



## Government Must OUTLAW Religious Conversions, Says Writer

“Government must see to it that conversions, whether open or on the sly, must be stopped,” opines writer Sumit Paul. “Mankind has already had enough of God and religion. Give it breathing space.”

Paul is passionate about this position, too, so much so that he devotes a goodly amount of picturesque prose to trying to convert us to his position.

Interestingly, he doesn’t mention if it should be legal to convert people from Republican to Democrat or vice versa, though.

Writing at the [Free Press Journal](#) on Sunday, Paul informs that the Indian government told its Supreme Court on November 28 “that it’s contemplating measures to ‘curb’ the menace of conversion through ‘force, fraud, allurements and deception’, while arguing that the ‘right to freedom of religion doesn’t confer a fundamental right to convert other people to a particular religion.’”

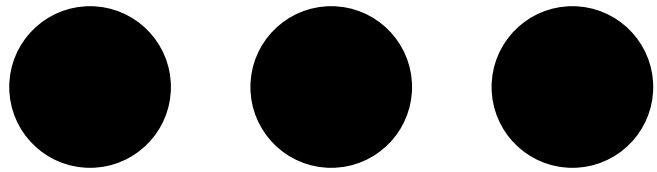
(For anyone wondering how Paul’s prescriptions could affect Americans, note that he doesn’t say his prohibition should be limited to India; rather, he makes a blanket case for such a thing in principle.)

Of course, few Westerners endorse forcible conversions, and fraud and deception are surely immoral. Yet if using deception to sway others were illegal, we’d have to jail virtually every politician in the country (what country? Take your pick). But “allurement”?

Bing’s dictionary [tells us](#) that “allure” is “the quality of being powerfully and mysteriously attractive or fascinating.” I’m chuckling. Isn’t this what we all strive for in whatever dimension we operate?

No doubt — though the quality may be eluding Paul himself if some responses he evoked are any indication. As MSN.com commenter J. Wesley Price [put it](#), “The level of hypocritical conceit on display in this [Paul’s] article is beyond irony.”

For sure, by an order of magnitude, Paul’s confidence exceeds his conversance. He writes, for example, “Being a student of comparative religions and a complete apatheist (one who has gone beyond theism and atheism), I’ve always wondered why conversions from one faith to another do take place in the first place.” Were Paul a wiser man, he’d have ceased writing his piece as soon as he had this thought, mindful of the principle of “Chesterton’s Fence,” the short version of which is, “Never take down a fence until you know why it was put up.”



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The point: Everything exists for a reason. It may be a good reason or a bad one, but until you know what it is, you've no business destroying the thing in question. So why does religious conversion occur?

Or, more significantly, what is the *valid* reason for it?

"Conversion" is actually an integral part of life. Coke and Ford try to convert you from, respectively, Pepsi and Toyota and vice versa; businesses ever attempt to convert you to their product or service. Political parties, ideologues, and activist organizations try converting people to their cause, and when a man woos a woman he's endeavoring to convert her from feeling indifference toward him to being his girlfriend or wife. We try converting drunkards to sobriety, errant children to morality, and criminals to legality.

Even Sumit Paul is, again, quite the proselytizer, feverishly trying to convert us to his position that we should discriminate against just one species of conversion and criminalize it. "So, stop this head-hunting (a reverse euphemism for conversion) and be a good human," he commands in his penultimate paragraph, never explaining the basis on which he defines "good."

But conversion's legitimate purpose can be illustrated with a simple analogy. Imagine a person finds a diet enabling him to lose weight with relative ease and few hunger pangs. He may want to sing its praises and convert other people to it because he believes it holds *Truth*, even if he doesn't consciously conceive of it in this way. Assuming he's making no money off and deriving no ego satisfaction from his appeals, his proselytizing reflects the best of man's nature: He has something he believes is *good* and wants to help others by sharing it.

So it is, too, with ideologues. If a liberal, conservative, or libertarian makes a *sincere* case for his doctrines, it's because he truly believes their embrace could improve the world. Now note here that because different religions are just like different ideologies in that they espouse different conceptions of virtue (what moderns call "values"), the same holds true:

A sincere believer's conviction will be that his faith's embrace would better the world and perhaps even save it — along with souls.

The point here isn't to convince anyone that a given faith actually could or that it wouldn't, but only that it's not hard understanding a proselytizer's motives. That this eludes Paul, whose literacy attests to his intelligence, reveals he's what too many moderns are: a relativist. Explanation?

Returning to the diet analogy, we may try warning someone off ice cream for his own good, but no sane person would nag the person about switching from chocolate to vanilla ice cream. For giving the dessert up, period, would be thought a matter of dietary Truth; flavor is simply a matter of *taste*.

Likewise, when one finds religious proselytizing unfathomable, it indicates he regards faith as just personal preference, a flavor of the day. If he recognized Truth's existence, all would become clear. Oh, he might not agree that a given religion well reflects Truth, but he'd understand the valid reason for conversion efforts.

Paul relates a quotation from Africa and writes, "When missionaries came, we had land and they had the Bible. When they left, we had the Bible and they had the land." Yet not only does Paul confuse missionaries with colonizers (they generally weren't one and the same), but the deeper point is missed: Now Africans have the land *and* the Bible.

When Paul's native India got more of the latter, courtesy of the Christian English, the practice of *sati* — the ritualistic burning of widows in Hindu culture — [was banned](#). And if there were more positive



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conversion today, perhaps India would have fewer “honor” and caste killings, such as that of a small boy [who was just murdered](#) for, allegedly, drinking water from a pot reserved for upper castes.

After all, the theologically correct meaning of “conversion” is to “turn from oneself, to God” — and that’s always a good thing.

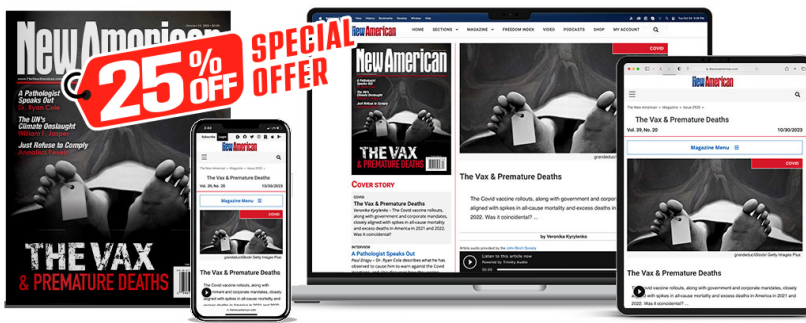


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