Islam Day in Hawaii – Misinterpreting Tolerance

May 20, 2009

On May 6, 2009, the Hawaii State Senate overwhelmingly passed a bill by a 22-3 vote to recognize September 24th, 2009 as Islam Day. The reason for this bill was to recognize "the rich religious, scientific, cultural and artistic contributions that Islam and the Islamic world have made. It does not call for any spending or organized celebration of Islam Day."{1}

Democrat Senator Will Espero presented his reason for this bill stating, "We are a state of tolerance. We understand that people have different beliefs. We may not all agree on every single item and issue out there, but to say and highlight the negativity of the Islamic people is an insult to the majority of believers who are good law-abiding citizens of the world."{2}

Two Republican senators opposed the bill, stating their reasons. Republican Senator Fred Hemmings said, "I recall radical Islamists around the world cheering the horrors of 9/11. That is the day all civilized people of all religions should remember."{3} Republican Senator Sam Slom stated, "I don't think there's any country in the history of the world that has been more tolerant than the United States of America, and because of that tolerance, we've looked the other way a lot of times, and many thousands of our citizens have been killed by terrorists."{4}

How should we approach this issue as believers in Christ? I believe there are two points we should be very concerned about. First, I agree with Sen. Will Espero that the majority of Muslims are peaceful, law-abiding citizens. However, I do not believe Islam is a religion of tolerance and peace. The

teachings of Islam's sacred works and its history reveal this to be the
case.

Throughout the Qur'an Muslims are commanded to spread Islam through the use of force. When Muhammad first began preaching his message, he did teach tolerance of Jews and Christians as he attempted to win converts from these religions. Sura 2:256 teaches that there is to be "no compulsion in religion." However, as he grew in power and the Jews and Christians rejected his message, these commands were later abrogated by later commands to fight against unbelievers in holy war.

Sura 9:5 teaches, "But when the forbidden months are past, then fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them, and seize them, beleaguer them, and lie in wait for them in every stratagem (of war); but if they repent, and establish regular prayers and practice regular charity, then open the way for them, for Allah is oft-forgiving, most merciful."

Sura 9:29 states, "Fight against those who believe not in Allah, nor in the last day, nor forbid that which has been forbidden by Allah and His messenger and those who acknowledge not the religion of truth among the people of the Scripture (Jews and Christians), until they pay the Jizyah (tax) with willing submission and feel themselves subdued."

The Qur'an teaches holy war against unbelievers. Muhammad also represents the perfect model for Muslims to copy. Muslims are called to imitate him in all aspects of life. Islamic scholar John Esposito writes,

> "Muslims look to Muhammad's example for guidance in all aspects of life: how to treat friends as well as enemies, what to eat and drink, how to make love and war . . . . His impact on Muslim life cannot be overestimated, since he served as both religious and political head of Medina:

> prophet of God, ruler, military commander, chief judge, lawgiver . . . . Traditions of the Prophet provide guidance for personal hygiene, dress, eating, marriage, treatment of wives, diplomacy, and warfare."{5}

What kind of leader and model was Muhammad? He was a warrior. The history of Islam records his raids on caravans, battles, and the merciless killing of those who disagreed with him. The first biography of Muhammad states he fought twenty-seven battles in which thousands were killed.{6} His successors followed in his footsteps, spreading Islam through jihad attacking the countries of Africa, Asia, and Europe. Many of these countries posed no threat to Muslims nor were they aggressive towards Islam. For example, Egypt was not aggressive towards Islam, yet they were attacked and the Muslims killed over four million Egyptians. The nations of Europe posed no threat yet Islam invaded Europe and nearly conquered Europe until Charles Martel repulsed them in 732 A.D.

Most Muslims are peaceful but the religion of Islam is not a religion of tolerance and peace. In reading some of the authoritative sources of Islam, the Qur'an, the Hadith (sayings and actions of Muhammad), and the earliest biography of Muhammad, one will soon realize this to be the case. Therefore, it is dangerous to tolerate a religion that promotes intolerance and the use of force on unbelievers. Observe the history of Islam when they became the majority and instilled Sharia Law in a country. Once Sharia Law is instituted, they do not tolerate other faiths. In passing this bill, the leaders of Hawaii send the unbalanced message that we will honor this religion and its values, yet ignore the dangers it poses. I believe the leaders of Hawaii do not know what this religion teaches, and its history. It is dangerous then to honor a religion that poses such a threat to our nation and civilization.

Second, there is a misunderstanding of tolerance. Senators

state tolerance as a reason to honor Islam. However, true tolerance has moral guidelines and limits. A tolerant society should not tolerate pedophiles or the abuse of women or racial discrimination. Tolerance does not mean all religions and values are equal and true, and therefore should be allowed to permeate a culture. However, this appears to be the definition the leaders of Hawaii are going by. True tolerance has its limits; it does not tolerate all beliefs. Should we tolerate racism and groups like the KKK that promote this belief? Would we in the name of tolerance have a KKK day? What about Nazism? What about the Taliban?

If we are to tolerate all beliefs as equally valid and true and worthy of recognition, we will end up allowing groups like these to permeate our culture. Philosopher Karl Popper states, "If we extend unlimited tolerance even to those who are intolerant, if we are not prepared to defend a tolerant society against the onslaught of the intolerant, then the tolerant will be destroyed, and tolerance with them."{7} Unlimited tolerance with no moral guidelines will eventually lead to the downfall of our civilization as we allow false ideologies to destroy the moral foundations of our nation.

I ask the leaders of Hawaii to study the religion of Islam and its history from its beginning to what is occurring now in Europe. I believe Islam represents one of the great threats to western civilization and if we do not stand against its ideas, we may soon succumb to its tyranny.

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