

One Minute and 33 Seconds, Or Pauline Hanson Ill-Prepared

by Hugh Fitzgerald



Pauline Hanson, the Australian politician and leader of the One Nation Party, two days ago called for a referendum to change her country's Constitution, so that section 116 of that document, which prohibits banning a religion, might be scrapped, in order that Islam might then be prohibited.

For Hanson claimed, as she has so many times before, that Islam is a political ideology and not a religion. She singled out the Muslim group Hizb ut-Tahrir as a pro-Sharia law group that was of particular concern. This was, for Hanson, a lost opportunity to win over those who are made uneasy by Islam, but who are also disturbed by what they regard as Hanson's either/or remarks about the faith. She might have said, more accurately and more convincingly, that "yes, of course Islam is a 'religion' insofar as it concerns itself with the belief in, and worship of, a superhuman power. I don't deny that aspect of it. But, ladies and gentlemen, I'm afraid, that

Islam is also, at the same time, and much more significantly, a 'political ideology' which has to do with extending the power and reach of the faith and its Believers, and with what the ideal Muslim state ought to look like."

And she might then have added, in a more-in-sorrow tone, that "unfortunately, Islam as a 'political ideology' is far more important than Islam as a 'religion,' and we should not be shy about recognizing that. Both the Qur'an and the Hadith are concerned with the duty to defeat the Unbelievers, and the requirement that Muslims fight those Unbelievers, using whatever instruments – violence, either in regular combat (*qitaal*) or through terrorism, propaganda, wealth, or the weapon now mentioned by more and more Muslims, that of demographic conquest – are both available and effective, until the entire world is dominated by Islam, and Muslims rule, everywhere."

Then she might have adduced Qur'anic passages, confidently citing, by sura and ayat, those that most strikingly support that claim of the duty of Muslims to engage in Jihad. She might have invited her listeners to read the Qur'an, as she did, especially (here should follow a very slow reading of a very short list of a half-dozen of the so-called Jihad verses, such as 3:151, 8:12, 2:191-193, 9:5, 9:29) and then another half-dozen verses denouncing the Unbelievers, such as 98:6, and recommended that they read, too, parts of the Hadith, ideally in the collection of Bukhari (Hanson could have taken care to explain how the different collections of Hadith are ranked by Muslims according to their assumed trustworthiness), to find out more about Muhammad, the Perfect Man and Model of Conduct.

And then she could have invited her listeners to simply look around the world, at just what has happened in those countries where Muslims have been allowed to settle in recent years in large numbers, and: "Ladies and gentlemen, please draw your own conclusions. What has the large-scale Muslim presence

meant for the tranquility and physical security of Infidels everywhere? What has that large scale presence meant for the taxpayers who pay for their country's welfare-state benefits? Am I wrong," Pauline Hanson ought to ask aloud, "to worry"?

Last week, Ms. Hanson provided another example of an opportunity lost. She was walking through a shopping center in Cannington, a south-eastern suburb of Perth, greeting voters ahead of the Western Australian election. She was [confronted by two hijabbed women](#) and challenged as to her knowledge of Islam. Her encounter with them lasted for one minute and 33 seconds.

That election has now taken place, and the One Nation Party received less than 5% of the vote. But that's not the point of this post. That party is now best known for its anti-Islam stance, and for Pauline Hanson's own declaration, after her election to the parliament in 2016, that she would support a ban on all Muslim immigration into Australia. One reason for the poor showing of her party may be seen in this video, where Hanson becomes disappointingly discombobulated, and cannot respond adequately to the questions the Muslimahs ask her about Islam. She is unable to summon up the most obvious Qur'anic quotations about violence and terror, and allows herself to raise irrelevantly the matter of the mistreatment of women in Islam, and even manages to name the wrong verse – 9:36, instead of 4:34 – as dealing with that matter.

The hijabbed inquirers begin, with all parties well aware that the encounter is being filmed:

"According to if you were to win the elections, what would be your reaction to people like us?"

Hanson's aide replies first: "Look we're for integration. It's all about making sure that we don't get that fundamental group of people that are wanting to enforce their laws upon Australia. That's the main thing." Much too accommodating. He

needn't have said "we're for integration" at all. He might have said instead that "admission to Australia, the granting of Australian citizenship is, we believe, a precious privilege, and ought to be available only for those whose views do not flatly contradict our essential Western values, such as freedom of religion and of speech. That means Muslims must be allowed to leave Islam, if they so wish, and that all of us should be allowed to criticize or mock any religion, including Islam and Muhammad, without any fear of reprisal. So far Muslims, in threatening or inflicting real punishment, including death, on those Muslims who have dared to become apostates, have shown they do not believe in freedom of religion. And the list of non-Muslims murdered by Muslims for their criticism or mockery of Islam and Muhammad, grows ever longer, from Pim Fortuyn to Theo van Gogh to the staff of Charlie Hebdo, and then there are those, from Molly Norris to Robert Redeker, who have not been killed, and have not only been silenced, but forced to change their identities or gone into hiding, because they angered Muslims with their exercise of free speech. All of this is overwhelming evidence that Muslims do not believe in freedom of speech. Rather, they follow the example of Muhammad, who was delighted when those who mocked him, such as Asma bint Marwan and Abu Afak, were murdered. Can you assure us, ladies, that Muslims will be able without fear to change or drop their religion without any consequences? Can you assure us that non-Muslim Australians will be allowed without fear to mock Muhammad and Islam if they so wish, that, in short, the foundational principles of *our* society, freedom of religion and freedom of speech, will be observed by Muslims? If you cannot do so, then we think that's enough to justify our party's policy on Muslim migrants." He might have said this, or something very like it. It might have taken an extra minute or two, but well worth it, and one would hope the camera would still be rolling.

Then Pauline Hanson herself was addressed by the same Muslim woman. She asked Hanson what she knew about Islam: "Did you

read up about our religion? Have you read the Qur'an?" Hanson replied: "I have read parts of the Quran, yes I have." This sounded lame. At this point in the political career of Pauline Hanson, whose main issue for several years has been the menace of Islam and of Muslims to Australia, she ought to have read, and re-read several times, the entire Qur'an. She ought as well to have read a commentary on it in order to understand the obscure passages in the Qur'an that require elucidation. One such exhaustive commentary, that first appeared at this website, is Robert Spencer's "[Blogging the Qur'an](#)." To present oneself as a severe and knowledgeable critic of Islam, and then to open oneself to the charge of insufficient knowledge – familiar only with "**parts** of the Qur'an" – is not acceptable.

Then the same hijabbed lady asks: "'Did it not come to you as a peaceful religion? Does it tell you anywhere in there [the Qur'an] to be a terrorist..or a fundamentalist?" Hanson ought at that point to have immediately had at the ready – even, if need be, written on a notecard – some of the Jihad verses, by way of responding to this constant claim that Islam is a "peaceful religion." She should have said, sweetly, "Well, let me just start with 9:5: 'So when the sacred months have passed away, then slay the idolaters wherever you find them, and take them captive and besiege them and lie in wait for them in every ambush, then if they repent and keep up prayer and pay the poor-rate, leave their way free to them,'" and then perhaps read out 9:29: "Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the Religion of Truth, from among the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued," and then offered "to give a few dozen more, but I don't think there's time, and I wanted to answer your second question about whether there's anything in the Qur'an that has to do with being a terrorist." Well, there is 8:12 – "I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off

every fingertip of them,” and then there’s 3:151, which begins, “Soon shall We cast terror into the hearts of the Unbelievers.”

Hanson then should press her advantage: “And I think it’s not just in the Qur’an, but in the Hadith, in the Sahih Bukhari that we should look – of course you know what I am referring to [distinct unease and silence on the part of the Muslim ladies] – the one where Muhammad says, ‘I have been made victorious with terror.’ But really, there are so many more Qur’anic passages, both about warfare, and about striking terror into the hearts of Unbelievers, so I really have to say – and I’m sorry to say – that no, the Qur’an did not ‘come to me as a peaceful religion’ and yes, it has a lot to say about the use of terror. And I think any fair-minded person would have to come to the same conclusion.”

If the hijabbed lady manages to sputter that “you don’t understand” or “it’s all a matter of context” or tu-quoquettishly alludes to violence in the Bible, Hanson ought to be ready to explain that violent Qur’anic verses are prescriptive, and valid for all time, while Biblical verses are descriptive, valid only for their time and place.

Of course, what I’ve written above is in the I-Have-A-Dream mode. Pauline Hanson said none of the things I’ve attributed to her above. Instead, in attempting to answer the question about whether terrorism was in the Qur’an, she confusedly referred to the treatment of women. Here’s how the exchange actually went: The more aggressive of the two Muslimahs asked Hanson about her reading of [parts of] the Qur’an: “Did it not come to you as a peaceful religion? Does it tell you anywhere in there to be a terrorist or a fundamentalist?” Instead, say, of quoting any of the verses about killing and striking terror among the Infidels, the very ones given above, Hanson replied by talking, irrelevantly, about the mistreatment of women. Here’s what she said, in her confusion worse confounded: “well it [the Qur’an] does [speak about terrorism] because if you

look at I think it's about sura[s] 9.36 or so where it cites to actually these women and how you treat women and I think..." What has any of this to do with terrorism? And at this point it is the Muslim lady who finishes Hanson's sentence with "beat women"? knowing perfectly well what is in the Qur'an, and if that was the case, the Muslimah was no doubt prepared to offer the conventional defense that the verse meant only to "beat lightly." But Hanson doesn't even take the hint, and never says, so discombobulated is she, that the Qur'an sanctions wife-beating. And in any case, the Qur'anic passage about the treatment of women is not 9:36 but 4:34, a verse that, like 8:12 and 3:151 and 9:5 and 9:29, Hanson ought to know by now.

At this point in the political career of Pauline Hanson, her knowledge of, and comprehension of, and quick recall of, what is in the Qur'an about violence and terror and the Unbelievers,, ought to be much better than it apparently is. If she isn't up to the task, surely there are those in Australia, such as Mark Durie, who are.

The brief encounter – so unsatisfactory in so many ways – comes to an end with the Muslimah who did the talking, telling Pauline Hanson and thereby getting the last word, that "I think you need to get a little more knowledge of Islam...What it's about. That's what I think."

And that's what we who want Pauline Hanson to succeed, should – though in an entirely different sense – also think.

First published in