

Some of us might even be convinced that we have been spared to go on with life because we were better than those victims. Assuming so would be a terrible mistake. It reminds me of some people in Jesus time who harboured similar thoughts about tragedies in their world. Jesus referred to an accident that was the talk of Jerusalem then. A tower had collapsed and buried eighteen people that were crushed to death. Luke 13: 4-5 gives us the lesson Jesus drew from it: *“Do you think they were more guilty than all the others living in Jerusalem? I tell you, no! But unless you repent, you too will all perish.”*

WHAT DID JESUS SAY...

One cannot help, but be struck by the relevance of Jesus' response in view of the terrible events in New York and Washington. This call for repentance is surely not directed to citizens of New York, Washington or Jerusalem any more than to you and me. **We** are to be blamed for allowing blatant lies to raise their ugly head unchallenged. **We** are to repent for putting our personal comfort and amusement higher than the well-being and prosperity of our suffering neighbour and fellow-human. The American president praised his nation, claiming that this tragedy “brought out the best of the American people under the worst of circumstances.” Yet it ought to go further than that and cause repentance (= turning around, changing our ways, adopting new values) in **our** attitude to a hurting humanity.

Lastly all of us who are following Jesus Christ need to ask ourselves: “What is my

attitude towards my Muslim neighbours? Do I despise, resent and avoid any contact with them?” If so, how can you bring this in harmony with the spirit of your Master who always sought to win his opponents to acknowledge the compassionate nature of God? Are **we** not to take the blame for restricting the Truth of God's Holy Word to our own church buildings and homes, instead of taking the initiative of love and sharing the One who is *“The Way, the Truth and the Life”* with those bound by a system that sanctions lies whenever it seems convenient?”

Dear Friends, Sisters and Brothers in Christ, we may never fully know who is to be blamed, but this much we know: it is time to repent, change our ways and sacrificially reach out to those beyond our Christian buildings and communities. Let's affirm with our lives that we identify with him who said: “I have other sheep that are not of this sheep pen. I must bring them also” (John 10:16).

This is a decisive moment. Our prayer is that the Church will not catch the 'hate' disease already infecting so many but will instead reach out a hand of hope and help to the Muslims living among us.

Moreover those Christians who had already established a bridge of friendship before Tragic Tuesday now have an opportunity to show true love in standing by their Muslim friends when others shun them. Did You show Christ's love to a Muslim today?

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If this has touched you to look beyond your doorstep and reach out to those in need of Christ,

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When Tragedy Strikes ...



WHO TAKES THE BLAME

The horrible terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center (WTC) and the Pentagon have brought shock and pain to many nations in a measure as never before experienced in times of peace. It has affected not only Americans, but all humanity and burnt deep wounds into the body of nations. All over the globe we were watching in utter disbelief as those ill-fated planes crashed into the two towers of the WTC and the Pentagon. At that time nobody would have thought it possible that these mighty symbols of Western capitalism and US military strength could crumble and desintegrate right before our eyes in less than an hour, burying thousands of unsuspecting victims under a heap of rubble.

Since that tragic day, the 11th of September, so many questions have troubled our minds: Who could have schemed such a heinous act of terror? How could this devilish attack have been kept secret and undetected? Will any organisation come out openly claiming responsibility for this cowardly act? Who is to be blamed for it? And how will the superpower America respond to such a national humiliation?

Many were quick to blame **“the Arabs”** as this appears to be a convenient label for most terrorist acts that remain unsolved. Although no reasonable person would accuse **all** Arab nations for such terror, yet sadly some Americans have lashed out against any Arab face in the aftermath of the tragedy. But harrasing one ethnic community or losing

self-restraint against all Arab nations could never accomplish justice in such an hour of crisis.

For others the obvious culprit was **Osama bin Laden** who had been the main player in the bomb blast against the US embassy in Nairobi just three years earlier. He had repeatedly declared war against the United States. Yet at second thought it seems beyond one man's resources and capability to level a strike of such magnitude singlehandedly. Past experiences have also clearly shown that terrorism has long built up international networks. Aided by the revolution in communication technology in recent years, even remote or isolated places in Afghanistan, Sudan or Iraq can become hubs of terrorist hideouts or training grounds.

Increasing the shock and pain of those suffering were the pictures of some small groups of Palestinians and other enemies of the **American superpower** showing them jubilant and dancing. *"America just got what it deserved!"* – *"Let's hope that they learn their lesson not to bully the rest of the world."* But such responses are surely driven by hate or envy against the mightiest nation in the world rather than by fair judgment. And they hardly tie up with the fact that hundreds of British, Asian and African professionals were also buried under the rubble, nor is it just to the scores of firemen and police officers who unselfishly gave their lives in single-minded rescue efforts.

Shouldn't we look deeper and probe the underlying systems rather than targeting tribes, individuals or nations? This is a vital point that should not be dismissed too swiftly. A look into modern history reminds us that the decades after the Second World War were dominated by a "balance of power" between two great opponents, namely Communism and Capitalism. But even before the "cold war era" ended the emergence of the Ayatollah Khomeini pinned Islam and Capitalism as irreconcilable enemies. Western

Capitalism (usually exempting Japan or the oil-rich nations for whatever reasons) has been blamed for suppressing the less fortunate, to legalise oppression against the two-thirds world by enforcing unjust trade laws favouring the rich and further impoverishing the poor. Some would argue: "America and Europe are merely excusing their unwillingness to assist the poorer nations by constantly pointing to corruption, mismanagement and political instability in the African nations." Others rightly ask: "How will the peoples in the Western countries (and elsewhere!) justify their insatiable greed for wealth, comfort and pleasure by wasting valuable resources on entertainment and leisure industries, intoxicating drinks and luxuries, when billions of fellow human beings struggle to their utmost for sheer survival?" And those with some sense of accountability to God do well to conclude: "Will the Almighty, the Lord of the whole universe, not have good reason to humble the godless system of Capitalism just as He did with Communism a decade ago?"

These are very good questions. And they go far beyond national borders challenging us to bring down our personal towers of pride, self-centeredness and ruthless prosperity. *"What will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul"* is a timeless truth deserving daily reminder (Matthew 16:26). Indeed many of our contemporaries and most successful companies today seem to have no higher goal than raising their profits by a larger percentage than the year before.

DON'T JUST BELIEVE EVERYTHING...

Some might suggest that **Islam** is the answer. Many Muslims tell us: "Those terrorists are discrediting our religion. Islam means peace and is the most tolerant religion on the face of the earth". Such assurances are given to us repeatedly whenever terrorism strikes. But fewer and fewer people are prepared to remain gullible consumers of such cheap talk and prefer to think for themselves. One wonders: "Why does

Islam nurture such atrocities as witnessed in an increasing wave of terrorist attacks over recent decades? Can it simply be explained by the discontented, desperate social climate in Palestine and the Middle East? What propels so many suicide volunteers to blow themselves up with an *'Allah-u-akhbar'* on their lips as they bring death and destruction?"

BUT CONSIDER THE EVIDENCE

The sad truth is that the religious system installed by Muhammad some fourteen centuries ago has always championed political supremacy. This can easily be documented from Islamic sources. While Muhammad was cherished by his followers as *Al Amin* (= the Trustworthy one) he had dozens of his personal enemies assassinated in the most despicable manner. (*Siratu'l Rasul, Sahih Muslim, Mishkat* and other Islamic sources describe these with unashamed clarity. – For documentation of original sources contact us.) While it is true that the Qur'an states that *"There is no compulsion in religion"* (Sura 2:256), it also urges to *"fight and slay the pagans wherever you find them"* (Sura 9:5). It specifically includes Jews and Christians along with the unbelievers into the curse *"May Allah kill them"* (Sura 9:30; also see 47:4). We should also consider the implication of the various "martyr verses" in the Qur'an (Sura 9:111; 48:15-17;

3:157.165-170.195; 61:4). *"For theirs is the Garden (of Paradise): they fight in His Cause, and slay and are slain..."*, also *"Truly God loves those who fight in His cause in battle array, as if they were a solid cemented structure"* or again *"those who have left their homes ... or suffered in my cause, or fought or been slain, - verily, I will blot out from them their iniquities, and admit them into gardens with rivers flowing beneath..."* In the light of these we are not surprised that some Muslim leaders, such as Hassan al-Banna, founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, could bluntly conclude: *"The only true Muslim is one, who denies himself, overcomes his inner hesitation and is willing to kill the enemies of Islam."* (*Holy Terror* by Amir Taheri, Sphere Books, London, 1987).

It is sad to note that such terror and deliberate deception is not restricted to Muhammad's days, but is still practiced today. We note that the use of lies is officially sanctioned in Islam as seen in *Do's and Do Not's in Islam* by Abdul Rehman Shad, Kazi Publications, Lahore, 1983, page 191-192 and implied in the description of Allah as *"the best of plotters"* – Sura 3:54 and 8:30. The *Daily Nation* on that fatal day of September, 11, when the *Supreme Council of Kenyan Muslims* (SUPKEM) published a *"Petition to the Kenyan Government on the Arab-Israeli Conflict in Palestine"* that displayed outright distortion of facts and certainly did not help to improve relations between Christians and Muslims. How can Christians be expected to believe that Islam means to bring peace in the light of such unrefutable facts?

So who is to be blamed? The Arabs, Osama bin Laden, America, Western Capitalism, or Islam? We might attach part of the blame to all of these but does it clear our conscience? Certainly not! We all have to test our hearts. And in no way do we suggest to target "the Muslims", most of whom are indeed peace loving citizens who would strongly reject having any part in such tragic incidents.

