
An Islamic Political Party?

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Proposals to form a separate political party for Moslems in Britain have alarmed many people. Such a move would affect the Labour Party which currently enjoys support from Islamic groups. If Moslem voters take an independent approach it is said that the seats of Mr Roy Hattersley, the Deputy Leader of the Labour Party and member for Sparkbrook, Birmingham and Mr Jack Straw, spokesman on Education and member for Blackburn would both be vulnerable.

From a Christian perspective, the dangers are acute. Islam is making determined inroads into British community life, including schools and local government. Their presence here is legitimate but the nature of their religious commitment is bound to erode the Christian heritage of the community. Because of our views concerning the dignity of man, we cannot deny to Moslems and others the right to citizenship and social political equity. An Islamic political party, however, would create an imbalance that, given time, would rob our land of religious freedom.

The common ethical and social norms of the community should be represented by all political parties. Liberties are to be protected and standards upheld impartially but this should not permit sectarian dominance. It is true that we are nominally a *Christian* country but newcomers argue that this is an unrealistic concept in what has become a pluralist society. There are many ordinary citizens who still value the *Protestant Ethic* which has given structure to our community life. Great difficulties arise, however, in appealing to Christian principles for our practice when the vast majority have, in reality, forsaken the faith of our fathers. Those principles provided the foundations on which our society was built and are gifts of stability to be treasured. To permit the founding of an Islamic party because we believe Moslems should be free to do so could ultimately lead to a different form of social order here, one in which that very freedom is restricted.

Part of our heritage is the inalienable right of a man to seek a relationship with God according to his understanding and conscience, even when others disagree with his convictions. This is one of the great *Atlantic Freedoms* and safeguards individuals from being persecuted. The cost of preserving the freedom for a Baptist Church to remain in a community is liberty for the Roman Catholic Church and also the Islamic Mosque to remain. This does not give us the right to impose our views on others by compulsion but it does mean that we can expect our basic freedoms to be defended by those appointed to political office. If there was an Islamic party these freedoms would be under substantial threat. It is alleged that the *Salman Rushdie affair* has spearheaded this proposal, although the pursuit of Islamic political power has long been cherished. Many Christians sympathise with Moslem concern over the book *THE SATANIC VERSES*, not out of sympathy with Islam itself but because the moral outlook of the story is questionable and they count it

a disgrace for the convictions of any group to be treated with such contempt.

The matter of our British blasphemy law is a further issue. An extension of the law to include Moslem beliefs would give some the opportunity to turn these laws viciously upon the Christian faith. **Basic freedom is found nowhere in the Islamic world.** Go to Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt or the Gulf States and try to evangelise and you will be arrested on the streets. If an Arab becomes a Christian he is branded a criminal and often imprisoned. Christian believers are harassed in matters of employment and personal liberty just because of their faith; church services, where they exist amongst ex-Moslems, are held in secret. There is some profession of religious tolerance in Moslem lands but this amounts only to permission for Europeans to have their churches whilst Arabs are strictly excluded.

An Islamic party would be expected to give directives that their candidate should receive the vote of every Moslem; if the votes returned did not tally then a witch hunt, with reprisals, might well ensue. It is quite likely that Moslems will find allies in other ethnic groups in Britain. Provided religious issues can temporarily be pushed into the background, the grievances of others from overseas might be championed. The proposed party would seek support from the non-European communities in the land, irrespective of religious conviction.

It is the avowed intention of Islam to proselytise Britain. Strategic advances have already been made politically, socially and commercially. Indeed, it has been publicly stated that the proposed political party will be funded by foreign Islamic leaders. The Islamic fingers are in place for the strangle-hold on *Christian* Britain. To the Moslem, Jesus is a figure to be respected. This often leads naive Christians to think that some kind of unity with Islam is possible. In Moslem eyes, however, Jesus is not the Christ, nor is he Saviour. Jesus is merely the final prophet in the succession leading to the advent of Mohammed. He is not the Son of God, neither did he die on the cross (another was substituted, probably Judas). There is no common ground between Islam and the Christian gospel. There may be ethical similarities, or some common ideals, there may be certain Scriptures which both revere but in the essential consideration of absolute allegiance to our Lord Jesus Christ, there is such contradiction that all grounds for unity are removed.

By definition every Moslem is committed to the *Jihad* or Holy War. This is a 'cold' war in the West but, given political power, the Moslem would be required by his religion to kill those who ascribe 'partners' to God (ie the doctrine of the Trinity) and to exact tribute from Jews and Christians unless they submit.

It would be unthinkable for Islam to gain political power in a nation and then to use that power impartially. To Islam, the pursuit of governmental authority is a religious quest and the key to proselytising Britain. As Christians we need to safeguard the foundational principles of our society. We should insist on the impartial administration of civil liberties and the preservation of those basic religious freedoms which current events show already to be at risk.

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