



It's a Moral Clash

By Karina Rollins

In *Mere Christianity*, C. S. Lewis sketches the existence of universally accepted notions of right and wrong—the moral laws of nature. Regardless of differing cultures, eras, and creeds, he argues, humans have always shared certain basic moral values. “Think of a country,” Lewis challenges, “where people were admired for running away in battle, or where a man felt proud of double crossing all the people who had been kindest to him. You might just as well try to imagine a country where two and two made five.”

September 11, 2001 has strained Mr. Lewis's theorem.

Major U.S. landmarks were attacked specifically for the large number of innocent people they housed, in an attempt to bring devastation to American soil and despair to the American soul. An unspeakable plan was carried out not by demented individuals but by disciplined representatives of a swelling cultural ideology that germinates hatred toward the entire free world. The numerous societies where this ideology has rooted now breed men filled with a loathing of such intensity, such scope, such depraved grandeur, that the human beings beset by it hardly seem to walk and breathe within the laws of nature that C. S. Lewis took for granted.

Since the attacks on the Twin Towers and the Pentagon, politicians and editorialists have made it a point to assure Muslims around the world that the West does not blame them for the perversities carried out in their name. They are right to do so. Though few Muslims seem to be agonizing over America's grief, there is no reason to convict every Muslim of being hostile to Western lives.

It is a grave and dangerous mistake, however, to leap from the fact that most individual Muslims are innocent to the notion that the societies in which they live are benign. The record of

Muslim nations across the world is hardly one of peace and tranquility. As British historian Paul Johnson has noted, “Islam means ‘submission’...and one of the functions of Islam, in its more militant aspect, is to obtain that submission from all, if necessary by force.”

“Islam is not the enemy!” is the slogan Americans are forced daily. When President Bush spoke at the Islamic Center in Washington, D.C. shortly after the terror attacks, he said that America is “a great country because we share the same values of respect and dignity and human worth. And it is my honor to be meeting with leaders who feel just the same way I do. They're outraged, they're sad. They love America just as much as I do.”

But is this true? There is no evidence that the Muslims living in America are necessarily all great patriots. Indeed, we know that a number of poisonously militant Islamic congregations now meet on American soil in numerous locations. Even among the leaders of such moderate Muslim groups as the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) and the American Muslim Council (AMC), the main priority in the terrorist aftermath has been to protest “hate crimes,” some real, some imagined, against Muslims and Arabs in the U.S.

Nor did these mainstream Islamic organizations show much star-spangled patriotism in earlier terror incidents. As Jake Tapper reports in *Salon*, CAIR included the court conviction of Omar Abdul-Rahman (the mastermind of the 1993 World Trade Center bombing) on a list of “hate crimes against Muslims.” In 1994, the director of the AMC expressed his views on the 1993 convictions in a letter to AMC members: “I believe that the judge went out of his way to punish the defendants harshly and with vengeance, and to a large extent because they were Muslim.” These words about terrorists who, as Tapper reminds, “differ

Karina Rollins is a TAE senior editor.

from the September 11 bombers only in efficiency.”

While President Bush's comments were well-intended, they were baseless assertions. It may be true that most individual Muslims living in America sincerely love this country. But it is a fact that as of the printing of this issue no major Muslim group in America has spoken out against terrorism without qualification.

“Islam is an imperialist religion,” Paul Johnson explains, noting that the Koran encourages believers to battle non-Muslims “until they embrace Islam.” In recent years, adherents have brought this tendency to the fore in an especially politicized form of the Muslim religion. Scholars call it Islamism, which Martin Kramer of Tel Aviv University defines as “Islam reformulated as a modern ideology.”

Daniel Pipes, director of the Middle East Forum, states that “Islamists see their adherence to Islam primarily as a form of political allegiance. Though usually pious Muslims, they need not be. Plenty of Islamists seem in fact to be rather impious.” Those who assume that the vodka-swilling, porn-buying, nude-club-visiting September 11 hijackers couldn't possibly be devoted to any Islamic cause should be interested to learn that Ramzi Yousef, major planner of the first Trade Center bombing in 1993, spent his time in the Philippines “gallivanting around Manila's bars, strip-joints, and karaoke clubs, flirting with women.” Osama bin Laden, too, is reported to have been a regular in the nightclubs of Beirut during the period when his Islamic fervor was blooming.

Islamic extremists may constitute only a minor percentage of the worldwide Muslim population; certainly it is true that not all Muslims support terrorists. But all of today's terrorists bent on destroying Western civilization are Muslims. The actions of September 11 were not the result of 19 individual sick minds, but of sick societies. Yes, horrible monsters spring from Christian nations as well. But the vital distinction lies in how societies respond to their evildoers. America executed Timothy McVeigh. Large parts of the societies from whence sprang the September 11 hijackers celebrated them as martyrs.

The leaders and supporters of the Soviet Union, as glaring and massive a threat to world freedom as they were, still held the basic moral assumptions about human life that C. S. Lewis believed universal. The most vile Communists, indifferent to the human tragedies they helped create, still cared whether their family members lived or died. That's why Mutual Assured Destruction—the Cold War gospel that neither side would launch a nuclear attack so long as it was clear that doing so would bring a deadly counterattack—worked.

MAD won't work with our latest enemies. There is nothing with which to threaten them, because there is nothing they fear. They *want* to die for the sacred cause of exterminating Americans, Jews, and Westerners. They know no mercy. They attack civilians, women, even children as indifferently as soldiers. They do not care how many of their own people suffer and die. A day after the attacks on New York and Washington, the civilian population of Kabul began to flee Afghanistan's capital for fear

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of U.S. retaliation. The Taliban, instead of being concerned for the safety of its citizens—the majority of whom are likely too ignorant, poor, and miserable to

have even heard of the Twin Towers before—urged the wretched masses to stay and fight—i.e., be blown to pieces for the sake of providing cover for the Taliban. The Islamic terror campaign is different from any enemy the West has ever faced, and, because there is no conventional way to fight it, more dangerous.

There are few moral values that these killers share with us. They inhabit countries where slaughtering women and children brings honor to men. There are people who live profitably among free nations and accept the kindness of their citizens, all the while plotting their ruin. There are leaders, popular ones, who will use poison gas on their own people. One might just as well imagine a country where two and two made five. Yet such countries are our new enemies.

In Syria, Libya, Iraq, Algeria, Iran, the Sudan, Afghanistan, the idea of hospitality means harboring mass killers; official slavery exists to this day within some of these borders; mutilations are state policies; women are kept as human house pets; and Americans are killed for sport. “In part of Nigeria and Sudan, and in Asia, notably in Indonesia,” warns Paul Johnson, “non-Muslims are given the choice of conversion or death. And in all countries where Islamic law is applied, converts, whether compulsory or not, who revert to their earlier faith, are punished by death.” With the exception of Turkey, fundamentalist theology “has increased its grip on both the rulers and the masses” throughout the Islamic world.

It isn't just Westerners who fear the menace of militant Islam. Algerian ambassador to the U.S. Osmane Bencherif has stated that “It is misguided policy to distinguish between moderate and extremist fundamentalists. The goal of all is the same: to construct a pure Islamic state, which is bound to be a theocracy and totalitarian.” “An Islamist state is, almost by definition, a rogue state,” observes Daniel Pipes. “Islamists in power means that conflicts proliferate, society is militarized, arsenals grow, and terrorism becomes an instrument of state.”

The Cold War is over, but the battle of good vs. evil rages stronger than ever. At some point in the future, the human thirst for liberty and self-determination may sweep even the Islamic world. But today, a fresh enemy is at civilization's gate, and it's time we recognized him.

The Muslim World Has Fallen Behind

By Hillel Fradkin

Osama bin Laden and other radical Muslims look at the present condition of the world not just in contemporary terms, but in light of the whole 1,400-year sweep of Islamic history. They cite medieval authorities as frequently as living experts; ancient battles as readily as recent ones. To understand today's Islamic radicals it is necessary to appreciate how unappetizing civilization's current trends look to them.