



## TERRORISM IN AMERICA WHERE ARE WE HEADED?

By Albert James Dager

WHERE DOES ONE begin in one's attempt to address the terrible events that transpired the day of September 11, 2001? The outpouring of grief and outrage at the mass destruction of innocent lives has given vent to every conceivable thought regarding how the United States should respond to the terrorist attack. We've read in the print media and heard on the broadcast media ideas that have ranged from wreaking total destruction upon the "enemies of freedom" to listening to their concerns and trying to placate them—all with the intention of preventing, or at least minimizing, the chances for any recurrence of that awful day.

### OUR FINEST HOUR?

Just as that one hour brought upon our land tremendous sorrow and pain, it has also stirred the best of emotions within the common man. For the first time in decades young people were expressing love for their country—young people who have flocked to register for the military, standing on street corners waving flags, shouting "U.S.A.! U.S.A.!"

People all over the country set aside differences to unite for the cause of the nation. The heroic actions of the firefighters and police officers, many of whom sacrificed their lives to save others, could not but bring us to tears. And not only these who were sworn to such duty, but many average people risked their lives and, in some cases, sacrificed their lives to help others. The nation as a whole has done whatever it can to help those who were victims of that evil. Americans have opened their pocketbooks and poured out millions of dollars toward efforts to relieve the pain and suffering of their fellow citizens.

In general, for a time, people were kinder, more patient with each other. There was an unspoken sense of kinship, conveyed through smiles, eye contact, and common courtesy that had often

been lacking in the past. We cannot but feel uplifted by the overall generosity and kindness of the average American citizen. The eternal truths that have flowed as an undercurrent to keep our nation as the most civilized and charitable nation ever to grace the earth found expression in the caring and genuine love expressed from sea to shining sea.

While there is never a spiritual justification for feeling pride in what we are—even as believers in Christ—I must admit to admiration for my fellow Americans during this time of trial. This may well prove to be "our finest hour."

I realize we are not citizens of this world, and that our citizenship is in Heaven. But that doesn't mean we should have nothing to do with the world. We must live on this earth as citizens of the nations in which the Lord has placed us. Even the apostle Paul appealed to his Roman citizenship to gain advantage over his persecutors. And while our spir-

itual fellowship is to be restricted to those of like faith, we recognize the duty to be good citizens of our nation.

The flag does not represent the government; it does not represent every evil of the human heart, latent or expressed. It represents the best characteristics of the people. Nor is it a matter of choosing man over God; it is a matter of expressing love for those who have died, not only in the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but for those who have made the sacrifices represented in the stars and stripes throughout the history of this nation—sacrifices that have allowed us to live in freedom, to proclaim the Gospel without fear, to worship our Lord without harassment.

It is also to show respect and thanks for those who are making, and are about to make, great personal sacrifices to ensure that this nation will continue to dwell in safety, God willing.



## THE FACE OF TERRORISM

What is this enemy called “terrorism” that has beckoned us to war? Is it not found in the dens and caves of backward men wearing strange garb and chanting in an unknown tongue, calling for death to the Infidel? Who are these people that they think they can bring down the mighty strength of the greatest nation in the history of the world?

In order to understand the faceless face of terrorism we have to understand not only the mind of the terrorists, but the tenets of Islam upon which they justify their actions.

According to the Qur'an (Koran), Muslims are not only encouraged, but commanded, to destroy those they view as their enemies. If, in the process, they die, Allah will receive them into the “Garden,” believed to be the original Garden of Eden in the celestial realm:

Think not of those who are slain in Allah’s way as dead. Nay, they live, finding their sustenance in the Presence of their Lord. (Sura 3:169)

Fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you, but do not transgress limits; for Allah loveth not transgressors.

And slay them wherever ye catch them, and turn them out from where they have turned you out; for tumult and oppression are worse than slaughter; but fight them not at the Sacred Mosque, unless they fight you there; but if they fight you, slay them. Such is the reward of those who suppress faith. (Sura 2:190-191)

Fight those who believe not in Allah nor the Last Day, nor hold that forbidden which hath been forbidden by Allah and His Prophet, nor acknowledge the religion of Truth, (even if they are) of the People of the Book [Christians and Jews], until they pay the jizyah with willing submission, and feel themselves subdued. (Sura 9:29)

While not explicit, the Qur'an does allow for Muslims to take the offensive in attacking their enemies—even civilians. That is the legacy of jihad as practiced by Muhammad. As well, other writings regarded as sacred—the Four Hadiths of Islam, strongly teach violence against non-Muslims. In the case of the fundamentalist sects that practice terrorism, they explain their offensive actions as defensive. To them, for example, Israel has occupied the Muslim’s holy ground since the British partitioned the land named “Palestine,” driving many out of their homes and into refugee camps, and even into the wilderness. To the Muslim, Israel is the unclean Infidel trampling holy ground. This is true of all Muslims, not just of the radical, militant elements.

The fact that the United States has supported Israel in so many ways through the years has made this nation the enemy of Islam, at least among those who truly understand the message of their “prophet,” Muhammad. That message is that both Jews and Christians have had the truth, but have not lived by the truth; they are disobedient to the will of Allah. Therefore, they are the enemies of Allah. Yet, Allah, said Muhammad, is gracious, ready to forgive. All that is necessary is that the Infidel

surrender his will to Allah through the tenets of Islam. Those who don’t are to be slain.

The Qur'an addresses also the Muslim who does not take up arms against the Infidel, but rather stays at home while others fight:

Not equal are those believers who sit (at home) and receive no hurt, and those who strive in the cause of Allah with their goods and their persons. Allah hath granted a grade higher to those who strive with their goods and persons than to those who sit (at home). Unto all (in Faith) hath Allah promised good: but those who strive hath He distinguished above those who sit (at home) by a special reward. (Sura 4:95)

This is in the context of going abroad—attacking other nations—in the “cause of Allah.”

Those who call Islam a religion of peace are disregarding the commands which Muhammad claimed the angel Gabriel gave him directly from Allah. The Qur'an is replete with commands to slay the enemies of Islam.

It may be said truthfully that YHWH gave similar commands to Israel. But that was in regard only to taking the Land they were to possess. Jesus commands otherwise:

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies; bless those who curse you; do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who slander you and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He causes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

“And if you salute your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

“Therefore, you be perfect even as your Father who is in Heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48)

The Qur'an claims that Jesus and Muhammad are both messengers from Allah. But Muhammad’s message is one of hatred against his enemies, while Jesus’ message is one of love for His enemies. So regardless of what Muslims say, the very tenets of their religion demand destruction of their enemies. Just because a large number of Muslims do not openly espouse those tenets does not mean that it is a religion of peace.

It is because a sufficient number of Muslims—particularly in Muslim countries—do adhere to those tenets, that terrorism has found its way to America’s door.

If those Muslim countries that have expressed their condolences to the United States were serious, they would take action to destroy the terrorist nests within their own borders. Yet even if they wanted to do that they couldn’t. The general populations of most Muslim countries look upon the terrorists as heroes in their cause against Israel. Even some “friendly” Muslim countries

shelter terrorist elements that operate without government interference. They openly recruit followers from within the mosques, and the religious leaders do nothing to hinder them.

At the time of the attack on the World Trade Center the United States was heartened by the declarations of several Muslim countries that they will stand with us against terrorism. But in so doing they may be sowing the seeds of their own destruction from within. Radical Muslims make no distinction between their enemies and those who aid their enemies—even Muslims. In truth, they would say that those Muslims who aid the United States are being unfaithful to Islam and its prophet, Muhammad. This sentiment is found not only among the radical elements, but among many within the general populations of virtually all Muslim countries.

In the eyes of Islam it was bad enough that the United States has been the major patron of Israel. As long as we stayed on our side of the ocean and did not desecrate Islamic holy ground we did not tempt some of the most devout terrorist elements to attack us. Some were even happy to receive our aid and call us “allies,” if not “friends,” when we gave them the means to defend themselves against Soviet aggression. Osama bin Laden, protected by the ruling Taliban party in Afghanistan, was one to whom we supplied arms in that country’s struggle against the old Soviet Union. Now he has been linked to the terrorist attacks in the U.S.

Things changed in 1990 when the United States led the coalition to drive Saddam Hussein back into Iraq. Even that was not too bad. But to keep a military presence on Islamic holy ground (Saudi Arabia), and to continually humiliate Saddam Hussein, a Muslim head of state—even one regarded by many Muslims as a despot—turned not only bin Laden against us, but most of the Islamic world. They are happy to sell us their oil—then use the proceeds to arm our terrorist enemies.

I am not arguing right or wrong here; I am merely stating the cause for the turn of events that have resulted in the recent attacks on U.S. soil.

While the government and media are stirring patriotic fervor with claims that the enemies of freedom have attacked us unprovoked because they hate our way of life, reality suggests there’s more to it than that.

The Muslim states and their terrorist guests might be critical of the United States’ growing immoral lifestyle, but they wouldn’t waste their lives and ordnance on us simply because we are decadent; there are other countries more decadent than the United States. Nor do they hate freedom, per se. They hate the immorality that results from personal freedom, and especially the influence Western ways have upon their youth.

Rather than hatred of the “American way of life” being the reason for the attacks, in the eyes of the terrorist factions—indeed, in the eyes of Muslims in general—the United States has been desecrating what Muslims consider Islamic holy ground for the past decade. These attacks, as heinous as they were, are perceived by the terrorists as justified according to their understanding of the Qur’an. Muslims who discount the terrorist

groups as fringe elements, or who say that the terrorists are not true Muslims, are blowing smoke, intentionally or not.

In the United States, however, there is distress among some American Muslims over the destruction that took place in New York and Washington, D.C. Even among foreign Muslims we have heard words of sorrow for what took place. In the case of American Muslims, many of whom came here to escape the oppression of their former homelands, that sorrow is, for the most part, genuine. In the case of Muslim heads of state who are sincere in their expressions, it is not the attack itself that is lamented as much as it is the destruction of innocent lives. What has set many Muslims against the terrorists is their indiscriminate attack against defenseless civilians. Had all the targets been military installations I doubt the sympathy would have been so forthcoming. Many, if not most, Muslims, while hating the United States, are not in favor of attacks against defenseless people. The problem is, there is nothing in the Qur’an that specifically forbids such action. It only speaks in general terms of slaying the enemy. And when it was written, it was common practice to decimate populations that opposed Islam. Muhammad certainly practiced that, and set the example in his jihad. But, then, the Crusaders adopted the same practices. Why should we expect that the legacy of Muhammad (and the “Holy Roman Empire”) would not be carried to the extreme?

We must now concern ourselves with the reality that life in the United States will never be the same as it was prior to that fateful day of September 11, 2001. Terrorism has become a daily word here, just as it has been in Israel for decades. As terrorism increases (and we are told it will), Americans will not be able to help surrendering, at least to some degree, to the designs of the terrorists. But that fateful day did not come without much planning on the part of our adversaries. For at least the past seven years they have bided their time, making sure that the relatively minimal results of the previous assault on the World Trade Center in 1993 would not be repeated. The strongest motivations behind the attacks against the United States here and abroad is our support of Israel, and the continued campaign of U.S. Troops against Muslims.

### **The Iraq Attack**

According to U.S. intelligence reports, the attacks on New York and Washington, D.C. had been in the planning for several years. And while bin Laden may have possibly been able to state truthfully that he did not plan the attacks, it is increasingly evident that he prompted and encouraged them through training, and financial and arms support, as well as ideological conditioning. Additionally, it was reported that Saddam Hussein may have been behind the attacks. Whether this was merely government propaganda to stir even more fervor in its plans to retaliate has not been determined. At the time, there was certainly good reason to suspect Hussein may have been involved.

But whether or not bin Laden and Hussein were directly involved isn’t an issue. Bin Laden’s modus operandi has been to train and equip his terrorists, then send them to the places where they would work their evil. He doesn’t necessarily care

what they do, or to whom they do it. He wants them to exercise their own initiative in targeting and carrying out their attacks. But to incite to riot carries the same guilt as rioting itself.

Regardless of the reasons emanating from the government and the media as to why we were attacked, the United States has come face-to-face with the consequences of its actions taken against Iraq. At the onset of the Gulf Crisis I voiced concern that the attack against Iraq could spark terrorism and economic chaos in the United States. I erred on the timing, thinking that these calamities would result almost immediately. They are only now being realized. What lies ahead only God knows. We cannot expect, nor has the government assured us, that terrorism on American soil will not be an ongoing phenomenon.

Even many who may not like to hear what I have to say about this, concede that this nation has been begging God's judgment. So let us not stick our heads in the sand and, in the interest of feeding our anger and urge for revenge, refuse to look at the spiritual reality that God does judge His people for having turned from Him. And for the most part, the citizens of the United States have called themselves by His name—Christians.

### **Islam in America**

But now, just as Islam is the fastest growing religion in the world, it has become the fastest growing religion in the United States, primarily through immigration. And the anti-American mindset of many American Muslims is openly revealed by one of their own leaders.

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The demonization of Islam in mainstream American media compels Muslims to become sensitive about their identity. All their activities are motivated by this identity and geared toward defending their faith from a perceived American assault. They rarely, if ever, get opportunities to live as American citizens endeavoring to maximize liberty, equality and prosperity.

Similarly the negative image of America in the eyes of most Muslims, a consequence of its foreign policy in the Middle East, elicits paradoxical responses from American Muslims. America's prosperity and freedom attract them and, once they are here, its policies and its attitudes toward Muslims and Islam alienate them. Becoming American citizens presents an unusual moral dilemma for American Muslims. They love to live in America, while many of them love to hate America.

We are hearing in the media and from government, calls for patience and kindness toward our fellow citizens who are of the Muslim religion. This is only proper. It would be a terrible tragedy to single out Middle Eastern people as the enemy, just as it was to do so to the Japanese Americans during World War II. But, again, we are also told that the terrorism the nation has experienced is not an expression of true Islam; Islam is a religion

of peace. Muslims in America are saying that the terrorists are not true Muslims; true Muslims desire peace.

Well, let us love all men, but let us not be naïve.

There is much speculation about the true face of Islam. But there needn't be. Just as one can find the true face of Roman Catholicism only in Roman Catholic countries, one can find the true face of Islam only in Islamic countries.

Roman Catholicism in the United States presents an ecumenical face of tolerance. In Catholic countries the face is one of antagonism—especially toward true believers in Jesus Christ. So, too, the face of Islam in the Middle East is far different from that in the United States.

The Qur'an explicitly calls for the destruction of all enemies of Islam through jihad (holy war). Enemies of Islam are defined as those who threaten Islam's hold wherever it is in power. This not only applies to military threats, but to threats from ideologies contrary to Islam.

This is true regarding Judaism, particularly since Muslims regard the Zionist state of Israel as an intrusion upon Muslim holy ground. It is especially true where the Gospel is proclaimed. Under penalty of imprisonment, deprivation of property and even death, believers in Christ are forbidden to proclaim the Gospel in Islamic countries. But, then, much the same can be said about Israel's policies toward the Gospel there. The difference is that the U.S. government, as well as Christian Zionists, champion Israel's cause in spite of its anti-Christ attitudes.

As far as Islam is concerned, however, if you want to know its true nature you must not look at Muslims in the United States; you must look at Muslim countries. There you will find a tremendous hatred of Christians, Jews and Americans in general among the populous of all Muslim countries. And don't suppose that a great number of U.S. Muslims would not embrace jihad if they were in the majority. The media did not report the celebrations by Muslims at American mosques after the 9/11 attacks. Police had been assigned to protect them while they jeered against the United States.

### **More Terrorism In The U.S.?**

It is estimated that there are anywhere from five to eight million Muslims in this country. Let us say there are seven million—a rather small minority. Most, I am sure, are average people with average lives, who are not inclined to hurt anyone. They, too, are sorrowed by the events that have led the nation to war. But suppose that a mere two percent of the seven million *are* so inclined toward those whom they perceive to be the enemies of Islam. That two percent is one-hundred-forty thousand. Let us say that two percent of the one-hundred-forty thousand are inclined to commit terrorism against the U.S. in support of their cause against those they perceive as the Infidels who have invaded their holy land. That two percent is two thousand, eight hundred. Estimating conservatively then, we are left with two thousand, eight hundred people who could conceivably reenact the destructive attacks we are still mourning. It took only 19 to bring the major financial center of the world to its knees, and to drive the nation to the brink of a depression from which it will not recover for some time, if ever.

Our economy is suffering greatly because of the actions of those few men. Consider what chaos could reign in this country should two thousand, eight hundred (or even eight hundred) possible terrorists decide to take action throughout this country. Particularly if they are aided by one-hundred-forty-thousand sympathizers.

They would make up a faceless enemy that can do to the United States what their Middle East brothers have done to Israel for the past five decades: bombing of public places, assassinations, suicide attacks—the prospects are terrible to consider. And how would America be able to return to any semblance of normalcy should the conflict be protracted over many years?

To terrorize is not the same as to induce terror. Terror can be a momentary fear under real or imagined circumstances that suggest danger. People can feel terror watching a scary movie.

Terrorism, on the other hand, creates a palpable, unyielding fear that could result in the one terrorized bringing upon himself his worst fears: suicide, reclusive living, striking out against any perceived threat. In a real sense, American troops in Vietnam were terrorized. They lived in constant fear of where or when the enemy might strike. And they did not always know who the enemy was. Children, women, old people—all were used in the war against our troops. Even friendly villages were not a sure thing. There, too, the enemy was faceless. As a result, many atrocities were committed by U.S. troops against those that are at least perceived to have been innocent civilians.

Before we judge these men too harshly, let us put ourselves in their shoes. In truth, we may not, in the near future, be able to avoid putting ourselves in their shoes.

The difficult issue is how to distinguish between the peaceful Muslim—even the patriotic Muslim—and the radical terrorist Muslim. Those involved in the attacks in New York and D.C. were said to be average-acting and even friendly neighbors. By all accounts there were no clues to what they were plotting, except perhaps in hindsight. So how do we make the distinction?

Frankly, there is no answer to that. We are going to have to trust government intelligence to take care of the problem. We have been warned that we must expect a campaign that may take many years to resolve. We must also expect more casualties, both civilian through terrorism, and military through armed conflict. Yet through it all, God will be with those faithful to Him:

I will say of YHWH, He is my refuge and my fortress—my God; I will trust in Him. Surely He shall deliver you from the snare of the fowler, and from the terrible pestilence.

He shall cover you with His feathers, and under His wings you shall trust. His truth shall be your shield and buckler.

You will not be afraid of the terror by night, nor of the arrow that flies by day, nor of the pestilence that walks in darkness, nor for the destruction that wastes at noonday.

A thousand shall fall at your side, and ten thousand at your right hand, but it shall not come near you. (Psalms 91:2-7)

### **THE U.S. vs. ISLAM**

From a purely rational standpoint, the situation is more precarious than even the government has allowed us to know thus far. We are heartened to hear that several Islamic countries have pledged their support in rooting out terrorism. But the fact remains that many, if not most, rank-and-file Muslims even under those supportive governments, hold strong anti-American sentiments. When the chips are down, and internal unrest reaches a flash point in those countries, we may find that all Islamic states will take sides against the United States. At the very least, they may decide not to cooperate with the United States. Islam has a long history of violence and unrest. No one can predict with certainty what those countries will do, one way or the other.

Since this was originally written in 2001, the Arab Spring has further complicated and made uncertain our relations with several Muslim nations. The pro-democracy move will only result in the takeover of those nations by radical Islam. The real probability is that this will spread to all Muslim nations, simply because democracy is necessary to bring unity among those nations so that the last-days anti-Christ may rise to power from among them, or from among a united Roman-Ottoman coalition.

But even if all goes well with those particular Muslim states, we are facing a grave danger in compelling Pakistan to help us attack Afghanistan as a goal of the military.

The present Pakistani government is tenuous at best. On one hand it does not want to incur the wrath of the United States as it seeks to build its economy and establish a better life for its citizens. On the other hand, there are many militant Muslims who would turn on the Pakistan government should it aid the Infidel in establishing an even greater foothold on what they consider holy ground. Should the radical factions take over they could become a great threat. Pakistan has nuclear weapons.

I cannot say if Pakistan has the capability for delivering those weapons, but it might not need ICBMs to accomplish the task of nuking American cities. To terrorists a nuclear weapon is just a tool, just as fuel-laden aircraft were tools. It was said that the explosive power of each of the two planes that struck the World Trade Center was equivalent to one-twentieth the power of the bomb dropped on Hiroshima. Both together were the equivalent of one-tenth that power. The terrorists most likely hijacked cross-country flights in order to make sure they had the maximum fuel capacity to wreak the most destruction. To the Muslim radicals, the greater the magnitude of destruction the better. It is quite likely that the September 11 attacks will have established the benchmark for future terrorist acts. Islamic terrorism may have entered a new era where individuals may not be content to destroy themselves by taking only a few lives. Targets may now range into the thousands for future suicide missions. The smaller stuff may be left to planting bombs and leaving the scene. Only time will tell, of course, but an ideology of hate is not easily sated.

## THE U.S. vs. IDEOLOGY

For the first time in the history of these United States, we have entered into conflict, not as nation against nation, but as nation against ideology. The ideology is a religious one first, but it is also a multinational political ideology. There are some 80 Islamic states, all of which hold to the same basic ideology, some more militant than others.

Most wars are fought by men who might or might not sense a patriotic duty in their acquiescence to their government's call. Even for the most patriotic, however, in the heat of battle the motivating force is self-preservation.

A holy war is the worst kind of war; it is fueled by religious fervor that looks at death as desirable for the ideologue. There is no sense of self-preservation, but a willingness—indeed a desire—to die for the cause. This is what makes a war between a nation and an ideology so dangerous for the nation at war. An ill-equipped enemy with nothing to lose and everything to gain (even if it's only in his mind) is far more dangerous than a well-armed enemy with a conventional war-like attitude.

How do we intimidate a foe who seeks to die in his cause against us? What has he to lose?

As far as the Muslim states that resist our demands are concerned, what do they have to lose? We can't bomb them into the stone age; they're already there. It is the general population that will suffer the most, just as they have been suffering under the repressive Muslim overlords in control.

In the meantime, the terrorists can take their leisure in picking off their targets. They have no timetable; there is no political pressure on them; there are no expectations of decisive victory. Casualties are celebrated; they are not cause for discontent among their supporters. And if innocent women and children are victims of our warfare, even due to the enemy's placing of its warriors among them for self-protection, we become the evil aggressors who have no compulsions about killing those innocents.

How different are the enemy's concerns from the concerns that face our government. Sadly, our government lacks the wisdom to address this issue. We must continue to pray for all concerned—especially the president.

Some are suggesting that, from a purely pragmatic standpoint, the safest thing the United States can do to ensure peace in our land—or at least to minimize the threat of Islamic terrorism—is to pull out of the Middle East and apologize to all Muslims for having desecrated their “holy ground” with our presence.

But even if this were true, pragmatically the United States can't do that. The deaths of innocent victims demand justice which only the government can pursue through military and other action. Can you imagine the cries of outrage and demands for the heads of President Bush and his cabinet had they taken the seemingly safe path? Forget terrorist-hijacked airliners. Patriots would attack the White House!

And that is the dilemma in which our nation finds itself. Even if it wanted to stay out of the fray it can't. The course is set and there is no way it can be altered.

## WAS PRESIDENT BUSH GOD'S MAN FOR THE HOUR?

Looking back on the 2000 election and how it was decided, we cannot but help wonder at how George W. Bush became president of the United States. I am well aware of the hidden hand behind government—how nations are shaped by unseen power brokers who control the financial wealth of the world. But they don't realize that their activities are still subservient to the will of God—the God that they reject.

We cannot suppose that the events that have led us to the war that has been declared on terrorism came about without God's knowledge. Those who say, “Where was God in this?” do not understand that there are greater issues at stake than the lives of men.

This is not to belittle the terrible loss of lives not only at the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, but throughout the history of man's conflicts. It is God who places men in positions of power to suit His own purpose:

This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones, to the intent that the living may know that the most High rules in the kingdom of men, and gives it to whomever He will, and sets up over it the lowest of men. (Daniel 4:17)

By all accounts, George W. Bush should have lost the 2000 election to Al Gore. Gore had the popular vote (although many votes were cast for him by illegal aliens, felons and others ineligible to vote). Considering Gore's pacifist leanings, we must wonder if he would have had what it would take to wage a military campaign.

All things considered, George W. Bush has the greater strength of character, even if he is not perfect (but, then, who is?). He has demonstrated leadership ability, the willingness to listen to all sides for courses of action, and a compassion for the plight of the nation.

Bush gave way to Barack Obama who, by all indications, lacks even the scant moral character that Al Gore possesses. His pro-Islamism makes suspect his ability to wage any effective warfare against Islamic terrorism, in spite of the assassination of Osama bin Laden. Islamic terrorism did not rest so heavily on bin Laden that his death will bring terrorism to an end.

### WHAT LIES AHEAD?

“These are the times that try men's souls,” said Thomas Paine, the deist/humanist patriot, in calling upon his fellow citizens to remain strong in the face of adversity during the American Revolution. Since that time these words have never had such dire meaning. Only this time the enemy the nation faces is not so easily fought. The unconventional tactics of the rag-tag American revolutionists brought the then-mightiest army on earth to its knees. But, then, the conventional tactics of the Redcoats was such that they were exposed to the shot of the hidden Americans. In many cases the British troops' enemies were faceless. They were in a hostile land among hostile people. And the more ruthless they were in their attempts to bring their enemy under subjection, the more they strengthened their enemy's resolve.

The mighty army of Rome was brought to its knees by the barbarians. Napoleon had Waterloo. Closer to home, the Soviet Union was beaten by a tiny Afghanistan rebel force (which we have foolishly thought to tame). History is fraught with such examples of the seemingly weak defeating the strong of arm.

There are no guarantees in war. God is the one who determines the outcome:

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of YHWH our God.

They are brought down and fallen, but we are risen, and stand upright.

Save, YHWH! Let the king hear us when we call. (Ps 20:7-9)

Said Solomon:

I returned and saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor even bread to the wise, nor even riches to men of understanding, nor even favor to men of skill, but time and chance happens to them all.

For man also does not know his time. As the fishes that are taken in an evil net, and as the birds that are caught in the snare, so are the sons of men snared in an evil time when it falls suddenly upon them. (Ec 9:11-12)

To be sure, the might of the United States military is nothing to trifle with. The attack on this country's symbols of government and economic strength have stirred what the 1941 Japanese high command called "a sleeping giant." There's good reason why the heads of all the Islamic nations, including Afghanistan, were quick to offer condolences and expressions of outrage at the terrorist attacks. They are no doubt "shaking in their boots" at the prospect of coming under attack by the U.S. military. President Bush's vow to hold equally accountable not only the terrorists, but those who harbor them and supply them, struck terror in their hearts. But his proclamation, "If you are not with us you are with the terrorists," may also reverberate to the harm of loyal American dissidents who fear greater terrorist activity for retaliation.

And let us not be too complacent or self-assured that God will protect the United States. Why should He? Because this is a war of "Jesus vs. Allah"? Hardly. Those called by God's name have at other times been given by God into the hands of their enemies in order to purge them of their sins.

Wouldn't God be on America's side because we are a "Christian nation"?

America is a Christian nation only in the sense that a majority of its citizens claim to be Christians of one stripe or another. There is no such thing as a truly Christian nation. A Christian nation would be a theocracy, just as was Israel. Yet even that theocracy came face to face with God's wrath because of its disobedience. America has rested upon a biblical ethic gleaned from the influences of Christianity in Western Civilization. But it is not a Christian nation in the true sense. And even if it were, all the more reason to expect God's judgment for our infidelity.

This may come as a shock to many, but God is not on the side of any nation; He was not even on the side of Israel except where it suited His purpose. When Joshua encountered the Angel of the Lord (the Word of God), he found out that it was Israel that was to be on God's side, not vice versa:

And it happened that when Joshua was by Jericho he lifted up his eyes and looked, and, behold, there stood a man over against him with his sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him, and said to Him, "Are You for us, or for our adversaries?"

And He said, "No! But I have now come as Captain of the army of YHWH."

And Joshua fell on his face to the earth, and worshipped, and said to Him, "What does my Lord say to His servant?"

And the Captain of YHWH's army said to Joshua, "Take your shoes from off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy."

And Joshua did so. (Joshua 5:13-15)

The Captain of God's army must have been the Word of God Himself, because he accepted Joshua's worship. And just as YHWH told Moses to take off his shoes because the ground on which he was standing was holy, so the Captain of YHWH's army told Joshua to do the same.

This tells us that God is not on Israel's side, but on His own side. To the extent that Israel is on God's side, or is being used according to God's plan, He will be on Israel's side. The same applies to all men. We cannot assume that God will be on America's side at all times.

But isn't God on our side because we love freedom?

Is freedom God's priority? Perhaps in the minds of many Americans—including many American Christians. Freedom has become an idol to Americans, and we look upon Lady Liberty as its icon. As a whole, the nation has taken its liberty for license. Every evil imaginable to the human heart is justified under the name of "Freedom." Even in our justice system criminals are treated as victims whose freedom of individualism was somehow, sometime, somewhere, infringed upon.

No, freedom is not God's priority. God's priority is holiness in His people and His will being done on earth.

Ironically, the word *Islam* means submission to the will of God, whom Muslims call Allah. By definition, a *Muslim* is one who has submitted his will to God's (i.e., Allah's) will.

Muslims claim that they worship the same God as do the Jews and the Christians—that they "believe in Jesus, too." Yet in spite of the Qur'an's claims that Allah is the God of Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, as well as the God of the Christians, Allah is not the same God. The Qur'an makes Muhammad's position clear:

The Jews call 'Uzayr [Ezra] a son of God, and the Christians call Christ the son of God. That is a saying from their mouth; (in this) they but imitate what the Unbelievers of old used to say. Allah's curse be on them: how they are deluded away from the Truth! (Sura 9:30)

No one comes to God except through Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God. Islam denies the deity of Christ, believing He was created in Mary's womb, "out of dust," just as was Adam. Thus, His sacrifice on the cross for our sins means nothing; salvation is found only in following the tenets of Islam's prophet, Muhammad. So let us put to rest their claims that they "believe in Jesus, too."

As far as the Bible is concerned, Islam teaches that, while the original "Book" came from God, all extant manuscripts and translations are corrupted; Ishmael, the father of the Arabs, is not given his proper due. Thus, the Qur'an takes precedent over anything the Bible has to say; it is considered the more perfect understanding of God's Word.

While Islam takes a low view of Scripture, we cannot say much better about today's Christianity. God's Word holds little if any place in the hearts of the majority who call themselves Christians. In truth, there remains only a remnant of true believers who name the name of Jesus Christ. For that reason we have no basis upon which to expect God will protect the "Christian" bastion of America against anti-Christ militants.

It has been God's method to use His enemies for the purpose of chastening those who claim Him within the context of their religious traditions, yet fail to live in obedience to His Word, as does a major segment of Christianity. And the majority of American citizens fit well Matthew 15:8:

These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me.

Let us not be confident that victory is assured. If Scripture is telling us that the coming anti-Christ will rule over the nations in the last days, it is possible that the United States will have to be made subservient to his rule. That can be accomplished only if this country has lost much of its capability—as well as its will—to resist.

### **A New Way Of Life**

It has been stated repeatedly by government and media pundits that life in America will never be the same since the terrorist attacks on September 11. So what can we expect in the way of differences?

Should terrorism increase—and we are assured by our government that it will—how much will Americans be able to take before acquiescing to more and more stringent controls over their lives? Already, beefed-up security at public venues, airports and government facilities has impressed upon the American consciousness that our heretofore ability to move about freely has been greatly hindered.

It isn't a simple matter of focusing attention on Middle Eastern people. Civil liberties advocates insist that no one be treated any different than anyone else. Even non-citizens are said to be entitled to the same constitutional guarantees as are citizens.

This broad interpretation of the Constitution may well lead to a situation where no one is free. It is reasoned that if there are to be random checks at airports, government buildings and other public venues, then there had better be an even representation of all ethnic groups, including elderly white Europeans.

It isn't argued that high-risk, young Muslim men should be free from government scrutiny; it is that everyone should be subjected to the same intensity of government scrutiny. To those who advocate against "profiling," freedom is less precious than equal treatment. That can easily lead to all citizens being treated "equally" to government interference in their personal lives. And even then, the threat of terrorism will never go away. In truth, efforts to curb it will be greatly hindered.

The debate in the public forum is now over how much personal freedom the American citizen is willing to give up for the sake of safety. As the FBI and other government security agencies are seeking broader powers to monitor communications and the movement of people, serious constitutional issues are being placed before Congress and the president.

It is natural, in the face of such a horrendous act, to run for cover—to appeal more to government for protection of life and property than for protection of the Constitution's guarantees of personal freedom. How far the people, through their representatives, are willing to go in order to secure their personal safety remains to be seen. But the truth is, the government has long been crafting executive orders to deal with just the situation at hand. Those executive orders allow for the president to assume near-dictatorial powers in order to preserve the security of the nation.

The greatest cost may not be in terms of lives lost or dollars expended. The economic and military disasters we are facing could be a prelude to implementation of executive orders enacted by Congress during the Nixon administration, and expanded upon by every administration since. These executive orders grant to the president absolute power over every aspect of each individual's life in the event of "economic or political crisis."

Various executive orders, ratified over time, and summarized in Executive Order 11490, grant the president power to take control of all communications media, energy resources, food resources, health, welfare, education, transportation, housing, and the military.

It allows him to draft all citizens into work forces under government supervision, to relocate populations, and to order the Postmaster General to register all citizens nationwide.

This power, though clearly unconstitutional, could place the nation at the mercy of a dictator without recourse to Congress or to any other governing body. Terrorism and economic chaos could provide "legal" grounds for implementation of a dictatorship.

Fear is a great motivator, sometimes for bravery, sometimes for cowardice. The mettle of the American people is being tested. What befalls us will depend entirely on God. But it will be our own character that will be used for us or against us.

Said Benjamin Franklin:

They that can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.

Should the citizens of this country opt for safety at the expense of essential liberty it will prove that they deserve neither. And God will have used our own cowardice to judge us for our



sins. Ironically, should America faint at the trials at hand, we will have betrayed those who are truly brave—the faithful in the country’s military who are placing themselves in danger in order to preserve both our liberty and our safety. We will no longer be able to sing the last stanza of our National Anthem; no longer will America be the land of the free and the home of the brave.

Yet even those who would fight to the death for liberty may not be immune from God’s judgment for sin. The only thing that can save a nation that has turned its back on God is to return to Him. And the only Way He has provided is His only-begotten Son. Unless a significant portion of the nation truly repents of their sins and receives Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, it is only a matter of time before both liberty and safety will be but remote memories.

### CALLING OUT TO “GOD”

As a result of the 9/11 tragedy, has America become more godly? Throughout the nation—indeed, throughout the world—expressions of sorrow and appeals to God went forth even before the last airliner met its doom. Prayer gatherings have been in evidence almost every day since. The most notable, and most broadcast, was that held at The National Cathedral in Washington, D.C., on Friday, September 14, 2001. At that ecumenical gathering attended by President and Mrs. George W. Bush and other government dignitaries, homilies were offered by representatives of various religions: Islam, Judaism, Roman Catholicism, and Protestantism. All expressed sadness; all encouraged the president in his quest for reprisals; all called for unity without regard to religious or philosophical beliefs. And all evoked the name of “God” in their discourses.

The Muslim representative appealed to the “God of Abraham, Muhammad and Jesus,” affirming the belief of Islam that Jesus was merely a prophet—and a lesser prophet to Muhammad who was named first. No Christians present raised any objection or attempted to affirm that Jesus is the Word of God made flesh.

The only representative of Christianity to mention the name of Jesus was Billy Graham, when he merely called attention to the icons of the cross that adorn the interior of the building. He also mentioned the need for the nation to repent, although he was not specific as to the sins that beg repentance.

As well, while invoking the name of Jesus, Graham stated that he was speaking only for Christians:

Here in this majestic National Cathedral we see all around us the symbols of the Cross. For the Christian—I’m speaking for the Christian now—the Cross tells us that God understands our sin and our suffering, for He took them upon Himself in the person of Jesus Christ—our sins and our suffering. And from the Cross, God declares, “I love you. I know the heartaches and the sorrows and the pains that you feel. But I love you.”

The story does not end with the Cross, for Easter points us beyond the tragedy of the Cross to the empty tomb that tells us that there is hope for eternal life, for Christ has conquered evil and death, and hell. Yes, there is hope.

Why was it necessary for Graham to qualify his words as speaking “for the Christian,” if they don’t apply to the lost? By such words, Graham gave leave to everyone in the world to remain in unbelief. How much better if he had said, “I am speaking to you who have not received Jesus as your Savior and Lord.” Graham missed the perfect opportunity to be God’s prophet to the nation.

Additionally, in addressing the great loss of life, he gave a new, humanistic twist to the meaning of the “firm foundation” familiar to believers in Christ:

We all watched in horror as planes crashed into the steel and glass of the World Trade Center. Those majestic towers, built on solid foundations, were examples of the prosperity and creativity of America. When damaged, those buildings eventually plummeted to the ground, imploding in upon themselves. Yet, underneath the debris, is a foundation that was not destroyed. Therein lies the truth of that old hymn, “How Firm a Foundation....” Yes, our nation has been attacked, buildings destroyed, and lives lost.

But now we have a choice: whether to implode and disintegrate emotionally and spiritually as a people and a nation—or, whether we choose to become stronger through all of this struggle—to rebuild on a solid foundation. And I believe we are in the process of starting to rebuild on that foundation. That foundation is our trust in God. That’s what this service is all about and in that faith we have the strength to endure something as difficult and horrendous as what we have experienced this week.

For a time the citizens of America did turn to “god” as they perceive him. But it is not our trust in a generic “god” that is our firm foundation. The Scriptures point us to Jesus Christ as the Foundation upon which our faith has been laid:

According to the grace of God that is given to me as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let every man take heed how he builds on it.

For no other foundation can man lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 3:11)

They also point us to Jesus Christ as the only way to God:

Jesus said to him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man comes to the Father, but by Me. (John 14:6)

To allude to faith in “God” as the foundation that will uphold the nation while saying “for the Christian it is Jesus,” allows men to trust in other gods as well.

Some may suggest that we give Graham the benefit of the doubt; perhaps he merely misstated his position. I would like nothing better. However, Graham is on record as saying that he believes people of other faiths, including Muslims, Hindus, etc., are members of the Body of Christ and will be saved if they are sincere in their beliefs.

Appearing on Robert Schuller's *Hour of Power* television program, June 8, 1997, Graham stated categorically that he believes people of other faiths are members of Christ's Body, even if they have never heard of Jesus.

And I don't think that we're going to see a great sweeping revival that will turn the whole world to Christ at any time. I think James answered that—the apostle James—in the first council in Jerusalem, when he said that God's purpose for this age is to call out a people for His name. And that's what God is doing today; He's calling people from out of the world for His name, whether they come from the Muslim world, or the Buddhist world, or the Christian world, or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they've been called by God.

They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their heart that they need something that they don't have, and they turn to the only light that they have. And I think that they are saved, and that they are going to be with us in Heaven.

Graham has redefined the Body of Christ according to the neo-evangelical model of the World-Christian Movement. Jesus must be acknowledged as the Savior for Christians, but other religions offer salvation through sincerity. So if sincerity is all that is required, why did our Savior suffer so greatly and shed His blood?

Graham, and other professing Christians, sit in polite deference to the appeals for "unity," "tolerance" and "love" offered by anti-Christ clergy who are less ashamed of their false gods than these Christians are of Jesus Christ.

While the nation is turning to "God," the god to which it is turning is one of each man's own making. Muslims are still turning to Allah, Jews still reject Jesus as their Messiah; in the process they are rejecting the YHWH in whom they claim to believe. Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains, Scientologists—every religious discipline continues to reject Jesus Christ as the only way to the true God. And most Christian leaders in America have joined in the secular chorus championing the virtues and resilience of the "human spirit" which will triumph over this adversity. Constantly we are reminded that the "American spirit," in particular, will remain undaunted and will triumph.

The human spirit (call it "American" or otherwise) cannot triumph over anything other than the mundane. It is the Spirit of God—working through the true believer in Christ Jesus—who will triumph, even in the face of death. For God's will shall be done regardless of the efforts of men. Contrast Billy Graham's ecumenical message with the message from David Wilkerson, the late pastor of Times Square Church, wherein Wilkerson challenged both believers and non-believers to repent of their sins and fully trust Jesus Christ for their salvation.

### THE NATION'S SINS

For the first few days after the 9/11 attack I was struck by the fact that, aside from Wilkerson, no major voice within the Christian community suggested that this event may have been a wake-up call from God, or called for the nation to turn from its

sins. But then it was reported that Jerry Falwell, appearing on Pat Robertson's *The 700 Club*, blamed the terrorist attacks on the ACLU, abortionists and homosexuals. Due to the public outcry, he was compelled to apologize for his remarks.

Yet the reporting of those remarks did not keep them in context. In essence, Falwell stated that he wondered if God had lifted His hand of protection over America because of the influences of these evils. Robertson essentially agreed to the possibility. For this, both have been vilified in the media, as well as by many citizens, for their "hatred."

The backlash against these remarks has resulted in the nation coming to the defense of homosexuals and abortionists. Which tells us much about the spiritual condition of the nation.

Yet Falwell's remarks, while brushing against the truth, were a bit simplistic. The few homosexuals in the United States are not the cause for God's judgment, nor are the abortionists. It is the acceptance of their evil by the general population that is bringing God's judgment. And while the world stands horrified at the loss of some 7,000 lives in one day in one place, more than that many innocent lives are being violently destroyed every two days by killers clad in surgical garb without so much as a whimper of protest from the vast majority of citizens.

For years this ministry has been addressing the specific sins of sexual deviancy and abortion as national in character, not because a majority of Americans practice them (they don't), but because the governments of the nation have sanctioned, protected, and even funded them, and have persuaded a large number of citizens to celebrate them. The governments in this country are the voices of the people, and the people have seen fit to consistently elect men and women who hold these sentiments. As a result, millions of unborn babies are sacrificed to the goddess of feminism; homosexuality is flaunted in public with the approval of elected government officials; criminals are coddled while the innocent suffer at the hands of a system of jurisprudence that is supposed to protect them.

It is the complacency of the population in general that begs God's judgment. As well, since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the citizens of this country have been steadily moving away not only from God, but from any semblance of the biblical ethic upon which the nation has based its mores from its inception.

It has been asked that, if this is God's judgment for the sanctioned sins of homosexuality and abortion, why did it fall on New York and the Pentagon, and not on San Francisco or other bastions of such sins? Are we to suppose that the people who perished in these attacks are more sinful than others? Not at all.

I am reminded of Jesus' words in response to some telling him about the Galilaeans whose blood Pilate mingled with their sacrifices:

And answering, Jesus said to them, "Do you suppose that these Galilaeans were sinners above all the Galilaeans because they suffered such things?

"I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.

“Or those eighteen on whom the tower in Siloam fell and killed them. Do you think that they were sinners above all men that lived in Jerusalem?”

“I tell you, no. But unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” (Lk 13:2-5)

Bad things happen to good people. Conversely, good things happen to bad people. The reason is that God seeks to use both good and bad events to bring people to Himself, and to set an example of how we are to love all:

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. (Mt 5:44-45)

Did our heavenly Father not know about the plans to attack these sites? Of course He did. Yet He chose not to intervene, just as He has chosen so many times in the past. This doesn't mean that the people who were destroyed were more evil than anyone else. For that matter, there may have been many true believers in Christ who perished in that horror.

For those who insist that God would never bring destruction upon men, I point them to the many warnings in Scripture about His judgments as well as His chastisement of His children:

“I am YHWH, and there is no one else; there is no God beside me. I girded you even though you have not known Me, so that they may know from the rising of the sun, and from the west, that there is no one beside Me. I am YHWH, and there is no one else.

“I form the light, and create darkness. I make peace, and create evil. I YHWH do all these things.” (Isa 45:5-7)

“And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to children: ‘My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when you are rebuked by Him, for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons. For what son is he whom the father does not chasten?”

“But if you are without chastisement, of which all are partakers, then you are bastards, and not sons. (Heb 12:5-8)

The evil that God creates is not sinfulness but circumstances that mete out justice to evildoers. Sometimes it is difficult to distinguish between His judgment on evildoers and His chastening of His children. The distinction is that the former is meant to destroy unrepentant sinners, while the latter is meant to drive His children from sin and back into their Father's arms. Chastisement may also be used to prevent further sin on the part of God's children (1 Cor 5:1-5).

When we speak of God's judgment it is not with gladness of heart. And we must explain that judgment is not a bad thing; it is meant to effect good things for the purpose of God's Kingdom. His Kingdom and His will take precedent over the mundane concerns of men. We cannot blame God for the evil that man brings upon himself, sometimes in conscientious defiance of God, sometimes through ignorance and innocence. It is up to every individual to seek God's will for his life and to conform his life to God's will. Only in the shadow of His wings is there safety, not necessarily from evil things that happen in this life, but from utter destruction of one's spiritual life which will result in eternal separation from God.

As far as why this particular evil struck where it did and not in the midst of greater sin, God often strikes at the heart of a nation, not at individual pockets of sin. The financial and governing hearts of the U.S. are New York and Washington, D.C., respectively. The Lord may be warning us, giving us an opportunity to consider where we stand as a nation in relation to Him. Or He may have already given us up, and these attacks are the first wave—a prelude of worse to come. Only time will tell.

However, do not think that adversity—even of the magnitude witnessed in New York and Washington, D.C., will necessarily cause Americans to truly repent of their sins. God's Word describes how men will refuse to repent even under worse adversity:

And I heard another out of the altar say, “Even so, Lord God Almighty, Your judgments are true and righteous.”

And the fourth angel poured out his vial upon the sun, and power was given to him to scorch men with fire.

And men were scorched with great heat, and blasphemed the name of God, who has power over these plagues. And they did not repent to give Him glory.

And the fifth angel poured out his vial upon the seat of the beast. And his kingdom was full of darkness, and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and did not repent of their deeds. (Rv 16:7-11)

It is a sad truth that men love their sins more than they love eternal life. The perils America is facing today did not come about by accident. Although Satan is working his plan for world domination, God is the one who ultimately decides how that plan will be implemented. It is His judgment that is calling for America's demise. And the only hope we have is for the nation as a whole to repent.

But rather than choose Jesus as Lord and Savior, the nation has chosen to worship other gods, including the god of self. The mores of our society are reflected in the movies that, year after year, break box office records; in the music that sells by the millions of copies; in the television programs that, because of their popularity, enjoy the prime-time slots.

Children are more rebellious than ever, and parents, to a large extent, don't care.

Even the least sinful do not take their sins seriously enough to repent and obey God. If we were a truly godly nation we would be able to enjoy God's protection without having to rely on the strength of armed forces. But we are not a godly nation; we have forgotten God.

Only the most naïve today would trust government to do what is right unless it served the government's best interests as well. Be that as it may, we must not forget that all authority is ordained by God. Even Saddam Hussein enjoyed his power at the behest of God. And whatever comes of today's crisis, it is in God's hands. Let us realize that the United States has suffered this calamity—and may well suffer worse—because the people have rejected God.

### THE CHURCHES' SINS

We cannot place the blame on unbelievers only. The churches are as worldly as the world. We believe that because Jesus died for us we have special privileges to live as we choose. Christians enjoy the same ungodly media productions as do their unbelieving neighbors; their children's idols are the same as those of the world's children. Because Christian parents are too weak to rule their children, they allow evil to exist in their homes. And for the most part we are unconcerned that the tortuous chambers of Hades exist and that our families and friends who do not know Jesus are headed there.

Our Lord's words to the assembly at Laodicea are just as well suited for the churches in America today:

"I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I would rather you were cold or hot.

"So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.

"Because you say, 'I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing,' and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, I counsel you to buy from Me gold tried in the fire, so that you may be rich, and white clothing so that you may be clothed and that the shame of your nakedness does not appear. And anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see.

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous therefore, and repent." (Rv 3:15-19)

This last verse is our hope. In spite of our sins, God gives us the chance to repent because He loves us. The course in which we find ourselves is never hopeless as long as we remember to trust Him. If the nation is lost, it doesn't mean we must be lost.

Before God judges the ungodly, He judges those who call themselves His people. If His judgment has begun upon America, Christians should take heed that, perhaps, His judgment has already been in effect against the churches.

Most people equate judgment with physical destruction or eternal damnation. True, God does at times judge the ungodly through physical destruction. But His judgment against those who claim the name of Jesus takes a more subtle, yet more terrible form. Religious men who depart from the truths of God's Word are struck with spiritual blindness (Ro 1:28). Not only have they

departed from truth, they are no longer able to perceive truth in order to find their way back to God. They may even be religious and pious. But this is apostasy from which there is no return.

Witness the condition of the majority of today's churches and denominations who are moving on the fast track back to Rome—who perceive God to be found in all religions, even those that overtly deny Jesus as the only-begotten Son of God.

The truth is that God's judgment has already come to the religious communities that comprise today's Christianity. Pastors turn deaf ears to those who warn them that they are leading their people into spiritual error. They see nothing wrong with melding human philosophy, psychology, even New Age deceptions and Roman Catholic mysticism, with biblical truths. They think that because they hold to the "essential doctrines" of Christianity it matters little what else they heap on top of those doctrines. And by all accounts, this has become the norm rather than the exception within the churches. God's Word is fraught with warnings against those who do such things:

"These people draw near to Me with their mouths, and honor Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. But they worship Me in vain, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (Mt 15:8-9)

Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. (Col 2:8)

Let no man deceive you with vain words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the children of disobedience.

Therefore, do not be partakers with them.

For you were at one time darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth), proving what is acceptable to the Lord.

And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them. (Eph 5:6-11)

Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience, and of unfeigned faith, from which some having swerved have turned aside to vain jangling, desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say, nor what they affirm. (1 Ti 1:5-7)

O Timothy, keep that which is committed to your trust, avoiding profane and vain babblings, and oppositions of science, falsely so called, which some professing have erred concerning the faith. (1 Ti 6:20-21)

But shun profane and vain babblings: for they will increase unto more ungodliness. (2 Ti 2:16)

There are many such warnings about mingling truth with error, but I've chosen to cite these because they contain a common word. All that is not of God is "vain." That is, they neither contain, nor produce, anything of value, but are destructive to one's spiritual welfare.

If, then, God's judgment is against America, who really is to blame? Is it the homosexuals and abortionists as Falwell said? Or is it rather the religious people who have turned away from the purity of God's truth and have embraced doctrines of demons? Is it not possible that God has allowed evil to increase in society precisely because evil has not gone unchecked, but has continually increased, in the churches that name the name of Jesus?

Is it possible that, rather than the homosexuals and abortionists, it is (unthinkable to some as it seems) the Christians that have brought this upon us?

Are the major leaders of Christianity godly men? Or are they opportunists who think of their positions as means to temporal wealth, power, the esteem of men, or any or all of these?

Of course, I have to placate those who defend their own pastors by saying that not all are in that category. I am speaking of the general condition of the churches. But I would say also that the majority of such who read these words would not recognize themselves in them. And that's the real tragedy.

Some churches are filling to overflowing, prompting some Christian leaders to suggest that this could be the beginning of the great end-time revival they've been expecting. Unfortunately, there is no scriptural basis to believe in an end-time revival.

No doubt there will be some souls who will turn to the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation during this time. God will use this evil to accomplish His purposes in individual lives. But do not mistake increased religious fervor for spiritual regeneration. The general condition of mankind's heart—even of those in the churches—is still, as Jeremiah said, "deceitful above all things and desperately wicked." There are no atheists in foxholes, but not everyone in the foxholes is born again by the Spirit of God.

Don't, for a moment, think I have not had to come to grips with my own carnality through the years. By God's grace I've been convicted on many occasions for my sins. That is why I choose to address issues rather than men's personal sins. But there comes a time when we must call things as they are. The spiritual condition of the churches is abominable even while, in many cases, they are enjoying unprecedented growth and prosperity.

They cite 2 Chronicles 7:14, and emblazon it over maps of the United States as if it applies to this country. But it does not apply to the United States. It applied to Israel which had fallen into apostasy. If it has any meaning today it is not for the country but for the churches that are called by His name. Perhaps the churches should post that Scripture over photographs of their own congregations. Better that they appeal to Jeremiah 18:7-10:

"At the time I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up, and to pull down, and to destroy it, if that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them.

"And at the time I speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it, if it does evil in My sight so that it does not obey My voice, then I will repent of the good, of which I said I would benefit them."

Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth (Mt 5:13). But He warned that if the salt has lost its flavor it is good for nothing but to be cast out and trampled under the feet of men.

When did the Body of Christ cease to be the salt of this land? The destructive elements have been at work from the very beginning. Yet for a time the general populous of the United States at least recognized the need to live according to the biblical ethic of God's Word. We have enjoyed unprecedented prosperity, freedom and security for over two centuries. Within one hour all three of those blessings were attacked, and remain threatened.

In spite of all this, I see a wonderful possibility that the evil that manifests in our midst will cause the Body of Christ to become more purified in its expression of the true faith. Persecution and tribulation cannot but purge the assemblies of the false brethren—those who feign faith in Jesus in order to gain power over His people, or to delude them into following spiritual error.

Paul tells us that Jesus would present to Himself His people without spot or wrinkle:

Therefore as the called out are subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.

Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the called out, and gave Himself for it, so that He may sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word—so that he may present it to Himself a glorious called-out company, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing, but that it would be holy and without blemish. (Eph 5:24-27)

Peter describes false believers as spots and blemishes:

But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who secretly will bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction....Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceptions while they feast with you. (2 Pe 2:1-13)

See also Jude 1:11-13.

The false believers cannot stand in the face of tribulation. They will leave the fold. In many cases the true believers will be forced to leave the churches that have given themselves over to deception.

No denomination is safe from the wolves that mingle with the sheep. In many cases the wolves are the leaders of the denominations or of individual churches, whether denominational or not.

In whom are we placing our trust for eternal life? Is it in the pope, the leaders of a denomination, the pastor or priest of the church we attend? Is it even in the tenets of the church, whether true or not?

Salvation is not attained by knowing the truth, or even following those who proclaim the truth. Salvation is in trusting Jesus Christ for having died in our place on the cross of Calvary. His death paid the price for all our sins; all we need do is trust

in that great sacrifice and surrender to His will—obey Him as He commands us to do. Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved (Ac 16:31).

Let us put away our idols and traditions of churches and men, and follow only Jesus, the Way, the Truth and the Life, by whom only is the way to the Father.

### HOW DO WE RESPOND?

If we have trusted Jesus Christ for our eternal salvation; if we have determined to obey His commands, what should our attitude be toward the Islamic terrorists that have wreaked this awful thing and threaten everything we hold dear in this country? Are we not to love them, too?

Some would be angered at that suggestion. But let us not lose sight of the Lord's commandment to love our enemies:

“You have heard that it has been said, ‘You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.’

“But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, so that you may be the children of your Father who is in Heaven. For He makes His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust.

“For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?

“And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

“Therefore, you be perfect, even as your Father who is in heaven is perfect.” (Mt 5:43-48)

This is an impossibility without the prompting of the Holy Spirit who reminds us to submit to our Father's will for our lives. Yet if we are going to be true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we must conform our lives to His commands:

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what is that good, and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Ro 12:1-3).

Evil demands retribution from government; it does not demand revenge from individuals—especially individual believers in Christ. We understand God's love for justice and the need for evil to be rooted out in society, but we are also sorrowed by that need.

Do not rejoice when your enemy falls, and do not let your heart be glad when he stumbles, lest YHWH see it, and it displease Him, and He turn away His wrath from him. (Pr 24:17-18)

We may exult in victory, but we should mourn our enemy. Can we take pleasure knowing the end that awaits the ungodly when they must stand before a just and fearsome God?

No matter what evil befalls us we must guard our hearts from offending God. Vengeance is His, not ours.

It may well be that the nation will have to spill much blood, and much blood of our own citizens will be spilled, before

anything is resolved—if it ever is resolved. The believer in Jesus must recognize the right and duty of governments to protect their citizens from attacks. But that does not mean we can personally indulge in blood-lust in the process. Strength and determination to punish evil that continues to threaten the land can be separated from hatred and vengeance which betray a heart not right with God.

And while we may have to join hands with the ungodly to help preserve the nation, we must keep ourselves pure in our spiritual fellowship. We must risk the misunderstanding and even anger of those who wonder why we cannot join with them in ecumenical prayer gatherings and public religious demonstrations. They may look upon us as unloving or uncaring for the plight of the nation. That is a risk we must take.

Public officials who claim to be believers in Christ are especially vulnerable to such misunderstanding.

Consider the position in which President Bush found himself. He claims to be a “born again” Christian. For that reason he has received criticism for praying at the National Cathedral with those of different religions. No true believer in Christ can accept that we are praying to the same God. Those who reject Christ are anti-Christ, no matter how loving and lovely they may be.

But this does not mean we are to hate them or to shun them. We must be with them if we are to win them to Christ. But the role of a Christian president is especially difficult.

Had President Bush refused to partake of that most public of memorials within the nation's capitol he would have been branded as divisive. He would have lost his ability to lead, not because God would not be on His side, but because the stiff-necked majority of people would refuse to follow his lead. They perceive the president's duty as that of uniting the people, not dividing them. The non-believer does not understand that the purity of our faith requires us to separate ourselves when it comes to spiritual fellowship. He does not understand that a truly godly leader is the best defense for the people if they would but accept his leadership without murmuring. God is greater than the majority.

Yet it's precisely because of the ungodly thinking of the masses that it is virtually impossible for a true believer to be solid in his commitment while trying to convey the message that he is the president of all the people, not just those of like faith with him.

And, truly, all the people, regardless of their religious beliefs, look to the president for leadership at times like this. How can he alienate them?

When asked to participate in interfaith services, the best a believing leader in the secular realm of government can do is state his belief in Jesus Christ as the only way to the Father, then reassure everyone that, even though he cannot fellowship with them spiritually, he is one with them in every other way—he is the president of all the people.

Sadly, President Bush did not take that route. Nor, for that matter, have any of his predecessors or his successor, who also claims to be a Christian.

It is not a matter of divorcing our faith from the mundane aspects of our lives; it is a matter of expressing our testimony with the demonstration of love toward all men. That, after all, is the message of our faith: that God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, so that whoever believes in Him would not perish but have everlasting life (John 3:16).

We cannot win souls by compromising the truth. But neither can we win souls by failing to express our love to others. Believers in Christ should be at the forefront of help at this time. We should not shrink back and say, “they deserved it because they didn’t repent of their sins.” We cannot refuse aid and comfort to others because they reject God’s truth. We are the expressions of God’s truth to a dying world. Let us not be arrogant and self-righteous in our attitudes.

When people are suffering we do not make distinctions of race, religious belief or even sexual orientation. Would any believer caught in the rubble of destruction refuse the helping hand of a homosexual, or not extend a helping hand to a homosexual? Would a white supremacist refuse the hand of a black man? Would a black supremacist refuse the hand of a white man?

When it comes to fellowship in the name of Jesus we must make distinctions. We cannot fellowship with those who are not of the faith. But when it comes to demonstrating the love that Christ commanded of us we must love all men—even our enemies.

As individuals we are not allowed to hate our enemies or to seek vengeance for wrongs done to us. But there are laws for individuals and there are laws for governments. No government would be fulfilling its duty to its citizens if it did not make use of every means to protect them. Sometimes that means going to war.

Whether or not believers should involve themselves militarily to defend the nation is between them and God. No doubt there will be many at odds on this, but we must not judge those on either side.

### **AN END-TIME SCENARIO**

Up to this point we have been looking at current events from the standpoint of what has been revealed in the news. But there are far greater issues of a spiritual nature which are not revealed in the news—not even in most churches. Those issues have to do with end-time biblical prophecy.

It isn’t the purpose of this writing to present an exhaustive eschatology. We offer that in our book, *The Day of Yahweh: A Biblical Eschatology with a Study on the Book of Revelation* (Sword Publishers). At this point we wish to concern ourselves with warning our brethren in Christ of the serious possibility that persecution is on its way for those who insist that Jesus Christ is the only Way to our Father God.

To begin, we must understand that the forces that control the governments of the world are not of this world; they are spiritual forces that God is using to accomplish His purpose in redeeming His creation from control of His enemies in the spiritual realm.

Scripture indicates that in the last days a great political leader will arise to deceive the entire world. He will head a coalition of

nations that at one time comprised the Roman Empire and the Ottoman Empire. Many speculate that the European Union is that coalition. I believe it’s possible that there will be a unification of the Middle East and North African nations with the Western European nations. This seems somewhat likely, at least at this time.

But another man will also arise who will deceive the entire world into giving spiritual allegiance to that leader. To do this they will have to pledge their souls and reject the God of Heaven.

The first to arise is he whom believers in Christ call “anti-Christ.” He will be a political leader who will gain the allegiance of the world through his ability to bring peace to a war-torn humanity. With the unleashing of terrorism throughout the world—terrorism whose perpetrators are hidden in virtually every nation—the stage may well be set for a world-wide conflagration that will cause men everywhere to call for peace at any price.

My personal conviction is that the last-days’ anti-Christ will be a Muslim with strong connections to the West, perhaps from Turkey. Time will tell.

Today’s political climate does not lean toward a major conflict between nations such as was experienced during World War II. Rather, it leans toward a revival of the conflict between Islam and the Holy Roman Empire. And this is where the second man to arise comes in. A religious leader whom Scripture calls the False Prophet will perform miracles, signs and wonders, even to the calling down of fire from the heavens. His spiritual power will give him influence over the masses, which he will use to cause them to worship the first man as if he were God Himself. Thus, the two will unite the world to gather them against the Lord Jesus when He returns to establish His millennial reign upon the earth. In the process, those within the anti-Christ’s kingdom will be required to give their allegiance to him by taking his mark on their hand or forehead (Rv 13:16–20:4), or be persecuted even unto death.

At a certain point in time, the true believers in the Lord Jesus will be taken out of the earth to meet the Lord in the air, after which He will pour out His judgments upon the inhabitants of the earth. Yet the believers will not be taken out before undergoing great tribulation themselves at the hand of the anti-Christ.

If we are not prepared to face the possibility that we will be here during that time, and that the Body of Christ will suffer great persecution, we may well be lulled into a false sense of security. When the “Great Escape” foretold by so-called “prophecy teachers” of a particular eschatological school fails to materialize, might we find ourselves lulled right into the prophesied “falling away”?

In this day, as never before, the Body of Christ must take special care how we live our lives and to whom we look for understanding. ❖

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