



Re. the vituperative criticisms of Graeme Wood's Atlantic article.

I think many of them are unwarranted and unfair. This is far from your Robert Spence fare of "Islam = Terrorism" despite some of its failings. One must always bear in mind that it is immensely difficult for non-Muslims who are unfamiliar with topics such as ijihad and usul ul-fiqh to grasp the subtelties and nuances that distinguish the numerous Islamist movements and factions. Furthermore it is no easy task to transpose yourself into the mindset of someone with a vastly divergent Weltanschauung. Anyway, some obvservations:

- Yes, one cannot critcise slavery per se as this was an act carried out by the Prophet (saw) and there is no textual evidence to forbid it. What one can say (as I do) is that such practises - being as they are not obligatory - should be made redundant as they cause more harm than benefit in the contemporary age. Regarding the hudood punishments then the evidential burden required for their imposition renders them all but defunct except in cases of open-court confession. Quite how IS seem to be eliciting such confessions I won't comment on.

- As to the nub of the article i.e does Islam inspire IS/is IS "Islamic" then the simple answer is yes. For certain most Muslims do not support their policies but to deny that the movement has the Islamic texts and an interpretation thereof as it's intellectual basis is quite simply erroneous. One might disagree with their interpretations but as it happens for each of their actions they *can* adduce evidences (no I am not a supporter btw). I gain the distinct impression that many of the "fatawa" that are published are hastily concoted after-the-fact so to speak in order to provide the requisite legitimacy. So far IS has not detailed the juristic school of thought it follows or catalogued the usuli principles its scholars follow (or who they are). Doing so would make scrutiny of its jurisprudence much more effective.

- Is it ALL about Islamic theology? No, I doubt it. Other factors undoubtedly play a role and it goes without saying not all of their 40,000+ contingent will be accomplished idealogues. The truth lies between the two extremes of "this has nothing to do with Islam" and "this is Islam in its purest manifestation". Many Muslims might agree, in principle, with the primary objective of IS while disavowing many of its attitudes and policies.

- IS is a phenomenon unlike any other so far witnessed in the post-Caliphate period of Islam. Their fixation on eschatology is unparalleled and Muslims have never approached the subject in such a manner previously. The standard view of eschatological ahadith is that they are merely informative lacking any hortatory aspect. We affirm the events described therein will occur and then carry on with our daily lives.

- What is really needed is a delegation from an "Islamist" background to visit Islamic State territory and engage with their leadership and idealogues as well as their common fighters. With the greatest of respect, Anjem Chaudry in London and Musa Cerantonio in Australia are

not the people to be talking to. Until that happens it is hard to truly fathom what this movement is about and what it truly wants.