

Wife-Beating, Wife-Beheading and the Qur'an

American Muslim leaders have been quick to condemn the beheading of a woman by her Muslim husband in Buffalo, saying it has nothing to do with religion. Is there a connection between religion and domestic violence?

1.....This week's "On Faith" questions hit me with a flurry of questions:

1.1.....Have any *non*-American Muslim leaders condemned the beheading?

1.2....."Quick" after the beheading, could anybody know whether, in the murderer's mind, religion had anything to do with his crime?

1.3.....Since beheading is a solid Muslim tradition & contemporary practice, how could any Muslim leader say that a particular beheading by a Muslim had "nothing to do with religion"?

1.4.....Since the beheader was religious, and of a religion that practices beheading, how - in light of this event - could anyone ask whether there is "a connection between religion and domestic violence"?

2.....I take no pleasure in citing any evidence of *Islamic beheadings*, and do so only because of widespread denials of it by some Muslims and consequent widespread public confusion on the subject. I'll cite only one reference in the Islamic holy book, the Qur'an: "smite their necks...slaughter...." (2.47.4 "Muhammad").

Subsequent Muslim literature (including hadith and sharia law) is replete with instructions on beheadings. / CIA agent William Buckley was beheaded in Iran after Hezbollah kidnapped him in Lebanon and sent him to Iran. American journalist Daniel Pearl's beheading was broadcast on Muslim television. / I was saddened, but not surprised, when a Muslim took the law (that is, sharia) into his own hands and beheaded his wife. Not that domestic murder is uncommon; but in the West, beheading is uncommon.

3.....I've seen no poll indicating, in cases of domestic violence, the presence or absence of religion as factor. I do know that *wife-beating* (but not wife-beheading) is approved in Islam (Qur'an 1.4.38 "Women"), and nowhere approved in Christian writings (indeed, it would be virtual masochism: "husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies" [Ephesians 5:28]). / The Buffalo Muslim who beheaded his wife had the Islamic right to beat her, and he probably did, but that treatment proved inadequate to subdue her.

BY WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | FEBRUARY 27, 2009; 12:04 AM ETSAVE & SHARE:        

PREVIOUS: [MUSLIM LEADERS CONDEMN BEHEADING OF WOMAN](#) | NEXT: [RELIGION CAN, SHOULD HELP DECREASE DOMESTIC VIOLENCE](#)

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Dr. Elliott - Thanks for taking the time to respond to my inquiries and for the thought you give to it. I respect your perspective and I'm not going to try to change the mind of anyone who has been doing anything for more than 60 years!

I do think the world would be better off if people spent as much time seeking to understand in a deeper way the faith of others as they do in trying to explain away the hard parts of their own. That goes for Muslims, Christians, Jews, and everyone else.

You are free, of course, to take difficult biblical passages and contextualize them beyond recognition, ignore them at will (Corinthians, Genesis), or dismiss them through personal anecdote.

I am left to wonder: Why can't you engage in a similar intellectual exercise when it comes to the texts of other faiths? Why is it that if it's the Bible, there is always an excuse. But if it's the scriptures of others, there is only black and white.

No need for an answer. I'll just pray.

POSTED BY: AARON9 | MARCH 3, 2009 7:38 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

My gripes with Islam:

Exaggerated masculine machismo;
Sexual hang-ups, prudery, and repression;
Racism against non-Islamic "infidels."

In these three categories, Islam is more and more flop-footed out of step with the world.

It's the twenty-first century, get over it!

POSTED BY: DANIELINTHELIONS DEN | MARCH 3, 2009 3:58 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dr. Elliott, my apologies for misspelling your name on my previous post.

POSTED BY: TWMATTHEWS | MARCH 3, 2009 3:07 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dear Dr. Elliot,

This is a good post that points out the high potential for problems when believers try to literally follow the guidelines of their holy scriptures. But, I think you need to expand it to include all religions.

The fact is that the real problem as I see it is that each religion contains a holy book which is subject to interpretation. So when a Christian husband "disciplines" his wife as the authority, he may feel justified based on his interpretation of the bible. This is no different than most Christian's understanding of homosexuality as a sin. Because god finds this behavior abhorrent, many fundamental Christians condemn the gay person. Thank goodness American secular society has laws against discrimination because of sexual orientation but if left up to the interpretation of Christians, I believe most would continue with the biblical interpretation that it's wrong.

The fundamental flaw in all religions -- a reliance on interpretation of their "holy" book -- is amplified because of one immutable fact; at no time has god come down from heaven to set the record straight.

Let's be real factual about this. God did not condemn Christian religious authorities when they undertook two centuries of weeding out witches and demons from the church. As you mentioned Dr. Elliott, to your knowledge no Christian woman has ever been stoned on account of adultery. And throughout history, there has never been an historically recorded fact that can ONLY be attributed to God. In the example in this paragraph, god did nothing to stop the Spanish Inquisition. Nor did God stop the puritans from persecuting non believers just like they in turn, were persecuted in Europe.

In fact, history is filled with examples of people, acting in a way they thought god wanted them to, performing heinous and cruel acts and never stopped or corrected by god. If you look at this objectively, you must conclude the following: either God sees and chooses to do nothing or god doesn't see meaning there is no god to see or care.

I've concluded the latter.

POSTED BY: TWMATTHEWS | MARCH 3, 2009 1:44 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TO AARON9:

The possibility of physical abuse exists wherever & whenever anybody is "subject" to anybody. Most obviously, in the parent-child relationship. The parallel possibility of abuse exists when two persons are "subject" to each other as equals in a committed relationship. / The Bible "submit" passage you quote (Ephesians 5:21-33) shows the Bible as against abject (strong) submission and for a (weak) submission within a relationship of mutual love and respect, on the model of Christ and his church. The Christian ideal is that in marriage, both partners should feel more free than they were before marriage. It has been true of our marriage for 64 years. (After our marriage, my wife - in addition to bearing children - earned two degrees and became a professional.) / A "physical abuse" factor you do not mention: court cases of battering are some 40% by husbands against wives. "The basis of my assertion that 'Christians have never stoned women'" is the fact that though long a scholar in religion (my first earned doctorate in Christianity having been granted 66 years ago), I've never read or heard of a single case.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | MARCH 3, 2009 11:03 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dr. Elliott - I chose a quick selection of Bible quotes. You are the scholar. Please explain how Bible passages that compel women to "submit to their own husbands in everything" and to let the husband "rule over thee" could not possibly lead to the physical abuse of women.

Also, what is the basis of your assertion that "Christians have never stoned women" for anything at any time in history?

POSTED BY: AARON9 | MARCH 3, 2009 3:33 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Mr. Elliot,

While I think you make a compelling case that there is certainly a link between the murder of Aasiya Hassan and her husband's faith, I would disagree on the precise nature of that link.

Domestic abuse is almost invariably a psychological problem in the abuser. The compulsion to abuse his wife most likely came from mental health issues (to put it mildly) that Mr. Hassan was, in all likelihood, facing. This is not to excuse his behaviour in any way, but to suggest that the problem probably did not arise in his faith.

Where his faith most likely came in would have been a lack of stigma attached to his behaviour, both within his own mind and even more regrettably, the larger Muslim community in the area. Also, his chosen manner of murder most likely derives from a warped understanding of what is permissible in Islamic tradition.

The Koran does indeed allow for the beating of a wife, though it is by no means an excuse for men to vent their personal frustrations on their spouses. The scholarly understanding of the verses you cite have nothing to do with domestic abuse (though, of course, the ignorant can and do chose to use them in this manner).

Simply put: you would be hard-pressed to find credible scholarship of Islam that would condone Mr. Hassan's murder of his wife, or even the prior abuse.

POSTED BY: FAROOQTIRMIZI | MARCH 3, 2009 3:15 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

god suffereing for us?????????????????

god nailed himself on the cross for the sin of mankind ??????????????????????

the delusion is deep dr elliot.
i,m convinced.

POSTED BY: MONO1 | MARCH 3, 2009 1:14 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Sharia law .. Institutionalizes the discrimination that makes women of every age second-class citizens in divorce, inheritance, child custody, dress code, and other basic rights.

Vernacular .. Middle East machismo condoned and codified.

In the past when Clerics are pressured on this topic they argue that women are better protected in Muslim countries than in the West, where they are often treated as sex objects.

Hope .. Among others, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Shirin Ebadi amid death threats continues her fight for women's rights throughout the Muslim world.

I tip my hat to her and the others.

POSTED BY: 4THWATCH | MARCH 2, 2009 11:22 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Well said, Daniel. We can tell how women are treated in islam just by simple observation. The fact that they HAVE TO dress like they do is already a hint.

Do you think the way American journalists were beheaded and broadcasted in muslim tv suggests that beheading is rare in the muslim world?

But watch-out, I haven't seen any muslim leader admitting that the Buffalo murder is linked to islamic religion. Does it look honest?

POSTED BY: BIOS | MARCH 2, 2009 9:16 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

When you are born female in an Islamic society, you are born into a permanent state of life-long subordination and inferiority. You don't need to know anything about the Koran, nor any Islamic laws of marriage to "get it." And you don't need to know much about anything else in this case of the "Buffalo Behading" to realize that it is associated, somehow, with Islam.

Part of democracy means equal rights for ALL. As long as Islmaic countries seek to oppress 50% of their population, they will ALWAYS ALWAYS be behind non-Islamic societies, and they will never catch up. The subjugaiton and subordination of women is a perpetual drag and the source of poverty and want. No need to blame the West or to be jealous of the West for a practice which is self-imposed and self-destructive.

POSTED BY: DANIELINTHELIONSDEN | MARCH 2, 2009 8:24 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Another act that 'should not be connected to the christian religion.':

"By Greg Jonsson

St. Louis Post-Dispatch

KIRKWOOD — The last things Charles Lee "Cookie" Thornton said to his family were "To God be the glory" and that he loved them.

Then Thornton headed to Kirkwood City Hall, gunning down a police officer outside. He then burst into the City Council meeting just after the Pledge of Allegiance and opened fire, shooting another officer dead and

apparently targeting public officials he's sparred with in the past.
Police said those killed included three Kirkwood officials, two police officers and the shooter. "

POSTED BY: DENSBTLY | MARCH 2, 2009 4:59 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TO MONO 1:

You misunderstand how we Christians view the Crucifixion of our Lord Jesus Christ. It was God - the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit - suffering "for us and our salvation."

God doing something FOR us:
not the Father doing something TO the Son.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | MARCH 2, 2009 11:25 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TO AARON9:

In your list of Bible quotations, you included nothing on the physical abuse of women for insuordination. I'm sympathetic with your failed efforts to find such: there aren't any.

TO RAJAJAMES:

Christians never have stoned women for adultery - or for anything else.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | MARCH 2, 2009 11:18 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

for so god love the world he nailed his only begotten son on the cross for the sake and sin of mankind????????????????????

- 1-how soild the above delusion in christianity?
- 2-how soild the effect on mankind mentality?
- 3-how many human heads beheaded since ever ^soild^ then???????????????

people with the above delusional mentality will never understand the QUIRAN.

POSTED BY: MONO1 | MARCH 2, 2009 10:33 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Maryann261

Are you a lawful child of your parents?

POSTED BY: SPARK1 | MARCH 2, 2009 9:35 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

All religions are guilty of treating women badly without exception. That is because most religions (books) are written by men. Didn't women ? adulterous were stoned in the three religions from Middle East, when the men went scott free even though adultery was condemned by all three. Hindus and Buddhist were no different. men and women should and must have equal rights and the religions and society need education and reform and updating. any violence must be out lawed and beheading nauseates me. May I make an appeal to all not to gloat and make political gains of this primitive barbaric act but take action to stop it stat. let this monster have the benefit of law and deport him to his country of origin if he is an American put him to hard labour for rest of his life. I do not believe in capital punishment

POSTED BY: RAJARJAMES | MARCH 2, 2009 12:54 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Islam is pure evil.

POSTED BY: MARYANN261 | MARCH 1, 2009 11:04 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

A few Bible quotes Dr. Elliot failed to mention:

"Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the saviour of the body. Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." (Ephesians 5:22-24)

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted unto them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also saith the law. And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church." (1 Corinthians 14:34-35)

"Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." (Genesis 3:16)

POSTED BY: AARON9 | MARCH 1, 2009 7:30 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

HS

Yes, there is domestic violence in the West. There's even detailed data on the subject accessible to anyone. It shows we are working on it.

There's no such thing in islamic countries. That's just the way things are. What would happen to a woman who goes to the police in Afghanistan, Iran, Saudi Arabia, etc., to complain about domestic abuse, besides being laughed at and sent back home (best case scenario).

Are you going to say women are respected in muslim countries?

Read the column by Taylor.

No matter how muslim you may be, you shouldn't feel offended about the beheading-linked-to-islam domestic violence murder. You should rather accept this and help your religion move on by treating women equally.

POSTED BY: BIOS | MARCH 1, 2009 4:16 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Spark,
Your first post;

"The social environment and culture around that place do play the role but not the religion."
How is religion not part of the social environment and culture?

"No religion allows beheading a wife, including islam"

Let's say it doesn't. Are you still denying the link islam-beheading in the Buffalo case?

Your second post;

"This act should not be connected to the christian religion."
Absolutely. It shouldn't be.

POSTED BY: BIOS | MARCH 1, 2009 3:59 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The Quran and the hadith/suras are full of calls to violence against all unbelievers...women are treated as chattel...Islam is not compatible with our Western values...everyone should pay attention to how, when confronted with evil-doers of their own faith, ALL Muslims will immediately try to point to other religions faults...or how the unbelievers made them do it...or how the perpetrators didn't actually understand "true" Islam. (see safiyah111s' post on this comment page for a perfect representation of my point) I've never seen an exception to this rule. Point out the over 12,000 deadly attacks by Muslims against unbelievers since 9/11... Muslims who say they're only doing what the Prophet has instructed (they're right), and you are immediately barraged with nonsense about insults to Islam, the presence of Israel, cartoons...anything to justify the murderous acts or deflect the criticism away from their fellow member of "the religion of peace"...you see, we, who do not follow that "perfect man" Muhammed are lesser beings to them. We are dhimmis...unbelievers..we have to pay special taxes, we can't practise our religions without permission, we're required to wear special clothes, we have little or no political say, we have to walk behind Muslims in public, etc...Muslims will try to deny this, or say it is an incorrect/dated interpretation of the "holy writings" of Islam, but one has to look no further than any predominantly Muslim country in the world to see the truth. And Europe is on its' way. Muslims have clamored for change, and even as we speak the traditional freedom of speech laws are being rewritten to prevent any criticism of Islam...it might offend somebody and then that somebody might have to kill someone else, you see how it works. The UN is having a conference on racism, which fortunately the US will not attend. This conference is going to key on Israels' racism of defending itself against aggression...that's right, if I fire 6000 rockets at you and then you retaliate, I get to call you a racist for preventing me from murdering you. Please go to Jihad Watch or Palestinian Media Watch to see what the world is up against.

POSTED BY: BRETT2 | MARCH 1, 2009 1:18 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

I found the following piece on the internet (google search).

Title: "Domestic Violence against women in the West".

It gives statistical data country by country. Here is an excerpt only from England:

1 in 4 women may experience violence in their relationships with men (Women's Aid Federation [England] report, 1992)

- Severe, repeated and systematic violence occurs in at least 5 of every hundred marriages in Britain;
- Between 40 and 45% of murdered women are killed by their male partners;
- Between 1 of every 2 women are murdered by their male partners every week;
- more than 25% of all violent crime reported to the police is domestic violence of men against women, making it the second most common violent crime; (Domestic Violence - Action for Change, G. Hague & E. Malos, 1993)
- 100,000 women per year seek treatment in London for violent injuries received in the home (Punching Judy, BBC1 TV programme, 1989)

POSTED BY: HSNKHWJ | MARCH 1, 2009 10:47 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

“For Muslim men and women, for believing men and women, for devout men and women, for true men and women who are patient, for men and women who humble themselves, for men and women who give in charity, for men and women who fast, for men and women who guard their chastity, and for men and women who engage much in Allah’s praise - For them all has Allah prepared forgiveness and great reward.” (33:35)

III. Human Rights:

Woman is recognized by Islam as equal partner in the procreation of humankind. Man is the father, woman is the mother, and both are essential for life. By this partnership, woman has an equal share in every aspect; she is entitled to equal rights; she undertakes equal responsibilities, and she has as many qualities and as much humanity as her partner. So, fourteen centuries ago, Islam made men and women equally accountable to God in glorifying and worshiping Him - setting no limits on her spiritual progress. In the Qur’an in the first verse of the chapter entitled “Women”, God says:

“O mankind! Be careful of your duty to your Lord Who created you from a single soul and from it its mate and from them both have spread abroad a multitude of men and women. Be careful of your duty toward Allah in Whom you claim (your rights) of one another, and towards the wombs (that bore you). Lo! Allah has been a Watcher over you.” (4:1)

And again in the Qur’an:

“O mankind! Verily we have created you from a single (pair) of a male and female, and made you into nations and tribes that you may know each other.” (49:13; cf.4:1)

IV. CIVIL RIGHTS:

When we then consider the area of civil rights, education is of greatest importance. The Prophet (pbuh) said: “Seeking knowledge is a mandate for every Muslim (male and female).” Keeping people ignorant equals oppression; whether man or woman. In the case of women their civil rights were considered necessary for the proper functioning of the community.

Recognizing her individuality, Islam grants a woman freedom of choice and expression. We are encouraged to contribute opinions and ideas. Women would pose questions directly to the Prophet (sal) and to other Muslim leaders and offer their opinions concerning religion, economics, and social matters. (Qur’an 58:1-4; 60:10-12)

Actually it was 1400 years ago that a right to vote was given to the woman. When the women came to Prophet Mohammad (sal) and swore their allegiance to him, he had to accept their oath. This established the right of women to publicly participate in the selection of their leader. Nor does Islam forbid a woman from holding important positions in government.

POSTED BY: HSNKHWJ | MARCH 1, 2009 10:39 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Last month a Christian man in California shot and killed his wife and all of his children in the house. The reason given was the loss of job. This act should not be connected to the Christian religion.

POSTED BY: SPARK1 | MARCH 1, 2009 6:04 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Domestic violence can happen in any society. Those societies where learning, education and awareness of social issues are neglected have the highest rate of such killings. Things like honor killings are prevalent in people with little or no education. The social environment and culture around that place do play the role but not the religion. Rather many such persons are non-religious. The drug abusers and alcoholics are mostly non-religious and domestic violence is prevalent in such homes. No religion allows beheading a wife, including Islam.

POSTED BY: SPARK1 | MARCH 1, 2009 5:44 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Safi,
Besides denying the fact that the beheading is the link to Islam in the Buffalo murder, would you also say that in Muslim countries women are treated equally?

POSTED BY: BIOS | FEBRUARY 28, 2009 10:39 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Salam Alakum;

Rev. Elliot, in the future you should refrain from making sweeping statements about a way of life-Islam-that you have very little knowledge of. Have you forgotten that just last month a Christian man in California shot and killed his wife and every child in the house. The reason given was the loss of the false security afforded by the fact that

one is employed. No thinking, rational person connected this act to the Christian religion as no thinking or rational person should connect the sister's murder in Buffalo to Islam. Both acts are borne out of emotions running wild and people whose actions are a demonstration that they have given up all hope. In future pray and consider that sensational violence has become common place in this country and address among your congregation why the people in the United States have become so very hopeless and violent.

POSTED BY: SAFIYAH111 | FEBRUARY 28, 2009 4:45 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Ok. Loud & clear. Thanks for your response.

Denial is destructive. As long as the link islam-beheading is ignored in this case, it's a matter of time for it to happen again.

POSTED BY: BIOS | FEBRUARY 28, 2009 11:03 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Wow, I didn't know the Qur'an explicitly advocated wife beating. That's disgusting. Thanks for not beating around the bush.

POSTED BY: HHEATHEN | FEBRUARY 28, 2009 10:14 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dr. Elliot: Thank you for your frank and honest assessment on this issue. I think it is dead on. I hope many more people are reading it compared to the number of people who have commented on it.

POSTED BY: US-CONSCIENCE | FEBRUARY 28, 2009 7:24 AM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

TO BIOS:

My citations are accurate.

I taught Islam in the University of Hawaii, and it hurts me (as a Christian) to have to be this critical of that religion. But any Muslims who deny that the Qur'an approves of both wife-beating and beheading are either ignorant or lying: there's no interpretive wriggle-room.

POSTED BY: WILLIS E. ELLIOTT | FEBRUARY 27, 2009 11:53 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

What can I say? So do I this time. I specially agree with the statement:

"...how...could anyone ask whether there is "a connection between religion and domestic violence?"

Regardless of the koran, I agree with the post because of simple observation of the muslim world. But if it's true that the koran mentions what is cited here, it becomes even more senseless to see muslim organizations denying the link between islam and the beheading.

I would just have one question, Mr. Elliott. Could the cites you mention of the koran be considered adequate and not just a light interpretation?

If so, then it is one solid piece of evidence validating the link of islam to beheadings.

POSTED BY: BIOS | FEBRUARY 27, 2009 10:35 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

Dear Dr. Elliott,

It is hard to believe, but for once we agree!

POSTED BY: GABY1 | FEBRUARY 27, 2009 7:37 PM
[REPORT OFFENSIVE COMMENT](#)

The comments to this entry are closed.