

Why Do the Fundamentalist Islamics Hate America?

By Dick Culver

In a word, they don't, or at least not in the way you would imagine. What we have come to call hardcore Muslim Fundamentalists are essentially an aberration in the Islamic tradition. Islam is basically a gentle and caring religion if read and interpreted literally, but in the hands of a fanatic it can become extremely dangerous.

History:

Most of the strict Muslim "traditionalists" (especially in Saudi Arabia) had their modern origin in a sect called the Wahhabis. This was a puritanical reform movement begun by the conservative Syrian Jurist Muhammad ibn Abd al Wahhab (1703 – 1792). He was faithful to the Qur'an (the supreme body of Islamic law) and to the Hadith (usually called the Sunna). The Hadith is a compilation of actions and utterances attributed to the Muslim Prophet Muhammad, and passed down (usually verbally) as a living guide to the practice of Islam.

The Hadith provides a sort of expansion to the text of the Qur'an and acts as an Islamic guide to living, based on Muhammad's personal actions and explanations of the meaning of the Qur'anic passages. One of the big rubs is that it has an "oral" tradition, passed down from generation to generation as opposed to a written one, and has been suspect from time to time as having been changed, or at least modified to suit the political or social "bent" of those who were teaching the faith from one generation to the next.

The Wahhabis would be much more at home in a world not tainted by electric lights, automobiles, trains, alcohol or tobacco. Their idea of the perfect Muslim World would be a world harking back to the 7th Century with very little to distract the faithful and as above, they rejected all luxury, dancing, gambling, and the use of tobacco and alcohol. This strict adherence to the "fundamentalist" interpretation was not shared by all. Warfare between the Wahhabis and their opponents resulted in their purging the Islamic shrine of Karbala and the cities of Riyadh, Mecca and Medina before eventually being defeated by the Turkish Sultan Mahmud II in 1818. While the Wahhabis were defeated in battle, their influence lingered on, chiefly on the Arabian Peninsula which now is chiefly controlled by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Enter the Saudis:

The founder and 1st King of Saudi Arabia was Abdul Aziz al Saud, and his early upbringing at the hands of his father was heavily influenced by his father's inclination towards the teachings of the Wahhabis. Abdul Aziz was however, a practical man of great humor and intelligence, who tended to be a bit more liberal in the interpretation of the Islamic tradition than that of his Father's generation. Abdul Aziz managed to consolidate the various Arabic tribes in the early 1930s, by *preaching* strict Islam but instituting policies that were much more liberal than those envisioned by Wahhab. As a result, Saudi Arabia tends to be a country that does not usually take an extremely hard core stance on most subjects. Their religious leadership will dispute that of course, if asked to describe the stance of Islam in Saudi, but nonetheless government of Saudi Arabia can hardly be considered a hot bed of fundamentalist Muslims.

The *façade* of strict Islam is one of the things that allowed Abdul Aziz to unite the tribes of the Arabian Peninsula under one flag. Abdul Aziz of course, blushing named his

consolidated country “Saudi Arabia” in honor of his tribe/family (the Sa’uds), but his leadership brought Saudi successfully into the 20th Century. The discovery of oil made Saudi Arabia an extremely wealthy country, and Abdul Aziz’s fascination with modern inventions and conveniences led to a much more informed and enlightened citizenry. Such attitudes towards modernization did not sit well with the older “moss-backs” who, in their heart of hearts, desperately wanted to return to the Islam of Muhammad. In this attitude lies a major portion of the problem(s) that divide the followers of the Prophet. There tend to be pockets of fundamentalist Islamics in any Muslim society.

Background of Mid-Eastern Religious Practices

Strangely enough, many of the so called “bans” on certain goods and practices were instituted by Mohammed, not because of any divine enlightenment from Allah, but rather as a practical restraint on excesses practiced by individuals of the faith in the 7th Century. The world Muhammad struggled to enlighten, was one that would have made the residents of Sodom and Gomorra blush. Wining and wenching were rampant, men coveted other men’s wives, freely fornicated with any that would have them and spent much of their spare time in a drunken stupor, when not practicing depravity.

Religious Expedients:

Mohammed instituted the covering of “wenches” (including face veils) to discourage licentiousness. Alcohol was forbidden, not because of any divine revelation, but because it prevented a total dedication to the one God (Allah), and encouraged acts that were unworthy of a good Muslim.

The prohibition against pork was again, not truly a religious ritual or prohibition, but rather the edict of a practical (enlightened) leader of his “people.” Since in the absence of refrigeration, pork spoils rather rapidly and is the cause of trichinosis, which was an essentially fatal disease in ancient times. The same prohibition was placed on the Jewish tribes by the Rabbis (the word really means “teacher” and had no true religious significance in the sense that the word Minister or Priest would have). The Rabbi was simply the most educated (and usually the most intelligent) individual in the social hierarchy of a particular community. These Rabbis were well acquainted with the danger of spoiled pork.

Since the Jews and the Arabs are both Semitic tribes with the common father of Abraham. The prohibition on pork no doubt was a shared heritage between the two close but disagreeing peoples. It is hardly likely that Allah or God hated pigs or swine, but their “enlightened ones” prohibited the eating of the flesh of swine as a matter of health rather than religion. It was given a religious connotation of course, because if it had been a secular prohibition, the quasi-faithful might well have done a little experimenting on their own.

The Catholics too, have food prohibitions that are sold by “The Church” as a religious obligation, but the origin is much more mundane. The mandatory eating of fish on Friday was for many years thought to be a religious requirement. Careful checking into the history books will reveal that at one point in time, the Italian fishing industry was in danger of “tubing it”. The Pope who (at various times in history) was both the secular and religious leader of the Italians/Romans, saw that the good Italian Fishermen were in danger of starving to death (figuratively at least). He decreed that all good Catholics (encompassing most of the Italian continent) were to come to the aid of their fellow Italian fishermen, by buying and eating fish on Friday... True story! The Vatican denies it of course, but nonetheless there is more truth to

the tale than fiction, and another (very practical) “must do” was given the veil of religious sanctity.

My point here is *not* that the various religions were dishonest with the faithful, but rather that they used a practical method of getting the faithful to do the bidding of the church.

Veiled ladies, prohibition on the eating of pork or the drinking of alcohol were not truly *religious* prohibitions, but rather secular decisions using “divine revelation” to enforce some pretty practical rules to live by, in order to keep the faithful in line. If they had been put forth as simple rules of society, they would no doubt have been ignored. Now if they were the will of Allah...

A More Modern Interpretation:

Even a few of the famous “Five Pillars of Islam” have been distorted by advances into the 20th Century. The “Five Pillars” are:

- 1) The profession of faith.
- 2) Prayer performed five times daily.
- 3) Charity towards one’s fellow man (as long as that “man” is a fellow Muslim).
- 4) Fasting during the Month of Ramadan.
- 5) A pilgrimage of the faithful to Mecca at least once during a Muslim’s lifetime.

While the fast of “Ramadan” is observed during the *month* of Ramadan by abstinence on the part of the faithful of food, drink, smoking and sex during the daylight hours (usually determined by the mullahs by whether a man can discern the color of a black and a white thread on the back of the hand). Ramadan usually brings faithful Muslims to a standstill during the prescribed month in daylight hours, but they are allowed to indulge in the various prohibitions during the hours of darkness. The intent of the lifting of the prohibitions after dark was to allow the faithful to indulge in enough water to slake their thirst, and take the hunger pangs away. It was NOT intended to be a license to “party hearty”! – Enter Thomas Edison, stage left...

This fasting was decreed by Mohummad to remember the less fortunate and remind them of their obligation to extend charity towards the less fortunate. Everything went well until the invention of the electric light. While the letter of the Islamic Law is still observed, you would have to spend the month of Ramadan in Jeddah to appreciate how the “faithful” have come to “bend” the rules and regulations. Traffic is so thick at night that you almost have to walk across the hoods of cars to cross the street, and the shops which open during the hours of darkness, stay open until dawn. Restaurants are packed, and when the (naturally) exhausted faithful return home or to work for a day of fasting, they are almost literally noodles... We secured training (for all intents and purposes) for the Saudi Marines during Ramadan after trying to hold classes the first few days. Our fledgling Arabic Leathernecks were “done puppies” until the coming of darkness.

I bring this to light primarily to illustrate that not everything is followed to the exact intent of the Islamic Law, but the prohibitions tend to be interpreted in an expedient manner. The Saudis should make excellent lawyers.

Saudi Arabia is the location of the two holiest shrines of Islam, the Mosques in Mecca and Medina. The rest of the Islamic world is envious of the Saudis hogging (– uppppssss sorry) the symbols of Islam. Several times in recent history, other “more worthy” Islamic nations

and/or groups have attempted to take over the shrines by force. The usurpers feel that the two holy mosques could be better protected and maintained by a more holy (translate, more fundamentalist) representative(s) of the Prophet. The Saudi's possession of Mecca and Medina remains a rather fundamental bone of contention within a religion that purports to be the one true faith destined to take over the World.

Fundamentalism in Today's World:

Fundamentalism was brought forcefully into focus on the Western Stage by the Ayatollah Khomeini's takeover in Iran in 1979. From out of the blue, came a truly fundamentalist Muslim who wished to return Iran to 10th Century Islam. By engineering a popular uprising he managed to whisk Iran back in time to the fundamentalist concept. The United States was caught totally off guard, and the peoples of Iran (some willingly, some not so willingly) went along with his teachings. Modern dress for women went the way of the "Do-Do Bird". The Ayatollah had accomplished in Iran what Wahhab had tried to do in the early 18th Century to all of Islam. This movement seemed to ignite a new fervor for a more hard-nosed approach to Islam and one more suited (according to the hard-core Islamics), to demonstrating the superiority of Islam over all other religions. While the Jewish People and the Christians are both considered to be "Peoples of the Book" (the Old Testament – common to all three religions), Islam is touted as the one true religion espousing true monotheism. The Islamics felt/feel that the Jews had violated God's edicts by worshiping the Golden Calf, and the Christians deified Jesus Christ (the Muslims do NOT deify Mohummad), and some Christians even mentioned the "Holy Ghost" – all tantamount to blasphemy! All but Islam had strayed from God's (Allah's) word. It was obviously up to the "faithful" to bring about the conversion of the masses. Who was better suited to the task at hand than fundamental Islam?

Once They've Seen Pareé...

Unfortunately for the fundamentalists, the most rich and powerful Islamic Nation was Saudi Arabia. The Saudis, in their zest for living in the modern age, had seemingly embraced the West. The more affluent families were sending their sons to American (and other Western) Universities with little or no supervision, and exposing them to one of the most free-living societies ever developed. Human nature dictated that the youngsters sent to our country would absorb a certain amount of one of the most permissive cultures on Earth. They LIKED our freedom, drank our booze, and romanced ladies who were as liberated as even *they* were becoming. This was GREAT stuff, and they took home a taste for much of what they had absorbed. In a sentence, they were straying from the ways of Muhammad, and in the eyes of the fundamentalists were defiling the faith as taught by Muhammad. To paraphrase the old WWI song – *"How ya' gonna' keep 'em down on the dunes once they've seen Pareé?"*

A Side Note:

The citizens of Saudi Arabia are held to extraordinarily strict observance of the tenants of the Islamic Faith. Why? The rationale is that those who protect the two holy Mosques must adhere to a strict observance of the faith. However, much like the observance of Ramadan, much of this is a façade. There is an unwritten rule that allows citizens of Saudi to "unwind" when they clear Saudi airspace. If they fly out of the Kingdom on "*Saudi Air*" they are stuck with the rules set down by the prophet until they reach their western destination, ...but if they go out say, on Sabrina Airlines or British Air, all bets are off. As soon as Saudi Airspace is to

the rear of the vertical stabilizer, a line forms on both sides of the passenger compartment by the Saudi Citizens waiting for access to the rest room facilities.

Gutras (the headdress looking like a small table cloth), Agals (the “rope” coiled on top of the headdress – sometimes called the “fan-belt” by irreverent infidels), Thobes (traditional Arabic robes) disappear, and gentlemen dressed in Brooks Brothers Suits, Gucci Shoes and other western dress emerge from the “facility”... On the ladies’ side of the house, the ladies with their abayas (the traditional black body covering and face veils) are gone, and the ladies emerging are wearing western clothing, lipstick, rouge, perfume, western dresses and high heeled shoes. The men and ladies (almost universally) return to their seats and order appropriate cocktails to go with their newly acquired garb. They are no longer representing the “keepers of the two holy Mosques” and thus have nothing to prove to the world, as they are not immediately identifiable as Arabs or Muslims.

Truly, it would seem that the Islam as practiced by the Saudis has been diluted somewhat by the modern Western influence. The Imams remaining in the Kingdom are acutely aware of this practice and sit in alleyways and gnash their teeth, cursing the Western influence that is personified by the Infidels from America. It would seem that they all *like* the freedom, but they don’t want anyone watching when they thumb their noses at the Prophet.

At this point you can begin to see why the American influence tends to rile the puritanical streak inherent in the older and less affluent Muslims. Those old timers remaining in the Kingdom are not amused. Not only don’t they have access to the outside world (financially), but they don’t like what they see when the wayward Muslims return! Many of the religious fanatics are ready for a return to the equivalent of “Wahhabism” and yearn for a way to dispose of what they have come to regard as the despoiler of fundamental Islam, the Americans and the American influence.

The (1st) Gulf War and a Slap in the Face:

Saddam Hussein kicked things off of dead center, and suddenly Saudi’s sacred oil fields were exposed to probable if not absolute danger of being taken over by an unscrupulous dictator who wanted to take over the oil fields AND probably more to the point, Mecca and Medina, the location of the two Holy Mosques. Not only would he gain great wealth, but more importantly as a Muslim, great status and prestige as the “new” custodian and protector of the two holy Mosques... Saudi panicked, knowing that they were incapable of repelling boarders (i.e. Saddam Baby), and called on the United States for assistance. We (of course) were more than willing to cooperate as nobody in this country wanted to pay \$5.00+ for gasoline. The coalition was formed and we (as agreed) put in ground troops to protect the Arabian Peninsula from the usurper.

Here was our worst mistake. In consonance with the politically correct efforts of the Femi-Nazis, we decided to allow “female soldiers” dressed much as their male counterparts in camouflaged uniforms, to be seen driving trucks and acting well out of character for what “the faithful” considered to be proper behavior for ladies in an Islamic Society. This was not done out of any military necessity, but rather to appease and pander to the desires of those who wanted to prove that God (Allah) is a woman, or at least NOT a man! We would have made just as many points by having a “pig roast” and inviting the Royal Saudi Family to attend! It just ain’t (or shouldn’t have been) done by an astute State Department! The Islamics were obviously NOT amused, and herein lies a large part of the hate and discontent that ruffled the fur of Osama bin Laden. “Osama Baby” felt that the presence of the American Armed Forces

in his country (deliberately rubbing the Muslim's noses in our total disregard for their customs and practices) was an (deliberate) affront to their beliefs and practices, and exposed the Muslim citizenry to unacceptable (non-Muslim) practices. It would seem that Gloria Steinem and the "NOW" movement may well have been responsible for the loss of 3000+ lives simply to make a politically correct statement. Perhaps God (Allah) "IS" a woman after all? Hummm...

Fast Forward to Present Day:

Why is the seeming rage of the Muslim Fundamentalists directed at the Western World in General and the United States in particular? The short answer is they are in desperate need for a focal point to rally the (fundamentally) faithful. Traditionally, the youth of a culture is looking for a cause. Being *against* something is much easier to sell than being *for* something. Examples? Check out the counter-culture in our country during the 1960s and early 1970s. It was easy to work the kids up into a froth and rally them around a banner. If it wasn't the war in Southeast Asia, it was the materialism of their parent's generation.

Did these demagogue-led individuals have a point? Well, yes and no. While there was just enough truth to the alleged allegations to give a phony legitimacy to the line of protesting, many (if not most) of the youngsters involved were simply looking for a cause – make that ANY cause. The youth of any country seem to have a need for causes, something to be for, but as I pointed out above, more often the easiest target is something to be against. Traditionally, it's always easier to be against something than to be FOR something other than some vague high sounding goal. Examples would be the removal of Americans from all Muslim countries, or let's kick all Jews out of Palestine, or some other popular cause.

Most of the Muslim countries are dirt poor, and the youngsters have no access to books (many cannot read anyway), movies, or Television (perhaps mercifully). Unemployment is off the page, and the job market is not promising – in short they have nothing to look forward to. This doesn't really apply to the Saudis as they are one of the most well-to-do societies in the world thanks to their abundance of oil and the ready market for it. Poverty is insignificant and charity is well attended by the faithful. All in all, it is a happy (if not totally free) Kingdom.

For the rest of the Islamic World, seeing the United States seemingly teeming with luxuries, and living what the fundamentalist Muslim would consider to be a dissolute existence simply fuels the fires of discontent, carefully fed by the religious fanatics. The youth are easy targets for the political and religious leaders who would take advantage of any situation to broaden their power base. The United States makes an almighty tempting target. We are accused of supporting Israel over Muslim Countries (perhaps rightfully so in this case), and they see a large Christian–Israeli conspiracy designed to deprive the Palestinians of their rightful homeland. Each additional charge adds fuel to the fire, and causes a righteous sounding basis for rioting in the streets. Suddenly the prospect of being able to kill Americans (and by default any of our allies) appeals to those who know no better. American Flags are burned and a Jihad is called for against those who are making war on Islam. No mention is made of course, of the acts of terrorism that perpetrated the most heinous murder(s) ever visited on an innocent population of civilians from a diverse collection of countries. This is accepted as the just desserts for a dissolute and evil society – now becoming known throughout the Islamic World as "The Great Satan!"

One of the tip-offs is that for the most part, the Muslim individuals from affluent countries are strangely quiet, and (at least in public) are agreeing with our crusade to wipe out the

terrorist camps and do away with world wide terrorism. Underneath however, a long simmering resentment is seething. The entire Muslim World is resentful at the United States' support for Israel over the Palestinian people's fight to retain their homeland. In many ways, they have a valid point if you use a logical instead of a religious argument. Most of those who argue for a Jewish homeland tend to ignore that the Israelis (in any great numbers) had been gone from ancient Israel for almost 2000-years, and the argument for being "given" their traditional "digs" is based on two things. First, the fundamentalist Jews and Christians (yes, we have them too) point to Biblical references, and those given the job of managing the great number of displaced European Jews after WWII were looking for a way to solve the problem and wash their hands of a very sticky problem.

Granted, the Jews had been badly treated by the Nazis and many did not have homes to return to in Europe. ...But conversely, the Palestinian people had not been responsible for the atrocities committed against the Jews and were suddenly being faced with displacement from their homes without so much as a "by your leave"... The Jews saw a chance to reclaim what they (Biblically) thought of as their rightful home and the fight was on. Religious arguments hold very little water, if for instance you happen to be a Buddhist, a Hindu or a Wiccian. Quite frankly, those folks don't CARE what the Biblical references say in reference to the restoration of a Jewish homeland!... *Their* sacred texts say nothing about it and we must admit to a certain amount of self-assured Christian and Jewish arrogance by imposing our beliefs on an unprepared and dispossessed Palestinian citizenry.

An Example:

Let me give you an example. I live on my little mountain top in North Idaho and have owned it for over 37-years. I've built my abode, tilled my ground and generally not bothered anyone. What say, if I was suddenly accosted with a group of Indians (I refuse to say Native-Americans – I'm a Native American too!) with feathers stuck in their headbands! They announce most imperiously to me, that they are here to reclaim their rightful land(s). They announce that "The Great Spirit" has come to them and told them to go reclaim the lands that had previously been held by their ancestors. Essentially the edict would be "get the @\$% off our lands paleface, we are here to reclaim rightful Indian lands! You don't suspect that I would be a little indignant about such a declaration now do you? I guarantee that I would grab my fowling piece and them "pesky redskins" would be running for cover, I don't give a d@mn what the Great Spirit told them to do! The same argument is directly applicable to the Palestinian Situation, except there they (the Israelis) had foreign military help to displace the long-time residents, and subsequently that "fine" organization, the United Nations. If you were a Palestinian would you be "urinated off?"... I sure as hell would! The most obtuse of individuals should be able to make the rather easy comparison to the situation in the Mid-East.

When I was serving in Saudi Arabia, a commonly asked question by the young Saudi Marines was "Why do you favor the Jews over the (Saudi Arabian) Arabs? We cost you no money, buy your goods, and often purchase your expertise and equipment! We want to be your friends (very true at that time), and yet you treat us like second class citizens. We deliberately hold down the oil prices in OPEC to please the Americans even though it makes us many enemies in the Arab community of nations, and still you favor the Israelis. They cost you huge sums of money, and demand more (usually citing their abysmal treatment in WWII and stating that *they* are your only true friends in the Mid-East). We have not tried to bomb or strafe any of your ships (i.e. the U.S.S. Liberty in 1967), nor have we recruited any people in your intelligence service to spy on you (i.e. Jonathan Pollard)! We simply don't understand!"

You know, I couldn't think of a single answer that made sense with the exception of a large Jewish electorate that swings a mighty hammer in the halls of Washington politics.

Please understand, this is not an anti-Jewish diatribe, but rather an attempt to let you understand the reaction of much of the Muslim World to the political antics of the United States. From their viewpoint, it would not be difficult to understand the rejoicing in the streets when the news of the Twin Towers going down in flames was announced.

No, they don't hate us for what we are, but rather for what they perceive us to be. The soldiers in their battle (the overt terrorists) will be the young and disillusioned Muslims with nothing to lose and have found a hero in Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden has found his niche in life and a way to overcome his mundane place in the overall hierarchy of the Laden family. His return to Saudi Arabia seemingly overcame him with rage that the Royal Family had sold out the country currently assigned the task of being the keepers of the two holy mosques. Criticism of the Sa'ud Family in general and King Fahd ibn Abdul Aziz al Saud in particular, earned him the displeasure of the Royal Family. He has convinced himself that Saudi has become soft and no longer worthy of being the de-facto guardians of the faith and the most holy places in Islam. For his criticism of the King and his family, Osama was disowned and banished. Now he's REALLY pi\$\$ed and moves around stirring up trouble as he goes. His magic elixir is the root of all evil (as the saying goes), money, and a disaffected Muslim youth.

The rest of the Muslim World will be watching and waiting to see how the events shake out. In general, as pointed out above, they are not happy with us because of our stance on supporting Israel, even when Israel is obviously in the wrong. The Arabs will be quick to point out that being a Jew doesn't necessarily make you right! Here I'd have to agree. The more moderate Arabs have to rattle swords with their Muslim brotherhood (kinda' like agreeing with the "Crips" when you are surrounded by the entire gang), but they would really prefer to be our friends. Make no mistake however, if we want the Arab World to side with us, we've simply got to learn to treat all in the Mid-East even handedly. You cannot continually beat your dog and expect him to jump in your lap when you come home. He may not bite you, but then it takes a bit more than abuse and an occasional table scrap to make him your friend.

The Israelis keep telling us that they are our only real friends in the Mid-East, but if that is true, we certainly don't need any additional enemies. What they MAY mean, is that they WANT us to be their only friend – a subtle but distinct difference.

The coalition of many nations has been a necessary expedient in this evolution. Arabic/Muslim Nations who are looking to either side and seeing additional Muslim allies eyeballing them suspiciously. There is no witness protection program for a moderate Muslim country who wants to help stamp out terrorism. They know that they will have to live in the Mid-Eastern World once this counter-terror campaign has come to an end. Compare it to "Greasy Thumb Gulick" selling out Al Capone in Chicago of the early '30s. The law enforcement folks would have loved him, but there'd have been no place to hide once "Al Baby" was put away! Don't forget, "Al Baby" had lots of friends.

So, while we do have some genuine friends in the Arabic World, putting their arms around the "Great Satan" is not a politically correct thing for them to do. Don't forget, when "big brother" goes home, it's gonna' get real lonely out there "in the hood"...

ROC