

## #1 THE STATE OF THINGS FROM YOUR PLACE IN THE WORLD

### Thread 1: GUILTY AS CHARGED

#### Author

**debbekennedy**

Joined: 27 Oct 2004  
Posts: 96  
Location: global dialogue center

#### Message

Posted: Wed Nov 02, 2005 7:40 pm Post subject: GUILTY AS CHARGED

Just saw this post...Here is an inside look at the implications of the IRAQ WAR...

NedSmith's Blog on Blog Ladder  
<http://www.blogladder.com/showComments.php?eid=3730>

Here is another view from our community, which I wrote about:  
<http://globaldialoguecenter.blogs.com/perspectives/2005/08/index.html>

Best...  
Debbe

### Thread 2: Elusive PEACE --- BBC ---- PBS

#### Author

**24sevenTEAM**  
Site Admin  
Joined: 25 May 2004  
Posts: 63

## Message

Posted: Fri Oct 07, 2005 5:29 am Post subject: Elusive PEACE --- BBC ---- PBS

Published on Thursday, October 6, 2005 by the BBC  
God Told Me to Invade Iraq, Bush Tells Palestinian Ministers

[FULL ARTICLE](#)

President George W. Bush told Palestinian ministers that God had told him to invade Afghanistan and Iraq - and create a Palestinian State, a new BBC series reveals.

In **Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs**, a major three-part series on BBC TWO (at 9.00pm on Monday 10, Monday 17 and Monday 24 October), Abu Mazen, Palestinian Prime Minister, and Nabil Shaath, his Foreign Minister, describe their first meeting with President Bush in June 2003.

**NOTE:** Carried by PBS stations in US

Nabil Shaath says: "President Bush said to all of us: 'I'm driven with a mission from God. God would tell me, "George, go and fight those terrorists in Afghanistan." And I did, and then God would tell me, "George, go and end the tyranny in Iraq ..." And I did. And now, again, I feel God's words coming to me, "Go get the Palestinians their state and get the Israelis their security, and get peace in the Middle East." And by God I'm gonna do it.'"

Abu Mazen was at the same meeting and recounts how President Bush told him: "I have a moral and religious obligation. So I will get you a Palestinian state."

The series charts the attempts to bring peace to the Middle East, from Bill Clinton's peace talks in 1999/2000 to Israel's withdrawal from Gaza last August.

Norma Percy, series producer of *The 50 Years War* (1998) returns, with producers Mark Anderson and Dan Edge, to tell the inside story of another seven years of crisis.

Presidents and Prime Ministers, their generals and ministers tell what happened behind closed doors as peace talks failed and the intifada exploded.

## Author

**CAMERA**

Joined: 16 Oct 2005

Posts: 1

## Message

Posted: Sun Oct 16, 2005 9:27 am Post subject: Elusive Peace - BBC - PBS

PBS aired a slanted 2 1/2 hour documentary this week about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict entitled "Elusive Peace: Israel and the Arabs". In most areas, it will be broadcast repeatedly. (See schedule for details.)

Below is a preliminary analysis of the documentary. Check back for a longer critique.

On the surface, the documentary appears to be balanced, because there are scenes and interviews with both Israelis and Palestinians, as well as Americans. However, the interviews and scenes with the Israelis focused heavily (if not entirely) on negative aspects, while the Palestinians were shown in largely sympathetic scenes, with their arguments left intact.

The Palestinians are often portrayed as weak and struggling for peace, constantly working on ceasefires, while the Israelis appear mainly as scheming bunglers, who, while they may also want peace, always seem to do the wrong thing that provokes the Palestinians predictably to perpetrate terror attacks. Targeted strikes against Palestinian terror leaders are repeatedly portrayed as the event that destroyed a working ceasefire, when in reality, the terror attacks had never completely stopped. Several times, the death tallies from both sides are presented in a way that morally equates Palestinian terror attacks against Israeli civilians with Israeli military strikes against terrorists and combatants.

Palestinian terminology is used throughout the film by the narrator. Terrorists are "activists"; the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) is described as "Palestinian land" rather than "disputed land."

When the film shifts its attention to the Camp David talks in the summer of 2000, emphasis is given to President Clinton reminiscing about his impatience with Israeli Prime Minister Barak, including over his allegedly not being more forthcoming with concessions. Jerusalem is a particular focus. Since in the end, Barak was very forthcoming and made an unprecedented offer that included Palestinian sovereignty over much of eastern Jerusalem, and even over the surface of the Temple Mount, it was odd that no time was spent on Clinton recalling anger at Arafat's rejection of the offer (well known from media accounts). Clinton's comments on this topic were either not requested by the interviewer or were left on the editing room floor.

Indicative of the skewing of the entire account of the Camp David/Taba negotiations is the program's heavy reliance on Robert Malley, who has been a vocal advocate of the line that Arafat did not bear responsibility for the collapse of the talks and the failure to reach an "end of conflict" despite the vast concessions offered by Barak. Tellingly omitted from the lineup of commentators was Ambassador Dennis Ross, the chief U.S. negotiator during the talks, who wrote in a September 2001 letter to the New York Review of Books in response to Malley's revisionist account of events:

Both Barak and Clinton were prepared to do what was necessary to reach agreement. Both were up to the challenge. Neither shied away from the risks inherent in confronting history and mythology. Can one say the same about Arafat? Unfortunately, not—and his behavior at Camp David and afterward cannot be explained only by his suspicions that a trap was being set for him.

...

Consider Arafat's performance at Camp David. It is not just that he had, in the words

of President Clinton, "been here fourteen days and said no to everything." It is that all he did at Camp David was to repeat old mythologies and invent new ones, like, for example, that the Temple was not in Jerusalem but in Nablus. Denying the core of the other side's faith is not the act of someone preparing himself to end a conflict.

In the documentary, Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in September 2000 is depicted as provoking the intifada and ending an imminent peace deal, with no mention whatsoever of the numerous statements of Palestinian leaders that they used Sharon's visit as a pretext to launch violence long in the planning. (Such public admissions came as early as 2001, and most recently in September 2005). A Palestinian who was on the Temple Mount at the time of Sharon's walk there is interviewed and says he shouted at Sharon to leave the mosques, yet no one in the film informs viewers that Sharon never set foot in a Muslim holy site. He merely walked on the Temple Mount plaza.

Presentation of events in Jenin in the spring of 2002 is also highly distorted. A great deal of time is spent implying that the Israeli army attempted to cover up a massacre in the city by avoiding a UN investigation. Unexplained is why the army did not trust the United Nations to perform an objective investigation. Amazingly, viewers are never told the UN did, in fact, conduct an investigation without Israeli involvement and found there had been nothing on the scale of casualties claimed by Palestinian spokesmen such as Saeb Erakat. Specifically the long UN document which is highly critical of Israel in much of its commentary stated in one finding:

56. Fifty-two Palestinian deaths had been confirmed by the hospital in Jenin by the end of May 2002. IDF also place the death toll at approximately 52. A senior Palestinian Authority official alleged in mid-April that some 500 were killed, a figure that has not been substantiated in the light of the evidence that has emerged.

At the very end of this long segment, in which gruesome dead bodies were shown (although none of the 23 Israeli soldiers killed were shown, and only the deaths of 13 were even mentioned), the narrator does briefly explain that actually only 52 Palestinians were killed, 14 of them civilians.

While the film isn't entirely one-sided, and does show footage of terrorist attacks, an uninformed viewer would likely come away from the program feeling it was the Israelis who were primarily at fault for constantly wrecking peace efforts with their insistence on killing Palestinian "activists." The same viewer would also likely be negatively impressed by repeated characterizations of Ariel Sharon and other Israeli leaders as high-handed, boastful and gloating over supposedly out-maneuvering Arafat.

Among the striking oddities of the program is the consistent presentation of Israeli participants speaking Hebrew with English subtitles while Palestinian commentators speak English -- not Arabic. Scene after scene has back and forth discussion between Palestinians speaking the language Americans speak and Israelis -- even those highly fluent in English -- speaking Hebrew.

[http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x\\_context=3&x\\_outlet=18&x\\_article=992](http://www.camera.org/index.asp?x_context=3&x_outlet=18&x_article=992)

## Thread 3 War --- We were duped

### Author

**JPPaul**

Joined: 12 Dec 2004  
Posts: 5  
Location: Nevada

### Message

Posted: Tue Oct 04, 2005 6:20 pm Post subject: War --- We were duped

thought this was worth posting for everyone.  
jp paul

Published on Tuesday, October 4, 2005 by the Independent  
How The World Was Duped: The Race To Invade Iraq  
by Robert Fisk

The 5th of February 2003 was a snow-blasted day in New York, the steam whirling out of the road covers, the US secret servicemen - helpfully wearing jackets with "Secret Service" printed on them - hugging themselves outside the fustian, asbestos-packed UN headquarters on the East River. Exhausted though I was after travelling thousands of miles around the United States, the idea of watching Secretary of State Colin Powell - or General Powell, as he was now being reverently redubbed in some American newspapers - make his last pitch for war before the Security Council was an experience not to be missed.

In a few days, I would be in Baghdad to watch the start of this frivolous, demented conflict. Powell's appearance at the Security Council was the essential prologue to the tragedy - or tragicomedy if one could contain one's anger - the appearance of the Attendant Lord who would explain the story of the drama, the Horatio to the increasingly unstable Hamlet in the White House. There was an almost macabre opening to the play when General Powell arrived at the Security Council, cheek-kissing the delegates and winding his great arms around them. CIA director George Tenet stood behind Powell, chunky, aggressive but obedient, just a little bit lip-biting, an Edward G Robinson who must have convinced himself that the more dubious of his information was buried beneath an adequate depth of moral fury and fear to be safely concealed. Just like Bush's appearance at the General Assembly the previous September, you needed to be in the Security Council to see what the television cameras missed. There was a wonderful moment when the little British home secretary Jack Straw entered the chamber through the far right-hand door in a massive power suit, his double-breasted jacket apparently wrapping itself twice around Britain's most famous ex-Trot. He stood for a moment with a kind of semi-benign smile on his uplifted face, his nose in the air as if sniffing for power. Then he saw Powell and his smile opened like an umbrella as his small feet, scuttling beneath him, propelled him across the stage and into the arms of Powell for his big American hug.

You might have thought that the whole chamber, with its toothy smiles and constant handshakes, contained a room full of men celebrating peace rather than war. Alas,

not so. These elegantly dressed statesmen were constructing the framework that would allow them to kill quite a lot of people - some of them Saddam's little monsters no doubt, but most of them innocent. When Powell rose to give his terror-talk, he did so with a slow athleticism, the world-weary warrior whose patience had at last reached its end.

But it was an old movie. I should have guessed. Sources, foreign intelligence sources, "our sources", defectors, sources, sources, sources. Ah, to be so well-sourced when you have already taken the decision to go to war. The Powell presentation sounded like one of those government-inspired reports on the front page of The New York Times - where it was, of course, treated with due reverence next day. It was a bit like heating up old soup. Hadn't we heard most of this stuff before? Should one trust the man? General Powell, I mean, not Saddam. Certainly we didn't trust Saddam, but Powell's speech was a mixture of awesomely funny recordings of Iraqi Republican Guard telephone intercepts à la Samuel Beckett that just might have been some terrifying proof that Saddam really was conning the UN inspectors again, and ancient material on the Monster of Baghdad's all too well known record of beastliness.

If only we could have heard the Arabic for the State Department's translation of "OK, buddy" - "Consider it done, sir" - this from the Republican Guard's "Captain Ibrahim", for heaven's sake. The dinky illustrations of mobile Iraqi bio-labs whose lorries and railway trucks were in such perfect condition suggested the Pentagon didn't have much idea of the dilapidated state of Saddam's railway system, let alone his army. It was when we went back to Halabja and human rights abuses and all Saddam's indubitable sins, as recorded by the discredited Unsc team, that we started eating the old soup again. Jack Straw may have thought all this "the most powerful and authoritative case" for war - his ill-considered opinion afterwards - but when we were forced to listen to the Iraqi officer corps communicating by phone "Yeah", "Yeah", "Yeah?", "Yeah . . ." - it was impossible not to ask oneself if Colin Powell had really considered the effect this would have on the outside world.

From time to time, the words "Iraq: Failing to Disarm - Denial and Deception" appeared on the giant video screen behind General Powell. Was this a CNN logo? some of us wondered. But no, it was the work of CNN's sister channel, the US Department of State.

Because Colin Powell was supposed to be the good cop to the Bush- Rumsfeld bad cop routine, one wanted to believe him. The Iraqi officer's telephone-tapped order to his subordinate - "Remove 'nerve agents' whenever it comes up in the wireless instructions" - seemed to indicate that the Americans had indeed spotted a nasty new line in Iraqi deception. But a dramatic picture of a pilotless Iraqi aircraft capable of spraying poison chemicals turned out to be the imaginative work of a Pentagon artist. And when Secretary Powell started talking about "decades" of contact between Saddam and al-Qa'ida, things went wrong for the " General ". Al-Qa'ida only came into existence in 2000, since bin Laden - " decades" ago - was working against the Russians for the CIA, whose present-day director was sitting grave-faced behind Mr Powell. It was the United States which had enjoyed at least a "decade" of contacts with Saddam.

Powell's new version of his President's State of the Union lie - that the " scientists" interviewed by UN inspectors had been Iraqi intelligence agents in disguise - was singularly unimpressive. The UN talked to Iraqi scientists during their inspection tours, the new version went, but the Iraqis were posing for the real nuclear and bio boys whom the UN wanted to talk to.

General Powell said America was sharing its information with the UN inspectors, but it was clear already that much of what he had to say about alleged new weapons development - the decontamination truck at the Taji chemical munitions factory, for example, the "cleaning" of the Ibn al-Haythem ballistic missile factory on 25 November - had not been given to the UN at the time. Why wasn't this intelligence information given to the inspectors months ago? Didn't General Powell's beloved UN Resolution demand that all such intelligence information should be given to Hans Blix and his lads immediately? Were the Americans, perhaps, not being "proactive" enough? Or did they realise that if the UN inspectors had chased these particular hares, they would have turned out to be as bogus as indeed they later proved to be?

The worst moment came when General Powell discussed anthrax and the 2001 anthrax attacks in Washington and New York, pathetically holding up a teaspoon of the imaginary spores and - while not precisely saying so - fraudulently suggesting a connection between Saddam Hussein and the anthrax scare. But when the Secretary of State held up Iraq's support for the Palestinian Hamas organisation, which has an office in Baghdad, as proof of Saddam's support for "terror" - he of course made no mention of America's support for Israel and its occupation of Palestinian land - the whole theatre began to collapse. There were Hamas offices in Beirut, Damascus and Tehran. Was the 82nd Airborne supposed to grind on to Lebanon, Syria and Iran?

How many lies had been told in this auditorium? How many British excuses for the Suez invasion, or Russian excuses - the same year - for the suppression of the Hungarian uprising? One recalled, of course, this same room four decades earlier when General Powell's predecessor Adlai Stevenson showed photographs of the ships carrying Soviet missiles to Cuba. Alas, Powell's pictures carried no such authority. And Colin Powell was no Adlai Stevenson.

If Powell's address merited front-page treatment, the American media had never chosen to give the same attention to the men driving Bush to war, most of whom were former or still active pro-Israeli lobbyists. For years they had advocated destroying the most powerful Arab nation. Richard Perle, one of Bush's most influential advisers, Douglas Feith, Paul Wolfowitz, John Bolton and Donald Rumsfeld were all campaigning for the overthrow of Iraq long before George W Bush was elected US president. And they weren't doing so for the benefit of Americans or Britons. A 1996 report, *A Clean Break: A New Strategy for Securing the Realm*, called for war on Iraq. It was written not for the US but for the incoming Israeli Likud prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu and produced by a group headed by Perle. The destruction of Iraq would, of course, protect Israel's monopoly of nuclear weapons - always supposing Saddam also possessed them - and allow it to defeat the Palestinians and impose whatever colonial settlement Sharon had in store for them.

Although Bush and Blair dared not discuss this aspect of the coming war - a conflict for Israel was not going to have Americans or Britons lining up at recruiting offices - Jewish-American leaders talked about the advantages of an Iraqi war with enthusiasm. Indeed, those very courageous Jewish-American groups who opposed this madness were the first to point out how pro-Israeli organisations foresaw Iraq not only as a new source of oil but of water, too; why should canals not link the Tigris river to the parched Levant? No wonder, then, that any discussion of this topic had to be censored, as Professor Eliot Cohen of Johns Hopkins University tried to do in *The Wall Street Journal* the day after Powell's UN speech. Cohen suggested that European nations' objections to the war might - yet again - be ascribed to "anti-Semitism of a type long thought dead in the West, a loathing that ascribes to Jews a malignant intent". This nonsense was opposed by many Israeli intellectuals who, like

Uri Avnery, argued that an Iraq war would leave Israel with even more Arab enemies.

The slur of "anti-Semitism" also lay behind Rumsfeld's insulting remarks about "old Europe". He was talking about the "old" Germany of Nazism and the "old" France of collaboration. But the France and Germany that opposed this war were the "new" Europe, the continent that refused, ever again, to slaughter the innocent. It was Rumsfeld and Bush who represented the "old" America; not the "new" America of freedom, the America of F D Roosevelt.

Rumsfeld and Bush symbolised the old America that killed its native inhabitants and embarked on imperial adventures. It was "old" America we were being asked to fight for - linked to a new form of colonialism - an America that first threatened the United Nations with irrelevancy and then did the same to Nato. This was not the last chance for the UN, nor for Nato. But it might well have been the last chance for America to be taken seriously by her friends as well as her enemies.

Israeli and US ambitions in the region were now entwined, almost synonymous. This war, about oil and regional control, was being cheer-led by a president who was treacherously telling us that this was part of an eternal war against "terror". The British and most Europeans didn't believe him. It's not that Britons wouldn't fight for America. They just didn't want to fight for Bush or his friends. And if that included the prime minister, they didn't want to fight for Blair either. Still less did they wish to embark on endless wars with a Texas governor-executioner who dodged the Vietnam draft and who, with his oil buddies, was now sending America's poor to destroy a Muslim nation that had nothing at all to do with the crimes against humanity of 11 September 2001.

Those who opposed the war were not cowards. Brits rather like fighting; they've biffed Arabs, Afghans, Muslims, Nazis, Italian Fascists and Japanese imperialists for generations, Iraqis included. But when the British are asked to go to war, patriotism is not enough. Faced with the horror stories, Britons and many Americans were a lot braver than Blair and Bush. They do not like, as Thomas More told Cromwell in *A Man for All Seasons*, tales to frighten children. Perhaps Henry VIII's exasperation in that play better expresses the British view of Blair and Bush: "Do they take me for a simpleton?" The British, like other Europeans, are an educated people. Ironically, their opposition to this war might ultimately have made them feel more, not less, European.

Extracted from 'The Great War for Civilisation: the Conquest of the Middle East' by Robert Fisk, published by 4th Estate. Visit [www.independentbooksdirect.co.uk](http://www.independentbooksdirect.co.uk).

## Author

**R-U-Bn**

Joined: 15 Mar 2005

Posts: 3

Location: Belgium

## Message



Posted: Tue Sep 20, 2005 2:04 am Post subject: International Day of Peace (21 September)

Maybe a bit late, but here is a copy of a letter I sent to my friends and family:

Hi everyone,

Sorry to crowd your inbox once more, but I just wanted to share the following:

The 21st of September is the International Day of Peace!

So what ?

Well, I wanted to share that with everyone because it seems that this day has had its troubles, a.o. it has been overshadowed by the

11th of September, the dreadful event.

Did you know that on that day (11/9) just before that awful event, Kofi Anan was about to come forward and speak to the world to uphold the day of peace (21/9)? Coincidence ?

I recently have seen a documentary about how this day came to be in existence and about the guy who put his shoulders (his life!) under the idea. Actually, wouldn't it be great to have at least 1 day of peace and cease-fire all over the world ? Yes, I want it to be forever too, but maybe this is a start, a day of possibilities ? At least, if we manage to live by, it will save some lives!

The problem is, although the day has been accepted, not all governments remember or act like it. It is only strengthened by the fact that almost nobody of us, common people, knows about it. The founder of the day as well as myself, both think that the last thing to do (after convincing all UN members and all kind of important people in the world) is to make the people remember. OK, most of us have peace in our country, but still, sharing things can go around (the world).

Thank you for your time.  
Feel free to forward this.

Some Links:

About the day:

<http://www.un.org/events/peaceday/2005/>

The documentary. An individual genuinely can make a difference!:

PEACE ONE DAY

<http://www.peaceoneday.org/page/home>

Wanna do/join something in your country ?

[http://www.peaceoneday.org/bin/venda.plex?ex=co\\_disp-view&bsref=peaceoneday&page=2005](http://www.peaceoneday.org/bin/venda.plex?ex=co_disp-view&bsref=peaceoneday&page=2005)

## **Thread 4: 9-11 and the Sport of God --- by Bill Moyers**

### **Author**

Jan Coleman

Joined: 13 Jan 2005  
Posts: 49  
Location: Sausalito

## Message

Posted: Sun Sep 11, 2005 7:04 pm Post subject: 9-11 and the Sport of God --- by Bill Moyers

A very special message:

### **9/11 and the Sport of God**

By Bill Moyers

**COMMON DREAMS**

### **9/11 and the Sport of God**

By Bill Moyers

Commondreams.org

Friday 09 September 2005

This article is adapted from Bill Moyer's address this week at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where Judith and Bill Moyers received the seminary's highest award, the Union Medal, for their contributions to faith and reason in America.

At the Central Baptist Church in Marshall, Texas, where I was baptized in the faith, we believed in a free church in a free state. I still do.

My spiritual forbears did not take kindly to living under theocrats who embraced religious liberty for themselves but denied it to others. "Forced worship stinks in God's nostrils," thundered the dissenter Roger Williams as he was banished from Massachusetts for denying Puritan authority over his conscience. Baptists there were a "pitiful negligible minority" but they were agitators for freedom and therefore denounced as "incendiaries of the commonwealth" for holding to their belief in that great democracy of faith - the priesthood of all believers. For refusing to pay tribute to the state religion they were fined, flogged, and exiled. In 1651 the Baptist Obadiah Holmes was given 30 stripes with a three-corded whip after he violated the law and took forbidden communion with another Baptist in Lynn, Massachusetts. His friends offered to pay his fine for his release but he refused. They offered him strong drink to anesthetize the pain of the flogging. Again he refused. It is the love of liberty, he said, "that must free the soul."

Such revolutionary ideas made the new nation with its Constitution and Bill of Rights "a haven for the cause of conscience." No longer could magistrates order citizens to support churches they did not attend and recite creeds that they did not believe. No longer would "the loathsome combination of church and state" - as Thomas Jefferson described it - be the settled order. Unlike the Old World that had been wracked with religious wars and persecution, the government of America would take no sides in the religious free-for-all that liberty would make possible and politics would make inevitable. The First Amendment neither inculcates religion nor inoculates against it. Americans could be loyal to the Constitution without being hostile to God, or they could pay no heed to God without fear of being mugged by an official God Squad. It has been a remarkable arrangement that guaranteed "soul freedom."

It is at risk now, and the fourth observance of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is an appropriate time to think about it.

Four years ago this week, the poet's prophetic metaphor became real again and "the

great dark birds of history" plunged into our lives.

They came in the name of God. They came bent on murder and martyrdom. It was as if they rode to earth on the fierce breath of Allah himself, for the sacred scriptures that had nurtured these murderous young men are steeped in images of a violent and vengeful God who wills life for the faithful and horrific torment for unbelievers.

Yes, the Koran speaks of mercy and compassion and calls for ethical living. But such passages are no match for the ferocity of instruction found there for waging war for God's sake. The scholar Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer carefully traces this trail of holy violence in his important book, *Is Religion Killing Us?* [Trinity Press International, 2003]. He highlights many of the verses in the Koran that the Islamic terrorists could have had in their hearts and on their lips four years ago as they moved toward their gruesome rendezvous. As I read some of them, close your eyes and recall the scenes of that bright September morning which began in the bright sun under a blue sky:

"Those who believe Fight in the cause of Allah, and Those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil."(4:76)

"So We sent against them A furious Wind through days of disaster, that We might Give them a taste of a Penalty of humiliation In this Life; but The Penalty of the Hereafter will be More Humiliating still: And they Will find No help." (41:16)

"Then watch thou For the Day That the sky will Bring forth a kind Of smoke (or mist) Plainly visible, Enveloping the people: This will be a Penalty Grievous." (44:10-11)

"Did the people of the towns Feel Secure against the coming Of Our Wrath by night While they were asleep? Or else did they feel Secure against its coming in Broad daylight while they Played About (carefree)? Did they then feel secure Against the Plan of Allah? - But no one can feel Secure from the Plan of Allah, except those (Doomed) to ruin." (7:97-99)

So the holy warriors came - an airborne death cult, their sights on God's enemies: regular folks, starting the day's routine. One minute they're pulling off their jackets, shaking Sweet n' Low into their coffee, adjusting the height of their chair or a picture of a child or sweetheart or spouse in a frame on their desk, booting up their computer - and in the next, they are engulfed by a horrendous cataclysm. God's will. Poof!

But it is never only the number of dead by which terrorists measure their work. It is also the number of the living - the survivors - taken hostage to fear. Their mission was to invade our psyche; get inside our heads - deprive us of trust, faith, and peace of mind: keep us from ever again believing in a safe, just, and peaceful world, and from working to bring that world to pass. The writer Terry Tempest Williams has said "the human heart is the first home of democracy." Fill that heart with fear and people will give up the risks of democracy for the assurances of security; fill that heart with fear and you can shake the house to its foundations.

In the days leading up to 9/11 our daughter and husband adopted their first baby. On the morning of September 11th our son-in-law passed through the shadow of the World Trade Center toward his office a few blocks up the street. He arrived as the horrors erupted. He saw the flames, the falling bodies, the devastation. His building was evacuated and for long awful moments he couldn't reach his wife, our daughter, to say he was okay. Even after they connected it wasn't until the next morning that he was able to make it home. Throughout that fearful night our daughter was alone

with their new baby. Later she told us that for weeks thereafter she would lie awake at night, wondering where and when it might happen again, going to the computer at three in the morning to check out what she could about bioterrorism, germ warfare, anthrax and the vulnerability of children. The terrorists had violated a mother's deepest space.

Who was not vulnerable? That morning Judith and I made it to our office at Channel Thirteen on West 33rd Street just after the second plane struck. Our building was evacuated although the two of us remained with other colleagues to do what we could to keep the station on the air. The next day it was evacuated again because of a bomb scare at the Empire State Building nearby. We had just ended a live broadcast for PBS when security officers swept through and ordered everyone out. This time we left. As we were making our way down the stairs I took Judith's arm and was struck by the thought: Is this the last time I'll touch her? Could what we had begun together a half century ago end here on this dim, bare staircase? I forced the thought from my mind, willed it away, but in the early hours of morning, as I sat at the window of our apartment looking out at the sky, the sinister intruder crept back.

Terrorists plant time bombs in our heads, hoping to turn each and every imagination into a private hell governed by our fear of them.

They win only if we let them, only if we become like them: vengeful, imperious, intolerant, paranoid. Having lost faith in all else, zealots have nothing left but a holy cause to please a warrior God. They win if we become holy warriors, too; if we kill the innocent as they do; strike first at those who had not struck us; allow our leaders to use the fear of terrorism to make us afraid of the truth; cease to think and reason together, allowing others to tell what's in God's mind. Yes, we are vulnerable to terrorists, but only a shaken faith in ourselves can do us in.

So over the past four years I have kept reminding myself of not only the horror but the humanity that was revealed that day four years ago, when through the smoke and fire we glimpsed the heroism, compassion, and sacrifice of people who did the best of things in the worst of times. I keep telling myself that this beauty in us is real, that it makes life worthwhile and democracy work and that no terrorist can take it from us.

But I am not so sure. As a Christian realist I honor my inner skeptic. And as a journalist I always know the other side of the story. The historian Edward Gibbon once wrote of historians what could be said of journalists. He wrote: "The theologians may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian [read: journalist] He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings."

The other side of the story:

Muslims have no monopoly on holy violence. As Jack Nelson-Pallmayer points out, God's violence in the sacred texts of both faiths reflect a deep and troubling pathology "so pervasive, vindictive, and destructive" that it contradicts and subverts the collective weight of other passages that exhort ethical behavior or testify to a loving God.

For days now we have watched those heart-breaking scenes on the Gulf Coast: the steaming, stinking, sweltering wreckage of cities and suburbs; the fleeing refugees;

the floating corpses, hungry babies, and old people huddled together in death, the dogs gnawing at their feet; stranded children standing in water reeking of feces and garbage; families scattered; a mother holding her small child and an empty water jug, pleading for someone to fill it; a wife, pushing the body of her dead husband on a wooden plank down a flooded street; desperate people struggling desperately to survive.

Now transport those current scenes from our newspapers and television back to the first Book of the Bible - the Book of Genesis. They bring to life what we rarely imagine so graphically when we read of the great flood that devastated the known world. If you read the Bible as literally true, as fundamentalists do, this flood was ordered by God. "And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh... behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'" (6:5-13). "I will bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die." (6:17-19) Noah and his family are the only humans spared - they were, after all, God's chosen. But for everyone else: "... the waters prevailed so mightily... that all the high mountains....were covered....And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts...and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died...." (7:17-23).

The flood is merely Act One. Read on: This God first "hardens the heart of Pharaoh" to make sure the Egyptian ruler will not be moved by the plea of Moses to let his people go. Then because Pharaoh's heart is hardened, God turns the Nile into blood so people cannot drink its water and will suffer from thirst. Not satisfied with the results, God sends swarms of locusts and flies to torture them; rains hail and fire and thunder on them destroys the trees and plants of the field until nothing green remains; orders every first-born child to be slaughtered, from the first-born of Pharaoh right on down to "the first-born of the maidservant behind the mill." An equal-murderous God, you might say. The massacre continues until "there is not a house where one was not dead." While the Egyptian families mourn their dead, God orders Moses to loot from their houses all their gold and silver and clothing. Finally, God's thirst for blood is satisfied, God pauses to rest - and boasts: "I have made sport of the Egyptians."

Violence: the sport of God. God, the progenitor of shock and awe.

And that's just Act II. As the story unfolds women and children are hacked to death on God's order; unborn infants are ripped from their mother's wombs; cities are leveled - their women killed if they have had sex, the virgins taken at God's command for the pleasure of his holy warriors. When his holy warriors spare the lives of 50,000 captives God is furious and sends Moses back to rebuke them and tell them to finish the job. One tribe after another falls to God-ordered genocide: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites - names so ancient they have disappeared into the mists as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, infants in arms, shepherds, threshers, carpenters, merchants, housewives - living human beings, flesh and blood: "And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them...(and) your eyes shall not pity them."

So it is written - in the Holy Bible.

Yes, I know: the early church fathers, trying to cover up the blood-soaked trail of God's sport, decreed that anything that disagrees with Christian dogma about the

perfection of God is to be interpreted spiritually. Yes, I know: Edward Gibbon himself acknowledged that the literal Biblical sense of God "is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason" and that we must therefore read the scriptures through a veil of allegory. Yes, I know: we can go through the Bible and construct a God more pleasing to the better angels of our nature (as I have done.) Yes, I know: Christians claim the Old Testament God of wrath was supplanted by the Gospel's God of love [See *The God of Evil* , Allan Hawkins, Exlibris.]

I know these things; all of us know these things. But we also know that the "violence-of-God" tradition remains embedded deep in the DNA of monotheistic faith. We also know that fundamentalists the world over and at home consider the "sacred texts" to be literally God's word on all matters. Inside that logic you cannot read part of the Bible allegorically and the rest of it literally; if you believe in the virgin birth of Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, and the depiction of the Great Judgment at the end times you must also believe that God is sadistic, brutal, vengeful, callow, cruel and savage - that God slaughters.

Millions believe it.

Let's go back to 9/11 four years ago. The ruins were still smoldering when the reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell went on television to proclaim that the terrorist attacks were God's punishment of a corrupted America. They said the government had adopted the agenda "of the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians" not to mention the ACLU and People for the American Way (The God of the Bible apparently holds liberals in the same low esteem as Hittites and Gergushites and Jebusites and all the other pagans of holy writ.) Just as God had sent the Great Flood to wipe out a corrupted world, now - disgusted with a decadent America - "God almighty is lifting his protection from us." Critics said such comments were deranged. But millions of Christian fundamentalists and conservatives didn't think so. They thought Robertson and Falwell were being perfectly consistent with the logic of the Bible as they read it: God withdraws favor from sinful nations - the terrorists were meant to be God's wake-up call: better get right with God. Not many people at the time seemed to notice that Osama bin Laden had also been reading his sacred book closely and literally, and had called on Muslims to resist what he described as a "fierce Judeo-Christian campaign" against Islam, praying to Allah for guidance "to exalt the people who obey Him and humiliate those who disobey Him."

Suddenly we were immersed in the pathology of a "holy war" as defined by fundamentalists on both sides. You could see this pathology play out in General William Boykin. A professional soldier, General Boykin had taken up with a small group called the Faith Force Multiplier whose members apply military principles to evangelism with a manifesto summoning warriors "to the spiritual warfare for souls." After Boykin had led Americans in a battle against a Somalian warlord he announced: "I know my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his God was an idol." Now Boykin was going about evangelical revivals preaching that America was in a holy war as "a Christian nation" battling Satan and that America's Muslim adversaries will be defeated "only if we come against them in the name of Jesus." For such an hour, America surely needed a godly leader. So General Boykin explained how it was that the candidate who had lost the election in 2000 nonetheless wound up in the White House. President Bush, he said, "was not elected by a majority of the voters - he was appointed by God." Not surprising, instead of being reprimanded for evangelizing while in uniform, General Boykin is now the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. (Just as it isn't surprising that despite his public call for the assassination of a foreign head of state, Pat

Robertson's Operation Blessing was one of the first groups to receive taxpayer funds from the President's Faith-Based Initiative for "relief work" on the Gulf Coast.)

We can't wiggle out of this, people. Alvin Hawkins states it frankly: "This is a problem we can't walk away from." We're talking about a powerful religious constituency that claims the right to tell us what's on God's mind and to decide the laws of the land according to their interpretation of biblical revelation and to enforce those laws on the nation as a whole. For the Bible is not just the foundational text of their faith; it has become the foundational text for a political movement.

True, people of faith have always tried to bring their interpretation of the Bible to bear on American laws and morals - this very seminary is part of that tradition; it's the American way, encouraged and protected by the First Amendment. But what is unique today is that the radical religious right has succeeded in taking over one of America's great political parties - the country is not yet a theocracy but the Republican Party is - and they are driving American politics, using God as a battering ram on almost every issue: crime and punishment, foreign policy, health care, taxation, energy, regulation, social services and so on.

What's also unique is the intensity, organization, and anger they have brought to the public square. Listen to their preachers, evangelists, and homegrown ayatollahs: Their viral intolerance - their loathing of other people's beliefs, of America's secular and liberal values, of an independent press, of the courts, of reason, science and the search for objective knowledge - has become an unprecedented sectarian crusade for state power. They use the language of faith to demonize political opponents, mislead and misinform voters, censor writers and artists, ostracize dissenters, and marginalize the poor. These are the foot soldiers in a political holy war financed by wealthy economic interests and guided by savvy partisan operatives who know that couching political ambition in religious rhetoric can ignite the passion of followers as ferociously as when Constantine painted the Sign of Christ (the "Christograph") on the shields of his soldiers and on the banners of his legions and routed his rivals in Rome. Never mind that the Emperor himself was never baptized into the faith; it served him well enough to make the God worshipped by Christians his most important ally and turn the Sign of Christ into the one imperial symbol most widely recognized and feared from east to west.

Let's take a brief detour to Ohio and I'll show you what I am talking about. In recent weeks a movement called the Ohio Restoration Project has been launched to identify and train thousands of "Patriot Pastors" to get out the conservative religious vote next year. According to press reports, the leader of the movement - the senior pastor of a large church in suburban Columbus - casts the 2006 elections as an apocalyptic clash between "the forces of righteousness and the hordes of hell." The fear and loathing in his message is palpable: He denounces public schools that won't teach creationism, require teachers to read the Bible in class, or allow children to pray. He rails against the "secular jihadists" who have "hijacked" America and prevent school kids from learning that Hitler was "an avid evolutionist." He links abortion to children who murder their parents. He blasts the "pagan left" for trying to redefine marriage. He declares that "homosexual rights" will bring "a flood of demonic oppression." On his church website you read that "Reclaiming the teaching of our Christian heritage among America's youth is paramount to a sense of national destiny that God has invested into this nation."

One of the prominent allies of the Ohio Restoration Project is a popular televangelist in Columbus who heads a \$40 million-a-year ministry that is accessible worldwide via 1,400 TV stations and cable affiliates. Although he describes himself as neither

Republican nor Democrat but a "Christocrat" - a gladiator for God marching against "the very hordes of hell in our society" - he nonetheless has been spotted with so many Republican politicians in Washington and elsewhere that he has been publicly described as a "spiritual advisor" to the party. The journalist Marley Greiner has been following his ministry for the organization, FreePress. She writes that because he considers the separation of church and state to be "a lie perpetrated on Americans - especially believers in Jesus Christ" - he identifies himself as a "wall builder" and "wall buster." As a wall builder he will "restore Godly presence in government and culture; as a wall buster he will tear down the church-state wall." He sees the Christian church as a sleeping giant that has the ability and the anointing from God to transform America. The giant is stirring. At a rally in July he proclaimed to a packed house: "Let the Revolution begin!" And the congregation roared back: "Let the Revolution begin!"

(The Revolution's first goal, by the way, is to elect as governor next year the current Republican secretary of state who oversaw the election process in 2004 year when a surge in Christian voters narrowly carried George Bush to victory. As General Boykin suggested of President Bush's anointment, this fellow has acknowledged that "God wanted him as secretary of state during 2004" because it was such a critical election. Now he is criss-crossing Ohio meeting with Patriot Pastors and their congregations proclaiming that "America is at its best when God is at its center.") [For the complete stories from which this information has been extracted, see: "An evening with Rod Parsley, by Marley Greiner, FreePress, July 20, 2005; Patriot Pastors," Marilyn Warfield, Cleveland Jewish News, July 29, 2005; "Ohio televangelist has plenty of influence, but he wants more", Ted Wendling, Religion News Service, Chicago Tribune, July 1, 2005; "Shaping Politics from the pulpits," Susan Page, USA Today , Aug. 3, 2005; "Religion and Politics Should Be Mixed Says Ohio Secretary of State," WTOL-TV Toledo, October 29, 2004].

The Ohio Restoration Project is spreading. In one month alone last year in the president's home state of Texas, a single Baptist preacher added 2000 "Patriot Pastors" to the rolls. On his website he now encourages pastors to "speak out on the great moral issues of our day...to restore and reclaim America for Christ."

Alas, these "great moral issues" do not include building a moral economy. The Christian Right trumpets charity (as in Faith Based Initiatives) but is silent on social and economic justice. Inequality in America has reached scandalous proportions: a few weeks ago the government acknowledged that while incomes are growing smartly for the first time in years, the primary winners are the top earners - people who receive stocks, bonuses, and other income in addition to wages. The nearly 80 percent of Americans who rely mostly on hourly wages barely maintained their purchasing power. Even as Hurricane Katrina was hitting the Gulf Coast, giving us a stark reminder of how poverty can shove poor people into the abyss, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that last year one million people were added to 36 million already living in poverty. And since 1999 the income of the poorest one fifth of Americans has dropped almost nine percent.

None of these harsh realities of ordinary life seem to bother the radical religious right. To the contrary, in the pursuit of political power they have cut a deal with America's richest class and their partisan allies in a law-of-the-jungle strategy to "starve" the government of resources needed for vital social services that benefit everyone while championing more and more spending rich corporations and larger tax cuts for the rich.

How else to explain the vacuum in their "great moral issues" of the plight of millions



of Americans without adequate health care? Of the gross corruption of politics by campaign contributions that skew government policies toward the wealthy at the expense of ordinary taxpayers? (On the very day that oil and gas prices reached a record high the president signed off on huge taxpayer subsidies for energy conglomerates already bloated with windfall profits plucked from the pockets of average Americans filling up at gas tanks across the country; yet the next Sunday you could pass a hundred church signboards with no mention of a sermon on crony capitalism.)

This silence on economic and political morality is deafening but revealing. The radicals on the Christian right are now the dominant force in America's governing party. Without them the government would not be in the hands of people who don't believe in government. They are culpable in upholding a system of class and race in which, as we saw last week, the rich escape and the poor are left behind. And they are on they are crusading for a government "of, by, and for the people" in favor of one based on Biblical authority.

This is the crux of the matter: To these fundamentalist radicals there is only one legitimate religion and only one particular brand of that religion that is right; all others who call on God are immoral or wrong. They believe the Bible to be literally true and that they alone know what it means. Behind their malicious attacks on the courts ("vermin in black robes," as one of their talk show allies recently put it,) is a fierce longing to hold judges accountable for interpreting the Constitution according to standards of biblical revelation as fundamentalists define it. To get those judges they needed a party beholden to them. So the Grand Old Party - the GOP - has become God's Own Party, its ranks made up of God's Own People "marching as to war."

Go now to the website of an organization called America 21 (<http://www.america21.us/Home.cfm> ). There, on a red, white, and blue home page, you find praise for President Bush's agenda - including his effort to phase out Social Security and protect corporations from law suits by aggrieved citizens. On the same home page is a reminder that "There are 7,177 hours until our next National Election....ENLIST NOW." Now click again and you will read a summons calling Christian pastors "to lead God's people in the turning that can save America from our enemies." Under the headline "Remember - Repent - Return" language reminiscent of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell reminds you that "one of the unmistakable lessons [of 9/11] is that America has lost the full measure of God's hedge of protection. When we ask ourselves why, the scriptures remind us that ancient Israel was invaded by its foreign enemy, Babylon, in 586 B.C. ....(and) Jerusalem was destroyed by another invading foreign power in 70 A.D. .... Psalm 106:37 says that these judgments of God ...were because of Israel's idolatry. Israel, the apple of God's eye, was destroyed ... because the people failed... to repent." If America is to avoid a similar fate, the warning continues, we must "remember the legacy of our heritage under God and our covenant with Him and, in the words of II Chronicles 7:14: 'Turn from our wicked ways.'"

Just what does this have to do with the president's political agenda praised on the home page? Well, squint and look at the fine print at the bottom of the site. It reads: America21 is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to educate, engage and mobilize Christians to influence national policy at every level. Founded in 1989 by a multi-denominational group of pastors and businessmen, it is dedicated to being a catalyst for revival and reform of the culture and the government ." (emphasis added).

The corporate, political and religious right converge here, led by a president who, in his own disdain for science, reason and knowledge, is the most powerful fundamentalist in American history.

What are the stakes? In his last book, the late Marvin Harris, a prominent anthropologist of the time, wrote that "the attack against reason and objectivity is fast reaching the proportions of a crusade." To save the American Dream, "we desperately need to reaffirm the principle that it is possible to carry out an analysis of social life which rational human beings will recognize as being true, regardless of whether they happen to be women or men, whites or black, straights or gays, employers or employees, Jews or born-again Christians. The alternative is to stand by helplessly as special interest groups tear the United States apart in the name of their 'separate realities' or to wait until one of them grows strong enough to force its irrational and subjective brand of reality on all the rest."

That was written 25 years ago, just as the radical Christian right was setting out on their long march to political supremacy. The forces he warned against have gained strength ever since and now control much of the United States government and are on the verge of having it all.

It has to be said that their success has come in no small part because of our acquiescence and timidity. Our democratic values are imperiled because too many people of reason are willing to appease irrational people just because they are pious. Republican moderates tried appeasement and survive today only in gulags set aside for them by the Karl Roves, Bill Frist and Tom DeLays. Democrats are divided and paralyzed, afraid that if they take on the organized radical right they will lose what little power they have. Trying to learn to talk about God as Republicans do, they're talking gobbledygook, compromising the strongest thing going for them - the case for a moral economy and the moral argument for the secular checks and balances that have made America "a safe haven for the cause of conscience."

As I look back on the conflicts and clamor of our boisterous past, one lesson about democracy stands above all others: Bullies - political bullies, economic bullies and religious bullies - cannot be appeased; they have to be opposed with a stubbornness to match their own. This is never easy; these guys don't fight fair; "Robert's Rules of Order" is not one of their holy texts. But freedom on any front - and especially freedom of conscience - never comes to those who rock and wait, hoping someone else will do the heavy lifting. Christian realism requires us to see the world as it is, without illusions, and then take it on. Christian realism also requires love. But not a sentimental, dreamy love. Reinhold Niebuhr, who taught at Union Theological Seminary and wrestled constantly with applying Christian ethics to political life, put it this way: "When we talk about love we have to become mature or we will become sentimental. Basically love means...being responsible, responsibility to our family, toward our civilization, and now by the pressures of history, toward the universe of humankind."

Christian realists aren't afraid to love. But just as the Irishman who came upon a brawl in the street and asked, "Is this a private fight or can anyone get in it?" we have to take that love where the action is. Or the world will remain a theatre of war between fundamentalists.

-----

Bill Moyers is a broadcast journalist and former host the PBS program NOW With Bill Moyers. Moyers also serves as president of the Schumann Center for Media and

Democracy.

[www.commondreams.org](http://www.commondreams.org)

Friday 09 September 2005

This article is adapted from Bill Moyer's address this week at Union Theological Seminary in New York, where Judith and Bill Moyers received the seminary's highest award, the Union Medal, for their contributions to faith and reason in America.

At the Central Baptist Church in Marshall, Texas, where I was baptized in the faith, we believed in a free church in a free state. I still do.

My spiritual forbears did not take kindly to living under theocrats who embraced religious liberty for themselves but denied it to others. "Forced worship stinks in God's nostrils," thundered the dissenter Roger Williams as he was banished from Massachusetts for denying Puritan authority over his conscience. Baptists there were a "pitiful negligible minority" but they were agitators for freedom and therefore denounced as "incendiaries of the commonwealth" for holding to their belief in that great democracy of faith - the priesthood of all believers. For refusing to pay tribute to the state religion they were fined, flogged, and exiled. In 1651 the Baptist Obadiah Holmes was given 30 stripes with a three-corded whip after he violated the law and took forbidden communion with another Baptist in Lynn, Massachusetts. His friends offered to pay his fine for his release but he refused. They offered him strong drink to anesthetize the pain of the flogging. Again he refused. It is the love of liberty, he said, "that must free the soul."

Such revolutionary ideas made the new nation with its Constitution and Bill of Rights "a haven for the cause of conscience." No longer could magistrates order citizens to support churches they did not attend and recite creeds that they did not believe. No longer would "the loathsome combination of church and state" - as Thomas Jefferson described it - be the settled order. Unlike the Old World that had been wracked with religious wars and persecution, the government of America would take no sides in the religious free-for-all that liberty would make possible and politics would make inevitable. The First Amendment neither inculcates religion nor inoculates against it. Americans could be loyal to the Constitution without being hostile to God, or they could pay no heed to God without fear of being mugged by an official God Squad. It has been a remarkable arrangement that guaranteed "soul freedom."

It is at risk now, and the fourth observance of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is an appropriate time to think about it.

Four years ago this week, the poet's prophetic metaphor became real again and "the great dark birds of history" plunged into our lives.

They came in the name of God. They came bent on murder and martyrdom. It was as if they rode to earth on the fierce breath of Allah himself, for the sacred scriptures that had nurtured these murderous young men are steeped in images of a violent and vengeful God who wills life for the faithful and horrific torment for unbelievers.

Yes, the Koran speaks of mercy and compassion and calls for ethical living. But such passages are no match for the ferocity of instruction found there for waging war for God's sake. The scholar Jack Nelson-Pallmeyer carefully traces this trail of holy violence in his important book, *Is Religion Killing Us?* [Trinity Press International, 2003]. He highlights many of the verses in the Koran that the Islamic terrorists could have had in their hearts and on their lips four years ago as they moved toward their

gruesome rendezvous. As I read some of them, close your eyes and recall the scenes of that bright September morning which began in the bright sun under a blue sky:

"Those who believe Fight in the cause of Allah, and Those who reject Faith Fight in the cause of Evil."(4:76)

"So We sent against them A furious Wind through days of disaster, that We might Give them a taste of a Penalty of humiliation In this Life; but The Penalty of the Hereafter will be More Humiliating still: And they Will find No help." (41:16)

"Then watch thou For the Day That the sky will Bring forth a kind Of smoke (or mist) Plainly visible, Enveloping the people: This will be a Penalty Grievous." (44:10-11)

"Did the people of the towns Feel Secure against the coming Of Our Wrath by night While they were asleep? Or else did they feel Secure against its coming in Broad daylight while they Played About (carefree)? Did they then feel secure Against the Plan of Allah? - But no one can feel Secure from the Plan of Allah, except those (Doomed) to ruin." (7:97-99)

So the holy warriors came - an airborne death cult, their sights on God's enemies: regular folks, starting the day's routine. One minute they're pulling off their jackets, shaking Sweet n' Low into their coffee, adjusting the height of their chair or a picture of a child or sweetheart or spouse in a frame on their desk, booting up their computer - and in the next, they are engulfed by a horrendous cataclysm. God's will. Poof!

But it is never only the number of dead by which terrorists measure their work. It is also the number of the living - the survivors - taken hostage to fear. Their mission was to invade our psyche; get inside our heads - deprive us of trust, faith, and peace of mind: keep us from ever again believing in a safe, just, and peaceful world, and from working to bring that world to pass. The writer Terry Tempest Williams has said "the human heart is the first home of democracy." Fill that heart with fear and people will give up the risks of democracy for the assurances of security; fill that heart with fear and you can shake the house to its foundations.

In the days leading up to 9/11 our daughter and husband adopted their first baby. On the morning of September 11th our son-in-law passed through the shadow of the World Trade Center toward his office a few blocks up the street. He arrived as the horrors erupted. He saw the flames, the falling bodies, the devastation. His building was evacuated and for long awful moments he couldn't reach his wife, our daughter, to say he was okay. Even after they connected it wasn't until the next morning that he was able to make it home. Throughout that fearful night our daughter was alone with their new baby. Later she told us that for weeks thereafter she would lie awake at night, wondering where and when it might happen again, going to the computer at three in the morning to check out what she could about bioterrorism, germ warfare, anthrax and the vulnerability of children. The terrorists had violated a mother's deepest space.

Who was not vulnerable? That morning Judith and I made it to our office at Channel Thirteen on West 33rd Street just after the second plane struck. Our building was evacuated although the two of us remained with other colleagues to do what we could to keep the station on the air. The next day it was evacuated again because of a bomb scare at the Empire State Building nearby. We had just ended a live broadcast for PBS when security officers swept through and ordered everyone out. This time we left. As we were making our way down the stairs I took Judith's arm

and was struck by the thought: Is this the last time I'll touch her? Could what we had begun together a half century ago end here on this dim, bare staircase? I forced the thought from my mind, willed it away, but in the early hours of morning, as I sat at the window of our apartment looking out at the sky, the sinister intruder crept back.

Terrorists plant time bombs in our heads, hoping to turn each and every imagination into a private hell governed by our fear of them.

They win only if we let them, only if we become like them: vengeful, imperious, intolerant, paranoid. Having lost faith in all else, zealots have nothing left but a holy cause to please a warrior God. They win if we become holy warriors, too; if we kill the innocent as they do; strike first at those who had not struck us; allow our leaders to use the fear of terrorism to make us afraid of the truth; cease to think and reason together, allowing others to tell what's in God's mind. Yes, we are vulnerable to terrorists, but only a shaken faith in ourselves can do us in.

So over the past four years I have kept reminding myself of not only the horror but the humanity that was revealed that day four years ago, when through the smoke and fire we glimpsed the heroism, compassion, and sacrifice of people who did the best of things in the worst of times. I keep telling myself that this beauty in us is real, that it makes life worthwhile and democracy work and that no terrorist can take it from us.

But I am not so sure. As a Christian realist I honor my inner skeptic. And as a journalist I always know the other side of the story. The historian Edward Gibbon once wrote of historians what could be said of journalists. He wrote: "The theologians may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian [read: journalist] He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings."

The other side of the story:

Muslims have no monopoly on holy violence. As Jack Nelson-Pallmayer points out, God's violence in the sacred texts of both faiths reflect a deep and troubling pathology "so pervasive, vindictive, and destructive" that it contradicts and subverts the collective weight of other passages that exhort ethical behavior or testify to a loving God.

For days now we have watched those heart-breaking scenes on the Gulf Coast: the steaming, stinking, sweltering wreckage of cities and suburbs; the fleeing refugees; the floating corpses, hungry babies, and old people huddled together in death, the dogs gnawing at their feet; stranded children standing in water reeking of feces and garbage; families scattered; a mother holding her small child and an empty water jug, pleading for someone to fill it; a wife, pushing the body of her dead husband on a wooden plank down a flooded street; desperate people struggling desperately to survive.

Now transport those current scenes from our newspapers and television back to the first Book of the Bible - the Book of Genesis. They bring to life what we rarely imagine so graphically when we read of the great flood that devastated the known world. If you read the Bible as literally true, as fundamentalists do, this flood was ordered by God. "And God said to Noah, 'I have determined to make an end of all flesh... behold, I will destroy them with the earth.'" (6:5-13). "I will bring a flood of

waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall die." (6:17-19) Noah and his family are the only humans spared - they were, after all, God's chosen. But for everyone else: "... the waters prevailed so mightily... that all the high mountains....were covered....And all flesh died that moved upon the earth, birds, cattle, beasts...and every man; everything on the dry land in whose nostrils was the breath of life, died...." (7:17-23).

The flood is merely Act One. Read on: This God first "hardens the heart of Pharaoh" to make sure the Egyptian ruler will not be moved by the plea of Moses to let his people go. Then because Pharaoh's heart is hardened, God turns the Nile into blood so people cannot drink its water and will suffer from thirst. Not satisfied with the results, God sends swarms of locusts and flies to torture them; rains hail and fire and thunder on them destroys the trees and plants of the field until nothing green remains; orders every first-born child to be slaughtered, from the first-born of Pharaoh right on down to "the first-born of the maidservant behind the mill." An equal-murderous God, you might say. The massacre continues until "there is not a house where one was not dead." While the Egyptian families mourn their dead, God orders Moses to loot from their houses all their gold and silver and clothing. Finally, God's thirst for blood is satisfied, God pauses to rest - and boasts: "I have made sport of the Egyptians."

Violence: the sport of God. God, the progenitor of shock and awe.

And that's just Act II. As the story unfolds women and children are hacked to death on God's order; unborn infants are ripped from their mother's wombs; cities are leveled - their women killed if they have had sex, the virgins taken at God's command for the pleasure of his holy warriors. When his holy warriors spare the lives of 50,000 captives God is furious and sends Moses back to rebuke them and tell them to finish the job. One tribe after another falls to God-ordered genocide: the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Jebusites - names so ancient they have disappeared into the mists as fathers and mothers and brothers and sisters, grandparents and grandchildren, infants in arms, shepherds, threshers, carpenters, merchants, housewives - living human beings, flesh and blood: "And when the Lord your God gives them over to you, and you defeat them; then you must utterly destroy them; you shall make no covenant with them, and show no mercy to them...(and) your eyes shall not pity them."

So it is written - in the Holy Bible.

Yes, I know: the early church fathers, trying to cover up the blood-soaked trail of God's sport, decreed that anything that disagrees with Christian dogma about the perfection of God is to be interpreted spiritually. Yes, I know: Edward Gibbon himself acknowledged that the literal Biblical sense of God "is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason" and that we must therefore read the scriptures through a veil of allegory. Yes, I know: we can go through the Bible and construct a God more pleasing to the better angels of our nature (as I have done.) Yes, I know: Christians claim the Old Testament God of wrath was supplanted by the Gospel's God of love [See *The God of Evil*, Allan Hawkins, Exlibris.]

I know these things; all of us know these things. But we also know that the "violence-of-God" tradition remains embedded deep in the DNA of monotheistic faith. We also know that fundamentalists the world over and at home consider the "sacred texts" to be literally God's word on all matters. Inside that logic you cannot read part of the Bible allegorically and the rest of it literally; if you believe in the virgin birth of

Jesus, his crucifixion and resurrection, and the depiction of the Great Judgment at the end times you must also believe that God is sadistic, brutal, vengeful, callous, cruel and savage - that God slaughters.

Millions believe it.

Let's go back to 9/11 four years ago. The ruins were still smoldering when the reverends Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell went on television to proclaim that the terrorist attacks were God's punishment of a corrupted America. They said the government had adopted the agenda "of the pagans, and the abortionists, and the feminists, and the gays and the lesbians" not to mention the ACLU and People for the American Way (The God of the Bible apparently holds liberals in the same low esteem as Hittites and Gergushites and Jebusites and all the other pagans of holy writ.) Just as God had sent the Great Flood to wipe out a corrupted world, now - disgusted with a decadent America - "God almighty is lifting his protection from us." Critics said such comments were deranged. But millions of Christian fundamentalists and conservatives didn't think so. They thought Robertson and Falwell were being perfectly consistent with the logic of the Bible as they read it: God withdraws favor from sinful nations - the terrorists were meant to be God's wake-up call: better get right with God. Not many people at the time seemed to notice that Osama bin Laden had also been reading his sacred book closely and literally, and had called on Muslims to resist what he described as a "fierce Judeo-Christian campaign" against Islam, praying to Allah for guidance "to exalt the people who obey Him and humiliate those who disobey Him."

Suddenly we were immersed in the pathology of a "holy war" as defined by fundamentalists on both sides. You could see this pathology play out in General William Boykin. A professional soldier, General Boykin had taken up with a small group called the Faith Force Multiplier whose members apply military principles to evangelism with a manifesto summoning warriors "to the spiritual warfare for souls." After Boykin had led Americans in a battle against a Somalian warlord he announced: "I know my God was bigger than his. I knew that my God was a real God and his God was an idol." Now Boykin was going about evangelical revivals preaching that America was in a holy war as "a Christian nation" battling Satan and that America's Muslim adversaries will be defeated "only if we come against them in the name of Jesus." For such an hour, America surely needed a godly leader. So General Boykin explained how it was that the candidate who had lost the election in 2000 nonetheless wound up in the White House. President Bush, he said, "was not elected by a majority of the voters - he was appointed by God." Not surprising, instead of being reprimanded for evangelizing while in uniform, General Boykin is now the Deputy Undersecretary of Defense for Intelligence. (Just as it isn't surprising that despite his public call for the assassination of a foreign head of state, Pat Robertson's Operation Blessing was one of the first groups to receive taxpayer funds from the President's Faith-Based Initiative for "relief work" on the Gulf Coast.)

We can't wiggle out of this, people. Alvin Hawkins states it frankly: "This is a problem we can't walk away from." We're talking about a powerful religious constituency that claims the right to tell us what's on God's mind and to decide the laws of the land according to their interpretation of biblical revelation and to enforce those laws on the nation as a whole. For the Bible is not just the foundational text of their faith; it has become the foundational text for a political movement.

True, people of faith have always tried to bring their interpretation of the Bible to bear on American laws and morals - this very seminary is part of that tradition; it's the American way, encouraged and protected by the First Amendment. But what is

unique today is that the radical religious right has succeeded in taking over one of America's great political parties - the country is not yet a theocracy but the Republican Party is - and they are driving American politics, using God as a battering ram on almost every issue: crime and punishment, foreign policy, health care, taxation, energy, regulation, social services and so on.

What's also unique is the intensity, organization, and anger they have brought to the public square. Listen to their preachers, evangelists, and homegrown ayatollahs: Their viral intolerance - their loathing of other people's beliefs, of America's secular and liberal values, of an independent press, of the courts, of reason, science and the search for objective knowledge - has become an unprecedented sectarian crusade for state power. They use the language of faith to demonize political opponents, mislead and misinform voters, censor writers and artists, ostracize dissenters, and marginalize the poor. These are the foot soldiers in a political holy war financed by wealthy economic interests and guided by savvy partisan operatives who know that couching political ambition in religious rhetoric can ignite the passion of followers as ferociously as when Constantine painted the Sign of Christ (the "Christograph") on the shields of his soldiers and on the banners of his legions and routed his rivals in Rome. Never mind that the Emperor himself was never baptized into the faith; it served him well enough to make the God worshipped by Christians his most important ally and turn the Sign of Christ into the one imperial symbol most widely recognized and feared from east to west.

Let's take a brief detour to Ohio and I'll show you what I am talking about. In recent weeks a movement called the Ohio Restoration Project has been launched to identify and train thousands of "Patriot Pastors" to get out the conservative religious vote next year. According to press reports, the leader of the movement - the senior pastor of a large church in suburban Columbus - casts the 2006 elections as an apocalyptic clash between "the forces of righteousness and the hordes of hell." The fear and loathing in his message is palpable: He denounces public schools that won't teach creationism, require teachers to read the Bible in class, or allow children to pray. He rails against the "secular jihadists" who have "hijacked" America and prevent school kids from learning that Hitler was "an avid evolutionist." He links abortion to children who murder their parents. He blasts the "pagan left" for trying to redefine marriage. He declares that "homosexual rights" will bring "a flood of demonic oppression." On his church website you read that "Reclaiming the teaching of our Christian heritage among America's youth is paramount to a sense of national destiny that God has invested into this nation."

One of the prominent allies of the Ohio Restoration Project is a popular televangelist in Columbus who heads a \$40 million-a-year ministry that is accessible worldwide via 1,400 TV stations and cable affiliates. Although he describes himself as neither Republican nor Democrat but a "Christocrat" - a gladiator for God marching against "the very hordes of hell in our society" - he nonetheless has been spotted with so many Republican politicians in Washington and elsewhere that he has been publicly described as a "spiritual advisor" to the party. The journalist Marley Greiner has been following his ministry for the organization, FreePress. She writes that because he considers the separation of church and state to be "a lie perpetrated on Americans - especially believers in Jesus Christ" - he identifies himself as a "wall builder" and "wall buster." As a wall builder he will "restore Godly presence in government and culture; as a wall buster he will tear down the church-state wall." He sees the Christian church as a sleeping giant that has the ability and the anointing from God to transform America. The giant is stirring. At a rally in July he proclaimed to a packed house: "Let the Revolution begin!" And the congregation roared back: "Let the Revolution begin!"



(The Revolution's first goal, by the way, is to elect as governor next year the current Republican secretary of state who oversaw the election process in 2004 year when a surge in Christian voters narrowly carried George Bush to victory. As General Boykin suggested of President Bush's anointment, this fellow has acknowledged that "God wanted him as secretary of state during 2004" because it was such a critical election. Now he is criss-crossing Ohio meeting with Patriot Pastors and their congregations proclaiming that "America is at its best when God is at its center.") [For the complete stories from which this information has been extracted, see: "An evening with Rod Parsley, by Marley Greiner, FreePress, July 20, 2005; Patriot Pastors," Marilyn Warfield, Cleveland Jewish News, July 29, 2005; "Ohio televangelist has plenty of influence, but he wants more", Ted Wendling, Religion News Service, Chicago Tribune, July 1, 2005; "Shaping Politics from the pulpits," Susan Page, USA Today , Aug. 3, 2005; "Religion and Politics Should Be Mixed Says Ohio Secretary of State," WTOL-TV Toledo, October 29, 2004].

The Ohio Restoration Project is spreading. In one month alone last year in the president's home state of Texas, a single Baptist preacher added 2000 "Patriot Pastors" to the rolls. On his website he now encourages pastors to "speak out on the great moral issues of our day...to restore and reclaim America for Christ."

Alas, these "great moral issues" do not include building a moral economy. The Christian Right trumpets charity (as in Faith Based Initiatives) but is silent on social and economic justice. Inequality in America has reached scandalous proportions: a few weeks ago the government acknowledged that while incomes are growing smartly for the first time in years, the primary winners are the top earners - people who receive stocks, bonuses, and other income in addition to wages. The nearly 80 percent of Americans who rely mostly on hourly wages barely maintained their purchasing power. Even as Hurricane Katrina was hitting the Gulf Coast, giving us a stark reminder of how poverty can shove poor people into the abyss, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that last year one million people were added to 36 million already living in poverty. And since 1999 the income of the poorest one fifth of Americans has dropped almost nine percent.

None of these harsh realities of ordinary life seem to bother the radical religious right. To the contrary, in the pursuit of political power they have cut a deal with America's richest class and their partisan allies in a law-of-the-jungle strategy to "starve" the government of resources needed for vital social services that benefit everyone while championing more and more spending rich corporations and larger tax cuts for the rich.

How else to explain the vacuum in their "great moral issues" of the plight of millions of Americans without adequate health care? Of the gross corruption of politics by campaign contributions that skew government policies toward the wealthy at the expense of ordinary taxpayers? (On the very day that oil and gas prices reached a record high the president signed off on huge taxpayer subsidies for energy conglomerates already bloated with windfall profits plucked from the pockets of average Americans filling up at gas tanks across the country; yet the next Sunday you could pass a hundred church signboards with no mention of a sermon on crony capitalism.)

This silence on economic and political morality is deafening but revealing. The radicals on the Christian right are now the dominant force in America's governing party. Without them the government would not be in the hands of people who don't believe in government. They are culpable in upholding a system of class and race in

which, as we saw last week, the rich escape and the poor are left behind. And they are on they are crusading for a government "of, by, and for the people" in favor of one based on Biblical authority.

This is the crux of the matter: To these fundamentalist radicals there is only one legitimate religion and only one particular brand of that religion that is right; all others who call on God are immoral or wrong. They believe the Bible to be literally true and that they alone know what it means. Behind their malicious attacks on the courts ("vermin in black robes," as one of their talk show allies recently put it,) is a fierce longing to hold judges accountable for interpreting the Constitution according to standards of biblical revelation as fundamentalists define it. To get those judges they needed a party beholden to them. So the Grand Old Party - the GOP - has become God's Own Party, its ranks made up of God's Own People "marching as to war."

Go now to the website of an organization called America 21 (<http://www.america21.us/Home.cfm> ). There, on a red, white, and blue home page, you find praise for President Bush's agenda - including his effort to phase out Social Security and protect corporations from law suits by aggrieved citizens. On the same home page is a reminder that "There are 7,177 hours until our next National Election....ENLIST NOW." Now click again and you will read a summons calling Christian pastors "to lead God's people in the turning that can save America from our enemies." Under the headline "Remember - Repent - Return" language reminiscent of Pat Robertson and Jerry Falwell reminds you that "one of the unmistakable lessons [of 9/11] is that America has lost the full measure of God's hedge of protection. When we ask ourselves why, the scriptures remind us that ancient Israel was invaded by its foreign enemy, Babylon, in 586 B.C. ....(and) Jerusalem was destroyed by another invading foreign power in 70 A.D. .... Psalm 106:37 says that these judgments of God ...were because of Israel's idolatry. Israel, the apple of God's eye, was destroyed ... because the people failed... to repent." If America is to avoid a similar fate, the warning continues, we must "remember the legacy of our heritage under God and our covenant with Him and, in the words of II Chronicles 7:14: 'Turn from our wicked ways.'"

Just what does this have to do with the president's political agenda praised on the home page? Well, squint and look at the fine print at the bottom of the site. It reads: America21 is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to educate, engage and mobilize Christians to influence national policy at every level. Founded in 1989 by a multi-denominational group of pastors and businessmen, it is dedicated to being a catalyst for revival and reform of the culture and the government ." (emphasis added).

The corporate, political and religious right converge here, led by a president who, in his own disdain for science, reason and knowledge, is the most powerful fundamentalist in American history.

What are the stakes? In his last book, the late Marvin Harris, a prominent anthropologist of the time, wrote that "the attack against reason and objectivity is fast reaching the proportions of a crusade." To save the American Dream, "we desperately need to reaffirm the principle that it is possible to carry out an analysis of social life which rational human beings will recognize as being true, regardless of whether they happen to be women or men, whites or black, straights or gays, employers or employees, Jews or born-again Christians. The alternative is to stand by helplessly as special interest groups tear the United States apart in the name of their "separate realities' or to wait until one of them grows strong enough to force its

irrational and subjective brand of reality on all the rest."

That was written 25 years ago, just as the radical Christian right was setting out on their long march to political supremacy. The forces he warned against have gained strength ever since and now control much of the United States government and are on the verge of having it all.

It has to be said that their success has come in no small part because of our acquiescence and timidity. Our democratic values are imperiled because too many people of reason are willing to appease irrational people just because they are pious. Republican moderates tried appeasement and survive today only in gulags set aside for them by the Karl Roves, Bill Frist and Tom DeLays. Democrats are divided and paralyzed, afraid that if they take on the organized radical right they will lose what little power they have. Trying to learn to talk about God as Republicans do, they're talking gobbledygook, compromising the strongest thing going for them - the case for a moral economy and the moral argument for the secular checks and balances that have made America "a safe haven for the cause of conscience."

As I look back on the conflicts and clamor of our boisterous past, one lesson about democracy stands above all others: Bullies - political bullies, economic bullies and religious bullies - cannot be appeased; they have to be opposed with a stubbornness to match their own. This is never easy; these guys don't fight fair

## **Thread 5: Peace resonates from the heart**

### **Author**

**Carmen Youngmen**

Joined: 04 Sep 2005

Posts: 1

### **Message**

Posted: Sun Sep 04, 2005 1:30 pm    Post subject: Peace resonates from the heart

A Native American grandfather was talking to his grandson about how he felt. He said,  
I feel as if I have two wolves fighting in my heart.  
One wolf is the vengeful, angry, violent one.  
The other wolf is the loving, compassionate one.  
The grandson asked him,  
'which wolf will win the fight in your heart?'  
The grandfather answered, 'The one I feed.'

Peace resonates from our heart

Carmen

## #2 PERSONAL STORIES FROM AROUND THE WORLD

### Thread 1: Death and Dying in Iraq

#### Author

**JPPaul**

Joined: 12 Dec 2004

Posts: 5

Location: Nevada

#### Message

Posted: Thu Jan 19, 2006 2:23 pm Post subject: Death and Dying in Iraq

Someone sent me this story. I am not sure where it came from, but it is an ever-present reminder of death and dying in Iraq. We must work for peace and work to stop this war in every way we know how. If you can read this story and not feel like protesting you are not human. jpp

Thank You for the Music...  
Riverbend

When I first heard about the abduction of Christian Science Monitor journalist Jill Carroll a week ago, I remember feeling regret. It was the same heavy feeling I get every time I hear of another journalist killed or abducted. The same heavy feeling that settles upon most Iraqis, I imagine, when they hear of acquaintances suffering under the current situation.

I read the news as a subtitle on tv. We haven't had an internet connection for several days so I couldn't really read about the details. All I knew was that a journalist had been abducted and that her Iraqi interpreter had been killed. He was shot in cold blood in Al Adil district earlier this month, when they took Jill Carroll... They say he didn't die immediately. It is said he lived long enough to talk to police and then he died.

I found out very recently that the interpreter killed was a good friend - Alan, of Alan's Melody, and I've spent the last two days crying.

Everyone knew him as simply 'Alan', or "Elin" as it is pronounced in Iraqi Arabic. Prior to the war, he owned a music shop in the best area in Baghdad, A'arasat. He sold some Arabic music and instrumental music, but he had his regular customers - those westernized Iraqis who craved foreign music. For those of us who listened to rock, adult alternative, jazz, etc. he had very few rivals.

He sold bootleg CDs, tapes and DVDs. His shop wasn't just a music shop - it was a haven. Some of my happiest moments were while I was walking out of that shop carrying CDs and tapes, full of anticipation for the escape the music provided. He had just about everything from Abba to Marilyn Manson. He could provide anything. All you had to do was go to him with the words, "Alan - I heard a great song on the radio... you have to find it!" And he'd sit

there, patiently, asking who sang it? You don't know? Ok - was it a man or a woman? Fine. Do you remember any of the words? Chances were that he'd already heard it and even knew some of the lyrics.

During the sanctions, Iraq was virtually cut off from the outside world. We had maybe four or five local tv stations and it was only during the later years that the internet became more popular. Alan was one of those links with the outside world. Walking into Alan's shop was like walking into a sort of transitional other world. Whenever you walked into the store, great music would be blaring from his speakers and he and Mohammed, the guy who worked in his shop, would be arguing over who was better, Joe Satriani or Steve Vai.

He would have the latest Billboard hits posted on a sheet of paper near the door and he'd have compiled a few of his own favorites on a 'collection' CD. He also went out of his way to get recordings of the latest award shows - Grammys, AMAs, Oscars, etc. You could visit him twice and know that by the third time, he'd have memorized your favorites and found music you might be interested in.

He was an electrical engineer - but his passion was music. His dream was to be a music producer. He was always full of scorn for the usual boy bands - N'Sync, Backstreet Boys, etc. - but he was always trying to promote an Iraqi boy band he claimed he'd discovered, "Unknown to No One". "They're great - wallah they have potential." He'd say. E. would answer, "Alan, they're terrible." And Alan, with his usual Iraqi pride would lecture about how they were great, simply because they were Iraqi.

He was a Christian from Basrah and he had a lovely wife who adored him - F. We would tease him about how once he was married and had a family, he'd lose interest in music. It didn't happen. Conversations with Alan continued to revolve around Pink Floyd, Jimmy Hendrix, but they began to include F. his wife, M. his daughter and his little boy. My heart aches for his family - his wife and children...

You could walk into the shop and find no one behind the counter- everyone was in the other room, playing one version or another of FIFA soccer on the Play Station. He collected those old records, or 'vinyls'. The older they were, the better. While he promoted new musical technology, he always said that nothing could beat the sound of a vintage vinyl.

We went to Alan not just to buy music. It always turned into a social visit. He'd make you sit down, listen to his latest favorite CD and drink something. Then he'd tell you the latest gossip - he knew it all. He knew where all the parties were, who the best DJs were and who was getting married or divorced. He knew the local gossip and the international gossip, but it was never malicious with Alan. It was always the funny sort.

The most important thing about Alan was that he never let you down. Never. Whatever it was that you wanted, he'd try his hardest to get it. If you became his friend, that didn't just include music- he was ready to lend a helping hand to those in need, whether it was just to give advice, or listen after a complicated, difficult week.

After the war, the area he had his shop in deteriorated. There were car bombs and shootings and the Badir people took over some of the houses there. People went to A'arasat less and less because it was too dangerous. His shop was closed up more than it was open. He shut it up permanently after getting death threats and a hand grenade through his shop window. His car was carjacked at some point and he was shot at so he started driving around in his fathers beaten-up old Toyota Cressida with a picture of Sistani on his back window, "To ward off the fanatics..." He winked and grinned.

E. and I would stop by his shop sometimes after the war, before he shut it down. We went

in once and found that there was no electricity, and no generator. The shop was dimly lit with some sort of fuel lamp and Alan was sitting behind the counter, sorting through CDs. He was ecstatic to see us. There was no way we could listen to music so he and E. sang through some of their favorite songs, stumbling upon the lyrics and making things up along the way. Then we started listening to various ring tones and swapping the latest jokes of the day. Before we knew it, two hours had slipped by and the world outside was forgotten, an occasional explosion bringing us back to reality.

It hit me then that it wasn't the music that made Alan's shop a haven - somewhere to forget problems and worries - it was Alan himself.

He loved Pink Floyd:

Did you see the frightened ones?  
Did you hear the falling bombs?  
Did you ever wonder why we  
Had to run for shelter when the  
Promise of a brave, new world  
Unfurled beneath the clear blue sky?  
Did you see the frightened ones?  
Did you hear the falling bombs?  
The flames are all long gone, but the pain lingers on.  
Goodbye, blue sky  
Goodbye, blue sky.  
Goodbye. Goodbye.

(Goodbye Blue Sky - Pink Floyd)

Goodbye Alan...

## Thread 1: KBR economic slave

### Author

**KAHDUSHAN**

Joined: 27 Aug 2005

Posts: 2

Location: IRAQ

### Message

ted: Sat Aug 27, 2005 8:26 pm Post subject: KBR economic slave

we only have one copy of confessions here in camp anaconda iraq, but the waiting list to read grows daily. i consider myself to be an economic slave of KBR but the TCNs have it much worse. im sure the thought police monitor all transmissions of the truthful kind . i dont come from this mentality of control and chain of comand ,get an act of congress to do anything but the right thing. as you know people are dying and some because of the idiots placed in charge, but this operation is not about support of the troops. its about money, oil and the expansion of greed. an interesting letter in stars an stripes today said it all when the soilder stated the military does not need the civilian contractors to do anything they could do it all themselves. i believe the american public bought the lie and now must pay for

misplaced loyalty to the bushes. scott ritter and dahr jamal have put the truth out is america ready to wake up or is there a football game on??? kahdushan[/b]

## Author

**24sevenTEAM**

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

## Message

Posted: Mon Aug 29, 2005 4:22 pm Post subject: Your message

Dear Kahdushan,

Thank you for writing to share your moving story and we looked up the letter you mentioned in [Stars and Stripes](#) and also news about references you shared:

Scott Ritter

<http://www.time.com/time/nation/printout/0,8816,351165,00.html>

Dahr Jamail

<http://dahrjamailiraq.com/>

There are millions of people across the world, working to create the *tipping point* that will stop the war. This gives us all hope. However, we have a long way to go to get the attention of many Americans who are still not awake or just haven't been able to connect the dots. People, like yourself, willing to step-up and speaking the truth, especially when you are seeing it from the inside do help validate the realities for others. Your courage is appreciated.

How are you doing being away from your family? How long will you be there? It sounds like you could use a box of Confessions book?

Be safe.

Hope you write back again.

Kathryn

Your 24seven TEAM

## Author

**KAHDUSHAN**

Joined: 27 Aug 2005

Posts: 2

Location: IRAQ

## Message

Posted: Mon Aug 29, 2005 8:29 pm Post subject:

dear kathryn its nice to know someone is out there doing all you do to get the truthout. i do not want to be in this place and my leave sooner than when im out of debt. i make better \$ at home with less incompatence to deal with. soliders of fortune , ex inteligencia on the lamb for past sins and real patriotic idiots . these are the people john talks about in his book. i like to hang with people of true spirit not the hipocrates of this place. what is amazing is there are a few angles in the crowd which makes life here a little bit bareable. i do miss my family a great deal, especally my 4 year old with the heart condition. she's the only one who made me cry when i left home to come here to support them. i see the wounded and the fallen when they are loaded on the planes. i ve gone with one of the angles to the hospital to pray for the wounded. i try to give cheer where ever i can. i have an uncanny resemblance to the former JERRY GARCIA and the troops have fun taking pictures then we talk of home and our jobs. they want to come home but they are true to this country and they make you proud to know them ,so who put the village idiot in charge??? i had a vision while here , a concious awakening concert in washington dc with songs like bruce cockburns - call it democracy-- sara thomsens-- is it for freedom-- iris dements -- waistland of the free-- buddy tabors-- blinding flash of light-- a troop favorite, there are many more but music is magic it can touch the heart and awaken the soul- and yes im a magic man. kahdushan

## Author

**debbekennedy**

Joined: 27 Oct 2004

Posts: 96

Location: global dialogue center

## Message

Posted: Sat Sep 03, 2005 4:25 pm Post subject: Your Message from IRAQ

Dear KAHDUSHAN,

Your message was forwarded to me. I too am sorry to hear about your situation, but appreciate the time and courage it took to share your experience with others. Your voice puts a human face on what we read about.

We have just started a forum "Perspectives on WAR and PEACE" below where you posted. Would you consider sharing your experience in this forum to help set the stage for the conversation?

We welcome you to our global community and hope you will continue to visit, helping us get a glimpse of the reality that exists --- a reality the U.S. media does not report.

Did you personal have a chance to read John Perkins book? Any impressions of it?

Best wishes to you...thank you for your important contribution here at 24seven. Go *Jerry Garcia!*



Debbe Kennedy  
Founder, Global Dialogue Center

P. S. Kathryn will be back next week. We'll make sure she sees your response to her.

## Author

**24sevenTEAM**

Site Admin

Joined: 25 May 2004

Posts: 63

## Message

Posted: Mon Sep 05, 2005 8:55 pm    Post subject:

Dear Kahdushan,

Sorry for the delay in getting your message. I was away a few days.

It sounds like you have made some good friends there and found like-minded people to make your time there bearable and you've also brought them a bit of "celebrity joy." It is hard to even comprehend what you see and experience. Obviously, others are interested too noticed many have come by to read your message.

The conscious-awakening concert in Washington D.C. --- we share your vision here.

Saw Debbe's message to you. If you do get a chance to share more I know it will help us all.

Be safe.  
Kathryn