



Open Season on Muslim Women

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Can wife-beating be justified under any circumstances? According to some in Australia, yes – if the couple is Muslim.

The Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau has published and distributed 50,000 copies of an 82-page handbook for Australian police officers, directing them on how to deal with people from all the unfamiliar cultures that an Australian policeman may encounter. A Sikh, for example, may receive a three-day reprieve from arrest if the arresting officer happens upon him while he is reading his holy scriptures – a practice that takes fifty hours, and must not be interrupted. And Muslim husbands who beat their wives must be treated differently from other domestic violence cases, as a matter of cultural sensitivity: “In incidents such as domestic violence,” says the handbook, “police need to have an understanding of

the traditions, ways of life and habits of Muslims.”

This handbook has been issued, not surprisingly, in Australia’s Victoria state, where late last year two Christian pastors in Australia fell victim to new and treacherously elastic religious hatred laws. They were found guilty of vilification of Muslims for crimes such as quoting verses of the Qur’an that Victoria Muslims evidently preferred that non-Muslims not know about. The silencing of free speech was bad enough; now the distribution of the handbook made Joumanah El Matrah of the Islamic Women’s Welfare Council concerned that women would be endangered: “The implication,” she explained, “is one needs to be more tolerant of violence against Muslim women but they should be entitled to the same protection. Police should not be advising other officers

to follow those sorts of protocols. It can only lead to harm.”

Muslim husbands, of course, can point to Qur’an 4:34 to justifying wife-beating: “...good women are therefore obedient, guarding the unseen as Allah has guarded; and (as to) those on whose part you fear desertion, admonish them, and leave them alone in the sleeping-places and beat them...” This sanction has become culturally ingrained: the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences has determined that today over ninety percent of Pakistani wives have been struck, beaten, or abused sexually – for offenses on the order of cooking an unsatisfactory meal. Others were punished for failing to give birth to a male child.

If Victoria police are to tolerate such behavior by Muslims on the grounds of multiculturalism, even though it contravenes Australian law, surely they must tolerate other behavior as well. After all, Islamic law also allows for polygamy. Western European governments already turn a blind eye to polygamous arrangements among Muslims, and the British have even considered legalizing polygamy for tax purposes. Will Victoria state allow it also? Will Victoria police turn a blind eye to thieves whose hands have been amputated in accord with Qur’an 5:38? That verse is clear: “As for the thief, both male and female, cut off their hands. It is the reward of their own deeds, an exemplary punishment from Allah. Allah is Mighty, Wise.” Muhammad is equally clear that anyone who leaves Islam must be killed (cf. Bukhari, vol. 9, bk. 84,

no. 57): will Victoria police hesitate or even decline to prosecute murder cases if the victim is an apostate from Islam?

This backhanded endorsement of wife-beating in Australia has revealed in a harsh new light the bankruptcy of relativist multiculturalism. Is wife-beating intrinsically wrong? Evidently not in Victoria state. Indeed, it is doubtful that the learned members of the Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau think that moral categories have any relevance to the modern world. Yet if something that is endorsed by large numbers of people and ingrained in cultural habit cannot be condemned, then the Allies had no reason to oppose Nazi Germany or condemn Hitler. Murderous anti-Semitism? Well, yes, but you see, we need to have an understanding of the traditions, ways of life and habits of Nazis.

All Muslim husbands are not wife-beaters, and it is condescending and irresponsible for the Australasian Police Multicultural Advisory Bureau to give those who are a free pass, instead of denouncing the practice unequivocally and calling upon Muslim men to heed the better angels of their nature. It is the same condescending irresponsibility that primly refuses to confront the elements of Islam that jihad terrorists use today to justify violence, for fear of offending moderate Muslims – thereby undercutting any chance sincere moderates may have had to speak out for reform within Islam. Why should they speak out if nothing needs reforming?

But the folly of Victoria state runs deeper also: it reveals a gaping weakness in the West's defense against the global jihad: this is, or threatens to become, not so much a clash of civilizations as a clash of barbarisms. One side contends for certain values that are, in a word, monstrous: the subjugation of women and non-Muslims, the stifling of freedom of conscience, and so on. But the other contends for no values at all, and opposes this great maelstrom with nothing more than a moral and intellectual vacuum in which no behavior, no matter how heinous, is beyond the pale.

Which side will prevail in such a conflict? Well, nature abhors a vacuum. But it doesn't have to be this way. It is the Judeo-Christian West that has given the world the great ideas of the equality of dignity and rights of all people, the freedom of conscience, the sanctity of the individual — all of which would be swept aside by the jihadists. Instead of sweeping it aside for them, as Victoria state seems determined to do, perhaps those who cherish these values will someday unite in their defense. But it is getting late, very late.

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