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AN ESSAY BY DAVID MARSHALL TITLED:

ARE RELIGIONS EVIL BECAUSE THEY CAUSE INQUISITIONS?

DAVID, BEFORE YOU BEGIN LET ME JUST SAY THAT I'M WITH YOU ON THAT ONE. IN ORDER TO CALL RELIGION EVIL, IT'S GOING TO TAKE A LOT MORE THAN A SIMPLY TORTURING AND MURDERING PEOPLE WHO VIOLATE RELIGIOUS DOGMA.

One of the best lines in the movie Mary Poppins was, I think, given to Mrs. Banks to sing: "Although we adore men individually, we agree that as a group they're raa-theer stoooo-pid."

Seldom has the inanity of man to man (not excepting woman) been more richly on display than in Dublin, at the World Atheist Conference a few days ago, when Iranian dissident Maryam Namazie gave a popular keynote speech on the horrors of religion, comparing Christian and Muslim inquisitions.

DAVID, IT'S NO WONDER YOUR DIAPERS ARE ALL KNOTTED UP IN A BUNCH.

BUT IF YOU THINK THE INANITY OF "MAN TO MAN" HAS SELDOM BEEN MORE RICHLY ON DISPLAY THAN IN DUBLIN, THEN YOU MAY NOT BE ATTENDING CHURCH ... AS OFTEN AS YOU ARE SUPPOSED TO BE.

In my last post, I asked the obvious question, that seems to have escaped those who invited Ms. Namazie.  If you're going to defame religion for causing inquisitions and offer atheism as the solution to such evils, wouldn't it be better to invite someone who is NOT on the Central Committee of a communist party to make the point?

DAVID, WHY DO YOU CONSIDER "CAUSING INQUISITIONS" TO BE DEFAMATION?

FROM DICTIONARY.COM, DEFAMATION:

"the act of defaming; false or unjustified injury of the good reputation of another, as by slander or libel;"

DAVID, SINCE RELIGIONS *HAVE* CAUSED INQUISITIONS, THERE IS NO GOOD REPUTATION TO DEFAME IS THERE? (DON'T BOTHER ANSWERING, THAT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION).

AND REGARDING YOUR QUESTION ABOUT THE COMMUNIST PARTY, I'LL SIMPLY REFER YOU TO: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ad\_hominem.

INSULTS ARE NOT NECESSARILY AD HOMINEM ATTACKS, BUT WHAT YOU JUST DID, WAS.

Even in the goodthinking frenzy of the moment,

DAVID, "GOODTHINKING?" NEXT TIME YOU POST TO THE INTERNET, TRY USING YOUR SPELLCHECKER FIRST.

isn't it just possible that some non-atheist in the crowd, who still remembers the long-forgotten 20th Century (it HAS been 11 years, now), might gently point to the Killing Fields or Gulag, and ask why it's better to kill fifty million people to end religion, than to kill three thousand to keep it afloat?

DAVID, WHO SAID IT WAS BETTER?

HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/STRAWMAN

DAVID, AT THIS RATE YOUR ATTEMPTS AT LOGIC(?) MAY CAUSE YOU TO BECOME THE FIRST PERSON EVER TO HAVE A FATWA ISSUED ON THEM ... BY MR. SPOCK.

No doubt, "as a group" we Christians can be "rather stupid," too.  It is probably healthy for us to get beat over the head for past sins, from time to time --lest we ever forget that Christians can put people on the rack, too. But we also need to think clearly about history, and try to learn the right lessons from the past. In the interest of doing so, I will now analyze and respond to the substance, not just the spectacle, of Ms. Poppins' -- I mean Maryam Namazie's -- speech.

SEE DAVID, THAT WAS NOT AN AD HOMINEM. THAT WAS JUST TYPICAL CHRISTIAN RUDENESS AND IMMATURITY. BUT YOU ARE IN FOR A TREAT DAVID, BECAUSE I JUST HAPPEN TO SHARE YOUR RUDENESS AND JUVENILE SENSE OF HUMOR.

Much of what she says shows deep ignorance and lack of reflection.  One can admire her passion, though, and I think she does hit a few nails on the heads.

NOW DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:
"In this day and age, Islam matters because of Islamism. Islam per se is fundamentally no worse than any other religion. The tenets, dogma, and principles of all religions are equal."

How can anyone get away with thinking, let alone saying, such blithering nonsense in public?

DAVID, CLERGYMEN DO IT EVERY SUNDAY. HAVE YOU *EVER* ATTENDED CHURCH?

Quakerism is the same as the Peoples' Temple?  "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the same as, "sacrifice your neighbor on top of yon pyramid and cut out his heart so the gods will keep Earth going?"

VERY SNEAKY DAVID. YOU QUOTED JESUS, AND THEN CAUGHT YOURSELF JUST IN TIME. INSTEAD OF COMPARING HIM TO THE GOD OF THE JEWS WHO ACTUALLY DID REQUIRE HUMAN SACRIFICE, YOU SUBTLY SWITCHED OVER TO THE MAYAN GODS AND HOPED NO ONE WOULD NOTICE WHAT YOU DID.

HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/MAYA\_CIVILIZATION.

AFTER YOU FINISH READING ABOUT THE MAYANS, TRY READING JUDGES 11:30-39. IT'S A FUN LITTLE STORY ABOUT A VIRGIN SACRIFICE TO THE GROTESQUE MONSTER THAT YOU WORSHIP. BUT DON'T TRY READING IT AT CHURCH; NOT UNLESS YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE BEING BURNED AT THE STAKE YOURSELF.

LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT DAVID, YOU DON'T JUST BELIEVE IN A GOD WHO DEMANDS HUMAN SACRIFICE ... YOU ACTUALLY WORSHIP HIM?

THAT IS SOME KIND OF SICK.

Atheists like to portray themselves as being especially in tune with the spirit of science,

DAVID, ATHEISM HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SCIENCE.

FROM DICTIONARY.COM, ATHEISM:

1. THE DOCTRINE OR BELIEF THAT THERE IS NO GOD.

2. DISBELIEF IN THE EXISTENCE OF A SUPREME BEING OR BEINGS.

DAVID, WHICHEVER DEFINITION YOU CHOOSE, NEITHER MENTIONS, NOR HAS ANYTHING TO DO WITH, ANY BRANCH OF SCIENCE.

but from a scientific point of view, when are different objects in a single class equal to one another?  Is a lime as sweet as a strawberry?  Does a weiner dog pull sleds as heavy a load as a husky?  Can one live as comfortably on a planet circling a quasar as on our own beloved Earth?

DAVID, ANALOGIES ARE DESIGNED TO MAKE DIFFICULT IDEAS EASIER TO UNDERSTAND BY FINDING SIMILARITIES TO IDEAS THAT ARE EASIER TO COMPREHEND. ANALOGIES DO NOT REQUIRE THAT THE TWO ITEMS BEING COMPARED BE IDENTICAL. IN OTHER WORDS, AN ANALOGY DOESN'T IMPLY EQUALITY IN ALL ASPECTS, ONLY IN THOSE ASPECTS BEING COMPARED. SO WHILE IT IS TRUE THAT A LIME MAY NOT BE AS SWEET AS A STRAWBERRY, IT IS ALSO TRUE THAT THEY ARE BOTH FRUITS AND HAVE MANY THINGS IN COMMON.

FROM DICTIONARY.COM, ANALOGY:

A SIMILARITY BETWEEN LIKE FEATURES OF TWO THINGS, ON WHICH A COMPARISON MAY BE BASED: "THE ANALOGY BETWEEN THE HEART AND A PUMP."

The reason Namazie could get away with such nonsense, of course, is that she was speaking to New Atheists, who think their own views are true, and dismiss with contempt those they don't believe in.

DAVID, CAN YOU NAME ANY GROUP OF PEOPLE WHO THINK THEIR OWN VIEWS ... ARE FALSE?

RATIONAL THINKERS DON'T DISMISS THE VIEWS OF OTHERS WITH CONTEMPT UNLESS THOSE VIEWS ARE BASED ON NONSENSICAL MAGIC, IN WHICH CASE, THEY DESERVE TO BE DISMISSED WITH CONTEMPT. THOSE WOULD BE VIEWS LIKE YOURS DAVID.

This is one of the ways in which Gnus are like fundamentalists:

DAVID, YOU JUST SPENT AN ENTIRE PARAGRAPH TRYING TO PROVE TO EVERYONE THAT JUST BECAUSE TWO OBJECTS ARE IN THE SAME CLASS THAT DOESN'T MEAN THEY ARE EQUAL. NOW YOU TURN AROUND AND TRY TO CLAIM THAT TWO OBJECTS IN THE SAME CLASS ("GNUS" AND FUNDAMENTALISTS ARE BOTH PEOPLE) *ARE* EQUAL.

NO WONDER YOU PEOPLE CAN'T FIND ANY CONTRADICTIONS IN THE BIBLE. YOU CAN'T EVEN MAINTAIN A TRAIN OF THOUGHT FOR TWO PARAGRAPHS WITHOUT CONTRADICTING YOURSELF. DON'T FEEL TOO BAD THOUGH ... GOD HAD THE SAME PROBLEM. NO DAVID, THAT IS NOT SOMETHING TO BE PROUD OF.

they hold to a radical form of what in the theology of religions is called an "exclusivist" understanding of religion, or rather "ontological exclusivism:" the idea that we are right, and everyone else is just wrong.

DAVID, YOU ARE PROJECTING YOUR BELIEFS ONTO OTHERS.

ATHEISTS, BY DEFINITION, ARE REJECTING RELIGIOUS CLAIMS. THAT DOES NOT QUALIFY AS MAKING A COUNTERCLAIM. THEREFORE, THERE IS NOTHING FOR THEM TO BE RIGHT ABOUT. NEARLY ALL GHOST WORSHIPPERS ON THE OTHER HAND, ARE PERFECTLY DESCRIBED BY YOUR STATEMENT "WE ARE RIGHT, AND EVERYONE ELSE IS JUST WRONG."

It's a very naive view, suitable for adolescents in reaction, not for people who have fairly surveyed the world of religions.

DAVID, WE ARE JUST FULL OF NIFTY LITTLE INSULTS AREN'T WE?

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOUR INSULTS AND MINE IS THAT MINE ARE ALWAYS BACKED UP BY AN ARGUMENT BASED ON EVIDENCE WHILE YOUR INSULTS *ARE* YOUR ARGUMENT. THAT IS WHY YOURS ARE AD HOMINEMS ... AND MINE AREN'T.

It's not at all what I think Christianity teaches.

DAVID, THEN YOU NEED TO OPEN YOUR BIBLE AND START READING IT.

BUT THERE IS ONE BIG PROBLEM WITH THAT. THE ADVICE I JUST GAVE YOU IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE EXISTENCE OF 99% OF ALL ATHEISTS IN CHRISTENDOM. HOWEVER IN YOUR CASE, YOU'LL PROBABLY BE OKAY.

NOW DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE AGAIN:

"I don't believe in good or bad religions; in my opinion all religion is bad for you."

In the face of the millions of people who have quit drugs, stopped drinking themselves to death, learned to love parents, children, or spouses better, in the face of religious reform movements that combated slavery, foot-binding, human sacrifice, and started tens of thousands of hospitals, schools, and rehab centers around the world, what can one deduce from such Machivalean thinking?

DAVID, I'M GLAD YOU ASKED. WERE IT NOT FOR THE HORRORS THAT YOUR RELIGION HAS IMPOSED UPON HUMANS THROUGHOUT HISTORY, MILLIONS OF PEOPLE WOULD NOT HAVE NEEDED TO TURN TO DRUGS AND DRINKING.

YOU REALLY MUST NOT BE AS WELL VERSED IN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS AS YOU SEEM TO THINK YOU ARE SINCE YOU ACTUALLY DISPLAYED THE GROSS STUPIDITY REQUIRED TO BRING UP SLAVERY. THAT IS BEYOND DUMB, DAVID. THERE IS A REASON WHY MOST CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS AVOID THE SUBJECT LIKE THE PLAGUE. CONTACT A FEW OF THEM AND I'M SURE THEY'LL BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO GIVE YOU ADVICE ON HOW TO STAY AWAY FROM A SUBJECT ... YOU CANNOT WIN.

HUMAN SACRIFICE DAVID? REALLY? FOR A CHRISTIAN YOU SEEM TO KNOW AS MUCH ABOUT THE BIBLE AS I KNOW ABOUT THE MOONIES. YOU'RE CRITICIZING ONE OF GOD'S FAVORITE HOBBIES. IF I WERE YOU DAVID, I WOULD BE REAL CAREFUL WHEN YOU GET DOWN ON YOUR KNEES TONIGHT. I THINK YOU'RE GOING TO HAVE SOME SERIOUS EXPLAINING TO DO. TELL YOU WHAT, BEFORE YOU BEGIN THAT PRAYER, SPREAD DOZENS OF PILLOWS ALL AROUND THE ROOM. WHEN YOU WAKE UP IN THE MORNING, YOU'LL BE GLAD YOU DID.

AS FOR THE THOUSANDS OF HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS, IF YOU EVER SAVE UP ENOUGH MONEY TO BUY A DISCOUNT CRUISE TO CHINA OR INDIA, I THINK YOU'LL FIND THAT THEY DIDN'T NEED YOUR GOD TO MAKE THEIR HOSPITALS AND SCHOOLS. HUMANS ARE QUITE CAPABLE OF BUILDING THOSE THINGS WITHOUT ANY SUPERNATURAL ASSISTANCE.

This sounds like a mass of people trying to convince themselves something by the sound of their preacher's roar.

WELL DAVID, THAT IS SOMETHING YOU WOULD KNOW ABOUT, ISN'T IT?

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE AGAIN:
"Religion should come with a health warning like cigarettes: ‘religion kills.’"

Another easy applause line.  How simple the world can seem!

DAVID, THAT'S AN INTERESTING LITTLE BIT OF SNARK COMING FROM SOMEONE WHO BELIEVES THAT ALL THE ANSWERS IN THE UNIVERSE HAVE ALREADY BEEN PROVIDED BY AN INVISIBLE GHOST.

DAVID CONTINUES THE QUOTE:

"But even so, today - as we speak - there is a distinction to be made between religions in general and Islam in particular, but for no other reasons than that it is the ideology behind a far-Right regressive political movement that has state power in many places with Sharia law being the most implemented legal code in the world."

When Namazie is speaking about Islam, she can say some interesting things.  But why reduce a religion that has existed 1400 years to a vague modern political ideology?

DAVID, WHAT PART DID YOU FIND VAGUE?

MORE OF NAMAZIE'S QUOTE:
"Islam matters to us today because we are living through an Islamic inquisition and not because it is becoming more ‘popular’ as its proponents like to argue. They call it the fastest growing religion. I’d personally like a count of how many people are leaving it, or would like to leave if they could without being killed."

Of course one cannot obtain such a count.  But there is no doubt the number of Muslims in the world has grown in recent decades.

DAVID, HOW BADLY YOU MUST WISH YOU COULD SAY THAT ABOUT YOUR FAITH. UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU, JUST THE OPPOSITE IS TRUE. I WONDER IF THAT MEANS THAT ALLAH IS THE ONE TRUE GOD? HE CERTAINLY HAS YOUR GOD IN FULL RETREAT. AND DAVID, REMEMBER THAT STATUE OF JESUS THAT ALLAH DESTROYED BY LIGHTNING LAST YEAR IN OHIO? IT SOUNDS LIKE YOU MAY HAVE SIGNED UP WITH CUSTER ... RIGHT BEFORE THE BATTLE OF LITTLE BIGHORN.

Largely that is because of a high birth rate in most Muslim countries, until recently, when it has begun to fall in some Arab states.

DAVID, NO MATTER HOW MANY WEB SITES I VISITED, I GOT THE SAME RESULT: THE HIGHEST BIRTH RATES WERE IN AFRICA. RELIGION DIDN'T SEEM TO BE A FACTOR. MAYBE A BETTER EXPLANATION IS THAT WHILE CHRISTIANITY IS CRASHING, ISLAM IS GROWING BECAUSE IT STILL CONTROLS THE MASSES THROUGH INTIMIDATION, THREATS, VIOLENCE, AND MURDER; WHEREAS CHRISTIANITY HAS BEEN TAMED OVER THE LAST FEW CENTURIES BY ENLIGHTENED HUMANS (INCLUDING BOTH NONBELIEVERS AND OTHER CHRISTIANS).

NO? DIDN'T LIKE THAT ONE? WELL, I WAS JUST SPECULATING.

It is also true that many have left or would like to leave Islam, but that this can be dangerous in many Muslim countries -- which is no doubt why Ms. Namazie left Iran.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:
"Islam’s appeal has not grown amongst the general public; in fact it’s the opposite. Its record in political power speaks volumes for itself: stonings, honour killings, amputation of limbs, child ‘marriages’, sexual apartheid, decapitations, public hangings, bombs in discotheques and on buses, the slaughter of entire generations in the Middle East and North Africa ... "

Which "general public" is she talking about?  The number of Muslims in the UK appears to have grown by about a million in the past ten years.  A quarter of Muslims in the US are converts.

THAT DOESN'T SAY MUCH FOR YOUR MISSIONARY PROGRAM DOES IT DAVID?

Frankly, a little madness doesn't always hurt the prospects of an ideology.

DAVID COME ON, KEEP YOUR GUARD UP. WHEN YOU SAY IDIOTIC STUFF LIKE THAT YOU MAKE ME FEEL LIKE I'M BEATING UP ON A RETARD.

Look at communism: everyone knew those folks were out for blood, and still it kept growing. The willingness to risk your life for a belief creates what sociologist Rodney Stark calls a "high-tension" religion, which tend to grow.

DAVID, REPLACE THE WORD "COMMUNISM" WITH EITHER CHRISTIANITY OR ISLAM AND IT WOULD STILL READ JUST AS TRUE.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:
"It is the difference between Christianity today and one during the inquisition.  A religion that has been reined in by an enlightenment is very different from one that has political power and is spearheading an inquisition."

The "Enlightenment" can be as dangerous as anything.

DAVID, TO RELIGION ... THAT WOULD BE TRUE. ALL RELIGIONS CAN ONLY THRIVE IN DARKNESS AND IGNORANCE.

The French Revolution followed the Enlightenment.  Both Nazis and Communists adopted some of its values and language.

DAVID, YOU LEFT OUT AMERICANS. I WAS GOING TO ASK "WHY?"

BUT I THINK WE ALL KNOW WHY, DON'T WE?

But here Namazie touches on the real issue: the danger of allowing any one ideological group monopoly power.

DAVID, THAT IS WHY OUR FOUNDING FATHERS WROTE THE FIRST AMENDMENT. CHRISTIAN FUNDAMENTALISTS HAVE BEEN ATTACKING IT EVER SINCE.

Stark argues, and I think he's right, that aside from ideology -- which really does matter -- it's a problem if one ideological group monopolizes a society, or if two big groups struggle for control.  A better situation is a free market of ideas.  That's what we've had in the US for 200 years, and as a result, religion has been both vibrant and free.

DAVID, I AGREE THAT HIS POSITION WAS BRILLIANT. BUT I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT THE PART YOU ADDED ABOUT THE PAST 200 YEARS, CONSIDERING THE CONSTANT ATTACKS BY CHRISTIANS ON OUR SCIENCE, OUR CONSTITUTION, OUR EDUCATIONAL SYSTEM, AND ALL OTHER RELIGIONS. RELIGION IN AMERICA HAS BEEN ANYTHING BUT "VIBRANT AND FREE."

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE AGAIN:
"Under the inquisition, you were killed even if you confessed. A confession would just mean that you would be strangled before being burnt to death rather than being burnt alive. The same applies for Islamism. It’s a killing machine."

Most of what Namazie says about the Inquisition appears to be based more on popular myth than reality.  A very small percentage of those subject to the Inquisition were killed; most were given light punishments.

DAVID, WHAT YOU CAN'T DENY ... YOU TRY TO MINIMIZE.

YOU PEOPLE ARE SOOO PREDICTABLE.

But I agree that the Inquisition was a terrible event, and part of a bigger problem after nationalized churches became supreme in Europe.

THAT'S BETTER DAVID. THERE MAY BE SOME HOPE FOR YOU AFTER ALL.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:
"Sharia law is designed to teach the masses the damnable nature of dissent.  Moreover, under the inquisition, once you were baptized, it could not be undone. The same is true with Islam. You are just not allowed to leave."

There is, indeed, a parallel between the worst excesses of the "Christian" Middle Ages and oppressive Muslim regimes.  Weak religions commonly borrow from stronger religions.  When Islam was on the rise, it borrowed practices from Christians, Jews, Persians, and Arab polytheists.  Later, as Islam ruled most of the richest parts of the Mediterranean world, and threatened to conquer the rest, Europe naturally adopted some Muslim beliefs, such as *jihad* and Mohammed's teaching that those who die in holy war go straight to heaven.  Christianity also borrowed from the tyranical system of ancient Rome, which had persecuted the church, and turned on its persecutors.

DAVID CONTINUES QUOTING NAMAZIE:
"If you look at Christianity for example, it’s not that the tenets, dogma, and principles have changed; it has not become more humane since the days of the inquisition and witch burnings."
﻿﻿

Actually, when people are allowed to read the words of Jesus (which they were not, in much of the Middle Ages), they see that witch burnings and inquisitions are AGAINST the tenets of Christ.

DAVID, IMAGINE YOURSELF BACK IN AMERICA AMONG GOOD CHRISTIANS ONLY A FEW CENTURIES AGO. AS THEY PREPARED TO LIGHT THE FIRE AND BURN ALIVE SOME POOR WOMAN, WOULD YOU HAVE TOLD THEM THAT THIS WAS AGAINST THE TEACHINGS OF CHRIST?

WELL DAVID, IF YOU HAD TRIED THAT ... YOU PROBABLY WOULD HAVE MELTED RIGHT ALONG WITH HER.

They were not, unfortunately, against the tenets of Marx.

DAVID, CAN YOU PROVIDE ANY EVIDENCE OF MARXIST TENETS THAT SUPPORT WITCH BURNING?

WHEN YOU FIND IT, JUST SEND IT TO THE EMAIL ADDRESS PROVIDED ON MY WEB SITE.

It is passing strange for a communist to hold up customs that appeared 1200 years after the time of Christ, and make that the standard for Christianity.

DAVID, SO YOU SEE WITCH BURNING AS "A CUSTOM?"

YOU HAVE REDEFINED THE WORD "MINIMIZING."

OR PERHAPS YOU HAVE HIT A NEW LOW IN THE USE OF "EUPHEMISMS."

EITHER WAY, I WONDER IF YOU WOULD STILL FEEL THE SAME WAY ABOUT WITCH BURNING (CALLING IT A "CUSTOM") IF IT WAS YOUR MOTHER THAT THEY WERE GOING TO EXECUTE?

AND WHY DO YOU THINK NAMAZIE'S OPINION IS MINIMIZED BECAUSE OF HER POLITICAL BELIEFS, I.E. COMMUNISM? IT IS BECAUSE YOU ARE TRYING TO SWAY THE IGNORANT WITH APPEALS TO EMOTION:

(HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/APPEAL\_TO\_EMOTION).

Marx' true homocidal tendencies came to the fore much more quickly.

DAVID, SO NOW YOU ARE A PSYCHOLOGIST?

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:

"It is important to note here that Islamism was actually brought to centre stage during the Cold War as part of US foreign policy in order to create a ‘green’ Islamic belt surrounding the Soviet Union and not concocted in some immigrant’s kitchen in London . . . "

This looks like one of those weird Middle Eastern conspiracy theories.  Few of the practices that Namazie derides are new to Islam -- most have parallels in the life of Mohammed himself, who I do not believe was a CIA agent.

DAVID, IT'S INTERESTING THAT YOU, A CHRISTIAN APOLOGIST BLOGGER, KNOWS SO MUCH MORE ABOUT ISLAM THAN NAMAZIE. I'M NOT SAYING YOU DON'T; I'M JUST SAYING, IT'S INTERESTING.
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DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE AGAIN:

"It is the human being who is meant to be equal not his or her beliefs. It is the human being who is worthy of the highest respect and rights not his or her beliefs or those imputed on them. The problem is that religion sees things the other way around. This is precisely what is wrong with multiculturalism. It gives precedence to cultures and religion rather than people and their rights and lives. And it says that human beings – depending on how they are pigeon-holed – are fundamentally different, and should be treated as such. The idea of difference has always been the fundamental principle of a racist agenda not the other way around.

And within this context any criticism of Islam and Islamism are deemed to be racism and Islamophobia. This is nothing but political scaremongering in order to silence criticism against Islam. The term is used to shield Islam and Islamism from criticism and so everything from opposing executions in Iran to demanding an end to Sharia courts in Britain are deemed racism by Islamic lobbyists and their supporters, including from within the Left, like the Socialist Workers' Party in the UK. It has become politically incorrect to criticise Islam. But Islamophobia does not refer to the fear of a certain people. It refers to the fear of a certain religion. And what is so wrong with that? Shouldn't we have the right to be critical of Islam - especially given its practices, its record?

At a minimum, we must have the complete separation of religion from the state, the law and educational system. The promotion of secularism is therefore an important vehicle to protect society from religion's intervention in people's lives, especially in the face of religion’s rising access to power."

That depends what "secularism" means.

DAVID, I AM TIRED OF RUNNING TO THE DICTIONARY TO FILL IN THE HUGE GAPS IN YOUR EDUCATION. LOOK IT UP YOURSELF.

If it means we favor the worldview of atheists and communists over that of Quakers and Presbyterians, I don't see why that would help.

DAVID, I'M ALSO TIRED OF COPYING LINKS TO LOGICAL FALLACIES. GO BACK TO THE ONE FOR "STRAW MAN" AND READ IT AGAIN.

ALSO, REMEMBER EARLIER WHEN YOU MADE THOSE SILLY COMPARISONS BETWEEN THINGS LIKE LIMES AND STRAWBERRIES? YOU SAID THAT THINGS IN THE SAME CLASS WERE NOT NECESSARILY EQUAL? YET ONCE AGAIN, YOU ATTEMPT TO LINK THINGS FROM A CLASS AND IMPLY THEY *ARE* EQUAL. ATHEISTS HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH COMMUNISTS. MANY COMMUNISTS ARE BUDDHISTS (AS IN CHINA), CATHOLIC (AS IN CUBA), PROTESTANT (AS IN RUSSIA), ETC. WHILE MANY ATHEISTS ARE CAPITALISTS, LIBERTARIANS, OR FAVOR OTHER ECONOMIC SYSTEMS. QUAKERS AND PRESBYTERIANS HAVE DIFFERENCES TOO, OTHERWISE THEY WOULDN'T NEED TO BE TWO SEPARATE DENOMINATIONS OF CHRISTIANITY.

DAVID, YOUR ESSAYS MIGHT BE A LOT LESS EMBARRASSING IF YOU TOOK THE TIME TO REVIEW THEM FIRST; OR AT LEAST LET SOMEONE ELSE LOOK IT OVER BEFORE POSTING YOUR IGNORANCE TO THE INTERNET FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO LAUGH AT. IT'S PLAIN TO SEE THAT THE BIBLE IS YOUR BLUEPRINT: IT TOO CONTRADICTS ITSELF CONSTANTLY.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:

"Religion excludes whilst secularism is inclusive and ensures that a sect or group does not impose its beliefs on all. That a person's religion is a private affair."

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Sure!  But many secular humanists see schools as an instrument for persuading kids to accept their atheistic worldview.

DAVID, PROOF. GIVE US PROOF NOT DOGMATIC PROCLAMATIONS. AND HOW WOULD YOU KNOW HOW SECULAR HUMANISTS SEE SCHOOLS? AND PLEASE, PLEASE DON'T TELL ME SOME OF YOUR BEST FRIENDS ARE SECULAR HUMANISTS.

Sam Harris is on record as saying so;

DAVID, FOR THAT I WOULD REQUIRE A LINK, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND AS TO OBLIGE.

Dan Dennett at loudly hinting it.

DAVID, FROM DICTIONARY.COM, OXYMORON:

"A FIGURE OF SPEECH BY WHICH A LOCUTION PRODUCES AN INCONGRUOUS, SEEMINGLY SELF-CONTRADICTORY EFFECT, AS IN “CRUEL KINDNESS” OR “TO MAKE HASTE SLOWLY.”

OR DAVID, "LOUDLY HINTING."

And of course communists followed out that policy, on similiar rationale, in one third of the world, and still try to wash tender brains of opposing views in places like China and North Korea.

DAVID, "WASH TENDER BRAINS OF OPPOSING VIEWS?" NOTHING DESCRIBES YOUR RELIGION MORE THAN WHAT YOU JUST TRIED TO PROJECT ONTO SECULARISTS.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:

"Faith schools must be abolished."

Ah!  The claws of the putty-tat begin to protrude.

DAVID. GROW UP.

HE CONTINUES THE QUOTE:

"Religion in general and Islam more so because of the rise of Islamism, indoctrinates children – often violently."

Having been to a religious school as a young boy, I remember some of that violence -- Mrs. Jones in third grade hit my hand with a ruler for getting an answer wrong, as I recall.  Let's abolish Mrs. Jones, and parents like mine who send kids to such houses of instructional horror!

DAVID, IF MRS. JONES SLAPPED YOUR HAND WITH A RULER FOR GETTING AN ANSWER WRONG, I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT SHE WOULD DO TO YOU IF SHE WERE FORCED TO READ THIS ESSAY; BUT I THINK *BURNING AT THE STAKE* WOULD DEFINITELY BE ONE OF THE OPTIONS.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE AGAIN:

﻿﻿"Religious schools by nature must teach the superiority of their belief system and the baseness of non-believers and kafirs . . . Education is meant to give children access to science, reason and the advances of the 21st century. It is meant to level the playing field irrespective of and despite the family the child is born into. It is meant to allow children to think freely and critically – something that religion actually prohibits and punishes."

Now there's another remarkably sweeping statement.  If "religion" prohibits and punishes critical thought, where did people like Augustine, Anselm, and Aquinas (to start with a few early As) come from?

DAVID, YOU HAVE AN AWFULLY FUNNY IDEA OF PEOPLE WHO QUALIFY AS CRITICAL THINKERS. BUT THEN AGAIN, I HAVEN'T THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT THAT YOU CONSIDER YOURSELF ONE.

﻿﻿If Christian schools are such terrible things, why have billions of young people managed to get a decent education in the things?

DAVID, YOU ASSUME FAR TOO MUCH.

Why was I so bored when I went to public school in 4th grade,

DAVID, IF YOU WERE BORED IN THE 4TH GRADE, THEN YOU HAD BIGGER ISSUES THAN WORRYING ABOUT ATTENDING PUBLIC SCHOOL. HOW COULD ANYONE BE BORED IN 4TH GRADE?

YOU DIDN'T COMPLAIN ABOUT BOREDOM WHEN MRS. JONES WAS WHACKING YOUR KNUCKLES WITH A RULER? PERHAPS YOU HAVE JUST REVEALED SOMETHING ABOUT YOURSELF?

FROM DICTIONARY.COM, DEFINITION #1, MASOCHIST:

"THE CONDITION IN WHICH SEXUAL GRATIFICATION DEPENDS ON SUFFERING, PHYSICAL PAIN, AND HUMILIATION."

and sat in my desk a year or so waiting for all the "free-thinking, critical" kids around me to catch up?

BOY DAVID, WE ARE JUST FULL OF OUR SUPERIOR LITTLE SELF AREN'T WE?

SINCE YOU ARE SO MUCH SMARTER THAN ALL THE REST OF US, MAYBE YOU COULD KINDLY EXPLAIN TO US, HOW YOU SAT ... IN YOUR DESK.

DAVID QUOTES NAMAZIE:

"Let me end with a quote from the late Marxist, atheist and humanist Mansoor Hekmat:

“…In Islam, be it true or untrue, the individual has no rights or dignity. In Islam, the woman is a slave. In Islam, the child is on par with animals. In Islam, freethinking is a sin deserving of punishment. Music is corrupt. Sex without permission and religious certification, is the greatest of sins. This is the religion of death. In reality, all religions are such but most religions have been restrained by freethinking and freedom-loving humanity over hundreds of years. This one was never restrained or controlled. With every move, it brings abominations and misery."

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Some of this seems a little over the top, even about Islam. To give him credit, Hekmat seems to have opposed Russian and Chinese communism.  Why was he a Marxist, though, if he cared so much about freedom?  One can only wonder -- Karl Marx himself was as egocentric and bossy as many of his totalitarian followers.

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But it looks like Hekmat is simply trying to dis the competition.  All religions, what, say music is corrupt?  But Confucius said, "I heard the sound of this music, and could not notice the taste of my food for months afterwards."  Christianity?  One word: Bach.  OK, a few more: Handel.  Harps.  Halleluyah. Gospel. What is behind the pitch black image of religion that Marxists portray,

DAVID, HISTORICAL FACT.

seems to be a fundamental (ist) drive to simplify reality: "communism abolishes all religion, all eternal truth, all morality."

DAVID, YOU KNOW LESS ABOUT COMMUNISM THAN YOU DO ABOUT THE BIBLE, IF THAT IS POSSIBLE. SO I HAVE DECIDED TO TAKE PITY ON YOU AND PROVIDE YOU WITH ANOTHER LINK:

(HTTP://EN.WIKIPEDIA.ORG/WIKI/COMMUNISM).

BUT IF I WERE YOU I WOULD DO WHAT ALL CHRISTIAN APOLOGISTS DO AND AVOID THAT ARTICLE LIKE KRYPTONITE BECAUSE THEY HAVE ONE SECTION THAT WILL FRY YOU DARKER THAN SALEM'S WITCHES, AND THAT IS THE SECTION ON CHRISTIAN COMMUNISM. THAT IS THE ARTICLE THAT YOU WILL BE FORCED TO REFUTE IN YOUR NEXT ESSAY. I WOULD LOVE TO SEE IT, EXCEPT THAT THERE IS NO WAY I COULD LISTEN TO ANY MORE OF YOUR NONSENSE, WITHOUT RISKING, MY BRAIN HAVING ME ARRESTED ON ASSAULT CHARGES.

Compare that to the approach an atheist I respect, the psychologist, Ernest Becker, took:

“I have had the growing realization over the past few years that the problem of man’s knowledge is not to oppose and to demolish opposing views, but to include them in a larger theoretical structure.”

WELL DAVID, IT'S EASY TO SEE WHY YOU RESPECT HIM. HE ACCEPTS NONSENSE.

Or Jesus:

﻿﻿ "Don't think I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets.  I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill."

DAVID, THAT IS NOT THE ONLY REASON JESUS CAME. JUST SO YOU CAN'T CLAIM I'M PUTTING WORDS IN HIS MOUTH, LET'S LET JESUS TELL US WHY HE CAME, IN HIS OWN WORDS, IN MATTHEW 10:34-36:

"THINK NOT THAT I AM COME TO SEND PEACE ON EARTH: I CAME NOT TO SEND PEACE, BUT A SWORD. FOR I AM COME TO SET A MAN AT VARIANCE AGAINST HIS FATHER, AND THE DAUGHTER AGAINST HER MOTHER, AND THE DAUGHTER IN LAW AGAINST HER MOTHER IN LAW. AND A MAN'S FOES SHALL BE THEY OF HIS OWN HOUSEHOLD."

DAVID, NOW EVERYONE HAS A BETTER PICTURE OF WHY JESUS CAME, THAN THE INCOMPLETE ONE YOU GAVE THEM.

The New Atheism seems to be following Marx into the most simplistic and untenable view of religion: that they are all simply wrong, aside from my own, which I do not define as a religion.

WRONG DAVID. IT IS NOT ATHEISTS WHO FAIL TO DEFINE THEIR WORLDVIEW AS A RELIGION. IT IS THAT THING I HAVE TO KEEP READING TO YOU ... THE DICTIONARY.

BY THE WAY DAVID, REREAD YOUR SENTENCE AFTER THE COLON, "THEY ARE ALL SIMPLY WRONG, ASIDE FROM MY OWN" AND YOU WILL SEE THAT YOU HAVE ONCE AGAIN DESCRIBED CHRISTIANITY. IT'S AMAZING HOW YOU CAN KEEP ACCUSING OTHERS OF FAULTS THAT PERFECTLY DESCRIBE YOUR OWN BELIEFS.

IF YOU GO TO THE SKEPTIC ARENA HOMEPAGE, UNDER HOT TOPICS, YOU WILL SEE A NEW PICTURE REFERRING TO CHRISTIAN APOLOGETIC ARGUMENTS THAT FITS YOU PERFECTLY DAVID. IN FACT, IF THE PICTURE WEREN'T SO OLD, I WOULD SAY THAT THE GUY ON THE LEFT PROBABLY WAS YOU.

Jesus offers a richer understanding, not just of Christian tradition, but of world tradition -- including the best ideas in atheism.

YOU KNOW DAVID, IN THIS ESSAY YOU MADE SOME OF THE MOST BONEHEADED STATEMENTS EVER POSTED TO THE INTERNET. BUT I HAD NO IDEA THAT YOU WERE SAVING THE "PIECE DE RESISTANCE" FOR LAST.

YOU JUST SAID THAT JESUS OFFERS A RICHER UNDERSTANDING OF THE BEST IDEAS IN ATHEISM. DAVID, THE BEST IDEA IN ATHEISM ... IS THAT JESUS WAS NOT DIVINE.

THE FUNNIEST PART OF ALL DAVID, IS THAT YOU ARE COMPLETELY OBLIVIOUS TO THE FACT THAT YOUR LAST STATEMENT JUST ANNIHILATED, NOT ONLY THIS ESSAY, BUT YOUR ENTIRE WORLDVIEW.

SOMETIMES YOU PEOPLE MAKE IT TOO EASY.

NOW FOR A BRIEF CRITICAL THINKING SUMMARY

ACCORDING TO THE TITLE, THIS ESSAY WAS SUPPOSED TO BE ABOUT EVIL AND RELIGIOUS INQUISITIONS. INSTEAD, YOU WERE TREATED TO A LONG-WINDED EXAMPLE OF THE LOGICAL FALLACY OF "THROWING IT BACK" IN AN EFFORT TO DISTRACT YOUR ATTENTION AWAY FROM AN ACCUSATION WHICH HE COULD NOT DEFEND AGAINST, AND FOCUS IT INSTEAD ON THE BAD BEHAVIOR OF OTHERS.

(DAVID MARSHALL'S ESSAY WAS TAKEN FROM HIS WEB SITE AT: HTTP://CHRISTTHETAO.BLOGSPOT.COM/).

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THE SCIENCE SEGMENT

TWO SKIN CANCER DRUGS HAILED AS 'BREAKTHROUGHS'

BOTH CAN SIGNIFICANTLY INCREASE SURVIVAL FOR THOSE WITH METASTATIC MELANOMA

TWO NEW DRUGS OFFER NEW HOPE TO PATIENTS WITH METASTATIC MELANOMA, THE TYPICALLY LETHAL ADVANCED FORM OF SKIN CANCER. THE TRIAL OF PLX4032, OR VEMURAFENIB, WAS SO SUCCESSFUL THAT THE STUDY WAS HALTED AFTER THREE MONTHS SO THAT ALL PATIENTS COULD RECEIVE THE NEW DRUG. IT IS THE FIRST CHEMOTHERAPY TO TARGET A SPECIFIC MUTATION THAT OCCURS IN 47% OF MELANOMA PATIENTS. THE STUDY FOUND IT HELPED 48% OF THOSE PATIENTS, COMPARED TO JUST 5% WHO WERE TAKING THE DRUG DACARBAZINE, THE CONVENTIONAL TREATMENT.

THE SECOND DRUG, IPILIMUMAB OR YERVOY, STIMULATES THE IMMUNE SYSTEM TO FIGHT SKIN TUMORS. IT HAS BEEN FOUND TO BE MORE EFFECTIVE THAN BOTH CONVENTIONAL CHEMOTHERAPY AND A VACCINE TYPICALLY USED IN TREATMENT, AND WAS APPROVED BY THE FDA IN MARCH. A COURSE OF TREATMENT COSTS $120,000. MANUFACTURERS OF BOTH DRUGS PLAN TO TRY THEM TOGETHER TO SEE IF THEY CAN BE EVEN MORE EFFECTIVE WHEN COMBINED. A MELANOMA IMMUNOTHERAPY EXPERT CALLS THE FINDINGS "A MAJOR BREAKTHROUGH."

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FAMOUS QUOTES

CHARLES DARWIN (1809 –1882) 73 YEARS.

HE WAS AN ENGLISH NATURALIST WHO ESTABLISHED THAT ALL SPECIES OF LIFE HAVE DESCENDED OVER TIME FROM COMMON ANCESTRY, AND PROPOSED THE SCIENTIFIC THEORY THAT THIS BRANCHING PATTERN OF EVOLUTION RESULTED FROM A PROCESS THAT HE CALLED NATURAL SELECTION. HE PUBLISHED HIS THEORY WITH COMPELLING EVIDENCE FOR EVOLUTION IN HIS 1859 BOOK ON THE ORIGIN OF SPECIES, OVERCOMING SCIENTIFIC REJECTION OF EARLIER CONCEPTS OF TRANSMUTATION OF SPECIES.

“IT APPEARS TO ME (WHETHER RIGHTLY OR WRONGLY)

THAT DIRECT ARGUMENTS AGAINST CHRISTIANITY & THEISM

PRODUCE HARDLY ANY EFFECT ON THE PUBLIC;

AND FREEDOM OF THOUGHT IS BEST PROMOTED

BY THE GRADUAL ILLUMINATION OF MEN’S MINDS

WHICH FOLLOWS FROM THE ADVANCE OF SCIENCE."