

Newsletter Column

Melanie's Miscellany: 911 for All of Us

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Although you are receiving this newsletter at the end of September or the first week of October, I am writing it on 9/11, the day of the horrific terrorist attacks on New York City and Washington, DC. Like most Americans, I can hardly believe what is happening. The loss of life is nearly incalculable, and the TV footage resembles the aftermath of a long, drawn-out war -- which, perhaps, in a sense, it is.

I sit mute, transfixed, laptop on my knee, as the news reports go on and on. Amidst the pictures of awful devastation, there are stories of incredible heroism and selfless courage by ordinary people as well as by police and fire departments. And I notice a great deal of caution by media commentators about what group might have been responsible -- something not evident after the Murrah Building bombing.

My heart is so full. All those lives lost -- all those families and friends bereft. Two familiar American landmark buildings are gone, reduced to rubble and shattered glass, blighting the entire south end of the island of Manhattan. The center of our country's military at the Pentagon gapes with a giant smoking cavern. How much hate and bitterness, how much fanaticism and obsession, does it take to pull off such a meticulously planned and executed act of mass murder? Whatever justice may lie beneath the grievances of the group responsible, this day will surely damage that cause, however righteous. And that, too, is sad.

My biggest concern is how we, as individual Americans and as a country, react to this despicable act. Will we turn our anger and desire for revenge towards all those we deem to be foreigners and outsiders? Will we attempt to demonize whatever ethnic or cultural group is deemed to be responsible? Will we override the freedoms of our Constitution and Bill of Rights in the name of some elusive national security?

These questions, and more, are raised for religious liberals and all Americans, by today's events. Let us strive not to give into our baser emotions, but to exercise our reason and our heart in our reactions. Let us look for ways to work for justice and peace and equity, as in the UU Principles and as urged by the world's great religions, including Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. Today, my prayers for healing are for the family and friends of the dead, for the wounded, for our leaders, and for all of us.