

In the latter days, the sun shall rise from the west • Holy Prophet Muhammad (Peace and blessings of Allah be on him)

In Defense of Islam: Confronting the Critics



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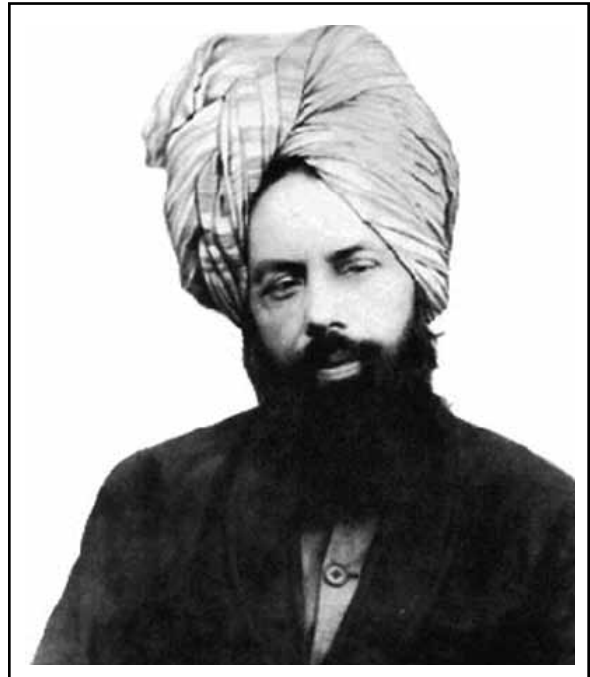
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The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is a religious organization, international in its scope, with branches in 195 countries in Africa, North America, South America, Asia, Australasia, and Europe. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was established in 1889 by Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} (1835-1908) in Qadian, a small and remote village in the Punjabi province of India. He claimed to be the expected reformer of the latter days, the Awaited One of the world community of religions (The Mahdi and Messiah). The Movement he started is an embodiment of the benevolent message of Islam – peace, universal brotherhood, and submission to the Will of God – in its pristine purity. Hadhrat Ahmad^{as} proclaimed Islam as the religion of man: “The religion of the people of the right path” (98:6). The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community was created under divine guidance with the objective to rejuvenate Islamic moral and spiritual values. It encourages interfaith dialogue, diligently defends Islam and tries to correct misunderstandings about Islam in the West. It advocates peace, tolerance, love and understanding among followers of different faiths. It firmly believes in and acts upon the Qur’anic teaching: “There is no compulsion in religion” (2:257). It strongly rejects violence and terrorism in any form and for any reason.

After the passing of its founder, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has been headed by his elected successors. The present Head of the Community, Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad, was elected in 2003. His official title is Khalifatul Masih V or Fifth Successor of the Promised Messiah..



Mirza Ghulam Ahmad (1835-1908)

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Muslims follow the name of God’s prophets with the prayer *alaehis salaam* or ‘may peace be upon him,’ and for the Holy Prophet Muhammad, *sallallahu alaehi wasallam* or ‘may peace and blessings of God be upon him.’ Companions of prophets and righteous personalities who have passed away are saluted by *radhi-Allaho anhu/a* or ‘may Allah be pleased with him/her.’ While such salutations sometimes are not set out in the text for readability, we encourage readers to offer these prayers as if set out in full.

Dr. Mufti Muhammad Sadiq (1872-1957) was the first Ahmadiyya Muslim missionary to arrive in America. In 1921, he founded the *Muslim Sunrise*, which stands today as the longest running Muslim publication in America. The magazine seeks to open discussions on Islam and topics relating to religion in general. It highlights the role of Islam in an ever changing global society. It provides a platform for public opinion on contemporary issues and presenting their solutions from an Islamic perspective.

www.muslimsunrise.com



AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY

United States of America

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah,
Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^{AS}*



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A Special Invitation to the Critics of Islam

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For More Information on
Islam/Ahmadiyyat:

Alislam.org
Ahmadiyya.us
or

1.800.Why.Islam

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

From the Holy Qur'an

Chapter 28, Surah Al-Qasas, 56-57

وَإِذَا سَمِعُوا اللَّغْوَ أَعْرَضُوا عَنْهُ وَقَالُوا لَنَا
أَعْمَالُنَا وَلَكُمْ أَعْمَالُكُمْ سَلَامٌ عَلَيْكُمْ
لَا نَبْتَغِي الْجَاهِلِينَ ﴿٥٦﴾

*And when they hear vain talk, they turn away from it
and say, 'Unto us our works and unto you your works.
Peace be to you. We seek not the ignorant.'* 28:56

إِنَّكَ لَا تَهْدِي مَنْ أَحْبَبْتَ وَلَكِنَّ
اللَّهَ يَهْدِي مَنْ يَشَاءُ وَهُوَ أَعْلَمُ
بِالْمُهْتَدِينَ ﴿٥٧﴾

*Surely thou wilt not be able to guide all whom thou
lovest; but Allah guides whomsoever He pleases; and
He knows best those who would accept guidance.* 28:57

In the Words of the Promised Messiah^{as}

God, in whose meeting is man's salvation and eternal happiness, cannot be found

without following the Holy Quran. Would that people could see that which I have seen and they could hear that which I have heard and give up following stories and run towards reality. The means of obtaining perfect knowledge through which one can see God, the cleansing water which removes all doubts, and the mirror through which one can behold that High Being, is the converse with God which I have just mentioned. He whose soul seeks the truth should arise and search for it.

I say truly that if souls were inspired by true search and hearts felt true thirst, people would look for this way and would search for it. I assure the seekers that Islam alone gives the good news of this way, for other people have since long sealed up the possibility of revelation. Be sure that this seal is not set by God, but as man has deprived himself of this favor, he seeks excuses for its absence. As it is not possible that we should be able to see without eyes, hear without ears, or speak without a tongue, in the same way, it is not possible that we should be able to behold the countenance of the sweet Beloved without the Holy Quran. I was young and now old, but I have found no one who might have drunk of this clear understanding without this holy fountain.

The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam, Ruhani Khazain VI. 10, pp 442-443)



The Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi

*"Alaysa Allaho be-Kafen Abdahoo"
Is not God sufficient for His servant?"*

The straight path and the principal means which is full of the light of certainty and constant experience, and is the perfect guide for our spiritual welfare and our intellectual progress is the Holy Quran which is charged with the settlement of all the religious contests of the world. Each and every word of it consistently carries thousands of repeated confirmations and it contains a large quantity of the waters of life for us and comprises many rare and priceless jewels which are hidden in it and are being displayed every day. It is an excellent touchstone whereby we can distinguish between truth and falsehood. It is the one bright lamp which shows the way of truth. Without doubt, the hearts of those who have a relationship with the straight path are drawn to the Holy Quran. Gracious God has so fashioned their hearts that they are

drawn toward this beloved like a lover and find no rest elsewhere, and hearing a plain and clear directive from it, they listen to nothing else. They accept joyfully and eagerly every verity contained in it. In the end, it becomes the means of illumination of the heart and lighting up the conscience and of wonderful disclosures. It leads everyone to the heights of progress according to their capacities. The righteous have always been in need of walking in the light of the Holy Quran.

Whenever Islam has been confronted with any other religion in consequence of some new condition of the age, the sharp and effective instrument that has immediately come to hand is the Holy Quran. In the same way, whenever philosophic thought has been given publicity in opposition to it, the Holy Quran has destroyed that poisonous plant and has so humiliated it as to provide a mirror to its students which shows up the true philosophy which is contained in the Holy Quran alone and nowhere else.

In the modern age, when Christian missionaries started their propaganda and made an attempt to draw away unintelligent and ignorant people from the Unity of God and to make them worship a humble creature and employed every kind of sophistry for dressing up their doubtful ideas and thus created a storm in India, it was the Holy Quran which repelled them so that they are not now able to face a well-informed person and their extensive apologetics have been folded up like a piece of paper. ♦

Izala-e-Auham, Ruhani Khazain Vol 3 PP 381-382

Editorial

A Letter to the Critics of Islam

Dear Critics,

As-salamu alaikum.

Peace be upon you.

With this issue, we invite you to debate the criticisms you levy against the peaceful religion of Islam.

We applaud your self-professed commitment to freedom and equality – indeed we stand for the same – but in attacking Islam, we question your tactics. The religion of Islam stands for truth, peace and justice, and is in need of revival, not destruction.

In this issue, we have chosen 10 of you – from a diverse group of widely recognized politicians, pundits, pastors, professors and authors – and respond to your criticisms of Islam. We expose them as either baseless, dishonest, or criticisms of practices which, although present in Muslim-majority countries, have no

basis in the religion of Islam. In doing so, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community defends Islam not just against your misinformation, but also from the misguided ulema who pass off their own twisted beliefs as Islamic.

Indeed this is the reason God raised Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian as the Reformer of this age. His Community, which practices and preaches the motto of “love for all, hatred for none,” actively promotes the true teachings of Islam, and wishes you peace, no matter how you feel about us.

We recognize you have strong feelings against Islam (or profess to, for personal gain), but when you inspire fervent praise from people like Anders Behring Breivik, the Norwegian terrorist arrested for killing more than 70 people in an effort to prevent a “Muslim takeover” (in particular, Robert Spencer, Pamela Geller and Geert Wilders), do you not see the ramifications of your hate speech? The Southern Poverty Law Center writes that the growth of an anti-Muslim movement, which began in 2010 and was “almost entirely ginned up by political opportunists and hard-line Islamophobes,” has

coincided with a 50% rise in reported anti-Muslim hate crimes.¹ Does such violence serve your purpose, or are you simply a truth-teller?

If your cause is just and true, join us in a public debate. If you are right, the people shall see it firsthand and join you in your enmity toward Islam. If, however, it is proven that your criticisms are based on lies or hate, then we shall have accomplished our purpose in defense of Islam.

Although you should not hesitate to accept our invitation, you may take six full months to decide, and we shall publish your responses (or lack thereof) in our Winter 2012 issue, God-willing.

To our readers, we hope you shall consider our replies to the critics with an open heart and mind. We hope that, at the very least, you will come to realize that the profit-driven, anti-Islam campaign of vilification and misinformation serves only to spread hatred and violence, not truth and understanding. May God bless you and may peace be upon you. ♦

The Muslim Sunrise

Footnotes)

¹ “Thirty New Activists Heading up the Radical Right,” Splcenter.org. Last accessed May 28, 2012.

Love, Affection, Brotherhood and Peace

The world must come to recognize its Creator

At the recent 9th Annual Peace Symposium organised by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, an audience including Government Ministers, Ambassadors of State, Members of both the House of Commons and the House of Lords, the Mayor of London and various other dignitaries and guests from all walks of life joined together to discuss the means of establishing international peace. In the keynote address Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, Khalifatul Masih V, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, warned that the perilous state of the world appears to be leading us to a nuclear conflict in the shape of a Third World War. During the course of his address, His Holiness stated:

“One way in which I have tried to promote peace is through a series of letters that I have written to certain world

leaders...upon observing that hostilities between Iran and Israel were boiling over to a very dangerous level, I sent a letter to both Israel’s Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, and Iran’s President, Mahmud Ahmedinejad, in which I urged them to forsake all forms of haste and recklessness when making decisions, for the sake of mankind. I have also recently written to President Barack Obama and Canada’s Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, calling on both of them to fulfil their roles and responsibilities towards the development of peace and harmony in the world. I am also planning to write and warn other Heads of State and leaders in the near future.

I do not know if my letters will be given any value or weight by the various leaders I have



Hadhrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}

written to, but whatever their reaction, an attempt has been made by me, as the Khalifa and spiritual leader of millions of Ahmadi Muslims worldwide, to convey their feelings and emotions about the perilous state of the world. Let it be clear that I have not expressed these sentiments because of any personal fear, but instead, I am motivated out of a sincere love for humanity. This love for humanity has been developed and instilled in all true Muslims by the teachings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) who, as I have already mentioned, was sent as a means of mercy and compassion for all of mankind.”◆

Khalifatul Masih V - Letter to Pope Benedict the XVI

The letter from Hadhrat Khalifatul Masih V^{aba}, Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, was delivered personally by the President of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Jama'at Kababir, Muhammad Sharif Odeh, who met the Pope as part of an official delegation from Israel consisting of renowned religious scholars of various faiths. A copy of the Holy Qur'an with translation was also gifted to the Pope.

To His Holiness Pope Benedict the XVI,

It is my prayer, that may Allah the Almighty bestow His Grace and Blessings upon you.

As Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, I convey to His Holiness the Pope the message of the Holy Qur'an: Say, 'O people of the book! Come to a word equal between us and you – that we worship none but Allah, and that we associate no partner with Him, and that some of us take not others for lords beside Allah.'

Islam, nowadays, is under the glare of the world, and is frequently targeted with vile allegations. However, those raising these allegations do so without studying any of Islam's real teachings. Unfortunately, certain Islamic organisations due only to their vested interests have portrayed Islam in a totally wrong light. As a result, distrust has increased in the hearts of the people of Western and non-Muslim countries towards Muslims, to the extent that even otherwise extremely well-educated people make baseless allegations against the Founder of Islam, the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}.

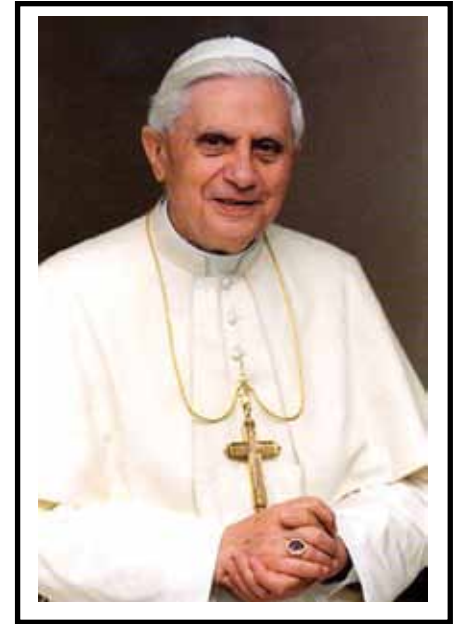
The purpose of every religion has been to bring man closer to God and establish human values. Never has the founder of any religion taught that his followers should usurp the

rights of others or should act cruelly. Thus, the actions of a minority of misguided Muslims should not be used as a pretext to attack Islam and its Holy Founder (pbuh). Islam teaches us to respect the Prophets of all religions and this is why it is essential for a Muslim to believe in all of the Prophets who are mentioned in the Holy Bible or in the Holy Qur'an, until and including Jesus Christ^{as}. We are the humble servants of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw} and so we are deeply grieved and saddened by the attacks on our Holy Prophet^{saw}; but we respond by continuing to present his noble qualities to the world and to disclose even more of the beautiful teachings of the Holy Qur'an.

If a person does not follow a particular teaching properly whilst claiming to subscribe to it, then it is he who is in error, not the teaching. The meaning of the word 'Islam' itself means peace, love and security. There should be no compulsion in matters of faith is a clear injunction of the Qur'an. From cover to cover, the Holy Qur'an teaches love, affection, peace, reconciliation and the spirit of sacrifice. The Holy Qur'an states repeatedly that one who does not adopt righteousness is far removed from Allah, and therefore, is far removed from the teachings of Islam. Hence, if anybody portrays Islam as an extreme and violent religion filled with teachings of bloodshed, then such a portrayal has no link with the real Islam.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community practises only the true Islam and works purely to please God Almighty. If any Church or other place of worship stands in need of protection, they will find us standing shoulder to shoulder with them. If any message resonates from our mosques it will only be that of Allah is Great and that we bear witness that there is none worthy of worship except Him and Muhammad^{saw} is the Messenger of Allah.

A factor playing a major role in destroying the peace of the world is that some people perceive that as they are intelligent, well-educated and liberated, they are free to ridicule and mock founders of religions. To maintain peace in society it is necessary for one to eliminate all sentiments of hostility from one's heart and to increase one's lev-



els of tolerance. There is a need to stand in defence of the respect and reverence of each other's Prophet. The world is passing through restlessness and unease and this requires that by creating an atmosphere of love and affection, we remove this anxiety and fear, that we convey a message of love and peace to those around; that we learn to live with ever greater harmony and in a way better than before; and that we recognise the values of humanity.

Today, small-scale wars are erupting in the world, while in other places, the superpowers are claiming to try and bring about peace. It is no longer a secret that on the surface we are told one thing, but behind the scenes their real priorities and policies are secretly being fulfilled. Can peace in the world be established in such circumstances is the question. It is with regret that if we now observe the current circumstances of the world closely, we find that the foundation for another world war has already been laid. If after the Second World War a path of equity leading to justice was followed, we would not witness the current state of the world, whereby it has again become engulfed in the flames of war. As a consequence of so many countries having nuclear weapons, grudges and enmities are increasing and the world sits on the precipice of destruction. If these weapons of mass destruction explode, many future generations will never forgive us for having inflicted permanent disabilities

upon them. There is still time for the world to pay attention to the rights of the Creator and of His Creatures.

I believe that now, rather than focusing on the progress of the world, it is more important, indeed it is essential, that we urgently increase our efforts to save the world from this destruction. There is an urgent need for mankind to recognise its Creator as this is the only guarantor for the survival of humanity; otherwise, the world is rapidly moving towards self-destruction. If today man really wants to be successful in establishing peace, then instead of finding fault with others, he should try to control the Satan within. By removing his own evils, a person should present

a wonderful example of justice. I frequently remind the world that these excessive enmities towards others are completely usurping human values and so are leading the world towards obliteration.

As you have an influential voice in the world, I urge you to also inform the wider world that by placing obstacles in the way of the natural balance established by God, they are moving rapidly towards annihilation. This message needs to be conveyed further and wider than ever before and with much greater prominence.

All the religions of the world are in need of religious harmony and all the people of the world need a spirit of love, affection and

brotherhood to be created. It is my prayer that we all understand our responsibilities and play our role in establishing peace and love, and for the recognition of our Creator in the world. We ourselves have prayer, and we constantly beseech Allah that may this destruction of the world be avoided. I pray that we are saved from the destruction that awaits us.

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community International

Khalifatul Masih V - His Excellency Nicolas Sarkozy

Dear Mr. President,

In view of rapidly changing circumstances in the world, I must send you this letter because as President of the French Republic, you have the power to make decisions that will affect not only your nation, but the world as a whole. In my opinion, the world's governments should be extremely concerned about the current state of things in the world. Injustices and hostilities among nations are about to switch to a global conflict.

The last century witnessed two world wars. After WWI, the League of Nations was created, but the demands of justice were not so far honored and, consequently, this led to World War II, leading ultimately to the use of atomic bombs. Subsequently, the United Nations was created for the protection of human rights and to maintain peace on earth. However, if the means to avoid war have been considered, the fact remains that today we observe that the foundations for World War III has already been laid. Many nations, large and small, now have atomic bombs. What is worrying is the fact that some of the nuclear powers of the least important are irresponsible and ignorant compared to the devastating consequences of these weapons. In the event that nuclear weapons are used, it is not at all inconceivable that what occurs immediately after is horrific and that day is apocalyptic in nature. The weapons available today are so destructive they could lead to several genera-



tions of children born with severe physical and genetic defects. We know that in Japan, the only country to experience the devastating destruction of nuclear war, though seven decades have passed, the effects of atomic bombs continue to occur in newborns.

So I humbly ask you to do everything you can to extinguish the enmity and mistrust that persists between the Muslim and non-Muslim world. Among European countries, there are those who misinterpret the teachings and traditions of Islam and have imposed certain restrictions based on their fears and misunderstanding. Some other countries may follow suit. The Muslim extremists' animosity against the West would be further inflamed by any inappropriate action by the Western countries leading to even more religious intolerance and discord. Islam, however, is a peaceful religion that teaches us not to use evil to fight evil. We, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, follow this principle, we believe in finding peaceful solutions to all problems.

Unfortunately, we can only see a small minority of Muslims continue to present an entirely distorted picture of Islam and act on their beliefs. The love I have for the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, who was a Mercy for all mankind, compels me to tell you that you should not believe that their actions are the true Islam and that you keep using their misguided acts as a pretext to undermine the feelings of the majority of peaceful Muslims. Recently, a person without pity or heart shot of French soldiers in the South of France for no reason; few days later, he entered a school and killed three innocent Jewish children and their teachers. We observe such cruelty regularly in Islamic countries, so much so that all these acts give the opponents of Islam as well fuel their hatred to express that a base from which to pursue their objectives on a large scale.

As a Muslim, I want it absolutely clear that Islam does not allow cruelty or oppression in any form. The Holy Qur'an says that the killing of an innocent person is tantamount to killing all mankind. This is an injunction which is absolute and without exception. The Qur'an also declares that, even if a country or people vow of enmity towards you, this should not prevent you from acting in a totally fair and equitable to them. Animosity and rivalries must not lead you to take revenge or to act disproportionately. If you want the conflicts are resolved in the best way, try to search it for amicable solutions.

I understand that many Western countries have generously allowed the inhabitants of poor countries and underdeveloped to settle on their respective territories, among whom are Muslims. It is a fact that many Muslims live in your country and are citizens. They are mostly law-abiding and sincere. Indeed, Islam clearly states that the love for his country is an integral part of faith. The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community is on this principle, and does everything to promote this message throughout the world. This is the message I send to you also, that if the authentic teaching of Islam has spread in all directions, requirements that make love for the nation and peace and will be honored at national and International.

The humble petition that I make to you, as well as all world leaders, is that instead of using force to suppress other nations, have recourse to diplomacy, dialogue and wisdom. The major world powers, including France, must play their role is to establish peace. They should not use the actions of small countries as a pretext to disturb the harmony of the world. Also, do I ask you once again you try to do everything in your power to prevent the powers large or small to trigger World War III. There should be no doubt in our minds that if we fail in this task, the effects and implications of such a war will not be limited only to poor countries in Asia, Europe and the Americas, on the

contrary, our future generations will suffer the horrible consequences of our actions and our children worldwide are born with deformities. I pray that God Almighty will help you, and all other world leaders, to understand this message.

Please accept, Mr. President, the assurance of my best wishes and my most sincere prayers.

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community International

Khalifatul Masih V - Letter to the Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu

Dear Prime Minister,

I recently sent a letter to His Excellency Simon Peres, President of Israel, regarding the perilous state of affairs emerging in the world. In light of the rapidly changing circumstances, I felt it was essential for me to convey my message to you also, as you are the Head of the Government of your country.

The history of your nation is closely linked with prophethood and Divine revelation. Indeed, the Prophets of the Children of Israel made very clear prophecies regarding your nation's future. As a result of disobedience to the teachings of the Prophets and negligence towards their prophecies, the Children of Israel had to suffer difficulties and tribulations. If the leaders of your nation had remained firm in obedience to the Prophets, they could have been saved from enduring various misfortunes and adversities. Thus, it is your duty, perhaps even more so than others, to pay heed to the prophecies and injunctions of the Prophets.

I address you as the Khalifa of that Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi (peace be upon him), who was sent as the servant of the Holy Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him); and the Holy Prophet (peace and blessings of Allah be upon him) was sent as the Mercy for All Mankind amongst the brethren of the Children of Israel in the semblance of Moses (peace be upon him) (Deuteronomy, 18:18). Hence, it is my duty to remind you of God's Message. I hope that you

will come to be counted amongst those who hearken to God's Call, and who successfully find the right path; that path which is in accordance with the Guidance of God the Supreme, the Master of the heavens and the earth.

We hear reports in the news nowadays that you are preparing to attack Iran. Yet the horrific outcome of a World War is right before you. In the last World War, whilst millions of other people were killed, the lives of



hundreds of thousands of Jewish persons were also wasted. As the Prime Minister, it is your duty to protect the life of your nation. The current circumstances of the world indicate that a World War will not be fought between only two countries, rather blocs will come into formation. The threat of a World War breaking out is a very serious one. The life of Muslims, Christians and Jews are all at peril from it. If such a war occurs, it will result in a chain reaction of human destruction. The effects of this catastrophe will be felt by future generations, who will either be born disabled, or crippled.

This is because undoubtedly, such a war will involve atomic warfare.

Hence, it is my request to you that instead of leading the world into the grip of a World War, make maximum efforts to save the world from a global catastrophe. Instead of resolving disputes with force, you should try to resolve them through dialogue, so that we can gift our future generations with a bright future rather than 'gift' them with disability and defects.

I shall try to elucidate my views based on the following passages from your teachings, the first extract being from the Zabur:

'Do not fret because of evil-doers. Do not envy those who do wrong. For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither like the green herb. Trust in God, and do good. Dwell in the land, and enjoy safe pasture. Also delight yourself in God, and he will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to God. Trust also in him, and he will do this: He will make your righteousness go forth as the dawn, and your justice as the noon day sun. Rest in God, and wait patiently for him. Do not fret because of him who prospers in his way, because of the man who makes wicked plots happen. Cease from anger, and forsake wrath. Do not fret, it leads only to evildoing. For evildoers shall be cut off, but those who wait for God shall inherit the land. For yet a little while, and the wicked will be no more. Yes, though you look for his place, he is not there. But the humble shall inherit the land, and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.' (Zabur, 37:1-11)

Similarly, we find in the Torah:

‘Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small. [But] thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee. For all that do such things, [and] all that do unrighteously, [are] an abomina-

tion unto the LORD thy God.’ (Deuteronomy, 25:13-16)

Thus, world leaders, and particularly you should terminate the notion of governance by force and should refrain from oppressing the weak. Instead, strive to spread and promote justice and peace. By doing so, you will remain in peace yourselves, you will gain strength and world peace will also be established.

It is my prayer that you and other world leaders understand my message, recognise your station and status and fulfil your responsibilities.

Yours Sincerely,
Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community International

Khalifatul Masih V - Letter to the President of Iran

Dear Mr President,

Assalamo Alaikum Wa
Rahmatullahe Wa Barakatohu,

In light of the perilous state of affairs emerging in the world, I felt that it was essential for me to write to you, as you are the President of Iran, and thus you hold the authority to make decisions which will affect the future of your nation and the world at large. There is currently great agitation and restlessness in the world. In some areas small-scale wars have broken out, while in other places the superpowers act on the pretext of trying to bring about peace. Each country is engaged in activities to either help or oppose other countries, but the requirements of justice are not being fulfilled. It is with regret that if we now observe the current circumstances of the world, we find that the foundation for another world war has already been laid. As

so many countries, both large and small, have nuclear weapons, grudges and hostilities are increasing. In such a predicament, the Third World War looms almost certainly before us. As you are aware, the availability of nuclear weapons will mean that a Third World War will be an atomic war. Its ultimate result will be catastrophic, and the long term effects of such warfare could lead to future generations being born disabled or deformed.

It is my belief that as followers of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, who was sent to establish peace in the world, and who was the Rahmatullil Aalameen – the Mercy to all of Mankind – we do not and cannot desire for the world to suffer such a fate. This is why

my request to you is that as Iran is also a significant power in the world, it should play its role to prevent a Third World War. It is undeniably true that the major powers act with double standards. Their injustices have caused restlessness and disorder to spread all across the world. However, we cannot ignore the fact that some Muslim groups act inappropriately, and contrary to the teachings of Islam. Major world powers have used this as a pretext to



fulfil their vested interests by taking advantage of the poor Muslim countries. Thus, I request you once again, that you should focus all of your efforts and energies towards saving the world from a Third World War. The Holy Qur’an teaches Muslims that enmity against any nation should not hinder them from acting in a just manner. In Surah Al Mai’dah, Allah the Exalted instructs us:

“And let not the enmity of a people, that they hindered you from the Sacred Mosque, incite you to transgress. And help one another in righteousness and piety; but help not one another in sin and transgression. And fear Allah; surely, Allah is severe in punishment.” (Ch.5:V.3)

Similarly, in the same chapter of the Holy Qur’an we find the following commandment to Muslims:

“O ye who believe! Be steadfast in the cause of Allah, bearing witness in equity; and let not a people’s enmity incite you to act otherwise than with justice. Be always just, that is nearer to righteousness. And fear Allah. Surely, Allah is aware of what you do.”(Ch.5:V.9)

Hence, you should not oppose another nation merely out of enmity and hatred. I admit that Israel exceeds its limits, and has its eyes cast glance upon Iran. Indeed, if any country transgresses against your country, naturally you have the right to defend yourself. However, as far as possible disputes should be resolved through diplomacy and negotiations. This is my humble request to you, that rather than using force, use dialogue to try and resolve conflicts. The reason why I make this request is because I am the follower of that Chosen Person of God who came in this era as the True Servant of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}, and who claimed to be the Promised Messiah and Imam Mahdi. His mission was to bring mankind closer to God and to establish the rights of people in the manner our Master and Guide, the Rahmatullil Aalameen – the Mercy to all of Mankind – the Holy Prophet^{saw} demonstrated to us. May Allah the Exalted enable the Muslim Ummah to understand this beautiful teaching.

Wassalam,
Yours Sincerely,

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community International

Khalifatul Masih V - Letter to the Prime Minister of Canada

In his letter of 8th March 2012 to Mr Stephen Harper, the Prime Minister of Canada, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad(aba), Khalifatul Masih V, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, similarly warned of the impending outbreak



of a Third World War, and the horrific consequences that will ensue as a result. He mentioned that hostilities between nations, and injustices carried out by the major and minor powers, had already laid the foundation for a global catastrophe. He requested the Prime Minister to use his authority to help bring about peace in the world through purely peaceful means, rather than by the use of force. His Holiness wrote:

“Canada is widely considered to be one of the most just countries in the world. Your nation does not normally interfere in the internal problems of other countries. Further, we, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, have special ties of friendship with the people of Canada. Thus, I request you to strive to your utmost to prevent the major and minor powers from leading us into a devastating Third World War.”

Khalifatul Masih V - Letter to President Barack Obama

Dear Mr President,

In light of the perturbing state of affairs developing in the world, I felt that it was necessary for me to write to you, as you are the President of the United States of America, a country which is a world superpower, and thus you hold the authority to make decisions which will affect the future of your nation and the world at large.

There is currently great agitation and restlessness in the world. Small-scale wars have broken out in certain areas. Unfortunately, the superpowers have not been as successful as was anticipated in their efforts to establish peace in these conflict-hit regions. Globally, we find that almost every country is engaged in activities to either support, or oppose other countries; however, the requirements of justice are not being fulfilled. It is with regret that if we now observe the current circumstances of the world, we find that the foundation for another world war has already been laid. As so many countries, both large and small, have nuclear weapons, grudges and hostilities are increasing between nations. In such a predicament, the Third World War looms almost certainly before us. Such a war would surely involve atomic warfare; and therefore, we are witnessing the world head towards a terrifying destruction. If a path of equity and justice had been followed after the Second World War, we would not be witnessing the current state of the world today whereby it has become engulfed in the flames of war once again.

As we are all aware, the main causes that led to the Second World War were the failure of League of Nations and the economic crisis, which began in 1932. Today, leading econo-

mists state that there are numerous parallels between the current economic crisis and that of 1932. We observe that political and economic problems have once again led to wars between smaller nations, and to internal discord and discontentment becoming rife within these countries. This will ultimately result in certain powers emerging to the helm



of government, who will lead us to a world war. If in the smaller countries conflicts cannot be resolved through politics or diplomacy, it will lead to new blocs and groupings to form in the world. This will be the precursor for the outbreak of a Third World War. Hence, I believe that now, rather than focusing on the progress of the world, it is more important and indeed essential, that we urgently increase our efforts to save the world from this destruction. There is an urgent need for mankind to recognise its One God, Who is our Creator, as this is the only guarantor for the survival of humanity; otherwise, the world will continue to rapidly head towards self-destruction.

My request to you, and indeed to all world leaders, is that instead of using force to sup-

press other nations, use diplomacy, dialogue and wisdom. The major powers of the world, such as the United States, should play their role towards establishing peace. They should not use the acts of smaller countries as a pretext to disturb world harmony. Currently, nuclear arms are not only possessed by the United States and other major powers; rather,

even relatively smaller countries now possess such weapons of mass destruction, where those who are in power are often trigger-happy leaders who act without thought or consideration. Thus, it is my humble request to you to strive to your utmost to prevent the major and minor powers from erupting into a Third World War. There should be no doubt in our minds that if we fail in this task then the effects and aftermath of such a war will not be limited to only the poor countries of Asia, Europe and the Americas; rather, our future generations will have to bear the horrific consequences of our

actions and children everywhere in the world will be born disabled or deformed. They will never forgive their elders who led the world to a global catastrophe. Instead of being concerned for only our vested interests, we should consider our coming generations and strive to create a brighter future for them. May God the Exalted enable you, and all world leaders, to comprehend this message.

Yours Sincerely,

Mirza Masroor Ahmad
Khalifatul Masih V
Head of the Ahmadiyya Muslim
Community International

The world is green and pleasant. Allah made you vicegerents in it so that He might show you how to react to it. So beware of the beguilement of the world and the women. The first trial of the Bani Israel was through women.

(Muslim)

Leave alone that which involves thee in doubt and adhere to that which is free from doubt, for truth is comforting, falsehood is disturbing.

(Tirmidhi)

A person is not a believer unless he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.

(Bukhari and Muslim)



*Marked For Debate:
Geert Wilders'
(Mis)Reading of the Holy Qur'an*

By Naveed and Humera Malik

A Dutch
parliamentarian
and
Islamophobe, Geert Wilders
is the author of “Marked
for Death: Islam’s War
Against the West and Me,”
and producer of the widely-
discredited documentary
“Fitna,” which attempts to
paint the Holy Qur’an as a
violent book that incites to
evil. Although his bigotry
extends beyond Islam – in
February, for example, his
political party launched a
website encouraging Dutch
citizens to “report Eastern
European [immigrants] for
doing anything from ‘taking
your parking spaces’ to
‘taking your jobs’” – his
hate speech is directed
primarily towards Islam.¹
Later this year, Wilders
plans to release “Fitna
2,” focusing on the Holy
Prophet Muhammad^{sa}.

His principal criticism of Islam is that the Holy Qur’an incites to violence, extremism and aggression. Part I of this article takes a glance at his new book, and parts II and III address the verses he uses to criticize the Holy Qur’an, revealing not only his dishonesty and extreme prejudice, but also his ignorance of actual Islamic beliefs.

Part I: Marked for Death

Wilders’ self-aggrandizing autobiography is his latest, brazen attempt to thrust himself into wealthy and well-connected anti-Islamic circles in America. As for the merits of his actual criticisms, the book is even weaker than the *Fitna* “documentary,” and merits no serious consideration.

We do consider it unfortunate that he has had to live in constant fear for his life, and so, as peace-loving Muslims, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community has marked Wilders for debate, not death, that we may dispel once and for all his misunderstandings of Islam. Indeed we thank Mr. Wilders for writing his book; for when we expose his accusations as baseless lies, it will become easier to bring its readers to understand the truly beautiful religion of Islam.

As a detailed refutation is planned for the near future, here we will look at just one – albeit representative – example of Wilders’ deceitful approach to bashing Islam in his book.

Regarding his parliamentary colleague and former Muslim, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Wilders writes in “Marked for Death”:

“By renouncing her Islamic faith, she had committed apostasy, the ultimate crime in Islam, *for which the Koran prescribes the death penalty*; once you are Islamic, you are never allowed to leave” (emphasis mine, p. 8).

Mr. Wilders claims to have read the Qur’an many times. Fact: nowhere does the Holy Qur’an prescribe death for apostasy. Another fact: there is no secular punishment for apostasy in Islam. Whereas Wilders fails to give a single verse in support of his patently false accusation – precisely because none exists – we shall provide three, in successive chapters, to refute it. In Chapter 2, the Holy Qur’an addresses apostates specifically:

“And whoso from among you turns back from his faith...”

(Note: the Arabic word in this verse, *yartadid*, stems from the verbal noun *irtidad*, or apostasy.) What should we expect to read here? Something like ‘hunt him down and kill him,’ perhaps? On the contrary, the Qur’an

prescribes Muslims to do nothing at all for such a person’s entire lifetime. The verse continues:

“...and dies while he is a disbeliever, it is they whose works shall be in vain in this world and in the next” (2:218). Note that the Arabic word used in this verse, *yamut*, or “dies,” clearly signifies a *natural* death; the Qur’an distinguishes between natural death and killing by man, and would have used *qutila*, or “is killed” had it intended the latter.

In Chapter 3, God says that “people who have disbelieved after believing” shall “abide” under the curse of God, angels and men, “except those who repent thereafter and amend. And surely, Allah is Most Forgiving, Merciful” (3:87-90). In Chapter 4, we read: “Those who believe, then disbelieve, then *again* believe, then disbelieve...” (4:138). Now, if the Holy Qur’an indeed prescribes the death penalty for apostasy, why bother to note “except those who repent” from the apostates, or discuss those who “*again* believe” after their initial apostasy: according to Mr. Wilders, they should already have been killed! The facts are, there is no worldly punishment for apostasy in Islam, and Mr. Wilders is deliberately spreading misinformation.

Part II. Fitna

“Fitna” displays five verses from the Holy Qur’an,² each followed by various scenes of violence or hate, to promote the image that the Holy Qur’an encourages violence against non-Muslims. We address each of these verses in turn below.

1. “Frighten the Enemy” 8:61. The first verse is a portion of verse 61 from chapter eight, which reads:

“And make ready for them whatever you can of (armed) force and of mounted pickets at the frontier, whereby you may frighten the enemy of *Allah* and your enemy...”

He omits the rest of the verse and the following, related verse:

“...and others besides them whom you know not, (but) *Allah* knows them. And whatever you spend in the way of *Allah*, it shall be repaid to you in full and you shall not be wronged. And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in *Allah*. Surely, it is He Who is All-Hearing, All-Knowing,” (8:61-62).

The verse instructs Muslims on how to *prevent* war, not incite it. A standing army has always been the principal deterrent to invaders bent upon conquest (e.g., the neighboring

Mr. Wilders is famous for saying, “I don’t hate Muslims, I hate Islam.” Ironically, to justify this hatred, he invariably imputes the evil actions of misguided Muslims to the pristine teachings of Islam.

Romans and Persians). The verse guides the believers to prepare a standing force to “frighten” the enemy, not initiate hostilities towards it. It further instructs believers to erect walled defenses to deter foreign forces from attacking Muslim towns. The verse that follows it commands Muslims to “incline towards peace” if the enemy inclines towards peace. What then, is the criticism?

2. “Burning of Skin” 4:57. The second verse reads:

“Those who disbelieve in Our Signs, We shall soon cause them to enter Fire. As often as their skins are burnt up, We shall give them in exchange other skins that they may taste the punishment. Surely, *Allah* is Mighty, Wise,” (4:57).

Here, God is expressing His own displeasure with those people to whom He has sent a revealed book but who twisted its words and preferred the idolaters to the Muslims. He promises to such disbelievers the punishment of a burning hell, a non-controversial concept in line with Judaic and Christian teachings, with the only difference being that Islam teaches the concept of a temporary, reformative Hell, so that when the layers of evil skin are burned off, a new ‘skin of spirituality’ covers the reformed sinner, so that he may be admitted to Heaven. Most importantly, this verse states that God alone will be the One to punish the disbelievers, after death, and not the Muslims.

3. “Smite Necks, Bind in Fetters” 47:5. Of this verse, Wilders quotes only the portion he finds convenient, which is as follows:

“And when you meet (in regular battle) those who disbelieve, smite (their) necks; and when (you have overcome them), by causing great slaughter among them, bind fast the fetters...”

He omits what immediately follows:

“...then afterwards either *release them as a favor* or *by taking ransom*—until the war lays down its burdens. That is the ordinance...”

The phrase “in regular battle” does not appear explicitly in the Qur’an, but has been included in the translation to explain the

context of the verse, which appears in the chapter named “Muhammad,” but which is also called *Qital*, or “Fighting,” explaining the protocol of warfare. It is sheer lunacy to suggest this verse applies to every situation. For 1,400 years Muslims have lived alongside non-Muslims yet not gone about smiting their necks or binding them in fetters. The Holy Qur’an sanctions only defensive battles, prohibits aggression, and orders Muslims to incline towards peace once the enemy inclines towards peace. Mr. Wilders cannot answer for 1,400 years of history, nor for the present day, where in most Muslim-majority countries, “non-believers” live and practice their own faiths in peace.

4. “Seize and Kill Them” 4:90. The fourth verse reads:

“They wish that you should disbelieve as they have disbelieved, so that you may become all alike. Take not, therefore, friends from among them, until they emigrate in the way of *Allah*. And if they turn away, then seize them and kill them wherever you find them; and take no friend nor helper from among them,” (4:90).

Wilders is again guilty of ignoring the context of the verse, which has to do with battle; in particular, the verse applies to when the disbelievers, who unilaterally broke their peace treaty with the Muslims, journeyed to attack the believers in Madinah. The next verse is actually a continuation of the same thought, and qualifies the command to “take no friend nor helper from among them...”

“...except those who are connected with a people between whom and you there is a pact, or those who come to you, while their hearts shrink from fighting you or fighting their own people. [...] So if they keep aloof from you and fight you not, and make you an offer of peace, then (remember that) *Allah* has allowed you no way (of aggression) against them,” (4:91).

Verse 92 further explicates the multiple necessary conditions that must be met before Muslims are allowed to take up arms against aggressors. A simple reading of these verses

together exposes how Mr. Wilders attempts to deceive his audiences by projecting his own warped image of Islam, while deliberately concealing the obvious context of the Qur’an.

5. “Fight Them” 8:40. The final verse is the worst attempt yet by Wilders to portray the Holy Qur’an in a negative light. He cites the following:

“And fight them until there is no persecution and religion is wholly for *Allah*.”

He omits the rest of the verse, however, which reads:

“But if they desist, then surely *Allah* is Watchful of what they do.”

He also fails to cite the prior, related verse:

“Say to those who disbelieve, if they desist, that which is past [i.e., their horrendous crimes against humanity, what today amount to acts of genocide] will be forgiven them; but if they return (thereto), then verily, the example of the former people has already gone before them,” (8:39).

Together, these verses clearly show that Muslims are commanded to offer their brutal enemy peace and forgiveness. A very generous offer. But should the oppressor fail to accept, Muslims are commanded to defend themselves forcefully, an act that every nation today considers its sovereign right and responsibility.

And this being not their first, but the latest in a series of transgressions, it had become abundantly clear that the disbelievers would not relent until the Muslims were annihilated, so the Muslims were commanded to fight until achieving ultimate victory.

Wilders attempts to mislead his audience by translating *fitna* as “dissension,” whereas in the proper context, the word is understood as “persecution” of the Muslims, as they were a smaller, weaker group of innocent people, who were being brutally attacked by the idolaters for their faith in One God.

Part III: ‘The Holy Qur’an Incites to Violence’

Based on the twisting of such verses, Wilders has called for a ban on the Holy

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Qur'an in Holland, labeling it a "fascist" book and arguing that it incites toward aggression and extremism. In addition to the verses cited in *Fitna*, Wilders often presents the fifth verse of chapter nine, as evidence that Islam calls for violence against Jews and Christians. The entire verse is as follows:

"And when the consecrated months have passed, kill the idolaters wherever you find them and take them prisoners, and beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them at every place of ambush. But if they repent and observe Prayer and pay the *Zaka'at*, then leave their way (free.) Surely, *Allah* is Most Forgiving, Merciful," (9:5).

His Holiness Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, Head of the worldwide Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, replied to Wilders' allegation directly³ by explaining that the verse concerns a very specific group (namely, those "idolaters" who had broken a peace treaty with the Muslims and journeyed to Madinah in an effort to kill them), whereas Wilders tries to apply it to all non-Muslims for all time⁴ (Note that capital punishment for heinous crimes is currently practiced in the United States and more than 50 other countries around the world).

It is also important to remember that the preceding verses give these people respite for four months to reconsider their behavior and cease hostilities. Sadly, after four months passed, the enemies of Islam continued their hostilities against the Muslims. Only then was the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} commanded by God to meet them in battle to defend Muslims and the religion of Islam.

Despite deserving capital punishment, the God of Islam calls for mercy upon those heinous killers who repented and accepted

Islam during the sacred months. Wilders then tries to make it appear as if this compassionate act is a call for conversion by force. Were an idolater to be forcibly converted, it would contradict the Holy Qur'an, which states, "There should be no compulsion in religion" (2:257), and "for you your religion, and for me my religion" (109:7), in effect, prohibiting conversion by force and establishing religious freedom.

Finally, it must be emphasized that "idolaters" (*al-mushrikin* in Arabic) by definition exclude Jews and Christians, as the Holy Qur'an calls them *Ahl al-Kitab*, or "the People of the Book," who were taught to believe in One God.

More to Wilders than Meets the Eye

Although this article exposes Mr. Wilders' main criticisms of the Holy Qur'an as dishonest and unfounded, due to space considerations, it has had to ignore a number of issues, including, other, equally ridiculous criticisms of Islam, such as women in Islam are not highly valued; Wilders' reported ties to individuals and entities outside Holland, which support his anti-Islamic activities and fund his Party for Freedom (PVV); the legal ramifications of his hate speech, including a 2010 trial in which he was charged with inciting hate, and his temporary ban on entering the United Kingdom; and a host of other points suggesting that Mr. Wilders is part of a larger, deliberate anti-Islamic campaign propped up by financial backing and organization. What Geert Wilders is not, however, is an honest or serious critic of Islam.

Islam or Muslims?

Mr. Wilders is famous for saying, "I don't hate Muslims – I hate Islam"⁵. Ironically, to justify this hatred, Wilders invariably imputes the evil actions of misguided Muslims to the pristine teachings of Islam. We cannot deny that certain Muslims have twisted Islamic teachings to suit their own designs, just as those before them corrupted the pure teachings given to them to suit their own ends.

For this reason, God has sent the Promised Messiah, Hadrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, to divest Islam of the corrupt beliefs and practices of the misguided scholars. The interested reader should study his life and claim. His community stands in stark contrast to those whom Mr. Wilders portrays as the torchbearers of Islam. Its motto, which it preaches and practices, is "love for all, hatred for none" – not even for hatemongers. So if Mr. Wilders persists in judging Islam by the actions of a group of Muslims, let him look to Ahmadi Muslims. He shall find a peaceful, moderate community inviting him not to death, but debate. ♦

(Endnotes)

¹ Anthony Faiola, "In Ailing Europe, Far Right Finds a Growing Audience," *Washington Post*, May 1, 2012, A1.

² The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's translation and numbering of the Holy Qur'an is used for this article, not that of "Fitna."

³ Friday Sermon by Khalifatul Masih V, Hadrat Mirza Masroor Ahmad^{aba}, August 24, 2007.

⁴ In particular, reference is made to five tribes: Banu Khuza'ah, Banu Mudlij, Banu Bakr, Banu Damrah, and Banu Sulaim, who did not honor the treaties they made with the Muslims.

⁵ Ian Traynor, "I don't hate Muslims. I hate Islam," says Holland's rising political star" *The Observer*, February 16, 2008. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2008/feb/17/netherlands.islam>. Last accessed May 22, 2012.

“As a Jew, I am offended to my core. Muslims have no right to invoke Moses and Abraham. This is a delegitimization of Judaism. It is offensive and vile. And while Jesus is not my guy, the same thing goes for him. It is a delegitimization of Christianity. These are not Muslim prophets.”¹



This typical quote from Ms. Pamela Geller

perfectly represents her perplexing manner of argumentation and the blatant ignorance deeply rooted in her work. In this particular case, Ms. Geller takes exception with Islam’s acceptance of the prophethood of Abraham^{as}, Moses^{as} and Jesus Christ^{as}. Whereas most people view common beliefs as a means of building bridges of kinship between Jews, Christians and Muslims; Geller feels Muslim beliefs in such prophets is “offensive and vile.” Apparently she feels that Jews have exclusive rights to believe in Moses^{as} and Abraham^{as}. Paradoxically, her ignorance has no problem granting

Christians the right to invoke Moses^{as} and Abraham^{as} without delegitimizing Judaism.

Accustomed to providing responses to substantive attacks against Islam, I found it challenging to determine the appropriate manner in which to address the attacks levied against Islam by Ms. Geller, as her work is mostly outrageous and irrational. She does not purport to be a scholar of Islam, nor does she possess academic

or experiential credentials that provide any unique insight into Islam. Her self-education about Muslims began after 9/11, when she “felt guilty that I didn’t know who had attacked my country.” Deceived by the false premise that Islam attacked this great nation on 9/11, Ms. Geller searched for reasons to loathe the Islamic faith, seeking education from those most antagonistic of Islam, such as Bat Ye’or (pseudonym for

Ms. Gisèle Littman, a Jewish-Egyptian French writer who imputes Christian and Jewish suffering to the theological beliefs of Islam), Ibn Warraq (pseudonym for a Pakistani author well known for writing about leaving Islam), and Daniel Pipes (American author who extensively criticizes Islam but whom Ms. Geller eventually rejected due to his belief in the existence of a moderate form of Islam).²

Rather than relying on scholarship for substantive arguments against Islam, Ms. Geller often resorts to shock-value through outlandish statements. She has falsely claimed that President Obama is a Muslim with the aim of fostering America’s submission to Islam^{3 4}, Arabic is not a language but “the spearhead of an ideological project

that is deeply opposed to the United States”⁵, Hitler and Nazism were inspired by Islam^{viii} (therefore “devout Muslims should be prohibited from military service”⁶), that “Islam is the most anti-Semitic, genocidal ideology in the world”⁷, called for the removal of the Dome of the Rock from the Temple Mount in Jerusalem⁸, bought bus ads offering Muslims an opportunity to leave Islam⁹, and called for boycotts of both Campbell’s soup and Butterball turkeys for offering a certified halal food line.

Her claims are so bizarre that one struggles to understand whether they are worthy of a response. Indeed, one can understand why Charles Johnson, who runs the blog *Little Green Footballs* where Pamela

Geller used to write, said about her: “*That would be Ms. Geller. She has a very long record of absolute lunacy, mixed with bigotry and racism and I am far from the only person to point this out.*”¹⁰

Yet, hidden beneath the rubble of vitriolic attacks, campaigns, rallies and statements lie tangible attacks against the very teachings of Islam, and it is imperative to address these attacks, as they form the foundation

Confronting Pamela Geller

By Harris Zafar

Advancing the scholarship of Robert Spencer, she advances the theory that deception and dishonesty are permitted to Muslims to advance their faith, although no verse from the Qur'an is provided as a clear instruction for this practice.

.....
As part of its effort to revive the teachings of Islam, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community entirely rejects the claim that Islam permits deception or lying. Quite to the contrary, the Qur'an clearly articulates honesty as incumbent upon Muslims when it says, "And confound not truth with falsehood nor hide the truth, knowingly"¹⁸ as well as "Most hateful is it in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do."¹⁹

upon which Ms. Geller attempts to smear Islam. Most commonly, Ms. Geller draws attention to the writings of Robert Spencer in her allegations against Islam. This duo works together extensively in order to attack the Islamic Faith, commonly highlighted by Ms. Geller's attention-getting statements.

Apostasy

"Apostasy is the most egregious of Islamic crimes."¹¹ One common allegation the two have advanced together is that Islam prescribes a death penalty for apostasy. They cite real-life troubling accounts of people (e.g. Iranian Pastor Youcef Nadarkhani) punished for converting from Islam to another religion. This issue is real and undeniably must be addressed, but on this point let it be clear that there is nothing contained within the Holy Qur'an – the highest authoritative source in Islam – that sanctions any punishment for apostasy.

The Qur'an contains at least 10 verses about those who leave Islam, none of which sanction death in response. Exemplifying the Qur'an's principles, the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} never ordered any person to be killed for apostasy. In fact, in his peace treaty with Meccans, his acceptance of the condition that any Muslim recanting their faith be allowed to return to Mecca unharmed demonstrates that no punishment exists for apostasy, as he would never accept anything that went against the Shariah.

The oft-cited proponent of radical interpretations of Islam is the influential

cleric and founder of the Pakistani political party *Jamaat-e-Islami*, Abul Ala Maududi, who wrote, "In our domain we neither allow any Muslim to change his religion nor allow any other religion to propagate its faith."¹² He believed the Qur'an's injunction that there can be no compulsion in religion did not apply to Muslims, who must be compelled to remain a Muslim. Sadly, present-day scholars (e.g., Dr. Bilal Philips¹³) continue to advance this preposterous theory.

Islam affords all people – believers and non-believers – freedom of conscience and religion, with no threat of coercion in matters of faith. God's universal prohibition from religious compulsion came with no qualifiers nor exceptions and must be applied to complementary Qur'anic verses 10:109¹⁴ and 88:22-23¹⁵ where God instructs Prophet Muhammad^{sa} that he is not appointed to be a keeper over the people. Not even the Prophet was permitted to coerce his people to believe. The Promised Messiah^{as} and founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community also condemned any punishment for apostasy and any violence to spread faith. He wrote, "Religion is worth the name only so long as it is in consonance with reason. If it fails to satisfy that requisite, if it has to make up for its discomfiture in argument by handling the sword, it needs no other argument for its falsification. The sword it wields cuts its own throat before reaching others."

Taqiyya

"Deception, taqiya, and and lies are essential to advancing Islam (according the unflushable Koran.)"¹⁶ Another common allegation Ms. Geller makes – with references to the writings of Mr. Spencer – is that Muslims engage in the practice of *taqiyya* – which she defines as the practice of lying to non-Muslims in order to advance the cause of Islam (though most Sunni and Shia scholars define it as concealing one's beliefs explicitly to avoid physical harm). She levies this allegation against any Muslims speaking for peace, reconciliation or rationality. This exposes her inherent hypocrisy, as she criticizes Muslims for not being loyal to the US, but when they do pledge allegiance to the US, she claims it is deception (as she did with our *Muslims for Loyalty* efforts¹⁷).

As with most of her accusations against Islam, there is indeed truth to be found in the writings and actions of some fanatics, but Ms. Geller conflates their words with Islam. Advancing the scholarship of Robert Spencer, she advances the theory that deception and dishonesty are permitted to Muslims to advance their faith, although no verse from the Qur'an is provided as a clear instruction for this practice.

As part of its effort to revive the teachings of Islam, the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community entirely rejects the claim that Islam permits deception or lying. Quite to the contrary, the Qur'an clearly articulates honesty as incumbent upon Muslims when

it says, “*And confound not truth with falsehood nor hide the truth, knowingly*”¹⁸ as well as “*Most hateful is it in the sight of Allah that you say what you do not do.*”¹⁹ Muslims have also been warned repeatedly to avoid language that may have double meanings in any situation and to, rather, employ straightforward and clear speech²⁰ when dealing with members of our own household, neighbors or even enemies.

Allah continues in the Quran by instructing Muslims to be truthful even if doing so will harm them, their family or the community.

“*O ye who believe! Be strict in observing justice, and be witnesses for Allah, even through it be against yourselves or against parents and kindred. Whether he be rich or poor, Allah is more regardful of them both than you are. Therefore follow not low desires so that you may be able to act equitably. And if you conceal the truth or evade it, then remember that Allah is well aware of what you do.*”²¹

Thus is every Muslim instructed to bear true testimony even if it is against themselves, other Muslims, children, parents, kin, etc. Even if our honor or property is at stake, we are required to be fair, just and honest. The very idea that believers may legitimately deceive unbelievers when under pressure is patently absurd and not grounded in the teachings of the Quran.

Partnership with Robert Spencer

Ms. Geller’s *modus operandi* is to use head-turning statements to merely draw attention to the message of Robert Spencer. The two of them co-founded an organization (Stop Islamization of America) whose actions the Anti-Defamation League concluded “*promotes a conspiratorial anti-Muslim agenda under the guise of fighting radical Islam.*”²²

Together, they produce a pair very similar to that of Abu Lahab and his wife, as described in the Quran. Abu Lahab (literally “Father of Flame”) was the nickname given to the Prophet’s uncle, ‘Abd-ul-‘Uzza, because of his fiery temper and reprehensible stance towards the Prophet^{sa}. He made every effort to follow Prophet Muhammad^{saw} everywhere and dissuade people from see-

ing or paying any attention to him, calling him a mad man and liar. While Abu Lahab made efforts to obstruct Muhammad’s true message from people, his wife would make outrageous efforts such as scattering thorns and even garbage on the path on which the Prophet walked to either hurt him or impede his progress. More than anything, though, she was known for her slander and defamation of the Prophet.

Driven by their fiery hatred of Islam and its Prophet, Spencer and Geller have unwittingly become the modern day Abu Lahab and his wife. Fittingly Chapter 111 of the Quran (entitled *al-Lahab*) predicts that the plotting of such nefarious enemies of Islam would appear but ultimately fail miserably, and their wealth will not avail them.

Like Abu Lahab’s wife, Ms. Geller will continually attempt to obstruct any effort to spread the truth of Islam. She expressed this commitment recently on two of her blogs when she targeted me with the following words: “*Yes, Zafar, there are always going to be truth tellers in this world exposing these lies. Yes, Zafar, there are always going to be free men fighting for freedom of speech, freedom of conscience and individual rights. Yes, Zafar, I will fight you in the media, I will fight you on the billboards, I will fight you on radio. We will never give up.*”^{23 24}

If Ms. Geller is not herself committing ‘taqiyya’ here, she has become hysterical with delusions of grandeur, coupled with paranoia of an imaginary global conspiracy. Ms. Geller, if you truly want to ‘fight’ us with any type of honor and sense, lay aside your crass tactics and put your words into action. It’s time to publicly end your absurdity and fiery propaganda, which is no match for the truth of Islam, as revived by the Promised Messiah^{as} and rightly guided Reformer, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian. Prove that you mean it when you say you are willing to fight us anywhere. Prove I am wrong that you are nothing without the likes of Robert Spencer or David Yerushalmi by your side. You will find the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community just as willing to debate you in public, as long as you are honest about this offer and not practicing deception. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Pamela Geller, “Islam: This is defamation of Religion,” December 2009, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2009/12/islam-this-is-defamation-of-religion.html

² NY Times, “Outraged, and Outrageous,” October 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/10/nyregion/10geller.html>

³ Pamela Geller, “FACT: Obama Hussein Practiced Islam,” Atlas Shrugs, January 2008, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2008/01/fact-obama-huss.html

⁴ Pamela Geller, “Obama’s Islam: Now he tells us,” WorldNetDaily, June 10, 2009, <http://www.wnd.com/index.php?fa=PAGE.view&pageId=100660>

⁵ Pamela Geller, “Texas School District Backs Off Mandatory Arabic Classes,” Atlas Shrugs, February 2011, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2011/02/texas-school-district-backs-off-mandatory-arabic-classes.html

⁶ Pamela Geller, “It Isn’t Political Correctness; It’s Shariah,” The American Thinker, November 2009, http://www.americanthinker.com/2009/11/it_isnt_political_correctness.html

⁷ Pamela Geller, “NY Times Con Job: Daisy Khan had never seen so many Jews in her life,” November 2010, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2010/11/new-york-times-con-job-daisy-khan-had-never-seen-so-many-jews-in-her-life.html

⁸ Pamela Geller, Atlas Shrugs, September 2009, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2009/09/erev-yom-muslim-riot-attack-jews-in-jerusalem-policemen-wounded-in-temple-mt-riots.html

⁹ “Pamela Geller’s ‘Leaving Islam?’ Bus Ads Cause Controversy,” Huffington Post, May 2010, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/05/26/pamela-gellers-leaving-is_n_591112.html

¹⁰ “Pamela Geller: American patriot or extremist firebrand?,” The Independent, May 2011, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/pamela-geller-american-patriot-or-extremist-firebrand-2282486.html>

¹¹ Pamela Geller, “Christian Science Monitor (!) Shills for Death Penalty for Apostates,” Atlas Shrugs, July 2010, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2010/07/christian-science-monitor-shills-for-death-penalty-for-apostates.html

¹² Abul Ala Maududi, “Murtadd ki saza Islami qanun main,” (Lahore: Islamic Publications Ltd, 1981 8th ed.), 32.

¹³ Dr. Bilal Philips, “Apostasy, Alcohol – Contemporary Issues,” December 2006, http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_detailpage&v=IBJmm-nfEow#t=297s

¹⁴ Holy Quran, 10:109 contains the instruction from God to Prophet Muhammad to say the following to all people: “O mankind, the Truth has indeed come to you from your Lord. Then whoso follows the guidance, follows it only for the good of his own self, and whoso errs does so only to his own detriment. I am not appointed a keeper over you.”

¹⁵ Holy Quran, 88:22-23 contains the words from God to the Prophet Muhammad: “Admonish, therefore, for thou art but an admonisher; Thou hast no authority to compel them.”

¹⁶ Pamela Geller, “Not to put to fine a point oni,” Atlas Shrugs, July 2007, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2007/07/not-to-put-to-f.html

¹⁷ Pamela Geller, “Muslims for Loyalty” Pledge Launched by Sect Rejected by Islam,” Atlas Shrugs, January 2011,

http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2011/01/muslims-for-loyalty-pledge-launched-by-sect-rejected-by-islam.html

¹⁸ Holy Quran, 4:23

¹⁹ Holy Quran 61:4

²⁰ Holy Quran, 33:71, states “O ye who believe! Fear Allah, and say the straightforward word.”

²¹ Holy Quran, 4:136

²² “Background: Stop Islamization of America (SIOA),” Anti-Defamation League, March 25, 2011, <http://www.adl.org/main/Extremism/sioa.htm>

²³ Pamela Geller, Atlas Shrugs, March 2012, http://atlasshrugs2000.typepad.com/atlas_shrugs/2012/03/cnn-looks-to-repair-sharias-reputation-but.html

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One cannot study the modern onslaught of propaganda against Islam without quickly encountering Robert Spencer. With his furious activity of speaking engagements, publishing and blogging since 9/11, he has almost single-handedly misled and made paranoid an entire generation of Americans who were hitherto completely clueless, about Islam. His book titles alone telegraph his views on Islam and attract those with *axes to grind*.

■ “Religion of Peace?: Why Christianity Is and Islam Isn’t”.

■ “The Complete Infidel’s Guide to the Koran”

■ The Truth About Muhammad: Founder of the World’s Most Intolerant Religion”

■ “The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam (and the Crusades)”

■ “Stealth Jihad: How Radical Islam is Subverting America without Guns or Bombs”

With titles like these, it is comical that Spencer is taken seriously at all. But he is. He has frequently appeared as an ‘expert’ on Islam on numerous radio and major television networks. He has spoken at dozens of major universities including Ivy League schools. His articles have been published in numerous prominent newspapers on an ongoing basis. According to his blog *Jihadwatch*, Spencer has even “led seminars on Islam and *jihad* for the United States Central Command, United States Army Command and General Staff College, the U.S. Army’s Asymmetric Warfare Group, the FBI, the Joint Terrorism Task Force, and the U.S. intelligence community.”

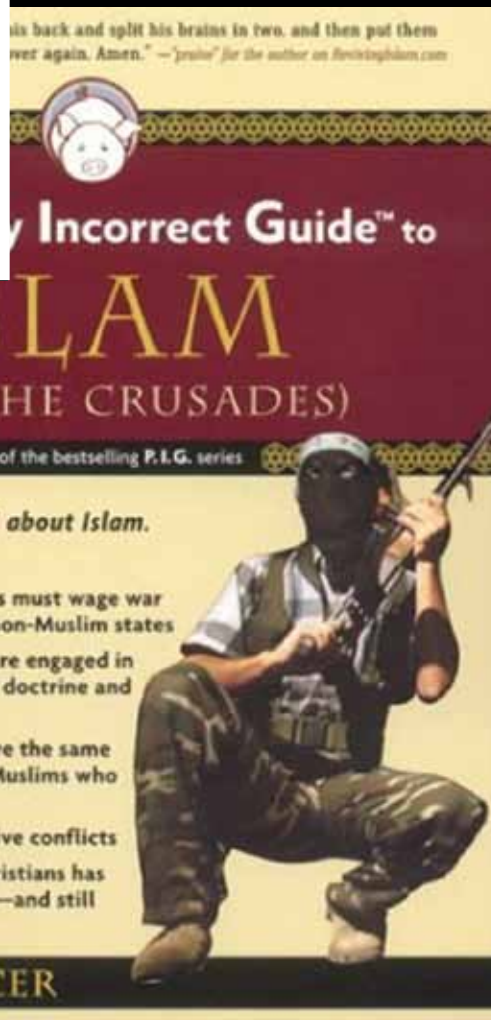
Spencer’s Background

So what credentials of Islamic scholarship does this very influential voice hold and from where did he emerge?

Spencer attained a Master’s degree in Religious Studies in the mid-1980s, writing his thesis on *Catholic* history. Having no formal instruction in Islam, he claims to have studied Islam on his own since then, urged on by his “enduring fascination” with the religion, which spawned from listening to stories told to him by his grandparents; he claims they

Welcome to the World of Robert Spencer: Master of Misinformation

By Abdur Rahim Hubbs



were forced to emigrate from Turkey due to their refusal to convert to Islam.

Besides his “enduring fascination”, Spencer’s ire against Islam has, no doubt, been shaped by his right-wing affiliations. He has served the conservative ‘Heritage Foundation’ think-tank and is currently funded by neo-conservative David Horowitz, whose ‘Freedom Center’ pays him a salary of over \$150,000 annually to run his anti-Islam blog. Horowitz, born to Communist parents who indoctrinated him with Soviet propaganda films as a child, became a leading Marxist activist in his early life. Later, after becoming disillusioned with leftist ideologies, Horowitz rebounded hard to the Right and eventually (as Communism collapsed) turned his confused frustrations towards Islam as the new enemy.

With such background and affiliations, it is easy to see how Spencer’s “scholarship” is so tainted.

Spencer’s Main Tactics

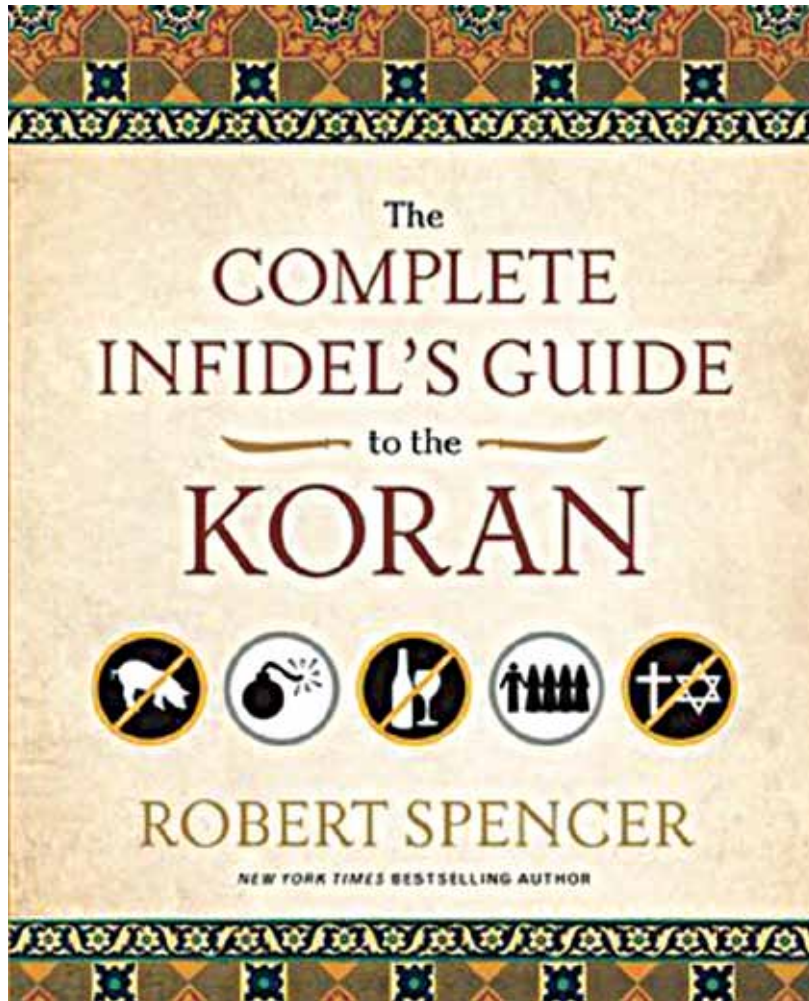
When boiled down, Spencer’s tactics to ‘prove’ his contentions are quite predictable. Though he presents himself as a scholar, he consistently and unforgivably distorts the message of Islam.

1. Contextual Dishonesty

One of his main ploys is to present verses of the Holy Qur’an or *ahadith* (sayings of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}), out of context. Spencer waxes in his articles, books and media appearances about Islam being a religion of war and conquest, pointing out that this is a requirement of faith and commandment in the Qur’an. Anyone who has given the Holy Qur’an a legitimate study knows that any verses commanding Muslims to fight disbelievers are invariably buffered by verses before and after, that instruct numerous parameters and clarifications. Let us take a few examples:

[2:191] “And fight in the cause of Allah against those who fight against you, but do not transgress. Surely, Allah loves not the transgressors.”

[2:194] “... But if they desist, then remember that no hostility is allowed except against the aggressors.”



[2:221] “And Allah knows the mischief-maker from the reformer.”

[8:62] “And if they incline towards peace, incline thou also towards it, and put thy trust in Allah.”

Of course, Mr. Spencer conveniently leaves these qualifiers out while his unknowing audience gasps in horror that the Qur’an seemingly commands wanton violence and murder. Spencer presents Islam as a “violent political ideology more than a religion” and paints Muhammad^{sa} as a warmongering conqueror. This is, of course, nothing new in the realm of Western portrayals of Islam, but Spencer takes such devices to new lows.

2. Dubious Sources

Like verses from the Qur’an, Spencer has also cherry-picked his sources. He often argues that he is merely quoting authentic Islamic sources and scholars “accepted by all Muslims”. While some of these historical personalities and their works are respected to one degree or another by Muslims, not all are and they are certainly not the final word on Islam. Their writings are to be taken with a grain of salt and should be judged according to the teachings of the authentic *Mujadideen* (Reformers) and especially the Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}. For the past 120 years, his teachings have guided Ahmadi Muslims away from fanaticism and violent interpretations to become the preeminent unified and organized Muslim community on the planet.

Of some of the suspect sources that Spencer often quotes, here’s a brief summary:

Tafseer of Ibn Kathir (1301-1373 CE) - A Shafi’i legalist, Ibn Kathir was a commentator of the Holy Qur’an who lived six centuries

after Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. While his *tafseer* (commentary) is certainly a historical milestone, it is 700 years old and not the be-all and end-all commentary of the Qur’an that Spencer would have his readers believe. The Qur’an is a living book that can never be frozen in time or meaning and requires perpetual study to elucidate its meaning.

Sirat / Ibn Ishaq (died 767 CE): Author of *Sirat Rasulallah* (Life of The Prophet), Ibn Ishaq used various oral traditions of his day (a century after the life of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}) to compile stories, pre-Islamic history and even poetry. His work, while valuable in many ways, is not reliable as fact. Many of the narrations in his *Sirat* are without legitimate

isnad (chains of transmitters). Some have no *isnad* at all. Some of the stories recorded in the *Sirat* are nothing more than the wicked gossip of the day and directly contradict far more proven collections of *ahadith* and the Qur'an itself.

It should be noted that the great Imam Bukhari wouldn't use Ibn Ishaq's narrations as they were considered severely lacking. Ibn Ishaq's original work does not exist, but is instead largely preserved by being the basis for later *Sirat* (especially **Ibn Hisham** and **Tabari** who largely copied from his work). It should be noted that all *Sirat* are, at best, quaternary sources in Islam. They contain errors and even fabrications and, as many of their authors admit, were not meant to be taken as fact, but instead only as a compilation of the stories current in their day. With this said, Spencer relies heavily on these flawed sources. Out of 400 footnotes in "The Truth About Muhammad" Spencer has referenced *Sirat* over 200 times.

Al-Waqidi (748-822 CE): An early historian of Islam, Al-Waqidi is universally dismissed as an unreliable liar by the the most famous scholars and Imams of Islamic history. Imam Shafi, the famous jurist and scholar said, "the books written by Al-Waqidi are nothing but heaps of lies." For Spencer to have used anything from Waqidi as an "authentic source" is ridiculous.

Spencer completely ignores the elucidations of the great Islamic Saints, *Mujadideen* and the Promised Messiah^{as} and instead relies on these flawed references and the ravings of modern terrorists to inform his readers.

3. Double Standards

When it comes to double standards, Spencer has no equal. Himself a Catholic, one would think that Mr. Spencer would have some shame. Instead, he puts forward conspiracies of sinister motives and a laughable rewriting of history.

One concept Spencer has made much about is that of *taqiyyah* ('deception' in Arabic). In "The Politically Incorrect Guide to Islam," he has named a chapter *Islamic Law: Lie, Steal and Kill*, in a pathetic attempt to twist facts into fiction.

Extrapolating from a practice that Shia and some Sunni scholars define as lying or deception under duress, or to avoid physical harm, Spencer has sought to create a mass

conspiracy where none exist. His idea, that has reverberated over the entire internet discussion of Islam, presupposes that Islam allows and even promotes deception in all of its dealings with non-Muslims. According to Spencer and now most of the anti-Islam cult, it is believed that anything peaceful or endearing that a Muslim says is pure deception to cover a master-plan to take over the world and subject it to a brutal and repressive interpretation of *shari'ah* law.

Spencer conflates lying or deception to avoid physical harm in warfare (as a military tactic or as an insincere renunciation of faith to save one's own life) with the concept of treachery. Treachery is a willful and deceptive betrayal of trust, which is strictly forbidden in Islam and which has no precedent in the life of Prophet Muhammad^{saw} and certainly no support in the Holy Qur'an. For Spencer to mix these two concepts fits into the earlier discussion of contextual dishonesty as well as the current one of double standards; did Christian soldiers never feign maneuvers in battle? Should they have been completely forthright and honest with their enemies as to what their plans were? Would they have been blamed had they faked renunciation of their faith under duress to save their own lives? No sincere person would argue these things.

Spencer's double standard glares most when it comes to warfare itself. When it comes to Islam, Spencer cries "Violence!" and "Conquest!", ignoring his own Bible and church history. While the Qur'an and the Holy Prophet^{saw} put strict standards on warfare to make it as just and least devastating as possible, the Bible has no such rules. Passages in the Bible give no parameters regarding conflict and instead seem to openly support genocide. Any Qur'anic verses that Spencer cites that supposedly support conquest or coercion, pale in comparison to passages in the Bible. One must ask Spencer, where in the Qur'an do we find anything like these verses from the Bible:

"Thus saith the Lord of hosts ... go and smite Amalek, and utterly destroy all that they have, and spare them not; but slay both man and woman, infant and suckling, ox and sheep, camel and ass," 1 Samuel 15:2-3.

For Spencer to try and turn Qur'anic verses into something evil and ignore such verses in his own scripture shows the extreme hypocrisy in his rhetoric.

The Summation and Result of Spencer's Work

In studying Spencer and his polemics, one gets the all too familiar feeling of listening to the ravings of a fanatic *mullah* (Muslim cleric) with angry motives. Like the rabid *mullahs*, Spencer has no sense of true scholarship and is blinded by his own cynical agenda, playing on his audience's fear, prejudice and angst. If readers want a thorough primer of the extremist rationalization of Islam, Robert Spencer is their man. With just a slight shift, he could very well serve as a spokesman for Al-Qaeda.

The results of Spencer's disinformation campaign are increasingly apparent. When compared to six months after 9/11, the percentage of people in America that now believe Islam encourages violence, has doubled. Right wing politicians have seized on the hysteria and made platforms out of the rhetoric Spencer has been sowing for the past decade. There are now calls to preemptively ban *shariah* by constitutional amendments and never-ending absurd accusations that President Obama, is a secret Muslim intent on "Islamizing" the United States.

Even more disturbing, though, is that Spencer's propaganda inspired Anders Breivik, the right-wing terrorist who killed eight people in the 2011 Oslo bombing and another 68 at a youth camp by shooting. Breivik cited Spencer's blog more than 160 times in his anti-Islam manifesto and views his terroristic massacre as "saving" Norway and Europe from "the Muslim takeover". And it is this disturbing irony that lies at the heart of the likes of Robert Spencer and Breivik, that they both mimic those fanatic *imams* and *jihadi* terrorists that they claim to be fighting against, using the same false logic, double standards and heinous behavior to fan the flames of hatred and terror.

Robert Spencer has become an American *mullah*. He is the perfect counterpart to the fanatics spoiling the Muslim world, using the same tactics and rhetoric, misquoting the same verses, and citing the same dubious sources. And now he inspires the same hysterical and bloody results. ♦

ENDNOTES

(WikipediaThe Life and Character of The Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, Mirza Bashir Ahmad, M.A. (alislam.org) Jihadwatch.org Sourcewatch.org spencerwatch.com <http://www.businessinsider.com/islam-encourages-violence-good-magazine-tumblr-911-2011-4#comment-4dbb47d849e2ae4c34130000> (article about Pew Poll)



A GOD WHO HATES

THE COURAGEOUS WOMAN
WHO INFLAMED THE MUSLIM WORLD
SPEAKS OUT AGAINST THE
EVILS OF ISLAM

WAFSA SULTAN

By Ayesha N. Rashid

As the title of her book, “A God Who Hates”, demonstrates, Wafa Sultan makes several fallacious accusations against the God of Islam - Allah . She also misrepresents various other Islamic concepts, traditions, personalities, and historical events. Since it is impossible to address each of these misrepresentations adequately in one article, this article repudiates Sultan’s primary accusations against Allah . This repudiation also provides readers an example of Sultan’s general habit of misrepresentation when discussing Islamic beliefs in general.

**A
woman
who
hates
the
God
who
loves**

First, Allah is clear that His greatest attributes are His Grace and Mercy—not His Wrath. Next, His attributes are relative to man’s needs. For example, when a people dismiss His Mercy and Grace and exceed in their mischief, then to reform them His attributes of being the Avenger and Afflicter come into action.

Sultan makes six serious yet baseless arguments against Allah—this paper addresses each of them.

Her first argument is about the concept of *jihad*. In the beginning of her book Sultan accuses Allah for the acts of suicide bombers.¹ She propagates *jihad* as a commandment to kill non-believers, giving strength to her idea that Allah is unmerciful. In actuality, Islam only permits defensive wars.² Furthermore, Allah forbids creating disorder in a society where peace has already prevailed.³ Thus, the ideas of killing in the name of Allah, let alone suicide bombing, are both un-Islamic and also disobediences to Allah.

Secondly, Sultan makes a fallacious claim about the concept of God in Islam. In her opinion, the concept of Allah emerged as a result of the Arabs’ demand for a being higher and scarier than their fears of the unseen.⁴ She alleges that it was the insecure, deserted environment of sixth century Arabia that originated the need for God. This argument is meritless. Karen Armstrong’s book “A History of God,” traces the concept of worshipping a Sky God in the pre-historic era—long before Islam’s advent. Many Arab Christians and Jews prior to Islam held a distinct concept of God. Many Arabs, including Prophet Muhammad’s^{saw} family, were Unitarians. Hence, Islam refined, but did not introduce, the concept of God. Furthermore, Sultan contradicts herself when she later accuses Allah to have borrowed His attributes from previous gods. How could that have possibly happened, when the need for a God was just arising in the Arab world?

Thirdly, she accuses only the God of Islam to be a tyrant. Although Sultan claims to be an atheist, her prejudice is solely against Islam. In her effort to prove Islam to be a violent religion and other religions to be of gentle nature, she altogether ignores the violent teachings of other faiths. For example, Jeremiah 10:10 says “At His wrath the earth shall tremble, and the nations shall not be able to abide His indignation.”

Isaiah 9:19 says, “Through the wrath of the LORD of hosts is the land darkened, and the people shall be as the fuel of the fire: no man shall spare his brother.” Psalms 137:9 adds, “Blessed shall he be who takes your babies and smashes them against the rocks!” These are but a few of numerous examples from the Bible that show the “not so merciful” qualities of gods other than Allah. To be sure, these are not merely the attributes of the Biblical god but real life events of which God approved. The flood of Noah^{as},⁵ the Seventh plague of Egypt,⁶ the drowning of the Egyptian army,⁷ God’s seven year worldwide famine,⁸ God’s wrath upon those who complained to Him,⁹ etc. are all documented in the Bible as a result of God’s wrath—nullifying Sultan’s assertion that the concept of gods in other religions is only of mercy and kindness.

In her fourth allegation against Allah, Sultan claims that His beautiful attributes are borrowed from past religions, while His allegedly repugnant qualities are not found in other gods.¹⁰ This allegation needs to be addressed in two parts. Firstly, Islam is the last Abrahamic faith; hence, the similarities are inevitable. The Qur’an has never claimed to present a message contradictory to the pristine teachings of previous faiths. Instead it says, “Wherein are lasting commandments,”¹¹ i.e. the Qur’an is the compendium of all that is good, lasting, and imperishable in the teachings of former revealed scriptures.

Secondly, Sultan’s claim that any good attribute of Allah is “borrowed” from the Bible, is patently false. The Old Testament presents only thirteen attributes of God. The majority of these attributes express God’s oneness, supremacy, and eternity. Others express His treatment of people as the Healer, the Peaceful, or the Jealous.

Her fifth accusation against Allah is about His glorious attributes. While the Bible only presents thirteen attributes of God, the Qur’an, on the other hand, presents over a hundred attributes of Allah—and each attribute contains deep connotations

that Sultan misses. For example, Sultan objects to Allah’s attribute of *Al Jabbar* i.e. the Compeller. *Al Jabbar*, in the original Arabic, denotes to favor and patronize a needy person to help reform with domination and might, or to mend as opposed to breaking. This attribute, therefore, signifies the Divine quality to amend where things have gone wrong.

Sultan also objects to several other attributes of Allah, including, the Subduer, the Bringer of Death, the Most High, the Avenger, the One who humiliates, and the Afflicter. In objecting, Sultan misses two points. First, Allah is clear that His greatest attributes are His Grace and Mercy—not His Wrath. Next, His attributes are relative to man’s needs. For example, when a people dismiss His Mercy and Grace and exceed in their mischief, then to reform them His attributes of being the Avenger and Afflicter come into action. Just as painful surgery is needed to protect from and remove cancer, these attributes are needed to protect humanity from further atrocities and harm. In fact, even these attributes are from Allah’s mercy as it protects the oppressed from the oppressor, and punishes the unjust, saving them from a bigger affliction in the hereafter. The Promised Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian^{as} explains more thoroughly:

“All His attributes are appropriate to Him. They are not like human qualities... For instance when a man is angry he suffers from anger himself and his heart loses its comfort and perceives a burning sensation, and his brain is oppressed and he undergoes changes; but God is free from all such changes. His wrath means that He removes His support from one who does not desist from mischief and according to His eternal laws, He metes out to him such treatment as a human being metes out to another when he is angry. Metaphorically, it is called God’s wrath.”¹²

In her sixth allegation, Sultan accuses Allah for not being merciful enough. She questions, “Shouldn’t God’s wisdom, mercy

and love far surpass the wisdom, mercy and love of a father?"¹³ Again, while she misses the point, this is exactly what Islam teaches about Allah. The Qur'an gives the glad tidings of Allah's unlimited mercy in numerous verses. For example, "God replied, 'I will inflict My punishment on whom I will; but My mercy encompasses all things,' (7:157). This verse is clear that Allah's mercy encompasses "all things," even His punishment. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, explains this verse in the most logical form:

"...mercy is general and encompassing, while displeasure, which in actuality is the attribute of justice, appears as a result of a deed. This means that the attribute of justice validates its right when divine laws are compromised. Therefore, it is required that the divine law is enacted and that a sin happens as a result of breaching the divine law. Only then this attribute materializes and demands its fulfillment."¹⁴

Prophet Muhammad's^{saw} *hadith* (saying) further authenticates Hell's temporary nature, "a time will come when no one will be left in Hell; winds will blow and the windows and doors of Hell will make a rattling noise on account of the blowing winds."¹⁵

In short, punishing is not God's past time as Sultan depicts. Instead, it requires an exceptionally sinful person to cause God's wrath. He overlooks His people's sins and tends to forgive them as much as possible. Allah's attribute of "*Ghafoor*" i.e. the one who forgives, is always functional. Thus, no matter how "big" a sinner is, the door for forgiveness is always open for him. As Prophet Muhammad^{saw} said, "A man who sincerely repents for his sins is like the one who has never sinned." Allah's mercy, however, is not limited to those who ask for forgiveness; it embraces even the sinners. Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} says:

"It is a foolish notion that after sinful people have been condemned to hell, the divine attributes of Mercy and Compassion will cease to operate and will not manifest, inasmuch as the permanent operation of the cessation of Divine attributes is not permissible. The basic attribute of God Almighty is Love and Mercy and that is the mother of all attributes. It is the same

attribute, which sometimes comes into action in the shape of the attributes of Glory and Wrath for the purpose of human reform. When the reform has been affected then love appears in its true form and remains in operation forever as a bounty. God is not like a short-tempered person who loves to torment. He wrongs no one but people wrong themselves. All salvation lies in His love and all torment are to draw away from him."¹⁶

The question may arise about the need of His wrath and displeasure and why should it result in punishment. As a psychiatrist, Sultan may agree that penalties play an important role in the human psyche to refrain them from indulging in criminal activities. The concept of punishment can be found not only in all religions before Islam, but also in all historic as well as modern day secular laws. Punishment by definition is justified with retribution, deterrence and rehabilitation. All these justifications, if applied justly, impact society in a positive manner. The key is in the appropriateness of these punishments. For instance, when surgery is required for a patient, the hardship of surgery is in fact necessary to meet the foremost purpose of physically healing the patient—the risk being that otherwise the patient will either continue to suffer or even die. In the same manner, when God's wrath is needed for a person or a people, the hardship is in fact designed to promote foremost purpose of spiritually healing the person—the risk being that otherwise the person will either continue to suffer or become spiritually and morally dead.

God's wrath is in fact derived from His love for mankind, and His desire to see mankind prosper. For example, the Qur'an never mentions that Allah does not love Christians or Jews. Instead, the Qur'an declares, "Surely those who believe and the Jews and the Christians and the Sabians – whichever party from these, truly believes in Allah and the Last Day and does good deeds, shall have their reward with the Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve."¹⁷ This verse which is unique to the Qur'an—promises paradise for Jews and Christians and repudiates those who consider Allah to be their enemy.

The Qur'an attributes the terms "loves" and "loves-not" to Allah in numerous verses. For example, Allah loved those who do good (2:196), are steadfast (3:147), put their trust in Him (3:160), and are just (5:43). Likewise, Allah loves not those who are transgressors (2:191), confirmed disbelievers and arch sinners (2:277), wrongdoers (3:58), unjust (3:141), proud and boastful (4:37), perfidious and great sinners (4:108), create disorder (5:65), exceed the bounds (6:142), treacherous (8:59), ungrateful (22:39) and those who exult (28:77). In short, Allah loves those behaviors beneficial to mankind, and loves not those behaviors harmful to mankind. Justice tempered with mercy, not hatred, determine whom Allah loves and does not love.

In her quest for a God who loves, Wafa Sultan should also look at the attributes of God that emanate from love, compassion and mercy. Out of His over one hundred attributes, the majority depict His love, bounties, forbearance, generosity, beneficence, friendliness, and kindness. While His attributes do not comprise wrath and hatred, they certainly do comprise love and compassion.

This article gives a glimpse of the absurdity of Wafa Sultan's other arguments against Islam. In conclusion, the fact that God's mercy, not wrath, encompasses all, an act of love not hatred, shakes the very premise of her book. ♦

Endnotes

- ¹Sultan, Wafa "A God who hates" Page 10
- ²The Holy Qur'an 22:40 "Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged."
- ³7:57 And create not disorder in the earth after it has been set in order, and call upon Him in fear and hope.
- ⁴ Sultan, Wafa "A God who hates" Page 51
- ⁵Genesis 7:23
- ⁶Exodus 9:25
- ⁷Exodus 14:8-26
- ⁸Genesis 41:25-54
- ⁹Numbers 11:1 & 11:33
- ¹⁰Sultan, Wafa "A God who hates" Page 54
- ¹¹ Holy Qur'an 98:4
- ¹² Chashma-e-Ma'rifat, Ruhani Khaza'in, Vol. 23, pp. 272-276
- ¹³Sultan, Wafa "A God who hates" Page 55
- ¹⁴Jange Muqadith Pg 6
- ¹⁵Tafsir-ul-Maalam-ul-Tanzil under verse Hud:107
- ¹⁶Roohani Khaza'en Vol 20 Pg 369-370
- ¹⁷ The Holy Qur'an 2:63

Perception vs. Reality: Is Islam a Militant Religion? Response to Daniel Pipes' Accusations

By Anwer Mahmood Khan



The news seems to brand all terrorists as Muslims. It has become acceptable in some circles to declare: “Not all Muslims are terrorists, but nearly all terrorists are Muslims.” Even in academia, respected scholars like Dr. Daniel Pipes have leveled harsh criticism against the Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, citing the early history of Islam. This article will demonstrate that in both, media and academia, perceptions can be nothing more than misperceptions and the facts present a different reality about violence and its relationship with Islam.

The media seems to thrive off misinformation, especially when it concerns Islam. It reminds me of the adage that if lies are spoken a million times they become the truth. Here are some facts that expose the fallacies of this perception.

Research conducted by the University of North Carolina and Duke shows that the terrorist threat posed by radicalized Muslims has been exaggerated. A big sign titles these findings: “Terrorism has no religion, please stop this insanity.”

The FBI maintains demographic statistics of terrorism in the United States:

a. Out of 318 cases recorded, roughly 20 (6%) were ascribed to radical Muslims. Other major groups included: Communists (5%), Jews (7%), Extreme Left Wing Groups (24%), and Latinos (42%). [Source: FBI Database of terrorist acts between 1980-2005] The grouping has been done not by FBI but by Daonis based on the details included in FBI report.¹

b. Another report on the data on Post 9/11 Terrorist attacks in USA by Alejandro Beutel published in January 2012 indicate that the plots associated with radical Muslims in USA were recorded to be 52 as opposed to a total of 172. Interestingly, 18 terrorist plots were foiled with the assistance of Muslims living in USA.²

c. Michael Rolince, Special Agent FBI on December 17, 2005 said: the FBI conducted about 500,000 interviews without

finding a single lead which could have helped the agency prevent the terrorist attacks of 9/11.³

Europol publishes an annual report entitled “EU Terrorism Situation and Trend Report.”⁴

■ From 2007-2009, there were 1,576 cases of terrorism and five have been attributed to Muslims.

■ Rand Corporation reports that not a single U.S. civilian has been killed by Jihadists since the September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center. However, 14 soldiers have been killed, 13 of which during the Ford Hood shooting.⁵

This begs the question why the media insists on correlating terrorists with Muslims. The reasons could be that Western scholars:

- Are unaware of the facts,
- Have misunderstood the facts, and/or
- Have deliberately ignored the facts to misrepresent Islam.

One such scholar is Daniel Pipes. Dr. Pipes is a prolific writer who obtained his doctorate from Harvard University and was appointed a member of the U.S. Institute of Peace by President George W. Bush in 2003. While the media call these writers *Islamophobes*, I simply feel they misrepresent the true religion for personal gains.

Daniel Pipes has authored 14 books, four of them on Islam. In one of his books, “Militant Islam Reaches America,” he astutely concludes that militant Islam is today’s problem and moderate Islam is the

solution. But in the very first chapter he shows a picture of the Ka'ba, the symbolic heart of Islam in Mecca, with a sign over it reading "Militant Islam." Pipes contradicts himself from the beginning by depicting the center of Islam as militant while later in the same book he categorizes Islam as "Militant," "Moderate," and "Traditional." This misrepresentation of Islam is only a fraction of the lies found in Pipes' books on Islam. Perhaps the most egregious is his depiction of the events surrounding the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, which is one of the most important moments in Islamic history.

By omitting salient facts, Pipes would like to assert that Muhammad^{saw} was a violent warrior who dodged promises. When, however, full facts are brought into light, his deception manifests itself. To convince a layman, he cites seven scholars who allegedly endorse his assessment and he states that nearly all Western writers support his views - views which we will prove are deceitful lies.

Let me first describe the incidence of Hdaybiyyah and show the details that are missing in Pipes' write up.

Prophet Muhammad^{saw} made a claim to prophethood at the age of 40. He lived 13 years in Mecca and when he was driven out by Meccans he moved to Medina, a town some 300 miles north. He lived there ten years and passed away at the age of 63. No military activity waged by Prophet Muhammad^{saw} took place in Mecca. Three major battles took place after the migration to Medina: the Battle of Badr, the Battle of Uhud, and the Battle of the Ditch. In the last of these battles, the Meccans attempted to siege the city of Medina with an army of 10,000 men. They met defeat because of the Muslim army's strategy of digging a ditch around Medina to prevent Meccan enemies from entering—a plan that worked flawlessly.

This was the sixth year after Hijrah (i.e., the migration from Mecca to Medina in 622 C.E.), after which both Muslims and pagan Meccans grew tired of the hostilities and battles. In the sixth year, Prophet Muhammad^{saw} had a dream that he was circuiting the Ka'ba. This dream prompted him to visit Mecca for the sole purpose of 'umrah, also known as the "lesser pilgrimage." He consulted with his companions and persuaded 1,400 of them to join him, along with



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their sacrificial animals. They began their journey as unarmed pilgrims with the sole intention of visiting the Holy Place. When the Meccans heard about Prophet Muhammad's 'umrah, they became furious and wanted to prevent Muhammad's entry into Mecca. The Meccans sent a delegate to determine Muhammad's intentions. Three delegates were sent and each time Muhammad^{saw} expressed his sole intention of the 'umrah. He also sent Hadrat Uthman^{ra} (who later became the third caliph after Muhammad's passing), to convey the message that Muhammad^{saw} and his party intended to visit Mecca unarmed. The Meccans finally sent Suhayl ibn Amr, a respected Meccan chief, to talk to Muhammad^{saw}. It was then that the two parties signed the Treaty of Hdaybiyyah, an extensive agreement with the following terms:

"War shall be suspended between Quraish and the Muslims for ten years. Whosoever wishes to join Muhammad, or enter into treaty with him, shall have liberty to do so; and likewise, whosoever wishes to join Quraish, or enter into treaty

with them. If a man from among Quraish goes over to Muhammad without the permission of his guardian, he shall be sent back to his guardian; but should any of the followers of Muhammad return to Quraish, they shall not be sent back. Muhammad shall retire this year without entering the City. In the coming year, Muhammad may visit Mecca, he and his followers, for three days, during which Quraish shall retire and leave the City to them. But they may not enter it with any weapons, save those of the traveler, namely, to each a sheathed sword."⁶

As the treaty was being signed, the first test of keeping his word was presented to Muhammad^{saw} when Abu Jandal, son of Suhayl, wearing handcuffs and chains and bearing marks of injuries all over his body, staggered into the Muslim camp and told the Muslims that he had embraced Islam and was being kept in durance and tortured. He wanted to be rescued by Muhammad^{saw}, but the Prophet^{saw} advised him to go back as he has signed the truce and prophets do no renege on their pledges.

Based on the terms of the treaty, Muhammad^{saw} returned to Medina without entering Mecca and waited one full year before performing the pilgrimage.

Another incidence of a man escaped Mecca was Abu Basir who had accepted Islam and was tortured. Muhammad^{saw} said to him: We are under compulsion by virtue of the treaty that we have entered into, that we cannot permit you to remain with us. If you will be steadfast, seeking the pleasure of Allah, He will open some way for you. But we must conform to the terms of the treaty and you must go back to Mecca.⁷

Um Kulthum, daughter of a pagan chief, also escaped Mecca and came to Muhammad^{saw} for rescue. She was permitted to stay as per terms of the treaty. As reported by *Bukhari*⁸: "No one of our men, though he may belong to thy faith, shall come to thee, but that thou shall be bound to return him to us." It is thus clear that this clause of the treaty was specifically confined to men.

In 629 C.E., as promised in the treaty, the Muslims returned and made the first pilgrimage. None of the pagan Meccans claimed that the Muslims had violated the treaty up until this point – a fact that Islamic critics cannot deny even though they deliberately write the opposite.

The next year, the clan of the *Banu Bakr*, allies of the Quraish, attacked the Bedouin Khuza'a, allies of the Muslims. Muhammad^{saw} considered the Banu Bakr attack a breach of the treaty, citing one of the clauses of the treaty: "An attack on an ally of the party, will be considered an attack on the party itself," and offered the Quraish three alternatives:

- Dissolve their alliance with the Banu Bakr,
- Compensate by paying money, or
- Dissolve the treaty.

The Quraish chose the third alternative, to dissolve the treaty, and Muhammad^{saw} decided to march on to Mecca with an army of 10,000, leading to the Conquest of Mecca.⁹

Pipes omitted all the above stated details in his discourse. His assessment of the event is as follows:

"Two points stand out from the sequence of events. First, Muhammad^{saw} was technically within his rights to abrogate the treaty, for the Quraysh, or at least their allies, had broken the terms. Second, it is equally clear that his response was disproportionate

to the infraction: a raid by an allied tribe, even possibly with Quraysh connivance, hardly warranted conquest of the enemy's territory. Combining these points leads to this conclusion: if there is no basis to accuse the Muslims of breaching their promise, there is reason to wonder what validity the treaty had if the Muslim forces were at the ready. The issue here is not the legal one but a moral and political one. Nearly all the western historians agree with this judgment."¹⁰

Then he cites William Muir, Carl Brockelmann, Bernard Lewis, Montgomery Watt, John Glubb, Marshal Hodgson and Frank Peters, who agree with his judgment. This is what he calls nearly "all Western historians."

Now let us evaluate Pipes' accusations:

1. "Muhammad^{saw}'s response was disproportionate to the infraction. It hardly warranted conquest of the enemy's territory."

This statement implies a huge combat with the loss of thousands of lives in wholesale murder. The fact is that a general amnesty was given to all the people living in Mecca with hardly any loss of lives. We challenge Pipes to find one instance of such immense grace in retaliation to bitter and sustained hostilities.

True to his anti-Islamic bias, Pipes conveniently overlooks: (1) The "morality" of this general amnesty; and (2) The fact that the Quraish did not view the Muslim siege as "disproportionate to the infraction," for they knew full well that they could be categorically slaughtered under the accepted tribal system of governance. The pagan Meccans' memories ran afresh of the horrific atrocities they perpetrated prior to the treaty, when they were in power. They were fully aware of the consequences of their un-avenged acts, and they recognized the Prophet's forgiveness as an undeserved gift.

Further, since when did Mecca become "the enemy's territory" as Pipes puts it? He conveniently forgets that the Muslims fled their homes in order to escape the persecution.

2. "There is reason to wonder what validity the treaty had if the Muslim forces were at the ready."

There were less than 2,000 Muslims in Medina against over 10,000 people in

Mecca, Pipes is way off in his estimation. The details clearly indicate that Muhammad^{saw} upheld the treaty on all five occasions, namely Abu Jandal's return, Abu Basir's return, not returning Um Kulthum, performing pilgrimage the following year, and offering three options to the Meccans when they breached the truce. This reveals the moral character displayed by Muhammad^{saw} and the misleading accusations launched by Pipes. If Pipes would like to evaluate anyone's morality, he should start with his own, given his less than scholarly misrepresentations of Islam.

Finally, Pipes states that nearly all Western scholars side with him in his opinions. The seven scholars he cites do not constitute nearly all Western scholars. In fact, more than 50 scholars have penned their views about the Hudaybiyyah event. Pipes only cites those who agree with him, although some of them have even contradicted their own statements cited by Pipes.

A large number of scholars have praised Muhammad^{saw} on this incident and called it one of the biggest victories for Muhammad^{saw}. A few of them are included below. Even a handful of Western writers calling Hudaybiyyah as a great victory for Muhammad^{saw} negates Pipes' claim of a unanimous agreement on Muhammad^{saw}'s failure.

Caesar Farah

Farah states that Muhammad^{saw} was complying with the verse of Holy Qur'an: "And if they break their pledges after their treaty (e.g. with you Muhammad^{saw}) and assail your religion, then fight the heads of disbelief" from Chapter 9, Verse 12.¹¹ ("Islam," by Caesar Farah, p. 54)

Frederick Denny

"Much to the displeasure of some of his supporters, Muhammad^{saw} concluded a treaty with Meccans. Although he returned home that year without making a pilgrimage, the following year he and the Medinians came back for sacred rites, and the city of Mecca was evacuated for three days so as to avoid any conflict. Muhammad thus demonstrated his goodwill and his adherence to a sacred ritual structure that both

the pagan and the Muslim Arabians were dedicated to maintaining.¹² page 77

Martin Lings

In Chapter 74, “A Breach of the Armistice,” scholar Martin Lings explains the breach of Hudaibiyah in greater detail:

“On his way, he (Abu Sufyan, the chief of Mecca) met the men of Khuzah returning home and he feared he was too late.... O Muhammad, he said, I was absent at the time of the truce of Hudabiyya, so let us now strengthen the pact and prolong its duration. The Prophet parried his request with the query: “Hath aught befallen to break it on your side? God Forbid! Said Abu Sufyan uneasily. ”We likewise,” said the Prophet, “are keeping to the truce for the period agreed upon at Hudabiyyah. We will not modify it, neither will we accept another in its place. He was clearly not prepared to say more.”¹³ (p. 293)

Karen Armstrong

In “Mohammed: A Biography of the Prophet,” Armstrong writes:

“Here Mohammad’s new policy of reconciliation was immediately seen to be productive, because the truce created more relaxed atmosphere which encouraged discussion between Muslims and pagans and a free exchange of views. Commenting on the ‘manifest victory’ of Hudabiyya, Ibne Ishaq says:

‘No previous victory in Islam was greater than this. There was nothing but battle when men met; but when there was an armistice and war was abolished and men met in safety and consulted together none talked about Islam intelligently without entering it. In these two years(628-630) double as many or more than double entered Islam as ever before.’¹⁴ (p. 226)

There are scores of other writers who have cited the wisdom and peace displayed by Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and who have considered the Treaty of Hudaibiyah to be a great victory for Muslims.

In the end, I humbly recommend Daniel Pipes, and other mis-informants of Islamic history, not *throw out the baby with the bathwater*. If some so-called Muslims are

involved in violent activities, they are not representing Islam and they are betraying it. In similar fashion, we ask Pipes not to betray the standards of scholarship. May Allah guide us all. ♦

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1. FBI Report: http://www.fbi.gov/stats-services/publications/terrorism-2002-2005/terror02_05 In this report 318 cases have been mentioned in which about 20 were done by radical Muslims, however the death toll of 9/11 was the largest mayhem, although it counts as one of 318 cases. ¹ (author)
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Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

**Truth guides to virtue and
virtue guides to Paradise. A
person persists in telling the
truth till in the sight of Allah
he is named Truthful. Lying
leads to vice and vice leads
to the Fire; and a person
goes on lying till in the sight
of Allah he is named a liar.**

(Bukhari and Muslim)

Rush Limbaugh's radio show is under fire and for good reason. The spark that lit this fire was his ridicule of law school student Sandra Fluke, labeling her a "slut" among other things. Although he has publicly apologized, it reeks of a superficial pandering to his sponsors, who were dropping like flies in response to his relentless critics. More importantly, this event reveals Limbaugh's behavior of irresponsibility without accountability. Complementing this trait, Limbaugh consistently fails to objectively report the facts and support them with reliable sources. Even though Limbaugh stays current with politics, he's way off target when it comes to religion – Islam being one of his favorites to discuss.

When discussing Islam, Limbaugh consistently fails to fact check his sources, let alone his own comments. For example, he often cites Debbie Schlusel, who is notorious for making irrational claims. Schlusel,



Self Inflicted *Threats*

Rush Limbaugh and the art of fear mongering

By **Aasim Ahmad**

oddy enough, is an attorney, who has a hateful borderline racist blog, which seems devoted to promoting conspiracy and distrust. Unlike most attorneys, academics, and people in general, Schlüssel searches for information with blinders on. That takes real effort in the age of the internet, where unbiased information is readily available at one's fingertips. Consequently, most of what she writes contains information that has been skewed or taken completely out of context to satisfy her own biased beliefs. Sadly, but not surprisingly, Limbaugh chose her as a source.

Using the cover of a Pew Research Center Study, Schlüssel and Limbaugh misrepresented the polling data results in what seemed like yet another attempt to create mistrust and hatred between their audience and the greater Muslim American community. Being an attorney, Schlüssel is expected to have a minimal level of integrity to analyze and report the facts. On the contrary, Schlüssel and Limbaugh outrageously reported that a third of Muslim Americans might actually blow themselves up. Fortunately, Schlüssel cited the breakdown of responses so reasonable individuals can quickly discover her misrepresentation.

When asked *Can suicide bombing of civilian targets to defend Islam be justified?* the Pew results indicated the following results for those aged 18 to 29:

- 2% of respondents said suicide bombings were *often* justified
- 13% *sometimes* justified
- 11% *rarely* justified
- 5% said *don't know/unsure*¹

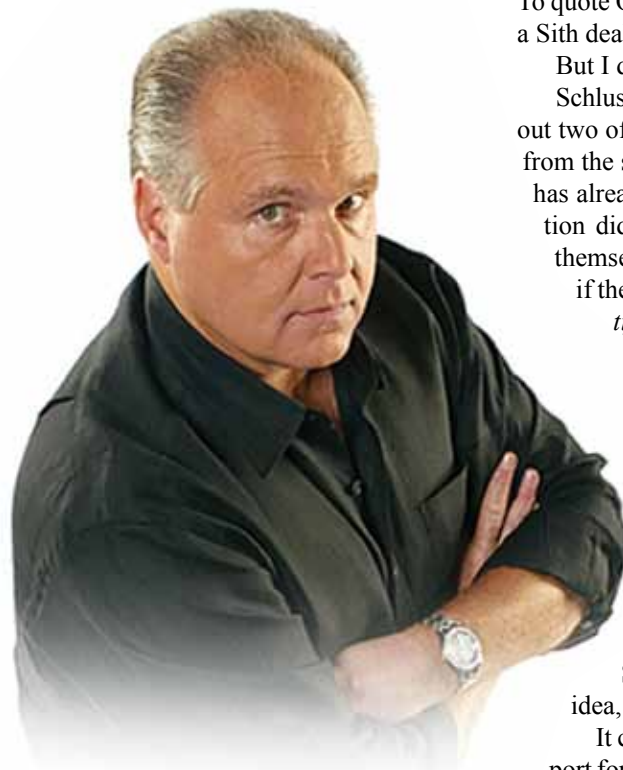
Notice that 11% responded "rarely," a word synonymous with "hardly ever." In addition, 13% responded that such suicide bombings were "sometimes" justified, which is synonymous with "occasionally."

An objective researcher would never misrepresent this 24% of respondents as supporting suicide bombing wholesale, much less draw the ridiculous conclusion that 1/3 of American Muslims might blow themselves up. The only significant figure is the 2% who responded that suicide bombings are justified "often," which implies "frequently." (For a more thorough evaluation of the Pew Study results, see the Summer 2007 *Muslim Sunrise* article entitled *Understanding the Muslim Next Door – Insights into the recently released Pew Report*, page 27.)

Adding to her poor integrity, Schlüssel opted to go one step further by adding in the 5% of Muslims who responded "don't know/

unsure" to her list of potential suicide bombers. Although this makes no sense, Limbaugh thought it did. Inclusion of this 5% into their fabricated lump sum statistic, now 31% (26% + 5%), enabled them to falsely conclude "a third of Muslim Americans..."

As for Limbaugh, it seems he got emotional and quickly lost track of the actual poll data. In speaking about the data, he said, "You're talking about a significant number of people in the demographic group that do take action like this around the world." Interestingly, Limbaugh deduced this 26%, plus 5% that answered "don't know/unsure" (making 31%), are actually willing to "take action



like this around the world." On a side note, Limbaugh messed up on his math. He added too many numbers too many times (totaling 36%, not 31%) further exaggerating his fictitious threat.² Regardless, the problem with Rush's deduction is it has nothing to do with the question. The Poll asked if suicide bombing could be justified, not if one was willing to take such action around the world. The two are very different questions that would yield very different responses.

Perhaps the most blatant fabrication made by both Schlüssel and Limbaugh is that all the Muslims who answered "don't know" or "unsure" are liars who allegedly support the most extreme response to the question. In other words, if a Muslim answers *don't*

know or unsure of supporting Al-Qaeda, they in fact support Al-Qaeda, and for those who answered this way about suicide bombings, they do in fact support suicide bombings. To quote Limbaugh, who was quoting Schlüssel, he said, "If you can't answer an outright *no* to this question, you support Al-Qaeda."³ After all, if, according to Schlüssel and Limbaugh, those who *rarely* support suicide bombings are *actually* suicide bombers, then it is a *no-brainer* that those who are *unsure* must also be in the same boat. Maybe they've been watching too many movies because their logic is no different than Anakin Skywalker's point: "If you're not with me, then you're my enemy." To quote Obi-Wan Kenobi's response: "Only a Sith deals in absolutes."

But I digress...

Schüssel and Limbaugh conveniently left out two of the most important pieces of data from the suicide bomber question. The first has already been mentioned, that the question did not ask if someone would blow themselves up; rather, the question asked if the act of suicide bombing can be *justified*. The second is that only 30%

of the entire Muslim population is aged 18-29. Thus, 26% of 30% drives down the number of people who, according to Schlüssel and Limbaugh, support suicide bombings. These two points allow reasonable individuals to conclude that the data reveals... Wait a minute!

Why don't we just quote the

Study's own conclusion?! Great idea, huh?

It concludes: "Absolute levels of support for Islamic extremism among Muslim Americans are quite low, especially when compared with Muslims around the world."⁴

Now let's look at the data revealing the opinions of the majorities of the Muslim populations:

1. 82% of U.S. Muslims older than 30 indicated suicide bombings are *never* justified
2. 78% of *all* U.S. Muslims indicated suicide bombings are *never* justified also,
3. 69% of the 18-29 group answered suicide bombing can *never* be justified

Even after ignoring the middle groups, who answered *rarely*, *sometimes*, or *often*, it is quite clear where American Muslims stand. The Poll clearly states "Overall, Muslim Americans have a generally positive view of the larger society. Most say their communities

are excellent or good places to live.” Just as many Muslim Americans express satisfaction with the state of the nation as members of the general public. “Moreover, 71% of Muslim Americans agree that most people who want to get ahead in the U.S. can make it if they are willing to work hard.”⁵ Clearly, Schlüssel and Limbaugh have, for whatever reason, misrepresented the data to instill fear and distrust between America and American Muslims when none exist.

The words they choose to present this data can only breed fictitious fear and unwarranted reactions. Schlüssel, for example, speaking about Al-Qaeda said, “A significant portion of America’s Muslims support the group, and it’s growing.”⁶

For starters, there is no doubt Schlüssel made up the last part about the “support growing” as this was never measured in the Study and she simply made up the comment that a significant portion of American Muslim’s support Al-Qaeda. Schlüssel simply fabricated this false generalization of American Muslims likely based on her own dislike of the religious group as there is nothing in the poll to support this comment (i.e., a grand total of 5% of all American Muslims believe Al-Qaeda is favorable).

Limbaugh takes a truly unique stance based on the data, indicating he has a problem with news companies like the Chicago Tribune for describing the poll with headlines like “US Muslims more content, assimilated than those abroad.”⁷ He disregards the fact that these news headlines reflect the Poll’s own conclusions. The Chicago Tribune said Muslims assimilate better in the U.S than abroad and the Pew Poll revealed 63% of Muslim Americans do not feel conflict living in America whereas Germany and Britain show 57% and 49% respectively.⁸ Thus, the Tribune made a perfectly acceptable assessment of the Poll. Further 84% of American born Muslims are *pretty* or *very happy* with their lives in America. As to where Limbaugh conjures this notion that news companies are unwilling to see reality is unreasonable.

Overall, it is clear what Schlüssel and Limbaugh are pursuing. They cater to a different fundamentalist minority that breeds on negativity and fear. Thus, they are compelled to distort facts and offer a truly horrific and pessimistic view of the United States. It is strange that Rush Limbaugh would devote a radio show to discussing a poll which proves he is wrong about Muslims, but it is outlandish that he would argue the Poll proves he is right.

One eventually comes to expect this kind of irrational behavior from Limbaugh and his allies. After all, he called a woman he never met before a “slut” on the air for all to hear. The consequence for the radio host’s irrational behavior has so far been over 100 dropped sponsors and his move to a new smaller station.⁹ Although this was not a significant blow to his show as now he is on the FM, it sends a clear message that Rush Limbaugh needs to clean up his act. Simply put, he just needs to grow up. ♦

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²“American Muslims Not Moderating,” Rush Limbaugh, accessed April 21, 2012, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2007/05/23/american_muslims_not_moderating

³“American Muslims Not Moderating,” Rush Limbaugh, accessed April 21, 2012,

⁴ Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream, Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007, <http://www.debbieschuessel.com/archives/muslimamericanspoll.pdf>, pg 7.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶“Debbie Schlüssel: Meet Your Moderate,” “American” Muslim Neighbors: New Study Shows U.S. Muslims Are Extremists,” accessed April 21, 2012, <http://www.debbieschuessel.com/archives/002434print.html>.

⁷ “American Muslims Not Moderating,” Rush Limbaugh, accessed April 21, 2012, http://www.rushlimbaugh.com/daily/2007/05/23/american_muslims_not_moderating

⁸ Muslim Americans: Middle Class and Mostly Mainstream, Pew Research Center, May 22, 2007, <http://www.debbieschuessel.com/archives/muslimamericanspoll.pdf> pg 8, 38.

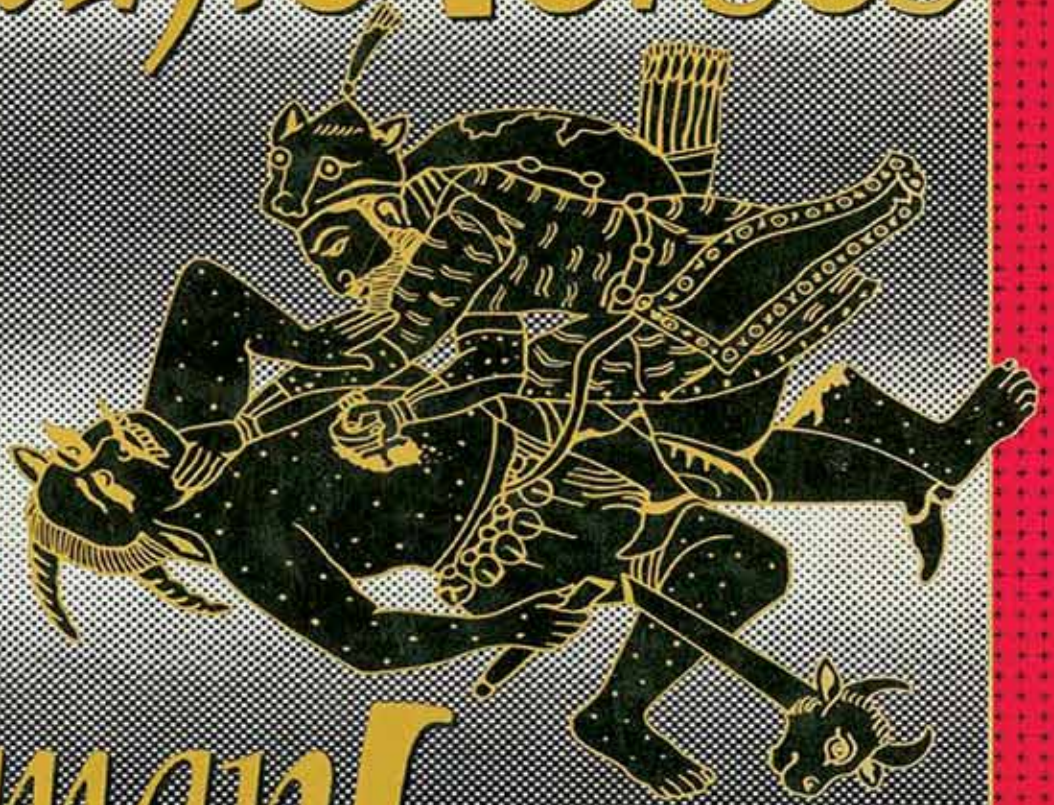
⁹ “Rush Limbaugh Show Moved From CBS Affiliate Station WPHT-Philadelphia” accessed April 21, 2012, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/04/10/rush-limbaugh-show-cbs-affiliate-wpht-philadelphia_n_1414353.html.

Sayings of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{saw}

The most perfect of believers in the matter of faith is he whose behavior is best; and the best of you are those who behave best towards their wives.

(Tirmidhi)

The Satanic Verses



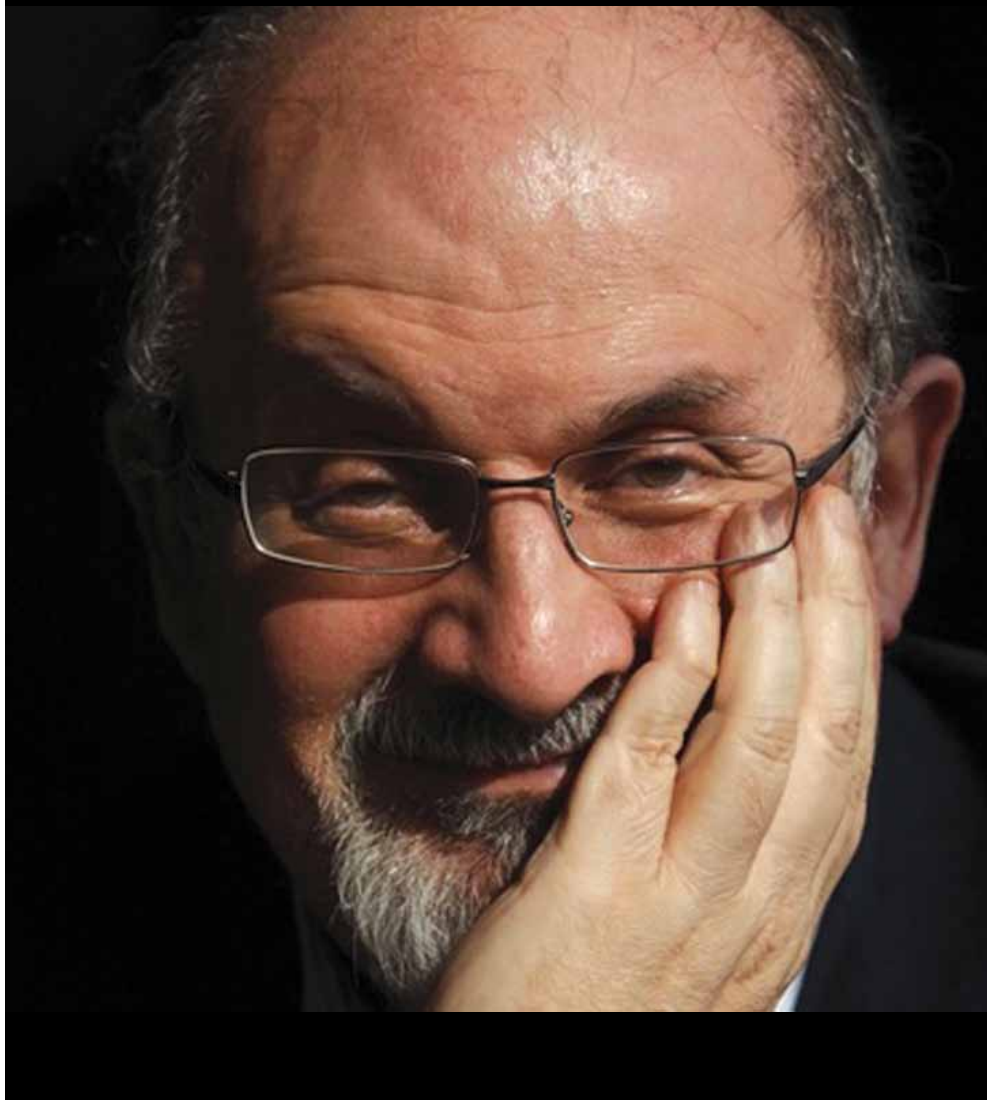
Salman
Rushdie

Salman Rushdie's

novel *The Satanic Verses* published in 1988 generated a plethora of emotions the world over. The book's subject matter inflamed fury and hostility, which in turn fostered cultural misunderstandings and social unrest. The novel, while generally condemned by the Muslim world, was met with violence by Muslim fanatics. The West, on the other hand, lauded the author's work, perceiving the controversy as a battle between freedom of speech and censorship. As such, the novel became a political device used by its supporters and opponents alike to further their own personal and political agendas. Emotions ran high. Mutual insult and ridicule undermined any prospect of a meaningful cross cultural dialogue that could explore and evaluate the boundaries of freedom of speech in the global village.

The Ideological Imagination: Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

By Atif Munawar Mir



The novel became a source of intense controversy. Muslims were enraged at the degrading depiction of their beloved Prophet^{saw} and his wives and companions. Rushdie, on the other hand, argued that the real cause of controversy was not the novel itself but the way Muslims read the novel. Rushdie claimed that instead of reading it as a work of art, Muslims read it literally.¹

Rushdie seems to be asserting that “his novel is not open to accusations of blasphemy since in literature or art, figurative necessarily dominates” over the literal, according to literary theorist, K.M. Newton.² Such viewpoints “set works of an art on a pedestal”,³ which stifles healthy dialogue. That is why Newton argues that “inheritors of Western values should...learn to view works of art in a less idealistic spirit”.³ Otherwise, supporters of Rushdie “appear to suggest that Muslims have no right even to find the book offensive since they are reading the text in an improper fashion”.⁴ Viewing art in a less idealistic spirit will enable Rushdie’s supporters to better understand the other party’s viewpoints and feelings of insult. To this end, this article will explore the following:

- 1)What does Rushdie mean when he says that *The Satanic Verses* can be read as a work of art?
- 2)What are the ramifications for such a view?
- 3)Do authors have ethical responsibility to respect individuals, cultures and religions? Meaning of “read the novel as a work of art”

Categorizing *The Satanic Verses* as a work of art should not absolve Rushdie from explaining the offensive elements of his novel. The book attacks the Holy Qur’an and the Holy Prophet^{saw}, and his wives and companions by creating a disrespectful fictional history of early Islam. He should explain as to why he couldn’t convey his artistic vision without insulting the Holy Prophet^{saw}, his wives and his companions.

In the novel, Gibreel is a popular Indian Muslim movie star who, after a traumatic accident, finds himself struggling with his faith. In his dreams, he finds himself in early Islamic history as an arch angel where he encounters the Holy Prophet^{saw} as a very ambitious individual who makes compromises to consolidate power and finds it hard to resist pleasures. The dreams also portray the wives and companions of the Holy Prophet^{saw} in a highly offensive manner. According to Rushdie, these dreams of Gibreel, were not meant to insult anyone but were merely metaphorical representations of Gibreel’s loss of Islamic faith.⁵

A famous playwright once said, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.” Rushdie, arguably, thinks of literature as a hammer that can reform the Muslim world and he hammered the Muslim world with an offense hoping that it would somehow motivate or inspire the Muslim world to change.

Rushdie argues that the “passages that have particularly offended Muslims do not aim to ‘vilify’ or ‘disprove’ Islam but portray...a soul in crisis; a reference to Salman the Persian’ is not intended to ‘insult and abuse’ the Prophet’s^{saw} companion Salman al-Farsi^{ra} but is rather an ironic reference to the novel’s author. Rushdie claims ‘such highlighting is a proper function of literature. Similarly, the ‘shocking representations of the Prophet’s^{saw} wives as whores are not to be taken literally but rather as images which juxtapose antithetically ‘the sacred and profane worlds’.”⁶

Figurative representations of history that present historical heroes in a negative light

have not always been received well even with western audiences. A precedent exists where a play by Rolf Hochhuth was removed from public viewing because, to convey a figurative message, he depicted Churchill as a murderer of a Polish politician. The defenders of the play argued that in Shakespeare’s play *Richard III*, Richard is presented as a criminal psychopath even though the historical evidence suggests otherwise. Drawing this analogy, Hochhuth’s defenders argue that his representation of Churchill as a murderer should not be considered objectionable.⁷ In light of this, Newton argues that “clearly the difference was that whereas in the case of Richard audiences had ceased to care about the historical figure, with Churchill they still did care and this made it difficult for audiences to respond to the play as a figurative representation, as they could with regard to Richard...Muslim opponents of Rushdie could exploit such a case in order to claim that the only difference between Muslim and non-Muslim readers of *The Satanic Verses* is that they cannot be indifferent to Rushdie’s depiction of the Prophet; the literal force of the text is too strong for them to set it aside in favour of the figurative.”⁸

That is why Newton argues that “Muslim readers...have reasonable grounds for rejecting such a claim. However, even more worrying for defenders of Rushdie is the fact that contemporary critical theory casts doubt on the view that even in literary texts the figurative or rhetorical should have priority over the grammatical or literal”.⁹ “Even the works of a writer such as Shakespeare must be read contextually and politically in a very specific sense.”¹⁰ Rushdie, on the other hand, rejects contextual and political reading of literature. He points out that “If religion is an answer, if political ideology is an answer, then literature is an inquiry; great literature, by asking extraordinary questions, open doors in our minds...literature is, of all the arts, the one best suited to challenging absolutes of all kinds”.¹¹ Rushdie seems to believe that the purpose of literature is to shake the foundations of cultural and religious absolutes. If literature is an inquiry that is, according to Rushdie, free from political and contextual realities, what then are the parameters that define the framework of this inquiry? What is the inquiry grounded in? If it lacks this grounding, an inquiry is baseless. A baseless inquiry is a frivolous venture of the intellect and degrades the literary arts it claims to be a part of.

Significance & Ramifications of “read the novel as a work of art”

Rushdie has bestowed his novel *The Satanic Verses* with a mission. He claims that “Islam, Muslim world, at the moment, is in a condition where it finds itself unable to permit discussion of itself”¹² in the way that Judaism and Christianity does. He wants to see the growth of “skeptical tradition”¹³ in Islam. He felt “colossal envy”¹⁴ when he reviewed the new collection of stories from Isaac Bashevis Singer because of his “colossal blasphemies, talking about God’s mistakes, talking about how Satan’s not such a bad person after all, re-writing Bible stories right, left and centre, and he doesn’t get fundamentalists after him, he doesn’t get governments banning his book.”¹⁵

It seems that for Rushdie intellectual freedom is tantamount to committing “colossal blasphemies”. To him, imagination in the service of blasphemy is scholarship. He finds it very sad to see the Muslim “community closing itself off to the processes of imagination and to the processes of scholarship. All you have is this crazy literalism. And if you go against that, you are called a bad person”.¹⁶ Rushdie is frustrated with “crazy literalism” and demands the emergence of the skeptical tradition within Islam.

A famous playwright once said, “Art is not a mirror held up to reality but a hammer with which to shape it.” Rushdie, arguably, thinks of literature as a hammer that can reform the Muslim world and he hammered the Muslim world with an offense hoping that it would somehow motivate or inspire the Muslim world to change. It seems odd to try to change people by attacking what they cherish. This strategy gives an impression that Rushdie is not so much interested in changing the Muslim world, as he is in provoking it. Imagination is harmless and, in fact highly meaningful as long as it teaches, guides, and inspires us to consider what could be. But an imagination that feeds misinformation and entrenches prejudices, should not automatically qualify as a work of scholarship. By celebrating imagination that twists history and offers explicit insult, one facilitates freedom of speech indeed, but undermines facts as well.

Role of Novels in a Globalized world

Does literature have a responsibility towards social and global peace? This is an important question. In previous eras, literature had a limited

audience. For example, Dante Alighieri’s *Divine Comedy*, written in the early fourteenth century and widely considered to be a masterpiece of western literature, draws a highly offensive portrait of the Holy Prophet^{saw}. But this book did not cause any serious tension, if any, between the Muslim and non-Muslim worlds. But now our world has become a global village where comments, good or bad travel with the speed of light across the globe and carry with them vast cross-cultural implications.

Art must be free to explore human truths, but this freedom should not become a license to insult. Granted that definitions of insult vary across cultures and societies should be careful not to become too sensitive about art that may question and perhaps even judge their beliefs but responsibility also lies with an artist to be careful not to cause offense for no reason other than to cause offense and thereby seek to instill an immunity to supposed sensitivities. Authors should demonstrate at least some responsibility in their writings.

In the global village where, peace in one part of the world is connected to peace in another part of the world, it is important for artists to be responsible. Art is important and it is indeed a source of human truth but what constitutes decent art varies across the world and depicting what is sacred to one culture, as lewd and profane and is less artistic than it is political and perhaps even ideological, taking into consideration Rushdie’s departure from the faith before he wrote the book.

Hadhrat Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the founder of the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community said, more than 100 years ago in India, that people who “vilify the Prophets of other faiths...sow the seed of enmity and discord among mankind”.¹⁷ In the end, he advocated a treaty of mutual respect between Hindus and Muslims. According to the proposed treaty, both sides were required to respect each other’s faith. Perhaps in this spirit, people of all faiths and beliefs, including Muslims of course, should show respect towards the faiths of others. Mutual respect does not mean that people of different faiths cannot disagree. Respect means that what can be said decently and with dignity must be said decently and with dignity. If a person thinks that Islam causes violence, he is free to say so and furthermore should outline the reasons behind such a view, so an opposing viewpoint may be able to address the former’s concerns in a valid and intellectual fashion, thus laying out the foundations for inter-religious dialogue. However, drawing a cartoon or writing a

novel which is knowingly offensive, is neither a matter of inquiry or even judgment, but simply provocation. Art exceeds borders and the boundaries of culture and faith because it encourages dialogue, it is best when it speaks to our common humanity, not when it stifles or inflames it. The nature and purpose of art has always been a subject of philosophical discussion. There are a number of definitions of art being debated in the academic world.¹⁸ This debate is likely to continue forever. But this academic debate must grow into a global dialogue which highlights that the manner in which art is communicated across cultures is as important as art itself.

Instead of passing *fatwas* and resorting to violence, Muslims have a responsibility to “repel evil with good”. (13:23). To this end, they must intellectually engage the supporters of Rushdie in a decent fashion as taught by the Holy Prophet^{saw} that “a believer does not taunt, or curse or abuse or talk indecently”.

Rushdie and his supporters should acknowledge the obvious, that *The Satanic Verses* is bound to offend Muslims even if it is a work of art. There is no harm in critically evaluating early Islamic history but why does one need to degrade the Islamic Prophet^{saw} and his wives and companions to make this point? It is clearly counterproductive to try to reform and enlighten Muslims by offending them. Writers should understand that freedom of speech is a sacred and powerful concept but it is common courtesy if writers agree to exercise this right intelligently without resorting to insult and offense and instead striving to build bridges. ♦

Endnotes

¹Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991* (London: Granta Books in association with Penguin, 1991, p. 393.

²Newton, K.M. “Literary Theory and Rushdie Affair”, *Bloom’s Modern Critical Views: Salman Rushdie*, Chelsea House Publishers, Yale University, 2003. P. 40

³ *Ibid*, p. 49

⁴ *Ibid*, p. 48

⁵Reder, Michael, Editor, *Conversations with Salman Rushdie*, University Press of Mississippi, 2000, p. 108.

⁶Newton, K.M., p.39

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 42

⁸ *Ibid*, p. 42

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 42

¹⁰ *Ibid*, p. 44

¹¹ *Ibid*, p. 45

¹² *Conversations with Salman Rushdie* p. 108.

¹³ *Ibid*, p. 116.

¹⁴ *Ibid*, p. 108.

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 116

¹⁶ *Ibid*, p. 116

¹⁷ Ahmad, Hazrat Mirza Ghulam, *Message of Peace*, Islam International Publications, 2007, p.32

¹⁸The Definition of Art, *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Oct. 23, 2007

Burning of the Qur'an

Dove World Outreach Center's



Reasons why

By Imam Mubasher Ahmad

The Dove World Outreach Center, located in Gainesville, Florida, claims to be a “New Testament Church – based on the Bible, the Word of God.” The Center gave ten reasons for its Pastor, Terry Jones, to burn the Qur’an, which he did on March 20, 2011, and again, to far less fanfare, reported The Gainesville Sun, on April 28, 2012. Without going into the details of the universal condemnation of Pastor Terry Jones’s outrageous acts, a brief response to his “ten reasons” is provided as follows:

Reason One: *The Koran teaches that Jesus Christ, the Crucified, Risen Son of God, King of Kings and Lord of Lords was NOT the Son of God, nor was he crucified (a well documented historical fact that ONLY Islam denies). This teaching removes the possibility of salvation and eternal life in heaven for all Islam’s believers. They face eternal damnation in hell if they do not repent.*

Response: The Qur’an teaches that God Almighty, the Creator of heavens and the earth is One and Unique in His person and attributes. He is the Highest of the High, Lord of all the worlds. No one is like unto Him. He is neither begotten, nor does He beget. He does not have a father, mother, wife, son or daughter. The Qur’an reconfirms what Jesus^{as} practiced and affirmed his faith in One God. According to the Gospel of Mark 10:18, and the Gospel of Luke 18:19, Jesus^{as} said, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but ONE, that is God.” Again, the Qur’an confirms the truthful statement of Jesus^{as} when, according to Mark 12:29, he said, “The first

of all the commandments is: Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. This is the first commandment.” However, the Qur’an says that this commandment is not limited to Israel only; it is for the entire mankind.

The Qur’an teaches to worship no one but ONE God, and the Bible teaches the same wherein the above mentioned commandment is stated in the Book of Deuteronomy 6:4. The Gospels also confirm that Jesus worshiped ONE God. In Gethsemane, Jesus was crying fallen on the ground before God to take the cup of death away from him. The Qur’an claims that God heard his heart-rending prayer, and saved him from dying an accursed death on the cross. The Qur’an rejects Paul’s opinion where he asserts in Galatians 3:13: “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us: for it is written, ‘Cursed is every one who hangs on a tree.’” Obviously Paul was referring to the

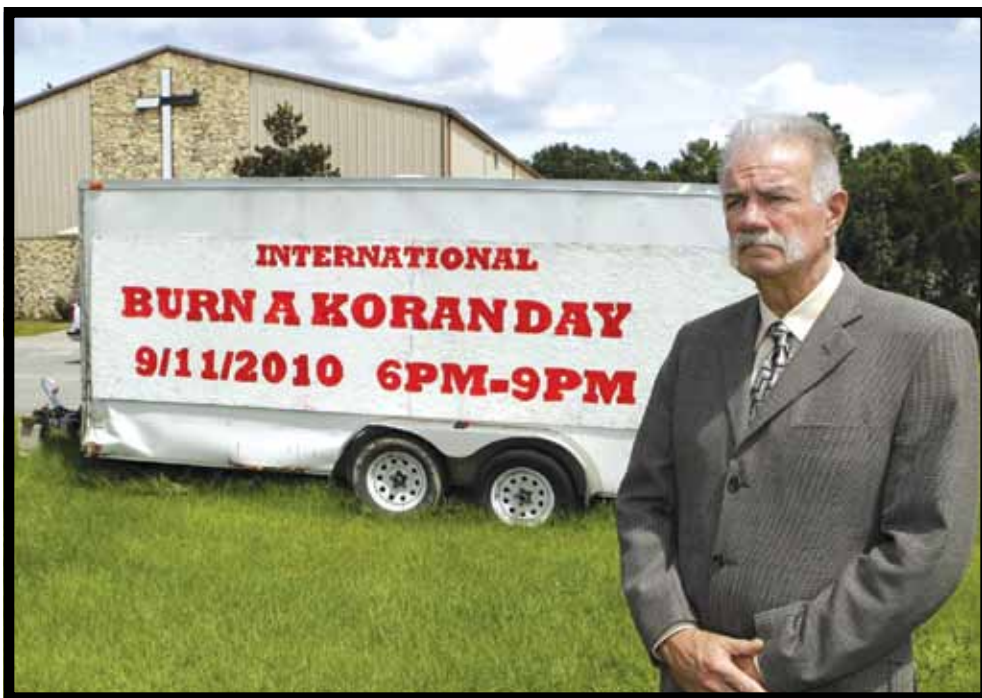
Laws of the Torah where it is written: “If a man has committed a sin, deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance; **for he who is hanged is accursed of God**” (Deuteronomy 21: 22,23).

The Qur’an emphatically rejects Jesus’^{as} dying an accursed death. He was put on the cross, appeared to be dead, but did not die there. Jesus was the Messiah sent by God to the Children of Israel. He practiced what he preached. He commanded to his disciples, saying, “Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not. But go rather to the **lost sheep of the house of Israel,**”(Matthew 10:5,6). After he was saved from dying an accursed death, he himself, as their shepherd, did go out to find the lost sheep of Israel — the ten lost tribes scattered in other countries.

As for accepting Jesus^{as} to be “the Son of God”, we read in the New Testament that Jesus^{as} used to call himself also “the Son of man.” He called himself as such more often than he used the term ‘the Son of God’. He never asked that he should be called the Only Son of God. He taught his disciples: “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God” (Matthew 5:9), “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be **sons of your Father in heaven**” (Matthew 5:44,45).

Reason Two: *The Koran does not have an eternal origin. It is not recorded in heaven. The Almighty God, Creator of the Worlds, is NOT its source. It is not holy. Its writings are human in origin, a concoction of old and new teachings. This has been stated and restated for centuries by scholars since Islam’s beginnings, both Moslem and non-Moslem.*

Response: The Qur’an has issued a challenge: if it is not the Word of God then produce something similar to any one of its chapters. This challenge stands unanswered for 1400 years! If only the Bible is the Word of God, and no other book is holy, then Pastor Jones has to deny the divine or eternal origin of the Vedas, the Geeta, the Avesta, the Agama and other Scriptures as well, and start burning them all.



Reason Three: *The Koran’s teachings include Arabian idolatry, paganism, rites and rituals. These are demonic, an ongoing satanic stronghold under which Moslems and the world suffer.*

Response: According to the Qur’an, the greatest and indeed the gravest sin is *shirk* – that is, associating anyone with God, or to worship any man-made image of God. The Holy Qur’an upholds and reconfirms God’s commandment given in the Old Testament, Exodus 20: 3-5: “You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make unto you any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them.” The Holy Qur’an confirms the Commandment as fundamental, and rejects worshiping God in human form, or to bow down in front of any handmade image of God instead of the Unseen God.

Reason Four: *The earliest writings that are known to exist about the Prophet Mohammad were recorded 120 years after his death. All of the Islamic writings (the Koran and the Hadith, the biographies, the traditions and histories) are confused, contradictory and inconsistent. Maybe Mohammad never existed. We have no conclusive account of what he said or did. Yet Moslems*

follow the destructive teachings of Islam without question.

Response: Among all founders of world religious traditions, including Moses^{as}, Krishna^{as}, Buddha^{as} and Jesus^{as}, the Prophet^{saw} of Islam is the one whose life is well-preserved in history. The Christian scholars are still in search of the historical Jesus. Who wrote the Bible is a big question debated within Christian circles. The Qur’an was preserved and protected in the very life of Prophet Muhammad^{saw}. There is only one version of the Qur’an as compared with several versions of the Bible that differ with each other. For example, the Roman Catholics have many books in their Bible that are taken out in the Bible of the non-Catholic Christians. The Qur’an is preserved in Arabic, its original language, and it remains unaltered to this day. However, the original text of the Bible does not exist in full. The first complete Bible available is only a translation in the Greek language.

Reason Five: *Mohammad’s life and message cannot be respected. The first Meccan period of his leadership seems to have religious motivated and a search for the truth. But in the second Medina period he was “corrupted by power and worldly ambitions.” (Ibn Warraq). These are char-*

acteristics that God hates. They also led to political assassinations and massacres which continue to be carried out on a regular basis by his followers today.

Response: About Prophet Muhammad^{sa}, the famous historian Gibbon writes: “The good sense of Muhammad despised the pomp of royalty. The Apostle of God submitted to the menial offices of the family; he kindled the fire; swept the floor; milked the ewes; and mended with his own hands his shoes and garments. Disdaining the penance and merit of hermit, he observed without effort of vanity the abstemious diet of an Arab.” Reverend Bosworth Smith says about Muhammad^{sa}: “Head of the State as well as the Church, he was Caesar and Pope in one; but he was Pope without the Pope’s pretensions, and Caesar without the legions of Caesar, without a standing army, without a bodyguard, without a police force, without a fixed revenue. If ever a man ruled by a right divine, it was Muhammad, for he had all the powers without their supports. He cared not for the dressings of powers. The simplicity of his private life was in keeping with his public life.” Lane-Poole says about Prophet Muhammad^{saw}: “He was the most faithful protector of those he protected, the sweetest and most agreeable in conversation. Those who saw him were suddenly filled with reverence; those who came near him loved him; they who described him would say, ‘I have never seen his like either before or after.’ In contrast, Jesus^{as} did not ever hold any worldly or political power. According to the Biblical narratives, Jesus^{as} never married. So, he cannot be a model for those who have political power, nor did he set any personal example for those who are married, have children and family.

Reason Six: *Islamic Law is totalitarian in nature. There is no separation of church and state. It is irrational. It is supposedly immutable and cannot be changed. It must be accepted without criticism.*

Response: In Islam the administrative affairs of a State are required to be conducted by mutual consultation. In addition, exercise of reason and judgment, *ijtihad* is fundamental in Islamic Law. Moreover, reasoning based on *qiyas*, analogy, and *istihsan* or exercise of personal common-sense and use of inference or *istidlal*, are

well-known sources of Islamic Law. All of these sources of Islamic Law are based on the use of rationality, freedom of expression and justice. The longest theocracies in the history are upheld in Christianity. The Catholic Papacy is only one example. A British Christian monarch is also the head of the Anglican Church.

Reason Seven: *Islam is not compatible with democracy and human rights. The notion of moral individual capable of making decisions and taking responsibility for them does not exist in Islam. The attitude towards women in Islam as inferior possessions of men has led to countless cases of mistreatment and abuse for which Moslem men receive little or no punishment, and in many cases are encouraged to commit such acts, and are even praised for them. This is a direct fruit of teachings of the Koran.*

Response: The concept of modern democracy is not incompatible with Islam. The Qur’an prescribes a binding obligation that authority in public matters is a “trust” and it must be vested in those who are best capable of exercising it. The Qur’an says: “Verily, God commands you to entrust authority into the hands of those who are best fitted to discharge it, and that when you are called upon to judge between, or exercise authority over the people, you must do so equitably and with justice. Surely, excellent is that with which God admonishes you. God is All-Hearing, All-Seeing,” (4:59).

The Qur’an also upholds basic human rights in clear and precise words, and teaches freedom of will, making each individual responsible for his or her own actions. The Qur’anic teaching gives comprehensive rights to women, including the right of inheritance. In the words of Yvonne Ridley, a high profile Western convert to Islam, the Qur’an is a ‘Magna Carta’ for women.

Reason Eight: *A Muslim does not have the right to change his religion. Apostasy is punished by death.*

Response: There is no verse in the Qur’an that teaches death penalty for apostasy. The Qur’an’s fundamental teaching is: “There should be no compulsion in matters of religion”, (2:257). Again, the Qur’an says: “And

if your Lord had enforced His will, surely, all who are on the earth would have believed together. Will you, then, force men to become believers?” (10:100).

Reason Nine: *Deep in Islamic teaching and culture is the irrational fear and loathing of the West.*

Response: Islam does not specifically belong to any geographical location. The Qur’an declares that the East and the West both belong to God. However, there are some traits in the modern Western societies that Islam is not congruous with. Moral problems such as sexual promiscuity, teenage pregnancies, nudity, alcoholism and gambling are offensive to good Christians as well. The Qur’an gives a solution to such moral problems out of love for humanity, not out of any resentment against the West.

Reason Ten: *Islam is a weapon of Arab imperialism and Islamic colonialism. Wherever Islam has or gained political power; Christians, Jews and all non-Muslims received persecution, discrimination, are forced to convert. There are massacres and churches, synagogues, temple and other places of worship are destroyed.*

Response: The verses of the Qur’an giving permission for *jihad* clearly command to protect churches, synagogues and temples where the name of God is taken: “Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is made, because they have been wronged – and God indeed has power to help them – those who have been driven out from their homes unjustly only because they said, ‘Our Lord is God.’ And if God did not repel some men by means of others, there would surely have been pulled down cloisters, churches, synagogues and mosques, wherein the name of God is oft commemorated. And God will surely help one who helps Him. God is indeed Powerful, Mighty” (22:40-41).

The Christian Inquisitions are the worst example of religious persecution in history, and all the oppressions were done based on the teachings of the Bible – the Word of God. Similarly, there is no comparison to the imperialism and colonialism as practiced by some Christian nations – the British, Portuguese, French, and Germans. ♦

The Trouble with Muslims Today

By Lubna R. Malik



“Yet you are the people who slay your own brethren and turn out a section of your people from their homes.” (2:86)

This verse from the Holy Qur’an was revealed by Almighty God. Revealed about the historical followers of Moses, it illustrates that Muslims of today have not learned from the Holy Qur’an and history. Muslims are slaying their own brethren and turning their own out from their homes.

Irshad Manji, the acclaimed journalist, lecturer, and human rights advocate who wrote *The Trouble with Islam Today* and *Allah, Liberty and Love*, would disagree with my preceding statement. Manji does not believe that Muslims think about the Holy Qur’an, nor that they analyze it. Manji says that simply using a verse, such as that quoted above, against Jews is “not quite as scary as calling Muslims to account, is it?”¹ Manji’s two books of complaints of Islam are actually complaints of the Muslim world and how Muslims fail to question the Islamic establishment, analytically and rationally read the Holy Qur’an, and live the faith as the Prophet Muhammad^{sa} intended. Irshad Manji is correct. Her personal life choices aside, Manji is correct that most Muslims today turn a blind eye to misinterpretation of

Irshad Manji is correct. Her personal life choices aside, Manji is correct that most Muslims today turn a blind eye to misinterpretation of the Holy Qur’an, mistaking culture for religion, and violence in the name of faith.

the Holy Qur’an, mistaking culture for religion, and violence in the name of faith.

Manji missed one thing—there are Muslims who are engaging in the very revival of Islam that she urges. These Muslims are doing so not only on an individual basis, but as an organized group that has standing and recognition—the Ahmadiyya Muslim Community (AMC), Muslims who believe in the Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian. To be fair, Manji does acknowledge AMC as standing out, but limits her analysis to two paragraphs. Manji rightfully points out Professor Abdus Salam as a Muslim who received the Nobel Prize in 1979. She also points out that, rather than Pakistan applauding one of their own receiving this honor, rioters prevented Professor Salam from reentering Pakistan. Why? Because he was an Ahmadi Muslim. If Manji had inquired further about AMC’s teachings and the rationality with which Ahmadis follow Islam, perhaps she would have spent two

books expounding on examples from AMC on how Muslims can do more to purify and revive Islam, rather than complaining that Muslims are doing everything wrong.

This brief article will address a few of Manji’s complaints of Muslims today and illustrate how AMC is the answer Manji spends 456 pages seeking.

Problem 1 Muslims Complain About Americans:

Manji dislikes that Muslims complain that America is brutalizing the Islamic world and is after Muslims. Instead, Manji wishes Muslims would work *with* the American establishment to show the truly humanitarian nature of Islam.² AMC does just this. As a recent example, in the summer and fall of 2011, AMC organized more than 100 blood drives across the United States, collecting

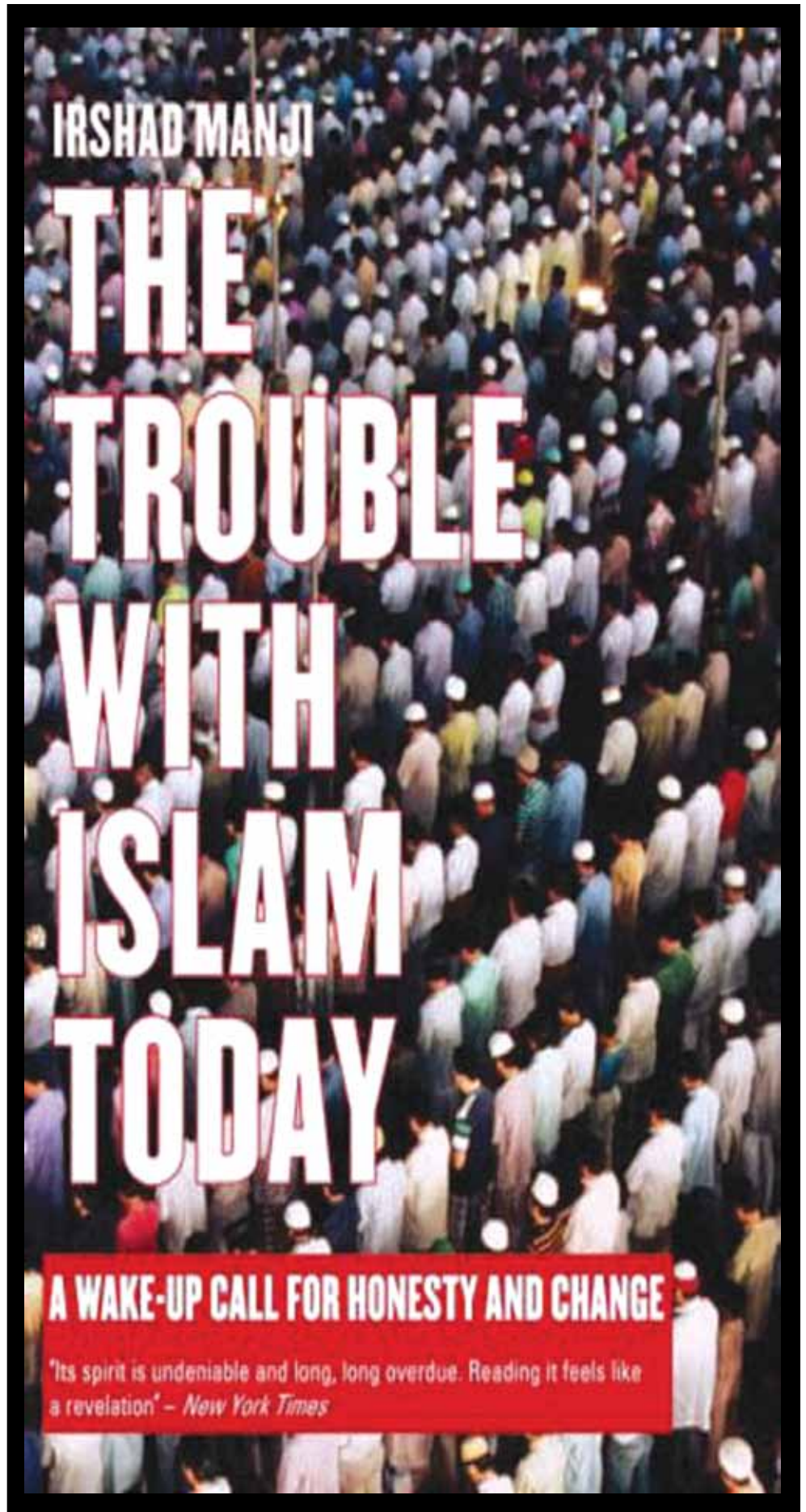
more than 10,000 pints of blood from Muslims and non-Muslims alike in commemoration of the tragedies of 9/11 and all of the American blood that was lost. This *Muslims for Life* campaign, along with the preceding *Muslims for Peace* and *Muslims for Loyalty* campaigns, highlighted that Muslims are members of American society and are not violent individuals who want to destroy all non-Muslims.

Problem 2 **Muslims Do Not Empower Women:**

Manji dislikes that Muslim women are not adequately educated and are not given support from the Muslim community to study further and support themselves.³ In AMC, women are as, if not more, educated than men. Further, the official AMC establishment supports women. In addition to the Professor Abdus Salam Scholarship and annual Talent Awards that are given to students, Lajna Ima'illah, USA, the women's auxiliary of AMC, has instituted the Khadija Scholarship. Under this scheme, women who are particularly underprivileged because they are widowed or divorced are given scholarships to pursue an education that will enable them to support themselves.

Problem 3 **Muslims Do Not Incorporate Women Into Decision-Making Roles:**

Manji shrieks at the fact that Muslim organizations, including many in the United States, do not involve women in leadership roles.⁴ However, in addition to the aforementioned women's auxiliary, Lajna Ima'illah, USA (which elects and is led by female presidents and officeholders across the country), AMC also incorporates active female participation at the National Majlis-e-Shura, or the consultative body which was started in the time of Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. This body of elected delegates comes together once a year to discuss the pulse of AMC and women are involved and actively convey their input.



Problem 4 Muslim Parents Disown their Daughters for Avoiding Female Circumcision:

Manji expresses dismay that Muslim parents demand circumcision from their daughters.⁵ Manji needs to take the time to realize that this practice has nothing to do with Islam. This practice that predates Islam and is practiced by more non-Muslims than Muslims is a purely cultural practice. Nowhere in AMC is this practice ever condoned by the faith.

Problem 5 The Muslims Who Do Recognize Problems in Islamic Practice Are Scared to Speak:

Manji highlights her own views and those of some of her readers that there are many Muslims who agree with Manji about the problems with how many Muslims are practicing Islam, but yet these Muslims are scared to speak.⁶ Perhaps these Muslims are scared because they see what speaking out leads to in the example of AMC. AMC, without any violence or provocation of any sort, spreads its message of the peaceful Islam that Prophet Muhammad^{sa} established under God's Command. What has AMC received? Martyrdoms of hundreds, including women and children. The inability to assert itself as a Muslim organization in countries such as Pakistan and Bangladesh without facing severe persecution. Public beatings that lead to death in Pakistan and Indonesia. This is what those Muslims are scared of. But if they truly believe in Islam's truth like AMC does, then that fear will not matter. Tragedies will be replaced with overwhelming successes. In spite of state-sponsored persecution of AMC in some countries, Ahmadis are thriving all over the world and illustrating that Muslims can follow Islam, be loyal to

their country, and be active and productive members of their society.

Problem 6 Mainstream Islam Denounces Reformists as Unfaithful:

Absolutely. Ahmadi Muslims are broadly considered *kuffar*, or disbelievers, for this very reason. Manji agrees. Indeed, as with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as}, the reformers before him, including the majority of today's most revered Islamic figures – including Caliphs Uthman and Ali, Imam Bukhari (who died in prison), the four great Sunni Imams, Abu Hanifah, Malik, Shafi' and Ahmad bin Hanbal – were also denounced as unfaithful in their times.⁷ Manji also states that it is often the reformists who are actually the *most religious and in touch with faith*.⁸ This is why AMC continues to grow and prosper and serves as the very outlet that Manji desperately seeks in her books, but fails to recognize.

Problem 7 Islam Needs a Reform Movement:

This idea, submitted by Tareq, one of Manji's readers, is echoed by her. She agrees with Tareq in her book, but fails to provide him with any option. AMC is an option, Tareq. AMC is the very reform movement that offers a "better life" so Muslims "can live successful, healthy and happy" because this "is the best way to worship God."⁹ Rather than rewrite Islamic law according to the latest popular democratic trends, and disregard Qur'anic verses and Ahadith that might seem difficult to explain, however, as the Manjis of the world would have it, the founder of AMC, the Promised Messiah and Mahdi, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad^{as} of Qadian, and his five successors to date, have all emphasized the importance of reviving the true Islam practiced by Prophet Muhammad^{sa}. Such revival, coupled with an understanding of Islam from a divinely appointed figure, clarifies Islam's beautiful teachings and presents them in the proper context.

Problem 8 Not Enough Scholars Are Revealing Islam's True Beauty:

Manji highlights the example of Egypt's Sheikh Ali Gomaa who declared in 2008 that there is no compulsion in religion and that, thus, there is no allowance within Islam to punish an apostate.¹⁰ That is correct. AMC has been saying this a century. Manji does not need to cry out for help—the help she desires is right in front of her. The fourth successor of AMC, Hadrat Mirza Tahir Ahmad^{ta}, published a book back in 1986 going into much greater detail on apostasy and how Islam absolutely prohibits punishing apostates or blasphemers in any manner.¹¹

Problem 9 Muslims Do Not Recognize the All-Knowing Nature of God:

Manji discusses how Muslims judge others, including those who say they are Muslims. Manji emphatically beseeches Muslims to focus on themselves and not judge others because judgment is only Almighty God's prerogative.¹² That is absolutely correct. This is the very line AMC has promoted every time an Ahmadi Muslim is called a *kafir*. Islam prohibits anyone from judging the spirituality or religiosity of another human being. This is a matter between that person and God alone.

These are only a few of the many valid complaints Irshad Manji lays against mainstream Muslims today. She is correct. If only she had offered the example of AMC. She desperately wants an alternative to mainstream Islam. Her readers echo her concerns. The answer is in front of them. ♦

Endnotes

¹ Irshad Manji, *The Trouble with Islam Today*, St. Martin's Press: New York, NY, 2003, p. 68.

² *Id.* at 131.

³ *Id.* at 162.

⁴ *Id.* at 191.

⁵ *Id.* at 193.

⁶ Irshad Manji, *Allah, Liberty and Love*, Free Press: New York, NY, 2011, p. xviii.

⁷ Mirza Tahir Ahmad, *With Love to the Muslims of the World*, Islam Intl Pubs Ltd: Tilford, 2004, pp.13-14.

⁸ Manji, *Allah, Liberty and Love*, p. 6.

⁹ *Id.* at 47-8.

¹⁰ *Id.* at 75.

¹¹ The book, *The Truth about the Alleged punishment for Apostasy in Islam*, can read at alislam.org.

¹² Manji, *Allah, Liberty and Love*, p. 93.

Propagation of Religion by **Force** is Forbidden

By Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian

The Promised Messiah and Mahdi (Published in 1902)

Translated by **Shazia Sohail**

My friends, give up the thought of jihad¹
War and killing for religion is now barred.

With the arrival of the Messiah, the Leader
of Faith. All wars for religion have now been
stayed.

Descending from heavens now is Divine Light
Useless is the fatwa for jihad¹ and to fight.

He who wages jihad¹ now is God's enemy
He who covets war disowns the Prophet
completely.

Why do you disregard, O people, the Prophet's
words? Abandon the wretch who abandons the
Prophet's words.

Why do you forget the news of Yadha'ul Harb²
Is it not in Bukhari³? Just open it and look.

Muhammad, the chosen one, did declare
Jesus the Messiah will end all warfare.

When he arrives he will be accompanied by
peace. He will completely eradicate the war
series.

The lion and the lamb will drink at the same
pond. Children will play with snakes, without
fear or harm. It means - that time will not be of
war, but of harmony. People will forget the arts
of blowgun and archery.

Whoever will go to battle after hearing this
command
Will face crushing defeat at the disbeliever's hand.

This prophesy is in the way of a miracle
It is enough to reflect upon, if someone is capable.

In short, the Messiah has come, and this is the
evidence. He will put an end to religious wars by
his appearance.

The times have changed, the sign is self-evident
Our nation no longer has the same grit and strength

Why don't you have the power of sword any more?
The secret is that there is no need any more

There is no compulsion on you from a foreign
nation. To stop you from fasting and supplication

If you truly cherish your faith and integrity.
Then fortify your hearts, it is now your duty

My friends, I have now fulfilled my duty.

If you still don't learn, then God will make you see.

1. Here, Jihad means the (un-Islamic) use of force to propagate Islam
2. "Cessation of all wars," a function of the Promised Messiah as foretold in Hadith
3. A book of Hadith, or traditions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad



In his comic documentary *Religulous*, Bill Maher levels dangerously ignorant allegations against Islam in a tongue in cheek manner. These allegations incite hatred and fear towards Muslims, and misrepresent the facts.

Religulous Retold

By Shazia Sohail

In his comic documentary *Religulous*¹, Bill Maher levels dangerously ignorant allegations against Islam in a tongue in cheek manner. These allegations incite fear and hatred toward Muslims, and misrepresent the facts. But, in all fairness, he had plenty of help from other Muslims who fail to question the disparity between what they blindly believe in the name of Islam and the basic source of its teachings, the Holy Qur'an.

The segment on Islam in *Religulous* features mock interviews with several Muslims, all of whom end up portraying Islam, unintentionally or intentionally, as an intolerant and violent religion. There are some reflections and commentaries by Bill Maher in which he draws erroneous conclusions from misstated historical facts. He also asks several questions crafted in a way that the answer does not matter. He deliberately blurs the lines between religious and political issues and then ridicules people for not seeing them as one. On the other hand, there are those Muslims who try to add

religious overtones to political issues, thereby confusing the two.

First we see Fatima Elatik, a Dutch politician, being interviewed at the spot where Theo Van Gogh was murdered for making a film that was deeply offensive to Muslims. Without telling the audience what Elatik's opinion was on the murder, Maher starts talking about freedom of speech and that, for Muslims, religion is off-limits as far as freedom of speech is concerned. She tries to have a rational conversation but a short clip is shown of her saying 'Freedom of speech goes both ways,' probably referring to the limitations to freedom of speech² but we never find out.

While Maher is allowed to finish his sentences and make his point clearly, the same courtesy is not allowed to Elatik. Does she condemn the killing? A video clip then shows a noisy crowd protesting the cartoons outside the Danish embassy in London and holding up placards that read "The Prophet^{saw} [is] A Mercy for the Universe,"; a caption read "As a result of these cartoons 50 people were killed."

Maher's edited clips present the Muslims protesters in a humiliating manner – wrought with deep division and chaos. Is this the intent behind freedom of speech? Maher conveniently grants himself editing rights to say his piece, while the other side struggles to be heard.

It is clear that Maher was looking for Elatik to make a definitive condemnation of the killing of Van Gogh. He makes this point again with his next subject, the British rapper Aki Nawaz, and says in reference to Salman Rushdie (the author of *Satanic Verses*), "All you gotta say is it's wrong for someone to have to suffer a death threat for writing a book." One is left mystified why a rapper would be viewed as an expert on Islam, but it's no

surprise that he did not set the record straight. There is no punishment prescribed in Islam for dissent in religious belief; God has indeed granted the right of free speech to people of all faiths. How they choose to exercise this right can and will be judged by God Alone. The Holy Quran repeatedly enjoins patience in the face of blasphemy. Mirza Tahir Ahmadth said the following on this subject:

“Islam goes one step further than any other religion in granting man the freedom of speech and expression. Blasphemy is condemned on moral and ethical grounds, no doubt, but no physical punishment is prescribed for blasphemy in Islam despite the commonly held view in the contemporary world.

Having studied the Holy Quran extensively and repeatedly with deep concentration, I have failed to find a single verse which declares blasphemy to be a crime punishable by man.

Although the Holy Quran very strongly discourages indecent behavior and indecent talk, or the hurting of the sensitivity of others, with or without rhyme or reason, Islam does not advocate the punishment of blasphemy in this world nor vests such authority in anyone.^{3”}

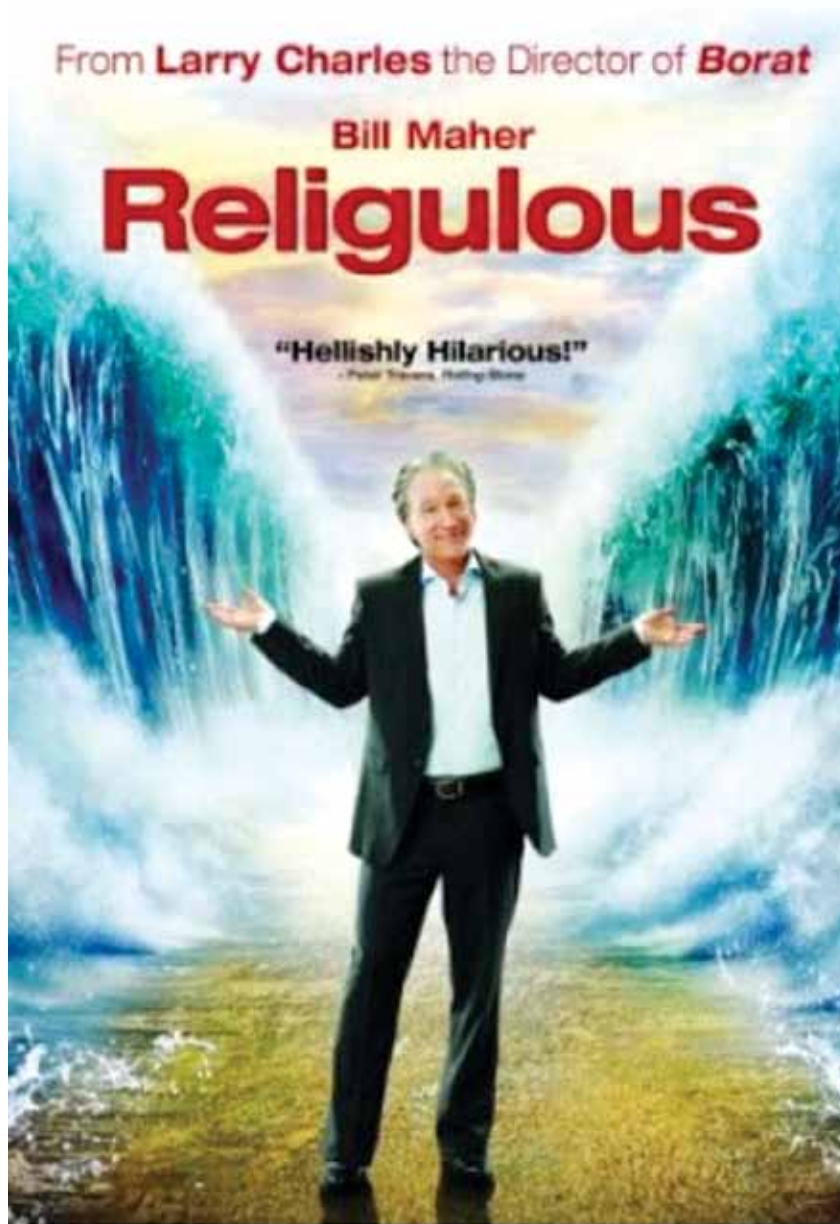
Why Elatik and Nawaz couldn't bring themselves to condemn the killing is a question that still needs to be addressed and the answer to it lies in the erroneous concept of blasphemy that has emerged and solidified in the last few decades in Islam due to political reasons. The blasphemy laws⁴, that call for death penalty for the subtlest possible insult to the honor of the Holy Prophet Muhammad, implemented based on misguided and dishonest representation of historical facts, have given moral justification to vigilantism. The definition of blasphemy has expanded in people's minds to the extent that even defending the right of the one accused of blasphemy to a fair trial is blasphemy, and any lawyer who might defend the accused, or judge who might acquit him, would be committing blasphemy and liable to be put to death in the court of public opinion. Both Elatik and Nawaz would likely have

received death threats from the self-appointed custodians of Islam if they had condemned violence against Van Gogh and Rushdie.

Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian⁵, who claimed to be the reformer and Messiah prophesied to appear among Muslims in the latter days, declared 120 years ago that the sword had been replaced by the pen; the time for holy wars had come to an end, and religion could only be defended through an appeal to reason:

own throat before reaching others.”⁶

Next, Maher interviews Junas Gaffar, at Ta bah Mosque in Amsterdam. The first question Maher asks him is “Is Islam a threat to Dutch values?” To answer a loaded question like this effectively one would have to be able to think clearly on one's feet, under the watchful eye of the camera, condense a lot of information to a couple of sentences, and then articulate it well. Did Maher choose a Muslim



scholar who might have been up to this task? Of course not.

Inherent in the question Is Islam a threat to Dutch values? are all the following statements:

- Islamic values are inimical to civilization
- Dutch values are superior to Islamic values
- When a Muslim commits a crime he is exhibiting Islamic behavior
- I will ignore the long history of peaceful collaboration between Holland and the Ottoman Empire
- I will ignore that the Dutch were introduced to the concept of Freedom of Religion by the Ottomans

The complete and most appropriate reply to this question can be found in the paper titled Let the Muslim be my Master in Outward Things: References to Islam in the Promotion of Religious Tolerance

in Christian Europe, written by Mr. Abdul Haq Compier, a Dutch Muslim, at this link:

<http://www.alislam.org/egazette/articles/Islam-in-Christian-tolerance-201001.pdf>

Maher then mentions to Gaffar that within a 100 years after Prophet Muhammed's death Muslims conquered most of the known world

“Religion is worth the name only so long as it is in consonance with reason. If it fails to satisfy that requisite, if it has to make up for its discomfiture in argument by handling the sword, it needs no other argument for its falsification. The sword it wields cuts its

in one century. Gaffar responds by suggesting they were not conquerors, they were trying to spread Islam. Maher goes, “Yeah they were - but they weren’t doing it by singing kumbaya.” A short, but powerful, exchange of words that has absolutely no bearing on reality. Numerous books have been written on this part of history, all testifying to the fact that the small and weak Muslim armies of the earliest times were provoked by Persians in the east and Romans in the west and north. It is a testament to their organization and valor that they were able to triumph over these great armies. Zachary Karabell admits to Muslim conquerors being invited in, and accepted as liberators, by the nations that had suffered tyranny at the hands of Byzantines in his book *Peace Be Upon You*.⁷

According to Thomas Arnold, “Islam has gained its greatest and most lasting missionary triumphs in times and places in which its political power has been weakest.”⁸ Indonesia and Malaysia never had a Muslim conqueror - they experienced a peaceful conversion by Muslim sufis and missionaries. Bangladesh became a Muslim majority country under the British rule.⁹

Maher is then shown interviewing Dr. Hourani, Coordinator for Center for Peace and Reconciliation, on the site of the Dome of Rock. He states, “Muslims built the Dome of Rock over Temple Mount,” and “There is more than one mosque in the world that used to be a temple, because its a lot easier to just change the sign on the top ...” the implication being that Muslims converted the holiest of Jewish temples into a mosque!

By this time one is wondering who approved the script of this documentary. Does Maher not know that the second Temple Mount was destroyed by the Romans after the first Jewish revolt in 70 AD and rebuilt as Temple of Jupiter, and hellenized, in 130AD?¹⁰ This led to the Third Jewish Revolt after which all Jews were forbidden on threat of execution from entering the city.¹¹

The site exchanged hands several times and was finally being used as a garbage dump by the local Christian population!¹² When Caliph Omar took the city in 637AD he immediately ordered its cleanup, and built a wooden mosque to one side, later rebuilt as al-Aqsa Mosque.¹³ The Dome of Rock was built in the middle of the site a half century later, not as a mosque, but as a shrine.¹⁴

Following the Muslim conquest of Jerusalem, Jews were once again allowed to live and practice their religion with more freedom in Jerusalem, 8 years after their massacre by the

Byzantines and nearly 500 years after their expulsion from Judea by the Roman Empire.¹⁵

Caliph Omar signed a treaty with Patriarch Sophronius, assuring him that Jerusalem’s Christian holy places and population would be protected under Muslim rule:

“The protection is for their lives and properties, their churches and crosses, their sick and healthy and for their co-religionists. Their churches shall not be used for habitation, nor shall they be demolished, nor shall any injury be done to them or to their compounds, or their crosses, nor shall their properties be injured in any way. There shall be no compulsion for these people in the matter of religion, nor shall any of them suffer any injury on account of their religion.”^{16, 17}

It is important to clarify here that only the actions of the Holy Prophet Muhammad^{sa} and the first four Caliph, known as the Righteously Guided Caliphs, are guaranteed to pertain to the teachings of the Holy Qur’an and the core teachings of Islam. The Righteously Guided Caliphs were elected, they legislated according to the teachings of the Qur’an, they sought advice from a consultative body in all important matters, they set up a public treasury to meet the expenditures of the state, they lived in their own homes and led simple lives, had no bodyguards and were always accessible to their common subjects. The later caliphs passed on the crown to family members, did what they pleased, were sole decision-makers, the Public Treasury became their personal property, lived like monarchs in grand palaces, enjoyed the pleasures attained by wealth, and were not accessible to the common man. Just as one cannot blame Christianity for the actions of all Christian monarchs, similarly one cannot declare the acts of the caliphs who succeeded the Righteously Guided Caliphs as accurate reflections of Islamic teachings.¹⁸

In addition to the allegations addressed here, Maher makes numerous other claims against Islam in *Religulous* as well as commentaries and interviews, all of which lack credibility in a similar manner. However, Muslims in the US must rescue the true teachings of Islam from the clutches of so-called scholars, and defend them against critics who exploit and propagate the erroneous interpretations put forth by these ‘scholars’. The negative image of Islam prevalent today is based on politicized interpretations coming out of the mid twentieth century ‘scholars’ with aspirations to regain the lost glory of Islam through force.¹⁹ Fortunately, the innate rationality of the Quran and several hundred years of early Islamic history serve as a testament

to the compatibility of Islamic teachings with freedom of religion and basic human rights. ♦

Endnotes:

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19. <http://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2010/07/23/my-take-why-americans-should-care-about-ahmadiyya-muslims/>

By Dr. Zia H. Shah

The Chinese tell of a time during the Hsia dynasty, in the third millennium before Jesus, when our cosmic environment suddenly changed. Ten suns appeared in the sky. The people on earth suffered greatly from the heat, so the emperor ordered a famous archer to shoot down the extra suns. The archer was rewarded with a pill that had the power to make him immortal, but his wife stole it. For that offense she was banished to the moon.¹ We in the West do not believe this and Chinese do not press this myth, but, for a moment consider, what will happen if a billion people believed it to be valid and literally true and their world view incorporated this myth, despite our twenty first century physics!

According to the Boshongo people of central Africa, in the beginning there was only darkness, water, and the great god Bumba. One day Bumba, in pain from a stomach ache, vomited up the sun. In time the sun dried up some of the water, leaving land. But Bumba was still in pain, and vomited some more. Up came the moon, the stars, and then some animals: the leopard, the crocodile, the turtle, and finally man.² Today, no one tries to harmonize these myths with our Newtonian and Einsteinian physics or science as we

The Root Cause of Conflict Between Religion and Science: Wrong Theology!

know it. But, are these myths any different from what many among us believe in the West. Consider for a moment, how much different or similar are these myths to those, according to which Grand Ma Eve was created from Grand Pa Adam's rib and pain of labor was created only after Grand Ma Eve faltered and that our planet earth is no older than a few thousand years. Almost half of USA Christians believe in these ideas or shall we call them American myths.

Japanese have their own share of myths. According to them, Izanagi-no-Mikoto (male) and Izanami-no-Mikoto (female) were called by all the myriad gods and asked to help each other to create a new land which was to become Japan. They were given a spear with which they stirred the water, and when removed water dripped from the end, an island was created in the great nothingness. If our Western Navy personnel find these myths to be literally true our ships and fleets may begin to sink! But, no lesser damage is done to our understanding, when we assert the Bible to be literally true, strange things begin to happen and our sciences are completely shattered. If you read your book of Genesis carefully, the earth is created before the sun, we can have days and nights before the creation of the sun,³ our earth has a roof or a vault called the sky, plants and animals gain existence only after mankind and last but not the least, Grand Ma Eve was created from Grand Pa Adam's rib, while he was sleeping. Additionally, there are only four rivers in the planet earth, if time and space were not a consideration, I could keep on reading Genesis over and over and keep on adding to this list. According to the second chapter of Genesis seas have been created, the whole of universe is in place, God has rested for a day also and yet there has been no rain at all on planet earth.⁴

Let me remind you, in case you missed in your previous readings of the Bible, the serpent is more crafty than any of the other wild animals the Lord God had made.⁵ It is not only physics, astronomy, cosmology and meteorology that are threatened but so is our biology and the field of medicine. Continue to read your Genesis, "When Adam had lived 130 years, he had a son in his own likeness, in his own image; and he named him Seth.⁴ After Seth was born, Adam lived 800 years and had other sons and daughters.⁵ Altogether, Adam lived a total of 930 years, and then he died."⁶ Our understanding of human body and aging process are shattered to say the least.

Now imagine those who believed in Chinese, Japanese, African or Hawaiian myths, what would have happened, if some of them developed genuine science, the believers would have tried to create metaphors to synchronize their myths and science. In so doing, at least some of their children and grand children would have received the indoctrination, in this pseudo-harmonization and a conflict would have been born between their religion and science. This did not happen to them but this is exactly what happened to the Trinitarian Christians of Europe and the Americas.

The Jews, the Unitarian Christians and the Muslims believe in the Transcendent God, who is the Law Giver. This was the paradigm in which science was developed in the Muslim Empire from eighth to twelfth centuries and then the plant of science was transplanted to Renaissance Europe over the next two to three centuries. The Trinitarian Christians with their belief of Jesus being God himself, denied the Transcendent nature of God, being beyond time, space and matter, at least in some respects. Addition-

ally, their understanding of miracles implied suspension of laws of nature. So, Trinitarian Christianity did not provide an atmosphere conducive to development of science. However, fortunately for all of us, the Renaissance Europe borrowed the paradigm from Judaism and Islam, without formally acknowledging the debt. It was in this history of development of science that the seed was sown for the religion and science conflict, which should actually be understood as unscientific nature of the dogma of Trinitarian Christians and undue status of the Bible. If the Biblical myths are packaged with the Chinese, Japanese, African or Hawaiian myths, where they belong, the religion-science conflict magically disappears and an era of genuine understanding and harmonization of religion and science is ushered in.

Monotheism and understanding of Transcendent God did have a big role in the development of our sciences. Here I quote Paul Davies, who is a physicist, writer and broadcaster, currently a professor at Arizona State University, from his book 'the Mind of God.' He writes:

"In Renaissance Europe, the justification for what we today call the scientific approach to inquiry was the belief in a rational God whose created order could be discerned from a careful study of nature. And, Newton notwithstanding, part of this belief came to be that God's laws were immutable. 'The scientific culture that arose in Western Europe,' writes Barrow, 'of which we are the inheritors, was dominated by adherence to the absolute invariance of laws of Nature, which thereby underwrote the meaningfulness of the scientific enterprise and assured its success.'"

For the modern scientist, it is sufficient only that nature simply have the observed regularities we still call laws. The question of their origin does not usually arise. Yet it is interesting to ponder whether science would have flourished in medieval and Renaissance Europe were it not for Western theology. China, for example, had a complex and highly developed culture at that time, which produced some technological innovations that were in advance of Europe's. The Japanese scholar Kowa Seki, who lived at the time of Newton, is credited with the independent invention of the differential calculus and a procedure for computing pi, but he chose to keep these formulations secret. In his study

of early Chinese thought, Joseph Needham writes: 'There was no confidence that the code of Nature's laws could ever be unveiled and read, because there was no assurance that a divine being, even more rational than ourselves, had ever formulated such a code capable of being read.' Barrow argues that, in the absence of "the concept of a divine being who acted to legislate what went on in the natural world, whose decrees formed inviolate 'laws' of Nature, and who underwrote scientific enterprise," Chinese science was condemned to a 'curious stillbirth.'"⁷

Judaism and Islam provided the paradigm for scientific revolution, however, as a large number of practicing scientists came from Trinitarian background, they brought their biases with them and the stage was set for religion and science conflict. Centuries passed and in the middle of the nineteenth century we get the works of Sir Charles Darwin. The Catholic Church and the Protestants fought the ramifications of Darwin's theory of evolution for decades. However, more than a century after the publication of *On the Origin of Species*, when evidence for Darwin's theory became overwhelming, the Catholic Church yielded. Pope John Paul II revisited the question of evolution in a 1996 message to the Pontifical Academy of Sciences. Unlike his predecessor Pius XII, John Paul was broadly read, and embraced science and reason. He won the respect of many scientists in 1993, when in April 1993 he formally acquitted Galileo, 360 years after his indictment, of heretical support for Copernicus's heliocentric view. The Pontiff began his statement with the hope that "we will all be able to profit from the fruitfulness of a trustful dialogue between the Church and science." Evolution, he said, is "an essential subject which deeply interests the Church." He recognized that science and Scripture sometimes have "apparent contradictions," but said that when this is the case, a 'solution' must be found because '*Truth Cannot Contradict Truth!*'⁸ The Pope successfully built a smoke screen by expression of a truism and hid decades of irresolvable conflict between Christian dogma of Original Sin, which requires Adam and Eve to be the first human couple and Darwin's theory behind this newly constructed screen, '*Truth Cannot Contradict Truth!*' Pope's one liner, '*Truth Cannot Contradict Truth,*' is indeed true as words and actions of All-knowing God can-

not contradict each other. But, if this litmus test of '*Truth Cannot Contradict Truth,*' is applied to the Bible, it does not cut the mustard as we have already seen in several examples just from the book of Genesis, with more than 70 books to go yet! Incidentally, the Muslims do believe that many of the books of the Bible were revealed, but as these were not preserved over time, we have the inconsistencies and paradoxes in Genesis and other books, as noted above.

The Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad Qadiani, the Founder of Ahmadiyya Muslim Community, wrote more than seventy books in defense of Islam and existence of God. He wrote: "The God of Islam is the same God Who is visible in the mirror of the law of nature and is discernible in the book of nature. Islam has not presented a new God but has presented the same God Who is presented by the light of man's heart, by the conscience of man, and by heaven and earth."⁹ It is only for the Divinely revealed, historically preserved and scientifically accurate Holy Quran that the compliment can be extended, '*Truth Cannot Contradict Truth!*'¹⁰ The Quran says about itself that had it been from anyone other than Allah they would surely have found therein much contradiction.¹¹ This, incidentally, also explains the contradictions in the Bible, both logical and the ones that contradict science. Only the precisely recorded and properly understood words of All Knowing God, the Quran, as learned Muslims understand it to be, which are free of contradictions and misinformation, can be fully in keeping with God's 'works,' which are studied in science. Only such a theology can be free of contradiction with genuine science. I rest my case! ♦

Endnotes

¹ Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. *The Grand Design*. Bantam Books, New York, 2010. Pages 87, 123, 149 and 163.

² Stephen Hawking and Leonard Mlodinow. *The Grand Design*. Bantam Books, New York, 2010. Pages 87, 123, 149 and 163.

³ Genesis 1:14-17.

⁴ Genesis 2: 5.

⁵ Genesis 3:1.

⁶ Genesis 5:3-4.

⁷ Paul Davies. *The Mind of God*. A Touchstone Book, 1992. Pages 75-77.

⁸ www.newadvent.org/library/docs_jp02tc.htm

⁹ www.alislam.org/library/browse/book/The_Essence_of_Islam/?p=1#page/-35/mode/1up

¹⁰ http://www.muslimsunrise.com/dmddocuments/2008_iss_2.pdf#page=21

¹¹ Al Quran 4:83.

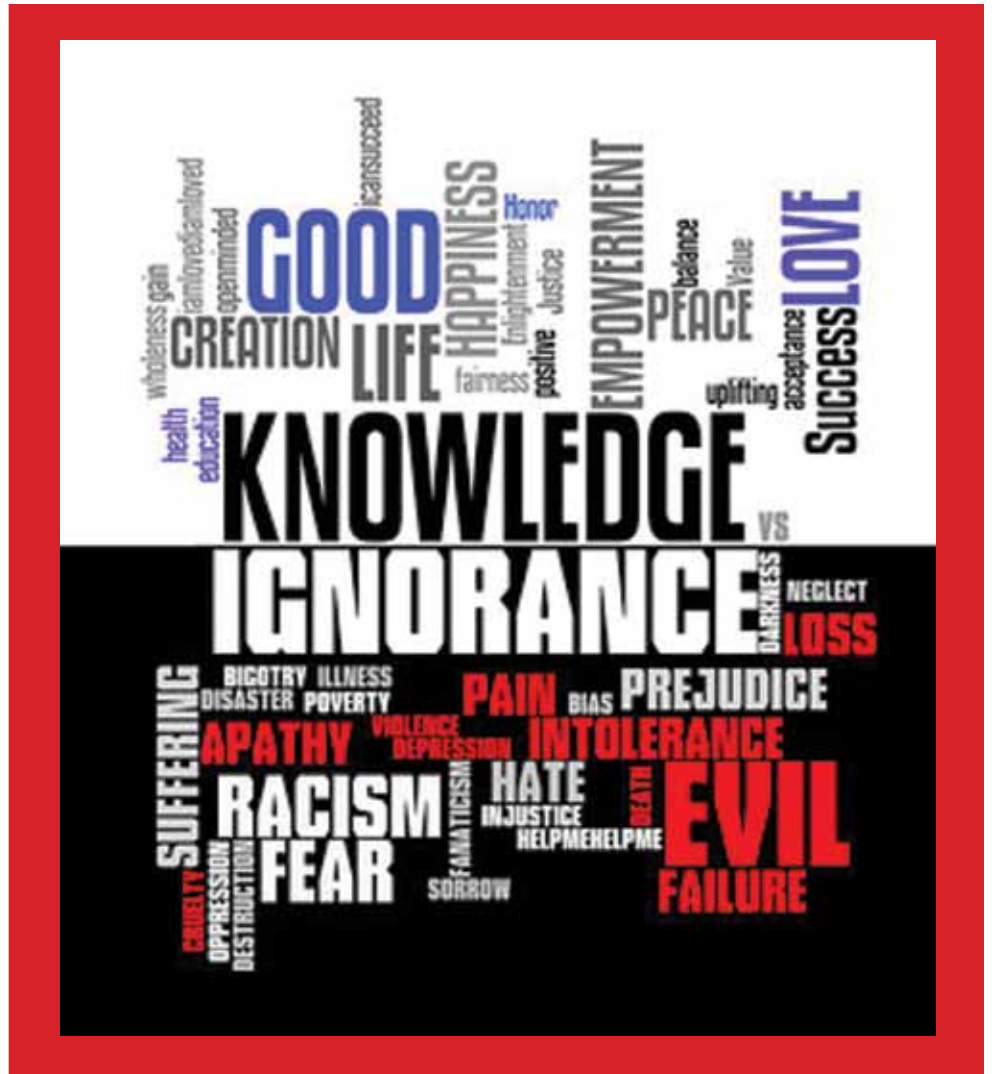
The upper hand is better than the lower; and begin with your dependents; and the best charity is out of surplus; and he who desires to abstain from asking will be shielded by Allah; and he who seeks self-sufficiency will be made self-sufficient by Allah.

(Bokhari)

The Tragedy of Prejudice

By Sufi M. R. Bengalee

Appalling ignorance exists in the western countries regarding the Holy Faith of Islam and its sublime teachings. Through centuries of repetition, many false stories and fantastic ideas concerning this great religion, have gained currency among the so-called enlightened people of the western hemisphere. It is a sad commentary on occidental enlightenment, catholicity, and propaganda. The world is greatly divided by misunderstanding and misrepresentation. Hence, we find widespread enmity, animosity, and hatred among the various nations and races of the earth. Now that all right thinking men are deeply concerned about ushering in a new era of world peace by building bridges over the chasm of prejudice, to take any step in writing or in speaking which stimulates disunity and disharmony, and widens the gulf of misunderstanding, should not only be sadly regretted, but highly condemned. The following passage in the Editorial page of the Sunday Herald and Examiner, recently came to my notice.



“The Mohammedan, taught by his prophet who alone had the right to speak for Allah, the high god, believes that man’s object on earth should be to spread the faith, destroy its enemies, pray kneeling several times daily with face toward the tomb of the prophet at Mecca. The reward for these things is eternal happiness in a sensual paradise, where each man finds himself thirty feet tall, with energies that never become weakened, eternally supplied with wines but never intoxicated, and where beautiful females, ‘hour is,’ their bodies made of solid musk always surround him and do his bidding.”
(Chicago Herald and Examiner – Aug. 21, 1932.)

In this small passage, the learned author of the article betrays ridiculous ignorance. Even a school child ought to know that Mohammed’s tomb is not in Mecca, but in Medina – a town about two hundred and sixty miles from Mecca, and the Moslem wrongfully called Mohammedan, prays with his face toward the Mosque Kaaba, which is situated in Mecca.

The writer then goes on to repeat the same common misconception that,

“The Mohammedan believes that the object of man’s life on earth should be to spread the faith and destroy enemies.”

The general public may in some measure be excused for holding such erroneous views regarding the great religion, as

these misconceptions have been deliberately propagated, in order to poison the minds of the western public, against the Holy Faith. But, a writer of importance, as one of the Editors of the *Chicago Herald and Examiner* must be, can by no means be pardoned for such appalling ignorance as has been shown in the above passage. The very word Islam which means peace, is an abundant proof of the fact that the great religion does not advocate war and fighting. Its message

only and not to compulsion... He declares his business was only to preach and admonish; that he had no authority to compel any person to embrace his religion; and that whether people believed or not was not his concern but belonged to God only. And he was so far from allowing his followers to use force that he exhorted them to bear patiently these injuries which were offered them on account of their faith; and, when persecuted himself, chose rather to quit the

As soon as the veil of misrepresentation and false propaganda is lifted, and the beauties and excellencies of the great religion are known, people will invariably adopt it. People are drawn towards the Truth as by the law of gravitation.

to humanity is the message of peace and brotherhood. Islam does not allow the use of force in any shape or form, except in self defense. The Moslem scripture, the Holy Quran, says, in no ambiguous terms:

“There must be no compulsion in religious matters.” (11.256)

“Summon thou to the way of the Lord with wisdom and kind admonition.” (XVI.126)

These verses make it perfectly clear that there is no sanction of the use of force for the propagation of the Faith.

The conduct and example of MUHAMMAD prove beyond the shadow of a doubt that he never resorted to sword or force for the propagation of his faith. MUHAMMAD’S life as a prophet is divided into two parts – Meccan life before Hijrah and his life in Medina from Hijrah until his death. George Sale, in the preface of his translation of the Quran says regarding his preaching of Islam until Hijrah:

“Hitherto Mohamet had propagated his religion by fair means, so that the whole success of his enterprise, before his flight to Medina, must be attributed to persuasion

place of his birth and retire to Medina than to make any resistance.”

T.W. Arnold who made a thorough study of the subject says in his famous book, “The Preaching of Islam,” concerning MUHAMMAD’S conduct in the propagation of his faith during his life in Medina after Hijrah:

“Exactly similar efforts were made to preach the faith of Islam and to convert the unbelieving Arabs after the Hijrah as before in the days of Muhammad’s political weakness.” (The Preachings of Islam).

The same author says regarding the history of his propagation of Islam in the subsequent centuries:

“...From the very beginning, Islam bears the stamp of a missionary religion that seeks to win the hearts of men, to convert them and persuade them to enter the brotherhood of the faithful; and as it was in the beginning, so has it continued to be up to the present day, as will be the object of the following pages to show.” (The Preaching of Islam).

It should be borne in mind that the above quotations are taken from the Christian writers and are as such from unwilling witnesses.

The Falsity of this groundless charge is proved beyond all doubt in India, where the Moslem population has increased far more rapidly during the last seventy years under the English rule than under the Moslem Kings and Emperors for seven centuries, and it is quite evident that there is no room for the charge that Islam was propagated in India by force during English rule.

A grand and standing refutation of the false charge is that at the present time Islam is peacefully penetrating into, and daily gaining converts from all the Christian states of the West. Islam is making rapid and steady progress. The day is not far when the majority of the people of the earth will find glory and happiness in embracing Islam. As soon as the veil of misrepresentation and false propaganda is lifted, and the beauties and excellencies of the great religion are known, people will invariably adopt it. People are drawn towards the Truth as by the law of gravitation.

The most damaging accusation brought against Islam, is, “the reward of all these things is eternal happiness in a sensual paradise.” The tragedy of ignorance and prejudice is so vile that the religion which makes the observance of prayers five times a day obligatory upon its followers, enjoins compulsory fasting and absolutely prohibits intoxicating liquors, is mercilessly assailed as having advocated sensual paradise. Can blind prejudice go any farther?

Nothing can be more foreign to the lofty teachings of Islam than a sensual heaven. Some of the most beautiful metaphors and allegories of the Holy Quran have been tortuously twisted to depict such an ugly picture. According to the Holy Quran, the joys of heaven are all spiritual. The Book of God expressly says regarding the heavenly bounties: “No soul knoweth what blessings are reserved as reward for their virtuous deeds.” (XXXII-7) The Holy Prophet, MUHAMMAD, elucidates when he says: “The bounties of heaven are things which the eye has not seen, nor has the ear heard, nor has the mind of man conceived.” (Bukhari)

In short, heaven, according to Islam, is the attainment of a life of ever-lasting progress and complete joy and happiness through union with God and by the development of the fine spiritual qualities and the unlimited capacities that have been implanted in man. ♦

Questions & Answers

What is the meaning of forbearance and forgiveness?

The first of these is forbearance or forgiveness. He who commits an offence against another causes him pain or harm and deserves to be punished either through the process of the law, with imprisonment or fine, or directly by the person offended. To forgive him, if forgiveness should be appropriate, would be to do him good. In this context the teaching of the Holy Quran is:

Those who control their tempers when they are roused and who overlook people's faults when that is appropriate (3:135). The recompense of an injury is a penalty in proportion thereto; but whose forgives and effects thereby a reform in the offender, and no harm is apprehended, that is to say, exercises forgiveness on its appropriate occasion, will have his reward with Allah (42:41).

This verse shows that the Quran does not teach non-resistance to evil on all occasions, or that mischief makers and wrongdoers should never be punished. Its teaching is that one must consider whether the occasion calls for forgiveness or punishment, and to adopt the course which would be best in the interests both of the offender and the public. Sometimes an offender turns away from wrongdoing in consequence of being forgiven, and sometimes forgiveness incites him to further wrongdoing. Therefore,

God Almighty directs that we should not develop the habit of forgiving blindly on all occasions, but should consider carefully whether forgiveness or punishment would be most appropriate, and, therefore, a virtue, in each particular case, and should adopt that course. Some people are so vindictive that they keep in mind the wrongs done to their fathers through generations, and there are others who carry forbearance and forgiveness to the extreme, sometimes even to the limit of shamelessness. They exercise such weakness, forgiveness and forbearance as are utterly inconsistent with dignity, honour, jealousy and chastity. Their conduct is a stain on good character and the result of their forgiveness and forbearance is that people are disgusted with them. That is why the Holy Quran attaches the condition of appropriate time and place for the exercise of every moral quality, and does not approve the exercise of a moral quality out of its place.

How are equity, benevolence and graciousness related to each other in three stages?

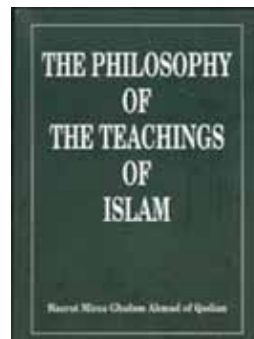
The first is the doing of good in return for good. This is the lowest gradation and even an average person can easily acquire this gradation that he should do good to those who do good to him.

The second gradation is a little more difficult than the first, and that is

to take the initiative in doing good out of pure benevolence. This is the middle grade. Most people act benevolently towards the poor. But there is a hidden deficiency in benevolence, that the person exercising benevolence is conscious of it and desires gratitude or prayer in return for his benevolence.

The third grade of doing is graciousness as between kindred. God Almighty directs that in this grade there should be no idea of benevolence or any desire for gratitude, but good should be done out of such eager sympathy as, for instance, a mother does good to her child. This is the highest grade of doing good which cannot be exceeded.

It should be remembered that equity or benevolence or graciousness between kindred is not in itself a moral quality. They are man's natural Conditions and faculties that are exhibited even by children before they develop their reason. Reason is a condition of the exercise of a moral quality and there is also a condition that every moral quality should be exercised in its proper place and on its proper occasion.



For further discussion on these topics go to Alislam.org. Search under library for the book, "The Philosophy of the Teachings of Islam."

He was trying to find his way.

THE
HUFFINGTON
POST

By Dr. Faheem Younus

While driving to the mosque for my Friday prayers, I saw him in my back view mirror, fidgeting with his GPS on a hot summer day. Driving up on Park Heights in Baltimore with a car full of children, this visibly Jewish man with a long wavy beard and thick black glasses was clad in a black suit. Say whatever you want, but this much was obvious: He had made some tough choices to please his G-d.

So why would your or my God not reward him for his commitment? What if this man was an organ donor? A volunteer firefighter? A caring neighbor? An honest trader? How could anyone declare with certainty that this man cannot go to heaven?

I don't know how, but people say this all the time: "He cannot go to heaven because he does not believe in [insert your Prophet or God's name here]." According to a 2008 Pew survey, one in five Christians in America believe that non-Christian faiths cannot lead to salvation. That number soared to 60 percent for white evangelical Protestants who attend church once a week.

Frankly, I would have checked out of my faith, Islam, if it took such a position. Thank God (or Allah) that it doesn't.



According to a 2008 Pew survey, one in five Christians in America believes that non-Christian faiths cannot lead to salvation. That number soared to 60 percent for white evangelical Protestants who attend church once a week.

Islam recognizes that the Jewish man mentioned above, who was probably lost and finding his way, is not alone; we are all trying to find "the way" in our own way. So it guards humans from the temptation of declaring who goes to heaven and who doesn't by proclaiming that "grace is in the hands of Allah. He gives it to whomsoever He pleases" (57:30).

Then why do people from almost every major religious tradition, including Islam, insist on some version of "I am the way and no one comes to God but through me"? They love to quote those parts of their Scriptures

without a broader context. You know why? Because it's leverage -- it's self serving and it feels good. Did I tell you that a majority of such people are typically born into the same faith that they sell as "the way"?

On the contrary, Islam's holy Quran provides not one, but many ways to the heaven (29:69). Yes, some are straight -- like belief (3:85) and good deeds (5:10) -- while others are convoluted. It's like going to New York City. You could take the bridge, tunnel, ferry or simply fly into the Big Apple.

God's grace though, truly leads the way to salvation. "He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases (5:19)" to me, assures that no matter which way you take, you won't hit traffic, accidents or bad weather.

To the Jewish man mentioned above, some Muslims may say: No way! How can a Jew or a Christian ever go to heaven? To them I present this from Quran: "Surely, the Believers, and the Jews, and the Christians and the Sabians -- whichever party believes in God and the Last Day and does good deeds -- shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear shall come upon them, nor shall they grieve (2:63)."

How can the Quran charge Jews and Christians of the notion of an exclusive heaven and then turn around to claim the same?

This is not a fringe interpretation, applicable to Jews and Christians only. Prophet Muhammad^{saw} paved the way to salvation -- ultimately for all humans -- in a famous narration from the book of Muslim, "A man said: By God, God will not forgive so-and-so. At this, God said: Who is he who swears by Me that I will not forgive so-and-so? Verily, I have forgiven so-and-so and have nullified your good deeds."

Islam neither believes in an eternal hell nor in an exclusive heaven.

After the next traffic light, the Jewish guy driving behind me made a left turn. I came to the mosque, praying that may God guide him to the shortest, straightest, safest way to his destination. ♦

Faheem Younus is an adjunct faculty member for religion/history at the Community Colleges of Baltimore County and a clinical associate professor at the University of Maryland. He can be reached at Faheem.Younus@Ahamdiyya.us

Pak court orders demolition of a minaret, dome of Ahmadi mosque



Lahore: A Pakistani court has ordered the demolition of a minaret and dome of an Ahmadi mosque, where over 50 people were killed in an attack by terrorists two years ago. Additional Session Judge Naeem Ahmed further directed authorities to remove the 'Kalma' (Islamic profession of faith) from the mosque in Ghari Shahu area of Lahore.

The judge issued the directives yesterday in response to a petition filed by Badr Alam, an assistant of lawyer Ismail Qureshi, who is known for his anti-Ahmadi views.

The judge gave his verdict under provisions of the Criminal Procedure Code. Munawar Ali Shahid, a spokesman for the minority Ahmadi sect, told PTI it was surprising that the judge issued the order without hearing arguments by the lawyer representing the Ahmadis.

Alam, in his petition, asked the judge to direct authorities to remove the Kalma from the front of the mosque, known as Darul Zikr, and demolition of the minaret and dome in line with the Prohibition and Punishment Ordinance of 1984.

He contended that the minaret was similar to those found in regular mosques and could not be part of Darul Zikr as Ahmadis are not Muslims.

Shahid said the mosque in question was built in 1951 and the legislation cited by Alam was introduced in 1984, and thus did not apply to this case. He said the Ahmadi community

would challenge the decision in the Lahore High Court.

Ninety-five people were killed and over 100 injured when heavily armed terrorists stormed two Ahmadi mosques at Garhi Shahu and Model Town areas of Lahore on May 28, 2010.

While Ahmadis consider themselves Muslim, they were declared non-Muslim in Pakistan in 1974, and in 1984 they were legally barred from proselytising or identifying themselves as Muslims.

http://zeenews.india.com/news/south-asia/pak-court-orders-demolition-of-a-minaret-dome-of-ahmadi-mosque_778761. Over 1.5 million Ahmadis live in Pakistan.



Courtesy of ZNews, India

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News, Views and Reviews

Muslims Offer Solution to Nation's Problems

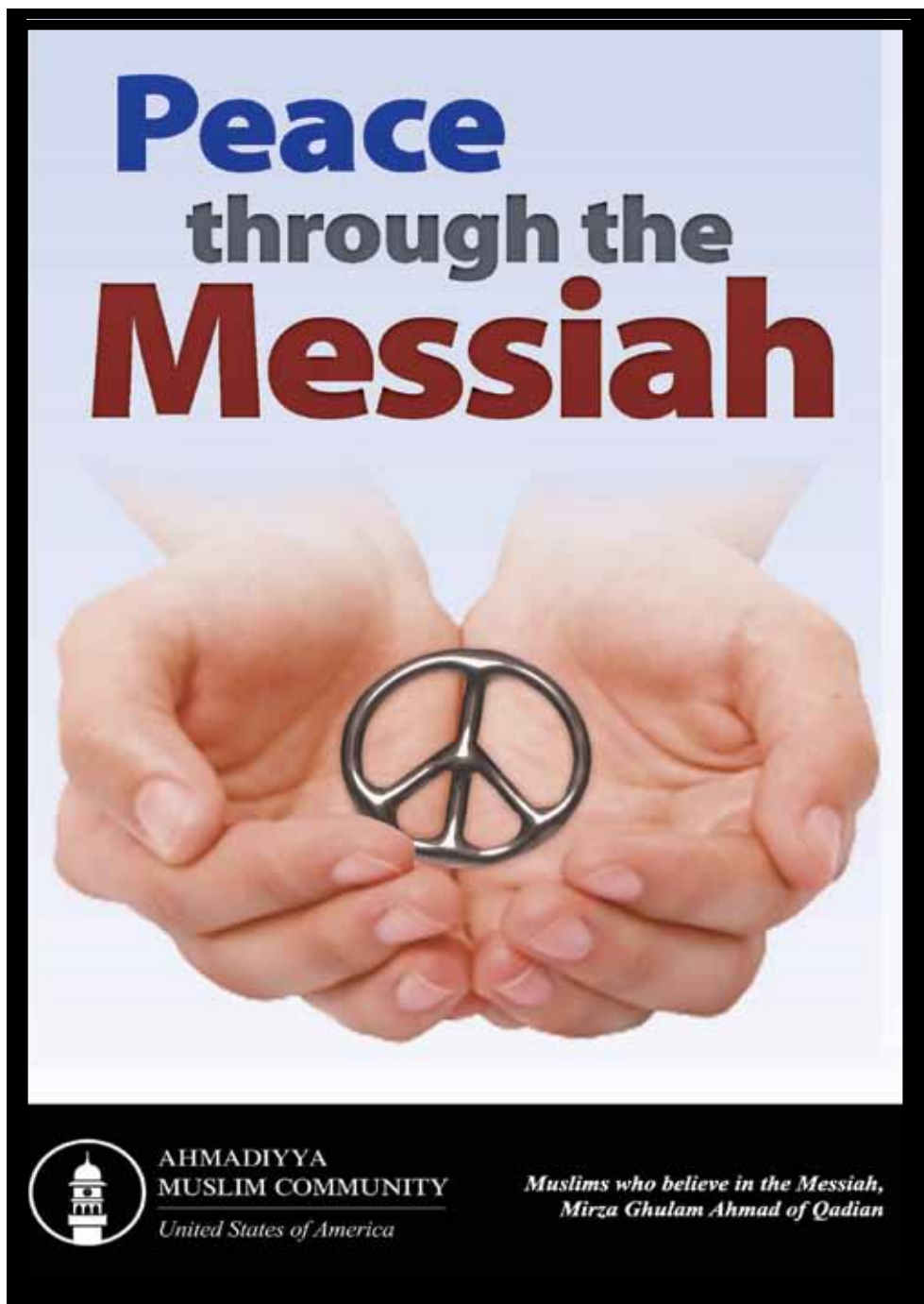
Ahmadiyya Muslim Community launches nationwide campaign to bring fellow Americans towards true peace

Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA announces the launch of a new nationwide campaign that provides holistic solutions to our nation's problems. Just like the deteriorating world conditions, millions in this country have suffered grief, injustice, unemployment, foreclosures and hardships – while a few in positions of power fed their own insatiable greed. As such, people are searching for any kind of peace – social peace, economic peace, political peace, personal peace and even inter-religious peace. This new campaign entitled “Peace Through the Messiah” asserts that peace can be achieved today only by accepting the Messiah who was Divinely sent to bring humanity back to God and rid the world of all these issues.

With true respect, care and consideration for the well-being of its fellow citizens, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA launches this campaign in order to spread the teachings of the Messiah, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian, who was prophesized to come by previous prophets to re-establish belief in God and demonstrate unity of mankind as the means to achieve true peace.

As the Messiah, Ahmad established peace through the belief of, and personal communion with, the all-Loving God. Ahmad's teachings not only establish interreligious peace; his teachings also establish social, economic, political peace since they are based on absolute justice. Most importantly, Ahmad's rational teachings establish belief in God and lead to individual peace between a person and God.

The nationwide “Peace Through the Messiah” campaign was launched on May 22nd in Zion, Illinois – a city founded by Reverend Dr. John Alexander Dowie, who over 100 years ago



Peace
through the
Messiah

AHMADIYYA
MUSLIM COMMUNITY
United States of America

*Muslims who believe in the Messiah,
Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian*

claimed to be the Prophet Elijah III and would herald the coming of the Latter Day Messiah. He exchanged words and views with Mirza Ghulam Ahmad – the Divinely sent Messiah – in what culminated in a widely publicized prayer duel. The subsequent death of Dr. Dowie firmly established the truth of Mirza Ghulam Ahmad in the United States, and for this reason, Ahmadiyya Muslim Community USA – the oldest Muslim organization in America – returns to its roots in Zion to spread this invitation to peace.

Islamic spiritual values promote genuine peace in all spheres of our lives, be they political, economic, social or personal. The failure to uphold such vital values has led to a breakdown in our families, communities and nation. Peace can only be achieved through an unbiased application of these values.

The Ahmadiyya Muslim Community's “Peace through the Messiah” campaign will accept invitations to debate or dialogue any topics regarding Islam.

The News Wrestlers

Every Saturday I used to watch the “professional” World Wrestling Federation matches on TV. Back in those days, Dick the Bruiser and Jimmy the Valiant were the main rivals. It was amazing how one would be beaten up so bad but then he would get up and pummel his opponent. Surprisingly, no one ever seemed to walk away with any bruises! I sometimes watched in disbelief thinking this couldn’t possibly be true...but hey...this was live TV with real people and a real crowd. Like most people I pretended to believe it. We all wanted the good guys to win but the producers were careful to keep us in suspense with an occasional defeat. It was all good entertainment.

Several years later some scrooge rained on our parade and decided to take



I am not sure what it would take to change behavior against the interests of the money game, but maybe we can get the Wrestling Federation to take these Islamic “experts” to court. They lost their battle last time but this could be their way of getting redemption.

the wrestling issue to court, alleging it was not “Sports” but “Entertainment.” Therefore, it should not be advertised as a sports event. The court agreed and my deep down suspicions were forced upon me as reality. By this time I had matured so it didn’t bother me much. However, for those who lived and died by these matches, I’m sure it was quite a letdown. I mean, it must be rough

knowing that you’re being taken for a fool, although the media has that ability. It can help you believe something you know isn’t true. Nevertheless, it was still entertainment for many but I’m sure the lawyers were laughing all the way to the bank. It is always a dollar game.

Often times I wondered: “How would these muscle bound monsters fare against a *real* wrestler? Could they even take a real punch?”

The media gives a false sense of authority. Anyone hiding behind the comfort of a camera can prop themselves as an authority for the masses to believe. But are they? How many a viewer has allowed themselves to be taken for a fool simply because they saw it on TV? TV has changed quite a bit since I first came to this country.

In those good old days, we used to watch the news at 5:30 PM on CBS with Walter Cronkite. He gave us the news the way it was. Just the facts. He finished his news with the sentence: “And that’s the way it is on” and he mentioned the date. His delivery was professional and generally steered clear of emotional and personal bias.

I’m sure he had his personal feelings about the Vietnam War, which was at its height, but he never showed those in his delivery of the news. We drew our own conclusions about domestic and international events. Cronkite is still revered as one of the best anchormen, and in the views of many, an icon.

Since then, TV news programs have changed. The anchormen force their own opinions and openly advertise their emotions. Nothing seems to matter to them. They misquote politicians, take excerpts out of context and in some cases even make up the news. It’s reached the extreme where even the self-proclaimed “Fake News” program

on *Comedy Central's, The Daily Show*, exposes these facts. It is all entertainment in praise of the almighty dollar.

All that matters to the TV anchors these days is the ratings. That translates into dollars for their bosses, their shareholders and most of all, themselves. It is of no concern to them how they misdirect the public about issues that have a great influence in their lives. Misinformation is so great that Americans are internationally considered by some to be the most ignorant. As an illustration, many Americans still believe that President Obama is not an American-born citizen, precluding him from the very office he holds. The emotions of sincere conservative citizens are played in a truly shameful way.

Today we see several self-crowned "experts" on Islam who advertise their ignorance via media channels. They're no different than those wrestlers who suffered from "media muscles." They label themselves as "specialists," "consultants" and "experts" about Islam. As long as someone can pronounce a few Arabic names and terms, s/he is misperceived as an "expert" on the religion of Islam. The so called newstations give airtime to these people to explain the verses of the Holy Qur'an.

Although it's entertainment, it is doing a lot of damage in the world. It provides ammunition to the extremists in Muslim countries against the West and in particular the Western News Media for spreading baseless claims about the faith of Islam. Muslims look at the tube in disbelief as they're informed that they are supposed to be these blood-thirsty terrorists who seek to kill any and all who disagree with Islam.

One man's ignorance is another man's news. It's all about the money.

Today we see several self-crowned "experts" on Islam who advertise their ignorance via media channels. They're no different than those wrestlers who suffered from "media muscles." They label themselves as "specialists," "consultants" and "experts" about Islam.

Most of these experts and scholars have their personal issues that they seek to blame Islam for. They may have come from countries where their cultures had subjected them to atrocities or ill behavior. They may have suffered because of the political rivalries in the country they came from. It is all too easy to blame the religion of Islam because who is going to refute their testimony? The response would be too sober and too bland to make it on the entertainment news channels.

Maybe it's time to see if these experts who have "media muscles" can take a real punch. Maybe they should accept the debate invitations by the Ahmadiyya Muslim Commu-

nity to see if they're really experts.

It all comes down to the fact that the dollars are dictating the behavior of most of these individuals. The best interest of the general public, morality and simple rules of decency are all sacrificed in this process. Truth is manipulated in such a manner that it all seems real. After all, it is live on television. Just like when Dick the Bruiser would get up from the floor shaking his whole body and beat the heck out of Jimmy the Valiant.

We are taught by the Holy Qur'an to use "straight talk" which is different than just plain truth. We are told that we should say the words which would communicate the correct message and not merely meet the standard of technical "truth." We are in a society where it is the job of the speech writers and lawyers to write things in a way that can be manipulated in different ways later. The words are carefully chosen so politicians can talk their way out of things once they see the tide changing. In one case, an American president even questioned the definition of the word "is."

I am not sure what it would take to change behavior against the interests of the money game, but maybe we can get the Wrestling Federation to take these Islamic "experts" to court. They lost their battle last time but this could be their way of getting redemption. They could expose these "expert" commentaries as entertainment, or better yet, emotionally blackmail them into accepting our debate challenges.

Now that would be entertainment.◆

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