

Articulating an Islamic Liberation Theology: A Scriptural and Historical Analysis

Much the rhetoric around revolution has been framed around the exclusion of religion and religious thought. When religion is included, it is largely framed around Christian liberation theology and the life of Jesus. What this paper hopes to expose to a Western audience is the strong tradition of liberation theology within the Islamic faith. The paper will begin with a presentation of Islam as a revolutionary faith. By drawing on the Holy Qur'an, the traditions and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad and the symbol of Husain's martyrdom, this paper will show that the spirit of revolution is deeply embedded in the Islamic tradition. Besides my own interpretations, I will be drawing on established scholarship for their interpretations including Ali Shariati, Hamid Dabashi, Malcolm X and Moulana Bhashani. This portion of the essay will also include how this liberation theology can be applied here in Canada, specifically in terms of building alliances with indigenous peoples, opposing pipelines and fighting government corruption and oppression.

The second portion of the paper will be devoted to the historical background of Muslim revolution and rebellion throughout the past 1,400 years, focusing on three major rebellions in the Muslim world: the Abbasid Revolution in 750, the Zanj Slave Revolt in Iraq in the 9th century and the various revolts and revolutions throughout West Africa from the 17th to 19th century. These are the most relevant Muslim led rebellions for the subject of Islamic revolution since none were directed against a non Muslim power but instead against the power structure within their own societies. This shows that these revolutions, while using the language of religion in order to fight against oppression and exploitation, were also authentically Islamic since none of them were influenced by Western ideas and are a symbol of self criticism in the Muslim world. The paper will conclude with a brief analysis of the current situation of Islamic liberation theology and the challenges for the future, both in Canada and across the Muslim world.