

http://onfaith.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/panelists/willis_e_elliott/2007/08/yes_to_the_prayer_and_the_prot.html

YES to the Prayer and the Protesters

ON FAITH - WASHINGTON POST - WILLIS ELLIOTT

"On Faith" is a serious game. It's a GAME, a contrived microcosm of real life. Each week a Sally-and-Jon-shaped question rains down on the roofs of us panelists and dries up or flows down on our appreciative and/or critical side. And it's SERIOUS. The questions—on religion's borders with all of human life—are consequential for personal and public decision-making.

That's four possibilities. When the rain hits, (1) it dries up: the panelist feels uninvested and does not post. Or (2) the rain flows down both sides of the roof: the panelist posts a YES/NO. Or (3) the post is a NO: the rain flows down only on the *critical* side of the roof. Or (4) the post is a YES: the rain flows down only on the *appreciative* side of the roof.

Like life, this "On Faith" game is complicated and messy. Panelists and commenters are—according to their mood and situation at the moment—cool/warm/hot. And posts are off the surface or from the depths of mind (reason) and heart (feeling).

This week's question presents a *double* event, namely, a prayer and a protest. My response (in light of all the above) is a *double* YES.

YES to the **prayer**-event.

1. America is religiously pluralist, and Senate-session opening-prayers should reflect this plain fact. We should be thankful for the fact, and humbly proud of this common-ritual way of living it.

2. Because God is at work always and everywhere, all religions are depositories of great prayers. "Lead us from the unreal to the Real, from darkness to Light, and from death to immortality." That great historic utterance was the heart of the Senate's first Hindu prayer. America, and the world, needs to hear and pray the great prayers.

3. The First Amendment speaks not to the separation of religion from politics (as our secularists claim) but to the mutual freedom of political and religious institutions ("state" and "church"). Benjamin Franklin argued that *not* to open government deliberative assemblies with prayer would be to fail to recognize that American life is to be lived under God. To the Declaration of Independence, Congress added "a firm reliance on the protection of divine Providence."

YES to the **protest**-event.

1. To the world, it was an American witness to unbloody protest-demonstrations. Nobody got shot except with words. Truth (as the protesters understood it) was spoken to power without power's violent reaction to the protest.

2. The good gardener nurtures the plant's roots. The roots of American democracy are not multicultural but culture-specific: Bible + Enlightenment. Bible without Enlightenment = theocracy, not democracy. Enlightenment (that is, reason) without Bible = tyranny (as in the French and Russian Revolutions).

3. Bible + Enlightenment = the American "civil religion." All other religions are (in this specific sense) un-American (which should not be over-read as "anti-American"). Most Senate-opening prayers should be American, honoring the American heritage and nurturing America's spiritual roots.

4. To date, none of the panelists has had any good word for the ("politically incorrect") protesters. Two generations of Americans have been public-school brainwashed to the un-American doctrine of multiculturalism, the heresy that one culture is as good as another, one religion is as good as another --a neat fit for Senate-chaplain Rajan Zed's prayer-phrase, "we are [all] headed in the same direction."

Because the increase of this sentiment correlates with decreasing personal experience and knowledge of religion, America's future as *America* is in doubt.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | AUGUST 6, 2007; 9:42 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:

PREVIOUS: [IMPLEMENTING THE FIRST AMENDMENT](#) | NEXT: [ALL THE DEITIES VS. NO GOD AT ALL](#)

Comments

Please report offensive comments below.

Here's an idea: How about not having any more prayers in the Senate? The author of the First Amendment, James Madison, himself stated clearly that Congressional chaplains were inappropriate:

"Is the appointment of Chaplains to the two Houses of Congress consistent with the Constitution, and with the pure principle of religious freedom? In strictness the answer on both points must be in the negative. The Constitution of the U S forbids everything like an establishment of a national religion. The law appointing Chaplains establishes a religious worship for the national representatives, to be performed by Ministers of religion, elected by a majority of them, and these are to be paid out of the national taxes. Does this not involve

the principle of a national establishment?" ~Essay on Monopolies; see Albert J Menendez and Edd Doerr, The Great Quotations on Religious Freedom)

Let's abolish the primitive practice of praying over legislation and get into the 21st century. That will end the controversy completely and allow us to move on to issues that matter.

POSTED BY: DJH | AUGUST 20, 2007 5:50 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, thanks for trying, Globo:

" Loco_Moco:

"Oops, sorry Paganplace, I really had no intention of lumping Wiccans and Satanists together except in the same paragraph. Apologies for any misunderstanding.

There's no excuse, except sheer ignorance, for anyone to confuse the two groups. The distinctions are both basic and obvious."

Do appreciate you trying, anyway, but, on this:

"I'm not necessarily citing the Satanists as a HORRIBLE religion either. Anton LaVey was a pretty interesting character, and "Do as thou wilt, an thou harm no one" is still a pretty reasonable mantra."

Anton La Vey didn't write the Wiccan Rede: 'An it harm none, do what thou wilt,' ...I can't actually remember whether or not he incorporated it into his Church of Satan or how he'd reconcile it with some of his other thoughts.

Some Satanists, (or would-be Satanists,) themselves, can muddy the waters a bit, since they tend to be broadly-interested in 'the occult' and may look to Wicca for some magic, call themselves Witches, or whatnot.

It certainly doesn't help, though, that the churches often engage active disinformation programs, and Fundamentalist 'occult experts' make big bucks going around 'educating' police departments with their 'Satanic panic' paranoia.

Wiccans actually tend to find Satanists quite annoying for playing into all this for shock effect, when it tends to be us and our families that catch the fallout.

The disinformation's more common than you'd think: anyone who thinks Wicca is spelled as an acronym 'WICCA' has been exposed to the idea we're a front for a Satanic baby-sacrificing conspiracy and the like: the new witch-hunts have a certain narrative 'ex-Witches' follow, that follow as much of a fictitious pattern as 'confessions' of the 'Burning Times' ones. In this day and age they tend to come out under 'exorcism' stress and mental illness rather than trials and torture, but the result's the same.

Anyway, the connections people try to draw between Wicca and Satanism (and the Satanism fundamentalists believe in, as opposed to what the LaVey guys actually profess to be doing,) go from the laughable to the *really crazy and scary.*

It's not so much unlike when they try to say Hinduism worships cows and sacrifices people to idols and the like... which, I think, is another reason why a diversity of invocations before Congress could have valuable effects: in the ivory towers, the people who govern us just often *don't know* about some of the people they're supposed to be representing.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 8, 2007 12:28 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Emma: I agree. The Constitution was and is a beautiful document with truly admirable ideals. The founders did not entirely live up to its ideals, and we have yet to. But it gives us something to strive for -- true equality and true respect for the individual. We've made good progress; maybe someday we'll reach the goal.

I don't agree with the protestors' act. They certainly have the right to free speech and to protest, but when their free speech conflicts with that of another, especially in a formal setting such as a legislative body, they have crossed the line.

POSTED BY: JAY | AUGUST 8, 2007 11:08 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Oh, I didn't mean to be anonymous. My name is Emma, the above comment is mine, and I would appreciate a response.

POSTED BY: EMMA | AUGUST 8, 2007 3:41 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dear Mr. Elliott,

I fully admit to being raised and schooled in this era of multiculturalism. However, I resent the implication that this breeds any un-American tendencies. Though I understand that a desire for political correctness above all else may hinder honesty in productive discussions, you must please explain your position better to me.

What, we a country based on the Bible and Enlightenment? On paper, perhaps...these certainly what inspired our founding fathers to write the words that form our civil religion today. No argument. But in 1776, when we declared our independence on the ideals of Bible and

Enlightenment, we WERE already living in a multicultural society. There were the American Indians. The African slaves. Not to mention the women. The sacrifice and labor of these people built the United States to its current strength...political and economical. The founding fathers may have been driven to lovely words by the Bible and the Enlightenment, but their actions remained tyrannical-- to the poor, the non-white, the female.

It was the struggles of these downtrodden who made America truer to the words of its Constitution, and made our country the place we inhabit today. The founding fathers were not too terribly disadvantaged by British rule, after all. They were still wealthy landowners, with all the security that it confers. After independence, they still owned slaves, refused women the right to vote, broke their promises to the American Indians and pushed them further west, and pursued personal profit while ignoring the extreme poverty that was increasing among the landless majority. Without the abolition movement, without the suffragist movement, without the civil rights movement, among many others? This country would only be better on paper than the other undemocratic places our government condemns today.

So you may revere the words of the founding fathers, and consider them "true Americans." But I choose to revere the women and men of all different cultures, races, and religions who set higher value on these words, and worked to make this country match them more closely. They are all true Americans to me.

I bless the protesters who exercise their right to assembly and free speech. But I feel they would use their time better by finding better issues to take a stand on.

POSTED BY: ANONYMOUS | AUGUST 8, 2007 3:37 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Oops, sorry Paganplace, I really had no intention of lumping Wiccans and Satanists together except in the same paragraph. Apologies for any misunderstanding.

There's no excuse, except sheer ignorance, for anyone to confuse the two groups. The distinctions are both basic and obvious.

I'm not necessarily citing the Satanists as a HORRIBLE religion either. Anton LaVey was a pretty interesting character, and "Do as thou wilt, an thou harm no one" is still a pretty reasonable mantra.

POSTED BY: LOCO_MOCO | AUGUST 7, 2007 7:36 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hi, Vie. It's been a while.

I suppose they go by his denomination, there: he's apparently a pretty controversially-right wing guy for all that, though.

Personally, I think quite often mainstream denominations will just blithely *assume* some of the same things that are said by the frothing radicals they dissociate themselves from *as* radicals.

Assumptions like, 'This is or should be a 'Christian Nation,' ...or that it's a supreme act of 'tolerance' or 'charity' to simply allow others their due in a pluralistic society.

My understanding is that this fellow is often challenged, at least, and rebuked, often, within his own denomination. I'd say if they want to kick him out, they can be the ones to do it, not Newsweek. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 7, 2007 12:51 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Note to "On Faith":

This guy is obviously evangelical, not mainstream, protestant.

POSTED BY: VIEJITA DEL OESTE | AUGUST 7, 2007 12:32 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

sighs at more anti-Semitic conspiracy theory.

You know, right-wing Christians will accuse Jews, atheists, and people of other religion of being somehow connected to Nazis, while never actually seeming to get around to condemning actual Nazis.

You want to see fascist, son, look at the Big Lies in your face, not for shadowy conspiracies based on ludicrous untruths like Holocaust denial.

Loco says,

"Dr. Elliott is correct when he says there has to be room for protest as well as prayer."

Are you ready to be 'protested,' too?

" A distasteful public example of a notable lack of Christian tolerance and charity."

A nice enough sentiment, though it's funny how 'Christian tolerance' just isn't a phrase in common usage, at least in my faith community.

But... Charity? No, it's not *charity* to show some decorum and not-hurl-religiously-abusive invective at someone else's clergy representing *American citizens* ...this was and is the Hindu priest's *due* as an American.

Gods, now it's 'charity' to not-try-to-silence other religions, is it. How insulting.

"I'd be glad to hear a Wiccan prayer at a public event. A satanist might be interesting for a change: "In Beelzebub's name, may the worst team lose!" "

Amusing, but Wiccans are getting pretty tired of Christians finding ways to always mention us in the same breath as Satanists. It's clear the association those who do so are trying to make.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 7, 2007 11:23 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"We will have a world government whether you like it or not. The only question is whether that government will be achieved by conquest or consent." (Jewish Banker Paul Warburg, February 17, 1950, as he testified before the U.S. Senate).

Maier Amschel Rothschild said:

"Permit me to issue and control the money of a nation and I care not who writes its laws"

What luck for "The victor will never be asked if he told the truth". Adolf Hitler.

"History, Sir, will tell lies as usual"

- George Bernard Shaw, The Devil's Disciple

"Khazars set up the Holofoax, they prospered immensely from the sacrificing of the 'lesser' Judahic brothers', its a fact"..Eric Hulse 2005

"I fear very much that the Jews are like all underdogs. When they get on the top they are just as intolerant and cruel as the people were to them when they were underneath. I regret this situation very much because my sympathy has always been on their side." Harry Truman

"Organizations like CFA, ADL, ACLU, CAMERA and the Hudson Institute are formally independent but they are purposefully financed and therefore under the benefactor's control, the question, then is, who are the benefactors?" Eric Hulse.

"Jews ran the Gulags" Aaron Schitwitter

Zhabotinsky [a Jewish writer] once said "The best service our Russian friends give to us is never to speak aloud about us."

Researching a book on Lenin, Prof Service came across details of how Trotsky, who was of Jewish origin, asked the politburo in 1919 to ensure that Jews were enrolled in the Red army. Trotsky said that Jews were disproportionately represented in the Soviet civil bureaucracy, including the cheka.

The Rothschilds long had a powerful influence in dictating American financial laws. The law records show that they were the power in the old Bank of the United States. — Gustavus Myers, History of the Great American Fortunes, Random House, p. 556.

Aware that the Rothschilds are an important Jewish family, I looked them up in Encyclopedia Judaica and discovered that they bear the title 'Guardians of the Vatican Treasury'.... The appointment of Rothschild gave the black papacy absolute financial privacy and secrecy. Who would ever search a family of orthodox Jews for the key to the wealth of the Roman Catholic Church? — F. Tupper Saussy, Rulers of Evil, Harper Collins, page 160, 161

The Rothschild dynasty had conquered the world more thoroughly, more cunningly, and much more lastingly than all the Caesars before or all the Hitlers after them. — Ibid, p. 218.

Thomas Jefferson has this to say about the central bank.

A private central bank issuing the public currency is a greater menace to the liberties of the people than a standing army... We must not let our rulers load us with perpetual debt. — Ibid. p. 329.

Wake up now! Before all our liberties are given away for 'security', and before we truly become the what Orwell described.

Peace is War.
Freedom is Slavery
Ignorance is strength

Wake up now.

<http://www.pacinst.com/terrorists/chapter2/jackson.html>

POSTED BY: U.S. IS UNDER ATTACK...FROM WITHIN. | AUGUST 7, 2007 10:27 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

As a Hawaii boy I was a bit amused by the secondhand post about Wahiawa HS above. I grew up high-church Episcopal (organist since '67 or so) in a multicultural / multifaith community, so the idea of non-Christian prayers at public events is old hat to me. But I think either the writer is exaggerating, or these events are not recent. Wahiawa is quite a cosmopolitan little town these days.

I'm happy to say that as I grew up, I went to all sorts of services at shrines, temples, etc. And far from threatening my faith, all of those experiences have enriched it considerably.

Dr. Elliott is correct when he says there has to be room for protest as well as prayer. Where we diverge is that, as far as I'm concerned, the timing and nature of this particular protest was just plain rude. Their disruptive actions spoke even louder than their derisive words. A distasteful public example of a notable lack of Christian tolerance and charity.

I'd be glad to hear a Wiccan prayer at a public event. A satanist might be interesting for a change: "In Beelzebub's name, may the worst team lose!" Atheists should be welcome too, provided they don't try to out-Baptist the Baptists, and can manage to truncate their exegeses sometime before sunup the next day.

POSTED BY: LOCO_MOCO | AUGUST 6, 2007 10:47 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"Bible + Enlightenment = the American "civil religion." "

Could someone explain to me, please, the difference between a "civil religion" and a state religion?

I don't want anything to do with your civil religion, and I don't want anything to do with your Bible. I've been studying the history of early Christianity, and the more I find out about it, the less I want to do with it. The New Testament is largely a compilation of books written under false names to settle early church arguments, and the people who wrote them, notably Eusebius, made no bones about their willingness to tell lies to promote their dogma.

As for civil religion, that's what Europe had from the time of Constantine to the time of Luther. The Catholic Church, to this day, does not blush at the numberless tortures and murders they committed to make sure it stayed that way. As for the Protestant churches after the Reformation, they treated "heretics" pretty much the same way the Catholic Church did, except that in the United States, they didn't burn them. Merely hanged them or pressed them to death.

Kindly keep your "civil" religion away from me.

POSTED BY: GODFREY | AUGUST 6, 2007 10:31 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Thank you Terra,

As the enlightenment was inspired by Greco-Roman ideas of rationality and democracy - the existence of Greco-Roman democracy proves the point. I might add the Greeks were so terrified of any one person becoming a tyrant that they rotated their generals every day during war, such that every day the troops had a new commander...

In the absence of rational discourse all we have is tyranny - if there is no agreed upon way to determine what is true all we have are opinions like - my "faith" tells me X - you can't argue with that because someone else's faith says something different. So how do you decide what to do? In the middle ages the king decided, or the Pope or whoever had the most force. The only way to resolve disagreement in the absence of empirical reasoning and rationality is through force or subjugating your will to another - as there is no way for a "dialogue" to move forward.

The brilliance of removing religion from the public sphere is that it steps around this - there is a way to win an argument without resorting to force or submitting to tyranny - everyone plays by rules - the rules are you have to back up what you say with facts we all can agree on and use rationality to argue based on those facts. This means you cannot reason for something based on faith, belief or because you found a passage in an old book somewhere that tells you what to do. Those who want to reintroduce religion into the public sphere open the door for tyranny, plain and simple, as they undermine rational discourse and democracy.

POSTED BY: RM -RF | AUGUST 6, 2007 2:39 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well, I don't think Bush represents Discordia. I think he represents someone else's myth, entirely: a corrupt individual with mass support, coming in the name of Jesus to divide the nations, try and conquer the world, and deceive everyone.

Frankly, I find this a demonstrably-poor model for government to be based upon, particularly when there's a perfectly good Justice people are throwing sheets over cause they're afraid of boobies. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 2:05 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

PP...A boob worried about covering a set of boobs..I would much rather see the pair on a diety then who was standing as AG.

We do need to work on getting Themis back as Ma't and Justitia. Then maybe we will get Libertas back...but that means we need to get rid of Discordia spelled BUSH.

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | AUGUST 6, 2007 2:01 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

And long may She rise, Terra. :)

The blindfolded Justice in the secular Neoclassical spirit in which the displays were intended was intended was meant to represent an idea of Justice only listening to reason, not seeing the superficialities of race or class.

Bare-breasted to represent that she herself was open and concealing nothing.

Bad juju when Ashcroft had Her covered...

And ask Alito how the results are working out for us. I'm sure he'll deny knowing. :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:53 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Pre enlightenment Democracies was scarce. What comes to mind here on this land of what is now called America was the 5 Tribe Confederacy...it lasted 1000 years and is still strong. Then there were the Greek City States and early Rome. Can anyone else come up with any more?

Can anyone see what is in common? They were all (what was called Post early Christianity) Pagan. Pagan peoples invented Democracy and the rights of man. Libertas, the Roman Goddess of personal freedom, became our Lady Liberty.

A common representation of Justice is a blind-folded woman holding a set of scales. The origin of the Goddess of Justice goes back to antiquity. She was referred to as Ma'at by the ancient Egyptians and was often depicted carrying a sword with an ostrich feather in her hair (but no scales) to symbolize truth and justice. The term magistrate is derived from Ma'at because she assisted Osiris in the judgment of the dead by weighing their hearts. (Symbolic of course...as guilt lies heavy on the heart...a light heart means a more perfect life).

To the ancient Greeks she was known as Themis, originally the organizer of the "communal affairs of humans, particularly assemblies." Her ability to foresee the future enabled her to become one of the oracles at Delphi, which in turn led to her establishment as the goddess of divine justice. Classical representations of Themis did not show her blindfolded (because of her talent for prophecy, she had no need to be blinded) nor was she holding a sword (because she represented common consent, not coercion). It is said that before community there was Themis, as there is no community without Themis.

The Roman goddess of justice was called Justitia and was often portrayed as evenly balancing both scales and a sword and wearing a blindfold. She was sometimes portrayed holding the fasces (a bundle of rods around an ax symbolizing judicial authority) in one hand and a flame in the other (symbolizing truth).

Pre enlightened Europe was disease ridden, ignorant, women hateing, poverty driven serfdoms. Ruled by the rich lords with First Night Rights...And those were Christians.

This panalist needs to understand where the enlightenment and our founders gained their ideals...it was not from any religious text but by the examples of the past.

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:43 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Heh.

Now they know how the rest of us feel...

Except maybe not how it feels to actually be *forced* to stand or kneel, or even (seem to) pray at a Christian school service.

Too bad the writer felt it was so unacceptable to simply stand, or sit, while others said *their* prayers that they couldn't tolerate attending a high school football game, but, frankly, that's their religion's problem.

But it's true, there's social pressures, there.

It's why enforced prayer is Unamerican.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:38 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Ben Franklin Said to beware of them.:

In whatever country Jews have settled in any great numbers, they have lowered the moral tone, depreciated the commercial integrity, have segregated themselves, and have not been assimilated, have sneered at and tried to undermine the Christian religion, have built up a state within a state, and have, when opposed, tried to strangle that country to death financially.

"If you do not exclude them from the United States, in the Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land and change our form of government."

~~~~~

-- Sometimes called the Benjamin Franklin Prophecy, this forgery can be traced back no further than 1934, when it appeared in a pro-Nazi newspaper in the U.S. The source cited for the quote by that paper is also fictitious. Franklin was very tolerant of diverse religions, and gave monetary support to any religious group that solicited contributions, including the Hebrew Society of Philadelphia when they sought funds for the construction of a new synagogue. (See the discussion of this quote in Paul F. Boller & John George, *They Never Said It*, Oxford Univ. Press, 1989, pp. 26-28)

(beware of what you claim...some very simple research would have told the truth about this quote. It took me 2 minutes. Also Franklin's religious leanings did not lend to this sentiment.)

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:17 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

WorldNetDaily  
Letter of the Week

Why I'm against  
pre-game prayers

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Posted: October 14, 2005  
1:00 a.m. Eastern

I was prompted to write and comment after reading the story on the New Jersey football coach that resigned because he was prohibited from leading his team in pre-game prayers.

Let me start by saying I am an evangelical Christian and have pretty hard-core beliefs about the rights of individuals, particularly students, to express their faith, to include religious themes in their school work, to perform Christian-themed music and dramas during school talent events, etc. If a school administrator had ever tried to stop one of my kids from carrying a Bible, participating in voluntary prayer, or openly discussing their faith with another student, I would have sued him back in to the Stone Age.

You might be surprised then to learn that I am adamantly opposed to teachers and other school officials leading students in prayer or the conduct of prayer rituals, even by students, at officially sanctioned events. Why would I take a position that is seemingly so at odds with my core beliefs?

Throughout the vast majority of the United States, most religious practices and beliefs are rooted in a traditional Judeo-Christian belief system. As such, prayers conducted before a football game or at a graduation ceremony, even if so bland and non-proselytizing as to be meaningless, are generally offered in the context of the traditional Jehovah God of the Old and New Testament. However, that is not the case in all corners of our nation.

I had the privilege of serving our nation's Air Force while assigned to Hickam Air Force Base on the beautiful island of Oahu in the beautiful state of Hawaii. Because of the arrangement of military housing in that location, my family and I actually lived not at Hickam near the Honolulu metropolitan area, but at Wheeler Air Force Base in the central part of the island just out side of the small pineapple-farming town of Wahiawa. In Wahiawa we found a small Baptist church that met our family's needs. However, Christians and others from various Judeo-Christian traditions were in the very distinct minority in this little village that was populated predominantly by people of Japanese and Chinese ancestry. Rather than a church on every corner, as is common in the continental 48 states, Wahiawa had a Shinto or Buddhist shrine on every corner.

Because we worked in the youth department of our church and taught teenage Sunday School classes, we were anxious to be involved in the lives of the students we worked with. So we were quite excited to be able to attend our first football game at Wahiawa High School. Upon our arrival at the stadium it seemed like so many other high school athletic events we had been to in many other places. The teams were warming up, the band was gathering, the ROTC was preparing to raise the colors – a pretty typical fall ritual.

Coming from a fairly traditional Southern upbringing, I was not at all initially surprised when a voice came over the PA and asked everyone to rise for the invocation. I had been through this same ritual at many other high-school events and thought nothing of it, so to our feet my wife and I stood, bowed our heads, and prepared to partake of the prayer. But to our extreme dismay, the clergyman who took the microphone and began to pray was not a Protestant minister or a Catholic priest, but a Buddhist priest who proceeded to offer up prayers and intonations to god-head figures that our tradition held to be pagan.

We were frozen in shock and incredulity! What to do? To continue to stand and observe this prayer would represent a betrayal of our own faith and imply the honoring of a pagan deity that was anathema to our beliefs. To sit would be an act of extreme rudeness and disrespect in the eyes of our Japanese hosts and neighbors, who value above all other things deference and respect in their social interactions. I am sorry to say that in the confusion of the moment we chose the easier path and elected to continue to stand in silence so as not to create a scene or ill will among those who were seated nearby.

As I thought through the incident over the next few days I supposed that the duty of offering the pre-game prayer rotated through the local clergy and we just happened to arrive on the night that the responsibility fell to the Buddhist priest. However, after inquiring I learned that

due to the predominance of Buddhist and Shinto adherents in this town, it was the normal practice to have a member of one these faiths offer the pre-game prayer, and Christian clergy were never included. Needless to say that was our first and last football game. Although many of the students we worked with continued to invite us to the games, we were forced to decline. We knew that if we were to attend again we would be forced to abstain from the pre-game activity. And not wanting to offend our Asiatic neighbors and colleagues, we simply refrained from attending.

The point is this. I am a professional, educated and responsible man who is strong in his faith and is quite comfortable debating the social and political issues of the day. Yet when placed in a setting where the majority culture proved hostile to my faith and beliefs, I became paralyzed with indecision and could not act decisively to defend and proclaim my own beliefs. I felt instantly ostracized and viewed myself as a foreigner in my own land.

We often advocate the practice of Judeo-Christian rituals in America's public schools by hiding behind the excuse that they are voluntary and any student who doesn't wish to participate can simply remain seated and silent. Oh that this were true. But if I, as a mature adult, would be so confounded and uncomfortable when faced with the decision of observing and standing on my own religious principals or run the risk of offending the majority crowd, I can only imagine what thoughts and confusion must run through the head of the typical child or teenager, for whom peer acceptance is one of the highest ideals.

I would say in love to my Christian brothers and sisters, before you yearn for the imposition of prayer and similar rituals in your public schools, you might consider attending a football game at Wahiawa High School. Because unless you're ready to endure the unwilling exposure of yourself and your children to those beliefs and practices that your own faith forswears, you have no right to insist that others sit in silence and complicity while you do the same to them. I, for one, slept better at night knowing that because Judeo-Christian prayers were not being offered at my children's schools, I didn't have to worry about them being confronted with Buddhist, Shinto, Wiccan, Satanic or any other prayer ritual I might find offensive.

Gary Christenot

Editor's note: Each week, our editorial staff will consider the letters we receive for possible inclusion in our Letter Of The Week section. Letters will be evaluated primarily on content, clarity, and conciseness. WorldNetDaily reserves the right to edit letters for clarity, brevity, spelling, grammar, AP style and foul language.

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POSTED BY: JAY | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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I'll add that Bram Stoker's Dracula, which is where the modern form of the vampire myth originated, came out in \*1897,\* long after Franklin: Gothic horror as we know it basically originated in the 'Year Without A Summer... 1818. Well after the alleged speech citing the modern vampire myth as though it were a familiar metaphor.

It, for all practical purposes, didn't really exist yet.

It's a forgery.

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POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 1:07 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Oh, and the Franklin 'prophecy' is well-known to be a forgery.

The language isn't even consistent with the times, and Franklin was well-known to have no enmity against Jews:

"The late Carl Van Doren, a biographer of Benjamin Franklin made this report:

The speech against the Jews which Benjamin Franklin is alleged to have made the Constitutional Convention of 1787 is a forgery, produced within the past five years [1933-38]. The forger, whoever he was, claims that the speech was taken down by Charles Pinckney of South Carolina and preserved in his Journal. "

[http://www.adl.org/special\\_reports/franklin\\_prophecy/franklin\\_documenting\\_fraud.asp](http://www.adl.org/special_reports/franklin_prophecy/franklin_documenting_fraud.asp)

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POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:59 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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On a more serious note, Jay, I \*would\* make sure that Native Americans are better-represented in government. Actually something that came to mind in my ruminations. This is a long-standing injustice, among many, and I'd want to involve Native American voices in the White House.

As for what's a 'real prayer,' I'd stand by my belief that that's not for government to decide or enforce, but if there haven't been Native American prayers in Congress all this time, that's a voice that's too long been silent.

While indulging our little pipe dream, here, well, the philosophical stuff is the easy part. Getting us out of this mess, would take all the practical help I could get.

But the symbolic things are important.

All in all, I think the campaign slogan would be, 'There's gonna be some changes around here.'

:)

It'd be interesting, to say the least. We need real leadership on a lot of issues that get token attention at best... Via the corporate media, we're unwilling to do a little belt-tightening on our excesses: America's lost its place as a strong friend to the world and become a blind behemoth and bully... lacking the will to do what's important and necessary, and compromising our principles in the process.

This Dominionist stuff like the columnist advocates, that America should be a right-wing Christians-only club, beholden to unchecked corporate greed by the same people who tell us anyone but right-wing Christians are morally-bankrupt, (even if those in government just \*keep getting caught with their hands in the till, their hands in the wrong undies, and their hands messing with the very freedoms they claim non-straight-white-Christians are a threat to,) though, that wouldn't stand,

...As it shouldn't take a formerly-homeless Pagan to tell America.

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POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:48 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

#### BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

This prediction was made during the intermission of the Philadelphia Constitutional Convention of 1787, and was recorded by Charles Cotesworth Pinckney, a South Carolina delegate.):

("I fully agree with General Washington, that we must protect this young nation from an insidious influence and impenetration. That menace, gentlemen, is the Jews. In whatever country Jews have settled in any great number, they have lowered its moral tone; depreciated its commercial integrity; have segregated themselves and have not been assimilated; have sneered at and tried to undermine the Christian religion upon which that nation is founded, by objecting to its restrictions; have built up a state within the state; and when opposed have tried to strangle that country to death financially, as in the case of Spain and Portugal. For over 1,700 years, the Jews have been bewailing their sad fate in that they have been exiled from their homeland, as they call Palestine. But, gentlemen, did the world give it to them in fee simple, they would at once find some reason for not returning.

Why? Because they are vampires, and vampires do not live on vampires. They cannot live only among themselves. They must subsist on Christians and other peoples not of their race. If you do not exclude them from these United States, in this Constitution, in less than 200 years they will have swarmed here in such great numbers that they will dominate and devour the land and change our form of government, for which we Americans have shed our blood, given our lives, our substance and jeopardized our liberty. If you do not exclude them, in less than 200 years our descendants will be working in the fields to furnish them substance, while they will be in the counting houses rubbing their hands.

I warn you, gentlemen, if you do not exclude Jews for all time, your children will curse you in your graves... A leopard cannot change its spots. Jews are Asiatics, are a menace to this country if permitted entrance, and should be excluded by this Constitutional Convention."

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POSTED BY: BEN FRANKLIN SAID TO BEWARE OF THEM. | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:28 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Hee. Gods, it's an amusing (then daunting) thought, but I don't think my health would even be up to the job, but if I were actually in that rather bizarre position, (I have some difficulty seeing my smirking mug on those posters of US presidents, :) ) ...I'd probably have to be sure to be very sensible about it. :) Like pick Joe Biden for a VP, as a complementary force, and a darn good professional at what he does.

Mind you, I'd probably spend half the inaugural rescinding executive orders and signing statements, but I suppose we could work a drum circle in there. :)

I'm trying to imagine what my Secret Service codename would be: Moonbat? :)

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POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:09 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Enlightenment (that is, reason) without Bible = tyranny (as in the French and Russian Revolutions)

B.S. - the idea that the use of reason to decide what is true or not leads inevitably to tyranny is utter nonsense - a tyrant fears nothing more than being in a situation where any of his ideas can be challenged by anyone else with a rational argument. Democracy is a product of the enlightenment - does this guy think we are all idiots? France had a tyrannical government BEFORE the revolution and so did Russia - the enlightenment did not create tyranny and I think there were more democracies in the world AFTER the enlightenment than before it (quick hint: there were ZERO before the enlightenment)... People who try and equate tyranny with reason are just propogandists who are trying to insert religion into public discourse and policy

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POSTED BY: RM -RF | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:07 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I want to see a series of Native American religious leaders give invocations based on their particular home-grown religions. None of these prayers from transplanted, johnny-come-lately Christians, Jews, Muslims, or Hindus. I want REAL American prayers in the House and Senate.

POSTED BY: JAY | AUGUST 6, 2007 11:50 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Terra,

I'm liking this idea...:D

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | AUGUST 6, 2007 8:57 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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LOL...Pagan for Prez!!! I would sure vote for that! Can you imagine the celebratory balls?? LOL. They first Inaugural with a drum circle.lol.

Umm we could invite all the folks who are fighting to a sweatlodge...sweat out the negative and bring in some healing communication. In fact that might work for everyone in the senate and house. And maybe a spring tonic might help...; ) I can think of a few panalists that might get some good out of a good sweat...

terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:16 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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terra

POSTED BY: TERRA GAZELLE | AUGUST 6, 2007 12:14 AM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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You've got my vote. :)

POSTED BY: PRIVER | AUGUST 5, 2007 1:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Wiccan:

Wow. You sure put me in some good company. Thanks!

Vice President Butterfly - hmmtttt.

POSTED BY: LEPIDOPTERYX | AUGUST 3, 2007 8:56 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Actually, I agree absolutely with Rev, Elliot here. If prayer is to be allowed, whether the majority likes it or not. all prayers should be allowed. And all voices of protest should be allowed, whether the majority likes it or not.

Personally, I want the Nazis of the world to be able to speak out publicly. Makes it easier to keep track of them. Those protesters had every right to openly speak their minds, and the rest of us have every right to point out what a pack of ignorant, pinheaded bigots they are.

Democracy is messy; and I love it...

Regards

A Hermit

POSTED BY: A HERMIT | AUGUST 3, 2007 7:35 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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All other religions are un-American? That is the most un-American thing I've ever heard.

This is a country of many religions. Christianity doesn't get a special status just because it's in the majority. This country was founded to be a place of freedom for all people, not just Christians.

POSTED BY: JULIA | AUGUST 3, 2007 12:51 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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PaganPlace-

I'd vote for you any day. Especially if you had Terra or Lep as your VP. "Pagan for President!" That's got a nice ring to it. ;-)

POSTED BY: WICCAN | AUGUST 3, 2007 12:29 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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"Keep up the good work brother Paganplace!"

Sister, thanks very much! Am I still 'electable' according to the news? :)

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 2, 2007 6:27 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Government and religion are to be separate. I don't mind if our elected officials pray, but they should do so at home or in their respective churches, synagogues, etc., not at their workplace.

As far as your statement about American and un-American religion, you Sir, are a bigot.

All religions are equal, if simply because they are real only to those who believe in them. Your Christianity is no more real to me than my religion would be to you. Therefore, I believe you are praying the wrong way and I am praying the right way. How is that for American logic???

You, Sir, are un-American because you want to deny me my right to believe as I wish. And so do the protesters who want to have an American theocracy.

May whatever supreme being(s) there is/are help us all!!!

POSTED BY: GABY | AUGUST 2, 2007 5:37 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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... Or maybe I should have said keep up the good work sister Paganplace!

Either way, keep up the good work!

POSTED BY: FREESTINKER | AUGUST 2, 2007 5:14 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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Paganplace for President!

I love to debate but I have yet to find anything in any of your posts about which we disagree.

It's really nice to know some people (other than me) still care about my religious liberty. And you don't even know me! How refreshing that is indeed.

So I sincerely thank you for your diligent, well-reasoned defenses of our most precious liberty of all, freedom of conscience.

Keep up the good work brother Paganplace!

POSTED BY: FREESTINKER | AUGUST 2, 2007 4:49 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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But, back to the words of this panelist, whose repeated denials of the Americanness of Americans who don't follow his religion... (and it just doesn't get any more Unamerican than that, if you asked me,) ...let's have a look, here:

" Most Senate-opening prayers should be American, honoring the American heritage and nurturing America's spiritual roots."

Which in fact include many paths, and acknowledge the role of all. Check the Treaty of Tripoli.

"4. To date, none of the panelists has had any good word for the ("politically incorrect") protesters."

They deserve none. Political correctness has nothing to do with it, except of course that it's Constitutionally incorrect to support the monopoly on public voice for only your form of religion, or to support those who use inappropriate force and intimidation to try and silence others.

" Two generations of Americans have been public-school brainwashed to the un-American doctrine of multiculturalism, the heresy that one culture is as good as another, one religion is as good as another --a neat fit for Senate-chaplain Rajan Zed's prayer-phrase, "we are [all] headed in the same direction."

So, should I take my heretic Irish and Italian heritage 'back to where I came from...' Will Southie do, or should I get a steamer ticket?

Steerage, of course.

You're talking about \*heresy,\* though, (Mr. Protestant) ? \*Heresy?\*

Where did \*you\* get off the boat. I thought you said American.

Actually, 'heresy' is not a word we use in American government.

If we \*did,\* it would be \*heresy\* to forget that, in the eyes of the law, \*yes,\* one religion \*is\* as good as another, because religious freedom is a right accorded to us as \*individuals.\* Not as mobs with bullhorns.

"Because the increase of this sentiment correlates with decreasing personal experience and knowledge of religion, America's future as America is in doubt."

With your idea of 'America,' it \*should\* be in doubt.

Your ilk threaten the America \*I\* know and love, because of your \*fear\* of \*doubt.\*

This is the \*Land of the free, and the home of the brave,\* not the land of the sheep and the home of those afraid of someone thinking differently.

America is \*built\* upon people \*thinking differently.\*

If George Washington didn't \*think differently\* he could have been \*King\* and decreed all the burning of 'heretics' that it might supposedly take to warm your little xenophobic heart, Reverend.

He didn't.

He chose to honor what America \*really\* is.

As do I.

You say my religion is 'Unamerican,' and now... everyone but your own.

I say my religion is about as American as it gets.

And, more than that, it doesn't keep trying to undermine the Constitution in the name of your 'doubt' America can remain America without people like you getting their way.

I got news for you, cousin.

We always do.

Gods bless America. Wherever you are.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 2, 2007 4:12 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

You know, Bgone, if you're appealing to people's potential to flip out to save themselves from the idea of the Christian Hell, ....I submit it's not tremendously-productive to try and induce them to flip out about a slightly-\*different\* idea of the Christian Hell.

Not that a little diversity of thought isn't good for everyone, but... What do you expect to accomplish, here? You'd still just be making people too freaked-out by the threatened consequences of not holding an arbitrary belief to think what they're actually doing, anyway.

The same 'Absolute answers are in these books,'

Just it's different answers you propose there.

If you're looking for what causes religion to lead to such abuse, it's really where it's made psychologically-unacceptable for most to dissent too hard. I think you're trying to both have your cake and put it through the woodchipper.

Which is amusing for a while, but ultimately not very productive, as much as deconstructing is fun.

Just... This Hell idea's pretty much poison, whatever you do to 'stay out of it,' at least as long as you think it's a horrible unaccountable thing to protect others from.

You OK?

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 2, 2007 3:34 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

"on religion's borders with all of human life--are consequential for personal and public decision-making"

Consequences smonsequences. <http://www.hoax-buster.org/sellyoursoul> The religious decision you make can have far reaching consequences. The heat you feel is from the fire of hell as you sing "Nearer My God To Thee"

"1. To the world, it was an American witness to unbloody protest-demonstrations. Nobody got shot except with words. Truth (as the protesters understood it) was spoken to power without power's violent reaction to the protest."

So you're ok with the idea of one person using his First Amendment right to freedom of speech to deny someone else his First Amendment right to freedom of religion?

"2. The good gardener nurtures the plant's roots. The roots of American democracy are not multicultural but culture-specific: Bible + Enlightenment. Bible without Enlightenment = theocracy, not democracy. Enlightenment (that is, reason) without Bible = tyranny (as in the French and Russian Revolutions)."

Sorry, but when you make the claim that i=ont particular book of religious writings is the basis for a governmental system, you are implying that that religion and its adherents should receive some sort of preferential status. No can do.

"3. Bible + Enlightenment = the American "civil religion." All other religions are (in this specific sense) un-American (which should not be over-read as "anti-American")."

If by "civil religion" you mean that Biblical principles must be the basis for civil law, then I must call you on that one. The First Amendment forbids that. Civil law based on a collection of scriptures is un-American. And anti-American.

"Most Senate-opening prayers should be American, honoring the American heritage and nurturing America's spiritual roots."

Hindu prayers prayed by Americans are American prayers. Pagan prayers prayed by Americans are American prayers. Muslim prayers prayed by Americans are American prayers. Etc, etc, etc.

"4. To date, none of the panelists has had any good word for the ("politically incorrect") protesters. Two generations of Americans have been public-school brainwashed to the un-American doctrine of multiculturalism, the heresy that one culture is as good as another, one religion is as good as another --a neat fit for Senate-chaplain Rajan Zed's prayer-phrase, "we are [all] headed in the same direction.""

Do you mean to imply that there is One Right Culture, and all others are inferior? That there is One Right Religion, and all others are inferior? And that we should treach such a load of claptrap to the children from many cultres and many religions who populate our public schools? Shall we invite the Gideons back onto our school playgrounds to hand out their little New Testaments for all the little "heathen" children to bring home to their "unsaved" families?

"Because the increase of this sentiment correlates with decreasing personal experience and knowledge of religion, America's future as America is in doubt."

What exactly do you mean by "personal experience and knowledge of religion?" All religious experiences are by nature personal. I know what my religious beliefs are, thank you very much, and they in no way interfere with my loyalty to or love for my country, or my identity as an American.

"1. To the world, it was an American witness to unbloody protest-demonstrations. Nobody got shot except with words. Truth (as the protesters understood it) was spoken to power without power's violent reaction to the protest."

So, you wouldn't mind, if Christians of your stripe were a minority in America, if people who will accept no other way than theirs shouted you down with 'protest' when you tried to give a blessing in the halls that are supposed to represent you?

Maybe you wouldn't mind if people came into your services 'protesting' with bullhorns? As long as 'no one gets shot.'

Mighty 'merciful' of you guys, when you don't shoot anyone. Woo.

These types do this quite often when they get wind of a Pagan worship gathering.

They aren't 'speaking truth to power,' they're \*trying to maintain exclusive access to power.\*

I find it curious they were so successful when you get thrown out in seconds for showing up in a T-shirt critical of Bush these days.

"2. The good gardener nurtures the plant's roots. The roots of American democracy are not multicultural but culture-specific: Bible + Enlightenment. Bible without Enlightenment = theocracy, not democracy. Enlightenment (that is, reason) without Bible = tyranny (as in the French and Russian Revolutions)."

Nonsense.

Frankly, one could argue that enlightenment itself is borrowed from the East and inspired by the Pagan thought upon which our democracy, our Republic, is \*based.\*

Shouting down any show of our nation's vital diversity doesn't make your assertion true...

It just attempts to use 'power' to \*erase\* the truth.

What do you propose, pretend we are \*not\* a pluralistic society?

That this is not government of the people, by the people, for the people?

That's the only reason I can see for applauding this \*disgraceful embarrassment upon America\* these Christian 'protestors' perpetrated.

It certainly gives the lie to the idea that Christians who want to impose Christianity on our government have 'religious freedom' in mind.

They just want their way, and no other.

Shame.

POSTED BY: PAGANPLACE | AUGUST 2, 2007 12:43 PM  
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

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The comments to this entry are closed.