

# A 1,389 Year-Old ‘Phobia’?..

A direct correlation exists between Western ignorance of history and Western ignorance of Islam’s “troublesome” doctrines. It is this connection that allows Islam’s apologists to get away with so many distortions and outright lies meant to shield Islam.

Take Reza Aslan, [CNN’s resident “cannibal”](#): he recently claimed that “Islamophobia”—defined by CAIR and others as “unfounded fear of and hostility towards Islam”—was [created by a few “clowns” in 2014](#).

To be sure, Western fear of Islam is something of a recent phenomenon in modern times. Because the world was a much bigger place a few decades ago, and Islam was oceans away, the average American hardly knew anything about Muhammad’s creed. However, as the world has become smaller—as Muslims have grown in numbers in Western societies, as modern technology has made it possible for the weaker to terrorize the stronger, and then broadcast it for the world to see (via Internet)—so has the Western world been hearing, seeing, and experiencing more and more of Islam.

But Aslan’s lament is not that people were once ignorant but now are wise to Islam. Rather, he accuses a number of writers and activists—the aforementioned “clowns”—of manufacturing a menacing image of Islam, which, in turn, has prompted Western people to develop an “unfounded fear of and hostility towards Islam”—or, in a word, “Islamophobia.”

Such a claim relies on an obscene amount of historical ignorance. The fact is, Western peoples, including some of their luminaries, have portrayed Islam as a hostile and violent force from the very start—often in terms that would make today’s “Islamophobe” blush. And that wasn’t because Europeans were “recasting the other” to “validate their imperial aspirations” (to use the tired terminology of Edward Said that has long dominated academia’s treatment of Western-Muslim interactions). Rather, it was because, from the very start, Islam treated the “infidel” the same way ISIS treats the infidel: atrociously.

According to Muslim history, in 628, Muhammad summoned the Roman (or “Byzantine”) emperor, Heraclius—the symbolic head of “the West,” then known as “Christendom”—to submit to Islam; when the emperor refused, a virulent jihad was unleashed against the Western world. Less than 100 years later, Islam had conquered more than two-thirds of Christendom, and was raiding deep into France. While these far-reaching conquests are often allotted a sentence, if that, in today’s textbooks, the chroniclers of the time, including Muslim ones, make clear that these were cataclysmic events that had a traumatic effect on, and played no small part in forming, the unconquered portion of Christendom, which became Europe proper. As Ibn Khaldun famously put it after describing incessant Muslim raids for booty and slaves all along Europe’s Mediterranean coasts during the ninth and tenth centuries, “the Christians could no longer float a plank on the sea.” They took to the inlands and the Dark Ages began.

But it wasn’t just what they personally experienced at the hands of Muslims that developed this ancient “phobia” to Islam. As far back as the eighth century, Islam’s scriptures and histories—

the Koran, hadith, sira and maghazi literature—became available to those Christian communities living adjacent to, or even under the authority of, the caliphates. Based solely on these primary sources of Islam, Christians concluded that Muhammad was a (possibly demon possessed) false prophet who had very obviously concocted a creed to justify the worst depravities of man—for dominion, plunder, cruelty and carnality. This view prevailed for well over a millennium all over Europe (and till this day among “Islamophobes”); and it was augmented by the fact that Muslims were still, well over a millennium, invading Christian territories, plundering them, and abducting their women and children. The United States’ first brush with Islam—the early nineteenth century Barbary Wars—came by way of Muslim raids on American ships for booty and slaves in the name of Allah.

Here is a miniscule sampling of what Europeans thought of Islam throughout the centuries:

**Theophanes**, the Byzantine chronicler (d.818):

He [Muhammad] taught those who gave ear to him that the one slaying the enemy—or being slain by the enemy—entered into paradise [see Koran 9:111]. And he said paradise was carnal and sensual—orgies of eating, drinking, and women. Also, there was a river of wine ... and the women were of another sort, and the duration of sex greatly prolonged and its pleasure long-enduring [e.g., Koran 56: 7-40, 78:31, 55:70-77]. And all sorts of other nonsense.

**Thomas Aquinas**, one of Christendom’s most influential philosophers (d.1274):

He [Muhamad] seduced the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh urges us .... and he gave free rein to carnal pleasure. In all this, as is not unexpected, he was obeyed by carnal men. As for proofs of the truth of his doctrine.... Muhammad said that he was sent in the power of his arms—which are signs not lacking even to robbers and tyrants [i.e., his “proof” that God was with him is that he was able to conquer and plunder others].... Muhammad forced others to become his follower’s by the violence of his arms.

**Marco Polo**, world famous traveler (d.1324):

According to their [Muslims’] doctrine, whatever is stolen or plundered from others of a different faith, is properly taken, and the theft is no crime; whilst those who suffer death or injury by the hands of Christians, are considered as martyrs. If, therefore, they were not prohibited and restrained by the [Mongol] powers who now govern them, they would commit many outrages. These principles are common to all Saracens.

When the Mongol khan later discovered the depraved criminality of Achmath (or Ahmed), one of his Muslim governors, Polo writes that that the khan’s

attention [went] to the doctrines of the Sect of the Saracens [i.e., Islam], which excuse every crime, yea, even murder itself, when committed on such as are not of their religion. And seeing that this doctrine had led the accursed Achmath and his sons to act as they did without any sense of guilt, the Khan was led to entertain the greatest disgust and abomination for it. So he summoned the Saracens and prohibited their doing many things which their religion enjoined.

**Alexis de Tocqueville**, French political thinker and philosopher, best known for *Democracy in America* (d.1859),

I studied the Quran a great deal. I came away from that study with the conviction that by and large there have been few religions in the world as deadly to men as that of Muhammad. As far as I can see, it is the principal cause of the decadence so visible today in the Muslim world and, though less absurd than the polytheism of old, its social and political tendencies are in my opinion more to be feared, and I therefore regard it as a form of decadence rather than a form of progress in relation to paganism itself.

**Winston Churchill**, a leader of the Allied war effort against Hitler during WWII (1965):

How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism [Islam] lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy. The effects are apparent in many countries. Improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live. A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement; the next of its dignity and sanctity. The fact that in Mohammedan law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property, either as a child, a wife, or a concubine, must delay the final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men.

Lest it seem that these and other historic charges against Islam are simply products of Christian/Western xenophobia that simply cannot tolerate the “other,” it should be noted that many of Islam’s Western critics regularly praised other non-Muslim civilizations, as well as what is called today “moderate Muslims.” Thus Marco Polo hailed the Brahmins of India as being “most honorable,” possessing a “hatred for cheating or of taking the goods of other persons.” And despite his criticisms of the “sect of the Saracens,” that is, Islam, he referred to one Muslim leader as governing “with justice,” and another who “showed himself [to be] a very good lord, and made himself beloved by everybody.”

Winston Churchill summed up the matter as follows: “Individual Moslems may show splendid qualities—but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world.”

Apologists like Reza Aslan can say whatever they want; they can claim that Islam is forever and perpetually “misunderstood”— and can bank on Western ignorance of its own history to get away with it. But fear and dislike of Islam has been the mainstream position among Christian/Western people for nearly 1,400 years—ever since Muhammad started raiding, plundering, massacring, and enslaving non-Muslims (“infidels”) in the name of his god; and it is because his followers, Muslims, continue raiding, plundering, massacring, and enslaving “infidels” that fear and dislike of Islam—what is called “Islamophobia”—exists to this day.