Subject: "Now we\'re talking" - October 22, 2006 - davidwarrenonline.com

>
> SUNDAY SPECTATOR
> October 22, 2006
>
> Now we\'re talking
>
> An extraordinary thing happened a week ago. Thirty-eight Muslim scholars
> and chief muftis, from across the Muslim world, jointly replied to the
> Pope's speech at Regensburg (and more have associated their names with
> this document, since). It was presented to the Vatican's envoy at Amman;
> the full text in English is available through the Islamica magazine
> website, the Catholic website, Chiesa, and elsewhere. I look through the
> list of signatories, and they are a "who's who" of the learned leaders of
> a faith that has always aspired to be led by its most learned.
>
> One of the points the Pope has made, about the difficulty of engaging in
> dialogue with Islam, is to know who speaks authoritatively for it -- as,
> for instance, the Pope can speak for Catholic Christians. The document
> answers that question. In effect, the signatories reply, "Here we are."
> Here, for Muslims as well as Christians to read, is an authoritative
> contemporary statement by men who DO speak for Islam. Not for "moderate
> Islam", whatever that could mean, but for the living religion itself. And
> they speak in forthright contradiction of the welter of idiotic fatwas
> issuing from Afghan caves, the Sunni Triangle, and the North London
> Central Mosque.
>
> And the significance of what they said went beyond -- far beyond -- being
> a formal reply to the Pope's remarks at Regensburg. Truly with reason and
> restraint, they defend the honour of the Islamic faith as it has come down
> through 14 centuries of interpretation and experience -- that faith in its
> breadth, and not in the narrowness of postmodern psychopaths, trying to
> reconstruct the conditions of 7th-century Arabia.
>
> The signatories renounced and condemned violence against Christians in the
> name of Islam. They accepted without qualification the Pope's
> post-Regensburg clarifications, and both accepted and applauded his call
> for dialogue. They unambiguously denounced and rejected all terrorist
> interpretations of the word "jihad"; they insisted on the priority of
> Surah 2:256  of the Koran ("There is no compulsion in religion"), stating
> explicitly that it is not obviated by later Koranic passages or Hadiths.
> They went so far as to aver that the declaration of Jesus in Mark 12:29-31
> expresses the essence of all Abrahamic religion -- Muslim, Christian,
> Jewish.
>
> That is Mark's version of the Gospel message that there are "two great
> commandments". The first is to love God with all thy heart and soul and
> mind; and the second, to love thy neighbour as thyself. (And please,
> secular humanists, note the order in which those commandments are always
> given: first God, then man.)
>
> The signatories agree with the Pope that the dialogue between Christianity
> and Islam must be founded in reason. They admit, just as Christians admit,
> there are limitations to human reason, for what is divine goes beyond what
> humans can know. But what is divine is not incompatible with reason, and
> within the sphere of human relations, between peoples who do not confess
> the same faith, reason is the only sound guide.
>
> This does not mean that violence is forsworn in all circumstances. As the
> Muslim signatories note, Jesus himself violently turned the moneychangers
> out of the Temple precincts. But reason itself determines when violence is
> the only appropriate defence against unreason.
>
> Islam is thus, in the words of 38 of its most qualified living exponents,
> not merely "a religion of peace", but more essentially a religion of
> love -- of love, from and for the one God we all worship; the one true
> Lord we know by His works, and who is Love in all His actions. For what is
> done in hatred cannot be done in God's name, and will always be false
> religion.
>
> Now take this in. In a moment of increasing worldwide violence and
> tension, Pope Benedict XVI issued a call, echoing his predecessor
> John-Paul II, for a real dialogue between religions at the highest level
> of reason. And authoritative spiritual leaders of the Islamic umma
> responded favourably to this, and declared, in a fine, noble, and open
> spirit: "Let the dialogue begin!" This is news of very great significance.
> It should have been the top headline in every newspaper in the world.
>
> But our media -- West and East -- report this, when at all, as some kind
> of sidebar on the terror war; as if the Muslim leaders had merely accepted
> an "apology" from the Pope for having hurt some Muslims' feelings.
>
> This is why we have religions. Because journalism cannot tell us what we
> need to know.
>
> David Warren
>
> © Ottawa Citizen
>
>
> For an archive of David Warren's newspaper columns, see:
> [http://www.davidwarrenonline.com](http://www.davidwarrenonline.com/)
>
>
> ----------------------------------------------------------------------
> Daily jokes, funnies and clean humor won't let you get bored under any
> circumstances. <http://www.zinester.com/Humor-/>
>
> Archived Issues: <http://archives.zinester.com/14807>
> RSS Feed: <http://archives.zinester.com/14807/rss.xml>
> Update Profile:
> <http://www.zinester.com/cgi/l.cgi?hantonides@sympatico.ca&K7w7pXAbW5zUS4COaqfDew>