The Impact of Islam on the U.S.

An introduction

BY JOHN VINSON

Islam is an issue of growing interest and concern to people in Western nations. More and more, this faith is making its presence felt in the West, and for good reason many Westerners feel uneasy as that presence manifests itself in various spheres of public life. This issue of *The Social Contract* will explore the question of Islam with particular reference to its current and potential impact on the United States. The common theme is that the U.S. should limit Islamic influence, particularly with an immigration policy geared to restrict Muslim immigration.

All writers for this issue are aware that such a position is controversial, at least in terms of how the powers-that-be of America define controversy. No doubt our writers will risk the powers' accusation of "racism," their standard reaction when immigration reduction of any kind is suggested. In this case the charge will be all the more ludicrous, given the fact that Islam isn't a race, but a multi-racial religion.

That notwithstanding, one can count on the critics to push on with their outrage. They will, as they have often done, label criticism of Islam and proposals to restrict Muslim entry as bigotry, hate, discrimination, demonization, intolerance, and all the other common bully words of politically correct vituperation. They will maintain that most Muslims are moderates and ordinary human beings who simply want the good things of life that most people do. Thus to single them out for exclusion is nothing but crass prejudice.

The proper reply is that the character of individual Muslims is not the issue, but rather the character of the religious ideology they profess. Specifically, it is quite appropriate to inquire as to whether Islam tends to inspire beliefs and behaviors which are incompatible with the kind of society we want as Americans. This is a

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legitimate intellectual pursuit, one necessary for setting sound policy.

It is certainly true that many people who espouse questionable ideologies often rise above the negative teachings of their creeds. But it's also unavoidable that such creeds will greatly influence and motivate at least a significant minority of their adherents. And throughout history it has been clear that determined minorities can effect great change, either for good or evil.

Polls show (see page 33) that a large minority of Muslims now living in the U.S. endorse values and objectives at odds with those of most Americans. As it is likely that the innate character of Islamic ideology increasingly will reveal itself if the number of Muslims in the U.S. continues to rise, it is crucial to determine just what that character is. The writers of this issue have done so with sober reflection on the scriptures of Islam and the legacy these texts have inspired. Their conclusions deserve a hearing in the court of public opinion. ∎