

Prologue:

The following letter was written in early October as a response to the video posted on YouTube by Acts 17 Apologetics. Prior to posting this letter, however, we attempted to contact the members of this ministry in person in order to make them aware of our concerns and to ask them to correct the misleading implications of their video. Specifically, we were concerned with the unspoken, yet very clear implication given, that all Christian witness had been expelled from the Festival. After multiple attempts to speak with them by phone, we finally did make contact in early November. Two of us had lengthy conversations with them, and our concerns were clearly transmitted. However, in the two months since, they have apparently not come to share our concerns, preferring, it would seem, to defend their ministry and promote their agenda.

Let it be clear: our purpose in posting this letter is NOT to condemn or repudiate brothers or sisters in Christ. Nor is it in any way to serve as advocates for the city of Dearborn, though we are intent on being responsible members of our community. Rather, our purpose, indeed, our only concern, is to lift up the name of Christ and serve his Kingdom. His Kingdom is never served when we promote false impressions...or allow them to linger on once they have been exposed.

Response to Acts 17 Apologetics' "Special Report: Shari'a in the United States"

by

Concerned Followers of Jesus in Dearborn

Over the last several months, there has been a growing national furor sparked by a video posted online by a group called Acts 17 Apologetics. The video – “Special Report: Shari'a in the United States” – claims to show evidence of the slow creep of Muslim Shari'a law into the public domain of American life. Filmed during this year's Arab-American Festival (June 19-21) here in Dearborn, this film features Nabeel Qureshi and others from Acts 17 Apologetics as they purport to engage in a public defense of the Christian faith and to expose the errors of Islam. At the end of the video, Nabeel Qureshi and David Wood are shown in confrontation with the private security guards hired by the Arab-American Festival. The very clear impression created by this video is that Acts 17 Apologetics was being forbidden from sharing the Gospel of Jesus and from openly challenging the errors of Islam. The message? Islamic Shari'a is spreading in the heart-land of America – Dearborn, with its large percentage of Arab-Americans, is the Nexus of Islamic subterfuge in America.

We want to be clear as to why we are taking this opportunity to address this issue: it is not in any way to defend Islam. As it so happens, we believe that an honest, open discussion and evaluation of the teachings of Islam has been hindered in this country, in large measure because of the political correctness that has captured and enslaved the intellectual centers of learning and the arena of public debate. Any honest, open evaluation of ideologies and systems of belief has been rendered impossible, sacrificed on the altar of tolerance and relativity. Anyone who would dare engage in such honest discourse is branded a bigot, guilty of our day's worst heresy – Intolerance!

So, let it be clear, we are not critiquing Acts 17 Apologetics on the basis of intolerance or because they were standing up to proclaim truth and expose falsehood. Our concern is that they have simply presented a contrived and false image of the actual situation here on the ground in Dearborn. That they were in conflict with the security guards had more to do with how they set out to provoke a reaction than it did with actually sharing the Gospel or refuting error. The words of the Apostle Peter (1 Peter 4:15) are clear and very applicable to this situation:

“If you're abused because of Christ, count yourself fortunate. It's the Spirit of God and his glory in you that brought you to the notice of others. If they're on you because you broke the law *or disturbed the peace*, that's a different matter...” The Message

As ones who have been active in sharing our faith unashamedly with Muslim and non-Muslim, it seems to us that filming yourself as you share the Gospel – or even as you attempt to correct error – is the last thing a genuine witness for Christ would do!

Back in 1 Peter 3:15-16 (NIV) Peter gave us this exhortation:

“But in your hearts revere Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.”

This exhortation is very clear: Do not be ashamed of the Gospel! Do not be timid in sharing with others the hope that you have in Christ! We would suggest that the intent of the Apostle’s words go even further: Don’t be afraid to boldly speak the truth and expose falsehood! But – and this is vitally important and to the present point – Peter goes on to add the following injunction that is often (as in this case?) ignored:

“But, do this with *gentleness* and *respect*, keeping a clear conscience, so that those who speak maliciously against your good behavior in Christ may be ashamed of their slander.”

We are concerned that, rather than following Peter’s injunction to share Christ and the hope that they have in him with gentleness and respect (thus provoking shame in others for how they may wrongly respond to that witness), Acts 17 Apologetics has actually brought shame to the name of Christ because of the spirit with which they conducted themselves during the Arab-American festival in Dearborn this year.

Friends, there is not at this time any overt operation of Shari’a law in force here in Dearborn. Those of us here on the ground will keep close watch! And we are committed to speaking truth. No, what we had was a group visiting our city with their own agenda, painting a picture that is neither accurate nor one with which other evangelical leaders here in town would concur. In actual fact, there is a spirit of openness here in Dearborn, with many opportunities to make Christ known clearly to our Muslim friends and neighbors. As evidence, we would simply reference the number of very openly Christian booths at the Arab-American Festival this year. Two examples will perhaps suffice:

- ◆ Directly opposite the Muslim booth where Acts 17 Apologetics attempted to film their conversation with a man regarding a tract his group was distributing, another booth being manned by the pastor of the Arab Alliance Fellowship of Dearborn was openly sharing the Gospel with passers-by. While it is the Festival’s policy to grant each organization only one booth, they graciously provided the Arab Alliance Fellowship with, not 2, but 3! Over the course of the three days of the conference, they distributed \$10,000.00 worth of Gospel literature.
- ◆ Nearby, at yet another booth, Josh McDowell* was autographing copies of his latest book, The Witness! In total, he distributed 3600 of these and gave out several thousand copies of More Than A Carpenter.

Regrettably, you would never have known this from watching the video posted online by Acts 17 Apologetics.

Here at our churches in Dearborn, we are unapologetic about our message that Jesus Christ is the Word of God Incarnate – that he is God’s answer – the only answer – for the multiple problems that afflict our world today. We will never short-change the Gospel, nor will we be silenced by the prevailing winds of political correctness that would have us exchange the “love of God” for the mere “tolerance of man.” But we do the Gospel no service when we cloud the issues by inserting a contrived hostility into our witness – stoking feelings of fear when we should be fanning the flames of Christ’s love.

It is ironic that, though Acts 17 Apologetics believes they have taken a courageous step towards protecting us from “the slow creep” of Islam into the public domain of American life, they may actually have, by their artificial and contrived confrontation, inoculated the American public to it, should it come.... One should only cry “Wolf!” when the wolf is real.

*See Josh McDowell’s video on Youtube: “Dearborn Arab Festival: Sharia Love in the USA”
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cIH1F7KGWnY&feature=player_embedded#

*Please see his letter of appreciation to the city and the Arab-American Festival organizers.
<http://joshmcdowell.blogspot.com/2009/07/special-news-bulletin.html>

October 20, 2009

Signed,

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Demetrius J. Jones, Jr.; Pastor - Dearborn Christian Fellowship
Bret Abdullah; National Day of Prayer Coordinator
Haytham Abi Haydar, pastor of Arabic Alliance Church
Michael W. Em, Sr. Pastor Dearborn Free Methodist Church