

Why Islam is Not a Religion

by Rebecca Bynum (Nov. 2011)

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Good evening. I'm here to talk about a subject no one wants to discuss – religion. Many people in our post-Christian society (especially journalists) are afraid of it, misinformed about it and ignorant of the most basic theological concepts. And our theologians are often too specialized in their work to be able to discuss religion in its broadest outlines or our Churchmen are often so concerned with finding common ground that they gloss over and ignore the theology of Islam.

Our greatest Islam critics confine their attack to the non-religious aspects of Islam, either its political side or its judicial side. But when we discuss political Islam or Sharia law alone, we imply that there is a religious Islam that is perfectly fine, that we don't have to worry about. And we leave the major problems of Islamization – Muslim immigration, mosque building, the proselytizing in our prisons and military and the infiltration of our governmental institutions completely untouched and indeed untouchable.

So I think we need to take a few steps back to examine Islam as a whole and to broadly define the outlines of Islam – what it is and what it isn't.

One thing we can definitely say about Islam is that it is not solely confined to a belief system. If it is a religion it is not a religion only. Islam is a total system of life and contains within itself a particular social system, judicial system, and political system which includes geo-political aspirations – the conquest and administration of territory.

I often liken Islam to a duck-billed platypus which

superficially resembles an otter. Upon closer examination, one finds this animal has a duck-like bill, lays eggs, and has many other characteristics which are not otter-like. So it cannot therefore remain in the biological category containing otters. It is simply too different and has to have its own category. I believe the same thing is true of Islam. It is much too different from the other religions to remain in the religion category, it should be uniquely classified in its own category.

Secondly, I think it is obvious to Christians that Islam is its polar opposite and I believe nihilism lies between Christianity and Islam and that the morality of Islam is inverted.

Let me explain: religion supplies our basic world-view concerning the nature of reality. If we were to plot belief systems on a graph – on one side are religions which view God as good and the universe as a benevolent place – in the middle we have the view that there is no God and the universe is a pitiless and indifferent place, the view of material determinism which is the direction toward which our society is tending. On the other side of the view of God as malevolent and the universe is a vicious and unpredictable place – that God enjoys our suffering. This is where Islam lies.

The reason we can assert that the morality of Islam is inverted is that Islam consistently elevates material over spiritual considerations. That is, it elevates the material obedience to the dictates of the Islamic doctrine above all consideration of Truth or Goodness. Morality, conformity and even legality are all one and the same in Islam. Let me give you an example: The following are the words of the father of a failed female suicide bomber:

“‘If I had known what [my daughter] was planning I would have told the Jews. I would have stopped her.”

“In our religion it is forbidden for a girl’s body to be uncovered even at home. How could a girl allow her body to be smashed to pieces and then collected up by Jews? This is absolutely forbidden.”

Though this is an extreme circumstance, we see this pattern play out over and over again. Women are treated as if they were property because that is how they are defined by Islam.

For example, if a young girl runs away from home to marry her true love, she has in effect stolen the property that is herself from her family and the family will often try to kill her to negate the theft and to assuage the shame and humiliation suffered by the family for not to being in full control of their daughter’s body as is required by Islam. In this way, Islam is utterly materialistic – control of the body is everything. And the Muslim mind is focused fully on the material world.

I further contend that Islam has become a substitute God for Muslims. Worship is defined as obedience to Islam and Islam represents the entire will of God for all men through all time. God’s will is also every single thing that happens. So even if one disobeys Islam, it is still God’s will that he did so.

If there is no difference between man’s will and God’s will, there is no God to seek. In Islam God is unknowable – he is completely transcendent and his will is all things. Theologically this is the equivalent to saying there is no God.

Furthermore, when a religion becomes completely reduced to a doctrine and only a doctrine, it is no longer a living faith. It is dead. Islam may be complex and it maybe logical, but it is logic in the absence of living truth.

Religion in its broadest sense must be about the pursuit of

higher value – of Truth Beauty and Goodness. As we learned in philosophy class, the thinking used to be that these values stand apart from the world and evaluate the world. Truth is the measure of man, man is not the measure of truth. That is the essence of religious thought. And the interesting thing is that when we pursue value, as all true religions encourage, we incorporate those values into our selves – as we pursue goodness, we become good, as we pursue truth we reflect truth in ourselves and we appreciate the beauty of God's creation more and more – this is commonly called spiritual growth. All religion as we have known it facilitates this process – its goal is to lead men to God and lead them to experience God's love.

Islam on the other hand, subordinates everything to itself. Islam is the highest value and the spiritual values we just mentioned are thought to be entirely contained within Islam, even to be entirely contained within the Koran. Which is why after a rumor about Korans being flushed down the toilet at Guantanamo was started by Newsweek in May 2005, scores were killed and hundreds injured in rioting all over the Muslim world. Lives were sacrificed over paper and ink. We saw the same pattern play out with the Muhammad cartoons over a supposed religious principle which concerns only the material world.

There is no higher truth than Islam, no higher good than Islam and nothing more beautiful than Islam. Islam has replaced God, you see, and its ultimate goal is not to lead men to seek those higher values. Islam exists simply to perpetuate itself.

Let's take three simple religious concepts and look at how they are subordinated under Islam.

The first one is Faith. When we use the word faith, we mean a growing trust in a loving, fatherly God – a God who can be known, a God who can be approached. In Islam, God cannot be known, there is no bridge to him. What Muslims mean by faith

is faith in the truth and rightness of Islam itself. Intellectual assent to a doctrine has replaced living faith – man's relationship with a higher reality.

The second is prayer. When we pray we open our inner life to God – it is an intimate and personal communication and is often a petition for God to strengthen us in virtue so we will be better prepared to meet the problems of our lives.

There is nothing personal or intimate about Muslim prayer. It is communal and a rote formula. Everyone prays the same prayers at the same time facing the same direction, while performing the same muscular movements. Just like military drills, these so called prayers have the effect of cementing communal solidarity, but not of increasing intimate contact with God. Personal petitions must be addressed correctly to one of the 99 names of God, otherwise the prayer is lost as though God were some kind of giant post office. There is no intimacy between man and God in Islamic prayer because there cannot be.

The third is worship by which we mean love, adoration, awe and gratitude all being expressed to God. Often this is done in the form of song. In Islam, worship is defined as obedience to Islam and since God is transcendent and we cannot know him, loving him is beside the point and is certainly not essential. Obedience is everything.

This concept is also a major stumbling block to democracy because to obey man's law in Islamic thought is equivalent to the worship of man. Now, while I would agree that the worship of man is broadly a characteristic of the modern world, especially if we look at the rise of science and its promise of omniscience and even omnipotence – that all things can be known and done through the agency of science. I vehemently disagree that the Islamic total belief system and total regulation of life is the answer to anything. It is certainly not a way to grow closer to God. It leads men away from God

and focuses the mind on the material world alone from morning till night, day in and day out..

Islam is not the answer – Islam is the problem.

Now for those who still insist that Islam remain in the religion category, they will eventually have to concede that Islam is either a false religion or an evil religion because it leads men to evil action, even toward their own families. Of course there is no rule stating all religions must be good or lead to good actions.

Islam is false because it is built on the fundamental lie that Muhammad was a real prophet, rather than a man simply pretending to be a prophet in order to gain power over people. Of course one can make the same claim about Joseph Smith or L Ron Hubbard or any number of other founders of man-made religions which have been created from time to time throughout history. A religion which venerates an evil man and raises him to the level of the perfect model for human conduct, cannot help but lead men to evil action – even jihad.

This brings us back to the crux of our problem. Should an evil religion, which functions in exactly the opposite way from religion as we have known it, receive the same benefits and consideration as religion which is beneficial to society?

Essentially our secular society has a contract with religion. It says, the state will not interfere with religious practice so long as it is within the law and the state will extend benefits in the form of tax breaks and other considerations so that religious institutions can flourish freely within our boundaries. In exchange, religion has strengthened the family, produced honest hard working citizens with a high degree of personal self-control so that people behave ethically and charitably toward each other and can function with a minimum of external social control.

Religion as we have known it has been good for society. It has

nurtured morality, strengthened the family, fostered public service and encouraged social harmony. Islam, on the other hand, is self-segregating and fosters ideas of Muslim supremacy and thereby sows seeds of social discord. Even its tradition of charitable giving is solely for the benefit of fellow Muslims and it utterly destroys the nuclear family through its adoption of polygamy. Polygamous marriage is not marriage. It reduces women to the status of property. Even Mormon polygamy eventually does this.

With the Arab spring we can clearly see that when the governing police state is suddenly removed, Muslim societies across the board descend into violence and chaos – religious sects fight other sects, tribes fight other tribes, looting is rampant and men are reduced to defending their families against their neighbors. Needless to say, this is not what we expect from religion. We expect religion to uphold morality and civilizational standards. It is clear Islam doesn't do that.

Now despite all the evidence that Islam is an immoral religion, there is a current of modern thought seeking to elevate a laudable personal virtue, that of tolerance, over the greater social principle of justice.

But is it just to tolerate polygamy in the name of religious freedom? The Supreme Court unanimously ruled in 1878 that it is not. Is it just to tolerate the unequal right to inheritance for women? Is it just to tolerate forced marriage? Is it just to tolerate antisemitism? Is it just to tolerate the preaching of hatred toward non-Muslims? Is it just to tolerate the teaching that Muslims are superior to non-Muslims or that men are superior to women? Is it just to tolerate a parallel legal system based on inequality?

There are things that our society cannot tolerate and expect to survive. Justice must take its rightful place above tolerance.

So to reiterate – Islam is not a religion because:

1. It is an amalgam of social, political and judicial systems as well as a belief system. It is neither one thing nor the other – Islam is unique
2. Philosophically it is as far from other religions as it is possible to be. It lies beyond nihilism and its morality is inverted.
3. In society Islam functions in the opposite manner from all other religions. Rather than producing peace and social harmony, it sows violence and social disruption.

Therefore, I believe it would be wise to reconsider Islam's inclusion as a religion at least as far as the First Amendment is concerned. I understand the difficulties with this approach, and I know many have and will reject it, but I also think it is necessary to raise the question about what Islam really is and what it isn't.

When you consider the effort that went into arguing whether Pluto should be considered a planet or not, or how a newly discovered insect should be classified, or what constitutes organic produce, I really don't think the ability to classify belief systems is beyond us. At the very least we must call into question this Islam-is-a-religion trump card that its defenders have been playing so successfully. And I think it could help remove the confusion in our own ranks and allow Islam to be criticized in its entirety, not just as a political or judicial system.

We cannot fight a lie of this magnitude with half the truth.

Thank you.

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