
APPENDIX B

CBSC Decision 05/06-1380 CFRA-AM re an episode of the *Lowell Green Show* (the Qur'an)

The Complaint

The following complaint was sent to the CRTC on March 31, 2006 and forwarded to the CBSC in due course:

CFRA, Friday, March 31, 2006. *Lowell Green Show*.

Mr. Green tacitly incited hate by blatantly suggesting believers in the Qur'an are a physical threat to Canadians because of their belief in the Qur'an. He purposely juxtaposed the Qur'an to The New Testament (NT) claiming that the NT does not ever support whimsical or religious based killing, unlike the Qur'an. He used this to clearly separate the two faiths in an effort to incite hate towards one particular group based upon their religious beliefs. This is not acceptable for any public broadcaster.

Here is a copy of a letter I have mailed to Mr. Green & CFRA:

Mr. Green,

Today you claimed the New Testament, unlike the Qur'an, does not contain passages which support whimsical murder.

Let's take a look at Mark 7:1-13. Jesus accused the Pharisees of "neglecting the commandment of God" so they could "hold to the tradition of men" (7:8). They set "aside the commandment of God in order to keep [their] tradition" (7:9). The commandments Jesus was referring to were OT commandments: "For Moses said, 'Honor your father and your mother'; and, 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death'" (7:10). Here we see Jesus applying Exodus 21:17 and Leviticus 20:9 in a NT context. The same account is found in Matthew 15:1-14, the same NT book where you claim there are no references to faith based killing. Therefore, according to the New Testament, Jesus believed anyone who speaks evil of their parents should be killed ... well, isn't that nice of you Jesus. Obviously Canada is under threat of Christians who support their God. I suspect this passage would pose at least as much threat as any found within the Qur'an. Just quoting the good book here, Lowell, not making this up.

Yes, the Qur'an, as an ancient text, is derived from a time far different from ours. It does include passages which support killing non-believers and converts; however, the New Testament is certainly not without its own convictions of death. As well, like in all of your one-sided ceterus [sic] paribus arguments, you entirely ignore context. As the New Testament is an evolution of the beliefs put forth by God himself, as is the modern Muslim an evolution of the days in which the Qur'an was revealed. True believers (in all religions) understand the failings of literal following. These holy books are texts, not isolated paragraphs. Today you revealed your ignorance of your own religion more than any inherent threat contained within the Qur'an. You are either a fool, or a very sad excuse for a man. Considering your daily following and local "celebrity" status, I suspect the latter.

Broadcaster's Response

CFRA sent the following response on April 7:

Further to your CRTC correspondence (CFRA, March 31, 2006 – Reference 295592) and CBSC file C05/06-1380:

Respectfully, if you heard the entire Lowell Green program, you will be well aware that the discussion centred very specifically and exclusively around those people who consider it acceptable to kill a person who has converted from the Muslim faith to Christianity.

That is the position taken by extremists in volatile parts of the world, the profile of which was raised most notably by the case of Abdul Rahman in Afghanistan, where the Muslim-led parliament demanded that Mr. Rahman be put to death instead of being allowed to travel out of the country for refuge in Italy. Given the constitution of Afghanistan and the very public demands of the death penalty for converting to Christianity, it is not unreasonable to conclude that such extremists do indeed pose a physical threat -- particularly to converts. This is an international story, and it is entirely appropriate to discuss this issue as a matter of public concern in Canada.

Throughout the program, Lowell made it abundantly clear he was addressing only the extremists who want to emigrate into Canada, and who support the practice of executing Muslim-Christian converts. Not surprisingly, Muslim callers agreed that such extremists should not be allowed to import their extremist views into Canada, and that Canada has every right to pose the question.

There is no need for you to defend the Qur'an "as an ancient text, derived from a time far different from ours." Mr. Green did not attack the Qur'an -- indeed he has often praised the Prophet Muhammad as a visionary man of true love and peace. Mr. Green was dealing only with those who interpret passages literally, to call for putting Christian converts to death in 2006, not in "ancient times."

Mr. Green did not suggest "all believers in the Qur'an are a physical threat to Canadians because of their belief in the Qur'an." It is clear throughout the program that he never said or implied any such thing. Nor did he breach any provisions of broadcast regulations or codes. It is regrettable that you missed his point.

To delve into your personal interpretations of biblical passages is not germane to the matter at hand. If extremist Christians were to begin rioting in the streets demanding the execution of converts to Islam, it would be appropriate to further delve into their extremism as well. Of course even under such circumstances, Mr. Green would make it just as clear that he is not referring to all Christians, but rather those who harbour extremist and violent views.

Additional Correspondence

The complainant replied to CFRA on April 7 and provided a copy of that e-mail to the CBSC:

Thank you for your response.

Unfortunately your explanation entirely fails to address the purpose of Mr. Green juxtaposing the Qur'an to the New Testament. As you yourself have already stated in defence of Mr. Green, the New Testament or its interpretations are not germane to the discussion you claim

was being introduced by Mr. Green. Yet it was he who stated, matter-of-factly, that unlike the Qur'an, the New Testament does not condone faith-based killing.

Therefore it is reasonable to believe that the intention was to draw a distinction between faiths. It is reasonable to foresee this could, whether or not intentionally so, incite hate or fear within one (majority) group towards or for another (minority) group. This is a time of great upheaval, a time in which Canadian soldiers are dying in a Muslim country. It is important for public broadcasters to frame public comments with a consideration for the perils of the times.

As Mr. Green, for reasons only he can explain, chose to introduce this comparison, I feel his judgment, and role as a public broadcaster requires further review by the CBSC.

I did not hear the entire broadcast of this discussion. Like, I am sure, the vast number of those who listen to your station, I was in my car when tuned to CFRA. If 35 minutes of a publicly broadcasted discussion does not provide sufficient context, then possibly the selection or content of your topics of discussion should be more stringently considered before being introduced into your chosen format.

Thank you for your time and consideration of my concerns,

Please note this clean link, as it best demonstrates the foundation for my concerns surrounding the comments of Mr. Green. I no longer believe Mr. Green necessarily intended to incite hate. <http://www.beyondintractability.org/essay/dehumanization/>

excerpts from above site

"An enemy image is a negative stereotype through which the opposing group is viewed as evil, in contrast to one's own side, which is seen as good. Such images can stem from a desire for group identity and a need to contrast the distinctive attributes and virtues of one's own group with the vices of the 'outside' group. In some cases, evil-ruler enemy images form. While ordinary group members are regarded as neutral, or perhaps even innocent, their leaders are viewed as hideous monsters. Enemy images are usually black and white. The negative actions of one's opponent are thought to reflect their fundamental evil nature, traits, or motives. One's own faults, as well as the values and motivations behind the actions of one's opponent, are usually discounted, denied, or ignored. It becomes difficult to empathize or see where one's opponent is coming from. Meaningful communication is unlikely, and it becomes difficult to perceive any common ground.

"Once formed, enemy images tend to resist change, and serve to perpetuate and intensify the conflict. Because the adversary has come to be viewed as a 'diabolical enemy,' the conflict is framed as a war between good and evil. Once the parties have framed the conflict in this way, their positions become more rigid. In some cases, zero-sum thinking develops as parties come to believe that they must either secure their own victory, or face defeat. New goals to punish or destroy the opponent arise, and in some cases more militant leadership comes into power.

"While deindividuation and the formation of enemy images are very common, they form a dangerous process that becomes especially damaging when it reaches the level of dehumanization.

"Once certain groups are stigmatized as evil, morally inferior, and not fully human, the persecution of those groups becomes more psychologically acceptable. Restraints against aggression and violence begin to disappear. Not surprisingly, dehumanization increases the likelihood of violence and may cause a conflict to escalate out of control. Once a violence break over [*sic*] has occurred, it may seem even more acceptable for people to do things that they would have regarded as morally unthinkable before.

"Indeed, dehumanization often paves the way for human rights violations, war crimes, and genocide. For example, in WWII, the dehumanization of the Jews ultimately led to the destruction of millions of people. Similar atrocities have occurred in Rwanda, Cambodia, and the former Yugoslavia."

Or the creation of Japanese Internment camps in Canada ... we all know what they say about history.

CFRA provided a second response to the complainant on April 10:

Thank you for acknowledging that Lowell did not mean to incite hatred. The argument then centres around whether he unintentionally incited hatred, and unequivocally, he did not.

No, it is not reasonable to conclude that Lowell's comments would incite hatred or fear toward all Muslims, as you posit. I have received advice from a biblical scholar who says your examples are so far out of context and so weakly interpreted that they add no weight to your argument. Again, however, debating the Bible and your interpretation of it is side-track which our correspondence will not resolve.

The fact remains that the issue at hand is that some extremists are interpreting the Qur'an literally and using that to justify the execution of Muslim-to-Christian converts. Even if your argument about the Bible were to hold true (which the expert I consulted says it does not), the argument becomes moot because it is not being interpreted literally, nor is it being used by Christians to justify killing people for faith conversion.

To suggest that asking the questions about extremism somehow "dehumanizes" all Muslims is folly. No reasonable person would fear (nor hate) all Muslims because a specific extremist group among them mis-uses the holy writings to justify killing converts. Lowell made it clear throughout that he was referring to that very specific group of extremists, and not to all believers.

Lowell's discussion was timely. He made it clear that he was not discussing all Muslims. His examination of a very specific group of people (extremists) was appropriate. And there was no breach of any codes or regulations.

I'm sorry that we disagree, but unless there are new issues to review, this will -- respectfully -- conclude our correspondence on this matter.

The complainant wrote again to CFRA on April 10:

To be perfectly clear:

1. It is not the interpretation of the New Testament, it is the comparing of the New Testament to the Qur'an, which placed the Qur'an in a morally inferior light, to which I have taken issue. You have in no way addressed this concern.
2. I did not say Mr. Green did not intend to incite hate, I said I do not believe he NECESSARILY intended to incite hate. I cannot knowingly speak to Lowell's intentions. His actions are, however, suspect.

The complainant then submitted his Ruling Request on April 10 with the following additional comments:

Unfortunately CFRA refuses to, or does not understand the point of my complaint. My concern centres not at all on the Qur'an itself, or the New Testament itself. My concern is the juxtaposing of one religious text to another in order to highlight a key difference in that the Qur'an, which represents a targeted minority in Canada, preaches murder, and the New Testament, which represents the entrenched majority, does not. I am of neither religion, and could honestly care less about religion at all. I do care that history has shown that hate is promoted by isolating the minority through differentiating them from the majority in a way which clearly demonizes the minority. If, as CFRA claims, the discussion Mr. Green was having had nothing to do with the New Testament, but only the Qur'an, why did he compare the two? What was the motivation of the comparison? It is only reasonable to conclude that some may take advantage of such obviously irresponsible and erroneous comments to vilify the minority, while using their own religion as a pillar of higher morality. A clear moral delineation among cultures. This is how hate works; the weight of evidence to support my concerns is overwhelming. I trust the CBSC has the breadth of experience and arms length relationship to draw a similar conclusion. I am not seeking a ban on the topic being discussed by Mr. Green; it is a topic of legitimate concern. His introduction of the New Testament as a clear separation of faiths is my concern. Muslims in this country are already at risk of hate due to current geo-political circumstances; juxtaposing their faith to the majority faith in a negative way is anything but constructive or exploratory to the discussion of the topic raised.

I have made two attempts to explain my concerns to CFRA, however they are focused more upon the accuracy of my interpretation of the NT than the purpose in the comparing of the Qur'an to the New Testament.

I feel VERY strongly about this. I have never complained to the CBSC before, and I assure you Mr. Green and I do not see eye to eye on many topics. This is not about political differences; this is not about a grudge; this is about the tacit promotion of hate in a very sensitive environment.

Point blank: Why the comparison? CFRA never addressed this central concern.

CFRA wrote again to the complainant on April 11:

1. Lowell's comparison of the Bible and the Qur'an was based on his interpretation and he is perfectly free to do so [*sic*]. Whether your interpretation and his are similar is irrelevant.

The phones were open and people of all views were invited to participate. Everyone was afforded opportunity to present their opinions and interpretations. Very divergent views have been presented on CFRA to a reasonably consistent listener over a reasonable period of time. (That is the requirement -- verbatim -- contained in the regulations.) Lowell handled this polemic issue entirely within the bounds of regulations and codes.

2. Thank you for clarifying your use of the qualifier "necessarily." As you can see from my reply that is the interpretation I afforded your original statement.

The complainant replied to that e-mail the same day:

For clarity [S.], these are your words:

"Thank you for acknowledging that Lowell did not mean to incite hatred." I did not say this. Twice you have put words into my mouth, or failed to fully read or comprehend my statements.

"The argument then centers around whether he unintentionally incited hatred..." No, it does not. The argument centers around whether or not Lowell's comments could reasonably incite hate. As I stated already, I am unable to know why Lowell chose to inject into the debate his opinion that, unlike the Qur'an, the NT does not condone faith based murder. History is rife with Christians committing faith based atrocities. Why Lowell attempts to dismiss this fact in an effort to further an opinion that, in reality, there is only a "risk" posed by literal translation of the Qur'an is sheer folly, and potentially hate-mongering. As such his intentions are certainly suspect but, albeit, not clear.

If you no longer wish to discuss this topic, please refrain from putting words into my mouth, thus requiring my response.

I am continuing my complaint with the CBSC.

CFRA replied again on April 11:

I will try to simplify this. I did not write that statement twice, I wrote it once, and have since acknowledged your semantic clarification, i.e. your belief that he did not "necessarily" intend to incite hatred.

I have presented CFRA's views to you. We will unfortunately not agree on these matters, so our further correspondence will now be directed to the CBSC.

CFRA then sent a letter directly to the CBSC on April 13:

Enclosed please find two CD copies of the *Lowell Green Show* at the centre of the above-noted complaint, along with my original response to the complainant. While I believe there is no code-relevant aspect to his complaint, it seems [the complainant] is unwilling or unable to accept CFRA's position on this matter.

He has tried to side-track the issue by debating whether the New Testament condones faith-based killing, and by debating the semantics of his words in our email exchanges. While [the complainant]'s personal comments ("*Like Lowell, I cannot know your intentions ... but they too are suspect*") and ("*I fear there is some form of comprehension challenge facing you at this time*") may be amusing, they make it clear this matter will not be resolved through direct dialogue.

I referred the excerpts cited in [the complainant]'s original complaint to the attention of John Counsell, a part-time CFRA host, an ordained Christian minister and accomplished bible scholar. His response to [the complainant]'s position:

"... his take is absolutely laughable and betrays a total lack of respect and understanding of Christ's words and the context in which they are used.

Christ is quoting from the Old Testament an extreme example of how the Old

Testament uses profoundly strong language to teach respect of one's parents, he does this in order to expose the Pharisees' lack of respect of parents by showing that they think their small acts of kindness towards their parents are enough to please God. They are clearly not. To use this reasoning you would also assume when Jesus said if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out, if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off ... he was not advocating a new movement "amputees for Christ". The contextual lesson is obvious: "sin is dangerous, take drastic measures to keep it out of your life." He often used irony (a very popular, and recognized form of humour at the time) to drive home profound truths. Other examples "take the plank out of your own eye before you take the speck out of someone else's eye."

To suggest that Christ is advocating some type of faith-based murder is ludicrous! Matthew 5, 6 and 7 (the sermon on the mount) Christ cites law after Old Testament law in which he teaches love, forgiveness, etc. Specifically: Matt. 5:21, 22 (look it up)"

To the central issue of the complaint, then: It is not reasonable to conclude that Lowell's comments would incite hatred or fear toward all Muslims, as [the complainant] argues.

The fact remains that there has been extensive news coverage of some extremists who interpret the Qur'an *literally* and use that to *justify the execution of Muslim-to-Christian converts*. Even if [the complainant]'s argument about the Bible were to hold true (which it does not), the argument becomes moot because it is not being interpreted literally, nor is it being used by Christians to justify killing people for faith conversion. The government of Afghanistan wanted to put a convert to death, and Lowell asked callers whether it was appropriate to ask newcomers to Canada whether they support the idea of putting a person to death for converting from Islam to any other faith. Even his Muslim callers this day and others agreed that it is a fair question, and that Canada has a right to pose it to immigration applicants.

[The complainant]'s suggestion that merely asking questions about extremism somehow "dehumanizes" all Muslims is folly. No reasonable person would fear (nor hate) all Muslims because a specific extremist group among them mis-uses the holy writings to justify killing converts. Lowell made it clear throughout that he was referring to that very specific group of extremists, and not to all believers. He has done this as standard procedure whenever he talks about sensitive race- or creed-related topics.

Lowell's discussion was timely. This was a legitimate matter in newspapers, on TV and radio newscasts. He made it clear that he was not discussing all Muslims. His examination of a very specific group of people (extremists) was appropriate. And there was no breach of any codes or regulations.

I look forward to your decision.

CFRA sent an additional letter to the CBSC on May 9 after the station was informed that the complaint was being sent for adjudication:

Enclosed please find the requested CD copies of the *Lowell Green Show* at the centre of the above-noted complaint, along with my original response to the complainant. CFRA maintains there has been no breach of any code or regulations.

The complainant has tried to side-track the issue by debating whether the New Testament condones faith-based killing.

I referred the quotations (used to support the complaint) to the attention of [...], an ordained Christian minister and accomplished bible scholar. His response to [the complainant]'s

position:

“... his take ... betrays a total lack of respect and understanding of Christ’s words and the context in which they are used.

Christ is quoting from the Old Testament an extreme example of how the Old Testament uses profoundly strong language to teach respect of one’s parents, he does this in order to expose the Pharisees’ lack of respect of parents by showing that they think their small acts of kindness towards their parents are enough to please God. They are clearly not. To use this reasoning you would also assume when Jesus said if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out, if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off ... (He was not being literal.) The contextual lesson is obvious: “sin is dangerous, take drastic measures to keep it out of your life.” He often used irony (a very popular, and recognized form ... at the time) to drive home profound truths. Other examples “take the plank out of your own eye before you take the speck out of someone else’s eye.”

To suggest that Christ is advocating some type of faith-based murder is ludicrous! Matthew 5, 6 and 7 (the sermon on the mount) Christ cites law after Old Testament law in which he teaches love, forgiveness, etc. Specifically: Matt. 5:21, 22.”

To the central issue of the complaint, then: It is not reasonable to conclude that Lowell’s comments would incite hatred or fear toward **all** Muslims, as [the complainant] argues.

The fact remains that there has been extensive news coverage of some extremists who interpret the Qur’an literally and use that to justify the execution of Muslim-to-Christian converts. Even if [the complainant]’s argument about the Bible were to hold true (which it does not), the argument becomes moot because this Christian text is not being interpreted literally, nor is it being used by Christians to justify killing people for faith conversion. The government of Afghanistan wanted to put a convert to death, and Lowell asked callers whether it was appropriate to ask newcomers to Canada whether they support the idea of putting a person to death for converting from Islam to any other faith. Even his Muslim callers this day and others agreed that it is a fair question, and that Canada has a right to pose it to immigration applicants.

We do not share [the complainant]’s argument that merely asking questions about extremism somehow “dehumanizes” all Muslims. No reasonable person would fear (nor hate) all Muslims because a specific extremist group among them mis-uses the holy writings to justify killing converts. In the *Letters* section of the *Ottawa Citizen* May 9, 2006, Muslim writer M. Husain Sadar writes (“Canadian Muslims must stop hijacking of their Faith”):

... there is sinful silence adopted by other Muslims, including most of us in North America. Unfortunately this leaves the field wide open for some fly-by-night kind of Organizations, especially the Canadian Islamic Congress, to issue outrageous statements to get self-publicity

... terrorists, especially al-qaeda and its supporters too often use the “Islamic umbrella” to justify killing innocent people ...

... Muslims need to ask themselves: “how can we claim that Islam stands for peace when some of its followers are engaged in death and destruction on an hourly basis?”

Clearly, most *Muslims* are reasonable and moderate, and have no problem rooting out extremist views to improve understanding and relations with other Canadians. This is illustrated by many letters to the editor such as Mr. Sadar’s, and by numerous Muslim participants in CFRA open-line programs. No reasonable person would argue that such opinions are racist or discriminatory, or that people should be prohibited from expressing them.

Even if Mr. Green's personal opinion of the Bible and Qur'an comparisons were faulty, he is entitled to them, and callers are always welcome to call and challenge those opinions. Lowell was asking the public whether it would be reasonable to ask immigrants whether they felt it was acceptable to kill Christian converts. The very fact that Muslim Canadians have supported these and other steps to root out extremism in their midst is concrete proof that such a discussion is in no way *abusively discriminatory*.

Lowell made it clear throughout that he was referring to that very specific group of extremists, and not to all believers. He has done this as standard procedure whenever he talks about sensitive race- or creed-related topics.

Lowell's discussion was timely. This was a legitimate matter in newspapers, on TV and radio newscasts. He made it clear that he was not discussing *all* Muslims. His examination of a very specific group of people (extremists) was appropriate. Respectfully, we believe there was no breach of any codes or regulations.

I look forward to your decision.