

Dear Friends, Feb. 6, 2006

We knew we had to tackle the subject of the Danish Cartoons yesterday at Speaker's Corner, and as could be expected, Emmanuel and I got quite a reaction to our challenges, to the point of being punched and spat upon.

Yet, here is the rub...I get up on the ladder every Sunday and question the validity of Allah, I criticize the Qur'an, and critique much of their theology and history, yet when I questioned the anger against the cartoons on Muhammad yesterday, the vitriol came pouring out, accompanied with visceral hate, similar to what we witness on our television screens around the Muslim world...all because of these few cartoons, which are neither good, nor serious. Reactions such as these almost suggest they have elevated their prophet above that of their god, ascribing him more honour...which smacks of 'shirk' (equating someone or something with Allah), the unforgivable sin.

What's more, this widespread and violent over-reaction makes it difficult to take seriously their claim that Islam is a religion of peace, a mantra repeated monotonously daily in our media. Even the more moderate and level-headed leaders of the UK Muslim community, though they don't support the violence against the Danish editors, nonetheless make it plain that they understand the anger behind those who do...and then hold the Danish editors responsible for the violent actions of the Muslims around the world!

I compared the call for censorship, coupled with the violence of our placard carrying Muslims, with the more peaceful Christian reaction to BBC's showing of the 'Jerry Springer Opera' (where a gay Jesus is paraded in diapers). Yet, for the Muslims surrounding our ladder, this confirmed that Christians are weak, whereas Muslims are strong. They then reminded me that on Friday even our timid Metropolitan police refused to arrest any Muslims carrying the threatening placards, despite a law, having been passed on Tuesday, making such acts illegal.

Does this not suggest an increasing 'clash of civilizations', one where Islam cannot, nor ever will be, able to assimilate with our Western, Liberal, Democratic environment, an environment in which Christianity has and will continue not only to assimilate, but, hopefully, continue to make a moderating impact on its more debilitating excesses?

Curious to know what you think?

Jay Smith
www.debate.org.uk

