"You never know how much you really believe anything until its truth or falsehood becomes a matter of life and death to you."
—C.S. Lewis

15-Sep-06

'Dangerous' Speakers of Truth

Just this Tuesday, speaking at Regensburg University in Germany, Pope Benedict XVI quoted fourteenth-century Byzantine Emperor Manuel Paleologos II, a Christian: "Show me just what Mohammed brought that was new, and there you will find things only evil and inhuman, such as his command to spread by the sword the faith he preached." Of course, as we have unfortunately begun to expect when someone speaks the truth about Islam, his remarks have been met with the usual firestorm of protest from the Muslim world. From the growing Muslim enclaves of Europe to the more traditional Middle and Far Eastern Islamic nations, the Pope is being burned in effigy and lambasted as a bigot and a racist intent on promoting a modern Christian crusade against Muslims.

The Byzantine Emperor's observation predates by about five centuries a lengthier and more detailed one from a young Winston Churchill, which he included in his book, The River War, published in 1899:

How dreadful are the curses which Mohammedanism lays on its votaries! Besides the fanatical frenzy, which is as dangerous in a man as hydrophobia in a dog, there is this fearful fatalistic apathy. The effects are apparent in many countries. Improvident habits, slovenly systems of agriculture, sluggish methods of commerce, and insecurity of property exist wherever the followers of the Prophet rule or live. A degraded sensualism deprives this life of its grace and refinement; the next of its dignity and sanctity. The fact that in Mohammedan law every woman must belong to some man as his absolute property, either as a child, a wife, or a concubine, must delay the
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final extinction of slavery until the faith of Islam has ceased to be a great power among men. Individual Moslems may show splendid qualities—but the influence of the religion paralyses the social development of those who follow it. No stronger retrograde force exists in the world. Far from being moribund, Mohammedanism is a militant and proselytizing faith. It has already spread throughout Central Africa, raising fearless warriors at every step; and were it not that Christianity is sheltered in the strong arms of science, the science against which it had mainly struggled, the civilisation of modern Europe might fall, as fell the civilisation of ancient Rome.

Intrepid radio talk-show hosts, columnists, and a handful of politicians have made similar remarks to their respective audiences since September 11, 2001, only to be castigated for intolerance, mendacity, and bigotry. In fact, here in America, one Muslim group, the Council on American-Islamic Relations (maybe better known by its acronym, CAIR), headquartered in Washington, spends nearly all of its time and energy protesting truthful statements about Islam in the media. They have been successful in causing radio stations to fire talk-show hosts and squeezing newspapers and magazines to offer apologies to the "Muslim community." Perhaps they have been most successful in intimidating politicians to tone down their rhetoric and to treat American Muslims with kid gloves.

So great is the fear of offending adherents of Islam that it is the official policy of the Bush Administration that "Islam is a religion of peace." To assuage Muslim voters, the President repeats this ironic statement every time there is an "incident" involving Islamic violence and terror. Watchwords of our time are "Islamic terrorism" and "Muslim extremists," and nearly every point of conflict on the planet involves Muslim aggression, yet the American government—and frankly, most other Western governments—continues to insist, "Islam is a religion of peace."

Any objective history of Islam will show that "the religion of peace" expanded primarily at the point of the sword. The concept of jihad, whether or not the Koran's original intent included aggressive warfare, came to mean "holy war" early in Islamic history, and millions of Muslims have sworn to advance jihad, no matter the cost, until the entire earth lays under the banner of Islam. The so-called "moderate Muslim," if such a person exists, is either 1) a secularist in reality, or 2) a moderate because he has calculated that it is presently in his best interest (for example, the governments of "moderate" Arabian Peninsula states like Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, and Qatar fall into one or the other of these categories).
More broadly, the Pope's statement and the Muslim world's reaction to it highlight a confounding reality of this world: Those who speak the truth are considered dangerous and must be silenced. Usually, the silencing of those who dare to say what is right takes the form of ridiculing or discrediting them, branding them as intolerant, or stridently calling for them to apologize or resign. If this fails, Islamists are not above intimidation, threats, violence, and murder. In the Netherlands, Theo van Gogh and Pim Fortuyn both paid the ultimate price for daring to speak the truth about Islam and Islamic fundamentalism.

But this goes beyond Islam. It can reach into every facet of life on earth, but it is especially virulent when the subject is religion, lifestyle, or morality. Anyone who speaks authoritative truth wears a target in these days of tolerance and liberal humanism. Should a preacher, backed by the authority of God's Word, condemn homosexuality, he could in some places not only expect persecution, but also find himself jailed or heavily fined for his "hate speech." Were a missionary to enter America's urban neighborhoods and preach abstinence, non-violence, and respect for law and authority, he would likely be laughed down, roughed up, and perhaps even killed for his "insolence." Even college campuses, supposedly bastions of free speech, are no longer safe for preachers, pundits, and politicians who stray beyond a narrow, politically correct viewpoint.

The prophet Amos foretells of such a time: "They hate the one who rebukes in the gate [where city elders made judgments in ancient Israel], and they abhor the one who speaks uprightly" (Amos 5:13). Isaiah, too, speaks of those "who make a man an offender by a word, and lay a snare for him who reproves in the gate, and turn aside the just for a thing of naught" (Isaiah 29:21). Jesus concurs: "[Yes], the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service" (John 16:2).

It seems that the whole world—thenations of modern Israel in particular—has come to such a point. The time of the end is fast approaching as we see these activities of evil men increasing. From here on out, it will become increasingly dangerous to speak the truth to a "hear no evil" world.

- Richard T. Ritenbaugh

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**From the Archives: Featured Sermon**

**Persecution**

by Richard T. Ritenbaugh

Richard Ritenbaugh acknowledges that although many in God's church have gone
through sore trials and tests of sorts, virtually no one has gone through the nightmarish persecutions suffered by the early Christians in Imperial Rome. Because most of us have lived our lives in modern Israel rather than a Gentile culture, we have been?to this point?shielded from the kinds of persecution (being put to flight, pursued, or martyred from an external source) experienced by the early apostles. This message explores both a time factor and a righteousness factor, explaining why intense persecution has not yet taken place. Paradoxically (a big horse pill to swallow), persecution may be regarded as a reward for righteousness, a kind of favor and kindness toward us, preparing us for a better resurrection and greater service as priests in God's Kingdom, following in the footsteps of our Elder Brother.

From the Archives: Featured Article

The Flood Is Upon Us!
by John W. Ritenbaugh

In Matthew Christ likens end-time events to the time of Noah's Flood. John Ritenbaugh gives insight into how this end time flood might manifest itself and what we can do to avoid being swept up in it.

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