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To Counter the Chorus of Hate We Must Form an Alliance of Good Faith



By Clay Farris Naff

“We have just enough religion to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.” — Jonathan Swift, circa 1726

Hate has become the tonic chord of our times. Its frequency in the news has more than doubled in the last five years, and, according to Google Trends, this year as a search term it [spiked to an all-time high](#). Whether in pews, politics or planet-girdling policies, to disagree, it seems, is longer sufficient; you must despise the other with all your heart.

So commonplace has hate become that it even appeared recently in a roadside traffic sign in Utah:



Though there are many ways to express hatred, let's be honest: haters most often call upon God to raise the baton and lead the chorus of bile. Whether they invoke the Lord Almighty or chant *Allah-u-akbar*, their voices never fade. An emotion with [deep evolutionary roots](#), once evoked hate can last a lifetime. (I know — it took me decades of work to overcome a single elementary school encounter with cauliflower, and I'm still only moderately tolerant of that most pale of vegetables.)

The effects of hate are devastating for all concerned: it short-circuits reason, makes compromise impossible and overwhelms the constraints of conscience. At a time when we urgently need global consensus to meet the challenges ahead, hate threatens to tear us apart. The prospects are grim but not hopeless. Before I get to what I think may be a solution, let me share a few examples of what we're up against.

The aptly named website [Sparenot.com](#) offers us a neat syllogism of hate. It opens with this delightful snippet from Leviticus: "And the LORD spake ... saying ... Whosoever he be ... that giveth any of his seed unto Molech; he shall surely be put to death: the people of the land shall stone him..."

Then comes the Aristotelian logic:

Molech=False Religion

Muslim=False Religion

God Hates Muslims!

OK, so that's not even a proper syllogism. These guys don't care; they've got God on their side. To drive home the lesson with a dollop of superstition, Sparenot cites an Associated Press headline: "Lightning kills 13 outside Bangladesh mosque" Adds Sparenot, "Thank God for lightening!" [sic]

In Nigeria, Muslim protesters [have a simple wish list for God](#): "Death to America, death to Israel and death to the enemies of Islam." But some Islamic hotheads don't wait for Allah to act; they take it on themselves to carry out what they imagine to be God's will. Just this month, [a suicide bomber](#) in that hapless African country evidently thought God would be pleased by his murderous attack in a Catholic Church during mass.

Some, if they have the means, pay others to do the dirty work for them. A member of Pakistan's ruling coalition is offering \$100,000 to anyone who kills the creator of the crudely offensive "Innocence of Muslims" film. [According to the BBC](#), Minister of Railways Ghulam Ahmad Bilour said he would pay the reward for the "sacred duty" out of his own pocket.

In case of sequels, Minister Bilour is prepared to dig deep. "If someone else makes other similar blasphemous material in the future," the Beeb quotes him as saying, "I will also pay his killers \$100,000." Talk about going off the rails.

But don't get the idea that inter-religious fratricide is the only game in town. The haters loathe science, too. It's no longer enough to say you don't accept evolution; you have to hate — no, make that HATE — evolution. According to [Jonathon Mosely of FreeRepublic.com](#), "evolution tells [us] that life is a hostile, adversarial, doq-eat-doq COMPETITION ... Can you see now why [we say] 'I HATE EVOLUTION!'?"



Hate comes easy. It builds in-group solidarity, saves you the trouble of figuring out whether strangers are trustworthy, and even fosters coalitions between foes (“The enemy of my enemy is my friend,” goes the ancient proverb).

Trust, respect and, dare I say it, love? Those are harder to attain. They require risk. It is so much easier just to hate back. But surely you can see that if we all give in to visceral hatred we are doomed. Is there a way forward? I believe there is. Whatever our worldview, there is a set of principles we can adopt under the banner of a Good Faith Alliance. And here, adapted from my new book [“Free God Now,”](#) they are:

Tolerance: *We recognize religions for what they really are: cultural and institutional responses to a shared belief about ultimate reality. On this understanding, there is no one “right” religion - just as there is no one “right” language or culture.*

Humility: *We accept that human beings are incapable of fully grasping the ultimate order and scale of reality by any means. No book, sermon, or experiment can encompass the infinite or plumb the bedrock of reality.*

Reason: *Passion is powerful, faith sustaining, but only reason allows us to find common ground amid cultural differences — especially in the findings of science about the world we share.*

Empathy: *The ability to feel for others, to share in their pain and in their joy, is what makes us fully human. Compassion gives a larger meaning to our lives than our selfish interests.*

Appreciation: *Life itself is the most astonishing feature of an amazing Universe, but to live as a human being at this time of unmatched freedom, discovery, cultural exchange, and achievement is a gift truly worth appreciating.*

Determination: *Despite our flaws, we recognize that we are the only creatures on Earth capable of understanding the fate of our world and acting together to save it. Since life is good, we accept its continuity and quality as our shared mission.*

Together, these principles form a thread that weaves us together in our common human purpose: to leave a better world for our children. You can help in the formation of a Good Faith Alliance in several ways: “like” and share this post, for starters. Comment to make it better.

For a more sustained connection, “like” the [Good Faith Alliance Facebook page](#). For an active role, join the Free God Now! group on [Facebook](#) or [Google+](#). Whatever you do, don’t let the chorus of hate go unanswered.

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