

Why Radical Muslims Hate You

(Short op-ed piece)

If you are a Westerner, an American, a non-Muslim, or a Muslim of a different stripe than they, then some radical Muslims hate you.

Why? The complex answer involves history, culture, politics, religion and psychology. Of course, many—some would say most—Muslims are peace loving and deplore terrorism. Islam is quite diverse. Extremist Muslims do not represent all Muslims any more than white supremacists represent all Christians. Not all “radical” Muslims are violent or hateful. But understanding extremist Muslim hatred is essential to interpreting our post-9/11 world.

Osama Bin Ladin calls on Muslims to “obey God’s command to kill the Americans and plunder their possessions...to kill Americans and their allies, both civil and military...” He and his sympathizers want to eliminate Western influence and restore their version of Islam to the world.

Would you believe that dancing in American churches helped fuel some radical Muslim anger today? Princeton Near East scholar Bernard Lewis illustrates.

In 1948, Sayyid Qutb visited the United States for Egypt’s Ministry of Education. His stay left him shocked with what he perceived as moral degeneracy and sexual promiscuity.

He wrote that even American religion was tainted by materialism and consumerism. Churches marketed their services to the public like merchants and entertainers. Success, big numbers, “fun” and having “a good time” seemed crucial to American churches.

He especially deplored clergy-sanctioned dances at church

recreation halls. When the ministers lowered the lights, the dances became hot. Qutb's PG description: "The dance is inflamed by the notes of the gramophone...the dance-hall becomes a whirl of heels and thighs, arms enfold hips, lips and breasts meet, and the air is full of lust." He cited the famous Kinsey Reports as evidence of American sexual debauchery.

Qutb, who was dark skinned, also experienced racism in America. Back in Egypt, Qutb joined the Muslim Brothers organization. Imprisonment and torture made his writings more militant. Qutb became what Georgetown University religion and international affairs professor John Esposito calls "the architect of radical Islam."

Some Muslim Brotherhood groups, offshoots, and alumni are mainstream and nonviolent. Others have a violent legacy. A militant offshoot, Islamic Jihad, assassinated Egyptian president Anwar Sadat. Esposito notes that Abdullah Azzam, a radicalized former Muslim Brother, significantly influenced Osama bin Ladin. Former CIA Middle East case officer Robert Baer observes that a Kuwaiti Muslim Brother, Khalid Sheikh Muhammad, became a bin Ladin terror chief.

Princeton's Lewis notes that Sayyid Qutb's denunciation of American moral character became incorporated into radical Islamic ideology. For instance, he says Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini, in calling the U.S. the "Great Satan," was being consistent with the Koranic depiction of Satan not as an "imperialist" or "exploiter" but as a seducer, "the insidious tempter who whispers in the hearts of men."

The founder of the faith I follow, Jesus of Nazareth, told people to "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you." It is not emotionally easy for me to love Osama bin Ladin or to pray for him. I have to ask God for strength for that.

Certainly bin Ladin's hatred of me and my compatriots—flawed though we may be—does not justify his campaign of terror. His campaign rightly prompts national vigilance, a proverbial cost of freedom. But as we keep the powder dry, might it also be appropriate to individually reflect on the character that seems so offensive to him and his colleagues?

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Homeland Security and Privacy

A Supersnoop's Dream

Every day we seem to wake up to news about another terrorist threat, so it's not surprising that Americans are placing more of their faith in the government to protect them. But there are also important questions being raised about our loss of privacy and constitutional protections. So in this article we are going to take a look at some of these issues as we focus on the subject of homeland security.

The Department of Homeland Security was created by combining twenty-two existing agencies and 170,000 federal employees with an annual budget of approximately \$35 billion. While the implications of this megamerger of governmental agencies will be debated for some time, some columnists have already begun to question the impact it will have on our private lives.

The Washington Times called it "A Supersnoop's Dream." Columnist William Safire of the *New York Times* wrote a column entitled "You Are a Suspect" in which he warned of a dangerous intrusion into our lives. He predicted in November 2002 that if the Homeland Security Act were not amended before passage,

the following would happen to you:

- *Every purchase you make with a credit card, every magazine subscription you buy and medical prescription you fill, every Web site you visit and e-mail you send or receive, every academic grade you receive, every bank deposit you make, every trip you book and every event you attend—all these transactions and communications will go into what the Defense Department describes as a virtual centralized grand database.*
- *To this computerized dossier on your private life from commercial sources, add every piece of information that government has about you—passport application, driver's license and bridge toll records, judicial and divorce records, complaints from nosy neighbors to the F.B.I., your lifetime paper trail plus the latest hidden camera surveillance—and you have the supersnoop's dream: a Total Information Awareness about every U.S. citizen.*

It is important to point out that these concerns about a potential invasion of privacy did not start with the passage of the Homeland Security Act. Over a year ago, critics pointed to the hastily passed U.S.A. Patriot Act which widened the scope of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act and weakened 15 privacy laws.

On the other hand, there are many who argue that these new powers are necessary to catch terrorists. Cal Thomas, for example, writes that “Most Americans would probably favor a more aggressive and empowered federal government if it lessens the likelihood of further terrorism. The niceties of civil liberties appear to have been lost on the 9/11 hijackers and countries from which they came. Wartime rules must be different from those in peacetime.”[\[1\]](#)

The Patriot Act

Let's look more closely at the U.S.A. Patriot Act. When Senator Russ Feingold voted against the Act, he made these comments from the Senate floor on October 11, 2001:

"There is no doubt that if we lived in a police state, it would be easier to catch terrorists. If we lived in a country where police were allowed to search your home at any time for any reason; if we lived in a country where the government is entitled to open your mail, eavesdrop on your phone conversations, or intercept your e-mail communications; if we lived in a country where people could be held indefinitely based on what they write or think, or based on mere suspicion that they are up to no good, the government would probably discover more terrorists or would-be terrorists, just as it would find more lawbreakers generally. But that wouldn't be a country in which we would want to live."

Most would agree that the Patriot Act weakens grand jury secrecy. Already there is criticism that grand juries have become mere tools of the prosecution and have lost their independence. By destroying its secrecy, any federal official or bureaucrat can "share" grand jury testimony or wiretap information.

The Patriot Act also weakens Fourth Amendment protection against unreasonable searches and seizures. Under the Act, law-enforcement agencies can in "rare instances" search a person's home without informing that homeowner for up to ninety days. This so-called "sneak and peek" provision can be used to sneak into your home, and even implant a hidden "key logger" device on a suspect's computer (allowing federal officials to capture passwords and monitor every keystroke).

And, the Patriot Act weakens financial privacy. The bill added additional amendments and improvements to the Bank Secrecy Act

which already encourages FDIC member banks to profile account holders and report to the government (FBI, IRS, DEA) when you deviate from your usual spending or deposit habits. The Act exempts bank employees from liability for false reporting of a money laundering violation.

Michael Scardaville of the Heritage Foundation, however, isn't concerned about conferring this new power on bureaucrats. "Even if they wanted to, the program's employees simply won't have time to monitor who plays football pools, who has asthma, who surfs what Web site or even who deals cocaine or steals cars. They'll begin with intelligence reports about people already suspected of terrorism."[\[2\]](#)

Immigration Threats

Lincoln Caplan, writing in the November-December issue of *Legal Affairs* (a magazine of the Yale Law School), said that the U.S.A. Patriot Act "authorized law enforcement agencies to inspect the most personal kinds of information – medical records, bank statements, college transcripts, even church memberships. But what is more startling than the scope of these new powers is that the government can use them on people who aren't suspected of committing a crime."

Although there has been some concern expressed about the intrusion of government into our lives, an even greater concern is how the Homeland Security Act fails to address the real threat to our country through lax enforcement of immigration laws. Michelle Malkin, author of *Invasion*, cites example after example of problems at the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

Foreign students getting visas to enter the U.S. constitute a major problem that is out of control. Malkin says that the bill establishing this new department doesn't do anything about it. There is also a problem with foreigners getting tourist visas to enter the U.S. and then overstaying their

visas. The bill doesn't do anything about this problem either.

More than 115,000 people from Iraq and other Middle Eastern countries are here illegally. Some 6,000 Middle Eastern men who have defied deportation orders remain on the loose. Add these numbers to those who are here legally, but still intend harm to the United States, and you can begin to grasp the extent of the problem.

Consider the case of Hesham Mohamed Hedayet, who shot and killed people at the Los Angeles International Airport. He managed to stay in this country by obtaining a work permit after his wife won residency in a visa lottery program (given to 50,000 foreigners on a random basis).

Michelle Malkin broke the story about the Washington, D.C. area sniper suspect John Malvo. The INS had him in custody but released him. The U.S. State Department failed to obtain a warrant for the arrest of the other sniper suspect, John Muhammad, after he was suspected of using a forged birth certificate to obtain a U.S. passport.

Congress needs to take another look at both the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Act. In its rush to deal with the imminent terrorist threat, it has conferred broad powers to bureaucrats that should be refined and failed to address some crucial concerns in immigration that continue to threaten our safety. It is time for Congress to pass some common sense amendments to these two pieces of legislation.

History of Governmental Power

I think all of us would strongly support the President and Attorney General in their attempts to track down terrorists and bring them to justice. But some wonder if Congress has put too much power in the hands of the executive branch, power that could easily be abused by this administration or future administrations.

Let's consider our history. President John Adams used the Alien and Sedition Act to imprison his political enemies and curb newspaper editors critical of him. President Woodrow Wilson permitted his attorney general (Mitchell Palmer) to stop political dissent during the Palmer Raids. And President Franklin Delano Roosevelt interned thousands of Japanese-American citizens during World War II.

It is interesting that some of the greatest expansions of powers have come under Republican presidents. The first Republican president, Abraham Lincoln, suspended the writ of habeas corpus. (This is a judge's demand to bring a prisoner before him, with the intent to release people from unlawful detention.) This led to the imprisonment of physicians, lawyers, journalists, soldiers, farmers, and draft resisters. Sixteen members of the Maryland legislature were arrested in order to prevent them from voting for their state to secede from the Union. By the time the Civil War was over, 13,535 arrests had been made.

Although Democrats have often been credited with expanding the size and scope of the federal government, Republican administrations are actually the ones who have expanded various police powers. RICO and nearly all the seizure laws (where police can confiscate cars, boats, even homes without due process) were passed by Republican administrations.

Dana Milbank wrote in the *Washington Post* (Nov. 20, 2001) that "The Sept. 11 terrorist attacks and the war in Afghanistan have dramatically accelerated a push by the Bush administration to strengthen presidential powers, giving President Bush a dominance over American government exceeding that of other post-Watergate presidents and rivaling even Franklin D. Roosevelt's command."

Perhaps it is time for Congress to revisit this important topic of anti-terrorism and modify some of the provisions of the Patriot Act. Some have suggested that Congress pass

legislation that would sunset all aspects of the Patriot Act. The bill currently has sunset provisions that apply to selected portions of the legislation. But sunset provisions do not apply to the expanded powers given to the federal government which weaken the Fourth Amendment protections we are guaranteed under the Bill of Rights. The bill was touted as an emergency wartime measure, but some of the most dangerous aspects of the bill would continue on even after America wins the war on terrorism. It is time to revisit this bill and make some necessary changes.

Christian Perspective on Government and Privacy

Let's focus in on the matter of government and privacy.

To begin with, Christians must acknowledge that Romans 13:1-7 teaches that civil government is divinely ordained by God. Government bears the sword, and that means it is responsible to protect citizens from foreign invaders and from terrorists. So on the one hand, we should support efforts by our government to make our society safer.

On the other hand, we should also work to prevent unwarranted intrusions into our privacy and any violation of our constitutional liberties. In the past, drawing lines was easier because an unconstitutional search was conducted by a person who came to your door. Today we live in a cyber age where our privacy can be violated by a computer keystroke.

In the past, what used to be called public records weren't all that public. Now they are all too public. And what used to be considered private records are being made public at an alarming rate. What should we do?

First, live your life above reproach. Philippians 2:14-15 says "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God

above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.” 1 Timothy 3:2 says that an elder must be “above reproach” which is an attribute that should describe all of us. If you live a life of integrity, you don’t have to be so concerned about what may be made public.

Second, get involved. When you feel your privacy has been violated or when you believe there has been an unwarranted governmental intrusion into your life, take the time to complain. Let the person, organization, or governmental agency know your concerns. Many people fail to apply the same rules of privacy and confidentiality on a computer that they do in real life. Your complaint might change a behavior and have a positive effect.

Third, call for your member of Congress to take another look at both the Patriot Act and the Homeland Security Act. In their rush to deal with the imminent terrorist threat, Congress may have expanded federal powers too much. Track congressional legislation and write letters. Citizens need to understand that many governmental policies pose a threat to our privacy. Bureaucrats and legislators are in the business of collecting information and will continue to do so unless we set appropriate limits.

Sadly, most Americans are unaware of the growing threats to their privacy posed by government and law enforcement. Eternal vigilance is the price of freedom. We need to strike a balance between fighting terrorism and protecting constitutional rights.

Notes

1. Cal Thomas, “More Power to the Government,” Nov. 21, 2002.
2. Michael Scardaville, “TIA Targets Terrorists, Not Privacy,” Nov. 22, 2002.

Fear and Its Remedies

All set for the next terrorist attack? Got your biohazard suit? How 'bout your gas mask, radiation detector and potassium iodide pills? A new store opened in Manhattan recently, only a few blocks from Ground Zero. "Safer America" markets personal safety products for a post-9/11 world.

Work in a high-rise? Have you considered a personal parachute? It comes in two models: the streamlined Executive Chute and the deluxe "HOPE" system (High Office Parachute Escape; opens automatically, good from heights over 100 feet, accommodates persons up to 300 pounds).

Safer America President Harvey Kushner takes a pragmatic approach to homeland security: "These products are no different than safety devices already commonplace in most homes, such as fire extinguishers, smoke detectors, and first-aid kits. We are enabling people to alleviate their fears by doing something smart and productive: preparing to overcome that which they most fear."

Fears abound these days. CIA director George Tenet recently warned Congress that al-Qaida could attack at any time here or abroad. A sampler, from a guy who is privy to more intelligence data than most of us: "Based on what we have learned about the 11 September [attacks], an attempt to conduct another attack on U.S. soil is certain.

"You must make the analytical judgment that the possibility exists that people are planning to attack you inside the United States—multiple simultaneous attacks. We are the enemy, we're the people they want to hurt inside this country," Tenet said.

As Tenet spoke, the nation was still on alert code yellow—"significant risk of terrorist attacks"—because officials had no specific details about time and location of possible attacks. Frightening times. How should we deal with fear?

We trust military and law enforcement to keep us safe from harm. But we can never completely prepare for every risk in life. And eventually life will end for each of us. What then?

Besides taking reasonable precautions, might it also be worth considering something deeper as an ultimate solution to fear? An Israeli shepherd who became a king knew dangers from wild beasts and wild political enemies who sought his life.

"The Lord is my shepherd," he wrote. "I have everything I need. Even when I walk through the dark valley of death, I will not be afraid, for you [God] are close beside me. Your rod and your staff protect and comfort me."

A descendant of this king, Jesus of Nazareth, offered similar advice to His friends: "Don't be afraid of those who want to kill you. They can only kill your body; they cannot touch your soul. Fear only God," He taught. God loves people, values them and saves a spot in eternity for those who trust Him.

It's hard to turn on the news these days without finding cause for fear: terrorism, snipers and financial woes augment personal concerns about relationships, family and job future. Maybe it's time to look more closely toward One who can calm fears and who holds the future in His hands.

Terrorism and Just War

America's war on terrorism has once again raised important questions about the proper use of military action. President George W. Bush said on September 20, 2001, "Whether we bring our enemies to justice, or justice to our enemies, justice will be done." This message and following statements by President Bush and Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld articulated portions of what has come to be known as *just war theory*. This 1600-year-old Christian doctrine attempts to answer two questions: "When is it permissible to wage war?" and "What are the limitations on the ways we wage war?"

Historically, Christians have adopted one of three positions: (1) **Activism** – it is always right to participate in war, (2) **Pacifism** – it is never right to participate in war, or (3) **Selectivism** – it is right to participate in some wars. The just war theory represents the third position and was articulated initially by Augustine who developed it as a logical extension of Romans 13:1-7.

1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.

2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.

3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same;

4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil.

5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are

servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing.

7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

Augustine argued that not all wars are morally justified. He said, "It makes a great difference by which causes and under which authorities men undertake the wars that must be waged."

This seven-point theory provides a framework for evaluating military action. A just war will include the following conditions: just cause, just intention, last resort, formal declaration, limited objectives, proportionate means, and noncombatant immunity. The first five principles apply as a nation is "on the way to war" (*jus ad bellum*) while the final two apply to military forces "in the midst of war" (*jus in bello*). Let's look at each of these in more detail.

Seven Points of a Just War

- ***Just cause*** – All aggression is condemned in just war theory. Participation must be prompted by a just cause or defensive cause. No war of unprovoked aggression can ever be justified.
- ***Just intention*** – War must be to secure a just peace for all parties involved. Revenge or conquest are not legitimate motives.
- ***Last resort*** – War must be engaged as a last resort only after diplomacy and economic pressure have been exhausted.
- ***Formal declaration*** – War must be initiated with a formal declaration by properly constituted authorities.
- ***Limited objectives*** – War must be characterized by limited objectives such as peace. Complete destruction is an improper objective. War must be waged in such a way that once peace is attainable, hostilities cease.

- ***Proportionate means*** – Combatants may not be subjected to greater harm than is necessary to secure victory. The types of weapons and amount of force used should be limited to what is needed to repel aggression and secure a just peace.
- ***Noncombatant immunity*** – Military forces must respect individuals and groups not participating in the conflict. Only governmental forces or agents are legitimate targets.

Objections to Just War

Two types of objections often surface against the idea of just war theory. First, there is the moral objection. Pacifists argue that it is never right to go to war and often cite biblical passages to bolster their argument. For example, Jesus said believers should “turn the other cheek” (Matt. 5:39). He also warned that “those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matt. 26:52).

However, the context of the statements is key. In the first instance, Jesus is speaking to individual believers in his Sermon on the Mount, admonishing believers not to engage in personal retaliation. In the second instance, He tells Peter to put down his sword because the gospel should not be advanced by the sword. But at the same time, Jesus actually encouraged his disciples to buy a sword (Luke 22:36) in order to protect themselves.

Two political objections have been cited in the last few months against the application of just war theory to our war on terrorism. Critics say that the idea of a just war applies to only to nations and not to terrorists. Even so, that would not invalidate American military actions in Afghanistan or Iraq.

But the criticism is incorrect. It turns out that Christian thought about just war predates the concept of modern nation-states. So the application of these principles can apply to governments or terrorist organizations. Moreover, the very

first use of American military force in this country was against Barbary Pirates (who were essentially the terrorists of the 18th century).

Critics also argue that since terrorism is an international threat, the concept of just war would require an international declaration of war. This is not true. The U.S. or any other country does not need to get international approval to defend itself. Even so, both President George H. W. Bush and President George W. Bush have brought the issue of Iraq to the United Nations for a vote. But as the current president made clear, he sought UN approval, not permission. He would like multilateral approval and help, but the U.S. is prepared to go it alone if necessary.

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“Is Islam a Religion of Peace or of Violence?”

I’m hearing people (like the president) say that Islam is actually a religion of peace. Others are warning us that the terrorists who attacked the U.S. on 9/11 represent the true Islam of anger and violence. Which is it? And why would they want to attack us anyway?

To get a better grasp on this apparent contradiction I had a very enlightening conversation with a missionary to Muslims for many years who also has a Ph.D. in Islamics. He provided perspective I have never heard:

We have to back up to 610 A.D. and look at the big picture of Muhammad and the Qur’an.

Muhammad was frustrated at the heathen polytheism of the Arabian culture, and wanted people to return to the one true God, the God of the Bible. In fact, he called Jews and Christians "the people of the Book." In the beginning, he said he was preaching the same message, just in a different language. And if people had doubts about what he was saying, they should check with the people of the Book.

The Qur'an, which is a compilation of the teachings of Muhammad after his death, is not in chronological order. When Islamic scholars rearrange the chapters, or suras, into chronological order, they are comprised of the Mecca (early, middle and late) suras, the city where Muhammad started out, and the Medina suras, where he ended up. Something very important happened in between those two sections. As Muhammad rose in prominence and influence, accumulating followers, some of them wanted to verify that he was actually a prophet of God. He said, "Go check with the Jewish tribes." So they did. . . and the Jews said, "No, Muhammad is not a prophet of God." This made him very angry, and it changed the way he thought about Jews. The anti-semitism of Islam began here. The hostility, violence, controlling nature, and forceful missionary zeal of Islam ("accept Islam or suffer") developed in Muhammad's later teachings.

So there are two very different aspects to Islam. Earlier suras are more about peace. Later suras are more about violence. In addition, where Muslims are in the minority (such as North America and Europe), they tend to follow the earlier Mecca suras. Where they are in the majority (such as the middle East, Afghanistan, Pakistan, etc.), they tend to follow the later Medina suras.

Add to this the fact that in the culture of Islam, people learn differently. We are taught to think critically, to analyze and compare and contrast literature. Muslims are taught NOT to think critically, only to memorize the Qur'an and parrot back what they are taught about Islam. So it is not

surprising to learn that some Muslims say that Islam is a religion of peace, since that is their perception and experience, and other Muslims say that Islam is a religion of conquering and judgment, since that is their perception and experience.

The Qur'an contradicts itself from the early Mecca suras to the Medina suras. This is different from the progressive revelation we find in the Bible, where God reveals more and more information as history unfolds, and He reveals what had earlier been mysteries. This makes sense in view of the fact that the Qur'an is a human invention and the Bible is divinely inspired.

I also asked the missionary why Osama bin Laden wanted to attack us. He suggested three reasons:

- A personal grudge against the U.S. for pressuring Sudan and Saudi Arabia (bin Laden's home country) to kick him out.
- A resentment of America that he shares with many Muslims for exporting our immoral standards and examples to the world through TV, movies and music. They object to the way sexual immorality and impurity, women's provocative dress, pornography, drug and alcohol abuse, and homosexuality are presented as normal, desirable lifestyles. (And I have to say this is a completely legitimate complaint, although their way of showing frustration and displeasure is completely unacceptable!)
- The whole Palestinian-Israeli land fight. In the Arab mindset, the sons of Ishmael (Abraham's son) had the rights to the promised land, and they held it for thousands of years. Then when Israel (sons of Isaac, Abraham's other son) came and took it away from them, that was heinously unfair, but the U.S. backed and supported Israel. What looks like righting a wrong to Israel is "wronging a right" to the Palestinians. This is an impossible situation that cannot be

solved until the Lord Jesus returns and HE makes all things right.

One final comment which Pat asked me to be sure and stress: it is just as illogical to judge all Muslims as terrorists as it is for the rest of the world to condemn all American Christians as Timothy McVeighs.

This is a very complex situation and won't be solved easily or quickly. It shows the importance of worldview and the truth that ideas have consequences.

Sue Bohlin
Probe Ministries

“I Can't Forgive God for Taking All Those People in the WTC!”

I saw a distraught woman on the news asking, “Pray? Who do we pray to? God took all those people in the buildings !” It's obvious there is so much hurt and a sense of betrayal toward God for allowing such a horrific thing to happen. I'm having a rough time forgiving God for allowing such terrible evil in the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

I'm so glad you wrote.

A lot of people struggle with anger toward God when we experience pain or when bad things happen. (I completely understand, and carried anger toward Him for many years myself for allowing me to get polio, and not healing me when I begged Him to. That story is [here](#).)

In his excellent book *I Should Forgive, But . . .* [1998, Nashville: Word Publishing, p. 143-157], Dr. Chuck Lynch addresses this issue. There are three problems with a perceived need to forgive God.

*1. It implies **an offense**. But God does not and can not sin against us. He does not morally offend us and does not need to be forgiven.*

The number one complaint against God is that He failed to protect. We can be angry that He did not protect us, or He did not protect other innocent people. We believe a good God does not let bad things happen to good people. Bad things only happen to bad people. Therefore, if bad things happen to good people, God “did us dirty.” But we live in a fallen world; bad things happen to people, period. Our longing for a perfect world where nothing bad happens is a perfectly legitimate longing for the Eden we were created for, and God will re-create that perfect world in the future. . . but we don’t live there yet.

If God doesn’t “perform” as we think He should, we think He has offended us. The real failure is not with God’s performance, it’s with our misperception of His character.

We are upset when we realize that God knew the bad thing was going to happen and He didn’t stop it. Why not? Because He is graciously patient now, but His full wrath will be poured out on sin and unrighteousness at a later time.

Acts of nature such as weather tragedies, birth defects and diseases, as well as the consequences of things like terrorist attacks, are also perceived as offenses by God against man.

Many people believe it’s God’s job to keep their lives free from pain and loss, especially if they are faithful to Him. They fail to remember two things:

- God does not suspend the natural laws of nature for believers. He also does not violate the gift of free will to humanity, even when a person's choice means others will be hurt.

- While we have the promise that all pain and tears will be wiped away in heaven, this is earth.

2. It implies **accountability**. We demand to know the "WHY???" We think God owes it to us to explain why He does what He does, and why He allows the things that He does. And if He doesn't explain it to us [and often, if not usually, He doesn't], then many cut off fellowship with Him. "I'll show You, God, I won't believe in You anymore/I will live in rebellion/I will ignore You!"

God does not owe us an explanation. He is not accountable to us. He does as He pleases (Ps. 115:3), and He has the right to be the sovereign Lord without explaining to His creatures how his actions today, in time, fit into the big plan of eternity.

3. It implies **payment**. Somebody has to pay for sin. Jesus paid for our sins—but who's going to pay for God's "sins" against us?

Our anger against God is like a red light on a car's dashboard. It alerts us that something is wrong and we need to deal with what we're thinking and thus, what we're feeling. The red light tells us we need to grow into acceptance of our losses and adjust to them over time. When God allows bad things to happen, we get mad because of our loss and hurt. We don't need to forgive Him; we need to ask for grace to accept what He has allowed to happen.

God doesn't sin against us; He does things we don't like. He understands our anger the same way a parent understands a

child's anger when the parent allows the doctor to give the child a shot. Just as a parent acts in the child's best interest, God is always acting in our best interests even in the midst of horrific evil and pain. He can do that because He is much bigger and more powerful than we can even begin to imagine.

God allows us to experience pain because His goal is our growth and maturity. He is in the process of developing a mature and solid Bride for His Son Jesus, and He knows that the best way for us to grow is often through pain. Even the Lord Jesus, although the Son of God, "learned obedience from what He suffered" (Heb. 5:8). God has a bigger plan than keeping us comfortable.

The real issue is to put aside the misconception that God needs to be forgiven, and move through to trust and acceptance.

I hope this helps.

Sue Bohlin

Probe Ministries

Where Was God on Sept. 11? The Problem of Evil

Dr. Ray Bohlin explores the problem of evil in light of the terrorist attacks on the U.S. on Sept. 11, 2001.

Why Didn't God Prevent the Terrible

Attacks?

The events of September 11th are indelibly etched in our hearts and minds. The horrible memories of personal tragedy and suffering will never really go away. As well they shouldn't. As Christians we were all gratified to see so many of our national, state, and local leaders openly participate in prayer services and calling upon people of faith to pray for victims' families and injured survivors.

What was lost underneath the appearance of a religious revival was the clear cry of many that wondered if our prayers were justified. After all, if we pray to God in the aftermath and expect God to answer, where was He as countless individuals cried out to Him from the planes, the World Trade Center and the Pentagon? The skeptical voices were drowned out because of the fervent religious outcry seeking comfort and relief. But make no mistake; the question was there all the time. Where was God on September 11th? Surely He could have diverted those planes from their appointed destinations. Why couldn't the hijackers have been intercepted at the airports or their plots discovered long before their designed execution?

Why so many innocent people? Why should so many suffer so much? It all seems so senseless. How could a loving God allow it?

It is important to realize also that the suffering of those initial weeks is only the tip of the iceberg. There will be military deaths and casualties. The war on terrorism will be a long one with mounting personal and economic costs. The clean up will also continue to take its ever-mounting toll in dollars, lives, and emotional breakdowns.

Former pastor Gordon MacDonald spent time with the Salvation Army in caring for people and removing debris and bodies from the rubble of the World Trade Center. He relates this encounter from his journal of September 21 in *Christianity*

Today: [{1}](#)

“Later in the night, I wandered over to the first-line medical tent, which is staffed by military personnel who are schooled in battlefield casualties. The head of the team, a physician, and I got into a conversation.

“He was scared for the men in the pit, he said, because he knew what was coming ‘downstream.’ He predicted an unusual spike in the suicide rate and a serious outbreak of manic depression. . . . Many of the men will be unable to live with these losses at the WTC. It’s going to take an unspeakable toll on them.”

So why would God allow so much suffering? This is an ancient question. The problem of reconciling an all-powerful, all-loving God with evil is the number one reason that people reject God. I will try to clarify the question, provide some understanding, and make some comparisons of other explanations.

Psalm 73 and Asaph’s Answer

The Bible answers the question of where God was on September 11 in many passages, but I would like to begin with the answer from Asaph in Psalm 73. My discussion will flow from the excellent discussion of the problem of evil found in Dr Robert Pyne’s 1999 book, *Humanity and Sin: The Creation, Fall and Redemption of Humanity*. [{2}](#)

In Psalm 73, Asaph begins by declaring that God is good. Without that assumption, nothing more need be said. He goes on in verses 2-12 to lament the excess and success of the wicked. In verses six and seven he says, “Therefore pride is their necklace; they clothe themselves with violence. From their callous hearts comes iniquity; the evil conceits of their minds know no limits.” (Psalm 73:6-7). From this point Asaph lets his feelings be known by crying out that this isn’t fair

when he says in verse 13, "Surely in vain have I kept my heart pure; in vain have I washed my hands in innocence."

The wicked seem to snub their noses at God with no apparent judgment, while Asaph strives to follow the Lord to no benefit. We have all experienced this in one form or another. Some things in this world simply aren't fair. In the last ten verses of the psalm, Asaph recognizes that the wicked will indeed realize their punishment in the future. God's judgment will come. He also realizes that God is always with him and that is sufficient.

18th century philosopher David Hume stated the classical problem of evil by saying that if God were indeed all powerful He would do something about evil, and that if He were all-loving He would want to do something about evil. Since evil exists, God must either not be able or not want to do anything about it. This makes God either malevolent or impotent or both. But Hume chooses to leave out the option, as Asaph resolves, that God is patient. Hume, like many before him and after him, grows weary with a God who is patient towards evil.

We long for immediate justice. But before we pray too earnestly for immediate justice, we'd better reflect on what that would be like. What would instant justice look like? Immediate justice would have to be applied across the board. That means that every sin would be proportionately and immediately punished. We soon realize that immediate justice is fine if applied to everybody else. Dr. Pyne quotes D. A. Carson as saying, "The world would become a searing pain; the world would become hell. Do you really want nothing but totally effective, instantaneous justice? Then go to hell."[\[3\]](#) I think we're all quite comfortable with a God that does not apply immediate justice.

Evil and the Sovereignty of God

Next, I want to focus on God's sovereignty. We understand that

God knew what He was doing in creating people with the ability to choose to love Him or hate Him. In order for our love for Him to be real, our choice needed to be real and that means creating creatures that could turn from Him as well as love Him. In order to have creatures with moral freedom, God risked evil choices.

Some would go so far as to say that God couldn't intervene in our evil choices. But in Psalm 155:3, Psalm 135:6, and in Nebuchadnezzar's words of praise in Daniel 4:34-37 we're told it is God who does whatever He pleases. However, God does perform acts of deliverance and sometimes He chooses not to. We are still left with the question "Why?" In the book of Job, Job basically proclaims his innocence and essentially asks why? God doesn't really give Job an answer, but simply reminds him who is in charge. (Job 38:2-4) "Who is this that darkens counsel by words without knowledge?" the Lord asks Job.

The parameters are clearly set. God in His power is always capable of intervening in human affairs, but sometimes He doesn't and we aren't always given a reason why. There is tension here that we must learn to accept, because the alternative is to blaspheme by assigning to God evil or malevolent actions. As Asaph declared, God is good!

This brings us to the hidden purposes of God. For although we can't always see God's purpose, we believe He has one in everything that occurs, even seemingly senseless acts of cruelty and evil. Here is where Jesus' sufferings serve as a model. The writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus endured the cross for the joy set before Him. (Hebrews 12:1-3) So then, we should bear our cross for the eternal joy set before us. (Hebrews 12:11, 2 Corinthians 4:16-18) But knowing this doesn't always make us feel better.

When Jesus was dying on the cross all His disciples but John deserted Him. From their perspective, all that they had learned and prepared for over the last three years was over,

finished. How could Jesus let them crucify Him? It didn't make any sense at all. Yet as we well know now, the most important work in history was being accomplished and the disciples thought God was absent. How shortsighted our perspective can be.

The Danger of a Nice Explanation

But with this truth comes the danger of a nice explanation. Even though we know and trust that there is a purpose to God's discipline and His patience towards ultimate judgment, that doesn't mean we should somehow regard evil as an expression of God's goodness. In addition, we can be tempted to think that if God has a purpose to evil and suffering, then my own sin can be assigned not to me but to someone else, namely God Himself because He had a purpose in it.

Dr. Robert Pyne puts it this way.

We may not be able to fully resolve the problem of evil, and we may not be able to explain the origin of sin, but we can see the boundaries that must be maintained when addressing these issues. We share in Adam's guilt, but we cannot blame Him for our sin. God is sovereign, and He exercises His providential control over all things, but we cannot blame Him either. God permits injustice to continue, but He neither causes it nor delights in it.[\[4\]](#)

Another danger lies in becoming too comfortable with evil. When we trust in God's ultimate purpose and patience with evil we shouldn't think that we have somehow solved the problem and therefore grow comfortable in its presence. We should never be at peace with sin, suffering, and evil.

The prophet Habakkuk sparred with God in the first few verses of chapter 1 of the book bearing his name by recounting all the evil in Israel. The Lord responds in verses 6-11 that indeed the Babylonians are coming and sin will be judged.

Habakkuk further complains about God's choice of the godless Babylonians, to which God reminds him that they too will receive judgment. Yet the coming judgment still left Habakkuk with fear and dread. "I heard and my inward parts trembled: at the sound my lips quivered. Decay enters my bones, and in my place I tremble. . . . Yet, I will exult in the Lord." (Habakkuk 3:16-19.) Habakkuk believes that God knows what He is doing. That does not bring a smile to his face. But he can face the day.

"We are not supposed to live at peace with evil and sin, but we are supposed to live at peace with God. We continue to trust in His goodness, His sovereignty, His mercy, and we continue to confess our own responsibility for sin." [\[5\]](#)

He Was There!

Though we have come to a better understanding of the problem of evil, we are still left with our original question. Where was God on September 11th?

While the Christian answer may not seem a perfect answer, it is the only one which offers truth, hope, and comfort. Naturalism or deism offers no real answers. Things just happen. There is no good and no evil. Make the best of it! Pantheism says the physical world is irrelevant or an illusion. It doesn't really matter. Good and evil are the same.

To answer the question we need to understand that God does, in fact, notice when every sparrow falls and grieve over every evil and every suffering. Jesus is with us in all of our suffering, feeling all of our pain. That's what compassion means, to suffer with another. So the suffering that Christ endured on the cross is literally unimaginable.

"The answer is, how could you not love this being who went the extra mile, who practiced more than He preached, who

entered into our world, who suffered our pains, who offers Himself to us in the midst of our sorrows?"[\[6\]](#)

We must remember that Jesus' entire time on earth was a time of sacrifice and suffering, not just His trial and crucifixion. Jesus was tempted in the manner of all men and He bore upon Himself all our sin and suffering. So the answer is quite simple. He was there!

He was on the 110th floor as one called home. He was at the other end of the line as his wife realized her husband was not coming home. He was on the planes, at the Pentagon, in the stairwells answering those who called out to Him and calling to those who didn't.

He saw every face, knew every name, even though some did not know Him. Some met Him for the first time, some ignored Him for the last time. He is there now.

Let me share with you one more story from Gordon MacDonald's experience with the Salvation Army during the initial clean up at the World Trade Center.

"There is a man whose job it is to record the trucks as they leave the pit with their load of rubble. He is from Jamaica, and he has one of the most radiant smiles I've ever seen. He brings a kind of spiritual sunshine to the entire intersection. "I watch him—with his red, white, and blue hard hat—talking to each truck driver as they wait their turn to go in and get a load. He brightens men up. In the midst of those smells, the dust, the clashing sounds, he brings a civilizing influence to the moment.

"Occasionally I go out to where he stands and bring him some water. At other times, he comes over and chats with us. We always laugh when we engage. "I said to him last night, 'You're a follower of the Lord, aren't you?' He gave me an enthusiastic 'Yes! Jesus is with me all the time!' "Somehow this guy represents to me the quintessential picture of the

ideal follower of Christ: out in the middle of the chaos, doing his job, pressing a bit of joy into a wild situation.”

[{7}](#)

Notes

1. “Blood Sweat and Prayers,” *Christianity Today*, Nov. 12, 2001, p. 76.
2. Robert Pyne, *Humanity and Sin: The Creation, Fall and Redemption of Humanity*, pp. 193-209.
3. Pyne, p. 197.
4. Pyne, p. 204.
5. Pyne, p. 206.
6. Peter Kreeft, quoted in *The Case for Faith* by Lee Strobel, 2000, p. 45-46.
7. “Blood Sweat and Prayers,” *Christianity Today*, p. 76.

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Probe Staff Responds to the Terrorist Attack on America

Words are difficult to form when seeking to respond to the tragic events of September 11, 2001 in New York City and Washington D.C. Evil of the most despicable sort has truly visited our shores. But amidst the numbing horror of watching the unbelievable scenes on television and the disgusting displays of celebration from some in Palestine, an emotion lacking in my heart was anger.

I am confident that every attempt at finding those who helped mastermind this complex act of terrorism will be made. They must be brought to justice and I support every legal effort to

do so. However, I understand that those who brought these tragic events about justify it on the basis of faulty assumptions, a different worldview. This scheme was brought about by not necessarily a sick mind but a deceived and confused mind. They may even believe, if they turn out to be Islamic fundamentalists, that they will have gained a greater reward in the next life for killing huge numbers of “infidels” (unbelievers). This points out all too powerfully that in order to engage our increasingly global culture for Christ, we need to understand not only what we believe and why, but also the worldview of those around us. Not only are our evangelistic efforts imperiled, but our very lives are threatened if we fail to do so.

Unbridled anger is also unproductive. It can lead to making mistakes in a rush to find someone to blame. To seek vengeance as opposed to justice is to abandon a Christian worldview. Paul admonishes us to never pay back evil for evil to anyone. He further reminds us that vengeance belongs to God and to feed our enemy, therefore overcoming evil with good (Romans 12:17-21). Paul further reminds us in the next chapter that the government carries the God-given responsibility for justice, “for it does not bear the sword for nothing, for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath upon the one who practices evil” (Rom. 13:4b).

Let us pray, and donate our blood and money for the families of those who have been murdered, the injured, those still missing but alive, the rescue workers and medical personnel, and especially pray for those in our government responsible for investigating and ultimately apprehending those who planned these acts of terrorism that adjectives simply can’t adequately embrace.

Sue Bohlin:

Several observations have struck me and stuck with me as I’ve watched, listened, assimilated and prayed over the disaster.

1. Many people are experiencing fear that they find difficult to shake. The antidote to fear is to know the presence of the Lord, and I think we need to continually invite Him and the sense of His presence into our hearts, our minds, and our feelings. I think it's essential to remind ourselves that a *loving God is in control*, and to communicate this to our children.



2. As I was meditating on the inevitable question that so many people would ask: "Where was God in the midst of this disaster?" I realized that Jesus was on the hijacked planes, He was in the World Trade Center offices, and He was at the Pentagon. I remembered the painting of the Lord Jesus knocking at the door of the U.N. building. In my mind's eye, I could easily see Him standing before the twin towers of the World Trade Center, and then I "saw" Him turned around, facing the planes on their deadly missions, and realized *they had to fly through Jesus*, and through His heart, to get to the buildings. The terrorists inflicted fresh pain on the Lord just as they devastated the American people.

3. In hearing people's anguished voices on talk radio, and reading their impassioned posts on the internet, and seeing their pained faces in real life, I sensed a strong desire for justice. Many expressed outrage at the unfairness and the *evil* of this despicable act. And I thought, as a culture we can talk about everybody having the right to their own truth and

the universal validity of everyone's experience, but a tragedy like this shows what a hollow and deceptive philosophy that is. Where did the strong sense of right and wrong, of good and evil, come from if not from the fact that "God has planted eternity in the hearts of man" (Eccl. 3:11)? Within moments of hearing about the terrorist attacks, I started praying that people (including the media) would talk about this as an act of evil, making the moral judgment that calling something evil is. . . and was so glad to hear Peter Jennings use that word moments later. President Bush wisely and I am sure deliberately used the word "evil" several times in his message the night of the attacks.

4. Several friends have remarked that they don't feel safe anymore; they feel like they're in a war zone and their world could blow up at any time. What a poignant reminder that in actuality, we live in a *spiritual* war zone. We are in more danger of the enemy's flaming darts and philosophical scud missiles, every single day of our lives, than we are of hijacked planes slamming into buildings. We need to stay vigilant and trust in God all the time. Which reminds me. . . God is good. All the time. All the time, God is good.

Michael Gleghorn:

As the prophet Jeremiah surveyed the destruction of Jerusalem he wept, pouring out his grief in the poignant poetry of the Old Testament book of Lamentations. The ruthless honesty with which he attempts to reconcile his profound sense of loss with the sovereign will of a holy God is, ironically, both heartbreaking and refreshing. He offers no trite phrases, no easy answers. Indeed, he freely confesses, "My strength has perished, and so has my hope from the Lord" (3:18).

Yet in the midst of his despair and the desolation of his city a light begins to dawn, a ray of hope breaks through the darkness and gloom and he writes his now famous words:

"This I recall to my mind, therefore I have hope. The Lord's lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, for His compassions never fail. They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness. 'The Lord is my portion,' says my soul, 'therefore I have hope in Him'" (3:21-24).

Though we may not fully understand why God would allow Tuesday's tragic events we can, like Jeremiah, still look to Him in hope. Even in the midst of our pain and confusion, we can humbly remember His faithfulness, compassion and loyal love.

Pat Zukeran:

Yesterday's attack challenges each person's beliefs and convictions. It brought the reality home to all of us, that life is fragile and eternity is only one step away. At times like these we really begin to search and question our beliefs. It is at these times we see if our belief system really addresses life's greatest questions and if it provide the answers.

Yesterday we saw that only the Christian worldview stood the test. Never have we heard so many people turning to God for strength, for answers and for healing. This shows the natural reaction of man to turn to God in times like these. Each man and woman has the knowledge of God imbedded in his or her heart. As Romans 1:18 states, all men and women have knowledge of God but suppress this truth to justify living independently of Him. However, in times like this, we see this knowledge that man suppresses, rise up and come to the forefront of his thoughts. We can only question this act of terror, seek comfort, and hope only in relation to God Whose nature is revealed in the Bible. No other worldview can address an issue like this and make any sense of it, or bring a message of any hope.

The naturalist believes there is no God and that we are just

accidents of time and chance. Therefore, there really is no ultimate reason or purpose behind our existence in the vast universe. Naturalists must realize that, in their belief system, thousands of their loved ones have died for no reason and we will never see them again forever and ever. Those who were burned alive or jumped to their deaths from the burning buildings, firemen who rushed in to the World Trade Center to rescue their fellow citizens, died a meaningless death and are now extinct forever. What hope, what meaning is there in the naturalist worldview? Where are the atheists and humanists proclaiming their message of eternal extinction? They are all silent.

Pantheists will state that evil and sin are really an illusion. How then do we respond to this event? The pantheist's understanding of reality and human nature cannot make sense of this act.

To the Postmodernists who believe all truth is relative and decided by each individual, can those who truly believe this say this was an evil act? Those who flew this suicide mission and their supporters say no. So do we have the right to condemn them? Relativists, I am sure, are rethinking their position. Americans are angered and seeking justice to be executed on the perpetrators. This is the only right response, to seek justice, and that can only be done if there is a universal basis for right and wrong. Otherwise, if we hold to the relativist's position, we should tolerate this act as a one group freely expressing their ideas. Fortunately for Christians, we can respond properly for there are absolutes of right and wrong declared to us from God's word. Only on this basis can we seek a basis for executing justice.

Only the Christian worldview can bring an understanding, meaning, and hope to this tragedy. The Christian worldview correctly diagnosis human nature, that man is created in the image of God but sinful and separated from God. Therefore, he falls prey to false beliefs and is capable of doing great

evil. Only Christianity gives the message of hope that God is in control and will execute justice and one day overcome all evil. Only Christianity can give hope that those in Christ will live eternally in the presence of God. Life is fragile, but there is a life beyond the grave where justice is restored, peace is forever, and love will be experienced in its greatest way. Finally, seeking justice is the right response, for God's word states, "You shall not murder." Human life is sacred, and we are angered and in sorrow for beings made in the image of God are all valuable to Him and He weeps when they are destroyed by the evil we enact on fellow image bearers. This event only makes sense in reference to God.

That is why many are turning to Him now. Now is the time for Christians to expose false ideas and proclaim truth throughout our country and the world.

Second, it challenges us to see that religious values have consequences. What would motivate men to go on suicide missions and kill thousands of people? It is the Islamic belief that if a man dies in a Jihad, he will spend eternity in heaven sitting on couches, drinking wine, and enjoying the sensual pleasures of the heavenly maidens of whom he can take as many as he desires. This false religion, begun in violence, has devastating consequences of which we have now become aware. I can only conclude this is an evil force that has captured the hearts and minds of young men and led them to commit some of the worst acts of evil in the name of their false God. We Christians must pray and seek to win those lost Muslims to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ.

Jimmy Williams:

A recent bestdeller by Tom Brokaw is entitled *The Greatest Generation*. The people to whom he referred (and honored) were those who faced the horrors of World War II. They met their challenge with resolve and personal sacrifice, overcoming their enemies and helping to create a new "beginning" for

planet Earth. Why were they “great?” What kind of environment could forge such men and women?

The fathers and mothers of this “great” generation entered the 20th century optimistically. The light bulb. The automobile. The airplane. But then came World War I. It was called The “Great War.” And so it was. Never had the world seen such carnage on the battlefield. An estimated ten million died and twenty million were injured.

Quickly following came the “Great Depression.” Times were hard in America, and the economy didn’t really recover until the demands of war with Germany and Japan jump-started American industry. 400,000 Americans died in this war. Every home in America had been touched by death and injury to their friends and loved ones.

When it was over, this was a cleansed and grateful generation. No theory here. They had experienced and affirmed anew what they deemed REALLY important. The spirit, bravery, and sacrifice of their lives spilled over upon their children, the first post-war generation (baby boomers).

Life was good, and getting better. Unfortunately, it didn’t last twenty years. The turbulent Sixties followed. Assassinations. Flower Children. Vietnam. Ingratitude. “Me First.” Personal peace and affluence. Security. Unbridled freedom and non-stop entertainment of some kind.

While in church this first Sunday after September 11, I was struck by the awesome power of the words in the hymns we sang: “God of Our Fathers,” “A Mighty Fortress is Our God,” and “How Firm a Foundation.” They just flew off the page at me! It made me realize that the people who wrote these great hymns were probably much closer to living every day in a world of “uncertainty” and danger which Americans have just now rediscovered in the reality of our current shock, grief, and even fear.

Perhaps this tragic event is an opportunity for all Americans to be cleansed and purged and purified to such an extent that we might be among those who one day could come to be honored as another “greatest” Generation.

A “legacy of faith” has been prevalent throughout the history of our country which has periodically refashioned and refreshed the nation, giving it a strong religious flavor, not unnoticed by foreign observers. English novelist and poet G.K. Chesterton remarked in 1922 that the United States is “a nation with the soul of a church.” May it be so again in these days.

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A Picture of Our Vulnerability

On the afternoon of Sept. 11, I was talking to a friend on the phone who said, “I’m afraid to leave my house. I’m afraid to drive down the street; I have these images of airplanes falling out of the sky and crashing into my car. I don’t feel safe anymore.” She’s not alone. People are scared and angry at feeling like they’re living in a war zone where their world could blow up at any minute. Just about the time that fears of hijacked planes slamming into buildings started to subside, new fears of anthrax have caused waves of anxious phone calls to FBI offices and police stations.

Many people resent the loss of our innocence and security, and that’s completely understandable. But for the Christian, this

is a poignant reminder that in actuality, we DO live in a spiritual war zone. We are in far greater danger of being attacked in spiritual warfare than we are of hijacked planes slamming into buildings. Scripture tells us we have a personal adversary who prowls around looking for whom he may devour. Satan's spiritual terrorism is every bit as real as earthly terrorism.

The president tells us to remain vigilant and alert. That's a good policy for dealing with spiritual warfare as well. We make it easy for the devil when we get lazy and complacent. Our political and philosophical enemies know how to generate "disinformation" to confuse intelligence agencies and mislead the American public. The problem is, we can't tell the difference between actual threats and false ones. Disinformation is just a fancy word for lying. And we need to be alert for the lies of our spiritual enemy as well. But in the spiritual arena, we are in a much more powerful position because we can recognize Satan's lies if we know the truth, and God has already given us all the truth we need to know in the Bible. We have to read and study God's truth in order to recognize the lies of the enemy.

God has given every believer a supernaturally powerful set of defensive and offensive weapons we can read about in Ephesians 6. We have his assurance that it's not flesh and blood enemies we fight against, but spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places. And God has given us everything we need to fight back; we need not be defenseless! Most importantly, we need to remember that we have God's Spirit within us to help us fight, even when we are up to our eyeballs in the enemy's flaming darts and scud missiles.

Whether we are facing the threats of terrorists within our own country, or the threats of invisible terrorists fighting us in the spirit realm, the same comforting assurance of God's word can help us stay secure: "God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore we will not fear." Put

on your armor, pick up your sword, and fight back!

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Terrorism in America

Many are calling it one of the bloodiest days in American history. And now we face the prospect that terrorism has become a part of modern life. Crashing planes into buildings, hijackings, bombings, and assassinations on different continents of the world may seem like isolated attacks, but they reflect an easy reliance on violence as a way to promote social, political, and religious change. They are elements of a pervasive “end justifies the means” philosophy being followed to its most perverse conclusions.

Terrorism has become the scourge of democratic governments. According to Rand Corporation expert Brian Jenkins, nearly a third of all terrorists attacks involve Americans. Democratic governments, accustomed to dealing within a legal structure, often find it difficult to deal with criminals and terrorists who routinely operate outside of the law. Yet deterrence is just as much a part of justice as proper enforcement of the laws.

Democratic governments which do not deter criminals inevitably spawn vigilantism as normally law-abiding citizens, who have lost confidence in the criminal justice system, take the law into their own hands. A similar backlash is beginning to emerge as a result of the inability of Western democracies to defend themselves against terrorists.

But lack of governmental resolve is only part of the problem. Terrorists thrive on media exposure, and news organizations

around the world have been all too willing to give terrorists what they crave: publicity. If the news media gave terrorists the minuscule coverage their numbers and influence demanded, terrorism would decline. But when hijackings and bombings are given prominent media attention, governments start feeling pressure from their citizens to resolve the crisis and eventually capitulate to terrorists' demands. Encouraged by their latest success, terrorists usually try again. Appeasement, Churchill wisely noted, always whets the appetite, and recent successes have made terrorists hungry for more attacks.

Some news commentators have been unwilling to call terrorism what it is: wanton, criminal violence. They blunt the barbarism by arguing that "one man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter." But this simply is not true. Terrorists are not concerned about human rights and human dignity. In fact, they end up destroying human rights in their alleged fight for human rights.

Terrorism has been called the "new warfare." But terrorists turn the notion of war on its head. Innocent non-combatants become the target of terrorist attacks. Terrorist warfare holds innocent people hostage and makes soldier and civilian alike potential targets for their aggression.

Terrorist groups are not living in fear of their host governments. Instead, law-abiding citizens live in fear of terrorist groups. In one TV interview a Middle Eastern terrorist was quoted as saying, "We want the people of the United States to feel the terror."

The ability of these groups to carry out their agenda is not the issue. The fundamental issue is how U.S. government leaders should deal with this new type of military strategy. Terrorists have held American diplomats hostage for years, blown up military compounds, and hijacked airplanes and cruise ships. Although some hostages have been released, many others

have been killed and the U.S. has been unsuccessful at punishing more than a small number of terrorists.

Although international diplomacy has been the primary means used by the United States against terrorism, we should consider what other means may also be appropriate. In the past, American leaders have responded to military aggression in a variety of ways short of declaring war.

Military strategy must be deployed which can hunt down small groups of well-armed and well-funded men who hide within the territory of a host country. We must also develop a political strategy that will allow us to work within a host country. We must make it clear how serious the United States takes a terrorist threat. American citizens are tired of being military targets in an undeclared war.

Through diplomatic channels we must make two things very clear to the host country. First, they should catch and punish the terrorist groups themselves as civilian criminals. Or, second, they should extradite the enemy soldiers and give them up to an international court for trial.

If the host country fails to act on these two requests, we should make it clear that we see them in complicity with the terrorist groups. But failing to exercise their civil responsibility, they leave themselves open to the consequences of allowing hostile military forces within their borders.

In some cases, an American strike force of counterterrorists might be necessary when the threat is both real and imminent. This should be the option of last resort, but in certain instances it may be necessary. In 1989, for example, Israeli special forces captured Sheik Obeid and no doubt crippled the terrorist network by bringing one of their leaders to justice. Such acts should be done rarely and carefully, but they may be appropriate means to bring about justice.

In conclusion, I believe we must recognize terrorism as a new

type of military aggression which requires governmental action. We are involved in an undeclared war and Congress and the President must take the same sorts of actions they would if threatened by a hostile country. We must work to deter further terrorist aggression.

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