

3/10/07

“Muslim vs. Islam”

by
Tom Holbrook

Baghdad, Iraq’s capital, is a city of close to 6 million people, with 70% of them being Shiite Muslims and the rest are primarily Sunni Muslims. In today’s newspapers we read that 106 of these 6 million were killed by two crazed suicide bombers of the Sunni faith. Many are wondering why the violence continues in this hell hole and why these two factions of the same religious belief are so intent on murdering each other. We ask ourselves, “Why is it so hard to bring this violence to an end?”

First, are we talking about Islamic values or Muslim values... I thought they were the same, didn’t you? Well, according to the “Domain of Islam” website they’re as different as apples and oranges. Let’s look at what they have to say.

“Islamic values are those that are set out in the Quran and the practice of the noble Messenger, Muhammad (S). Muslim values are those that are created as part of the culture of the Muslim communities. The detriment that arises from this is that many times precedence is given to the Muslim values over the Islamic values.

“This is not to say that Muslims do not care about Islam, they care for and love Islam deeply. They have concern for their children’s Islamic upbringing and the welfare of the Muslims all over the world. But what happens is that certain practices become common among them and their mentalities are set on justifying these practices instead of accepting the Islamic rulings on such things. They become a part of the Muslim culture and mentality, and so it becomes difficult to try to explain to them that Islam forbids such things. Because of this transformation in mentality, the average person in such a community will be hostile to someone bringing Islamic rulings forbidding things such as music and dancing and enforcing things like hijab and modest conduct. Having gatherings and parties that center around music and dancing, and removal of the hijab and modest conduct have become common among many Muslims, and so they constitute what we have called Muslim values, as opposed to the Islamic values. The Muslim values are caused by a relaxation on the enforcement of Islamic laws.”

Now my simplification of all this, using the Christian religion as an example, is that 4 or 5 hundred years ago the only acceptable Christian belief was the Catholic church’s take on what the Bible said Christianity was all about. Then along came Martin Luther and put a fly in the ointment, so to speak, by posting his “95 Theses” to the church door and, thereby, became a heretic in the Church’s eyes. At that time the Catholic Church reacted like those of the Islamic faith are reacting now... they ordered Luther’s death and the death of anyone else who dared to dispute the authority of their Holy Father on earth, the Pope.

And so it went century after century as the Protestant movement continued and many new denominations were formed. Many believe that with each new denomination formed there came a further watering down of true Christian beliefs and potential punishments of God. Could be that’s why we have so many “Christian” beliefs today that gives “believers” the right to do just about anything they wish and still find their eternal address along the streets of gold. Folks, if we look real close at the relationships between

some of our Christian denominations, there's still a little hate lying dormant under the surface. Fortunately, we control it and stop short of killing each other.

As stated in the quote from "The Domain of Islam" above, the Islamic faith has also been watered down and, whereas we stopped killing our Christian brothers and sisters who rebelled, the Islamic radical leaders have encouraged the continuance of such a punishment. With the Sunnis and Shiites the rage goes a little further.

Mohammed established the Islamic religion around 600 A.D., and his word, the Quran, purportedly says only his natural heirs will be acceptable to rule the Islamic world. The Sunni vs Shiite squabble primarily has to do with who is the true leader of all Muslims... the Sunni branch believes that the first four caliphs-- Mohammed's successors--rightfully took their places as successive leaders of Muslims. They recognize the heirs of the four caliphs as legitimate religious leaders. These heirs ruled continuously in the Arab world until the break-up of the Ottoman Empire following the end of the First World War. Osama Bin Laden and Saddam Hussein were Sunnis and although a minority in Iraq, Saddam's dictatorship allowed the Sunnis to run rough shod over the Shiites and create an even greater atmosphere of hatred.

Shiites, contrary to Sunni belief, believe that only the heirs of the fourth caliph, Ali, are the legitimate successors of Mohammed. In 931 the Twelfth Imam disappeared. His death was a cataclysmic event in the history of Shiite Muslims. R. Scott Appleby, a professor of history at the University of Notre Dame, wrote, "Shiite Muslims, who are concentrated in Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon, [believe they] had suffered the loss of divinely guided political leadership" at the time of the Imam's disappearance. Not "until the ascendancy of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini in 1978 in Iran" did they believe that they had once again begun to live under the authority of a legitimate religious figure.

Radical Islam followers believe it is Allah's will that a global "caliphate" will be established, meaning it will be the religion of the world, and that it is to be reached by any and all means necessary. All Muslims believe the Mahdi or "rightly guided one," will lead them to this end. As historian Timothy Furnish has written, "The major difference is that for Shiites is he has already been here, and will return from hiding; for Sunnis he has yet to emerge into history: a comeback vs. a coming out, if you will."

Bottom line... only a change of heart will totally stop the senseless murder in the Middle East, but we've got to do all we can to create a climate that will allow that change.

#