

Religious Humor

Contributed by Alan
Monday, 02 July 2007
Last Updated Monday, 02 July 2007

Ever since I graduated college, I have done my best not to make jokes at the expense of people's religions, it's waaaaaay too easy, plus it's usually hurtful to the religious person (though they'd never show it) and it's also counter productive to the cause of rationality. That being said, I have never been able to get over the humorous things done and said by the devout. In order to pontificate and try to be "consistent" and whatever else their moral selves try to be, they can be far more debasing and heretical than I could ever be...and I've tried. With this in mind, I was fortunate enough to watch an episode of Frontline the other day (the segment can be found here). The episode was about a comic book called "The 99" which features Muslim heroes, 99 of them, and, as I understand it, the 99 is a reference to the 99 attributes of Allah, which, it seems, matters a lot to Muslims.

Within the segment they have some guy named Prof. Abdulla Al-Ghanim, who, I guess is a fundamentalist Islamic cleric somewhere who is interviewed in order to represent "the opposition" in the segment. In his effort to be morally pure, protect the youth and whatever else that type of person tries to do, he makes the following statement in his critique of "The 99" which is a COMIC BOOK. "Prophet Mohamed says you have to believe in god who can help you. In this comic I have to believe in individuals who can help me. This is (a) very strong contradiction." Let's be clear here, Wolverine killing the Hulk is a very strong contradiction. But the "contradiction" that this guy finds, is just good humor. For example, I would never state or imply (in mixed company) that someone's religion is comparable to a comic book. That's the type of thing I might think, but just wouldn't say. Sure, I may think that the distinction between religion and fiction is no distinction at all, but I would never say or imply it (again, in mixed company). But the fundamentalist guy clearly implies both! For what it's worth, I don't hold things like traditions, religions or archaic moral codes in very high regard, but out of politeness and respect for an individual's dignity (not his ideas) I would keep my mouth shut. But when this cleric comes right out and puts his holy book and lifelong devotion on the same footing with a comic book I start thinking "Does this guy have any regard for his own religion? Does he not have respect for the other Muslims in the room? Either way, he must have been reading my mind." Furthermore, if I were to make that statement it would be heretical and offensive (to Muslims) and, if I were in the wrong place in the world when I made it, I would be rather afraid for my well being. But when this guy does it in that same part of the world he's a leader and a scholar.