

James L. Holly, M.D.

September 22, 2001 -- A Response

Late in the evening of 9.11, the Editor and Publisher of the Examiner called and asked me to write a response to the days events. I was given thirty minutes to submit the piece. I sent the following 45 minutes later.

September 11, 2001 -- Faith and Works

by James L. Holly, MD

Special to *The Examiner*

By Request of the Editor and Publisher

I was in a meeting in Nederland when my wife telephoned to say that the World Trade Tower in New York City had been hit by an airplane. Moments later, she called back to say that another plane had struck the twin towers.

Immediately, we suspended our meeting, bowed our heads and without self-consciousness in a business setting, asked God to protect our President and to give him wisdom beyond his experience, knowledge and ability.

By the time I returned to Beaumont, I began to realize the magnitude of the crisis facing our country, but I also realized the personal crisis many of us would face in the days and weeks to come. We would not face a crisis of faith, but we would face a potential clash of faiths. If, as was suspected from the beginning, it proved to be the case that Islamic extremists were the perpetrators of this abomination, all of the stereotypes of a faith foreign to most Americans would march forth to do battle with reality.

The stereotype that all Muslims are terrorists would tempt us into Believing this distortion of the truth. The stereotype that every native of Afghanistan, or its neighbor, Pakistan, is also a terrorist would tempt the national, American psyche. The stereotype that any person who looks and acts differently from me must not be a good person would attempt to seduce good people.

Fortunately, as truth is the best defense against slander, so reality is a perfect defense against stereotypes. That's what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. taught us in his clarion call to reason, truth and acceptance of others in his "I have a dream" speech. Must I remind you that Dr. King said, "I have a dream; I have a dream today that the time will come in America when my children will be judged by the content of their character rather than by the color of their skin." Today, in Beaumont, Texas and in these United States of America, I have a dream that my friends,

neighbors and colleagues who are Muslims and who are Pakistanis will be judged by their character, conduct and conscience rather than by the insane acts of people who prostitute the very faith that my friends practice.

Today and tomorrow, Dr. King's dream can become our dream because I know dozens of Muslims. Dr. King's dream can become our dream because I know dozens of Pakistanis. And, judged by the content of their character, they are men and women, boys and girls, of faith, peace, kindness, compassion and integrity. Their accent differs from mine. Their skin tones -- not color, but tones -- are different from mine. Their faith is different than mine. But, their hopes and dreams, their fears and their anxieties are the same as mine. They love their families. They love their parents. They adore their children. They work hard. They are reliable and excellent in their profession. They worship God as they have been taught. In all of these ways, they who differ in skin, they who differ in national origin, they who differ in religion, are just like me and you.

As a committed Christian, I believe that Jesus Christ is God and that He Alone provides salvation to men and women and that faith in Him Alone provides access to heaven. Yet, I do not find that my love for and acceptance of my Muslim friends offends my God, but that it pleases Him. My Muslim friends believe that Islam is the One True faith and that adherence to its tenants is the way to Paradise. Yet, they would never lift a finger in anger, violence, coercion or force to impose their faith upon me or you, as you and I would not do such to them.

To paraphrase the Apostle James, "If you will show me your faith in Christ by opposing Islam, I will show you my Christian faith by loving Muslims." If you will show me your faith in Christ by your outrage against the terrorism which we witnesses today, I will show you my Christian faith by directing that outrage against the perpetrators, not against my Muslim and Pakistani friends who are as innocent as the victims who were injured and who died today.

Tomorrow, America will awake with an opportunity. That opportunity Will be to recognize that as the religious extremists in the American militia movement do not represent the "real" faith of Christ, neither do the religious extremists in Afghanistan and other Islamic nations who practice terrorism represent the true Muslim faith. America will have the opportunity to embrace the 15,000,000 loyal American Muslims who peacefully pursue their faith and lives in support of the American Constitution.

America will have the opportunity to show their faith by their works -- by their works toward those who are superficially different, but who are fundamentally just like us.

And, let it be known by all, that as far as me and my family, if some misguided soul thinks that he serves the faith of my fathers -- the Christian faith -- by impugning the dignity, honor and character of my Pakistani Muslim friends and colleagues -- that misguided soul will find himself opposed by this Christian who will stand with Christian and Jew, Muslim and Hindu, Buddhist and, yes, even with the Atheist, against prejudice, bigotry and racism.

God bless those families who have suffered great loss today. God Bless our national leaders as they guide us through these treacherous time. God bless our President with safety and strength. God bless our Muslim friends.

God bless all of us with the opportunity to know those who are different from us, for in such blessing, God gives us the ability to know Himself as we have never known Him before.

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