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# The Clash of Civilizations -Theology Matters

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Furthermore, they did this in the name of Allah. The mullahs who lead that dangerous city responded to the atrocity by condemning the mutilation of the bodies—but not the killings themselves. The mullahs were not alone.

“Every foreigner in Fallujah is a target,” said chief administrator Fawzi al-Aifan. “The resistance attacks are legitimate . . . . But the mutilation is totally rejected.”

Meanwhile, the world is still reeling from the sight of a sixteen-year-old boy captured by Israeli soldiers as he tried to enter the country wearing a belt of high explosives. This would-be suicide bomber decided that he didn’t want to die after all, and soldiers used a robotic assistant to help the boy cut the bombs from his body. Then, stripped to his underwear for safety, the boy was taken into custody.

Who would send out young boys as suicide bombers? The diabolical concept of using live persons as homicidal bomb delivery systems is unspeakably evil in itself. But to use young boys as the bombers is almost beyond our imagination.

This is not the first time teenagers have been used. A plot to use fifteen-year olds was foiled in recent months, while previous attacks have involved at least one other sixteen-year-old boy.

Underlying these acts of terror is the development of a worldwide clash of civilizations. Many Americans live under the fiction that all persons share a common perception of justice and a common commitment to human rights. This is simply not the case.

Many persons and cultures around the world do not share our commitment to modern democratic values—or the sanctity of human life. The most important flashpoints in the world order fall where different civilizations with contrasting and conflicting worldviews come into contact.

For most of the twentieth century, western civilization faced its greatest challenge from fascism and international communism. These rival systems of belief were locked in a contest for world domination. They held very different conceptions of human rights and human dignity, and this led to almost categorical opposition on any issue of importance. The conflict with fascism led to a world war. The contest with communism led to a cold war.

Western civilization faces a particular challenge from the civilization of Islam. We must be very careful here. It would not be fair to accuse all Muslims of participation in violence or of celebrating these acts of terror. This would certainly be both inaccurate and unfair.

At the same time, the Islamic worldview is opposed to many of the most important pillars of western civilization. Though western secularists seek to deny the obvious, western civilization is based upon a Christian civilization and worldview. From the Judeo-Christian worldview of the Bible we gained our respect for human rights and human dignity. We have never held these ideals with full faithfulness, but no other worldview holds human life to be sacred because each human being is made in the image of God.

We face what Samuel P. Huntington has identified as a “clash of civilizations and the remaking of world order.” The victims and the perpetrators of these acts of terror represent two rival worldviews with irreconcilable aims and principles. Islam has turned its wrath upon the West, Israel, and Christian culture. Most particularly, Islamic culture hates western secularism and the moral relativism and corruption it has produced. As Huntington explains, “Muslims fear and resent Western power and the threat which this poses to their society and beliefs. They see Western culture as materialistic, corrupt, decadent, and immoral. They also see it as seductive, and hence stress all the more the need to resist its impact on their way of life. Increasingly, Muslims attack the West not for adhering to an imperfect, erroneous religion, which is nonetheless a ‘religion of the book,’ but for not adhering to any religion at all. In Muslim eyes Western secularism, irreligiosity, and hence immorality are worse evils than the Western Christianity that produced them.”

America has given the Muslim world many reasons to consider our society decadent and dangerous to their concept of national righteousness and international order. We export filth and pornography through our media and entertainment products. The nation debates same-sex marriage and celebrates sexual promiscuity. This is not only an embarrassment—it is a matter of grave moral accountability.

The clash between Islam and Western civilization represents one of the most dangerous flash-points on the contemporary world scene. The world-wide growth of Islamic civilization presents the West with its greatest contemporary challenge.

Christians understand why this is so, and why it cannot be merely negotiated away. This is not just a horrible misunderstanding, for there are real differences involved. This is hard for secularists to understand, but in the end, theology matters.

