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Christians and Muslims Response to 9.11, Two Years Later

September 11, 2003

Letters to the Editor
The Beaumont Enterprise

Dear Sir:

It is September 11th. Even more than the date of the assassination of JFK, this day is etched into America's soul. At many levels and in many venues, we have all responded to 9/11 over these past three years. That process continues, as today's *Enterprise* indicates. Two articles caught my attention: "Muslims point out that they are also Southeast Texans," and "Atta's Father Offers Denials and Defiance." On Sunday, another article appeared which addressed these issues.

Recently, my wife and I attended a funeral at the local Mosque. As we shared the grief of friends who had suddenly lost a loved one, we realized that though our customs are different, our commitments to our families are not. My wife and I were welcomed kindly. We did not participate in the Islamic prayers. As Christians, who believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He is the only way to salvation, we observed respectfully those who believe differently and who pray differently exercising their faith. I also observed several receptacles for offerings. One was for the relief of the poor and for charitable acts. This is not unlike the "poor boxes" which are also in Christian churches.

As my Muslims friends prayed, I prayed. I prayed for peace and for understanding among men and women of different faiths. In my prayer, I celebrated the acts of worship of my Muslim friends, even though I do not embrace their faith and even though I could wish that they were all Christians. It does not do injury to my faith or beliefs for me to respect their faith and beliefs.

Muslims are indeed Southeast Texans. They are making a living here and they are making a life here. They are unlike us in many ways, and in the ways they are not like "us," they give us the opportunity to prove our character by our receiving and caring for and about them. As Southeast Texans, our Muslim friends must demonstrate their character by vigorously and vocally opposing the excesses of those who distort the Islamic faith with violence.

As we oppose terrorism, we must not do it self-righteously, for our history is stained with acts of violence against innocent African-Americans, American Indians and others. As we oppose terrorism, we must do it with the humility borne of our own humanity and our own history and frailties.

As our Muslim friends face their future as part the culture of their adopted homeland, the United States of America, at this time in world history, they do so with, "The painful truth (that) all the world terrorists are Muslims." These are the words of Abdulrahman al-Rashed, general manager of Al-Arabiya television. In his daily column, published in the pan-Arab *Asharq Al-Awsat* newspaper, Al-Rashed said, "Most perpetrators of suicide operations in buses, schools and residential buildings around the world for the past 10 years have been Muslims...Muslims will be unable to cleanse their image unless we admit the scandalous facts."

At the moment of His greatest Personal peril, Jesus Christ refused to allow His followers to use violence to defend Him. He rebuked Peter for drawing the sword and striking another. Sadly, misguided, supposed followers of Jesus have employed violence in the past, and even at present, in their commitment to a distorted view of being a Christian disciple. Muhammad taught peace and rejected attacks against the innocent. Yet, misguided, supposed followers of the faith he founded employ violence in their commitment to a distorted view of being a Muslim.

As Christians humbly and vigorously oppose terrorism, Muslims must aggressively do the same. And whether it is Christians in Ireland and Lebanon rejecting violence as a political and/or quasi-religious method, or Muslims in the Middle East, together the faithful followers of Jesus Christ and the faithful followers of Islam must with one voice declare forever that violence, terrorism and murder of any one, and particularly of children, is a sin against God and man. And, they must declare that the perpetrators, supporters and financiers of such will find safe haven neither in America, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, or any other civilized nation on earth.

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