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The 21st Century – The Century of Islam

Flying into Kennedy Airport at night, I looked out the window on my right and saw a stunning sight. The twin towers of the World Trade Center were bathed in light, along with the buildings, streets and avenues surrounding them. Over the years, our family had flown into Kennedy Airport a number of times, but usually from the east as we flew in from Paris and Africa on our way to Minnesota to enjoy a few months of home leave. This time I was with a missionary candidate who was looking forward to a career of working among Muslims in Chad.

A few days later, Chuck and I visited the large Islamic Cultural Center and Mosque in the Brooklyn borough of New York City. We walked in and talked with the imam, an urbane Egyptian who was director of this center. His English was impeccable and his manner appealing. He talked of the necessity of rescuing the youth of America; he felt they were on a slippery slope of moral degradation. As we talked, I didn't doubt his sincerity and I told him we had in common our fear of America's youth leaving moral

principles. I was concerned also. But I told him that although we could agree on this issue, we had different views on who Jesus was. To the imam, he was a great prophet, but that was all.

And then, a year and a half later, the twin towers were down! Conspiracy theories quickly appeared from every quarter. Another imam, the director of an Islamic center in Manhattan, was interviewed and he stated, "Only the Jews are capable of planning such an incident, because it was planned with great precision of which Osama bin Laden or any other Islamic organization or intelligence apparatus is incapable." This statement and others by prominent spokesmen for Islam were picked up by journalists and news agencies in the Muslim world and were quickly accepted by many who already had a penchant for blaming the ills of the world on the Jews and their allies, the Americans. To many, a more believable theory was that it was an attack inspired by and carried out by Muslim militants.

Responses of the Muslim Masses to 9/11

The responses of Muslims were mixed. Many around the globe were shocked and dismayed at the loss of innocent life. Thomas Friedman wrote in the New York Times that spontaneous candlelit vigils in sympathy with Americans were held in Iran. Even Yasir Arafat got into the act of showing sympathy to the Americans by donating blood for victims of the attack. At many mosques throughout the world there was praying for the victims and their families (Riddell 150).

But there were other responses. There was rejoicing in those quarters where large elements of Islam had long been harboring resentments against America over its pro-Israel stance, believing that the West and its European allies have had expansionist policies against the Muslims ever since the establishment of the State of