

11th SEPTEMBER 2001

All conflict is ultimately theological
Cardinal Manning

The Devil

The Church teaches that the Devil can do evil to man but only within the limits of God's permission. St Thomas quotes St Augustine as saying that there are many things that the demons could do by reason of their nature but they cannot do them because of the divine prohibition (cf. *De Malo*, 16, 11, ad 10). Here are quotes from the Church's saintly theologians on the subject.

St Augustine: *If the Devil could do everything he wanted, there would not remain a single living human being on the earth.* (Patrologia Latina XXXVII, 1246)

St John Chrysostom: *No one can feel such implacable hatred for his worst enemy as the evil one feels for the human race.* (*On the Priesthood*, 6, 13)

St Bonaventure: *The cruelty of the Devil is such that he would devour us at any moment if the divine power did not protect us.* (*Diaeta salutis*, VII, c.1)

What the Devil cannot do directly, he is permitted to do indirectly but, again, only within the limits imposed by God. So he can tempt one man to harm another and tempt that other to react. In this way he can do great moral and physical evil in the world. If we understood the extent of the hatred the Devil has for each and every one of us we would never cooperate with him by giving in to any of his temptations. We would take to heart the words of St Paul—

Draw your strength from the Lord and His mighty power. Put on the armour of God so that you may be able to stand firm against the tactics of the Devil.
Ephesians 6:10-11

If we want some idea of the implacable hatred the Devil has for mankind we have only to look at the manner and extent of the harm done at the World Trade Centre in New York on September 11th 2001. In less than two hours the two tallest buildings in the world and more than three thousand lives were destroyed—it was a holocaust. Moreover, the offenders used the innocent as instruments to achieve their evil ends. It was a diabolical achievement; a masterpiece of evil.

God's Permissive Will

No evil can occur without God permitting it. Indeed, as St Augustine remarks, since he is supremely good, God would not allow something of evil to be in his works were he not good and omnipotent to the point where he is able to bring forth good even from evil [St Augustine, *Enchiridion* 11].

Why, then, did he allow this great evil?

The first thing to be remarked is that while the majority of those who died in the attack on the World Trade Centre were Americans there were among them people from some sixty other nations. The second thing is the universality and the immediacy of the effect of the evil on all the nations of the world through the medium of television. Whatever lessons there are to be learned from this tragedy, then, are not just for America but for the whole world.

Abortion—the Sin that cries to Heaven for Vengeance

In the course of the clean up operation the Mayor of New York put out a call for 6,000 body bags. It became evident within twenty four hours that they would not be needed. There wouldn't be bodies anywhere near that number—not whole bodies. The call was changed soon after to 30,000 body bags to take each of the innumerable body parts that were being located. The violence of the collapse of the buildings had torn the bodies of the victims apart.

In America each year there are, on a conservative estimate, one million abortions—2,750 per day—innocent Americans murdered by Americans. In almost every other country in the world there are similar numbers in proportion to their populations. Most of these are first trimester abortions in which the tiny foetus is removed, body part by body part, from the womb of its mother. The bodies of the unborn, like the victims of the World Trade Centre disaster, are torn apart. The parallel is compelling.

This is the greatest sin in the world, the systematic killing of the innocent. It is universal and a sin that cries to heaven for vengeance. In my view, then, the first reason God allowed an evil of such universal and immediate effect is as punishment for this grave sin and warning of how utterly hateful it is to God.

It may be objected that this thesis is unacceptable; that those responsible for abortion were not punished; that many innocent people died including priests, Catholics in good standing and many totally opposed to abortion. How could God have excluded the guilty and included the innocent in such punishment?

Some important distinctions must be made. First, man has duties to God to keep the moral law insofar as he is an individual. But man also has duties to God *insofar as he is social*. In other words, *society* has duties to God. We tend to ignore this *social* duty in our preoccupation with our personal duties. Secondly, *not to will is to will not*. In other words, if society fails to act when it should, by that very failure it has already chosen its course.

Until the 20th Century abortion was an aberration, something generally abhorred, practised by the few. Now it is accepted behaviour and it is the western, supposedly Christian, countries which are the prime offenders. It is accepted because the societies involved refuse to condemn it or to prosecute those who indulge in it. Social attitudes are manifest in the politicians, the judges and magistrates, the police who are appointed. If they fail and society does not intervene to remove them then society as a whole will be afflicted with the evils they bring upon it—the *innocent members as well as the guilty*.

It is not to the point, then, to complain that the innocent died in the World Trade Centre disaster. The innocent die violently every day—2,750 a day in the US alone. Nor is it to the point that the disaster should have afflicted the innocent along with the guilty. As Our Lord remarked in Luke 13:4—*Those eighteen on whom the tower at Siloam fell and killed them, do you suppose that they were more guilty than all the other people living in Jerusalem? They were not, I tell you.*

God and Mammon

The total destruction of the World Trade Centre is a lesson, too, of the vanity of riches. Greater than any basilica ever built, than St Peter's in Rome or the Hagia Sofia in Istanbul (Constantinople), this monument to western capitalism was erected with pride in man's achievement. Like some latter day Tower of Babel it was a vain attempt to reach a heaven of man's contriving.

Psalm 48 includes the lines—

*No man can buy his own ransom
or pay a price to God for his life.
The ransom of his soul is beyond him.
He cannot buy life without end,
nor avoid coming to the grave.
...
In his riches man lacks wisdom:
He is like the beasts that are destroyed.*

Our Lord insisted upon it—*You cannot be the slave both of God and of money* (Lk 16:13). The western world and particularly America is obsessed with material possessions. If it continues to follow this obsession it will perish as have those who died in this holocaust.

Mohammedanism

There is a further lesson taught by the disaster—a warning about the dangers of Mohammedanism.

There are many Catholics who have watched with concern the encroachment of Mohammedans into nominally Christian countries throughout the world. The political correctness of 'multiculturalism' has sought to persuade us that we can live in amity with those whose religious values are utterly opposed to our own. It is part of the syncretism of the age to accentuate the similarities between religions and gloss over the differences. Usually those who bang the multiculturalist drum are themselves devoid of any religious tendency. But they are aided and abetted by those who are ignorant of the teachings of Christianity and of the lessons of history.

Mohammed [570-632 AD] had a dream or vision around 610 in a cave on Mount Hira, some distance from Mecca, of a supernatural being who addressed him as 'Messenger of God' and taught him a text. Some years later he had further visions

and further messages were given him. After his death these texts were collected and codified into the Qu'ran (Koran)—114 chapters or surahs. His followers regard the texts as having been given him by the archangel Gabriel.

While it did not arise from within the Catholic Church, Mohammedanism is in essence a Catholic heresy. It insists on certain of the teachings of the Catholic Church while denying the rest. Thus Mohammed taught the oneness of God and his infinite majesty while denying that in that One there is a Trinity of persons. He taught descent from Adam while denying original sin and its effects—sin was disobedience to God but God could not be affected by it. Sin, therefore, could not be an offence against God. He taught the immortality of the soul and that there is a last judgment with reward and punishment but denied that we have need of redemption or that Christ was our Redeemer.

God is omnipotent and merciful according to Mohammedans but immutable and inaccessible. It is inconceivable to them that we should regard him as a loving Father. They have no doctrine like our doctrine of Grace whereby God makes us partakers of His Divine Nature. Christ said: *'you are no longer servants but friends'* but for the Mohammedan this is blasphemous. The attitude of the Mohammedan believer is that of slave to master. There are no sacraments, no baptism; it is faith alone which saves—a jealous and exclusive faith—and good and evil acts assume only a relative position in the light of this fundamental principle. The first law for Mohammedans is not to love God with all one's heart with all one's soul and with all one's mind but a total and blind surrender to the will of Allah [*Islam* means 'submission' or 'acceptance'] and the only great sin is not the sin against charity—of hatred of God and of your neighbour—but that of denying that God is one. This is the only sin that cannot be forgiven.

Mohammedans say that they revere Jesus and his mother Mary but that reverence is not a Catholic reverence. Christ is the word of God, 'his name is the messiah', but he is not himself God; he did not die on the cross—another victim was substituted; he is not the mediator between God and man; he is merely a prophet like Moses or (they assert) David or Mohammed whose function it is to transmit the warning of God. Mary was visited by the archangel Gabriel; she remained a virgin while giving birth to Christ (under a palm tree!) but she is not the Mother of God; she was a woman like any other.

They are unbelievers who say 'God is the Messiah, Mary's son'. . . They are unbelievers who say 'God is the Third of Three'. No God is there but One God. . . The Messiah, son of Mary, was only a Messenger . . .

Qu'ran, surah 5: 76-79

Mohammedanism gives no credence at all to Sacred Scripture. The only true source of knowledge is the Qur'an. Christians and Jews are referred to as 'People of the Book'.

People of the Book! Why do you dispute concerning Abraham? The Torah was not sent down, neither the Gospel, but after him. What, have you no reason? Ha, you are the ones who dispute on what you know; why then dispute you

touching a matter of which you know nothing? God knows, and you know not. No; Abraham in truth was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim and one pure of faith; certainly he was never of the idolaters.

surah 3:58-60

Many of the biblical events are retold in the Qu'ran with alteration or comment which makes them foreign to Christians. Typical of the Mohammedan attitude is this statement of a Mohammedan professor in 1955—*If you want to know Judaism or Christianity, do not read the Bible or the Gospels; they are forged. Read the Qur'an; it contains everything.* (quoted in *How to Understand Islam*, Jacques Jomier, New York, 1991, p.103).

The Qur'an is something like the Book of Mormon. There are the same banal assertions, the story book descriptions to add apparent verisimilitude to the assertion of revelation from God. Moreover, Mohammedanism has the same sort of provenance as Mormonism. Like Joseph Smith, Mohammed allegedly learnt from God through a revelation the content of the writings which he delivered to his followers. The credibility of his revelation is based on nothing more than bland assertion. There is another similarity between Mohammedanism and Mormonism: both preach that degradation of woman which is polygamy.

There are elements in Mohammedanism of *Gnosticism* (which asserts a superior knowledge to which the teachings of the Church are to be subjected), of *Arianism* (which denied that Christ was God), and of *Pelagianism* (which denied Original Sin and its effects).

They are naïve who think that there can be rapprochement between Christianity and Mohammedanism. Any ecumenism which seeks to compromise the differences between the two is false. The whole history of Islam and of Christianity has been one of mutual antipathy, and for good reason. Mohammedanism has endeavoured to overrun the kingdoms of Christianity time and again since shortly after the death of Mohammed in 632 and time and again has been driven back. It is important to have some grasp of this history to understand the extent of the antipathy.

By 660 AD Islam had overrun Arabia, Syria, Egypt, the Holy Land and Persia. Constantinople was besieged for the first time in 668, again between 674 and 680, and yet again between 716 and 718. By 670 Mohammedans had conquered Tunisia in North Africa. By 700 all of North Africa, which had in large measure been Christian, albeit under the dominion of the Vandals since 535, was overrun. In 711 the Mohammedans invaded the Spanish peninsula and conquered it. They penetrated into present day France as far as Poitiers before they were stopped and driven back. Narbonne in southern France was recaptured around 760 and slowly the Mohammedans were driven back over the Pyrenees. Over the next 300 years they were driven south towards the centre of Spain.

In the meantime half the Mediterranean islands, Sardinia, Sicily, Crete and Cyprus included, had fallen and Mohammedanism had made remarkable inroads to the east. Pakistan was penetrated in the early 8th Century. Afghanistan fell to them after 800.

What gave impetus to Mohammedanism over the centuries was the continual recruitment to its cause of new pagan forces with great fighting qualities. The Arabs were succeeded by Persian, then Mongol then Turkish forces, each of them adopting the new religion and lending its own naïve vigour.

In 1095 the great reaction and awakening of Catholic Europe began. The successes in the Iberian Peninsula of Alfonso VI and El Cid in resisting the Mohammedans and the securing of Valencia by El Cid in the battle of Cuarte the previous year provided the impetus. It was no longer acceptable that the holy places should be in the hands of Mohammedans. On 27th November Pope Urban II preached at the Council of Clermont in France—

Jerusalem . . . [t]his royal city . . . situated at the centre of the world, is now held captive by His enemies, and is in subjection to those who do not know God, to the worship of the heathen. She seeks therefore and desires to be liberated, and does not cease to implore you to come to her aid . . . Whoever, therefore, shall determine upon this holy pilgrimage and shall make his vow to God to that effect and shall offer himself to Him as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, shall wear the sign of the cross of the Lord on his forehead or on his breast.

[according to Robert the Monk in his *Historia Hierosolymitana*, quoted in *The Building of Christendom*, Warren H. Carroll, Front Royal, 1987, p.521]

Those who vowed themselves to the effort came to be known as Crusaders—aiders of the Cross, and the struggles with Islam which followed, the Crusades. Between 1095 and 1197 there were three of these concerted attempts by great numbers of Christians to wrest the holy places back from Mohammedan influence.

It is characteristic of modern revisionist historians to condemn the Crusades as Christian aggression against the Mohammedan and as a blot on the purity of Catholicism. The very contrary is the case. The Crusades were instituted by the Church for the good of Christianity.

Up to this time all the aggression had been Muslim. The Muslims were the original and continuing attackers and conquerors of Christian territory. They continued to rule hundreds of thousands of Christian people. The Christian counter offensives, as in Spain, had all been limited and local; the Muslim aggression was much more nearly perpetual and universal, wherever Christendom was found. . . Never until this time had Christendom generated a united military effort against aggressive Islam.

Warren H. Carroll, *The Building of Christendom*, op.cit., p.529

Certainly there were abuses committed by those involved; slaughters; the compromising of principles and of vows; the opportunistic chasing after wealth. These things are inevitable in any human activity especially one in which military power is placed in the hands of men and there are none but moral fetters on how they

are to exercise it. But in the main those who devoted themselves to the design carried out what they intended.

Crusader kingdoms were set up in Syria at Edessa and at Antioch and in the Holy Land at Jerusalem which lasted close on one hundred years. But the supply lines were stretched and the Mohammedans continually harried the Crusaders. They found a great general in Saladin and in 1187 he won a decisive battle at Hattin in the Holy Land which decimated the Crusading forces. Most of the ground captured was won back and the Holy Land fell again under Mohammedan domination.

Many other expeditions against the Turk followed through to the end of the Middle Ages. And each of them was called a Crusade.

It took nearly 800 years before the Iberian peninsula (now Spain and Portugal) was secured again. And, coincidentally, it was after almost 800 years of intermittent attack by the Mohammedans that Constantinople finally fell to them in 1453. Further Mohammedan advances followed. The Ottoman Turks overran the Balkans. They conquered Greece and Hungary and entered Austria and in 1529, just as the Protestant revolt was taking place, put Vienna under siege. The negotiation of an armistice secured Christian Europe for the moment and offered the Pope some respite to deal with the attack from within the Church in western Europe. Forty years later the Turks sought to conquer Italy by sea and on 7th October 1571 a great naval battle was fought at the mouth of the Gulf of Corinth in the bay of Lepanto won by Christian forces led by Don John of Austria. Pope St Pius V instituted the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary on that date in recognition of the intercession of the Mother of God and he added the title of Our Lady Help of Christians to the Litany of Loreto.

The turn in the tide of Mohammedan influence in Europe did not occur for another hundred years. The Turks again laid siege to Vienna in 1683. They were turned back by an attack led by the Polish King, Jan Sobieski. Although those involved did not realise it, this was the beginning of a movement which was to see them driven out of Europe completely. The significance of the date of that attack will not be lost on the reader—11th September. No mention has been made publicly of the coincidence. The Devil, it seems, has a better sense of history than men.

In 1697 the Turks were defeated at the battle of Zenta in Hungary and Belgrade recaptured. Over the next one hundred years the vigour of the Turks declined and they were driven back into Asia Minor. Christian Europe was secured. The vigour of the Turkish influence repined such that by the 1930s, under the leadership of Khemal Ataturk, Turkey was throwing off the trappings of its religion and adopting western laws and customs.

In 1936 Hilaire Belloc wrote prophetically—

It has always seemed to me possible, and even probable, that there would be a resurrection of Islam and that our sons or our grandsons would see the renewal of that tremendous struggle between the Christian culture and what has been for more than a thousand years its greatest opponent.

The Great Heresies [Reprint], New York, 1968, pp. 126-7

It was soon after the Second World War that Islam again began to rise. Antipathy among Arab Muslims towards the West was raised with the establishment of the State of Israel in Palestine and its support by Britain and the United States. The discovery of oil in Arabia and the Persian Gulf and the royalties which flowed put the means into Mohammedan hands to seek to dominate. In 1979 in Iran the ancient dynasty of the Shahs was overthrown by a resurgent fundamentalist version of Islam under the leadership of the Ayatollah Khomeini. The fanatical element in Islam manifested its presence in a number of isolated events the most important of which was the assassination of the President of Egypt, Anwar Sadat. In these two instances Muslim was prepared to attack Muslim in furtherance of the purity of Islamic teaching.

In a fax allegedly sent by prime suspect Osama bin Laden to a Qatari satellite television station on 25th September, 2001, a fortnight after the World Trade Centre disaster, he is reported to have said: "We incite our brothers in Pakistan to deter with all their capabilities the American crusaders from invading Pakistan and Afghanistan". This squares with other sources which show bin Laden to be a great admirer of the Muslim general Saladin who overthrew the Crusading forces in the 12th Century. "I envision Saladin coming out of the clouds," he is reported as saying. "Our history is being rewritten." It is not beyond the realms of possibility that the date of the attack on the World Trade Centre and the Pentagon was chosen specifically to mark the return of Islam after the rout suffered by the Turks on the same date in 1683. But did those directing the US forces as they commenced their attacks on the Taliban positions in Afghanistan on 7th October realise that date was the anniversary of the Battle of Lepanto?

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The source of Mohammedan arrogance towards those who do not hold its beliefs can be found in the Qu'ran.

They wish that you should disbelieve as they disbelieve, and then you would be equal; therefore take not to yourselves friends of them until they emigrate in the way of God; then, if they turn their backs take them and slay them wherever you find them . . . You will find others desiring to be secure from you and secure from their people yet whenever they are returned to temptation, they are overthrown in it. If they withdraw not from you, and offer you peace, and restrain their hands, take them and slay them wherever you come on them; against them we have given you a clear authority.

Qu'ran, surah 4: 90-94

Surely the worst of beasts in God's sight are the unbelievers who will not believe, those of them with whom thou hast made a compact then they break their compact every time, not being godfearing. So if thou comest upon them anywhere in the war deal with them in such wise as to scatter the ones behind them; haply they will remember.

surah 8: 58-9

We should be reminded of the words of Our Lord to His apostles—

. . . *the hour is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is doing a holy duty for God.*

John 16:2

From its earliest days Mohammedanism has been a polemical religion, full of arrogance towards anyone who does not share its beliefs. The Qu'ran has innumerable passages expressing hatred for 'unbelievers'. Anyone who ceases to hold Muslim beliefs is guilty of the ultimate sin.

St Thomas

This is what St Thomas Aquinas has to say of Mohammedanism—

Mohammed seduced the people by promises of carnal pleasure to which the concupiscence of the flesh goads us. His teaching also contained precepts that were in conformity with his promises, and he gave free rein to carnal pleasure. In all this, as is not unexpected, he was obeyed by carnal men. As for proofs of the truth of his doctrine, he brought forward only such as could be grasped by the natural ability of anyone with a very modest wisdom. Indeed, the truths that he taught he mingled with many fables and with doctrines of the greatest falsity. He did not bring forth any signs produced in a supernatural way, which alone fittingly gives witness to divine inspiration; for a visible action that can be only divine reveals an invisibly inspired teacher of truth. On the contrary, Mohammed said that he was sent in the power of his arms—which are signs not lacking even to robbers and tyrants. What is more, no wise men, men trained in things divine and human, believed in him from the beginning. Those who believed in him were brutal men and desert wanderers, utterly ignorant of all divine teaching, through whose numbers Mohammed forced others to become his followers by the violence of his arms. Nor do divine pronouncements on the part of preceding prophets offer him any witness. On the contrary, he perverts almost all the testimonies of the Old and New Testaments by making them into fabrications of his own, as can be seen by anyone who examines his law. It was, therefore, a shrewd decision on his part to forbid his followers to read the Old and New Testaments, lest these books convict him of falsity. It is thus clear that those who place any faith in his words believe foolishly.

Summa Contra Gentiles Bk.I, 6 [4]

Fr George Rutler, a priest of the diocese of New York, wrote a life of St John Vianney in 1988 (*The Curé d'Ars Today*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco). There he endorses the view of Fr Faber that the Devil overreaches himself.

It is not that he is stupid. Because of ignorance he keeps missing: his pride blinds him to the extent of God's grace . . .

[p. 176]

Such is his desire to harm God's creatures that the Devil acts too precipitately. It seems that here he has done precisely that. The peril of Mohammedanism to Catholicism and to the nominally Christian nations might have grown for another

twenty five years and become so pernicious that little could have been done to address it. But now we have been put on notice. And if those who govern the Church have the will, something can be done to address it.

The US President and those supporting him have been at pains to say that their dispute is not with Mohammedanism but with terrorists. Yet it is entirely consistent with Mohammedan teaching that its members should regard as enemies all those who do not share the views of its pernicious religion.

We who have been favoured by God to be his sons and daughters as members of the Catholic Church should be thankful that through the precipitancy of this evil, the Mohammedan peril has been made clear to us.

Divine Providence

The Portuguese have a saying—*God writes straight with crooked lines*. He uses even the cruelty of religious fanatics to achieve His ends. Can anyone doubt that God has permitted this great evil to warn the nations of the inevitable consequences of the continuance of their evil conduct? Or doubt that He has used it as an instrument of His Mercy to open our eyes to the dangers inherent in compromise with non-Catholic teaching?

God sent Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh *because*, he said, *their wickedness has come up before Me*. When Jonah preached—*in forty days Nineveh shall be destroyed*—the people of Nineveh put on sackcloth and ashes. How will the world react to this tremendous tragedy? In the late 19th and early 20th Centuries, the French people, in thanksgiving for their release from the Prussian Army in 1870 and also in reparation for the evils they had committed during the Commune after this release, erected a great church in Paris at Montmartre. It is the basilica of *Sacré Coeur*—the Sacred Heart—where perpetual adoration of the Blessed Sacrament continues to this day. This great act of reparation was not carried out by any individual but by the whole people, albeit chiefly through funding from all France's Catholics; it was supported by the French National Assembly.

Will the world acknowledge the great evils that afflict our civilisation and move to amend them? Will it turn back to God in sorrow and contrition? Or will it continue as it is—justifying the killing of the innocent, excusing perversion in sexual behaviour and living in de facto denial of its utter reliance on a living and transcendent God?

If the world does not change its ways one thing is certain. Disasters yet greater than the World Trade Centre await us.

The Catholic Church

The means chosen by God for the saving of the world is His Church, founded on Jesus Christ. The head of that Church is not, as many suppose, the Pope, but Jesus Christ. He is not a dead but a living head—*mors illi ultra non dominabitur*—death no more has dominion over him [*Romans* 6:9].

In so far as the members of the Church live their vocations so will the Church succeed or fail in the mission to which God has appointed it. We have one guarantee—*the gates of hell will not prevail against it*. But its members may still fail. A great number of them fail today through adherence to the heretical views of Modernism whose thesis is that the Church must compromise its principles and conform to the mores of the world. The failure has been achieved through close on thirty five years of disobedience to the Church's clear teaching against contraception. Trust in the world rather than trust in God has led many to a lukewarmness which is a presage to the death of their faith.

While on this subject there is one final coincidence for us to consider. The war cry of the Spanish troops during the years of the *reconquista*, the reconquest of Spain from the Mohammedan and its restoration under Catholicism, was *Santiago!—St James*, the apostle of Spain. Those with a sense of history will recall that *Humanae Vitae*, the encyclical which crystallised the Modernist crisis in the Church, was issued on 25th July 1968, the Feast of St James—*God writes straight with crooked lines*.

The present Holy Father is approaching his end. It goes without saying that we need a strong man to replace him. One who understands history; one who will address fearlessly the dilemmas the Church faces; who will uphold Catholic teaching without compromise; who will rally Catholics to live the fullness of their Catholic Faith.

Let us pray, then, for strong leadership in the Catholic Church.

Michael Baker

11th November 2001