

September Eleven: Hope or Hate?

"Book burning is a special kind of savagery..."

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Theme: [Religion](#), [Terrorism](#)

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"No creature smarts so little as a fool." (Alexander Pope, 1688-1744.)

Numerous commentators on the demented, hate filled ramblings of "Pastor" Terry Jones, who may or may not celebrate his 11th September by an evening of Qur'an burnings, have referred to the potential of Muslim retaliation across the globe. General Petraeus is concerned about backlash to US troops in Iraq and Afghanistan. President Obama and Secretary of State Hilary Clinton, more or less reiterated his stance – whilst saying they are powerless to stop his hate filled initiative. One can only speculate as to whether they would be as sanguine were it the Torah or Talmud being burned.

Yet the avalanche of comments also create a further divide.

Jones is a man with miniscule "following." Near no mention is being made of Christians, Jews or those born to both religions, but who have long wandered away, and of other faiths, or none, shamed and repelled to have this action committed in their name – they are American, British, German, Spanish, Polish, Italian and other nations – civilian, but unwillingly "allied" to the "coalition", who have invaded – and are threatening – Muslim countries. They are part of the millions who marched against war – and the countless more, who first believed the threats spouted by their governments, then acknowledged that they had been misled and have acted tirelessly, trying to redress their – and governments – mistakes.

One website condemning the action attracted seven thousand protesters near-instantly. A tongue in cheek commentator suggested it is the Pastor who should be burned – in Hell. Another site has attracted more thousands of non-Muslims to a worldwide "Wear a Hijab Day", on 11th September – and another to convert the anniversary to global: "Buy a Qur'an Day."

One writer wondered what kind of "crazy" now "represents" God. Well, a few actually. There was George W. Bush, who announced he was embarking on a "Crusade" and was enjoined by then Prime Minister Tony Blair, now converted to Catholicism. There was the "Clash of Civilisations", nonsense. And US and UK soldiers taking in guns with Biblical quotes on the stocks – and distributing bibles in the relevant languages as they incursed – and worse – in to towns, villages, neighbourhoods in Afghanistan and Iraq. A practice, when discovered, which led – ironically – to a photo-op of ceremonial burnings of remaining bible stocks by US troops.

Guantanamo, Bagram and formerly US and UK-operated prisons in Iraq (and elsewhere)

including another infamy, Abu Ghraib, filled with near entirely Muslims. Countless languishing for years, uncharged and with no day in Court. Tortured, unimaginably degraded, their Qur'ans have been thrown in to toilets, stepped on and worse. In Fallujah in the original confrontation when the US troops took over a school, they left having written obscenities about Islam on doors and walls, having repeatedly defecated and again, done the unspeakable to Qur'ans.

Book burning is a special kind of savagery, it both destroys and displays an ignorance of and fear of culture, own and that of others. Julius Caesar burned the great library in Alexandria in 48 BC. Nero burned Rome in 64 AD. The Mongul hordes the Baghdad Library and that of the great Munstanstarya University eight hundred years ago. Hitler, of course was in to book burning, organized under Goebbels, the Orwellianly-named Minster of Enlightenment. The new Monguls, in US uniform, allowed or were instrumental, in the same the same, multi-fold, in 2003 – and have continued to bomb and burn property and people – and Qur'ans – for seven years – ongoing, for all the misleading “pullout” nonsense.

Perhaps Mr Jones – who seemingly packs a .40-caliber pistol on his hip – has unwittingly made one progressive step. After what has been revealed, from top to bottom of barking crazy fundamentalism in Christianity, many may think twice before ever again writing or uttering the words: “fundamentalist” with “Islam.”

11th September falls at the start of the three day Muslim celebration of Eid, marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan, a time of abstinence. Eid is joyous meals, new clothes for children, gifts and pristine money for the young. In Afghanistan and Iraq, for the majority it is either scaled down to near nothing, or just a memory, due to grief, invasion, inflicted travel terror, poverty, or all four .

For America, it is the commemoration of the fall of the Towers, with no thought of the 11th September inflicted in casualties, daily, weekly, monthly on the countries invaded since – who had no nationals even accused of being on the flights which allegedly hit the buildings and the Pentagon (facts which over twelve hundred professionals and experts now dispute the official version.)

Anniversaries on 11th September abound, from the mists of time onwards. However, some salutary ones, in relatively recent history, show America is not alone in its suffering, indeed, has created that of others. On 11th September 1919, US Marines invaded Honduras; on 11th September 1941, the ground was broken for the construction of the Pentagon, that source of more subsequent world wide marauding and slaughter. On 11th September 1965, the US First Cavalry arrived in Viet Nam – and on 11th September 1973, the Nixon Administration's collusion in the overthrow of the democratically elected President Salvador Allende in Chile, came to fruition, ushering in the decades of the “disappeared”, under General Augusto Pinochet.

Ally Britain indulged in a bit of decimation on 11th September 1944, bombing and creating a fire storm in Darmstadt, Germany, incinerating eleven thousand five hundred people. 11th September 1997 is remembered for the loss of fourteen Estonian soldiers on the Russian submarine Kurske, in a haunting disaster. The widow of one who died reflected, memorably: “ If you betray your country (the law is invoked) and you pay the price. But what happens if your country betrays you?” Quite.

Betrayed also are the nationalities of the numerous other countries who died in the Twin Towers – over one in ten of the tragedy. They included nationals of Jordan and Lebanon, India lost forty one, South Korea twenty eight, Canada and Japan both lost twenty four, Colombia seventeen, Jamaica, Mexico and the Philippines sixteen each, Australia and Germany eleven each, Italy ten, Israel five and the UK sixty seven, including nationals of its territory, Bermuda. Deaths in lesser numbers are from nations across the planet. (Wikipedia and others.) In spite of a near uniquely international tragedy, and opportunity for coming together, it seems to have been transformed in to exclusively American grief – and revenge.

Even that wretched dove, symbol of global peace, which adorns cards for all seasons, has become embroiled, with “Pastor” Jones, in naming his strange interpretation of vengeful, not conciliatory, Christianity: “Dove World Outreach Centre.” Jones, of course sent children from his church to school, wearing shirts stating: “Islam Is Of The Devil,” also the title of a book he has written. Impossible not to think of a recent depiction on a card, of a desperate dove, not with an olive leaf, or twig in its beak, but the entire branch. It is depicted struggling through the thermals, drops of perspiration bursting through the feathers.

Those of note who have spoken out appear to be more worried about retaliation on US and UK troops, than the implications of a shaming act. With the news from Pentagon documents, that US troops have alleged to have been involved in further atrocities, collecting of fingers, teeth bones, even skulls of victims, retaliation seems anyway, pretty well guaranteed.

Recently a contributor to a Middle East-orientated website wrote: “I am a Muslim : Kill me & call it “collateral damage”; imprison me & call it: “security measure”; exile my people en masse & call it: “A New Middle East”; steal my resources, invade my land, murder my wife & children, alter the leadership of my country & call it: “democracy.” He speaks for millions. Those representing the West, especially the US and UK need humility, genuine outreach, to listen carefully before they talk and bridge building, not bridge burning.

11th September 1893 marked the first World Parliament of Religions, held in Chicago, an outreach of understanding between all faiths, and held ever since. An anniversary which celebrates justice, not vengeance. A good starting point in emulating their efforts, might be to ponder on a verse from the Qur’an. The copy in mind is in superb, lovingly crafted calligraphy, on palest peachy-primrose, dawn’s perhaps most perfect herald. Translated, it reads:

“I seek refuge with the Lord of the Dawn,

From the mischief of created things,

From the mischief of darkness as it overspreads,

From the mischief of those who blow on knots’

And from the mischief of the envious one as he practises envy.”

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