

## President Obama's One World Includes Muslims

*At his inauguration, President Obama said: "To the Muslim world, we seek a new way forward, based on mutual interest and mutual respect." Is that possible? What must happen?*

1....."A new way forward" for America and the Muslim world is possible to the extent that the focus abides on the President's priority, namely, "mutual interest."

2.....If we -- America and the Muslim world -- discover, and act on, mutual interests, we will develop mutual *respect* as an affirmative we-feeling (without which "mutual respect" is only a self-congratulatory theory and empty virtue).

Here are some *hurdles*:

1.....The asymmetricality of the confronters. Obama, as political spokesman for one nation, here hopes for fruitful conversation not with another nation but with another *world*, the Muslim world. The conversation would be symmetrical if it were between the American nation and one or more Muslim nations, or if it were between the American world and the Muslim world. But the U.S. Department of State has continuing conversations with most nations in the Muslim world: that is symmetrical and hopeful. And "our first global president" does, unofficially, speak for the American world.

2.....As Islamism (radical, violent Islam) sees it, "the American world" is the head and the worst of "the West," the world competitor and enemy of Islam. As the West's dominance of the world declines (for all the reasons empires shrink), Islam's crusading tendency will be emboldened, and "the clash" (as Samuel Huntington called it) will be the globe's consuming dynamic for at least a century.

3.....In 1923, the Rev. Harry Emerson Fosdick of NYC preached a classic sermon titled, "How Religion Helps Mess Up the World." As the root of civilizations, religion gets blamed for everything that goes wrong (though seldom praised for everything that goes right). Religious competitions in all forms, including war, honor religion: people compete and fight about what is deepest and most precious to them. That religion will be more help than hindrance in the "new way forward" is, I regret, a false expectation. This, in spite of the Obama-enthusiasm of the Muslim leaders who participated in the interfaith worship in Washington's National Cathedral the morning after the inauguration.






4.....While interfaith conversations at local, national, and global levels are increasing, each religion is a semantic sphere that leaves nothing out and *excludes* all other religions: a religion is a way of seeing and living in the world, and a committed human being can live only one way at a time. Each religion says, "Look at it (life, the world, reality) this way." / We should all be taught religion-appreciation: simultaneously, in our MINDS, we can appreciate all "The World's Religions," which I enormously enjoyed teaching. But to try to entertain many religions simultaneously in one's HEART is to live none of them.

5.....Nations and religions go through aggressive and passive stages. In an aggressive stage, a nation has some of the characteristics of a religion in aggressive mode. America has recently had a missionary foreign policy, preaching and trying to export democracy; and in 9/11 we were hit by an aggressive form of a religion, Islam. Saudi Arabia has long used oil-money to promote its religion, Wahabism, the radical form of Islam from which violent al-Qaeda sprang.

6.....Violent Islamic movements use "America" and "the West" interchangeably, the West being divisible into "Crusaders" (Christians) and "Zionists" (Jews). Not all Americans are Christians, though Christianity was our founding religion and is our predominant religion. Less and less can the West be called Christian, though it once was dominantly so. Not all Jews are Zionists (some Jewish leaders thought the establishing of a Jewish state would be bad news for Judaism); but Jews (and America) stand for the defense of Israel.

7.....On Dubai television last night, President Obama said to the Muslim world, "The Americans are not your enemies....The U.S. has a stake in the well-being of the Muslim world." Aiming to disarm Muslim anti-

Americanism, he humbly set his administration to "start by listening." He gave heart to all who are yearning for a page-turning. His inaugural-address words in the "On Faith" question, and answering that question, were "we seek a new way forward."

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | JANUARY 30, 2009; 7:54 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:        

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TO FRANZWEBER999

1

As my opinions on reason, science, & religion closely parallel Obama's, your reading of my entry as a "screed" is puzzling.

2

Since what you said does not touch on my entry's intention, your screed is rational only as a solipsistic essay on your proposition that "God is only a word."

3

If "God is only a word," it's only logical/rational/reasonable for you to conclude that religion is reducible to "magic," & the world's most extensive religion is morally reducible to "harm."

4

Simplistically/sophomorically, you offer against the darkness of "religion" the light of "reason & science." No recognition of such facts as that (1) religion is the root of culture/civilization, & often what is said about the former should be directed to the whole cultural-historical reality; (2) in various forms, reason & science emerge within cultures/civilizations; (3) always & everywhere, the old resists the emergence of the new; (4) in Christendom, reason & science have succeeded more than they have in other civilizations; (5) to a greater extent than is true of any other religion, Christianity has promoted education, science, medicine.

5

On 4.5, I offer a school whose faculty have had more Nobel Laureates than any other institution in the world. It was started by Christians, & its first five presidents were, by profession, scholars of the Bible. As one of my earned doctorates is from it, I know it well. The world knows it as the University of Chicago.

6

Without knowing what I've done, you ask me to do something instead of just talking. And you ask me to "Stop trying to be so important, you are NOT!" In my entry, I don't even mention myself.

7

As a Christian, I don't claim to have "superior" knowledge. We Christian do claim to have the responsibility of preaching & living the Good News (in Old English, "Gospel") that God the Creator loves his creation, and has come among us as Jesus (to use an old phrase) "for us and our salvation." Nobody's perfect, & some modes of conveying this message have been bad news. But Christianity spreads mainly by words & deeds of love, kindness, benevolence.

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One can readily understand why Dr. Elliot's screed shows a selfish fear of reason and science. He is apparently incapable of using the first and of understanding the second, except to the extent that he correctly suspects that the more people learn to trust in the beneficence of either, he loses his power. His view is quite egotistical and selfish as well as cruel because of the harm it does to his fellow man. God is only a word and has no existence beyond semantics and man's fantasy that somewhere a magic entity exists that will save him from reality. The ritualization of this destructive fantasy is what humans call religion. Hitler called his religion the Nazi Party, Stalin called his religion Communism. And they both considered themselves the Gods of their respective religions. So how do Dr. Elliot's views differ from Hitler's and Stalins? True, he doesn't consider

himself God, but his statement suggest a belief in his possession of far superior knowledge of what constitutes God, God's purpose, and true religion than is possessed by his fellow human beings. His religion of Christianity, however, has over its long history committed far more atrocities than either Communism and the Nazis. And where was God in stopping any of these atrocities. Is it that God is impotent, indifferent, lazy, sadistic, or is it that God simply doesn't exist--except as a concept in the minds of mankind as a product of faith in magic. The real improvements in the human condition have come from rationality and science. From medicine, with for instance the smallpox and polio vaccinations, the groundwork for which the Christian church fought by torture or by the threat of torture, virtually every step of the way. And so it has been with all sciences historically, and so it is today with the much of Christianity's cruel and ignorant obstruction of stem cell research. I have a question for you, Dr. Elliot. Next time some one you love is seriously ill will you take them only to the church, the place of goodness, for God to treat them, or will you take them only to the Mayo Clinic, the bastion of science and rationality, and, as your statement implies, evil?

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Your rules....#4.....While interfaith conversations at local, national, and global levels are increasing.....

I say to you this; If you could just stop being so important and actually do something about the problems, we would not be in such a situation....10 more rules will only make YOU important to yourself! It won't do anything other than give you the ability to say, you posted the 10 rules. Look at me, I posted 10 rules! Do something real! I hate to say this to you but here it is, get a real job, one where you can do some good for mankind. Christians and Muslims don't hate each other, it's the people who have nothing else to do and want to stoke the fire of hate that cause problems. Help a Muslim build a house, help a Christian build a school. Stop trying to be so important, you are NOT!

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