

outreach

The Newsletter of the Churches of God, UK

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Matthew 28:19-20

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Thursday, July 7 2005:
what a day!

In an echo of the thirty years of IRA terrorism, the peace of early-morning London was shattered by four deadly terrorist bombs. The lives of perhaps sixty men and women callously and indiscriminately wiped out, with over seven hundred injured, many seriously. Bodies are still being laboriously pulled from the mangled underground train near Kings Cross—the very heart of London.

As with New York, Londoners immediately stoically faced the fear and the danger: helping the maimed, dealing with the lack of homeward transport, confronting their fears—and, next day, returning to their workplace, many using that same No 30 bus route on which 13 died.

Confronting the enemy face-to-face is one matter. But the twisted mentality of wicked men who hide in their anonymity blows the mind of every right-thinking man and woman of any race, any religion.

Blame?

The murderous killers have

been identified as British-born Muslims of Pakistani origin, and parallels with the Madrid bombing are drawn. But any freedom-loving nation is at risk from terrorists hell-bent on causing mayhem to satisfy their evil desires and perverse ideology. The hunt continues for the ‘master mind’—possibly from the Middle East—who recruited the young killers.

Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity; who speak peace with their neighbours, but evil is in their hearts.

Give them according to their deeds, and according to the evil of their endeavours; give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

Because they give no heed to the works of the LORD, nor to the operation of His hands; He will break them down and not build them up. (Psalm 26:3-5).

Jesus drew on two contemporary news events to illustrate a vital lesson. In one incident, a building collapsed with multiple deaths resulting. The other was State terrorism of a despised religion in which worshippers were slaughtered and their blood mixed with their sacrificial offerings in the Sanctuary.

Then there's the example of Jesus himself—killed by religious fanatics called Pharisees and Sadducees. Men who supposedly served a loving and merciful God but whose fanaticism drove them to incite murder.

Worse sinners, these? Not so. This is our world. This is human nature in the raw, sometimes garbed in the cloak of religion.

Cost-cutting engineers and businesses or murderous military or perverse religionists. And undercover murderers of the innocent abound.

Faiths of Violence

It is foolish and short-sighted simply to blame a particular faith—in this case Islam, the birth of which was bathed in blood.

Certainly that religion, especially the Wahabi faction that rules and dominates Saudi Arabia, which spawned Osama bin Laden and from where came most of the New York and Washington killers, has indeed been the seed-bed of most modern worldwide terrorism. We could cite the early WTC bombs, Bali, Sudan, Kashmir, Nigeria, Afghanistan, New York, Baghdad, Madrid, London—and now Turkey again. A noted Saudi commentator, Abdul Rachman al Rached, writes in a Saudi paper: ‘...most perpetrators of suicide operations in buses, schools and residential buildings around the world for the past ten years have been Muslims’.

Cast back a generation, however, and the Republican movement in Ireland, responsible during thirty years of terror for over three thousand violent deaths, was rooted in the centuries-old Roman Catholic desire for a united Catholic Ireland. It’s an ongoing struggle, too often supported by ignorance of the motives on both sides of the Atlantic.

Back a few centuries more and Christianity—both Protestant and Catholic—was the prime mover in worldwide slaughter, mitigated and suppressed only by the rise in 17th century Europe of the Enlightenment, secular humanism and the democratic ideal. Christianity, it seems, has been as guilty as Islam. In fact no world faith—Hindu, Buddhist, Islam, Christianity—is guiltless, and all have from time to time taken up the sword in the

name of their chosen faith.

The True Faith

The faith of Jesus, however, is different. This era of world history is *not* his time. ‘*My Kingdom*’, he says, ‘*is not of this world*’ (John 18:36). The Kingdom is indeed here and now—but only in the hearts and minds of selected men and women. Their role is to witness to the message of Jesus, the Gospel, and to discipline themselves to become increasingly Christ-like in behaviour.

Jesus concluded his illustration: “*Do you think these victims were greater sinners than everyone else in Jerusalem?*” Clearly not. Jesus foresaw the awesome events some forty years in the future. The citizens of Jerusalem, unless they turned from their evil ways would experience the same result—death. It happened.

It’s a timeless message. Accidents will happen. States will oppress, torture, murder. Religionists will seek to promote their views by violent means. History warns that this human nature is frail, fickle. It can—will—turn violent when its purposes are frustrated, or when there’s perceived advantage.

The word of Jesus for today and for every nation, for all mankind, is the same as his message to ancient Assyria through the prophet Jonah: ‘*let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who can tell if God will turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?*’

Only at the return of Jesus the Messiah as King of kings and Lord of lords—in control of politics and religion—will the horrors of suicidal murderers and killers of any and every faith be erased from the planet.

And God’s time is near.

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