

Is Allah the Author of Islamophobia?

There is a debate concerning the origins of the term Islamophobia. Should it be traced back to the 1970s or 1990s? And there is a debate concerning the usage of the term. Is it Islamophobic to be afraid of radical Islam? But a Christian colleague of mine who is an expert in Islam made a suggestion to me. He believes it is Allah himself who is the author of Islamophobia, and he finds support for this in the pages of the Quran.

He bases this concept on a well-known verse which states, "When your Lord revealed to the angels: I am with you, therefore make firm those who believe. I will cast terror into the hearts of those who disbelieve. Therefore strike off their heads and strike off every fingertip of them" (8:12).

So, the source of the terror is twofold. First, Allah himself will strike terror into the hearts of the unbelievers. Second, Muslims are to smite their enemies in specific ways, beheading them and chopping off their fingertips.

Other passages call for barbaric punishments, including: "The punishment of those who wage war against Allah and His messenger and strive to make mischief in the land is only this, that they should be murdered or crucified or their hands and their feet should be cut off on opposite sides or they should be imprisoned; this shall be as a disgrace for them in this world, and in the hereafter they shall have a grievous chastisement" (5:33).

I'm aware, of course, that there is debate among Muslim scholars as to the application of verses like this. Did they apply only to wars in which Mohammed was fighting? Do they apply in an ongoing way in times of martial conflict? Or do

they apply more universally in Islam's war against the unbelieving world?

For the moment, we can leave that debate aside and simply affirm this: The prescribed punishments were intended to strike fear into the hearts of the enemies of Islam. And to this day, when those punishments are carried out, be it legitimately or not, they are meant to instill fear. This is done in harmony with Allah, who promised to cast terror into the hearts of the non-believers.

In that sense, Islamophobia is something authored by Allah and produced by his devoted followers. In that sense, Islamophobia is a desired Islamic result.

Again, I understand that many Muslims will protest this line of thinking, claiming that Islam is peaceful and peace-loving and that the West has an irrational fear of Islam. I'm somewhat sympathetic to this argument, and it grieves me that peace-loving Muslims will be negatively judged by the actions of their violent co-believers.

But what else should we think when Pakistan sentences a man to death for speaking against Islam on Facebook? Or when ISIS throws homosexuals off buildings, and Iran hangs them from the gallows? Or when, "Nearly all Muslims in Afghanistan (99 percent) and most in Iraq (91 percent) and Pakistan (84 percent) support sharia law as official law"? Aren't the public punishments prescribed by sharia law meant to instill fear?

A colleague of mine who lived in Saudi Arabia for several years told me about the routine on Friday afternoons. Friday is the Muslim Sabbath. The community would be rounded up to go to the local square, called Chop Square, to watch beheadings and amputations. The message was loud and clear: We want you to see this, and we want you to be afraid.

Every time ISIS puts out a new video demonstrating its demonic

brutality, the intent is to instill fear in the hearts of those outside of their group, be they non-Muslims or other Muslims. And every time a radical Muslim commits an act of terror, the intent is to strike terror into the hearts of unbelievers.

Could it be, then, that Allah really is the author of Islamophobia? Conversely, could it be that we should have a healthy fear of Islam—not a fear of peace-loving Muslims but of Islam in its most original form? And could it be that, when radical Muslims say to us, “We will kill you if you call us terrorists!” that Islamophobia is not so unhealthy after all?

Judge for yourself. {eoa}