

The puerile and the profane

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Date : February 23, 2009

JOHNS ISLAND, S.C. -- I should know better than to write about this. Not least because no one can be as big a bully as the folks I am about to write about.

I am still struck by the shape, size and volume of churches in the United States of America. And I am also surprised by the extent to which it is so deeply entrenched in everyday life.

And I make the observation, because it is not as evident from outside the country as it is from within. Hollywood movies and TV shows make almost no reference to God. And businesses, for the most part, play down the involvement of the Lord. Although, once here, you can see that He is still in business and the arts in a big way.

Recently I was quite surprised to see a US-based, global company mention God twice in their corporate values. At their European corporate headquarters in Amsterdam, I asked about it and they replied: "Ah, yea, we just ignore that."

What do you think the response would be to a business that talked about the Prophet Mohammad in its business objectives? (Especially when you know that Dubai Ports was run out of the USA just because its country of origin is CLOSE to some that we don't like.)

The religiosity of America is all the more strange and uncomfortable making to the outsider when you then watch TV. Almost every second television advertisement, all through the day, deals with the ability of old people to have a sustained erection.

Sure there's lots of soft-focus pictures of old people dancing. And the words are even carefully selected. But the 'disclaimers' at the end include the spoken line "If you have a sustained erection for more than four hours, please consult your doctor."

Which is not the mental image that makes my afternoon golf-watching any more relaxing.

How can we reconcile these differences? The conservative and traditional with the medically (and surgically) enhanced population?

What are the implications for organisational communications? How do you engage people in work when their interests can be this broad? What do we not know about our American cousins, that we think we do?

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