How muslim extremists justify interpretation of quran religion essay

There is often a lack of understanding as to what religion is. How do we define the word religion? Is religion a belief or merely a way of life? " Genuine religion is fundamentally a search for meaning beyond materialism. …A world religious tradition is a set of symbols and rituals, myths and stories, concepts and truth-claims, which a historical community believes gives ultimate meaning to life, via its connection to a transcendent beyond the natural order" (Cited in Cline 2009: Introduction). As Cline has stated here, religion is a set of historical traditions which people adhere by and believe in. The Islamic faith for Muslims is not simply a religion but also a way of life for them and they are strongly attached to their own religion and culture. Some choose for their religion to be a private issue, whilst other prefers it to be the basis of all their social interactions. Muslims consider Islam to be a structure that takes in all aspects of life, both personal and social and it is a social, as well as legal system which governs matters such as family life, law and order, ethics, dress and cleanliness, as well as religious practice and observance (Hussain, El-Alami. eds., 2005: 1). Muslims follow their traditional system however, the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks have had a large impact on how society see and treat Muslims and the Islamic faith, when in fact these extremists committing these offences are a minority group hiding behind certain banners under the veil of Islam.

It has become apparent over the past decade that Islam seems to be a more militant faith than most others. Some people have been lead to believe that this is due to the Holy Scripture which holds all the laws of the Islamic religion, known as the Qur'an. However, the Islam faith is very diverse and varied and although many things in the Qur'an apply to mostly all Muslims,

there are many other things which only apply to a minority group of Muslims, those who take their faith and inaccurate interpretations of the Qur'an to the extreme. In order to establish why these Muslims take their faith to the extreme, it is essential that the various verses from The Qur'an and the diverse justification of Jihad are firstly discussed.

Jihad is a key problem in Islam as the meaning has many different interpretations. Jihad can be interpreted by some Muslims as the spiritual struggle against his or her own natural nature in order to lead a holy life (Bonney: 2004: xi), but for other Muslims like Osma Bin Laden, it may be interpreted as violent and extended to mean a commitment to Allah by all Muslims, to constantly strive to convert, defeat or overcome all non – Muslims. Those who believe and follow the latter interpretation of Jihad, believe it is their duty to persist with the preaching's of Islam through holy war, in an unjust way until the whole world accepts Islam or concedes to the Islamic faith. Bonney (2004: x) specifically states that those terrorists like Osma Bin Laden use an ancient, unfounded and misconstrued view of the Islamic perception of just war (Jihad) to exonerate their actions. The word Islam actually implies the meaning of peace and tolerance, but this reputation of Islam is being dented due to this wrongful interpretation of Jihad.

Islam is a faith which believes that religion is to be freely accepted and by no means should be forced upon anyone and this is evident through many verses throughout The Qur'an. The Qur'an (26: 4) states that God wants people to choose their path themselves and does not at any point instruct any Muslim to raise a sword over a non – Muslim in order to convert or

subjugate them. In another verse from The Qur'an, it explicitly defines: '
Invite people of the path of your Rabba with what? With forces of the sword?
No. With beautiful admonitions and advice' (Qur'an: 16: 125). From this
verse it is clear that many Muslim leaders, who have viewed Jihad as violent
and as an obligation on individual believers with intent to destroy religious
peace and pluralism in the name of Allah, are incorrect. There are many
more verses within The Qur'an which specify that Islam's idea of Jihad is not
the idea of a holy war which these terrorist leaders have claimed it to be.
With The Qur'an containing many verses stating the importance Islam gives
to peace, (Qur'an: 4: 128) it signifies that the soul of Islam is in fact peace;
again not war.

Researchers such as Cook (2000) and Waines (2003)(cited: Bonney: 2004:
47) as well as many others, both come to the same conclusion, that Jihads
fundamental nature is that of defence, not war. Al-Qaeda claims to preach
peace yet it also praises violence. The violent actions which are carried out
from Al- Qaeda have resulted in innocent people being murdered and it has
claimed to have been acting out in self defence against the imperialist
intrusions of the West, but yet it approves suicide bombing. Suicide bombing
is actually disobedience against established Muslim teachings.

According to The Qur'an, the world is divided into two categories; believers
and non-believers and it repeatedly states that the believers together form
one people and the non-believers together structure another, (Bonney: 2000:
8) as in ' the believers are brethren of one another and those who disbelieve
are friends of one another' (Qur'an: 8: 72). This verse again is promoting
peace and differences in belief are seen as Gods plan, it does not indicate

that any Muslim should linger everlastingly at war with any nonbelievers but, for the world to be aware of Muhammad and his teachings, preaching is to be done. It is may be this verse in The Qur'an that Jihad ' in the name of Allah' may merely mean a peaceful struggle through preaching's.

These rigorous and strict actions of Muslims who take their religion to the extreme have drawn attention to certain divisions within Islam known as Wahhabism and Salafiyya. Saudi Arabia is the birth place of Wahhabism and it is puritanical form of Sunni Islam. Saudi Arabia has always relied on a mixture of religion and political power. Its origins date back to the eighteenth century when an Islamic fundamentalist and extremist, Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab introduced a religious, political movement in agreeance with the local tribe chief, this was known as Wahhabism. The essential aim of Wahhab's reform movement was that every idea after the third century of the Muslim period should be abolished as it was false. For a Muslim to then be considered true to their faith, they must commit themselves exclusively and exactingly to the innovative beliefs set into the world by Muhammad. Ultimately, he encouraged a reinforcement of the original, pure and orthodox customs of the " fundamentals" of Islam, as characterised in the Qur'an and in the life of the Prophet Muhammad. Today the term Wahhabism refers to a Sunni Islamic movement that pursues to cleanse Islam of any modifications or practices that diverge from the original teachings of Muhammad and his cohorts.

The surfacing of Wahhabisms stern beliefs has resulted in conflict between other Muslim groups. As Wahhabism rejects Islam's most prominent religious traditions, Wahhabi's have found themselves in disagreements with non-

Wahhabi Sunni Muslims, Shiite Muslims and non-Muslims in surrounding areas resulting in war.

Since the attacks of September 11, 2001, the media have been inclined to centre their attentions on movements within the Muslim world that support and carry out acts of violence against other human beings and populations. The media refer to these terrorists by their religious group, but in fact these terrorist are hiding behind their religion, using the excuse that ' Allah' or God tells them to act in this way. This is not necessarily true, as mentioned before the Qur'an promotes to live to a peaceful and coexistent life and it also has commandments and beliefs which are similar to the Christian community and The Bible.

Those Muslims within the Islamic world who are dynamically working for peace, interreligious dialogue, minority rights and much more are overlooked. Organisations which are set up in order to reject violence are also disregarded yet such organisations and movements are the key to motivation and loyalty which inspires many Muslims throughout the world. These Muslims are moulding the foundations of the outlook and apparition of Muslims, and points in the correct direction that the majority of the Islamic community should be heading for. Those Muslims who participate in acts of violence and terrorism are isolated minorities within the Islamic faith, but this still tends to reflect of Islam and Muslims as a whole, with non-violent Muslims being judged unfairly and negatively by society.

Since the 9/11 attack, many Muslims have received increased discrimination and racism by the rest of civilization. What people fail to understand is that

these terrorist attacks were in fact carried out by a minority group of individuals who hide behind Islam as a faith to justify their violence by using a misinterpretation of the Qur'an. High levels of discrimination and racism are evident in schools were many Muslim boys are being stereotyped and associated with global terrorism, fundamentalism and urban rioting, resulting in them being identified as under-achieving and problematic pupils and they are becoming hot topics of social and educational debate (Archer: 2003: 2). Muslims are in fact against terrorism, yet the acts of the terrorists cause the rest of society to naturally tarnish the rest of the Muslims wrongfully, with the same brush because the media and politicians refer to the terrorists by religious standing. It could be argued that these terrorists are extremists who are passionately seeking political power and wealth and it has been noted here that Muslims face complications not just within education, but also everyday life. Muslims are afraid to have their own say in politics as they feel discriminated against as a community as a whole (Banchoff: 2008: 5).

In conclusion, it is evident that jihad is a complicated occurrence in both theory and practice. Throughout the history of Islam, there has been no single concept applied to the meaning and there have been different definitions resulting in how jihad is practiced. It is also evident that Islam places a huge importance on peace and how one strives to lead the correct way by the will of God, and if need be, defend oneself. The minority group within Islam have taken this concept of defence to aid their own national interest and used it as to justify their violent actions, at the cost of the rest of the Islamic population. Islam has a genuine image of advocating peace and

tolerance as well as the free will to choose your own faith, but they do believe in striving to preach in the name of Allah whether it is by pen, mouth media; yet again the extremists mentioned here use armies and violence to force their religion upon anyone. It does not mean to strive for individual, political or national power.

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