

July 2007

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A Sudden Rash of “Firsts”

I do not suppose an infidel, or any such person, will ever be chosen to any office unless the people themselves be of the same opinion.
—Richard Dobbs, Signer of the Constitution

Although he will host his seventh Iftaar dinner this fall, President Bush is following the lead of former First Lady Hillary Clinton. In 1996 Mrs. Clinton invited Muslim leaders to celebrate *Eid-ul-Fitr* (the close of Ramadan) at the White House. But Mr. Bush does take credit for being the first administration in U.S history to place a Koran in the White House library. America is experiencing a lot of firsts lately.

Diwali, the Hindu “festival of lights,” is also new on the official list of White House observances. During his 2004 re-election bid, Mr. Bush had indicated to Indian leaders that he would do his best to open the White House to the “mosaic of America’s multi-racial society.”¹ Not to be upstaged, the U.S. Senate invited Hindu chaplain Rajan Zed to deliver the Morning Prayer on July 12. In a statement preceding his appearance, Zed called the occasion, “an illustrious day for all Americans and a memorable day for us.”²

Another “memorable” day occurred in March when U.S. Rep Pete Stark (D-CA) acknowledged that he is the highest ranking elected official in America who is a card-carrying atheist. Although probably not the first at the congressional level to be a committed “non-believer,” he is certainly the first to be proudly “outed.” Perhaps, before long, an Atheist will fill the morning time now allotted for prayer in both houses of Congress. Since Washington is open for business to many gods these days, why not no god?

The god that seems to be sweeping through political circles at the moment is Allah of Islam. Followers are achieving levels of influence unknown, if not unthinkable in earlier times.

In 1991, Charles Bilal became the mayor of Kountze, Texas. He was America’s first Muslim mayor. In 1992, Islamic lecturer and imam, Siraj Wahaj offered the first Muslim prayer at the U.S. House of Representatives, followed by Muslim cleric Warith Deen Mohammad in the U.S. Senate in 1993. That same year, Captain Abdul-Rasheed Muhammad became the first Islamic chaplain in the U.S. Army. Since 1998, the Pentagon has been hosting Iftaar meals for Muslims on active duty and employees of the Department of Defense.

In 1996, Denver’s new international airport became the first in the nation to include a mosque next to its chapel, and, since 1997, a crescent moon and star representing Islam is displayed alongside Christian and Jewish symbols on White House grounds at Christmas. Muslims are even hoping to gain recognition of *ul-Fitr* as a federal holiday. That effort could be aided by Keith Ellison (D-MN) America’s first Muslim elected to Congress and the first to place his hand on a Koran during a swearing-in ceremony at the start of this year.

Many Muslims believe that America will one day serve Allah only, claiming Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world. That is not true. While Islam is the dominant (involuntary) religion in third-world countries, mostly by virtue of local birth rates, it continues to lag well behind Christianity in terms of real “converts” and total adherents.

That it has taken 400 years for Islam to manifest to any degree in America is a testimony both to God's hedge of protection and the fact that previous generations have understood the First Amendment, and, even more, have revered the FIRST COMMANDMENT.

Following World War I and the collapse of the Ottoman Empire, a huge wave of immigrants from the Muslim Middle East simply made many Americans uneasy. As a result, a law was passed to place limits (quotas) based on the national origin of foreign-born immigrants to America in 1890. The effect was to slow Muslim immigration to a trickle during the 1930s. But as many of those living in the United States began to realize their dreams of returning home probably would not be fulfilled and that they needed the support and structure provided by their families, they began to lobby for new immigration measures.

In the early 1960s, Islam began to put down roots in America as Christianity came under challenge in the courts and Malcolm Little, a/k/a Malcolm X, aggressively recruited disillusioned African-Americans for his *Nation of Islam*, a Black separatist movement. Malcolm gained even broader appeal in 1964 when he returned from a pilgrimage to Mecca a Sunni Muslim. Among famous "converts" to Islam in 1964 was Cassius Clay, the world's popular heavy weight boxing champion. Clay announced that he was changing his name to Muhammad Ali—"beloved of Allah."

A few months following, President Lyndon Johnson sponsored an immigration bill that repealed the long-standing system of quotas by national origin. "After 1965," says Jane Smith, a professor of Islamic Studies at Hartford Seminary in Hartford, Connecticut, "immigration from Western Europe began to decline significantly, with a corresponding growth in the numbers of persons arriving from the Middle East and Asia." Smith says more than half of the immigrants to America from these regions have been Muslim.

Is Islam more insidious than other false religions? Maybe not, but it poses an imminent threat. Practitioners in other cults are not currently blowing themselves up in public places, or flying airliners into our skyscrapers. And, more significantly, Ezekiel 38 confirms the intent of a certain group of nations—each Islamic or leaning at the moment—recorded more than a thousand years before the birth of Mohammed. It would seem that a world leader with understanding should have a distinct advantage over other world leaders, and a steady hand in foreign policy decisions.

To the extent that America grew from a "planting" in Jamestown to the most prosperous people in history would not surprise the founders. Employing Christian principles—they could envision none other. But they also knew it would be possible for non-Christians to rise to power. Founder Samuel Johnston acknowledged that Mahometans, pagans or other non-Christians could be elected to high office if "the people lay aside the Christian religion altogether" or if such men "acquire the confidence and esteem of the people...by their good conduct and practice of virtue..."³

As to the variety of religions parading through the White House, it should not be so. Thomas Jefferson wrote...*lex majoris partis is the fundamental law of every society of individuals of equal rights*. The majority rules! In other words, believe what you want, influence as you will. But when the votes are counted, the matter is settled. If an atheist becomes president, don't expect an Easter sunrise service on the White House lawn.

Can it really work that way? Ask the first 41 presidents.

Rick Forcier

¹ Press Trust of India, [Diwali celebrated in White House](#), 11/11/2004, Expressindia.com

² Nathan Burchfiel, [Hindu Prayer Will Open Senate Session in July](#), www.crosswalk.com/news/11545475

³ David Barton, [Original Intent: The Courts, the Constitution and Religion](#), WallBuilder Press, Aledo, TX, 2000, pg.34,35