

Dear Muslims: What Is It That You Don't Understand?
By: Amil Imani

We, the non-Muslims—the infidels, heathens, unbelievers, apostates, enemies of Allah, *najis* (soiled), as you prefer to call us—would like to know what is it that you don't understand and what is it that makes you behave so badly toward us? You blame us for your problems and believe if we embrace Islam and help establish the Islamic *Ummeh* the earth would be cleansed of us, transformed to paradise, and all your problems disappear?

Respectfully, we disagree. We believe that you and your system of belief are at the core of your problems; that you need to critically examine the facts rather than conveniently blame others for your ills. Keep in mind that beliefs and ideas make people human, that beliefs are roadmaps of life. To the extent that the roadmap is rational and enlightened, the path of life is illumined, pitfalls are avoided and obstacles are removed. The terrain of life has greatly changed since the roadmap of Islam was given to the wondering primitives of Arabian Peninsula.

The twenty first century presents great challenges and opportunities that demand new ways of thinking and behaving. The doctrine of Islam may have been appropriate for the desert dwellers of some 1400 years ago, the people you yourselves stigmatize as “The Ignorant.” It is dysfunctional today to say the least. As a matter of fact, Islam went astray from the very beginning and inflicted a great deal of suffering on both its followers as well as those who resisted its advance.

Early on, Prophet Muhammad explicitly said, “There is no compulsion in religion.” He further confirmed that admonition, “For you, your religion; and for me, my religion.” Why is it that as soon as you gathered enough power, you violated those exhortations and set out to force your belief and way of life on others at the point of the sword? You further conveniently ignored your own teaching by unsheathing your sword at “the people of the book”—Jews and Christians. You spared them death only if they converted or consented to pay you backbreaking religious taxes of *Jazyyeh*.

Your cruel successful subjugation of the people of the Arabian Peninsula whetted your appetite for further conquests. You ventured into the civilized world—to Persia, the Levant, Spain, and eventually to the gates of Vienna. Cruelty and terror were your instruments of policy—weapons you liberally use today whenever and wherever you are able.

Contempt and hostility toward non-Muslims living under your rule as well as those outside of your domain have characterized your attitude and behavior throughout the history. Isn't enough is enough? Is it not now the time to stand back and take a good look at what is the root cause of this pathological state of affairs?

Life is precious. It is to be protected, nurtured and celebrated. Mankind is moving, perhaps at a glacier pace, toward reconciliation, ever-expanding inclusiveness without any group or ideology imposing itself on others. Any attempt against this trend of unity in

diversity is doomed to failure, as exemplified by the demise of fascism and communism. Your charter, the Quran, for most parts, preaches discrimination, death and imposition of its dogma on everyone. Islam, just like fascism and communism, is a dysfunctional ideology that needs to be abandoned. Humanity has matured considerably since the time of Muhammad. In order to continue its forward march, mankind must follow a roadmap appropriate for its age and state of development. It is foolish to insist that a book written over 1400 years ago must serve as the one and only guide for humanity.

Progress thrives in a marketplace of free ideas, where beliefs and viewpoints, not people, clash. It is through the unimpeded clash of ideas that the best decisions and actions are reached. Islam is anathema to this invaluable principle. By forcing itself on any and all people it could, Islam violated this vital principle and it aims to continue to do so to this day. Islam's inflexible and intolerant dogmatism is at the heart of Islamic world's stagnation and backwardness. It is evident that staying put, so to speak, does not allow going forward. It is not the non-Muslim world, the convenient scapegoat, but Islam itself which is the culprit for your chronic ills.

The non-Muslims of the twenty first century treasure freedom in all its forms and are not going to lend their necks passively to the yoke of blind obedience and imitation.

Is the present argument too difficult to understand? Is it too threatening to the security of your mindset to concede its validity? Please have the courage and take that fateful step. Leave Islam, as many of us "apostates" have done, and inhale the life-nurturing fragrance of freedom. Islam is a slaveholder. It feels that it owns you; it condemns you as apostate to be beheaded if you dare to leave its chains. The non-Muslims, by contrast, respect you as a free human and support your inalienable right to believe whatever you want to believe—even if it is a non-belief. If you still wish to wrap yourself in your suffocating security blanket—Islam—please keep it to yourself and refrain from forcing it on others.

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