

WHAT IS ISLĀMIC FUNDAMENTALISM?

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consideration), and follow the way of those who turn to me (in love): in the end the return of you all is to Me, and I will tell you the truth (and meaning) of all that ye did." "O my son!" (said Luqman), "If there be (but) the weight of a mustard-seed and it were (hidden) in a rock, or (anywhere) in the heavens or on earth, God will bring it forth: for God understands the finest mysteries, (and) is well-acquainted (with them). "O my son! establish regular prayer, enjoin what is just, and forbid what is wrong: and bear with patient constancy whatever betide thee; for this is firmness (of purpose) in (the conduct of) affairs. "And swell not thy cheek (for pride) at men, nor walk in insolence through the earth; for God loveth not any arrogant boaster. "And be moderate in thy pace, and lower thy voice; for the harshest of sounds without doubt is the braying of the ass." Surah 31 (Luqman), verse 12-19

O mankind! We created you from a single (pair) of a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that ye may know each other (not that ye may despise (each other). Verily the most honoured of you in the sight of God is (he who is) the most righteous of you. And God has full knowledge and is well acquainted (with all things). Surah 49 (Al - Hujurat/The Chambers), verse 13

Say: "O People of the Book! come to common terms as between us and you: That we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with him; that we erect not, from among ourselves, Lords and patrons other than God." If then they turn back, say ye: "Bear witness that we (at least) are Muslims

(bowing to God's Will). Surah 3 (Al - Imran/The Family of Imran), verse 64

Say: "We believe in God, and in what has been revealed to us and what was revealed to Abraham, Isma'il, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and in (the Books) given to Moses, Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord: We make no distinction between one and another among them, and to God do we bow our will (in Islam)." Surah 3 (Al - Imran/The Family of Imran), verse 84

Say: Will ye dispute with us about God, seeing that He is our Lord and your Lord; that we are responsible for our doings and ye for yours; and that We are sincere (in our faith) in Him? Surah 2 (Al - Baqarah/The Cow), verse 139

Those who believe (in the Qur'an), those who follow the Jewish (scriptures), and the Sabians, and the Christians, and the magians, and the polytheists, - Allah will judge between them on the day of judgement: for Allah is witness of all things. Surah 5 (Al - Ma'idah/The Table Spread), verse 17

These then, are the fundamentalists of Islam. do you find anything fundamentally wrong with them? do they make you feel afraid? do you feel endangered by someone who follows them? Surely not.

So next time, somebody talks about "Muslim Fundamentalism" or "Islamic Fundamentalism" , laugh at them, because you know better, and they don't know what they are talking about. Let no one frighten you about Islam, which literally means "a religion of peace through submission to God".

What is Islamic Fundamentalism?

"Muslim fundamentalism is fast becoming the chief threat to global peace and security as well as a cause of national and local disturbance through terrorism. It is akin to the menace posed by Nazism and fascism in the 1930's and then by communism in the 50's" (The New York times 9/9/03).

According to the Reader's Digest Universal Dictionary "fundamental" means "having to do with the foundation; elemental; basic", and "fundamentalism" an "unswerving belief in a set of basic and unalterable principles of a religious or philosophical nature". The term was traditionally used for Christians who believed the Bible to be the literal truth even when it was found in conflict with modern scientific discoveries. "Fundamentalism" soon became a derogatory term. What purpose does the term serve when used in connection with Muslims?

Western science is built on the foundation of scientific discoveries of Muslim Spain before the inquisition, and unlike the bible, the Qur'an has never yet been proven to contradict reality. The Qur'an encourages scientific research. somebody believing the Qur'an to be the fundamental or elemental and basic truth, can hardly be accused of being irrational. nor can there be anything wrong with firmly holding on to "basic and unalterable principles". Modern secular society, for example, has agreed on a Universal Declaration of Human Rights to establish such "basic and unalterable principles". To try and frighten people of

Muslim fundamentalism, therefore, make little sense. Still it is being done every day.

When democratic elections were cancelled in Algeria or when Muslim campaigners for democracy in Egypt were hung without proper trial, it was enough of a justification to brand them as Muslim fundamentalists. No further questions needed to be asked. Fundamentalist meant terrorist. Terrorist meant danger. Danger justified eliminating those responsible. On the other hand, when Israel bombed civilian areas in Lebanon or when Serb militia massacred innocent Muslim men, women and children in Bosnia, the term Jewish, or Christian fundamentalists was never used to refer to them.

In his book Pity the Nation on the long conflict in the Lebanon, Robert Fisk, one of the longest serving British Middle East correspondents, spells out how emotional and ambiguous this use of language is. He says: "But 'terrorism' no longer means terrorism. It is not a definition; it is a political contrivance. 'Terrorists' are those who use violence against the side that is using the word. The only terrorist whom Israel acknowledges are those who oppose Israel. The only terrorist the United States acknowledges are those oppose the United States or their allies. The only terrorists Palestinians acknowledge - for they too use the word - are those opposed to the Palestinians. To adopt the word means that we have taken a side in the Middle East, not between right and wrong, good and evil, David and Goliath, but with one set of combatants against another. For journalists in the Middle East, the use of the word

'terrorism' is akin to carrying a gun".

Yet, The Times he worked for, and The Independent he now writes for still happily "carry a gun" and shoot at "Muslim Fundamentalists" or "Muslim terrorist" instead of objectively reporting the news. Prejudice against Islam is deep seated, because nobody bothers to find out what Islam really means and what code of conduct the Qur'an prescribes for a Muslim.

Here, then are some of the "fundamentals", "basic and unalterable principles" of the Qur'an, Muslims believe in.

"Let there be no compulsion in religion: Truth stands out clear from Error: whoever rejects evil and believes in God hath grasped the most trustworthy hand- hold, that never breaks. And God heareth and knoweth all things" Surah 2 (Al - Baqarah/The Cow), verse 256

we bestowed (in the past) Wisdom on Luqman: "Show (thy) gratitude to God." Any who is (so) grateful does so to the profit of his own soul: but if any is ungrateful, verily God is free of all wants, Worthy of all praise. Behold, Luqman said to his son by way of instruction: "O my son! join not in worship (others) with God: for false worship is indeed the highest wrong-doing." And We have enjoined on man (to be good) to his parents: in travail upon travail did his mother bear him, and in years twain was his weaning: (hear the command), "Show gratitude to Me and to thy parents: to Me is (thy final) Goal. "But if they strive to make thee join in worship with Me things of which thou hast no knowledge, obey them not; yet bear them company in this life with justice (and