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Divine dispatches: a religion roundup

Park51 brouhaha tops Time's 2010 religious stories; Jewish organ donation; sex toys exchanged for Christian sex tips



Riazat Butt

guardian.co.uk, Thursday 16 December 2010 13.00 GMT



Rally against the proposed 'Ground Zero mosque', held in New York in August. Photograph: KeystoneUSA-Zuma/Rex Features

Thanks for all your unhesitating support following last week's disclosure of my existential angst, I really appreciate it and I feel much better now.

❖ Time magazine has published its top 10 religious stories of 2010 as part of its top 10 of everything in 2010. The No 1 spot is occupied by the brouhaha over Park51 – the Ground Zero mosque. While I am obviously delighted that Muslims have triumphed over the planet's single biggest religious constituency (Catholics), I am upset that the Vatican is dominating the list. Come on Muslims – try harder! Other noteworthy stories include Barack Obama's failure to go to the Golden Temple because he was worried [or not] about appearing Muslim. Time reports: "In the US, Sikhs are very often mistaken for Muslims – and, when Islamophobia enters, unhappy consequences ensue. That was probably one factor too many for an American politician already burdened with false but unstanchable [sic] scuttlebutt that he is a secret Muslim."

❖ Next week, activist and journalist [Robert Berman](#) arrives in the UK to talk about the compatibility between [halacha](#) and organ donation. Berman wants more Jews to carry donor cards and donate their organs to people, whether they are Jewish or not. Earlier this year he [expressed his frustration](#) at the lack of new guidelines from the [London Beth Din](#) on the issue of brain death, which divides rabbis. Rabbis who object to organ donation do so on the grounds that a person is brain-stem dead but their heart is still beating with the help of a ventilator. "Such rabbis consider a beating heart to be a sign of life and therefore donating organs at this point would be killing the donor. The question is whether or not a brain-stem dead person is alive or dead." He'll be speaking at [Limmud](#).

❖ Slightly disappointed that Paddy Power – which will open a book on [pretty much anything](#) – hasn't taken bets on who will be the next chief rabbi. Lord Sacks is [stepping down](#) in 2013 but the hunt for his successor has already started. How will he be remembered? As a [rock or a relic](#)?

❖ Welcome to the [Sikh Council UK](#), which launched last weekend following a six-month consultation process across the country. The group claims it is the first time that most temples and groups in the UK have thrown their weight behind such an initiative and "come together on a united platform" on key issues and areas of concern. We wish them well.

❖ And finally, sex toys for sex tips? The Christian sex website [Whollylove.co.uk](#) has launched a festive appeal, offering couples sex toys in return for tips on how to stay happily married during the Christmas and New Year period. Its "[Have Yourself a Merry Married Christmas](#)" campaign recognises that while Christmas can be "a wonderful time of year", for many couples "it is a time of great stress and the potential for relationship breakdown is significant". The deal is that you email them your ideas and you get a toy for your trouble. Co-founder Stella Haggerty says: "We realise that we probably will attract some criticism [sic] for linking Christmas with sexual intimacy – despite it being clearly within marriage – and for offering multi-lighted vibrators as part of our campaign – but we really do believe strongly in the importance of doing everything possible to support marriage at what is a stressful time of year, and the colourful vibrators seemed like effective tool to do this with!"

Ads by Google

A Jewish Christmas?

The Jewish prophet Isaiah predicted the reason for this season.

[www.isaiah53.com](#)

Many Jews believe in God

But not all. Humanistic Jews affirm Jewish heritage and culture.

www.CityCongregation.org

[Christians For Israel](#)

Learn About Issues Facing Israel & Christian-Jewish Relations.

www.HolyLandMoments.org

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[Sipech](#)

16 December 2010 1:05PM

We realise that we probably will attract some criticism [sic] for linking Christmas with sexual intimacy

Given that a lot of people (myself included) have their birthday's in late September/early October, this isn't exactly a stretch of the imagination!

Recommend (12)

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[billysbar](#)

16 December 2010 1:09PM

and for offering multi-lighted vibrators as part of our campaign –

And they can double as a xmas tree decoration....the perfect xmas gift!

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[Henizy](#)

16 December 2010 1:14PM

the colourful vibrators seemed like effective tool

indeed

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[Valten78](#)

16 December 2010 1:20PM

Are the Sikh Council in receipt of any public funds? I can't find anything on their site indicating if they are or not.

I'm happy for them to form their own council if that's what they wish but the state should not be involved.

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[ToffeeDan1](#)

16 December 2010 1:20PM

Jewish organ donation - what a snip!!

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[nufubar](#)

16 December 2010 1:23PM

The Christian sex website

The mind boggles...

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[Sipech](#)

16 December 2010 1:23PM

I apologise for my appalling grammar above. Have only just noticed.

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[VoxAC30](#)

16 December 2010 1:24PM

This comment has been removed by a moderator. Replies may also be deleted.



[DamnWymz](#)

16 December 2010 1:25PM

Didn't The Exorcist get in a lot of trouble for its Christian themed dildo scene?

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[waitingmunchkin](#)

16 December 2010 1:27PM

Was it meant to say 'critischism' I wonder?

But wouldn't a vibrator count as a third party? There's no way of putting this delicately so I won't try, but they are advocating, are they not, the penetration of one's good lady wife with a penis that is not one's own. ADULTERER!!! time to start collecting rocks.

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[MiskatonicUniversity](#)

16 December 2010 1:31PM

Personally I thought it was interesting that the Park51 project was originally called the Cordoba House.

The promoters had the good sense to change the name when it was pointed out that celebrating the capital of a dead colonial empire that reduced the natives to second-class citizens in their own land and organised major persecutions probably wasn't the way to win friends and influence people.

It would be like an organisation aiming at British Chinese friendship calling itself the

Raj Foundation...

Still, better late than never!

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[MickGJ](#)

16 December 2010 1:41PM

Valten78

16 December 2010 1:20PM

Are the Sikh Council in receipt of any public funds? I can't find anything on their site indicating if they are or not.

I'm happy for them to form their own council if that's what they wish but the state should not be involved.

According to Admin at the site:

Initially the SCUK will be reliant upon the affiliation fees. We hope that in time it will tap into grant aid opportunities and undertake fundraising activities.

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[num5](#)

16 December 2010 1:43PM

Just because of 9/11 which happened what, nine years ago, people got offended by a mosque? What next? No Aussie embassy in the US because of Wikileaks? Protests against the New York Islamic center are just another case of PC gone mad culture.

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[MiskatonicUniversity](#)

16 December 2010 1:50PM

"Just because of 9/11 which happened what, nine years ago, people got offended by a

mosque? What next? No Aussie embassy in the US because of Wikileaks? Protests against the New York Islamic center are just another case of PC gone mad culture." Indeed. And the Islamic scholars can't even now remember the event that led to Christian churches and Jewish synagogues being banned in Arabia.

As you say PC gone totally lunatic, and for the longest time.

By the sound of it, the re-branded Park51 organisers now understand that the episodes of Islamic empires were unpleasant for the rest of us and are keen to distance themselves from that historical inheritance. Let's hope the scholars of Islam, as represented by the ulema of Arabia and Egypt get there too and allow people to follow religion (or not) freely.

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[Damnthelial](#)

16 December 2010 1:56PM

Protests against the New York Islamic center are just another case of PC gone mad culture.

Nonsense. If anything it's the opposite of PC.

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[bailliegillies](#)

16 December 2010 1:59PM

The Christian sex website

Sex toys for christians? Don't they realise that they're not supposed to enjoy sex? I didn't think they were supposed to know about things like this unless it's approved by the big papa in Rome

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[BarabbasFreed](#)

16 December 2010 2:04PM

Balliegillies

I didn't think they were supposed to know about things like this unless it's approved by the big papa in Rome

Think back 500 years. Think Henry VIII, think Luther, Zwingli, John Knox and Tyndale. You seem to have a wee gap in your historical knowledge there. Nothing major, admittedly, and I'm sure you'll just fine without covering it, its just kind of embarrassing to see ignorance on display.

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MiskatonicUniversity

16 December 2010 2:05PM

"Sex toys for christians? Don't they realise that they're not supposed to enjoy sex? I didn't think they were supposed to know about things like this unless it's approved by the big papa in Rome"

Nah, within marriage it is A-OK.

Fringe movements that decide celibacy is even better, like the Shakers, tend to have a short lifespan.

Apparently their last big recruitment drive was during the 1929 depression - still, nice kitchens. Not many religions can offer that kind of legacy.

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DocMolotov

16 December 2010 2:06PM

He you go voxAC30 knock yourself out the choice of religious sex toys is excellent

http://www.blowfish.com/catalog/toys/symbolic_dildos.html

Recommend (3)

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doughcnut

16 December 2010 2:20PM

we really do believe strongly in the importance of doing everything possible to support marriage at what is a stressful time of year, and the colourful vibrators seemed like effective tool to do this with!"

the religious "believe strongly" in the weirdest ideas, of which the above is by no means the best example

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urnotanatheist

16 December 2010 2:32PM

The only Christian sex tip I know is "try the other hole dear"

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Bikhair

16 December 2010 2:43PM

Miskatonic,

"By the sound of it, the re-branded Park51 organisers now understand that the episodes of Islamic empires were unpleasant for the rest of us..."

How old are you?

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urnotanatheist

16 December 2010 2:46PM

Jewish organ donation? I once knew a disillusioned Sally Army tambourinist who gave her instrument to OXFAM

Recommend (4)

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[Bikhair](#)

16 December 2010 2:51PM

Miskatonic,

"The promoters had the good sense to change the name when it was pointed out that celebrating the capital of a dead colonial empire that reduced the natives to second-class citizens in their own land and organised major persecutions probably wasn't the way to win friends and influence people."

What colonial empire of the past didn't do this? I doubt persecution was the defining and most notable feature of Cordoba Spain.

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[agreewith](#)

16 December 2010 3:11PM

and the colourful vibrators seemed like effective tool to do this with!

Seems like self gnosticism is worth exclaiming.

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[epeeist](#)

16 December 2010 3:23PM

@bailliegillies

Sex toys for christians? Don't they realise that they're not supposed to enjoy sex? I didn't think they were supposed to know about things like this unless it's approved by the big papa in Rome

Given recent CiF belief articles on contraception and Catholicism this raises some interesting questions. A form of sexual activity that cannot possibly lead to conception, one wonders whether it would be approved.

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[peitha](#)

16 December 2010 3:23PM

While I am obviously delighted that Muslims have triumphed over the planet's single biggest religious constituency (Catholics), I am upset that the Vatican is dominating the list. Come on Muslims – try harder!

Not that Riazat Butt would ever be so even handed as to point out that Muslims have a complete lock on any list of 'Top 10 most lethal [terrorist attacks in 2010](#)'.

But then those they kill are also adherents of the same 'religion of peace' that we keep getting told Islam supposedly is ... Go figure!

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[waitingmunchkin](#)

16 December 2010 3:29PM

If you're a catholic and you share dildos with other catholics, are you allowed to use condoms on them to protect yourself from STIs?

C'mon - it's a serious question. I would have thought that the only reason condom use is banned is because it prevents conception. But are condoms also banned for 60 year-old couples? or gay men (even if they aren't prostitutes)? Just trying to follow the logic.

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[cuniculus](#)

16 December 2010 3:32PM

For those who can't be bothered following the link to Time:

Top 10 Religion Stories

1 Park51: The "Ground Zero Mosque"

2 The Vatican and the Child Abuse Scandal

- 3 The Bankruptcy of the Crystal Cathedral
- 4 Franklin Graham vs. the Muslims
- 5 The Rev. Terry Jones Threatens to Burn Korans
- 6 Women Priests, In Spite of the Vatican
- 7 The Pope Doesn't Quite Endorse Condoms
- 8 Christians Under Attack in the Middle East
- 9 Obama Decides Not to Visit the Golden Temple
- 10 The Vatican and Homer Simpson

Read more: <http://www.time.com/time/specials/packages/completelist/0,29569,2035319,00.html#ixzz18HwfTziT>

I make it 5 1/2 to Catholics (2, 4, 6, 7, 10, and partly 8), 5 to Muslims (1, 3, 5, 8, 9) and 5 for Protestants, 3, 4, 5, 6 [assuming Anglicans are now wholly protestant], partly 8, and partly 10). I've calculated this via some form of proportional representation, so the total doesn't add up to ten.

For those incorrigibly ignorant, Franklin Graham is Billy's son, and has corresponding ideas about the Religion of Peace. The Crystal Cathedral is one of those tele-evangelist temples to Mammon that has finally been consumed by its own god. Ah, and Homer Simpson: the Osservatore Romano stuck its tongue in its cheek and said the Simpson family might just be sort-of Catholic; Time reclaimed them for the protestant flock.

Recommend (2)

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[riazatbutt](#)

16 December 2010 3:43PM

@peitha Well, it's a foregone conclusion that Muslims would dominate any list of terrorist attacks. I was looking at Time's efforts, which is much more inclusive

@billysbar @Henizy very good

Recommend (4)

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[muscleguy](#)

16 December 2010 3:44PM

The Sikhs have organised? colour me surprised. The only Sikh joke I know (related by a

Sikh colleague) goes:

A man opens his door to someone doing a survey who asks: 'are you a member of an organised religion?'

He replies: 'No, I'm a Sikh'

Possibly you have to be a Sikh or know one well to get that one.

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[Valten78](#)

16 December 2010 3:48PM

peitha

10 most lethal terrorist attacks in 2010.

Sounds like a bad show on Bravo. When Muslims Attack!

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[Valten78](#)

16 December 2010 4:01PM

peitha

Not that Riazat Butt would ever be so even handed as to point out that Muslims have a complete lock on any list of 'Top 10 most lethal terrorist attacks in 2010'.

Incidentally I've just looked over that link and have noted with interest that the UK appears nine times. Yet every single one of the incidents in question refers to Northern Ireland, not a single mention of any Islamic fundamentalism going on in the UK. All that talk the other day on CIF of the UK being a 'hotbed' of Islamic fundamentalism is beginning to look like allot of hot air.

Incidentally why are there so few reports of what's going on in Ireland in the UK press? All the evidence shows that the Irish militants are more likely to commit acts of violence on UK soil than Muslims and yet all the press coverage would suggest otherwise.

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[SamuelSmiles](#)

16 December 2010 4:18PM

Time magazine has published its top 10 religious stories of 2010.....Come on Muslims – try harder!

The years not over yet. Plenty of time left for an xmas terror attack, one fella tried it in Sweden already. You never know, you might just get your wish.

Recommend (4)

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[OnlyUsersLoseDrugz](#)

16 December 2010 4:30PM

ToffeeDan1

16 December 2010 1:20PM

Jewish organ donation - what a snip!!

good point. they somehow don't seem to recognise the skin being the largest organ of the human body.

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[HarryHamilton](#)

16 December 2010 4:48PM

I don't understand why a Christian sex shop is even a story. I mean it's no more weird than Islamic banking or a sex shop that emphasises women's role in sex. It would be far more weird if the sex shop was a Christian themed sex shop rather than the reality of a shop that encourages sex between married adults.

Anyway it's only Catholics that are not supposed to enjoy sex, which anyone who knows Catholic girls will know that it makes them enjoy it all the more.

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[Sipech](#)

16 December 2010 5:35PM

riazatbutt

it's a foregone conclusion that Muslims would dominate any list of terrorist attacks
You never know. Those Hare-Krishnas can be pretty terrorising with those little drums
and tambourines.

Recommend (5)

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[urnotanantheist](#)

16 December 2010 5:36PM

"Anyway it's only Catholics that are not supposed to enjoy sex, which anyone who
knows Catholic girls will know that it makes them enjoy it all the more."

Until they get married at any rate.

Recommend (5)

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[riazatbutt](#)

16 December 2010 5:44PM

You're cheering me up no end, esp. after my spectacular failure to win anything in the
Guardian Christmas raffle.

Recommend (4)

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[toba](#)

16 December 2010 6:18PM

These stories, taken as a whole, do a good job of showing the absolute absurdity of

religious belief, and i suspect Riazat, that was your intention.....long may this tradition of giving an annual roundup of the fantastical delusions of the Great Unthinking Masses continue until it no longer needs to.

Recommend (11)

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C



[Silverwhistle](#)

16 December 2010 6:45PM

epceist:

Given recent CiF belief articles on contraception and Catholicism this raises some interesting questions. A form of sexual activity that cannot possibly lead to conception, one wonders whether it would be approved.

They *don't* approve of anything that isn't open to conception.

For a good general history on the subject, I recommend Ute Ranke-Heinemann's *Eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven*. In earlier centuries, using contraception could earn greater penances than killing someone, and was regarded as worse than murder...

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[Silverwhistle](#)

16 December 2010 6:47PM

Next week, activist and journalist Robert Berman arrives in the UK to talk about the compatibility between halacha and organ donation.

I know there have been disputes over the use of valves of porcine origin in heart surgery.

Recommend (1)

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[georgesdelatour](#)

16 December 2010 7:40PM

bikhair

You might find this interesting:

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nunilo_and_Alodia

Recommend (0)

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[rongoklunk](#)

16 December 2010 8:02PM

riazatbutt;

Big news from Canada. The Globe&Mail reports that churches are closing all across Canada because young people no longer buy into religion. There are currently 4 or 5 blogs in the G&M today on religion, and most commenters are against religion.

But against this we have religion being imported from the Philippines, India and the Middle East which bodes ill for Canada. One day Islam could be Canada's biggest religion. Then what happens? Or will the immigrant children also drop their religion as they grow up in a country which is quite secular, as Canadian children have?

Riazat; Don't ignore what's happening in Canada. Lots of religious friction worth reporting.

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[Bikhair](#)

16 December 2010 8:23PM

georgesdelatour,

Forget finding it interesting. I cant even find it relevant.

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Kimpatsu

16 December 2010 11:13PM

In the US, Sikhs are very often mistaken for Muslims...

The difference is easy to understand.

Sikhs carry 7-inch knives called kirpans, and Muslims wear exploding underwear.

Recommend (6)

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RogerINtheUSA

16 December 2010 11:58PM

num5

16 December 2010 1:43PM

Just because of 9/11 which happened what, nine years ago, people got offended by a mosque? What next? No Aussie embassy in the US because of Wikileaks? Protests against the New York Islamic center are just another case of PC gone mad culture. a better analogy would be the Germans in 1949 building a German Ideology Centre 2 blocks from Coventry Cathedral

google Triumphalism

Recommend (2)

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RogerINtheUSA

17 December 2010 12:02AM

The Christian sex website Whollylove.co.uk has launched a festive appeal,

Cleanliness is next to Godliness

http://shop.whollylove.co.uk/product_info.php?products_id=5040&osCsid=leqbjjk2ffm3eilpdacv5h20i0

Antibacterial Toy Cleaner 118ml

Recommend (1)

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[jimmysirrelisgod](#)

17 December 2010 12:23AM

Those vibrators will be handy at the second coming.

Recommend (8)

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[PiedNoir](#)

17 December 2010 2:16AM

for many couples "it is a time of great stress and the potential for relationship breakdown is significant".

Hmm, depends on the couple. I won't be able to see my mistress for about three weeks over the festive season but that will only make my desire grow.

Oh, sorry, that not the religious message you were wanting?

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