

Devotion for Arab-American Month

It has been written about the Arabic civilization that it “carried the light of learning through so many centuries, paving the way for Europe’s Renaissance and Enlightenment. ...”^{*} “Nothing in Europe could hold a candle to what was going on in the Islamic world until about 1600.” Algebra, algorithm, alchemy, alcohol, alkali, nadir, zenith, coffee, and lemon: these words all derive from Arabic, reflecting Islam’s contribution to the West.”^{*}

And that ingenuity continued with many of the Arab folks who immigrated to the U.S., beginning in 1880. The early migration came from Lebanon and Syria, both having a strong component of Eastern Orthodox Christianity. There was also a contingent of Arab-Jews from these areas. The first, second & third generation of Arab-Americans were extremely instrumental in furthering the growth of industry, business, education, civil rights, medicine and entertainment in the U.S.

The “golden eras” of several civilizations have passed: Egyptian, Chinese, Indian, Arabic. “It is important to keep in mind that the decline of scientific activity is the rule, not the exception... While it is commonplace to assume that the scientific revolution and the progress of technology were inevitable, in fact the West is the single sustained success story out of many civilizations with periods of scientific flourishing.”^{*}

I’m of the mind that this success in the West is a result of the conglomerate of nationalities that have played into it: a mixture of different ethnicities, religions, traditions and other factors. St. Paul was a major proponent of combining different peoples. If he had gone only to the Jews, would the Gentile world have known about Jesus? Remember his words from *1 Corinthians 12:12-31 - Unity and Diversity in the Body*. Verse 12: “Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body,...” This analogy can extend to our nation as well.

Our country is strong because of its diversity, not in spite of it. God created all peoples and many of them have blended into American society to make us who we are today. Many have forgotten (or perhaps never knew) of the many contributions of other cultures to enhance our lives today. We need to be building relationships with all kinds of people so that we can learn and be wiser and stronger.

PRAYER: Lord, help us to embrace those with differing traditions; differing languages; differing religions. Our lives are so much more enriched by our relationships with folks who are willing to share their lives with us. Help us to do the same. Help us accept without judgment. Help us to love as Jesus loves. Amen

^{*} <https://www.thenewatlantis.com/publications/why-the-arabic-world-turned-away-from-science>