



A MOSQUE AT GROUND ZERO WHAT'S WRONG WITH THAT?

By Albert James Dager

UNDER THE CONSTITUTION of the United States, and according to the Bill of Rights and virtually every federal and state law, lies the principle of freedom of religion. Although the vast majority of the founding fathers of this republic identified with Christianity and/or the God of the Bible to some degree, they recognized that governments must act benevolently toward all of the nation's citizens regardless of religious beliefs. Only ancient Israel, as a theocracy guided by God's prophets, could legitimately legislate against false religious practices.

In 2009, Sharif el-Gamal, chairman and chief executive of Soho Properties, bought a site, 45 Park Place, near Ground Zero on which he proposed to build a large mosque which could accommodate 1,000 to 2,000 Muslims in prayer. With the aid of Feisal Abdul Rauf, an American Sufi imam who in 2003 founded the Cordoba Initiative to build relations between Islam and other religions, el-Gamal embarked on a campaign to build Park51, a Sufi Islamic community center two blocks from Ground Zero.

Almost from the beginning, and for several years to the present, there has been a large and passionate debate as to whether or not the city of New York should allow the 13-story mosque/community center to be built close to Ground Zero where the World Trade Center was destroyed by Islamic jihadists on September 11, 2001. The planned site for the mosque was occupied by a 152-year-old building that was struck by debris from the World Trade Center attack. Opponents of the mosque sought to have the building preserved as an historic site. But on August 3, 2010, New York City's Landmarks Preservation Committee voted against preservation, opening the way for construction of the mosque. New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg applauded the decision, saying, "We would betray our values and play into our enemies' hands if we were to treat Muslims differently than anyone else."



The next day, the American Center for Law and Justice (ACLJ) founded by Pat Robertson, filed suit to block the construction of the mosque. ACLJ represented a New York City firefighter who survived the attack.

Many Christians and Jews have been actively protesting the mosque as an affront to the memory of the 9/11 victims. They do not wish to consider any difference between avowed peaceful Muslims and the radical elements of Islam that fomented that attack.

Some people have become near violent in their expressions. At the height of the controversy a crowd gathered around two Egyptian men near the site who were speaking Arabic, shouting at them, "Go home!" and "Get out!"

As it turned out, the two men, Joseph Nassralla and Karam El Masry, are not Muslims, but Egyptian Coptic Christians who work for a Christian satellite TV station called "The Way," based in California.

They said they had come to New York to protest the building of the mosque.

In spite of Nassralla's protest, "I'm a Christian," the crowd had become so menacing that NYC police officers had to rescue the men. "I flew nine hours in an airplane to come here," Nassralla said.

This sad incident demonstrates how irrational people can become in the face of passionate issues.

On the other side are many Christians and Jews who wish to exhibit goodwill toward Muslims and insist that not all Muslims are responsible for the attack. After all, they say correctly, under the guarantee of freedom of religion the government must not stand in the way of any religious group that wants to build a structure for worship. That is why in some areas there stand in close proximity to Christian churches Jewish synagogues, Buddhist shrines, Hindu temples, Islamic mosques and sundry other religious structures.

For the most part the adherents to these varied religious traditions co-exist peacefully, and even, in this present age of ecumenical goodwill, co-mingle in inter-faith worship services. However, according to zoning laws, city governments do reserve the right to determine where houses of worship may be built. The area for the planned mosque allows for worship centers.

Apart from engaging in interfaith services, exhibiting goodwill toward those of other religions is how it should be for believers in Jesus. Our Lord has not commanded us to treat as enemies those bound by false religion. On the contrary, we are to love them and to share with them the good news of God's love demonstrated in the giving of His only-begotten son to die for our sins:

But God commends His love toward us, in that, while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Regardless how repugnant false religious practices may be to us (they are all the more repugnant to the true God), we are not to disparage those who engage in them. At the same time, however, we are to resist the propagation of false religion where we are given the opportunity to do so. But our resistance must not take the form of violence, hatred, or antagonism toward those caught up in unbiblical religion; it must take the form of spiritual warfare. Our weapons in that spiritual warfare are the Word of God and prayer, as well as overt resistance and education through the presentation of spiritual truth and facts that bear on the issues. We love those who resist the truth, but we are also to confront them with the truth, and/or with facts that may hinder their progress in propagating their spiritual error.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write to you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith that was once delivered to the saints. (Jude 3)

This applies to dealing with spiritual error both inside and outside the Body of Christ.

Unfortunately, it is now fashionable within so-called "Christian countries" to not only forego contending for the faith, but to acquiesce to spiritual evil. Out of a misplaced sense of goodwill and community spirit, Christians go beyond passive acceptance, and actively engage in the defense of spiritual error.

As a result, militant proponents of spiritual error are emboldened to push all the more to impose themselves upon the populace. And among all the world's religions, none comes close to Islam in attempts to impose itself upon the generous nature of those whose sense of fair play compels them to acquiesce. No other religion than Islam has as a mandate from its founder the subjugation of the entire world to its philosophy by any means. No other religion wages active warfare upon nations in the name of its god. And no other religion builds monuments to its conquests.

That's not to say that other religions haven't attempted these things to some degree. Witness the early years of the papacy and the resulting Dark Ages. But whereas Roman Catholicism had to face the reality of the Protestant Reformation and tone down its designs on world conquest, at least for the present time, Islam

from its inception until the present day has been engaged in active warfare against one nation or another. Its hatred for the "Christian" West compels its advocates to stand on the side of Islam in deference to citizenship.

Yes, true believers in Jesus also stand on the side of Christ in deference to our earthly citizenship. Jesus' Kingdom is not of this world; we are merely pilgrims in whatever nation the Lord has placed us. The difference is that we are not called by our God to overthrow our nation and impose God's Word upon its citizens. Our task is to be witnesses of Jesus Christ, calling out of the world those who would willingly obey His Word. All others we leave for God to deal with however He sees fit. In the process we are to expect persecution and tribulation from the world, against which we are not to resist.

The debate over the construction of a mosque at Ground Zero should cause us to reflect on just what the Lord expects of us. We should make distinctions between how we see this issue as believers in Jesus, as opposed to how we see it as citizens of the United States of America.

Yes, our citizenship is in Heaven, but the Lord also expects us to be true to our citizenship on earth. We are to obey government; we are to honor magistrates; we are to see our land first as a missionary field, second as our temporary dwelling place on earth. As good citizens we recognize that nations have the right to defend themselves against the aggression of other nations or ideologies that seek to conquer them. We also recognize that nations rise and fall at the behest of God. A nation that turns to evil He will cause to be brought down. Although we recognize how this nation has turned from the true God and our Savior, Jesus Christ, we do not know that God has abandoned it yet. So we continue to warn the brethren of impending calamity, while at the same time contending against the inroads of the enemy.

That is why we must address this issue regarding the proposed mosque near Ground Zero.

First, the attack on the World Trade Center was at the least allowed by God, perhaps as partial judgment against the United States for its sin in turning away from His Word that He has so generously made available to us. That attack may be the first truly serious inroad of jihad against the United States. We must not think for a moment that this event transpired without God's knowledge and permission.

Second, it's true that there are many Muslims who are not militant, but are Muslims in name only, just as most Christians are Christians in name only. These Muslims were truly devastated by the 9/11 attacks, and oppose militant jihad.

Third, there are few Muslim leaders, including Muslim clergy, who are not sympathetic to some if not all the aims of the jihadists. One would be hard pressed to find a Muslim cleric who would not like to see Israel driven into the sea, or to see Sharia law governing all nations.

Fourth, world conquest is and always has been the goal of true Islam, regardless how many individual Muslims may be so in name only. The problem is that it is virtually impossible to know exactly what any Muslim thinks in regard to jihad, simply because the Koran allows Muslims to deceive "infidels" for the

greater good of Islam. One Muslim may be telling the truth when he says he is against terrorism, while another Muslim may be lying. Further, many Muslims define “terrorism” as any attack against any Muslim, even if that attack comes in response against Muslim aggression. Thus, when some Muslims say they are against terrorism, you may have in mind Islamic jihad, while he has in mind Israel’s defense against Hamas’s and Hezbollah’s rocket attacks upon Israeli citizens, or U.S. intervention in Muslim countries for the sake of combating jihad. It is necessary to define terms when engaged in conversation with Muslims whose philosophy allows for lying to those outside Islam.

Hidden meanings are employed by despotic ideologies. They were found in Nazism, Communism, even socialism. The forked tongue of anti-Christ ideologies is to be expected since the father of lies is the Devil, as attested by Jesus Christ:

You are of your father the Devil, and the lusts of your father you will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and did not live in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks of his own, for he is a liar, and the father of it. (John 8:44)

We may love our Muslim neighbors, but, sad to say, until they turn to Christ we cannot trust them.

With all this in mind, we may consider what is happening in this debate about the mosque near Ground Zero.

From the beginning, proponents for the mosque stated that it would be part of a community center to be available to people of all religions, and would be a place for moderate Muslims. It would be operated by a group called the Cordoba Initiative. The mosque is a project of the American Society for Muslim Advancement and the Cordoba Initiative, which promotes cross-cultural understanding between Islam and the West. The organizations purchased the building in 2009 and broke ground in 2010. It was said that in addition to the mosque, the high rise building would also contain a prominent Islamic center that would be a national model of moderate Islam, with a board made up of Jewish, Muslim and Christian leaders

There are a number of reasons for concern even in the face of these seemingly benign designs.

One reason for concern is the name, “Cordoba Initiative.” The city of Córdoba was the center of Islam’s conquest of Spain until Ferdinand III of Castile reclaimed the city. Córdoba was the capital of the Spanish Muslim dynasty of the Umayyads (756-1031). The Great Mosque of Córdoba (La Mezquita) was built in 785 on the site of a Catholic church dedicated to St. Vincent. Over the next two hundred years it was expanded to make it the third largest structure in the Islamic world. To name the mosque near Ground Zero or the organization promoting it after Córdoba is to imply that the 9/11 attacks were part of Islam’s conquest of the United States.

It has always been the practice of Islam to build mosques on the sites of their conquests, often in place of churches that stood there.

Another reason for concern is the idea of promoting “cross-cultural understanding between Islam and the West.” This is code for “dialogue” in which Muslims have no genuine desire

to understand anything about the West than they already know. Their real aim is to disarm the “infidels” by feigned words of “cooperation” so that they may continue their inroads into Western society with the ultimate goal of conquest through immigration and procreation. Should militant jihad become necessary due to resistance by the infidels, that, too, will be used. If this sounds uncharitable, it isn’t; it merely acknowledges the truth that this is Muhammad’s tactic for conquest as revealed in the Koran. First, if peaceful means may be used to bring the infidels into submission, then that is the preferred method; failing that, terror and destruction would be acceptable, even preferable.

Yet another reason for concern is the secrecy surrounding the funding of the mosque. Cordoba Initiative’s director, Imam Faisal Abdul Rauf, refused to disclose those sources which some suspect may be tied to Islamic terrorism. Also, at one time Rauf suggested in a television interview that U.S. foreign policy was at least partially responsible for the 9/11 attacks. The policy, of course, is the United States’ support of Israel.

Sadly, his suggestion bears merit, but that does not negate Islam’s avowed goal of world conquest in accordance with the commands of “Allah” (read Muhammad) in the Koran.

On January 14, 2011, Park51 developer Sharif el-Gamal announced that Rauf would no longer speak for or raise money for Park51, replacing him with Imam Abdallah Adhmi. The split was attributed to differences in vision for the project—Rauf had wanted a larger interfaith center named Cordoba House, but el-Gamal wanted it to primarily serve Muslims, and to have a local outreach. Since that time, Rauf has been accused of embezzlement of funds for the project in order to finance a lavish lifestyle, and is facing a lawsuit.

The argument posited by proponents of the mosque is that Muslims have the right to exercise their freedom of religion just like anyone else. This was Barack Obama’s position on August 6, in stating that Muslims have the same right to freedom of religion as everyone else in America. Prior to that, Obama had skirted the issue. Obama’s words were part of a speech to a gathering at the White House that evening to observe iftar, the evening meal that breaks the day’s fast during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. Fearing a backlash against Democrat politicians currently running for office, White House spokesman Bill Burton “clarified” Obama’s statement: “What he said last night, and reaffirmed today, is that if a church, a synagogue or a Hindu temple can be built on a site, you simply cannot deny that right to those who want to build a mosque.”

That is true in a free society. However, opponents of the mosque are not saying that Muslims don’t have the right to worship; they just believe that a mosque so close to the site of Islam’s attack against the United States is at best in poor taste, and at worst a symbolic act of Islamic conquest. Other sites have been offered to the Ground Zero mosque proponents, but they have been categorically rejected. They do not care what anyone else thinks; they must build this mosque.

Echoing somewhat Barack Obama, a Hamas co-founder says that Muslims “have to build” a mosque near Ground Zero.

Mahmoud al-Zahar said Muslims “have to build everywhere” so that Muslims can pray just as do Christians and Jews. Hamas is a terrorist organization that wants Israel driven into the sea.

House Minority Leader John Boehner stated that the decision to build the mosque isn’t an issue of religious freedom, but a matter of respect. “The fact that someone has the right to do something doesn’t necessarily make it the right thing to do,” said Boehner. “That is the essence of tolerance, peace and understanding.”

Although some family members of 9/11 victims do not oppose the mosque, most are angered by the prospect of its being built so close to the ground they consider sacred to their loved one’s memories. Debra Burlingame, a spokesperson for some victims’ families, and the sister of one of the pilots killed in the attack, lamented Obama’s stance. “Barack Obama has abandoned America at the place where America’s heart was broken nine years ago, and where her true values were on display for all to see,” said Burlingame. She sees building the mosque at Ground Zero as “a deliberately provocative act that will precipitate more bloodshed in the name of Allah.”

In an Associated Press article, journalists Pauline Jelinek and Julie Pace cited Obama’s desire to reach out to the Muslim world as an impetus for his support of the mosque:

Obama surely knew that his words Friday night at a White House dinner marking the holy month of Ramadan not only would make headlines, but be heard by Muslims worldwide. The president has made it a point to reach out to the global Muslim community, and the more than 100 guests at Friday’s dinner included ambassadors and officials from numerous nations where Islam is observed, including Saudi Arabia and Indonesia.

When Obama first took office, Muslim leaders had high hopes from his presidency, even as he kept his distance from them during the campaign and rebutted false rumors that he was Muslim.

We are not convinced that the rumors were false or that Obama is not a closet Muslim. He is certainly not a Christian in the true sense. No true believer in Jesus would engage in and/or celebrate the religious activities of false religious systems.

Some may lay that charge to George W. Bush as well, since he, too, has held commemorations to Muslim holidays, and has demonstrated an affinity toward Muslim purposes. It may be argued that that’s just state diplomacy, but that doesn’t hold water where religion is concerned. But it does suggest that Islam is more than a religion; it is a political force that demands consideration by nation states, just as does Roman Catholicism.

We may argue whether or not many, if not most, Christian religious systems are also false, but we understand that ignorant, naïve and weak Christians may get involved in them. But when a professing Christian celebrates a religion that denies Jesus as the Son of God, he reveals that he is not a true believer in Jesus.

Lost to many Christians in the discourse about this mosque and how it represents Muslim conquest of America is the idea that this could be a judgment from God. As a nation founded on the biblical ethic represented in our founding documents and early history, Christianity in America has progressively abandoned true faith in Jesus Christ and settled for a Christianized form of religiosity.

The nation has become more and more paganized, not only through its immigration policy, but also through conversion of many from Christianity to pagan religions and New Age mysticism.

We are alarmed that Islam has become so bold of late, but we neglect to place the blame where it truly belongs: on the churches in America that have turned from solid ministry based on God’s Word to feel-good religion in the name of Jesus.

All this said, as believers in Jesus we may voice our concerns; we may oppose construction of this mosque; we may vote out of office those who support it. Or, as some believers do, we may abstain entirely from becoming involved in the world’s affairs, letting God have His way; it’s not up to His people to become embroiled in the world’s disputes.

Whatever course believers in Christ may take, what we must not do is grow irrational or become apoplectic about this. Nothing transpires without our God’s knowledge and permission. If it is His will for America that this nation fall to the barbarism of militant Islam, then it will happen. If and when that time comes we must trust Him and continue to pray for the preservation of America. In either case, let us thank Him.

In the meantime, regardless of our concerns, let us not forget to love our enemies as He commands us to do. ❖

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