



JIHAD!

by Jeff Reich

Pastor Richard O'Fill called me at 7:15 a.m. (Pacific Time) from Florida, September 11th. He was on his way to catch a flight from Orlando to come to Laymen Ministries for video taping.

"I don't think I will be making it to your place today. Have you heard what happened?" he said with a bit of shock in his voice.

"I saw something on the internet about a plane crashing into the one of the World Trade Center Towers, but it didn't really say much. I thought a small private plane had hit the building or something," I replied.

"Jeff, you can't even image this! Go to a TV and see it for yourself. This is going to change the world as we know it."

For the next several hours our staff and myself sat awestruck, watching the scenes of the towers crashing down over and over.

Jihad? Holy War?

Imam Sayed Hassan Qazwini is the religious leader of the Islamic Center of America in Detroit, the biggest such center in the United States. He joined the Islamic Seminary in Qum, Iran, in 1980, where he studied the highest Islamic studies available. He came to the Islamic Center of America in 1997, which includes a mosque in which he preaches. In a recent interview he explained that the concept of "jihad" originally was intended to mean the battle that one fights within one's self to overcome the evil tendencies of the heart, and to bring it into subjection to Allah.

Allah, by the way, is Arabic for "God"--historically the same God worshipped by Abraham, through whom Hagar's son, Ishmael (Gen. 21:17, 18), originated the descendants of the Arabic nations. (Please do not think that I am suggesting that these terrorists worship the same God we do!)

Should there be holy wars today? In the true Muslim sense, Yes! These “holy wars” are being fought in the hearts and minds of all the peoples of the earth every day as to whom will receive our affections—God or self? Do we choose this day to serve the true God of heaven? Do we “die daily” to self? 1 Corinthians 15:31. This is a question every person should ask himself. Can we, with the Apostle Paul exclaim, “And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men”? Acts 24:16.

The concept of Jihad, explains Mr. Qazwini, was later twisted as Muslims started defending their faith against attackers, or in some cases, becoming aggressors for their faith, as during the rise of the Ottoman Empire. Jihad then became a phrase of “holy war,” and is now pushed to its greatest extreme by radical Muslim fundamentalists who see Jihad as a means of establishing the Muslim faith universally.

Who’s Who

Just who and what is a Muslim? After traveling in many countries, visiting with, and actually having friendships with Muslims, I know that most Christians have a stereotypical view of who Muslims are and what they stand for.

While speaking in a church recently, I asked a congregation this question: “If I were a Muslim and I asked you, ‘What is a Christian?’ what would you tell me?” The answer could be: “having a priest place a wafer of bread on my tongue and bless me,” “going to a temple for baptism for the dead,” “jumping up and down to loud Christian rock music and then being ‘slain in the Spirit,’” “going to church on the 7th day of the week,” “attending the local Jehovah’s Witness ‘meetings,’” or any number of other “faces” Christianity wears around the world. Let’s admit it, if we are on the outside looking in, it is quite confusing.

Yet, in the Muslim world it is the same. There are many, many variations of the face of Islam—ranging from right-wing militants; tribal groups with their own traditions and customs; to moderate and even liberal persuasions. Islam, like most of Christianity, has drifted from its original foundation based upon the Koran, to traditions, customs, and creeds that are not even in harmony with the original foundation.

Many Muslims I have met, especially those from educated backgrounds, hold to many of the same views I hold as a Christian—modesty, honesty, abstinence from alcohol, not eating pork, believe we are living in the last days, etc. The vast majority of Muslims are moderates.

Vatican and Muslim Relations

Exactly 11 days after the September 11th attacks, where was Pope John Paul II? In Astana, Kazakstan, a mostly Muslim country in the Middle East region which was once part of the former U.S.S.R. The pope arrived the following Saturday on his first foreign trip since the devastating terrorist attacks in the United States, and during the buildup of U.S. military forces in the region. During his four-day visit he spoke of the need for “peace and justice in the aftermath of the attacks against the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, which he strongly condemned.”

Then on Wednesday, Oct. 3, 2001, just 22 days after the terrorist attacks in the U.S., Muslim and Christian religious leaders met in Rome for a two-day summit dedicated to promoting peace following the terrorist attacks of Sept. 11 on the United States. This Islamic Christian Summit was organized by the St. Egidio Community in Rome. Such important figures as Cardinal Roger Etchegaray, President Emeritus of the Pontifical Council for Justice and Peace, and M. Abdullah Omar Nasseef, President of the World Muslim Congress from Saudi Arabia, attended and spent time visiting (see picture) during a break in the summit.



Pope John Paul II arrived Saturday, September 22 in Kazakstan, a mostly Muslim nation and was welcomed as a voice of reason in the tense climate in Central Asia following the terrorist attacks in the United States. (Bottom Photo) He shakes hands with President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev shortly after his arrival at Astana's airport in Kazakstan.

Muslims and Catholics both hold to many of the same moral values and both extol the Virgin Mary. Even though historically the Catholic Church and Muslims fought with each other during the “Crusades,” their relationship has been growing stronger over the last several years. It is apparent that the Vatican hopes to be a mediator between East and West. As one watches the developments, it is clear that, on one hand Muslim extremists are being singled out and condemned by the large moderate Muslim majority. This has caused a swing among Islamic moderates toward being “friendlier” and being more “united” with the West, and Christianity in particular. Could we see the beginnings of a closer Ecumenism than ever thought possible between Christians and Muslims, at least in areas of common ground? And has not the Catholic Church historically, always bent to accept/absorb the philosophies, teachings, and cultures of other nations and peoples for the purpose of winning influence?

From Freedom to Decadency

America has stood, in the psyche of most of the world, as “the land of freedom.” We have fought for it for ourselves and for others. Being founded upon Christian principles has made us what we are—or should I say, what we used to be. Even today this country is the first to come to the aid of those around the world who have been oppressed, hurt in tragedy, famine, or natural disaster. Billions of dollars have been given out in the form of U.S. aid and through charitable organizations. We surely look like a “lamb” (Rev. 13:11)—Christian in appearance. We were a unique nation, being founded upon Christian principles, while at the same time strongly promoting the separation of church and state—giving people the right to worship, each according to the dictates of his own conscience.



Historically the reason behind the separation of church and state was to protect the state from the evils of the church—firsthand experience of which the Protestants had, who fled to this country to escape the persecution of the Papacy, which controlled kings and kingdoms. But today, the tide of thinking has changed, and many believe that this separation was really to protect the church from the evils of the state! We, as Adventists, should strongly uphold the separation of church and state, yet never deny our Christian heritage as a nation.

The America we live in today has changed: liberalism, pluralism, immigration of other cultures with their values and religious beliefs, have contributed to this change. Combined this with the abuse of our freedom by some, and with the aid of Hollywood, our country has been led down an immoral, decadent path. Homosexuality, promiscuity, drugs, and violent crime have painted a new face for America and its values. The ACLU, an organization that in the past has protected peoples' civil rights, has waged a war against God. Are they going to try to get "In God We Trust" off the back of the dollar? And yet this same group has lately stood to protect homosexuals and the rights of occult groups, such as the "Wiccans."

America, in the mind's of Osama Bin Laden and his followers, is the evil America--The Great Satan.

The events of September 11th could trigger a series of events that are the fulfillment of prophecy as we understand it. While on the other hand, it plays well into the minds of those who believe in the rapture and have bought into the Left Behind theology—setting the stage for the counterfeit of all counterfeits. Are we at the end? No, not yet. Satan is a master at three steps forward, two steps back, in conditioning the minds of people while slowly and surely gaining ground. In this case, Satan has taken five steps forward and only two steps back. This is not the beginning of the battle of Armageddon, nor the secret rapture. But it is setting the stage for legislation of moral issues here in the U.S. as freedoms once taken for granted are now vanishing. Life, as we have known it, will now forever be different.



Eroding Freedom

Freedom can be used or abused. If abused—we loose. We are all aware that freedom in this country has been fast eroding, especially over the last 30 years. The freedoms lost could be listed, and how government has been slowly clamping down on these liberties. Some freedom has been lost simply by people abusing their personal freedoms, or in other situations, it has been overtaken by the power hungry for the purpose of sheer control.

Now we have terrorists who are operating at a very serious level on American soil. Our country's freedom plays into the hands of those who orchestrated these attacks. What to do?—"Tighten security!" That means less freedom. Why? To protect us from terrorism.

A recent TV program was entitled, "Fighting Terrorism. Protecting Freedom." What a paradox! How can you do both? Who are the terrorists? They might be your next door neighbor! To fight terrorism means to: spy, wire tap communications, provide military control of airports, engage in armed conflicts, etc. What will come next?—a national ID card, check points between states?



Reuters reported on Saturday, September 29, that "Americans, firmly behind the administration's war on terrorism, are ready to give up some civil liberties if it helps catch those responsible for the September 11 attacks in New York and Washington D.C., according to a poll released on Saturday." Give up civil liberties? Yes, life as we know it has now forever changed. I have visited many former communist countries and have seen the many check points along the highways, with their concrete buildings that housed armed police to check on the movements of their own citizens.

Redefining America

Right now many Americans are redefining who they are and where we came from as a nation. I heard one person on a radio talk show state that "if the Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists who have come to this Christian country don't like it, then get on a plane and go back where you came from!"

Many Americans, busily living their lives, paying their bills, thinking about their jobs—their future—are also starting to ask themselves the question: "Do I really believe in God? And if so, should I give more consideration toward my Christian beliefs? Maybe I should begin going to church sometime." These thoughts are common among many people. It is reflected in TV programs; Ecumenism and Christian unity is intermixed with slogans such as "United We Stand. God Bless America!" Right now there is a new religious push taking place as America examines itself in light of our history, present, and future.

A friend recently called me from a Sunday-keeping church, and he informed me that churches are full right now. People are scared, and others are reconsidering their relationship with God.

Even other countries, many of which profess very little "Christian" faith, are looking at recent events as a call back to their roots, as well, as in the case of Germany, for example. Some 10,000 people took part in a memorial service in front of the Catholic Virgin Mary cathedral in Erfurt, Germany, Sunday, Sept. 16th, in commemoration of the victims of the terrorist attacks in the U.S. As Germany has been increasingly becoming a secular, deist nation, this type of religious turnout is truly amazing.

In Japan, which has become a highly secularized society, with its historical religious roots in Buddhism, the Self-Defense Force officers offered a silent prayer during a memorial service for victims of the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks.

This was a Japanese government-sponsored memorial service in Tokyo, Sunday, Sept. 23rd. About 3,300 people, including Japanese Prime Minister Junichiro Koizumi and U.S. Ambassador to Japan Howard Baker, attended the one-hour ceremony.

President Bush has been encouraging people to have religious tolerance toward those who hold faiths other than Christianity, then ends his speeches with “May God bless America,” and “Please remember to pray for the families who lost loved ones in this terrible tragedy.” What message is being sent here? We are a Christian nation—which is a far cry from the pluralistic, secularized America of just a year ago.

When the attack first came, President Bush made the dreadful mistake of stating that “we are (beginning) a crusade to stop terrorism.” To say that America (an “evil Israeli/Christian” nation) is on a “crusade” is sending a message to Muslims that we are on a “holy war” mission comparable to the intent of the Catholic Church when the Muslims, during the time of the Ottoman Empire, were compelled by the sword to be converted to Christianity. To a right-wing Muslim, use of the term “Crusades!” is truly a call to “Jihad.” President Bush later apologized for his inappropriate choice of words.



God’s Blessings Removed

As already mentioned, we cannot help but notice the growing immorality in our country, and at the same time we see a growing movement among the Christian churches proclaiming the need to protect family values by the means of some type of moral legislation.

Jerry Falwell said that the “American Civil Liberties Union, with abortion providers, gay rights proponents and federal courts that had banned school prayer and legalized abortion, had so weakened the United States spiritually that the nation was left exposed to these terrorist attacks.” He went on to say that “the ACLU has got to take a lot of blame for this,” according to a partial transcript of remarks he made on The 700 Club, Pat Robertson’s religious program.

In the transcript, distributed by the liberal organization, People for the American Way, Mr. Falwell described the ACLU. as “throwing God out successfully with the help of the federal court system—throwing God out of the public square, out of the schools.” Referring to the attacks, he said he would point a figurative finger at those “who have tried to secularize America” and say, “You helped this happen.” According to the transcript, Mr. Robertson said, “I totally concur.”

Falwell said he did not intend to shift blame from the terrorists. “I sincerely believe that the collective efforts of many secularists during the past generation, resulting in the expulsion (of God) from our schools and from the public square, has left us vulnerable,” he said, and that he did not believe God “had anything to do with the tragedy,” but that God had permitted it.

“He lifted the curtain of protection,” Mr. Falwell said, “and I believe that if America does not repent and return to a genuine faith and dependence on Him, we may expect more tragedies, unfortunately.” (Adapted from an article entitled “Terror Attacks, Images of Terror,” by Gustav Niebuhr)

Terrorist Attacks—Moral Legislation?

Tie this together with the growing economic problems our country faces, especially triggered by these attacks, and then add the increasing numbers of natural calamities over the last several years--all is starting to formulate a powerful resurgence of the religious right in America.

As already stated by men such as Robertson and Falwell, these calamities and economic problems have come as judgments of God, and we need to call our country to repentance; our country needs to get back on a moral basis so we can once again secure God’s blessing. This could be the beginning of enactment of moral legislation in which both the Evangelical and Catholic bodies may promote Sunday as the national day of rest. The stage is set. What happens over the next few years, or even months, could promote Sunday legislation. We have been warned years ago:



Glenn Beck on his talk show March 15th, 2011 said the 9.0 earthquake in Japan was “a message from God” and “then he went onto stress that people should follow the Ten Commandments from the Bible.” - DailyMail 3/15/11

“Men in responsible positions . . . will point to calamities on land and sea--to the storms of wind, the floods, the earthquakes, the destruction by fire--as judgments indicating God’s displeasure because Sunday is not sacredly observed.”--Christian Service, p. 155.

Eventually “rulers and legislators, in order to secure public favor,” as well as “to secure popularity and patronage,” will “yield to the popular demand for a law enforcing Sunday observance.”--The Great Controversy, p. 592; Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 451.

There is not enough room here to do justice to this subject, but if you have not heard the audio tape, The Sunday Lay Disappointment (AT1), you will want to order it from our office.

Ellen White in 1906 stated that, “I know that one day the great buildings there (in New York) will be thrown down by the turning and overturning of God’s power. From the light given me, I know that destruction is in the world. One word from the Lord, one touch of His mighty power, and these massive structures will fall. Scenes will take place the fearfulness of which we can not imagine.”--Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, July 5th, 1906.

In volume nine of the Testimonies, pp. 11-14, there are some interesting items that point to where we are today: “We are living in the time of the end. The fast-fulfilling signs of the times declare that the coming of Christ is near at hand. The days in which we live are solemn and important. The Spirit of God is gradually but surely being withdrawn from the earth. Plagues and judgments are already falling upon the despisers of the grace of God.

The calamities by land and sea, the unsettled state of society, the alarms of war, are portentous. They forecast approaching events of the greatest magnitude. . . . Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones...

“On one occasion, when in New York City, I was in the night season called upon to behold buildings rising story after story toward heaven. These buildings were warranted to be fireproof, and they were erected to glorify the owners and builders. Higher and still higher these buildings rose, and in them the most costly material was used. Those to whom these buildings belonged were not asking themselves: ‘How can we best glorify God?’ The Lord was not in their thoughts. . . . The scene that next passed before me was an alarm of fire. Men looked at the lofty and supposedly fire-proof buildings and said: “They are perfectly safe.” But these buildings were consumed as if made of pitch. The fire engines could do nothing to stay the destruction. The firemen were unable to operate the engines.

“There are not many, even among educators and statesmen, who comprehend the causes that underlie the present state of society. Those who hold the reins of government are not able to solve the problem of moral corruption, poverty, pauperism, and increasing crime. They are struggling in vain to place business operations on a more secure basis. If men would give more heed to the teaching of God’s word, they would find a solution of the problems that perplex them.”

Then on page 14 this comment is made: “The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place.” Could recent events be a partial fulfillment of “tidings out of the east and out of the north shall trouble him: therefore he shall go forth with great fury to destroy, and utterly to make away many”? (Dan. 11:44). It is just a thought.

The next several months will be interesting as we watch what happens. Prophecy is fulfilling. Life as we know it has changed. Our freedom will never be the same. God is calling us back to Him. “Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.” Yet, after the adrenaline wears off, after the shock wears off, where will be the allegiance of your heart? In obedience to Christ and the truth, or on the side of man and human tradition? The only way to know the difference is to study the “Book” for yourself and be led by His Holy Spirit. Oh! And to have the “real Jihad” take place in your heart by “dying daily to self.”—1 Corinthians 15:31.



The prophecy of Daniel chapter 2 depicts the destruction of the world's earthly kingdoms (represented by the statue) with the coming of Christ's kingdom represented as a stone.