

THE WORLD TURNED UPSIDE DOWN:

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I very much doubt if there is anyone at all, at least in the urban world, who is unaware of the events of Tuesday the 11th of September.

But I do wonder if there are many people who can see that the events were not primarily of political causation. Nor, in fact, were they, as so many people believe, caused entirely by inequalities in economic standing. Though it cannot be denied that poverty and hopelessness is a strong factor in creating the kind of person who can be used in this kind of event. Though in fact, I have to say that ignorance, far more than poverty, is the most important part of the equation.

The most vital thing for people to understand is that the primary cause of this tragedy is religion, just as it is the primary cause of so much other bloodshed and destruction.

Does anyone not comprehend that if religion were removed from the equation there would be no "Palestine Problem", no Northern Irish Problem, and no problems between India and Pakistan. In fact, take away religion, and India and Pakistan would be one country. While certainly not all the problems on this planet have their roots in religion, were the ones which do removed, then this planet would be well on the way to being a much better place for all humans to live on.

I also wonder, if anyone can see that perhaps these things are an almost inevitable part of the changes that the civilization, such as it is, on this planet is going through.

The attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon was surely an attack on the United States of America, but it was an attack on America as the symbol and catalyst of the changes that are being resisted in so many ways all over the world.

Fundamentalism, in all of its manifestations, is only the most spectacular of these 'resistances'. Islamic fundamentalism is really no different from other fundamentalisms, it is simply the most visible currently.

The single most important thing to know about fundamentalism, and it raises its ugly head in all religions, is that despite their claims to be restoring a religion to its Ühr "purity"; fundamentalism is always a heresy in terms of the religion represented. Fundamentalism represents the reaction of small intelligences to change.

Viewed from an historical perspective, the Human Race has always been fiercely resistant to change, the more extreme the change, the more extreme the resistance.

The riots in Genoa and Seattle and elsewhere against "Globalization" are also symptomatic

of this resistance. The people involved don't seem to realize that true globalization, which demands the end of malignant nationalism, is the best hope of peace this planet has. I will speak of this particular subject in my next essay.

Besides Nationalism, there is another malignant influence on the human race, and that is, and always has been, religion. Change, as it impacts on religion is the most devastating aspect of the resistance to change. The horror of Tuesday the 11th of September was a result of religious resistance to change carried to a degree that is totally malign. Malign to a degree that while it can be comprehended intellectually, cannot be at all comprehended emotionally. Malign to a degree that it negates the centuries of development of human civilization that lie behind the human race.

Beginning in the Renaissance, the people of the world have slowly but surely been moving away from religion towards secularism. People, at first only those of the most intellectual and educated segments of society, slowly began to realize that religion, per se, was extremely oppressive and deleterious to human growth and development. Little by little that realization began to spread throughout society, especially among the young. That movement has been more and more rapid in this century. The reaction to that movement away from religion has been the development of various Fundamentalisms.

Now, it must be admitted freely that the more rational, educated, intelligent devotees of the various religions have truly striven mightily to reconcile their basic belief systems with the Zeitgeist. This has not been an easy task. Unfortunately, I believe that, due to the intrinsic nature of religion, it is an effort than cannot possibly succeed.

To the rigidly orthodox of all religions it is an impossible task. Because of this impossibility, the rigidly orthodox have fled reality and become part of the fundamentalist movements.

The basic problem is this; to reconcile religion with the 21st century really does require abandoning some of the most dearly held shibboleths of the orthodox. The most insidious aspect of this is the fact that to reconcile religion with the 21st century goes against the dearly held belief of the various orthodoxies that their particular orthodoxy is the only 'true religion'. The 21st century requires, if nothing else, the admission that all religions are equally true to their believers and equal in value to human society. within the paradigm that is religion, that admission is utterly destructive.

You see, to the orthodox, the admission that all religions are equal in value, is an admission that none of them are of value. Unfortunately this is basically true.

Another way that religion is incompatible with the 21st century is political. Over the centuries the human race has slowly been rejecting authoritarian social solutions in favor of solutions more closely approximating libertarian democratic forms. Now, it must be admitted that nowhere on the planet has there been reached an approximation of perfect libertarian democracy, but the effort is being made. This presents the religious with a really tremendous problem.

Religion, by and large, is not entirely compatible with Libertarian Democracy. Some religions are less compatible than others. Islam, is one of the least compatible, were this not the case, there would be at least one or two non-totalitarian Islamic Societies. But there aren't In those few countries in which 'elections' are held those elections are almost entirely shams. In any case, all religions are authoritarian by definition. It is simply impossible for them to be anything else.

It is in the effort to reconcile religion with democracy that we are having so much trouble and strife.

The events of Tuesday the 11th of September have their roots in this basic resistance of religion to change.

Now there are so many important facets of this problem that it is difficult to order them. But there are many things that really need to be said.

Democracy is based entirely on the expressed will of the people. Religion is based upon the "revealed will of God" these two things are not compatible.

Democracy is the result of many millennia of unhappy human experience, religion is based on "faith in a myth". I strongly believe that myth to be primarily imaginative. Or to be more blunt, on falsehood. Is anything based entirely on faith in a falsehood valid? You tell me.

I really believe that on Tuesday the 11th of September 2001 the "World Turned Upside Down" because the absolute obscenity of the horror inflicted not simply on the United States of America but on the Human Race as a whole, must cause an eventual rethinking of all our basic beliefs. On that day, thousands of people died horribly, thousands others were wounded, some of then very badly, and uncountable numbers of people emotionally and financially traumatized. How can one evaluate the loss of a loved one? This all was the result of one lunatic's religious fantasies!

Why do I say "one lunatic's religious fantasies"? Well it's because it is clear to me that Osama Bin Laden really believes himself to be "The Maahdi" who is the Islamic equivalent of the "Messiah". I think that is quite sufficient proof of his mental and emotional instability. The same is true of the Taliban as a whole. It has been made clear by Islamic scholars world wide that the Taliban is an almost entirely heretical sect based totally on the fantasies of almost entirely ignorant self-appointed Mullahs. The Taliban's leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, calls himself Commander of the Faithful, which is a title which was always reserved for the Caliph, who was the living head of all Muslims. It is, in his case, certainly unwarranted.

Now these two men's fantasies have managed to draw a following composed of totally ignorant basically illiterate young men who believe all the perversions of the Islamic religion which have been preached by these two leaders. *The important thing for everyone to*

realize is that it is impossible to reach these people, or to convince them of their errors in any rational or reasonable way.

The Dalai Lama has issued a statement saying we must approach them with love. But I am sure he knows that were he personally to do so, he would be treated exactly as they treated the images of the Buddha and all of the incalculably precious art objects that were formerly the glory of Afghanistan.

The Taliban, and the Islamic Jihad and others of their like have their own beliefs and I believe that there is nothing we can do to change them. But, they are also entirely responsible for the results of actions taken pursuant to their beliefs. The rest of us have every right to resent their actions and every right to refuse to put up with those actions.

I am sure everyone has taken note of the care with which the American Government has attempted to remove itself from the idea that it's acts of retribution are in any way directed against Islam itself, but only against the perpetrators of this deed. But, I have to ask if, while completely desirable, this disassociation is at all possible.

There is no way at all that the activities of either Al-Qa'ida or the Islamic Jihad can be disassociated from the actions of Hamas or Hezbollah, or the actions of the fanatical Taliban Sunni Mullahs from those of the equally fanatic Shiite Mullahs of Iran. While the American Government can choose to pretend that American support of Israel has nothing to do with what happened on the 11th of September, I am afraid the fanatics won't permit them to do so.

Yasser Arafat is certainly not directly responsible for the attack on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but his words and actions, over the many years he has held the supreme leadership of the Palestinian cause, certainly helped create the conditions that made it possible. It is also undeniable that the basic goal of the Palestinians and many other Muslims is the destruction of Israel. Of course this does not include all Muslims, but it certainly includes a significant number of them.

This is absolutely equivalent to the fact that while Christianity did not build and run the Nazi Death Camps, 2,000 years of constantly preaching Jew Hatred certainly created the conditions that made them possible. Here too, not all Christians concurred in these teachings of hatred, but enough did that the whole world saw the utterly unbelievably horrid results.

There are American Fundamentalists who would support death camps for those they view as antithetic to their beliefs. Anyone who will murder a Doctor for performing a perfectly legal abortion, can be expected to do almost anything within their power to anyone who disagree with them. Christian fundamentalists are just as insane, and just as vicious, as Islamic fundamentalists, and Jerry Fallwell and Pat Robertson just amply proved that statement to be true.

Does this mean that I think that our so-called “War on Terrorism” should be extended to be a “war on Fundamentalism”? Of course not! Everyone in the world is entitled to their beliefs, and it would be futile to attempt to deny this right. But, they are not entitled to force these beliefs on others, they are not entitled to commit violent or coercive acts! Fundamentalism exists in every faith from Adwaitee Brahmanism and Alawite Islam to Zoroastrianism, those people are entitled to believe anything they choose, as long as they keep those beliefs peacefully. May they attempt to evangelize? Of course they may, that kind of freedom of expression is one of humanity’s most cherished rights. Evangelize yes, forced conversion - NO!

However, it is my dearest hope that as time passes and human development proceeds apace, the number of people taken in by evangelization will slowly become fewer and fewer. One may already see this process in action in so many places and so many ways.

I said earlier that Islam isn’t compatible with the 21st century, but then I must honestly admit that no religion is.

Religionists claim that religion is a civilizing factor. What does the attack on the World Trade Center say about that. What does the stoning of small girls in Belfast say about that? There are far too many examples of religion as a counter civilization force that I cannot spare the space to list them.

The most important thing I want to impress upon you is that what’s going on now is not America against Islam, or Europe against Islam. It’s certainly not a “Crusade” for the Crusaders were no better than the Taliban. It’s not even the West against the East. It is the forces of reason and civility against the forces of irrationality and barbarism. In other words, its the old dichotomy of Apollonian rationalism against Dionysian Irrationalism that has been going on since the human race stopped walking on all fours!