

The Struggle Between Two Worlds (Abbot Tryphon)

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In this photo released by the Islamic Republic News Agency, IRNA, on Wednesday, Sept. 21, 2011, US hikers Shane Bauer, right, and Josh Fattal, smile, at the Tehran's Mehrabad airport before leaving Iran. Two Americans jailed in Iran as spies left Tehran on Wednesday, closing a high-profile drama with archfoe Washington that brought more than two years of hope then heartbreak for the families as the Islamic Republic's hard-line rulers rejected international calls for their release. (AP Photo/IRNA, Ehsan Nederipour)

The two young men held in an Iranian prison for two years are now on their way to the United States. After being arrested for crossing over the unmarked Iraq/Iran boarder and being accused of espionage, they became pawns in the ongoing dispute between the United States and Iran. After the posting of a million dollar bail they are now free and reunited with their families.

The world is in a new struggle not unlike that which happened during the Soviet Union and the cold war that was brought on after the fall of the Royal House of Romanov. This was followed by World War II when we saw the struggle between

the free world and the fascism of Nazi Germany, Italy and Japan.

All these ideologies have much in common with Islam, where there is a non-democratic tradition and people live under strict rules that leave little room for personal choice, and where fate governs the people. The idea of mankind being formed in the image and likeness of God and having a role in making choices for ourselves, is foreign to Islam. The god of Islam demands submission, just as did communism and fascism.

In Christ you have freedom. God does not demand submission but desires your freely offered love and worship. God has invited you into loving communion because He first loved you. This is a personal relationship that is offered to you, not one based on rigid rules and forms that bespeak of a god who is all about law and submission.

The war of ideology between the Christian West and the Islamic world is one that promises the get worse before it gets better. Some authorities are projecting this war of ideology will go on for at least two generations, much as happened during the Communist days of the Soviet Union. The only way to survive this war is to make Christ central in your life. This world will change for the better only when change has begun in you.

The Islamic world will never know Christ if all they see from the West is secular and worldly idolatry, lust for their oil reserves, and disrespect for their ancient cultural traditions. They must see the love of Christ in our hearts. Muslim neighbors must be treated with the love that Christ tells us must be extended even to our enemies. If all the Islamic world sees as Christian, is the secularism and base worldliness that has replaced Christianity, they will never know the truth that is in Christ.

By Fr. Tryphon, Abbot of All-Merciful Savior Monastery

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