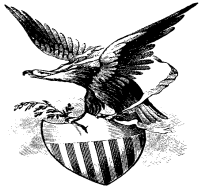


Light Brings Salt

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A Schism over Shari'a in the Church of England

by David J. Rusin
American Thinker
May 11, 2008

The debate over the trajectory of the Western sociopolitical system and its strained relations with Islam is the most pivotal of our time, as approaches decided upon today will impact billions not yet born. Two prelates in the ever more fractious Church of England provide a microcosm of this discourse.

Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams and Bishop of Rochester Michael Nazir-Ali have emerged as central combatants in the dispute between two fundamentally opposed models of social organization: multiculturalism and universalism. The former bestows equal standing upon different *cultures* in the public square. The latter bestows equal standing upon *individuals* who wield a common set of rights and responsibilities. Which system prevails will ultimately determine the level of danger that homegrown Islamists pose to Britain, Europe, and the broader West.

Nazir-Ali believes that Britain's campaign to reconstitute itself as a multicultural society has failed, and he explained why in a [January 6 op-ed](#). By emphasizing differences over common values, his country has promoted alienation among Muslims, many of whom are "living as separate communities, continuing to communicate in their own languages, and having minimum need for building healthy relationships with the majority." Since segregation breeds

extremism, Islamist-dominated "no-go areas" now dot the map.

Indeed, as Britain increasingly accommodates the strictures of Islamic law in both welfare and finance, the radicalization of its Muslims continues apace. According to a 2006 [Channel 4 survey](#), nearly one-quarter see the 7/7 London bombings as justifiable. A 2007 [Policy Exchange poll](#) found that 40% of Muslims under 24 prefer to be governed by Shari'a, while a shocking 36% believe that apostates from Islam should be "punished by death." Extremist views are far more common among younger Muslims, portending trouble on the horizon.

The death threats that followed Nazir-Ali's essay only bolstered his thesis. "The irony is that I had similar threats when I was a bishop in Pakistan," he noted, "but I never thought I would have them here." The rejection of reason is particularly disturbing to this learned man: "If you disagree, that must be met by counterarguments, not by trying to silence people. It was a threat not just to me, but to my family. ... It gave me sleepless nights."

Rowan Williams was likewise losing sleep — over the "damage" done by Nazir-Ali's frank assessment of multicultural pieties. Speaking to the [BBC on February 7](#), he ignited a firestorm of his own by suggesting that the official acceptance of some facets of Shari'a not only "seems unavoidable," but could actually improve social cohesion. To Williams, the idea that "there's one law for everybody and that's all there is to be said, and anything else that commands your loyalty or allegiance is completely irrelevant in the

processes of the courts — I think that's a bit of a danger."

In one sentence, Britain's most influential cleric effectively discarded the primary achievement of Western civilization: a system in which all live as equals before a single standard of law. The logical consequences of his worldview were underscored by Melanie Phillips: "If there is no one law, there is no one national identity and therefore no society but instead a set of warring fiefdoms with their own separate jurisdictions."

Williams and Nazir-Ali also illustrate how one's preferred method of social organization — multiculturalism or universalism — frequently boils down to whether one acknowledges the righteousness of the Western enterprise. Preoccupation with the real and imagined crimes of the West can serve as a gateway to Islamist apologetics. And the archbishop is Exhibit A.

Regarding the free market, Williams sees only suffering: "Every transaction in the developed economies of the West can be interpreted as an act of aggression against the economic losers in the worldwide game." And America's role on the international stage is, of course, the height of iniquity. In contrast, he often excuses horrors committed in the name of Islam. While condemning terrorism, he has suggested that terrorists can "have serious moral goals." He also laments the challenges faced by Middle Eastern Christians, but portrays them as victims of Western policies rather than of the Islamists threatening their lives.

Unlike Rowan Williams, Michael Nazir-Ali witnessed the realities of Shari'a law and radical Islam firsthand as a young Pakistani. These experiences eventually led him to Britain's shores — and to an admiration for the freedoms nurtured in the West. Like Magdi Allam, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Abdullahi Ahmed An-Na'im, Salman Rushdie, and Ibn Warraq, the future bishop escaped the stifling oppression of Shari'a to become an outspoken champion of Western values.

Shari'a "would be in tension with the English legal tradition on questions like monogamy, provisions for divorce, the rights of women, custody of children, laws of inheritance and of evidence," Nazir-Ali said in response to Williams' BBC interview. "This is not to mention the relation of freedom of belief and of expression to provisions for blasphemy and apostasy." His statement reveals a keen understanding of the two groups that suffer an inferior status under Shari'a: women and non-Muslims.

Not satisfied with abstract musings, Nazir-Ali applies this knowledge to contemporary problems. In March he quizzed a Home Office minister on whether women threatened by forced marriages are being adequately protected, and last year he urged Muslim leaders to condemn violence against apostates. Williams, in contrast, has said little about either issue. The bishop of Rochester has also criticized amplification of the call to prayer, demanded that Britain carefully scrutinize foreign imams, and spoken out against face-covering veils — even as Williams insists that an attempt to limit them would be "politically dangerous."

Nazir-Ali contends that the Western ethos did not arise by chance, but proceeded from "the Bible's teaching that we have equal dignity and freedom because we are all made in God's image." Islamist encroachments are therefore symptoms of a more fundamental problem. "The real danger to Britain today is the spiritual and moral vacuum that has occurred for the last 40 or 50 years. When you have such a vacuum something will fill it," he recently warned. "Do the British people really want to lose that rooting in the Christian faith that has given them everything they cherish — art, literature, architecture, institutions, the monarchy, their value system, their laws?"

Only time will tell.

Historians may one day look back on these two prelates and the church they serve — a body faced with plummeting attendance and approaching disestablishment — as symbols of the early twenty-first-century discourse over the future of the West. For now, Michael

Nazir-Ali and Rowan Williams illuminate the diverging paths before us: one paved with an ardent defense of Western liberties, the other with a nihilism that leads inexorably to dhimmitude.

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Reason For High Oil Is (Unsatisfyingly) Simple

By THOMAS SOWELL |

Some people think the reason the public misunderstands so many issues is that these issues are too "complex" for most voters.

But is that really so?

With all the commotion in the media and in politics about the high price of gasoline, is there really some terribly complex explanation?

Is there anything complex about the fact that with two countries — India and China — having rapid economic growth, and with combined populations eight times that of the United States, they are creating an increased demand for the world's oil supply?

The problem is not that supply and demand is such a complex explanation. The problem is that supply and demand is not an emotionally satisfying explanation. For that, you need melodrama, heroes and villains.

It is clear that many people prefer to blame President Bush. Others prefer to blame the oil companies, who have long been the favorite villains of the left.

Politicians understand that. Numerous times they have summoned the heads of oil companies before Congressional committees to be denounced on nationwide television for "greed," with the politicians calling for a federal investigation to "get to the bottom of this!"

Now that is emotionally satisfying. Which is the whole point. By the time yet another

federal investigation is completed — and turns up nothing to substantiate the villainy that is supposed to be the reason for high gasoline prices — most people's attention will have turned to something else.

Newspapers that carried the original inflammatory charges with banner headlines on page 1 will carry the story of the completed investigation that turned up nothing as a small item deep inside the paper.

This has happened at least a dozen times over the past few decades, and it probably will happen again.

What about those "obscene" oil company profits we hear so much about? An economist might ask, "Obscene compared to what?" Compared to the investments made? Compared to the new investments required to find, extract and process additional oil supplies?

Asking questions like these are among the many reasons why economists have never been very popular. They frustrate people's desires for emotionally satisfying explanations.

If corporate "greed" is the explanation for high gasoline prices, why are the government's taxes not an even bigger sign of "greed" on the part of politicians — since taxes add more to the price of gasoline than oil company profits do?

Whatever the merits or demerits of Sen. John McCain's proposal to temporarily suspend the federal taxes on gasoline, it would certainly lower the price more than confiscating all the oil companies' profits. But it would not be as emotionally satisfying.

Sen. Barack Obama clearly understands people's emotional needs and how to meet them. He wants to raise taxes on oil companies. How that will get us more oil or lower the price of gasoline is a problem that can be left for economists to puzzle over. A politician's problem is how to get more votes — and one of the most effective ways of doing that is to be a hero who will save us from the villains.

You have heard of the cavalry to the rescue.
But have you ever heard of economists to the rescue?

While economists are talking supply and demand, politicians are talking compassion, "change" and being on the side of the angels — and against drilling for our own oil.

Has any economist ever attracted the kinds of cheering crowds that Barack Obama has — or even the crowds attracted by Hillary Clinton or John McCain?

If you want cheering crowds, don't bother to study economics. It will only hold you back. Tell people what they want to hear — and they don't want to hear about supply and demand.

No, supply and demand is not too "complex." It is just not very emotionally satisfying.

Warming to an Old Climate

Genesis 2:6

But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground.

It was the largest bird that ever lived. It stood ten- to twelve-feet tall and could easily out run a horse. Being a meat-eater, this fossil bird, which has been nicknamed "terror bird," possibly did chase horses and bring them down with its sharp talons. The only thing that limited this creature's terrible abilities was its inability to fly.

"Terror bird," existed in a world that also included other large birds - one had a wingspread of 17 feet! In the warm climate of long ago ferns towered 150 feet tall, huge alligators, marsupials, and a strange mix of other creatures hid within the forest of fig and sequoia. Where would one find such a place? Of all places, Antarctica! Yes, it was a long time ago, although not as long ago as evolutionists claim. The location of these fossil creatures indicate that the earth was once much warmer. Similar fossil remains have also been found in Siberia, Alaska and the Arctic.

It sounds as if a tropical forest is being described when Genesis talks about mist rising from the ground, watering the plants. If the earth really is warming up, maybe it's just now returning to normal. This is certainly not something that the ancients in the Near East would have made up - offering further evidence of God's authorship of Scripture!

References: Walter Sullivan. Fossil 'Terror Bird' Offers Clues to Evolution. New York Times, Jan. 31, 1989. P. C11

Warfront with Jihadistan: Bush on the Left

If the shoe fits: President Bush, in a speech to the Israeli Knesset on Thursday, stated, "Some believe we should negotiate with terrorists and radicals, as if some ingenious argument will persuade them they have been wrong all along. We have heard this foolish delusion before... We have an obligation to call this what it is—the false comfort of appeasement, which has been repeatedly discredited by history." The president's remarks were intended as a rebuke to Jimmy Carter for his recent social visit with Hamas, the thugocracy that currently controls Gaza, and President Bush reasserted the administration's position that such talks could do no good and much harm.

The president's charge apparently struck a soft spot under Barack Obama's thin skin, as the freshman senator immediately whined of a false political attack. "George Bush knows that I have never supported engagement with terrorists." Hmm... last time we checked, Iran had successfully defended its Number One ranking in the State Department's list of state sponsors of terrorism, and Obama has stated that he would meet with the Iranians without preconditions.

Nancy Pelosi (D-Featist) also piled on, criticizing the president's remarks as "beneath the dignity of his office." Funny, we don't remember San Fran Nan having any regard for the dignity of office when she flew to Damascus in April 2007 to meet with Bashar Assad and the Syrian regime, Iran's silent partner and the chief facilitator of foreign fighters entering Iraq. Patriot readers will recall that Pelosi ludicrously claimed that Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert wanted her to pass on the message that Israel was ready for peace talks with Syria, a claim that the Israeli government immediately rejected.

When Lefties yelp so loudly over a perfectly sensible statement by the president, it's because they have been stung by the truth. Expect to see this issue in the news again between now and November, and expect John McCain to hammer on it at every opportunity, as he should.