OPINION

Islam's Villany Is Kept Quiet

By DIANA WEST
Universal Uclick Syndicate

No doubt Deborah Scroggins believes she just published a dual biography of Ayaan Hirsi Ali, former Dutch parliamentarian, and Aafia Siddiqui, jailed al-Qaida terrorist, and so she did. What may surprise the biographer, however, is that she also provided a third study: post-9/11 moral equivalence.

This begins with Scroggins' outre decision to pair a peaceable writer and politician with a violent al-Qaida scientist who married Khalid Sheikh Mohammed's nephew and co-plotter after 9/11 as the "Wanted Women" of the book's title ("Wanted Women: Faith, Lies and the War on Terror: The Lives of Ayaan Hirsi Ali and Aafia Siddiqui").

Wanted by whom? Hirsi Ali is wanted for violating Islamic law against apostasy (leaving Islam is a capital offense) and criticizing Mohammad, Islam's prophet (ditto). Siddiqui was wanted by the FBI as an accomplice of al-Qaida, an operational arm of Islamic law. How to knit the two together? Scroggins writes: "Like the bikini and the burka or the virgin and the whore, you couldn't understand one without understanding the other."

It's difficult not to read this as a smear of Hirsi Ali, no less visceral for its flippancy. But it's more than a noxious personal barb. Scroggins' binary vision offers a new look at an old kink: moral equivalence among the intellectuals via perverse yin-yang fantasy.

A little housekeeping: No, I don't know Ayaan Hirsi Ali. And yes, I read where Scroggins writes, "That is not to say they (Hirsi Ali and Siddiqui) are equivalent figures, morally or otherwise." But this line appears on the last page of the book, after Scroggins has made the case that Hirsi Ali's past political fight against Islam in Europe (highlighted as her fight for Muslim women's rights) was somehow a self-aggrandizing version of jihad, of "tribal principle" — even, most reprehensively, of terror-triggering extremism. Meanwhile, Siddiqui's life of jihad-obsession unspools in alternating chapters.

The cumulative effect is an effort to even the score with Hirsi Ali. As the debate over Islam and Islamic terror erupted in Holland, Scroggins writes: "Some Dutch spoke of 'the Ayaan effect,' a spirit of fear and rancor that seemed to have bewitched the country." Get it? It's not the jihad, stupid, it's "the Ayaan effect."

By bizarre contrast, Scroggins regards Siddiqui's jihad with empathy-nurturing neutrality. The result isn't so much "Islam, the West, what's the difference?" — the trope of moral equivalence during the U.S.-USSR Cold War.

It's more: Islam, the West, who is responsible for the violence? Who is reacting to whom? Who is putting on the burka to fend off the bikini? What virgin wouldn't hate a whore? One more time, it's all our fault.

Or, in this case, Hirsi Ali's fault.

Her offense? Hirsi Ali failed to submit to the never-never cant that "moderation" is a hallmark of Islam (no sacred Islamic texts support it), while she publicly flayed its teachings of conquest and supremacism. Scroggins invokes supposed Islamic reformers — including Mahmoud Mohammed Taha and Benazir Bhutto of Pakistan (one of three heads of state to recognize the Taliban), whose rhetoric reflects anything but moderation — to try to portray Hirsi Ali as "simplistic."

But it was Hirsi Ali's failure to kneel in appeasement of Islam, even in her early days of quasi-media-darlinghood, that bothers Scroggins to no end — far more, it seems, than anything Siddiqui ever did, up to and including WMD-tinkering on al-Qaida's behalf.

Scroggins reports disinterest — outrage, too — from Islamic women in the Netherlands regarding Hirsi Ali's erstwhile efforts to emancipate them from Islam's law. Such attitudes reveal unplumbed depths in the chasm between Islamic and Western cultures.

In this signal example, Islamic women in a Western country see themselves as Shariah-compliant Muslims, not repressed women yearning for Western liberty. To Scroggins, long interested in "the treatment of women in Islam," this almost seems personally liberating.

She used to think "the control of women was as fundamental to radical Islam as racism was to the old American South or anti-Semitism was to Nazi Germany," she writes. She still does. "But" — and here's where we perhaps approach an evolving mainstream consensus on Shariah and other Islamiana — "I also learned that Westerners who want to keep the Muslim world under Western rule also have used Islamic attitudes toward women not so much to help free Muslim women as to justify the West's continued domination of Muslim men."

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ROGER L. WILLIAMS
Publisher
•
JACK WILLIAMS III
Editor

Founded 1875
400 Isabella St.
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GARY GRIFFIN
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•
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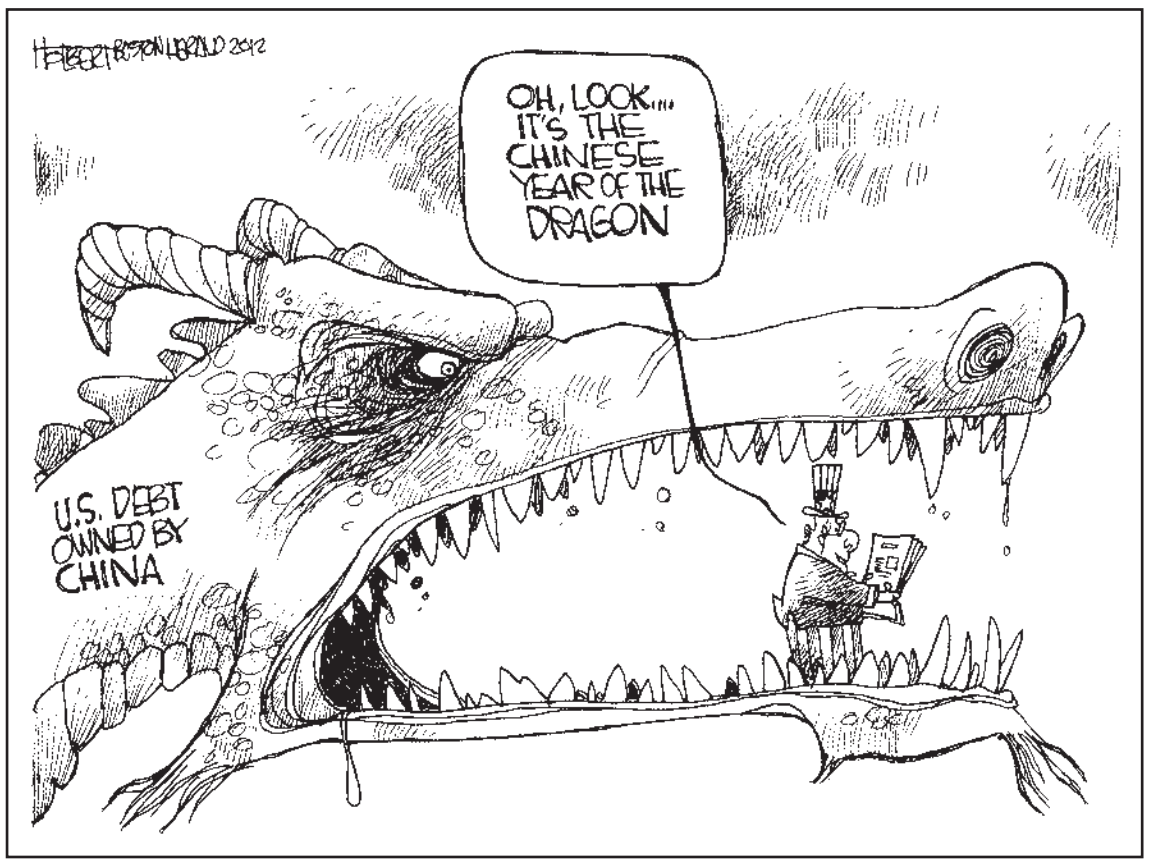
Thought for Today — ***"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God." Colossians 3:1***



HB-811 Ends 'Tax Fraud'

Rome News Tribune

In Georgia, it apparently has become necessary to pass new laws to make legislators do what they earlier had already promised to do. That may [illegible] how weird this state's approa[illegible] has become.

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As we observed [illegible] land of many new fees and su[illegible] any new taxes. Politicians ju[illegible] proceeds in the way those [illegible] states use taxes. A whole herd of these c[illegible] ready gotten out of the barn. Would somebody please lock this door?"

Legislators appear to be slow readers, and the door isn't locked yet, but no fault can be found with the offered legislation other than it would be phased in ... apparently legislators would have up to five years to break this bad habit.

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[illegible] ted pur[illegible] fall to 50[illegible] s it still isn't [illegible] fee [illegible] y mil[illegible] rticularly [illegible] olve [illegible] es. [illegible] rcharges [illegible] sed to [illegible] — [illegible] traffic [illegible] to funding [illegible] known as [illegible] as named for a [illegible] a wreck and was [illegible] Smith, R-Rome. [illegible] aised some $57 million only [illegible] gone to the intended pur[illegible] e.

By the way, this is not some new budgetary sleight-of-hand the state has been using to keep itself afloat since the recession hit. Most of these fees/surcharges predate the downturn; Joshua's Law collections began in 2005, for example.

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Our Readers Say

Religious Liberty Threat

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:

Please allow me the opportunity to write on a matter of grave concern, that does not only affect Catholic-run institutions but all peoples of religious faith regardless of their denomination.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Resources announced last week that almost all employers — not just Catholic employers — will be forced to offer their employees health coverage that includes sterilization, abortion-inducing drugs and contraception.

No doubt euthanasia is next! This is but the thin edge of the wedge. Almost all employers will be FORCED to include these "SERVICES" in the health policies they write.

Almost all individuals will be FORCED to buy that coverage as part of their policies. In so doing, the Obama administration has cast aside the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, denying not just Catholics but all of us our nation's first and most fundamental freedom, that of religious liberty.

And unless this ruling is overturned, not just Catholics but all of us will be FORCED to violate our consciences, or to drop health coverage for our employees resulting in severe penalties for doing so. We have one year to comply.

This is what happens because of the tyranny of Big Government. We take so much for granted, and now we have to act to put an end to this gross violation.

Basically, what the Obama administration is saying to all of us is "TO HELL WITH YOU." The issue is not just about contraception, it is about being FORCED to buy contraception.

We may think this is far- fetched or even crazy, but do you remember what the Nazis did by attacking people's freedom and FORCING them to kill the most vulnerable in society and then the "undesirables?"

Did we learn anything from history? The example of the Netherlands should act as a warning to us, Despite the availability of voluntary euthanasia for decades, many doctors remain unwilling on grounds of conscience to perform this "legal" procedure.

As a result, the Dutch government has approved the use of killing squads who will be sent in to do what the doctors and nurses will not do — kill patients.

Is the establishment of such squads the future practice in America? Is this the kind of America we want? If the U.S. government can FORCE contraception then is government-mandated killing next? Now is the time to take action.

Father Paul O' Connell, Pastor
St. Joseph's Catholic Church
Waycross

82nd Airborne Meeting

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:

The U.S. Army's 82d Airborne Division has been fighting for world peace for over 65 years. Today we are still in Iraq and Afghanistan after 10 years of fighting for the rights of both countries.

Our chapter holds mini-reunions, a national convention, dinner-dances and picnics. We also sponsor color guards and school programs for younger students.

The 82d Airborne Division is still in Afghanistan after ten years of fighting in the Middle East. The 82d Airborne Division made its reputation in WW II, Vietnam and Iraq. We need to locate the many thousands of veterans who have passed through our ranks over the past 65 years.

Our 100 chapters hold regular meetings and sponsor activities about their achievements since WW II.

Our membership has veterans from the 11th, 13th, 17th, 82d, 101st and today's Special Forces. We are 35 percent non-82d. Combat is not a requirement, only the (jump) wings they earned through hard work and dedication. Our national activities include:

•Winter Weekend Getaway, Hilton Head Island, S.C. Feb. 24-26, 2012

•Kentucky All-Airborne Days, Bowling Green, Ky., April 13-15, 2012

Interested veterans should write, e-mail or call us at their first opportunity. Our mailing address is: Airborne 2012, 5459 Northcutt Place, Dayton, Ohio 45414. e-mail: srgabn@aol.com, Phone 937-898-5977

Mr. Shirley R. Gossett
WW II National Membership Chairman
Dayton, Ohio

Return Oceans Of Cash

EDITOR, Journal-Herald:

"South Carolina may have spent $406 million on improper Medicaid payments," the *Sun News* reported in their Jan. 14 edition.

That's why we all want to eyeball those we give our money to, rather than have politicians dictate to us.

A large amount of money is available to the truly needy in our country, and we must begin to help them right now.

The Hollywood stars and professional athletes should look in their own back yards and donate their hard-earned money to the Salvation Army, Red Cross and other reliable charities.

Politicians, however, have oceans of money to donate. Their way of life is, "You scratch my back; I'll scratch yours, and to hell with the taxpayers!"

How do they pay FICA? They simply raise their salaries to cover this additional fee, and callously make fools of us all!

Politicians should tell us exactly how much money they have made since taking office, then indicate how much they will donate to orphanages to build our infrastructure in their own back yards, and to help other worthwhile causes.

Many politicians are decent people and simply go along with the system. These should accept term limits and get out. They should let their consciences be their guide. They will sleep better at night.

They claim to be taxpayers, too. But they pay their taxes with OUR money! This is called a *fictio iuris*, a fiction of law. Real taxpayers don't mind paying police officers, firefighters and the military — but politicians? What do they *really* do for us?

Come on, guys and gals. Give us back those oceans of cash.

Tom Dunn
Murrell Inlet, S.C.

President Goes Too Far

Savannah Morning News

IT'S UNFORTUNATE that the Obama administration is going ahead with its federal mandate to require faith-based employers to include birth control and other reproductive services in their health care coverage.

Such a move is a clear violation of constitutional rights.

Just as the government can't force Americans to practice a given faith, it can't force faith-based employers to provide services to which they are morally opposed.

On Jan. 20, the Obama administration made final a proposal that requires most employer-sponsored health plans to offer women contraceptive services, sterilization services and the "morning after" birth control pill.

Included are Catholic universities, Catholic-based hospitals and charities and groups affiliated with Methodists, Baptists and other denominations. Individual churches, synagogues and mosques are exempt.

A number of religious groups, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, condemned Mr. Obama's rule — and rightly so.

Allowing the federal government to interfere in the workings of any religious organization is alarming. Even those who are agnostic or atheist should want the feds to respect the First Amendment's boundaries. If Washington can bully universities like Notre Dame and hospitals like St. Joseph's-Candler in Savannah, no group is safe.

Like many government efforts, this requirement began with noble intentions.

A report last July by the respected Institute of Medicine found that half of all pregnancies in the U.S. are unplanned, and about four in ten of those end in abortion. Both are shockingly high percentages. There's also a cost to society. Many children of single mothers are born into lives of poverty. Many don't get the care and attention they need to thrive.

Thus reducing the number of children born out of wedlock should help reduce the poverty rate. But Medicaid, the health-care program for poor people, already covers contraceptives. So do most private-pay plans, with varying co-pay amounts.

Thus education and awareness remain bigger problems than faith-based institutions that strictly follow their beliefs. It certainly doesn't justify an assault on religious liberty, which is what Mr. Obama's rule is.

The freedom of faith-based groups to practice what they believe is one of America's greatest strengths. To deny them that right is to deny one of this nation's founding principles.

And it goes both ways. The U.S. government goes to great lengths to prevent public officials from force-feeding citizens their religious beliefs, which violates the Constitution. So why is it right for the Obama administration to force faith-based groups to knuckle under? It's not.

Granted, there are consequences for the lack of birth control and reproductive coverage — namely, women who are college students or employed at these institutions will have to go elsewhere and pay out-of-pocket for services. That's a burden. It can affect where women want to work or attend school.

But the desire to make these services more accessible or affordable doesn't trump a faith-based organization's right to practice what it preaches under the Constitution.