

I will provide the link to the entire article at its conclusion.

Beheading and Religious Profiling

By Aloysious Mowe

In April 2008 Jean Pierre Orlewicz was convicted in Michigan for the murder of Daniel Sorensen. The latter was stabbed, and then beheaded. Harrel Johnson was convicted in October 2008 for the murder of his step-daughter, Erica Green, in Missouri. The 3-year-old child was decapitated with hedge-clippers. In the same month, William Perry was indicted for the beheading murder of Brett Smith in Ohio. In Canada last July, Vince Weiguang Li stabbed and then beheaded a man on a Greyhound bus traveling from Edmonton to Winnipeg. Six months later, Virginia Tech student Haiyang Zhu was accused of decapitating a fellow student, Xin Yang.

In none of these cases was the beheading of the victim blamed on religion or ethnicity as a factor. But wait. Surely the last two instances of murder should set off all kinds of alarms: it must now be a truth universally acknowledged that two men of similar ethnic origins beheading their victims must be in want of an ethnic profiling.

Why did the news pundits not alert us to the custom of beheading as capital punishment in China? ... If Aasiya Hassan had been murdered with a gun, or by some other means other than beheading, her death would have been treated as just another murder. The manner of her dying, however, dredged up all the fears and fantasies about Islam that now pollute our consciousness. Beheading has become part of our cartoon-strip understanding of Islam.

... Our conversation about domestic violence should not be about Islam as such. There is nothing intrinsic to Islam that cultivates misogyny and spousal abuse. Rather, we should be asking how patriarchal cultural attitudes seek refuge and justification in all religions.

The 141st Southern Baptist Convention in 1998 declared that a wife "is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ", while it is the husband's role to "lead his family", and love his wife "as Christ loved the church". The Convention also spoke of the equality of husband and wife "before God", but this claim reads like a formulaic and ultimately empty add-on. If men are like Christ, and women are like the Church, then they can never be equals. The relationship between Christ and the Church can never be one of equals: we worship Christ as God, the source of all life and salvation. The Pauline analogy of husbands mirroring Christ and wives mirroring the church has within it the seeds of much in theology and church discipline that is sexist and misogynist.

The attitudes that men have towards women are formed very early in their development. We are socialized within our families, in our church communities, in our schools. If Catholics are told that only men can be, for sacramental purposes, in persona Christi, standing in the place of Christ at the Eucharist, are we seriously meant to believe that this does not lay down the germ of an idea, namely that women are inferior to men, even in the order of God's grace? If all the discernment and

decisions that affect women in the Church are made only by celibate men, are we to conclude that this has no effect at all on the attitudes of Catholic men towards women?

I have had the dis-edifying experience of living with a fellow Jesuit priest in Malaysia whose standard explanation for the behavior of any woman who disagreed with him or who had the gumption to stand up to his tyranny was, "She must be having her period." As far as he was concerned, women who questioned his God-sanctioned authority were simply irrational victims of hormonal rages. Was this attitude fostered by the male clerical culture of the Catholic hierarchy? Absolutely.

The sin of clericalism, however, is a choice, and not an ineluctable consequence of being a Catholic priest. Similarly, Catholic men may read St Paul, or the latest Vatican instruction against women priests, and yet come away unconvinced that socially-conditioned notions from 2 millennia ago have the force of divine will.

It is fortunate that we are able to learn from history rather than just repeat it. The sins of clericalism and sexism in the Catholic Church and other Christian churches are neither inevitable nor inescapable. Christians do not see our history as destiny. It is only prejudice and ignorance that stands in the way of our extending the same courtesy to Muslims.

... This crime should alert us to the way cultural attitudes take on religious garb to hide the ugly truths of patriarchy and male violence. There is not one line in the Quran or Islamic law that justifies so-called honor killings, and yet certain Muslim communities continue this barbaric tribal practice. Jesus gives women an honored and privileged place in the Gospels, and yet the Jesuit parish in Malaysia has no girls in its altar-servers society because the archdiocese in which it is situated does not allow girls at the altar. This is not religion, but idolatry: instead of an active seeking for the God who questions all our certainties, we put in God's place our compulsions and our violence.

Religious leaders must take up the challenge to root up from their traditions all vestiges of the subjugation of women to male caprice and violence. We cannot allow our history to become our destiny.

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http://newsweek.washingtonpost.com/onfaith/georgetown/2009/02/beheading_and_religious_profil.html

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