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April 2010

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A Second Attack at the Pentagon

But Peter and John answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have heard. --Acts 4:19-20

Six months ago, Army Maj. Nidal Hasan screamed "Allah-Akbar" as he manically shot and killed 13 fellow soldiers at Ft. Hood, wounding 30 others. It is believed that Army officials knew beforehand that Hasan was in contact with radical Muslim cleric Anwar Awlaki, a mentor to two of the 9/11 skyjackers and the foiled Christmas Day "underwear bomber." But if Pentagon officials know more than that, they aren't saying.

The Senate Homeland Security Committee, however, is looking for answers—now. Subpoenas have been issued for Attorney General Eric Holder and Defense Secretary Robert Gates to testify on April 27 regarding the shootings. "We have repeatedly sought your departments' cooperation for more than five months," the subpoenas say. "Our efforts have been met with delay, the production of little that was not already publicly available, and shifting reasons for why the departments are withholding the documents and witnesses that we have requested."

What the committee may want to know is to what extent people like Nidal Hasan have penetrated the departments of State, Defense, and the intelligence community. There is growing concern that the *Council on American-Islamic Relations* (CAIR), a fundraising arm of Hamas in the past, has placed a number of operatives into key government agencies. U.S. Reps Sue Myrick (R-SC), Trent Franks (R-AZ), John Shadegg (R-AZ) and Paul Broun (R-GA) have asked the Department of Justice to share with Congress an executive summary of findings that led the FBI to officially sever ties with CAIR.

But this much IS known about CAIR. It wields much influence among cabinet officials.

Last week, The Military Religious Freedom Foundation (MRFF) and CAIR successfully pressed the Pentagon to rescind an invitation to Franklin Graham (2010 honorary chairman of *National Day of Prayer*) to speak at the Pentagon on prayer day, May 6. An Army spokesman referred to Graham's past public comments (that he wants Muslims to know that Jesus Christ died for their sins) as "not appropriate." A letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates asked that Graham be replaced with a more inclusive speaker for the event.

Graham, whose son is serving his fourth tour of duty in Afghanistan, is but the latest distinguished Christian to be barred from speaking at a military installation thus far in the new administration. Earlier this year, Tony Perkins, a Marine Corps veteran, former police officer, Louisiana State legislator and president of the Family Research Council, was turned away from speaking at a prayer luncheon at Andrews Air Force Base due to his expressed opposition to homosexuals serving in the military.

Another surprise for the NDP honorary chairman came April 15 when Barbara Crabb, a Wisconsin-based federal judge ruled that a government resolution or proclamation

recognizing a day set aside for prayer or reflection is unconstitutional. Although her decision has no force until the appeals process has run its course, it does put future NDP organizers on notice.

Pleased with the ruling, are many who believe prayer is a personal matter and should be kept behind closed doors. One blogger insinuates that Evangelicals, especially, like to pray on street corners so that they can be seen by men.

While America still holds the torch of liberty, the flame is flickering. Expressions of fidelity to the Redeemer of mankind are increasingly contested in every conceivable venue, public and private. Though the practice of praying or sharing the Faith has cost little, it could one day cost everything.

Consider James Renwick, a Scottish lad who witnessed the execution of a field preacher of the Covenanters, the persecuted Scottish Presbyterians who had covenanted together to maintain the Reformed faith in Scotland. That martyrdom drew him to the Covenanters, and, with their aid, he became an ordained minister in 1683 following theology studies at the University of Groningen in Holland. Renwick's ministry coincided with the period known as the "Killing Time."

In 1685, James VII, a Roman Catholic, became king of Scotland. The king did not like unapproved religious meetings, so he "...issued indulgences guaranteeing freedom of worship if meetings were held in private homes, chapels, or places dedicated for this purpose. Conventicles—all other worship services, especially in secret and in open fields—were against the law and considered organized rebellion. Many ministers, tired of the struggle, accepted the conditions of the indulgences, but Renwick and a few others... continued to preach in the fields and villages, often to men, women, and children who were in hiding and wandering in the mountains to survive. In one year Renwick baptized six hundred children. Soon the government identified him as a traitor and issued an order for his arrest. But protected by so many friends, he was able to continue preaching without capture for three more years."

After his arrest, the 26-year-old Renwick refused an offer of clemency that would require him to acknowledge the king's authority over religious matters.

On the eve of his execution, he wrote his friends: "He has strengthened me to brave man and face death, and I am now longing for the joyful hour of my dissolution, and there is nothing in the world that I am sorry to leave but you." From the gallows before a crowd in Grassmarket in Edinburgh on February 17, 1688, Renwick sang Psalm 103, read Revelation 19, and prayed, "Lord, I die in the faith that Thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that Thou wilt make the blood of Thy witnesses the seed of Thy church, and return again and be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready."

Christians are commanded to honor the king. How that finds application in each believer's life requires sure and constant guidance from the Holy Spirit—ever the more as we see that day approaching. For Peter and John (Acts 4:19) and James Renwick, it meant respectfully declining mandates determined to be in conflict with their Holy Spirit-inspired call to preach the Gospel.

"To those Christian leaders," says Tony Perkins, "who say they want to avoid the controversy of political issues and 'just preach the Gospel,' wake up! It's the Gospel that's at the heart of the controversy—and the freedom to preach it that's at stake!"

Postscript: James Renwick was the last Covenanter to be hanged in public. One year later King James VII was in exile and the persecution was over.

Rick Forcier

1. "Lawmakers warn of CAIR threat," *WorldNetDaily.com*, 10/14/2009

2. The Last to be Hanged, *The One Year Book of Christian History*, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL, 2003, pgs.96-97

3. Ibid

4. Tony Perkins, "Military Won't Take Graham at Faith Value," *Washington Update*, 4/23/2010