

# Grace for the Day

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## Formulating a Christian Response to Muslims (Part 1 of 2)

By Rev. Peter Eng

Why do doctors conspire to be mass murderers? This past week, Britain has been spared the pain of another terrorist attack. There was a security lapse, but God was merciful to the British people. The two car bombs in London failed to go off, and the flaming jeep ramped into Glasgow Airport caused a fire but no explosion.

One item the news media notes is that all the people detained are from the health care profession, and three of them are medical doctors. The doctor from Iraq is suspected as the mastermind. The British media picks up on the health profession link, possibly on account of the shortage of doctors in the UK and the large number of foreign-trained doctors used to fill the need of the British NHS (National Health Service).

On the personal level, there is an undeniable irony that those in health care should betray their calling as health givers. These people who lived to save life and health now try to rip out life and limb. Do we not hear the mantra that desperation drives people to such acts of terrorism? How do these doctors fit that profile?

This will be the springboard for our discussion. A secularist cannot understand Muslims. They think only in terms of material needs and privations as motivations to terrorism. The reality is that like the terrorists who attacked on 9/11 masterminded by Osama bin Laden, these health care professionals are only desperate in their *hatred*, not in material possessions or life opportunities.

Christians need to understand Muslims before we formulate a response. It is right that Christians have been slow to jump to conclusions, and this is one time our bewilderment has served us well.

The Christian response has to be based on a correct understanding of Muslims. And our response must be based on Scripture, and be independent of national interests or political loyalties.

Part 1 of our discussion will focus on the Muslim community and the violent jihadism that arises from it. Part 2 will focus on the Christian response.

### Part 1: Getting the Right Picture

We need to begin with an oft-repeated, but necessary qualifier. Not all Muslims are violent jihadists and the worst forms of violent jihadism are probably not justified under the tenets of Islam.

My own life experience with Muslims had been mostly polite, if at times I remain a little guarded, since I grew up in South East Asia, among Muslim neighbors. I have never been on the inside of the Muslim community, so I cannot comment from that perspective. But I grew up among Muslims and have had many interactions with Muslims to understand that we are better talking about Muslim *communities* than to speak of Muslims as though they were a monolithic group.

It is imperative that we first understand how Muslim sects relate to each other and to the world around them before we try to understand the specifics of that community of Muslims who are violent jihadists.

Muslims as a social-religious group are fairly similar to European Christians. The majority of the people are on the uncommitted end of the spectrum. These nominal Muslims have attitudes similar to their nominal European Christian counterpart. These affirm their religious affiliation, but know very little about it. They are practicing Muslims only when it suits them, but when the opportunity arises, they would readily break the fringe rules of Islam (like the food laws). They are primarily secular in their outlook of life. And you would no more expect a nominal Christian to attack a person of a different faith than you would a nominal Muslim.

Arising from this level of nominal Islam, there are different levels of commitment with different faith traditions. As a *general* rule, the more developed a Muslim becomes in his own tradition, the more intolerant he becomes. The first level of intolerance is expressed towards other Muslims. The world knows about the blood letting among the Shia and the Sunni. But there are other minor sects which are often persecuted (e.g. Suffis, Alawis, Qadianis, etc.). It is common for Muslim countries to ban some of these sects while they seek a home in more tolerant countries around the world.

I know it is scant comfort that we are not the only targets, but we need to realize some Muslims have problems with everyone, including other Muslims. What is remarkable is that Muslims are deeply committed to the Muslim brotherhood of community. It does not matter that more Iraqis were killed by Saddam than by the Americans, or that Saddam's troops were supplied with arms from an atheistic regime in the former Soviet Union/Russia. America remains the great Satan.

This is just the macrocosm of what you will experience when you live among Muslims, especially in an Islamic country. If you are in a difficult situation with a Muslim (e.g. a car accident), you can be totally in the right, but that does not matter. You are in trouble. You had better move towards appeasement rather than argue your case. Communal loyalty always takes precedence over justice. And this is often justified by some notion that they have been victimized by the world so they need to stand up for each other.

The actions at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq are regrettable. But guilt associated with Abu Ghraib must be placed in the context of the incomparably greater atrocity of Saddam against his own people. According to a recent report in the Washington Post, Saddam, through his aides, was responsible for the slaughter of as many as 180,000 Kurds in northern Iraq in the late 1980s. Add that to the atrocities committed by Iraqis against the Kuwaitis during their occupation, and of the violent jihadists against Iraqis.

There is certainly a splinter in our eye, but there is a log in the eyes of many within the Muslim community. As a community they are quick to condemn others but are slow to condemn their own evil deeds.

The western world continues to wait to see if moderate Muslims will take a stand against violent jihadists. This will be a long wait. This step which seems so natural to non-Muslims represents a major paradigm shift for all but the most progressive of Muslims. The western world does not understand that Muslims consider their community of greater importance than truth or justice.

As a general rule, Muslims, unlike Christians, do not have a trained clergy, in the sense that Christian clerics spend enormous amount of time exploring their own faith in relation to the world around them. Muslim clerics such as the mullahs possess only rudimentary knowledge of the outside world. The more learned class of Muslim scholars principally comprises people who are deeply immersed in Islamic thought, law or tradition. They are insulated from the world and possess little social understanding or appreciation of the non-Muslim world. And these learned ones are the intolerant ones.

They are the problem, not the solution.

Islam has an ultimate goal: world domination. In some ways, this is similar to the Christian concept of winning the world for Jesus. But the similarity ends here. Christians believe in conversion through persuasion. First-century Christianity from which we draw our paradigm, did not engage in coercive conversion, but instead, they were the persecuted. Christians do not advocate the use of arms to fulfill their faith agenda.

Sixth-century Islam is the paradigm to which Muslims gravitate. And it is public knowledge that Islam spread through military conquest. Historically, Islam accepts warfare as a justified means to achieve world domination. The strong Muslim countries around the world today are the result of coercive conversion. The countries that convert to Islam (e.g. Malaysia, Indonesia) are relatively nominal. Many Muslims see warfare as a perfectly legitimate method of propagation. And the ideal state is the Muslim state. So the state should be utilized to promote Islam.

Christians in North Africa survived Roman rule, but the systematic persecution of Christians under the Muslims has rendered that whole region Muslim. It is perfectly logical for a committed Muslim to hark back to the glory days of Islam when they expanded through conquest.

Unless a Muslim has specifically renounced the use of force in the propagation of Islam, it is fair to assume that he believes that the fundamental philosophy of Islam allows the use of violence to achieve its goal. Enlightened Muslims who appreciate free choice for faith remain a small minority. Similarly, unless a Muslim has renounced the goal of taking over the state, we can fairly assume that he concurs with the goal of Islam to control the politics of a country.

That is to say, the Europeans who host Muslims in their countries need to know that they are nurturing people who are philosophically persuaded that Europe should become Muslim, and operate under Islamic laws. This is *mainstream*, not fringe Islam. There have been some moves to require Muslims to accept pluralism before they can be citizens. This is entirely appropriate if the host does not want to see himself put out by his guests.

An old Arab story tells of an oncoming sandstorm. The Arab got down from his camel and pitched a tent to escape the biting sand. His camel wanted to put its nose in the tent, and the Arab saw no harm in that. The nose became the head, the neck and eventually the whole camel. The master finds himself left out in the sandstorm. This is fair warning to all nations hosting Muslims. Those willing to assimilate may be welcomed. But those who

intend to act like the camel may be justly refused.

Muslim propaganda is a natural outgrowth of their insularity, and the priority of community above truth. Muslims, more than any other religion, have wielded the sword in the name of religion. But their powerful propaganda machinery would have you believe they are persecuted. Many spin fanciful conspiracy theories and many more believe their own fabrications (e.g. the Holocaust was a myth, and the Jews planned 9/11). Muslim propaganda is strong and pervasive. It ignores the atrocities committed by Muslims. It is supported by a western media ready to condemn any wrong by the West, but eager to justify atrocities done by Muslims; and by self-destructive and attention-seeking conspiracy theorists.

The end result is that Muslims constantly see images and commentary that blame the West for every conceivable evil, real and imagined. If we were Muslims, it would take a lot from us to rise above these repeated claims of atrocities. If we were Muslims, this propaganda is truth.

### Conclusion

Now we return to the issue of the three doctors. It is so common for the western media to impute blame on the American handling of the Palestinian problem as the reason for violent jihadists. If that were resolved, it will be the demand that no American can be based in Saudi Arabia. If that demand was met, there will be yet another, and another demand. People who listen to these as legitimate causes of violent jihadism have totally missed the picture. The real causes of violent jihadism lie within: the core ideologies of Islam and its interpretations.

It is not poverty, or a lack of education, or some combination of social factors that led to the health care professionals trying to commit mass murder. It is ideology, value system and the propaganda that promotes disinformation.

The violent jihadists may be a small minority of Muslims, but they are supported by a larger group of less committed Muslims. Without this network of social support, the violent jihadists cannot hope to survive. We would be naïve to

think that Muslims around the world do not support the violent jihadists.

Just think of the situation in Northern Ireland. Could the IRA operate without the support of the Catholic population? Could the Ulster Defense Association operate without Protestant support? The politically correct affirmation that Islam is a religion of peace is more hope, goal, or aspiration than reality.

When Islam becomes a religion of peace, it will be like the tearing down of the Berlin Wall. If the majority of Muslims will accept pluralism, not as a social necessity but as the preferred state of community, we will see the beginning of the end of violent jihadism.

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## Look out for our next article

### Part 2: Getting Our Own Head and Heart in the Right Place

The vast majority of Muslims are victims. They are victims of their own propaganda, and victims of other Muslims. Jesus asked the Father to forgive the Romans who nailed him to the cross because they do not know what they are doing. Christians today can return good for evil, love our enemies, and bring light to those who live in the land of the shadow of death.

Please pass this on  
so that many more can be blessed.

### I was a fanatic...I know their thinking, says former radical Islamist



When I was still a member of what is probably best termed the British Jihadi Network - a series of British Muslim terrorist groups linked by a single ideology - I remember how we used to laugh in celebration whenever people on TV proclaimed that the sole cause for Islamic acts of terror like 9/11, the Madrid bombings and 7/7 was Western foreign policy.

By blaming the Government for our actions, those who pushed this "Blair's bombs" line did our propaganda work for us.

*More important, they also helped to draw away any critical examination from the real engine of our violence: **Islamic theology.***

- Hassan Butt, in the Daily Mail (UK), 2nd July 2007

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**Rev. Peter Eng** is an ordained minister from the Reformed Tradition, but he is truly global in perspective. He served the Lord in various capacities starting from his teenage years in the 70s. His undergrad studies were done in Singapore, his grad studies in the USA, and post-grad studies in the United Kingdom, with additional post-grad research in Germany.