

Sheep for the Slaughter: Christians and Jews in The Sights of Islamic Jihadists

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“As it is written, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

Romans 8: 36

Around 2,500 years ago, the Chinese warrior-philosopher Sun Tzu wrote,

“Know the enemy and know yourself; in a hundred battles you will never be in peril.

“When you are ignorant of the enemy but know yourself, your chances of winning or losing are equal.

“If ignorant both of your enemy and of yourself, you are certain in every battle to be in peril.”¹

In 1832, Prussian general Carl von Clausewitz, in *On War*, the most comprehensive analysis of the subject so far, wrote,

The first, the supreme, the most far-reaching act of judgment that the statesman and commander have to make is to establish by that test the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither mistaking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.²

With whom are we at war? In the first weeks after nineteen Arab Muslims belonging to al Qaeda committed the largest act of terrorism in American history resulting in the murder of 3,000 innocent people in New York, northern Virginia and Pennsylvania, whenever President George W. Bush referred to the enemy he avoided calling them Muslims but referred to them ambiguously as “evildoers” or “the evil ones”. Just as ambiguously, the President stated they were “people motivated by hatred” and “hunting

down the evildoers and bringing them to justice” constituted American strategic objectives.³ Consequently, the United States launched its “War on Terror” by attacking al Qaeda in its lair in the Tora Bora mountains of Afghanistan and the Taliban regime that provided its refuge.

A nation can no more make war on terror than it can on ambushes. Terror is a tactic. Failure to define the enemy with something more specific than “evil doers” was a strategic mistake. The latest iteration of *The National Security Strategy of the United States*, issued in March 2006 attempts to redress this mistake. President Bush’s cover letter opens, “My Fellow Americans, America is at war.”⁴

More specifically, America is at war with al Qaeda, Hezbollah and groups and nations that support them, namely Iran and Syria. It is a global war with enemies who embrace total war objectives including the eradication of Israel, the overthrow of Muslim regimes not according with their brand of Wahhabist Islamic fundamentalism, and the ultimate establishment of a world-wide Islamic Caliphate. This is a religious war aimed at Christians and Jews along with all other non-Islamic religions as well as...if not more especially...with atheists. The enemy wants neither the understanding nor apologies of those who do not accord with their form of Islam. Rather, they want them converted or dead.

Furthermore, al Qaeda has been killing Americans since February 26, 1993 when Ramsi Yousef, an al Qaeda terrorist, masterminded the bombing of the World Trade Center which killed six people and injured a thousand others. In October of that year, fighting in Mogadishu led to the deaths of eighteen Army Rangers at the hands of Somali fighters trained, financed and armed by al Qaeda. On February 23, 1998, Osama bin Laden issued a

fatwa—a religious ruling—titled “Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders.” It reads, in part,

“The ruling to kill Americans and their allies—civilians and military—is an individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do it...This is in accordance with the words of Almighty Allah, ‘and fight the pagans together as they fight you all together,’ and ‘fight them until there is no more tumult or oppression, and there prevails justice and faith in Allah.’”⁵

Martha Crenhsaw, a professor at Wesleyan University, makes five important distinctions between religious terrorism and left-wing, right-wing and ethno-nationalist/separatist terrorism.

1. Religious terrorists often believe they are engaged in a struggle of good vs. evil. Anyone who is not a member of their religion is fair game: they are either infidels—or perhaps worse—apostates.

2. Religious terrorists engage in violent behavior to directly or indirectly please the perceived commands of a deity whose desires, commands and whims may not be evident to those who are not members of their religion. Furthermore, they are not constrained in their behavior by concerns about the reactions of humans...they are “on a mission” from their deity.

3. Religious terrorists are not bound by secular values or laws; indeed, law-based secular society may be their target.

4. Religious terrorists are alienated from the existing social system. They don’t want to correct the system as left-wing or right-wing or separatists terrorists may; they want to destroy it.

5. Religious terrorism often has dispersed popular support. Al Qaeda can find support from Muslims and Muslim non-governmental organizations throughout the world making it a truly global network.⁶

Christians and many Jews (especially those living outside of Israel), understand neither the seriousness nor the scope of this threat. This is especially so among the more liberal, mainline Protestant denominations including the Presbyterian Church, USA. Many liberal Christians, embrace a religion that shuns the supernatural along with notions of evil that spring naturally from original sin and the fall of man. To them the Judeo-Christian belief that blood must be shed to reconcile man to God is a quaint and uncomfortable anachronism. The exclusivity of the sacrifice a virgin-born incarnate Son of God in Jesus Christ, slain for our sins and resurrected by the power of God, as the only way to salvation is an embarrassment that flies in the face of warm and fuzzy notions of unity in diversity and the contention that “there are many ways up the mountain.” Mention the five points of Calvinism, sovereignty of God, or predestination and theologically liberal Presbyterians roll their eyes.

Leaders in mainline Protestant denominations cannot comprehend the nature of the threat posed by al Qaeda, Hezbollah and Hamas because they do not acknowledge the inherent evil of mankind. Official Presbyterian Church USA statements on the Middle East include this statement in a March 11, 2002 letter from Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick to Prime Minister Sharon,

“While we do not condone the acts of violence by certain Palestinian extremists, we are appalled that Israel, in response, has continued to punish the entire Palestinian population and its leaders who have been your government’s partners in the peace process. For the past year and a half, the Israeli army has continued to bombard Palestinian institutions and the civilian population, including those in refugee communities, with merciless attacks.

“We protest the continuing degradation of the Palestinian people by Israel. We appeal to you for the immediate withdrawal of the military

from the Palestinian territories. We urge you to renounce and to stop this violent madness and seek the course of peaceful negotiations, for the sake of justice, on which Israel's own security depends.”⁷

No similar note was sent to Chairman Yasir Arafat. Furthermore, Kirkpatrick's language ascribes terrorist acts to “certain Palestinian extremists.” In 2002, with the Second Intifada against Israel already underway for over a year, the Moderator of the PCUSA, Palestinian-born Christian Dr. Fahed Abu Ekel, met with and prayed with (not *for*...but *with*) the Egyptian-born terrorist, Chairman Yasir Arafat.

In 2004, retired Pittsburgh Theological Seminary professor and PCUSA elder Dr. Robert H. Stone, noted during a meeting with Hezbollah that it was easier to have a dialogue with terrorists than with Israelis. Stone also stated, “Also, we praise your initiative for dialogue and mutual understanding. We cherish these statements that bring us closer to you.”⁸

Hezbollah, an arm of Iranian military intelligence, is responsible for the deaths of hundreds of Americans beginning with the bombing of the US embassy annex and US Marine barracks in Beirut in 1983. Twenty-three years later US military personnel are engaged in Iraq with Jihadists from across the Middle East, many of whom are financed, trained, armed and directed by Hezbollah.

Within the PCUSA, too many clergy and leaders have subscribed to the idea that Israelis are people who, in the words of the Reverend Kirkpatrick, “indiscriminately shoot...children and adults.” The Reverend Christine Canton of the Christian Peacemakers Team in Hebron signed an “open letter” to Secretary of State Colin Powell in which she accused Israel of “indiscriminate shootings by Israeli Defense Force soldiers at checkpoints of civilians, including children, women, the elderly and the disabled.” She

further alleged, “US-manufactured missiles shower down indiscriminately on civilian areas from US manufactured Apache helicopters and F-16 bombers, or from Israeli tanks.”⁹

A few weeks ago, an American teenager named Daniel Wultz was killed in a Tel Aviv falafel shop when a Palestinian suicide bomber struck. Abu Nasser, leader of the Al Aqsa Martyr’s Brigade, the Palestinian group that took credit for the attack, stated, “We wish this young dog will go directly to hell.” Abu Amin, a spokesman for Islamic Jihad, stated, “If you live in America, the hand of Allah and the sword of Jihad will reach you, and you will find the same end as Wultz.” He added, “Killing Americans and Jews in one operation—it can be just great.”¹⁰

Too many Christians, having embraced a Marxist-tinged gospel of social justice at the expense of the Bible as the complete, authoritative and inerrant Word of God, cannot fathom the religious hatred that drives an enemy committed to the ultimate extinction of Christians and Jews and the eradication a Western civilization based on Judeo-Christian concepts of the worth of the individual, human dignity and freedom.

The United States and Israel cannot be defeated militarily by Islamic Jihadists, unless through apathy, misperception or a lack of will, we allow ourselves to be defeated. Whether mainline Protestant leaders acknowledge it or not, the Sovereign God who created the ends of the universe and who will one day establish his eternal kingdom in Jerusalem will not be thwarted. Rather, it is we who fail by refusing God’s demands for righteous obedience, by ignoring those who murder in the name of their god and by not acting decisively to stop them. Meanwhile we would do well to recall the words of the Apostle Paul at the conclusion of the Eighth Chapter of Romans,

“As it is written for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am persuaded that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, can separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Romans 8: 36-39.

Endnotes

¹ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, Samuel B. Griffith edition, (London: Oxford University Press, 1977.), p. 84.

² Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*. Peter Paret and Michael Howard, eds. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), pp 88-89.

³ See: Daniel Pipes: *Militant Islam Reaches America*, (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2003), pp. 242-43. Also see “President Says Terrorists Won’t Change American Way of Life,” 23 October 2001, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011023-33.html; “President Rallies Troops at Travis Air Force Base,” 17 October 2001, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/20011017-20.html; “President Bush and Russian President Putin Discuss Progress,” 21 October 2001, at www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/10/200111021-3.html.

⁴ The National Security Strategy of the United States. March 2006. (Washington: US Government Printing Office), p. 1.

⁵ Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders, 23 February 1998. <http://www.fas.org/irp/world/para/doc/980223-fatwa.htm>.

⁶ Audrey Kurth Cronin, “Behind the Curve: Globalization and International Terrorism,” in *Terrorism and Counterterrorism: Understanding the New Security Environment*, Brig. Gen. Russell D. Howard and Maj. Reid Sawyer, eds. New York: McGraw-Hill, 2006), pp. 73-34.

⁷ Letter from Stated Clerk Clifton Kirkpatrick to Prime Minister Sharon, March 11, 2002. at http://home.comcast.net/~jat.action/PCUSA_History.htm.

⁸ Stone quoted in Robert J. Avrech, “Presbyterian Terror,” May 31, 2006. See: Coalition for Responsible Peace in the Middle East, <http://c4rpme.org/bin/articles.cgi?Cat+divestment&Subct=presbyterian&ID=414>.

⁹ See: History of Anti-Israeli Bias of Presbyterian Church Leadership. Institute of Religion and Democracy. http://home.comcast.net/~jat.action/PCUSA_History.htm.

¹⁰ Quotes taken from Avrech, “Presbyterian Terror.”

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