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“Sir Salman Rushdie”

by
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"I am thrilled and humbled to receive this great honor, and am very grateful that my work has been recognized in this way," So said the latest Knight of the Realm, Sir Salman Rushdie upon conferring of his knighthood from Queen Elizabeth, II at Buckingham Castle. In days of yore the receiving of Knighthood usually meant one had learned the arts of fighting dragons and less fiery opponents, which meant, basically anyone who was a danger to the throne. Requirements for ancient Knighthood included the mastering of non-knightly weapons such as, specifically, the bow, two handed weapons, javelin and pike. Other battle oriented requirements were in place as well, such as not being too hasty in jumping into a fray where one was outnumbered.

For those of you who know the name, Salman Rushdie, you will know that his weapon is as un-knightly as one can get... the mighty ink pen... or possibly the mighty word processor since Sir Salman received his Knighthood for his service to literature. Sir Salman is a writer born into a Muslim family in Bombay, India in 1947 to a successful businessman and his wife. Rushdie was educated in England at Rugby School and Cambridge University and worked for an advertising agency in London before beginning his serious writing career in his late 20's.

His style of writing is to take an historical situation, then satirize and fictionalize it in order to make a political statement. In 1988, at the age of 41, Sir Salman wrote a parody of the Muslim Prophet Muhammed entitled "The Satanic Verses," that so inflamed the Islamic world that he had to hide out under police protection for the next decade. The Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini was so offended by the work he put out a death contract for several million dollars on Rushdie's head. After the death of Khomeini the sentence of death for Rushdie was lifted by the Iranian government and he was able to enter the world of the living again... almost.

Because of his recent Knighthood conferred by the Queen, the peace loving Muslims have once again called for the head of Sir Salman and organized demonstrations against the Queen and Rushdie broke out throughout the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan. Pakistan's Foreign Minister, one who should know better, was in Washington for talks with our administration and condemned the "insensitivity" of the British nation and its Queen for giving such an honor to one who so "vilified Muslims worldwide."

After burning an effigy of Queen Elizabeth and shouts of "death to Rushdie" in the streets of Punjab, Lahore, one of the Cabinet Ministers of Pakistan, rather than making an effort to encourage fellow Muslims to restrain themselves and head off trouble, was quoted as saying "the Knighting of Salman Rushdie could justify suicide bombings." Throughout

the Muslim culture cries for the Queen to rescind Rushdie's Knighthood are heard and threats of continued violence fill the airwaves of Islamic controlled TV and Radio stations.

To think these Muslim demonstrations and cries for death and destruction throughout the world are random and philosophically inspired or motivated is hogwash. It also should show to those who are capable of thinking clearly that rational talk and negotiations will not work with factions such as these and our target for change should be the Imams and Clerics who are perpetuating this extremism with radical teaching for their own personal and/or religious domination.

To think there is no organized threat from extremist Muslim factions in the United States is not only hogwash it is also dangerous. If polls are to be believed, and many times they're not, a recent poll of American Muslims, both native and foreign born, showed that 26% of Muslims between the ages of 18-29 felt that suicide bombings were justified to protect one's faith. Considering that America now have between 5 and 8 million Muslims living within its borders that number correlates into approximately 1.3 to 2.08 Million Muslims who believe that suicide bombings are an acceptable tool in protecting the name of Muhammed. To me that speaks clearly that there is a real and present danger existing in our midst that should be monitored and examined closely and not written off as insignificant. This is more than a radical few.

Other countries polled show similar results among that same age group: Britain had 35% approving suicide bombing; France - 42%; Germany - 22%; and Spain - 29%.

Thankfully 72% of all Muslims in America do not think suicide bombing is acceptable but having 26% to 28% of them believing otherwise should raise a few antenna on the heads of those responsible for our country's security.

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