Islam needs to become less confident

Mark Humphrys, 17 July 2016

There is a popular view in Ireland that Islam should not receive the same level of criticism that Catholicism gets. For example, RTE recently did a long-overdue program looking at the mountain of evidence of Muslim Brotherhood involvement in Ireland. Labour Senator Aodhán Ó Ríordáin gave a typical liberal-left response when he tweeted that the program was *"ill-timed, big on suspicion & light on substance"*. I highly doubt he said the same about programs on Magdalene laundries and clerical sex abuse.

There is an alternative view, which is that *only when* Islam gets the same level of scrutiny (and mockery and abuse) that Christianity gets will the world become a safer place. Let me explain the argument.

First, do you ever stop and wonder how *strange* this 21st century world is? How different it is to the future world that was predicted in the 20th century. In all those future predictions - of flying cars and houses on the moon - it was never predicted that in the future we would be talking about *Islam*, of all things.

No one paid the slightest attention to Islam 30 years ago, during the Cold War. It was all Communism and Capitalism then, and the great conflict of Communism against the democracies. Nobody back then would have believed that 30 years later, we would all be talking about Islam. Any more than if I told you that in 30 years time we will all be talking about *Hinduism*. You'd just be incredulous. Why on earth would we be talking about Hinduism in 2050? It would make no sense.

So why are we talking about Islam? I'm afraid the answer is simple. It's *Islamic violence*. Without Islamic violence, Westerners would pay very little attention to Islam at all. It would be ignored as one of the curious religions followed by strange foreigners and some immigrants - of interest to anthropologists but few others. (How many people get really fascinated by Hinduism or Buddhism?)

9/11 was the turning point. It was the start of this dull and uninteresting religion imposing itself on everyone's lives. Since 9/11 there has been a series of brutal Islamic terror attacks on the West. And somehow in the last 15 years, Islam became part of our lives. It's always in the news. We're always talking about it. And nobody predicted this.

So how long will this last? Is there any way forward to a dream future where we can ignore Islam again, like we ignore Hinduism?

The problem is that Islam is incredibly *confident*. Christianity has been beaten up by deists and atheists and scientists for the last 400 years. Christianity is used to criticism, and no longer reacts with violence.

Islam is different. it has been mostly protected from criticism for 1,400 years. Critics and apostates were censored, exiled and killed. Criticism today still generates furious anger. Islam has no real history of having its sacred texts and figures questioned or mocked. As a result, it has a *confidence* that Christianity lacks.

But the world is changing for Islam too. Something huge is happening that never happened before in the history of Islam. It is having to face criticism that it cannot control.

You try, as a Muslim, bringing up kids today, anywhere in the world, and stop them finding sceptical sites about Islam. There are entire learned books online, personal accounts by ex-Muslims, endless YouTube videos from academic to comedy. There's a great site called ["The Skeptic's Annotated Quran"](). Now are you going to tell me that at any time in the last 200 years, in any Islamic country, you could walk into a bookshop and buy "The Skeptic's Annotated Quran"? Of course you couldn't. But it's online. It can't be stopped.

And this will save us. It may take a century, but it will save us. This new Internet world has only just begun in the last 20 years. And it will not end. After a hundred years of "The Skeptic's Annotated Quran" and ["SyeTenAtheist"]() (Google him) and a million others, Islam will get used to criticism and mockery. It will start to ignore cartoons and parody. But it will also grow a little less *confident*. Islam will exist, but will lose the medieval swagger it has today, just as Christianity has lost its medieval swagger.

So Aodhán Ó Ríordáin's instincts are in fact the *opposite* of what is needed. Protection from criticism is bad for Islam, just as it was bad for Catholicism. What Islam needs, for its sake and ours, is endless scrutiny, criticism, challenge, mockery and comedy. The Internet sites that criticise and parody Islam are in fact the key to a long-term better future.

Islam needs to become less confident. This is the solution to both Islamic terror (jihad) and Islamic oppression (sharia). If, in the next century, Islam gets used to endless criticism and abuse, loses its arrogance, and changes to a less confident religion, this will end Islamic terror and liberate the world - including the Islamic world.

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