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The Terrorist and His Porn Stash

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The news that a huge stash of digital pornography had been discovered on the computers taken from Osama bin Laden's compound was big news, but it should not have been a big surprise. As Scott Shane of *The New York Times* reports, the discovery "could fuel accusations of hypocrisy against the founder of Al Qaeda, who was 54 and lived with three wives at the time of his death."

Well, he would hardly be the first married man caught with a porn stash, but in this case, Osama bin Laden had repeatedly accused the United States of immorality, with specific reference to pornography and sexualized images.



In 2002, bin Laden released a 'Letter to the American People,' in which he attacked American sexual mores. In his words:

"Your nation exploits women like consumer products or advertising tools, calling upon customers to purchase them. . . . You plaster your naked daughters across billboards in order to sell a product without any shame. You have brainwashed your daughters into believing they are liberated by wearing revealing clothes, yet in reality all they have liberated is your sexual desire."

There is considerable truth in his criticism of America's sinfully-sexualized and pornography-drenched culture, of course. Americans should be humiliated that we are known for such cultural exports to other nations. And yet, it turns out that the terrorists who denounce America for its depravity allow themselves pornography — and sexual entertainments.

At least some of those directly involved in the September 11, 2001 attacks had visited sexually explicit entertainment services just days before the murderous events.

What are we to think of this? Hypocrisy is nothing new, and we are prone to revel in it when seen in others. But there are larger lessons. For one thing, those who commit themselves to asceticism and denial in order to earn or supposedly deserve God's mercy and favor almost always allow themselves some sinful enjoyments. As a recent study of dieters revealed, those who put themselves on a rigorous food diet often allow themselves other satisfactions — an expensive new dress, a few more hours of television . . . or worse.

Christians are called to holiness, not to asceticism for the sake of asceticism. The Gospel reminds us that we do not deserve our salvation and that there is nothing we can do to deserve it. Bin Laden and his associates must have been convinced that Allah would forgive them their sexual sins because of their faithfulness in carrying out acts of terrorism in the name of Islam.

Christians had better see this as a warning lest we allow ourselves the same kind of rationalization. The porn stash in Abbottabad is not only a symbol of Osama bin Laden's hypocrisy — it is also a warning to us all.

I am always glad to hear from readers. Write me at mail@albertmohler.com. Follow regular updates on Twitter at www.twitter.com/AlbertMohler

Scott Shane, "[Pornography is Found in Bin Laden Compound Files, U.S. Officials Say](#)," *The New York Times*, Saturday, May 14, 2011.

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