

DCBULL by ARTHUR L. EKREM

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### **MUSLIM VS. CHRISTIAN CANT WE ALL JUST GET ALONG?**

Thank you for joining me again at DCBULL, and do we have a hot topic.

No disrespect intended – but “HOLY CRAP” what an issue we have to kick around this week – Muslim vs. Christian? Cant we all just get along?

I found myself torn between several topics this week as I pondered relevant information that is meaningful to all of my loyal readers here at DCBULL.

I was faced with the normal drudge of BULL we all wake up to each day, you know the drill – topics like, let’s kick around the President, or dissect the economy, there is always health care to bite into, and of course we can always discuss the war against terror.

But not now – today we will look for a little gold nugget in the relationship between Muslims and Christians.

I think one of the most challenging issues facing our society today is good vs. bad, Christian vs. Muslim, Muslim vs. Christian, man vs. man.

Until we define this issue or at least come to accept the human relationship, we will remain at a stalemate and wars will continue to rumble.

I want to say to my readers upfront, that I have no answer to the questions or concerns posed to you in this article. So read with a mind towards your own thoughts and ideas and let me hear from you.

This past Sunday I found myself away from the madness of Washington D.C. politics. It was just another Sunday except I chose to sit in on an open forum and dialogue that was hosted by an extremely well versed Dr. of Theology – the topic? What Muslims and Christians want to know about the other? Good Lord almighty, what a fun topic on a Sunday morning! Just when I thought I was free from politics on a Sunday, I was pulled back in.

The forum was comprised of the moderator and two panel members who were articulate and well spoken. One a Christian Missionary and the other a Muslim Professor. The first panel member is an American Missionary currently living in Egypt. The other panelist is a leading advocate for Muslim and U.S. relations, as well as a respected college professor. Together the two men would share an open dialogue as to their respective point of spiritual view and world order.

On topics of this nature, I must admit that I am a very hard sell. You are not going to teach this horse any new tricks unless you lasso me around the neck and kick me in the teeth. However, as I sat in the gallery of 120 or so people, I found myself temporarily persuaded to accept the concepts both men were presenting. Each man spoke with ease, and based much of their conclusions on factual data. As compelling as each of their arguments were, and as compelling as their spiritual beliefs were, I

found myself challenged by the reality of each man's opinion.

I am grateful to live in a country where open dialogue is welcome to between Christians and Muslims, especially after the events of 9/11. From the time I was a very young man I was drawn to the Bible, the Qur'an, and the teachings of Buddha. I experienced great comfort from the teachings of each of these sacred texts. Yet at the end of the day, like most Americans I returned to my traditional Christian roots.

Herein lies the rub between the Muslim and the Christian. It hardly seems fitting that a God who created all the magnificence of this earth, would exclude so many - to favor only those who believe a certain way. Yet at the end of the day, that is what each religion teaches. As I listened to these men share their positions on Christian and Muslim faith, I was reminded of the countless trips I have taken around the world where the wars were fought in the name of Islam or Christianity.

On one hand the missionary from America who now lives in Egypt. He is there because he believes solemnly that Jesus Christ is Son of God - that Jesus was sent to forgive us for our sins so we might obtain eternal salvation. While on the other hand we have the Muslim Professor, who believes that God is accepting of all mankind, and that we share one God with a common salvation - kind of?

Of course there are specific sets of rules and guidelines within each of these doctrines that set each apart from the other. I observed this forum to be a time of acceptance and sharing from the Missionary and the Muslim. However, I was still left with a sense of dissatisfaction. The Christian Missionary is living in Egypt so that he can help convert the Muslims according to God's will. While the Muslim professor is living here in America in order to present the Muslim side of the story - so that we can be accepting and/or believe in the Muslim faith.

My conclusion - each side sees the other as wrong. And if not wrong, one side would argue that they are going to heaven and the other side is not - not an easy game we are playing here is it?

The day ended with each party accepting each other, but silently implying the other was wrong - even though those words were never spoken. Herein lies the great spiritual division that creates such great dissatisfaction in the world. This dissatisfaction is then funneled to our leaders who have historically led us to war.

As human beings, we find it very difficult to accept another culture, their way of life or their differing practice of faith. This is especially true when we perceive their beliefs to be in opposition to our own. Or worse yet, if we perceive them to be a physical, emotional, or spiritual threat to our well-being and our way of life.

### **COMMON THOUGHTS OF 9/11**

- When we think of 9/11 we think Muslim
- When we think of 9/11 we think Middle East
- When we think of 9/11 we think revenge, war, fear

When I think 9/11 I feel immense sadness. In my years here on God's green earth, I've interacted with most every culture that God has created. Here is what I have discovered to loosely quote from The Diary of Anne Frank - "I have found a little bit in good in the worst of people and a little bit of bad in the best of people, but in the end, I still believe all people are good at heart".

So either God made all of us, or he made none of us!

I have found as much camaraderie among the Muslims as I have amongst the Christians in my travels. I stood outside of the Pentagon the morning of 9/11 with a mass of observers and hugged a Muslim taxi driver as we both cried and watched the building burn. On that day he and I were one in spirit.

The United States had a defining moment during the 9/11 attacks - a massive line was created right down the middle of the world, as it had never existed before. Some in power say that it will be very difficult to ever go back and undo the damage done that day. While others see it as the beginning of a new tomorrow for all of the earth's inhabitants towards healing. As for me, I will get back to you on this topic as it evolves - because sadly, I do not think our world is done with wars yet.

As long as there is division amongst mankind there will always be dissension, and where there is dissension there will be anger, and where there is anger there will be war. In the world that I live in, I've seen far too much war, I've seen people die, children and civilians taken as hostages, and countries divided. It is hard to see God's fingerprint in all of this madness, but I do believe it is there.

In a conversation with a friend over the last couple of days, we discussed the difficulty of harmony between Christians and Muslims. We talked about whether or not the two sides could ever agree to disagree - or at very least accept one another without the eventually of war. He asked me if I thought it was a possibility - and I said I thought it was - he agreed.

While I believe in the concept of world peace, I have never seen it materialize in the world I live in. I have only experienced spiritual and political division that creates hatred and anger. So while I have hope for peace amongst Muslims and Christians - I guess I remain skeptical, but hopeful.

For those of you reading my DCBULL column over the last couple of years, you already know that I firmly believe that both political parties are dying in the United States. In the coming years, it will no longer be the Republicans vs. the Democrats - and may not even be Republican vs. Democrat vs. Independent. I envision a new political order falling into place where common sense and values will once again be considered primary for survival. Maybe this will also apply to the relations between Muslims and Christians.

Are we witnessing a time in history when man will seek a more peaceful solution for a better tomorrow? You may say BULL CRAP Arthur, that sounds rather trite and pie in the sky or overly hopeful? I say - maybe!

When society can no longer function with any sort of harmony or order - we will lose the ability to prepare for tomorrow. In the media saturated world we live in, it is impossible for any event or activity to take place discreetly. Take for instance this jerk of a pastor in Florida who was to stage a burning of the Qur'an on 9/11 in the

name of his God. It actually took the leaders of our Nation (Generals and the White House) to back this one-man hate show down from the ledge. To make matters worse, a New Jersey auto dealer is giving this same pastor a new car, as it was promised to him if he did not stage the burning of the book.

I was astonished that an event such as this could gain worldwide attention – yet it did. For weeks the news outlets around the world monitored this event. Worse yet, was the tension it created between Muslims and Christians, and the potential for harm it brought to our military men and women abroad.

Most Christians maintain that they have the exclusive on ramp to God via salvation through Jesus Christ. While the Muslims maintain that Jesus Christ was not the son God and he is not the way to salvation.

It is the goal of many that the Muslim and Christian agree. But what if the two sides did agree? Would this not then erode the very tenants of each party's historic religious belief? Would this not eliminate the need for labels like Catholic, Methodist, Jewish, Muslim, etc? And the most important issue is simply this - one burning question, is this what each of our religious cultures really wants?

Do we really want one creation, one people, one God? History thus far has said no.

I guess only God knows for sure.

### **A New Plan for Afghanistan Less counterinsurgency, more killing and capturing.**

President Obama spoke far to soon when he promised he would end the war effort in Afghanistan during his "Yes We Can" run for the White House. But it turns out, "No He Can't"!

His policy is now mirroring guess who? That's right, George W. Bush. You see it turns out that President O has discovered the need for the soil we occupy in Afghanistan, and has decided - Oh what the hell, lets keep it after all.

Officials say a shift in back to previous U.S. war strategy has begun to take place in Afghanistan, away from counterinsurgency (protecting the population, providing basic services, promoting good government) and toward the traditional business of killing and capturing bad guys.

### **(SEE MY OCTOBER 4TH ARTICLE ON THE CIA AND THE WHITE HOUSE IN THE DCBULL ARCHIVES)**

Hence the huge increase, just in the last three months, of military attacks—by drones, aircraft-launched smart bombs, and special-operations forces on the ground—against Taliban soldiers and, in many cases, specific midlevel Taliban leaders.

As for the timing, President Barack Obama has repeatedly said that his much-publicized deadline of July 2011 will now mark only the beginning of a U.S. troop withdrawal from Afghanistan and that the scope and pace of the pullout will be determined by conditions on the ground. Still, it's clear that domestic support for this war is winding down. Some senior White House advisers (though just some) are

seeking any excuse for an exit. In any case, the time needed for success the White House says is another six to 10 years, or more, the strategy's most avid supporters estimate—is seen as politically unsustainable.