

Maria Carnicella

Response to News

Week 1

1-27-04

"Shiite cleric is clear: A direct vote required"

This article, outlining the requests of Iraqi government and religious officials regarding the US implementation of government, is written in a condescending tone. The writer is not completely subjective. Instead he uses quotes from the Iraqi's to make them sound like rebellious, unruly children who clearly don't know what is best for them. I have highlighted a specific example of this where the writer depicts the Iraqi Shiite Muslims as reckless militant rebels that aim to jeopardize the American way in Iraq. Perhaps the Iraqis simply do not wish to live the American way.

"Picking Jihad over Children"

Michael Matza, writer of this article, is similarly biased against Muslims in his article. Like the previous writer, Matza is a great example of the type of reporter that Said describes in "Covering Islam". Here the Muslim woman who died in Jihad is made to seem as a fool; she seems almost barbaric in her religious practices. This article tries to be subjective but getting negative feedback by Iraqis, but does not try to explain in anyway the actions that she tried to commit. It is clear, after examining these articles from a Said-like perspective, that we Americans are given an extremely biased perception of Muslims. This phenomenon is probably a result of the political agenda of our nation.

Some slam suicide attack by Palestinian mother of 2

BOMBERS from A1 took joint responsibility for the attack, would send a mother to her death, leaving two toddlers behind.

"Did she think about her children before she did this?" asked Um Wasim, another Gaza mother, rushing home last week from a secretarial job. "People are criticizing her because there really is no excuse for this."

In a farewell videotape replete with Hamas banners and weapons, Reem Salah al-Raiyshi, 22, said she chose jihad — holy struggle — over motherhood, because she always wanted to turn her body into shrapnel that would kill Israelis.

"God gave me two children, and I loved them so much," she said. "But my wish to meet God in paradise is greater, so I decided to be a martyr for the sake of my people."

Dressed in a green Hamas bandana and cradling an assault rifle, Raiyshi told the camera she was confident God would provide for her 3-year-old daughter and 1-year-old son.

Hamas staged a high-profile funeral. Sheikh Ahmad Yassin, the group's spiritual leader, praised Raiyshi as the first Hamas woman in a coming onslaught.

But in a departure from tradition, Raiyshi's brother Ayman spoke out immediately against his sister's mission and the militants who dispatched her. "This destroys our life, our work and our future," he told a Chicago Tribune interviewer. "It never occurred to us that she would do such a thing. If she had mentioned it, I would have prevented her, because of the children."

Raiyshi's relative Yusef Awad also condemned her act, saying



KHALIL HAMRA / Associated Press

A boy holds a picture of Reem Salah al-Raiyshi. She killed herself and four others this month.

her suicide detracted from the Palestinian national movement.

"The greatest jihad is raising your children," he told the Tribune.

Surveys show a majority of Palestinians, especially those in the Gaza Strip, where the Islamic resistance group Hamas holds sway, support suicide bombings as a response to Israel's occupation of Gaza and West Bank lands. In the last three years, there have been dozens of such bombings that have killed hundreds of Israelis.

In recent weeks, however, more Palestinians have publicly questioned the bombings.

In the West Bank, criticism was voiced this month after Islamic Jihad operatives sent Iyad al-Masri, 17, on a suicide mission to avenge the killing of his brother Amjad, 15, who collapsed in his arms Jan. 3 after being shot by Israeli troops in a Nablus raid.

Detonating his explosives in

an attempted attack on an Israeli patrol, Iyad Masri killed only himself on Jan. 11.

"It was wrong to send him to his death at a time when we were still mourning his brother. They must reconsider their tactics," Masri's father, Bilal, told Reuters.

Even among Palestinian media not known for publishing such criticisms, the issue has come to the fore.

Citing the possibility "of a strategic change in peoples' perception of such attacks," daily al-Ayyam columnist Hassan al-Batal praised the courage of the Raiyshi and Masri families for speaking out.

The Israeli daily Haaretz last week cited unnamed Hamas sources as saying the use of a female suicide bomber, even though the group

had previously said a woman had no place in such attacks, was part of a larger power struggle within the organization over the next leader of Hamas' political bureau, based in Damascus, Syria.

Yassin, Hamas' spiritual leader, wants to play a pivotal role in selecting the bureau's next chief. But in talks brokered by Egypt recently, he entertained the idea of a tactical lull in attacks on Israelis. For that reason, a Hamas source told Haaretz, Yassin was perceived by "external Hamas," those not in the Gaza Strip and West Bank, as too moderate.

"Now Yassin has to prove to the external Hamas that he's just as tough as they are," the source said. Using a mother to mount the next wave of attacks was a chilling way to send that message.

Contact staff writer Michael Matza at 215-854-2405 or foreign@phillynews.com.

Shiite cleric is clear: A direct vote required

Maria Cornicella

A spokesman said the leader may back a revolt if the U.S. refuses to allow full elections.

By Tom Lasserer
INQUIRER FOREIGN STAFF

NAJAF, Iraq — The leading Shiite Muslim cleric in Iraq is hoping the Bush administration will allow the country to hold direct elections because otherwise he may be forced to support a revolt, a spokesman for the cleric said yesterday.

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani met with his supporters recently and discussed his demand for direct elections and the U.S. refusal to grant them, said Noor Aldin Alwaadh, a spokesman for Sistani's Baghdad office. At the end of the meeting, which lasted for hours, Sistani "was clear about it — he wants direct elections," Alwaadh said.

"We are not the Taliban and we are not al-Qaeda," Alwaadh said. "But if you want to hear me say it, fine. We will fight for our rights. We will fight, ... we will not sacrifice our independence, and we do not want occupying forces in our country."

Sistani's views, and those of a number of ordinary Shiites, suggest that the United States may have little room to maneuver as it tries to engineer an orderly transition to Iraqi self-rule by the end of June. Earlier this week, Iraq's Shiite leadership sent tens of thousands of followers to the streets, calling for direct elections in a demonstration of their power.

The Bush administration says there is not enough time to organize elections by the end of June. Sistani has not specified a timetable for elections. But even if Sistani agreed to elections later this year or in 2005, President Bush's political advisers want to begin a U.S. withdrawal from Iraq well before Election Day in November.

L. Paul Bremer, the top U.S. envoy to Iraq, plans to hand



Knight Ridder Tribune

Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Hussein al-Sistani and others believe a caucus system proposed by the U.S. would yield a government beholden to Washington.

over power to an Iraqi legislative body selected by a series of caucuses across the nation. Participants in the caucuses would be selected in large part by local politicians and the U.S.-appointed Iraqi Governing Council.

Many Iraqis complain that because those local politicians and council members were appointed by the United States, they will be beholden to the Bush administration.

Alwaadh said Sistani did not believe U.S. contentions that elections were impossible because of the lack of a census, and Alwaadh suggested that Iraqis could use rosters from past United Nations-sponsored oil-for-food ration cards and supplement those names with foreign-issued identification cards for Iraqis returning from exile.

There have been conflicting reports on whether Sistani might accept a U.N. finding that elections were technically impossible. Asked about a possible U.N. mission to Iraq, which is being considered, Alwaadh said Sistani hoped the United Nations would help oversee the elections.

Sistani has avoided appearing before demonstrators and

has refused to meet with U.S. officials. Conflicting reports about his views frequently appear.

Interviews this week in Baghdad and in Sistani's home base of Najaf suggest that the senior cleric is restraining less moderate Shiite religious leaders, trying to prevent an outbreak of violence over the issue of elections. Sistani has said that he prefers civil disobedience, but some on the street say they have little patience for such measures.

"If there are no elections, there will first be a strike with a lot of violence in the streets," said Luai al-Mansori, a member of the Hawza in Najaf, a group of Shiite scholars who issue fatwas, or religious edicts, that are followed as the highest law by Iraqi Shiites. Shiites make up about 60 percent of the nation's 25 million people.

"The revolt will begin in Najaf because Sistani has more power here," Mansori said.

Amir Abdul Karim, a perfume salesman in Najaf, agreed. "We will fight for the freedom and the direct elections. ... The will of the people is more powerful than the Americans."

Alwaadh declined to comment specifically on whether Sistani would issue a call for violence if direct elections were not held.

Some Iraqis believe Shiite leaders want direct elections so they can use their majority vote to create a theocracy.

The clerics have been "telling the Americans what they want to hear, but as soon as the Americans turn their face, they will bring Islamic rule," said Sadr al-Dulame, executive director of the Iraq Center for Research and Strategic Studies, an independent think tank and polling agency. "They are just using the democratic language as a tool. All of the religious groups are pushing for a theocracy."

Contact reporter Tom Lasserer at tlasserer@krwashington.com.

Picking jihad over children

Maria Cornicella

One mother's choice before killing herself and 4 others has hit a nerve among Palestinians.

By Michael Matza
INQUIRER STAFF WRITER

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — Wind whipped a chilly Gaza street, kicking up dust around Um Zayad, a Palestinian mother of four, as she shivered red-cheeked beneath a billowing black robe and wrinkled her nose in disapproval.

A few days earlier, another Gaza mother had feigned a limp as she approached an Israeli army checkpoint and was escorted inside a building for a security inspection. She blew herself up, also killing three soldiers and a security guard in yet another act of self-proclaimed martyrdom.

"It's true, we should defend our country," Zayad said, reacting to the Jan. 14 attack. "But I prefer to raise my kids. Women can also be fighters, but not women who have children to raise."

The latest bombing — the seventh by a Palestinian woman since September 2000 — touched a nerve inside a society that normally celebrates the bombers as heroes. This time, as pride gave way to bitterness, many Palestinians expressed shock that Hamas and the Al Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, which

See **BOMBERS** on A9

OR LIFE

7 97910 00101

Modern and Medieval Comparisons of Muhammad's Life

There are a number of similarities and differences between Annemarie Schimmel's and John Esposito's modern accounts, in *Islam: An Introduction* and *Islam: The Straight Path* respectively, of the life of the prophet Muhammad, and the version, *The Life of Muhammad*, written by Sirat Rasul Allah in the eighth century. The clearest parallel among the three is the fact that all tell a relatively similar story of Muhammad, how he first became a prophet, and then a short overview of the beginnings of Islam. All of these accounts seem to especially emphasize Muhammad's first encounter with angel Gabriel, probably because this is the moment that could be considered the birth of the new religion.

Rasul Allah's story, however, is told much differently than Schimmel's and Esposito's. Schimmel and Esposito discuss the life of Muhammad in a very historical manner, attempting to be as unbiased as possible. I believe that this is probably on account of the fact that their books are intended to be read by an academic audience, wishing to learn more about the nature of Islam. Schimmel's and Esposito's version's of Muhammad's life seem to be the historical foundations to what will probably be a short overview of Islamic culture. Much different was Sirat Rasul Allah's account. He wrote his version not so much in a historical point of view, but more as a narrative. The reader in Rasul Allah's version feels closer to the events discussed, as if they are participating themselves, compared with Schimmel and Esposito's third-person, non-narrative descriptions.

God Beyond Praise

Rumi uses his poem *God Beyond Praise* to show the complete omnipotence of God, and how man must completely trust in him. It is an example of Sufi mysticism because it shows Rumi's personal relationship with God, and is based on his feelings of awe towards God, not scripture. It also expresses ideas that are outside of the parameters of common Islamic thought, which is most refreshing.

In the first half of the poem God is represented by beams of Wisdom, and man is compared to soils and clays. God's truth and word are represented by seeds. Springtime is symbolic of death and the day of judgement. In the first half Rumi is saying that humans are receptive to God, when death and the judgement day comes they will be repaid, because God has taught them the right way.

The second half of the poem Rumi says that humankind is a witless clod, and that through his own actions he hardens his heart and loses the ability to see God. The second verse also says, "My praise dispraises Thee, almighty God; for praise is being, and being is sin." This could refer to the need for humble praising, praising for God and not for anyone else. "Being" could represent thinking of ones self as holy and special, or self-righteous. The last two lines discourage self-righteousness and in a sense discourage the

idea of the self. These lines are reminiscent of Buddhist thought especially the Heart Sutra.

I liked these poems a lot, and think they offer a refreshing breath, as does Sufi Mysticism, into the law laden Islamic tradition.

Amanda Staples
Interpretation of Scripture Revised

When the Moslem belief in the total harmony of scripture is looked at against the background of sura 3:7, which acknowledges both the perfect clarity and the ambiguity of the Qu'ran's many verses, there arises a need for interpretation in order that the scriptures not be said to contradict one another. Zamakshari asserts, then, that a believer who is firmly convinced of the inerrancy of God's words is thereby required, when faced with the seeming discord of verses, to measure those ambiguities against the more clearly determined verses, in order to bring them into harmony.

The belief that God's words are perfectly harmonious with one another is not unique to Islam. Christians and Jews, for instance, are reminded time and again with verses like Psalm 12:6 that "the words of the Lord are flawless, like silver refined in a furnace of clay, purified seven times (NIV)." Yet plenty of verses have still been extracted and held up against others as contradictory. Without anyone to interpret these scriptures using the knowledge which God has firmly planted (according to many), people are left either to let prior opinion dictate which of the scripture to follow and which to discard, often giving way to greater discord than such seeming contradiction necessitates, or perhaps they falter, unable to reconcile all that they have allowed themselves to take at face value.

Needless to say, the question of interpretation is a difficult one. Zamakshari seems to make clear that interpretation is not for everyone, but only those "who bite with the sharp molar." But suppose everyone thinks himself so endowed, even while the Qu'ran makes it clear that there are indeed people "whose hearts are swerving," who cling to the ambiguities in order to justify their desires and actions. It seems safe to say, then, that for those whose reason is generally aligned with the reason revealed in scripture (whether this means everyone or a select few), if according to such divinely planted reason certain incongruities in the "outer meaning" of scripture should arise, then it is one's duty to God to go deeper than the outer shell to obtain the most complete meaning that, according to the believer, is always there.

John Keptner
W200~Intro to Islam
Assignment: 2/20/04

The Fiqh Akbar II was written in response to the ideas of "rational theology" and its impact on the fundamental beliefs of Islam. During the 10th century, a group called the Mu'tazilites came up with the idea that the Koran and the word of Allah should not be taken literally. Rather, these words should be interpreted and should be construed to display some form of rational ideas about Islam. The Fiqh Akbar II is a list of "statements of faith" for Muslims to follow and was intended to protect Islam from heresy and to prevent "infidels" from misinterpreting the Koran.

Most of the statements in the Fiqh Akbar II refer to passages in the Koran, and reflect the true beliefs of Islam. The author states that Allah did not create the world and everything in it; rather, he had prior knowledge of everything before it was even created. The writings in the Koran, therefore, are not supposed to be heard as the direct word of Allah. Instead, they should be considered interpretations of his word, written by prophets and followers. It is also stated that Allah did not create men to be excellent or to be infidels, but that men become who they are through their own actions. According to the Fiqh Akbar II, a man can only achieve excellence if he has faith in Allah and follows his teachings.

These writings are very orthodox in nature and were probably meant to separate the true believers from those who did not completely understand the faith. The Fiqh Akbar II is basically conveying one message to its readers: Accept the Koran as the truth, and do not question why or how it is the truth.

Great thoughts on this
question! Thanks!

Joshua Lorenzo Newell
Intro to Islam
MWF 11:40

Five Pillars

In the United States I think it is possible to comply with the five pillars, but with some compromise. Islam is a religion that encompasses every minute of daily life for a devout Muslim, so it is more of a lifestyle. It is based on the right actions as opposed to the right beliefs. Following the five pillars would be much easier, and done with less compromise, if a Muslim lived in an Islamic society. Their practices would be the norm, and day to day life would be scheduled around them. This is not the case in secular societies, such as the United States.

Praying five times a day would most definitely have to be compromised by a Muslim living in the United States. Most jobs do not allow for five prayer breaks through out the day. Also, depending on the job, customers or clients could be taken back by the prayer ritual. The compromise in this situation would be praying five times before and after work.

Good point!

Another problem a Muslim could encounter is the attendance Friday services. In the Western world Friday is a workday. Taking every Friday off could seriously effect the productivity of the worker. If a Muslim lived in Muslim society, everyone would be taking off because it would be the norm. A compromise to this situation could be going

✓

to the Mosque, and then coming into work. This would also be compromising the Mosque experience for the Muslim.

The Hajj could be difficult for reasons of distance, but this poses no major obstacle since the advent of airplanes. Alms also would be easily achievable, through the Mosque, and Aid organizations. One thing a Muslim would have to be careful with is researching the Aid organizations they are giving money to, for if the U.S. claims them to be aiding "terrorism" trouble could ensue.

The fasting for Rhamadan could also be problematic. Again in a Muslim society, everyone would be fasting. In the United States a Muslim must be surrounded by people who are not celebrating Rhamadan, and are not fasting. It must make it harder to fast when there are people eating all around you. It must also be harder to celebrate, when no one around you can connect with the feelings attached to Rhamadan.

Another thing I think would be hard for a Muslim would be the extreme materialistic nature of U.S. Al Ghazali say "Do not cherish long hopes that lay heavy labor upon you, but suppose that death is near..." and "Reflect upon the shortness of your life". These two things are in contrast to the everyday values that the U.S. holds. People in the U.S. are not worried about the shortness of their lives; they are worried about work, money, and material and social advancement. They cherish long hopes in hard work; it is the "American Dream". I think this has a negative effect on Muslims or any spiritual person in two ways. Firstly they could start to absorb some of this through being

immersed in the culture. Secondly people who do not follow the norm are out casts from the main society.

Yes it is possible for Muslim to practice the five pillars in the United States, but with some compromise. The practicing of the faith, and the value system that comes along with it, probably will label the Muslim as an outcast, or at least noticeably different from their peers. If I were a Muslim I would not want to live in the United States. I would want to be at the center of my faith and my faith to be the center of my life, and that seems much harder here, than in a Muslim society.

Rebekah J. Altland
March 31, 2004

This article gave me a new understanding of the relationships between Christians and Muslims. My ignorance is evident because I honestly had no idea that there are and have been so many organizations and attempts at creating and maintaining a civil dialogue between the two religious groups. Although with the obvious recent violent events I originally saw the concept of dialogue to be rather inconceivable. As Goddard pointed out however, social factors such as Muslim migration to predominantly Christian areas illustrate the dire need for such understandings to be established. He continued and explained how such developments compel Christians to reconsider historical relations between themselves and other religions. Goddard also illustrates how that "in the Muslim world there lacks a systematic study of Christianity". Personally I feel that without knowledge of others and their respective beliefs their perspective and subsequent understanding of such will never evolve.

However, due to the actions of organizations determined to establish solid communication lines I do feel that a promising future is very possible. Unfortunately there has recently been outrageous atrocities initiated by both sides; greatly impacting all former advancements. Such conflict however can only last for so long. Being that the United States in particular thrive on the idea of being the most civilized nation one would hope that they would strive to create forthcoming relations rather than continue to encourage hate through misunderstandings. Barriers including the matter of religious minorities and the "animus in their attitudes" must be overcome by both parties if refined relations are to progress.

Ihaku Ngokwey
Introduction to Islam

After reading Sayyid Qutb's introduction to "Milestones", one understands why he has been labeled by many as a fundamentalist. Indeed, he is very categorical in his views which he articulates with a strong language. To him, Islam is the only religion and way of life that can save the world from its demise. It is the religion that will deliver the world from the ills inflicted upon it by the West and its technology. As he said: "At this crucial and bewildering juncture, the time for Islam and the Muslim community has arrived because it has the needed values".

The fundamentalist nature of Qutb is demonstrated by the very fact that he believes Islam to be the ONLY solution to better the world. In doing so, he disregards the other religions, implying that they are not valid. This makes him an exclusivist: a characteristic that, to a certain extent, goes hand in hand with fundamentalism because they both refer to a narrow and limited perspective on things.

Besides being a fundamentalist and an exclusivist, Qutb is also sarcastic. The statement that supports the latter point refers to technological advances: "It is not easy to find fault with the inventors of such marvelous things, especially since what we call the "world of Islam" is completely devoid of all this beauty". This, I believe, indicates his bitterness about materialism and his criticism of the West.

Furthermore, it appears as though he is an individual who likes power. Indeed, when he says that he wants the Muslim community to be "the leader of the world", one is left to wonder about his motives in advocating "Islamic rule". Does he want Islam to prevail because he wants people to be "saved" or does he just want Islam to extend its political

power?

Sayyid Qutb is rightfully referred to as a fundamentalist because his views are very radical: Islam will save the world; not any other religion and especially not the West. Only Islam...

...and for the
...the world will
...the world will
...the world will
...the world will
...the world will