

Violence in any form is repugnant and sickening. We have all felt the emotional distress of seeing people fight or inflict injury. Physical violence is spiritual dysfunction; it is anger, hatred and selfishness untempered by any sense of the value or respect rightfully due other human beings.

While family violence, criminal violence and even random violence have confronted Americans and forced us to deal with their ugly reality, a “new” kind of violence – at least to the land of the free – is now intruding upon our domestic tranquillity: terrorist violence. *The World Trade Center. Oklahoma City. TWA flight 800. The Centennial Olympic Park in Atlanta.* We are now beginning to experience what other nations have endured for years – deliberate, malicious and indiscriminate attacks against the general public for the perceived advancement of a cause.

We have previously noticed the practical futility of trying to implement change by raw brutality. But there is a spiritual dimension to terrorist violence which must not be overlooked. Terrorism results when any subculture, whether Koran-quoting Muslims or Bible-thumping American militiamen, abandons reverence for human life. *“But you have not so learned Christ ...”*:

“First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (Mt 5:24).

“Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you ...” (Mt 5:44).

“Whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them ...” (Mt 7:12).

“If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men ... do not avenge yourselves ...” (Rom 12:18-19).

Terrorism lies at the end of the dark, winding road of idolatry. When a false religious figure such as Mohammed is idolized, when anarchy against ruling civil power is an all-consuming passion, when drug lords bow down to the gods of cocaine and heroin, then human life becomes a nuisance, a flesh-and-blood exclamation point to a childish tantrum.

Such violence usually spawns politically impotent and morally bankrupt declarations of outrage. Those who voice them usually have little interest in assuming true moral and spiritual leadership which would attack the monster of terrorism at the root. Until we decide to fight the battle on those grounds, we had better prepare for further onslaughts of unprincipled men who are afraid neither of God nor equally unprincipled political leaders.