



The Apple and the Crescent: The Ground Zero Mosque and the Mind of Islam

In the early 1920s, apples were awarded as prizes for important horse races in and around New York City. A writer for the New York Morning Telegraph, John Fitzgerald, wrote about them in his column *Around the Big Apple*. He probably heard the term from jockeys and trainers in New Orleans who aspired to race in New York City. In the late 1920s jazz musicians also began referring to New York City as the *Big Apple*. This led to the expression that *there are many apples on the tree, but only one Big Apple*.

A Triumphalist Caliphate

The latest disruption to New York City's relative calm has been caused by the ill-conceived plan of a Muslim group to build a mosque and community center two blocks from the former site of the twin towers. While Muslims have worshipped in New York without incident before and after 9/11, this proposal has sliced the healing process of the *Big Apple* into crescent-shaped pieces. Since all the terrorists were Muslims, it is especially offensive and impudent.

This controversy then is not about religious freedom. There are currently 140 mosques in the city. The roots of this controversy run far deeper because 9/11 was an overt act of war. To build a 13-story mosque that close to Ground Zero is a repugnant act that may precipitate additional violence. Common sense and human respect for the nearly 3000 victims should dictate the impropriety of their project. Its critics have not missed the fact that in 21st century politics the mosque has become a center for Islamist insurgency.

Opponents also say that the *Cordoba Mosque* project can be construed as a symbol of Islam's conquest of Christian Lands. Historian William Federer's voluminous research reveals that since Muhammad's conquest of Mecca in 630 AD, Muslims have celebrated their victories by building elaborate mosques, either on or near the sites of their triumphs. The *Cordoba Mosque* looks like another example of a *triumphalist caliphate*.

According to historian Robert Reilly the *Cordoba project* is representative of the Muslim principle of *siyada*, which means *Islamic supremacy*. The construction of mosques with minarets taller than the tallest spires of any nearby churches is the most common architectural expression of *siyada*. Building a mosque

near the site of America's symbolic twin towers can easily be construed as an attempt to establish the *siyada* in New York City. The fact that the scheduled grand opening is set for 9/11/2011 also says something about their symbolic intent.

Another Islamic Conquista

The original *Cordoba Mosque* was built in Spain in the aftermath of the Muslim conquest of that Christian land. The wholesale slaughter of large populations and the enslavement of women followed this *Islamic Conquista*. Islamic history and a growing sense of antipathy toward Muslims as the perpetrators of 9/11 cast an aura of suspicion over all Muslims.

After thousands of complaints about the historical symbolism of the *Cordoba Project* its promoters cleverly changed its name to the *Park51 Project*. Just two blocks from the World Trade Center site in Lower Manhattan, this Islamic community center and mosque is to be built on the site of the 153-year-old former home of the Burlington Coat Factory, which was damaged by the falling debris during the attacks on 9/11. While the modern facility will include everything from a 500-seat auditorium, and swimming pool, to a September 11th memorial for New York's 2,500 victims, it is not unrealistic to think that the mosque may be used to spread anti-Americanism.

The man behind the mosque is a Kuwaiti, Feisal Abdul-Rauf, Imam of Masjid al-Farah. Like Barack Obama, Rauf is a graduate of Columbia University and the author of a presumptuous book called *What's Right with Islam Is What's Right with America*. In a gesture of high irony, Obama recently sent him on a tour of the Middle East for the State Department to promote *religious tolerance*. Rauf procured the international financing for the mosque, reportedly from donors, particularly in the Middle East.

A Catholic Parallel

There are many examples of similar situations where common sense has been exercised. In the early 1990s the Disney Corporation proposed to build an American history theme park near the Manassas battlefield in Virginia. A coalition, which feared the vulgarization of the American Civil War, defeated it handily. A similar rationale forced the removal of a commercial viewing tower on the Gettysburg battlefield.

New York City's Archbishop Timothy Dolan has offered to mediate the Ground Zero Mosque dispute. He compared the situation to that of 14 Carmelite nuns who had a convent near Auschwitz. According to Catholic blogger, Anthony Stevens-Arroyo, it is not a perfect analogy. The Polish situation was far more complicated.

The Polish Communists leased the building to the nuns in 1984 to fulfill the desire of Polish Catholics to provide a memorial to martyrs such as St. Maximilian Kolbe who had been executed by the Nazis. Not only did most seem unaware of the Poles' 1984 intention to include a Christian memorial to all victims, some found placing any Christian symbol there objectionable for religious and political reasons. The compromise solution was the construction -- not a convent -- but a Center for Dialogue and Prayer *on the threshold of the original camp*.

When communism collapsed, many Jewish visitors flocked to the site of Nazis brutality. They seemed unaware or indifferent to the 1984 intention by the Poles to include a Christian memorial to all victims on the site. This center was not completed in 1989 when a New York City rabbi, Avraham Weiss, forced his way into the convent with six others dressed in prison clothing, seriously violating the nuns' cloister. This clash of competing claims to control *hallowed ground* was predictable. Pope John Paul II's order for the nuns to relocate was intended to prevent violence, as much as it was to encourage interfaith understanding.

Like a Duck

President Barack Obama needlessly risked his dwindling presidential capital with his involvement into this local dispute. His strange rationale that *our commitment to religious freedom must be unshakable* was largely irrelevant to the main question of why the proposed mosque had to be constructed at Ground Zero. Obama's intervention quickly metastasized into a major clash in America's religious and culture war. His interference as well as his opaque relationship with Islam only caused millions of Americans to believe that he was a *closet Muslim*.

In his new book, *The Roots of Obama's Rage*, Dinesh D'Souza dismisses any claims that Obama is a Muslim. While he knows Obama's middle name is *Hussein*, D'Souza believes that any allegiance to Islam is merely circumstantial. While both his father and stepfather were nominal Muslims, neither practiced. His mother was a religious free spirit, so it is not surprising that he has never shown the public faith of most of his predecessors.

While Obama lived in Indonesia, attended Muslim schools and read the Koran, it is not unreasonable to assume that some of it rubbed off on him. His many overtures to Islam, his quick dismissal of the Fort Hood massacre as an act of a Muslim extremist, his veiled support for the early release of the Lockerbie bomber Abdel Baset al-Megrahi, his bizarre attempt to transform NASA into an agency of scientific outreach to Muslim countries---raise the old maxim that *if it talks like a duck and walks like a duck...*

A 12th Century Torch

The aftermath of 9/11 elevated America's awareness of a resurgent Islam. Robert Reilly explains Islam's new ascendancy within its historical context in his recent book, *The Closing of the Muslim Mind*. *Closing* raises the question why has it taken Arab civilization so long to relight its *energetic torch of scientific accomplishment that suddenly became extinguished around the 12th century?*

Reilly cites the disavowal of western rationality, especially *the principle of cause and effect* in the 12th and 13th centuries for Islam's descent into the quasi-religious world of irrationality and militant behavior. By the mid-13th century rationalism had been replaced with a theological approach to the Koran, Allah, and Muhammad that denies the fundamentals of western thought. Pope Benedict XVI had warned against the divorce of reason from faith in his September 2006 lecture at Regensburg University in Germany.

In his 2009 book, *111 Questions about Islam* Father Samir K. Samir, S. J. argues that Americans have no idea what they are up against with regard to Muslim imperial designs. In Christianity God is understood to act in accordance with reason, while in Islam, Allah's absolute transcendence means that *God is not bound even by his own word, and can act in ways contrary to reason, including self-contradiction*.

This anti-rational theology is known as *Voluntarism*, which can be defined as *what God wills determines the moral status of any action*. According to voluntarism any conception of morality must originate in the will of God. Sometimes called the '*divine command theory*' voluntarism is fundamentally a theory of action according to which the command *Allah wills it* takes precedence over intellect and reason.

To Muslims suicide bombers are religious martyrs, not terrorists. In the Pope's Regensburg lecture, he stated that it was the separation of reason from faith that invalidated the intellectual roots of Islam's self-understanding. Father Samir contends that Islam wants to conquer the world both religiously and politically through military means if necessary, as dictated by the will of Allah. The *Park51 Project* is just another means to advance their understanding of Allah's will.

Back to the Golden Age

Many fear that the Ground Zero Mosque will further energize *Islamism* in America. The term *Islamism* is *Islam turned into an ideology rather than a religion*. Its goal is to set up a state based on Islamic law or *Sharia*, which must serve as the basis for all statutory laws and programs. Islamists also urge Muslims to return to the early models of Islam. They hold that western military, economic, political, social, or cultural influence in the Muslim world has been a detriment to their faith. Reilly compares Islamism to the Marxist's *liberation theology*, which is prominent in some black churches especially that of Chicago's Reverend Jeremiah Wright.

Most Muslims believe that their culture is far superior to that of the West. The serious reversals they suffered from the mid-13th seriously hurt their pride. Many Muslim countries have failed in their attempts to emulate either the capitalist model or the socialist paradigm. Now they are working for the promotion of a *third way*, that is a political system that they believe harkens back to that which created an empire from several tribes in the 7-8th centuries.

In order to recreate such a society, the Islamists must embrace modern technology. Islamists are determined to implement technological innovations on a grand scale in their new society. They believe this strategy will abet them in the glorious return to their Golden Age, that period dated roughly from the mid 8th century to the mid-13th century. However there are no historical sources that verify that the Islam of the Golden Age was as intolerant or as violent as modern Islam.

A Demon Target

Islamism is the Arabs' reaction to their historical decline, which they blame on a loss of religious faith. Islamists have targeted the United States as one of their demons for its unwavering support for Israel since the late 1940s.

The ideological father of Islamism is purported to be Sayed Abul Ala Mawdudi, who lived in what is now Pakistan. He called for an Islamic state governed by Sharia and tried to reconcile Islam with modern science. More important was one of his disciples, Sayyid Qutb, who was one of the prime movers in the Sunni branch of Islamism.

Qutb was a seminal Arab thinker, well versed in Western culture, philosophy and literature. Originally an ardent secularist he eventually adopted many Islamist views. In 1948 he was sent to the United States on a scholarship to Colorado State College of Education, now the University of Northern Colorado in Greeley. He was completely repelled by what he saw as an extremely decadent materialistic culture that was internally corrupt. And that was in Greeley. Close dancing, Jazz, democratic institutions and just about everything he saw scandalized his puritanical sensitivities.

Convinced of the corruption of Western culture, on his return to Egypt Qutb joined the *Muslim Brotherhood*. Initially he was on good terms with the revolutionary regime of Gamal Abdel Nasser but was imprisoned in 1954 with other Brotherhood leaders on charges of sedition.

Like Sardinian Communist Antonio Gramsci, his years in prison were his most productive. The brutal treatment he received there convinced him that like the West, Egypt was corrupt and a legitimate target of *jihad*. His 1964 book *Signposts in the Road* became a template for Islamist militancy. Released from prison in 1964, he was soon rearrested, tried for treason and hanged, a martyr to his cause.

Permanent War

Qutb called the battle against the West a *perpetual and permanent war*. America cannot afford to misunderstand the Islamist mindset. Its leaders must heed the words uttered by convicted *Times Square bomber*, Faisal Shahzad after receiving a life sentence for his failed attack last May. *Brace yourselves, because the war with Muslims has just begun*. Islamists are prepared for a long war that will appear more like a violent cultural siege.

America's leaders dismissed Shahzad as just another *Islamofascist*. This contrived geopolitical term with politically correct overtones can be defined as a *willful, arbitrary, and gratuitous disruption of global society, either by terrorist conspiracies or by violation of peace between states*. While its origins date back to 1990, its popular usage was an outgrowth of the need to distinguish between the radical Islam that attended the terrorism of the early 21st century and moderate Islam. In truth it is a covert way for government liberals, neo-conservatives, and their agents in the mainstream media to protect traditional Islam from the scrutiny and anger of the American people.

Islam is a rising tide of close to 1.5 billion believers. Conservatives, such as author William Federer believe in the cohesion of their political, religious and military branches. Most Muslims share the belief that Islam should rule the world, based on the Koran and that they should write the rules and make the laws in accord with their *Sharia*. If the terrorists gain the upper hand in their permanent war, it is likely the moderates will side with their more militant brothers.

America is caught within the grips of a hazardous vise between its own ignorance of the *Mind of Islam* and its leftist political leaders who unwittingly see Islam as just another useful tool in their dismantling of the traditional culture, not only of the United States but also of the West. To survive, the West must rebuke its leftist leaders and return to its spiritual values. That is a sure formula to undercut the Islamists' imperial designs.

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William A. Borst, Ph.D. can be contacted at BBPROF@sbcglobal.net.

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Eleanor Schlafly, *Publisher*
William A. Borst, Ph.D., *Feature Editor*
e-mail: info@mindszenty.org
web site: www.mindszenty.org

Veterans Day –November 11

November is a month when we especially remember our veterans, both living and deceased. In his 1981 Proclamation for Veterans Day, President Ronald Reagan said “The willingness of citizens to give freely and unselfishly of themselves, even their lives, in defense of our democratic principles, gives this great nation continued strength and vitality.”

The Washington DC Catholic Archdiocesan Administrator for the Military Services suggests the following prayer:

“Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands; protect them as they protect us; bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need; and give us peace. I ask this in the name of Jesus, Our Lord and Savior. Amen”

2 TIMOTHY 4:18

“May the Lord rescue us from every evil threat and bring us safe to his heavenly kingdom.”

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The first official designation of Thanksgiving as the last Thursday in November was in 1863 when President Abraham Lincoln declared “a day of Thanksgiving and Praise to our beneficent Father who dwelleth in the Heavens.”

As you gather with family and friends for the time-honored traditions, may you be filled with peace, joy, love and laughter!

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Notes

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