

Why Islamists Persecute the Baha'is

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Ideas and beliefs, including religion, are the software that determines how we behave. And some of the software of the past is no longer working because it is out of phase with the needs of the time as well as infected with destructive viruses.

Even a cursory look is enough to show that the software of Islam, over time, is so greatly manipulated by numberless sects, sub-sects and schools that it can hardly be considered a unitary belief system. And people *are* their ideas. Any assault on beliefs and ideas provokes the assailed to action.

This clash of beliefs, the old versus the new, is the reason for Islamists to unleash their power against the upstart iconoclastic Baha'i faith. In fact, the Baha'is revere Islam and respect all other religions. Baha'i faith has many teachings in common with Islam, so much so that some call it "Islam light," because, while it retains some of Islam's principles, it also abrogates a number of outdated and counterproductive Islamic laws and practices. Baha'is say their faith is not a wrecking ball that aims to demolish the schoolhouse of God called religion: a badly divided schoolhouse where everyone claims to worship the same God, yet keep oppressing, fighting and killing each other in the name of the same God.

Baha'is have a very rosy and possibly unrealistic view of humanity. They say that their goal is for every human being, irrespective of any and all considerations, to be granted all his God-given rights and be allowed to worship his creator the way he sees fit. They have a sort of lovey-dovey vision of the world where everyone will live as a valued member of the larger human family.. Apparently they have hit a responsive enough cord with some 6-7 million people of the world from every ethnic, religious and national stratum. This vision may not convert the remaining 6-7 billion people any time soon, but it sure beats hands down the Islamists' idea to force the world under their so called Ummeh with its stone-age shariah law.

Baha'is believe that God sends his teachers to his school, from time to time with new lessons, to help advance the people to a higher and higher level of humanness. Trouble is, they believe, that people cling to the old school-work and the old teacher and doggedly resist accepting the new teacher and his teachings. Baha'is think of God's prophets as renovators who come from time to time to tear down walls of separation and to bring God's children together in an open-air general classroom out of their own foolishly walled-in

dungeons of exclusivity and ignorance.

Below are some of the Baha'i teachings that clash head on with Islam's and provoke the Islamists to do all they can to destroy the new religion.

* The people of God. Muslims believe that they are the chosen people of Allah and recognize no other system of belief as legitimate. Baha'is believe that all people are the chosen people of God: that there is only one God, one religion of God, and one people of God, the entire human race.

* Pearls on a string. Muslims contend that Muhammad is the seal of the Prophets; that God sent his best and final messenger to mankind, and any other claimant is an imposter worthy of death. Baha'is believe that God has always sent his teachers with new and updated lessons to educate humanity and shall do so in the future. There have been numberless divine teachers in the course of human history who have appeared to various people. They say that these teachers are like pearls on a string and that Baha'u'llah is the latest, but not the last pearl.

* Independent thinking. Blind imitation is anathema to Baha'is. Baha'is believe that the human mind and the gift of reason should guide the person in making decisions about all matters. To this end, they place a premium on education and independent investigation of truth. Baha'is consider the education of women as important as that of men, since women are the early teachers of children and can play their valuable part by being themselves educated. By contrast, Muslims look to religious authorities for guidance and often deprive women of education and independent thinking.

In recognition of the importance of independent thinking, no one is born Baha'i. Once one is born to a Muslim, he is considered Muslim for life. If he decides to leave Islam, he is labeled apostate and, apostates are automatically condemned to death. By contrast, every child born in a Baha'i family is required to make his own independent decision regarding whether or not he wishes to be a Baha'i. Freedom to choose and independent thinking are cherished values of the Baha'is, in stark contrast to that of the closed-minded Islamists.

* Religion or science. Baha'is believe that truth transcends all boundaries. Scientific and religious truth emanate from the same universal source. They are like the two sides of the same coin. To Baha'is, science and religion are as two wings of a bird that enable humanity's flight toward the summit of its potential; that any religious belief that contradicts science is superstition. Muslims believe that their religious scripture and dogma, irrespective of their

proven falsehood, are superior to that of science.

* Gender equality. Muslims hold the view, expressly stated in the Qur'an, that men are rulers over women. Baha'is reject this notion and subscribe to the unconditional equality of rights for the two sexes. This Baha'i principle emancipates one half of humanity from the status of subservient domestic to that of a fully participating and self-actualized human. It aims to put an end to the heartless exploitation of women and demands that women be treated with all due respect under the law.

* Participatory decision-making. Islam, by its very nature, is patriarchal and authoritarian. Baha'is believe in the value of decision making through the practice of consultation; a process where everyone, irrespective of any and all considerations, has a voice in making decisions. This participatory decision-making principle abrogates a major prerogative of Islamic clergy who have been dictating matters to their liking and advantage. Also, at all levels of society, including the family, all affected members have the opportunity, even the responsibility, to make their views known without fear. Baha'i teachings clearly emphasize this commitment to a democratic decision-making in their scripture, "The shining spark of truth cometh forth only after the clash of differing opinions."

* World-embracing outlook. Baha'is love their native countries, yet extend that same love to the entire planet and its people. Baha'is believe that love has no limit and need not have limits. One can love his country and love the world at the same time. This love of the world is frequently used as a pretense by the Islamists to accuse the Baha'is of Iran as traitors to their own homeland. It is for this reason that the present mullahs ruling Iran falsely claim that the Baha'is are agents of the Zionist Israel and its American sponsor.

* Eradication of prejudice. Prejudice of any type is alien to the Baha'i faith and severely undermines its pivotal principle of the oneness of humanity. Prejudice against others is thoroughly exploited by the Islamists. In contrast, Baha'i scriptures say, "...again, as to religious, racial, national and political bias: all these prejudices strike at the very root of human life; one and all they beget bloodshed, and the ruination of the world. So long as these prejudices survive, there will be continuous and fearsome wars."

* Abolition of priesthood. A major point of conflict involves the abolition of the clergy. Baha'is believe that humanity has matured enough that it no longer needs a cast of professional clergy to serve peoples' religious needs. By one stroke, this Baha'i teaching puts hundreds of thousands of mullahs

and imams out of business and arouses the powerful cast of the do-nothing clergy to fight to retain their highly privileged parasitic positions.

It is imperative for the free people of the world to defend freedom of conscience, including freedom of religion, irrespective of one's own personal belief. It is for this reason that as a person who is not a Baha'i, I find it my solemn duty to speak up on behalf of a peaceful people, severely-persecuted by the savage Islamists.