1-every mankind is equal under the creator god.

2-the generosity and orthodoxy of mankind is put in mankind by the creator of mankind not by the inspiration nor the culturation of mankind nor the inspiration nor the culturation of christianity ,the generosity and orthodoxy of mankind is the nature of mankind that could be propmoted and expanded by the right creed of the creator god only.

3-the big question and the big picture is how to promote civility and orthodoxy in mankind ?what deviate mankind from his/her civility and orthodoxy?

4-have christianity promoted the above in mankind or dised and failed mankind?why the allmighty creator god even take a son?????and nail his son on the cross too for the generosity and orthodoxy of mankind?????????????????

5-in order to promote the civlity and orthodoxy in mankind first of all you need the creator of mankind and the guidance of the creator of mankind who never begt nor begoten .this is the core messeage of islam and this is the core messeage of any divine book .

6-the generosity of the infallible pope will never lead mankind to none but more diseing,the generosity of the son of god???will never lead mankind to none but delusionism,none but romeoism and julietism!

7-none compulsion in religion is the way of the creator god(god could ,v made every body one color and one lumb) and of course every body will pay for his/her choice.

8-the big picture of life and the purpose of life is not never not in the hand of the infallible pope nor in the hand nor at the time of the son who was nailed on the cross for the saftey and integration of mankind.

the integration of mankind is in the hand of the creator of mankind and according to the purpose of life that also created by the creator god.

POSTED BY: MO | APRIL 11, 2008 2:37 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Willis E Elliott sez, "His double yes gives him two sets of enemies and two sets of friends. All four sets will be chattering away during and after his visit to us Americans" and some other things about bridges and so on.

I wonder if Native Americans will welcome his holiness as one of those two sets of friends or enemies. I guess it's a matter of enough time passing so that the stolen property now in the Vatican's possession, gold in particular has changed title from them to his gang. Maybe there's 5 groups of folks to welcome the pope to America?

If gold can change title all by self given enough time then maybe other things too.

POSTED BY: BGONE | APRIL 10, 2008 5:37 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anonymous is right. If the pope is sincere about peace, he shouldn't have gone to Turkey and stood next to the imam in the Blue Mosque.

The Bush Neocon administration wanted Turkey to be a model for moderate Islam to the Moslem world. However, those who know Turkey and Turks well enough know that Turkey will be a model for disaster to the Moslem world.

They also wanted Turkey to be a model for democracy. But, with the recent events, the case against the Erdogan government, it shows that Turkey is model for corruption, moral degeneration, military rule, and Kemalist dictatorship.

Therefore, reality has it that the average Turk doesn't know anything about democracy and Islam. And they must stop telling the world the crap about their country being a "Bridge" between the Islamic World and the West.

If they stop all of this stuff, or at least fix themselves up, then the attempts of using Turkey by the West to attack the Moslem world will stop.

POSTED BY: MAHFOUZ IBRAHIM | APRIL 10, 2008 12:13 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Anonymous that is one of the larger bits of absolute garbage anyone not named Berlinerblau has yet posted here.

POSTED BY: GARYD | APRIL 9, 2008 11:38 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The pope faced Mecca in Turkey not in Egypt, Syria, or even Saudi Arabia. To his left, in the Sultan Ahmet Mosque, was Aia Sofia. This is Turkey. Turkey isn't Moslem now and it is not run by Moslems. The one who closed the Aia sofia for Islamic prayer was Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, who is not a Moslem but a Crypto Jew from Salonica.

Followers of the pope should have been angry if the pope prayed in a real Moslem country. Turkey is a country in which a Moslem Woman can marry a Christian. This is not Quran. This is not Islam.

The Pope wants war with Moslems. The efforts of the US to destroy the Islamic culture-- using Islam as an enemy after communism vanished-- suites the pope's agenda.

This is how the pope will be understood in the Moslem world

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | APRIL 9, 2008 5:45 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Dr. Willis

I don't know whether I have change or whether you have, but I like you better than I used to. It is probably me.

POSTED BY: DANIEL IN THE LION'S DEN | APRIL 9, 2008 3:02 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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