

has been brought under “the protection” of Shari’ah. This status was originally only made available to non-Muslims who were “People of the Book”, (i.e. Jews and Christians), but was later extended to include other groups such as Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Mandeans, and, in some areas, Hindus and Buddhists. Dhimmi have more rights than other non-Muslim religious subjects, but fewer legal and social rights than Muslims.

The Qur’an justifies this.

“ Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Messenger, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book, until they pay the Jizya with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued.”

Qur’an 9.29

The *jizya* is a tax paid as a tribute in order to obtain and keep this status. However one only has to read the newspapers to recognise that the status of dhimmi is, at best, insecure whatever the words of the Qur’an may say. Non-Muslims are frequently brutalised and even murdered in many Islamic countries.

There are many observers of the modern emergence of militant Islam who believe that the West is facing a concerted effort by Muslim jihadists to undermine the Christian ethical foundations of the West, ultimately to bring it into subjection to the Islamic world. Even western laws, e.g. anti-discrimination laws, are exploited in order to pursue their aims.

The best example of this in Australia was the attempt to suppress critical analysis of Islam in the well-publicised “Two Dannys” case. In this instance, it is ironic that Muslim groups were using laws founded on Western liberal, pluralistic values to undermine the right to make comments on Islam.

In this instance, two Christian critics of Islam were taken to court in Victoria on the claim that, in publicly making criticisms of Islam, they were breaching the Victorian anti-vilification laws. Initially found guilty,

the verdict was eventually overturned on appeal.

However it serves as a wake-up call to Australians in general, not just for Christians, that our freedoms, founded on values that are based on Judeo-Christian ethics, are under serious threat by subtle means.

Questions for Consideration

1. What evidence is there from world events that suggests that Islam is seeking to create Islamic states wherever it establishes Muslim communities?
2. Realistically speaking, does our Australian society have any reason to fear the influx of Islamic people into the country? Is this any worse than the rise in the level agnostic or atheistic thinking in Australia? To what extent will future Muslim generations follow the example set by the current one?
3. To what extent could this be God’s means of bringing non-Christians into contact with Christianity?
4. How should a nation which has traditionally held to the concept of a democratic, egalitarian, pluralistic, secular society attempt to cope with a religious element in its midst that is seeking to undermine those values and replace them irreversibly with its own? What part can we play in this as individuals?
5. How do we regard a situation where our western Judeo-Christian values are actually being used to undermine those values?
6. Are there, as the paper suggests, natural moral values that enable a secular society effectively to manage the nation’s laws and its concepts of right, wrong and goodness independently of any religion? What roles should religion of any kind, especially Christianity, play in this society?
7. In the light of the attitude of Islam to civil rights, what is likely to be the effectiveness of Western military involvements in Iraq and Afghanistan creating democratic societies in these countries?

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Islam and Christianity Series

No. 5 Civil Rights and Society



If there is an area in which Islam is vulnerable to criticism, it is in civil rights. In general the predominantly Muslim nations of the world have been critical of the **United Nations' Universal Declaration on Human Rights** on the grounds that it was prepared from a Judeo-Christian ethical viewpoint.

Human rights in Islamic eyes can only be understood in the light of the Muslim view that its adherents have either been born into "submission" or chosen to "submit" to Allah, an action which is irreversible in the eyes of its adherents. Hence it is Allah's will that determines the rights of his followers. They no longer possess freewill beyond the ability to choose between right or wrong, whatever the respective sub-groups of Islam regard that to be. Sunnis, who represent eighty five per cent of Muslims, define right or wrong as whatever Allah allows or disallows. Shi'ites believe that there is intrinsic good and evil in nature.

Under these circumstances Islamic Law or Shari'ah takes priority over human rights.

As a result of the inability of Islamic countries to accept the principles of the United Nations Declaration, they have created their own declaration called the **Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam**. The elements of the Cairo Declaration include,

- Human beings are united in their submission to Allah.
- All life is sacred except for a circumstances determined under Shari'ah.
- Non-belligerents, including prisoners-of-war, are protected in time of war.
- There is a right to marry and produce children..
- Women are entitled to their dignity and the care and protection of their men.
- Children must be protected, cared for and are entitled to an education.
- Only Islamic religious rights are protected although enforced conversion is rejected.

"Islam is the religion of true unspoiled nature. It is prohibited to exercise any form of pressure on man or to exploit his poverty or ignorance in order to force him to change his religion to another religion or to atheism.

Article 10, Cairo Declaration of Human Rights in Islam

- The rights to work, to receive fair wages and returns for effort without discrimination, to choose a place of residence, to seek asylum, to own property are protected.
- Everyone is equal before the law and is entitled to a speedy trial, a presumption of innocence, protection from indiscriminate arrest, torture or unjust imprisonment.
- Liberty of opinion and freedom of information is protected insofar as it conforms to Shari'ah.
- Everyone has the right to participate, directly or indirectly, in the processes of government.

Articles 19 and 24 in the Cairo Declaration are very significant as they severely restrict the availability of civil rights in an Islamic society.

"There shall be no crime or punishment except as provided for in the Shari'ah." (Article 19)

"All the rights and freedoms stipulated in this Declaration are subject to the Islamic Shari'ah" (Article 24)

Much has to be read between the lines of the declaration. It should be noted that women's rights remain severely restricted under this declaration. Their rights to marry and their rights in marriage are restricted by Shari'ah and at no stage are they guaranteed equality except "in dignity".

With the exception of a number of "liberal" Muslims there is no concept of a secular state in Islamic thought. The aim is to create an Islamic state in which all are subject to Allah through Shari'ah and from which there can be no escape.

Many argue, and these include such prominent women as Wafa Sultan and Ayaan Hirsi Ali, that Islam is not a religion at all but is in fact a political movement claiming to have Allah as its head of state.

Most Christians in the West, on the other hand, have no trouble with the concept of a secular society, one that recognises the notion that law and order and government services can be confidently managed, in a democratic societies, by an elected government. At the same time religious groups manage their own affairs and individuals in society are free to choose to which, if any, religion they belong. The Ten Commandments, although Christians believe that they are instituted by God himself, are seen as embracing natural moral laws. However it is for secular law to administer for the public good those that involve human relationships.

It is the expected duty of secular governments to make good laws and to enforce them for the good of all people in society. The other side of this coin is that Christians should willingly submit to the authority of these governments which themselves act under God's sovereignty. This involves obeying laws, giving service, paying taxes and giving honour where honour is due.

Hence Christians in a secular, democratic society can cast their votes for their preferred politicians or for their preferred political party, judging them not on their depth of Christian belief, even non-belief, but rather on their worth as measured by integrity, energy, social values, commitment and vision.

At the heart of Christian belief is the reconciliation of Man and God. **Christianity** is not to be viewed as a catalogue of right and wrong although the church and its individual members are expected to fulfil a prophetic role in which they warn when people and their governments fail to measure up to God's standards.

It is worth focussing attention on the methods by which Muslims aim to bring non-Muslims into subjection, if not to Allah, then to the Islamic state.

In the vocabulary of Islam a *dhimmi* is a person who