

# Allah Be Appraised

Although I have never claimed to be as politically correct as, say, the N.Y. Times, I like to think of myself as a reasonably open-minded fellow where people who are different from me are concerned. And, inasmuch as most people are very different from me—and glad of it—I get a lot of practice. Furthermore, I have always contended that bigots are just plain lazy, and that if you just take the trouble to know people as individuals, almost invariably you will discover better reasons to despise them other than their race, religion or bizarre sexual proclivities.

So, please believe me when I swear I'm only moderately skeptical when American Muslims claim to be loyal to this country and totally opposed to bringing sharia law to our shores. What I refuse to accept for a single second is their contention that Osama bin Laden was an aberration, an unholy defiler of the tenets of their peace-loving religion. As people used to say, tell it to the Marines.

No, I have not read the Qur'an. And while I have heard highly inflammatory excerpts from those who have read the holy book, I'm aware that Satan can quote or even misquote scripture to his own purpose. Another ancient adage, however, states that the proof is in the pudding. In the case of Islam, I would suggest that the pudding is to be found in every nation where Muslims hold the reins. Or, perhaps, one should say, the whip.

Can it be mere coincidence that, although liberty has flourished in nations that are predominantly Protestant, Catholic, Hindu, Jewish, Shinto, Buddhist, Lutheran and Anglican, it's never taken root where Muhammad's word is law? Can it be mere happenstance that wherever you look in the Muslim world, from Sudan to Syria, from Iran to Yemen, from Lebanon to Saudi Arabia, wherever Islam holds sway, you will find one totalitarian state after another? Only time will tell

if Iraq or Libya will be the exception, but, frankly, I'm not betting on it.

True, you will find a variety of national leaders, including oil-rich sheiks, fanatical ayatollahs and run-of-the-mill tyrants, but one and all could dine comfortably with a Russian czar or a Chicago gangster.

For an allegedly peaceful religion, isn't it remarkable that wherever Islam gains a stranglehold, you will find the nightmare of slavery, genocide, honor killings and female stoning and mutilation, the norm?

I have heard folks say that the historical reason for all this is that, of all the founders of the major religions, only Muhammad was a warrior. Although a merchant by trade, he led his followers in the bloody conquest of Mecca. So perhaps the die was cast thirteen centuries ago. Hell, for all I know, maybe it goes back to climate. I know I'm a perfect grouch when the temperature goes through the roof and the air conditioning conks out.

Maybe it has something to do with too much sand in one's diet. Or perhaps living in close proximity to camels, a notoriously nasty beast, is the reason behind the cult of death that celebrates suicide bombings throughout the Middle East?

To tell you the truth, when I first heard tell of the awards that allegedly awaited Islamic martyrs, even I began to see the attraction. I mean, on the face of it, moving from Jenin or Tehran, say, to Paradise sounds like an awfully good deal. Toss in six dozen beautiful virgins, and what healthy, red-blooded nincompoop wouldn't gladly blow himself to Kingdom Come?

The problem, of course, is that, like most youngsters, they never bother thinking things through. For instance, in the natural course of events, what the impetuous young idiot will inevitably have on his hands are six dozen ex-virgins.

And if he thinks he has it bad now, just wait until he winds up spending eternity with 72 women who while away each and every day complaining that he's always leaving his burnoose on the floor, doesn't help out with the kids, and never takes them dancing.

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