

CRAWFORD  
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COMPANY



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**THE STAND**  
**FREE SPEECH**  
**MUSLIM CARTOONS**

They raised a furor, these supposedly slanderous cartoons did, when they appeared in the Scandinavian Press some months ago.

The cartoons dealt with what the cartoonists called: MUSLIM HYPOCRISY

The cartoons were satires, sardonic in nature, critical and of course confrontational. In one real sense, the cartoons were disrespectful, and in others, rude and demeaning. The cartoons attacked terrorism. They sardonically portrayed wonton killing, murder, even to the point of showing severed heads. The cartoons further portrayed Muslim extremists forcing, with weapons, cartoonists to draw as they ordered. Worst of all, at least according to Muslims, the cartoons slandered and demeaned the Prophet Muhammad and Islam itself. One cartoon even sardonically, and at least indirectly, accused the Prophet Muhammad as being a terrorist himself!

Small wonder that the Arab world and the world of Islam were offended. They demanded cessation of all such cartoonists activities and retribution, including apology, firing or muzzling the offensive cartoonists and even the demand of a promise by the media to never engage in such activities in the future. So much for freedom of the press and free speech!

Satire, pun and playful attack is a fundamental part of the modus operandi of the American press and media generally. That is also true, by and large, in Europe as well. We Americans are used to satire and even attacks on things sacred. Sacrilege and blasphemy are so commonplace they seldom arouse an angry reaction.

Take Christianity for example. It is nothing anywhere to attack Christianity, the church and even Jesus Christ himself. Jesus Christ, rather than the revered Son of God, is often reduced to nothing more than a bizarre exclamation, a slanderous indifference to the holy, and even blasphemous to the extreme. Blurting out the words "Jesus Christ" is normal in the dialogue of those who do not believe or love. Our media thinks nothing of attacking or disrespecting Christianity whenever an occasion arises, including personal prejudices and preferences. Christians are mocked, as are basic Christian tenets and beliefs. The disrespect and disregard are rampant. We are for the most part immune to all such, and we as Christians can hear the name of our Lord taken in vain, and do or say nothing.

And the same with Judaism. The great God Jehovah YHVH, can be slandered and blasphemed with impunity. Combining the word damn with the precious word God is so much a part of our vernacular, such a common curse word that when we hear it, we seldom react. No matter the insult to Jews, or Christians for that matter, that is vocabulary in America and in fact around the

world, commonplace and most unfortunately accepted. Press and media get away with anything. God and Jesus Christ are fair game.

But, not so with Islam and the Muslims. They take their faith entirely seriously, and they react angrily and passionately when Allah, Muhammad, or any sacred institution, being or tenet is attacked, satirized or disrespected. In the extreme, the offender, an individual which extreme Muslims term the infidel, can be fair game, even killed with spiritual justification. More moderate Muslims will react passionately and angrily, and demand the offending behaviors cease and desist and that full retribution and restitution occur. They will not tolerate the blasphemy of their sacred faith. As well they should not!

### BUT NEITHER SHOULD WE!

The media of course backs down, apologizes and is severely reminded that all such offending behavior should not occur again. That is so with Islam, but not so with Christianity or Judaism. We are dealing, if the cartoonists are right, not only with Muslim hypocrisy, but with a much greater MEDIA HYPOCRISY. If it is disrespectful and wrong to satirize or blaspheme Islam, than it is every bit as wrong to satirize or blaspheme Christianity or Judaism. Consistency however never mattered to the media. Only the sensational does. It was undoubtedly great fun, and a cheap and easy way to attack extreme Islam by drawing such cartoons and the written copy that accompanied the drawings. Draw them, publish them and disappear as all writers can, at least until they are found out and exposed. The media thrives on the anonymous. So many editorials never identify the individuals involved who create the copy. Sources used are often anonymous, and information from these anonymous sources published, whether or not it is factual and true. Small wonder that newspapers everywhere face critical financial problems for lack of subscriptions, readership and advertising. The same so often with television news and public affairs programming. The information published is often trivial, biased, often deeply prejudiced, and in some cases (see Dan Rather) downright fabrications. When media resorts to slant, or spin, or personal prejudice, it destroys value completely and it should be ignored, or even in some extreme cases, done away with.

Christians and Jews should learn a lesson from the Muslims. When anything anti-Christian or anti-Semitic occurs, we should stand the ground, protest passionately and resist, and do whatever is possible to protect and defend the faith which guides our lives. Many Jews are vigilant and sensitive to anything anti-Semitic. But many are not. Some Crustaceans in the minority are extremely sensitive to things anti-Christian, but most Christians are not. Hence, the media has a field day publishing anything they wish no matter how negative or hurtful. That will continue until we the people of faith stand up and demand that such offense cease and desist.

All that having been said, our Constitution guarantees free speech no matter how offensive. It is the right of the newspaper to publish any words they wish provided that such words are not libel or slander, and nothing or no one should prevent them from doing so. No matter how offensive, it is their right, their Constitutional right to say and publish what they please. I believe that strongly. I believe it is the right of the cartoonists to satirize Islam and the Prophet Muhammad under the freedom of press and free speech guarantees of our incredible Constitution. I champion the right of the cartoonists to author and publish these cartoons. On the other hand, I personally find them offensive, disrespectful, in poor taste and even blasphemous. I would argue

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with them against such cartoons, I would economically boycott the newspapers, and I would challenge the underlying assumptions of the cartoons. I would do the same for any cartoons which would satirize Christianity or Judaism. But, I would champion their right, whoever they are, to publish what they believe even to the point of publishing these offensive cartoons. For after all, if for any reason these disseminators of information are prevented from doing and publishing what they wish as a form of free speech, the day will come when something you or I would wish to publish or say could also be prevented, and that of course would be the end of free speech. If a Christian believes that Jesus Christ is the only way of salvation, publishing or preaching that philosophy is offensive to Islam and Judaism. Someday, if offensive speech is prohibited, Christians might be prevented from publishing and proclaiming what they believe if secularists, atheists, Muslims, Hindus, Jews or any other religion or philosophy is prevented in any way from publishing or proclaiming what they believe. So says our Constitution. Infringe upon the absolute and unconditional right to free speech at your peril. Today, the ox of someone else may be gored. Tomorrow, that ox may be yours.

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