

CONSTANTINE'S SWORD

Director's Statement

We're living in a world at war. And we're living at a time when people on both sides are using religion as an excuse to go to war.



When I met James Carroll and heard his concerns about the coming together of religion and power in our country (set against the backdrop of America's rush to war) and the long history he had begun to trace of religious hatred and violence, I knew I had to work with him to get this story out.

Our movie poses the question: Where did anyone get the idea that it was all right to kill people in the name of God?

When we started to make this film we were shocked to discover how many Americans don't seem concerned about a possible breakdown between the separation of Church and State. They insist that America is a Christian nation, and have somehow revised history to convince themselves that this was a principle of our Founding Fathers. They don't seem at all concerned about the message this sends to the people in the Middle East, where we're entrenched in what's already one of the longest wars ever fought by our country.

Whenever the U.S. is involved in an armed conflict and the lives of American men and women are on the line, it's controversial to question the reasons that we're in that war or in what direction our country is headed.

But for many Americans our film asks an even more troubling and controversial question: is there something in the DNA of Christianity – the majority religion in our country – that demonizes “the other” and is inclined toward violence? This has become an even more controversial point, since that was exactly the suggestion Pope Benedict XVI made about Islam. He called it a religion that embraced violence and rejected reason.



Just as he was saying these words, we were listening to Evangelical Christian preachers in Colorado calling young Americans to war and urging them to reject rational arguments and years of serious scientific research in physics, astronomy and biology that might conflict with the Church's views about the origin of the earth, evolution and human sexuality.

At the U. S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs we discovered that the mission to proselytize and convert is so widespread in the US military, that it could be hard to convince the world that this is not our intent, that we are not a Crusading Christian nation, seeking converts.

I think many Americans are uncomfortable with the idea of religion and power coming together. This is true of people of faith as well as others. They will be glad for the opportunity offered by our film to get a clearer idea of where this impulse comes from and will have a better understanding for the terrible price that has been paid for it, especially by Jews.

On of the great pleasures directing Constantine's Sword was working with the extraordinary actors Live Schrieber, Natasha Richardson, Phillip Bosco and Eli Wallach. Each portrays a real character in a voice over performance, and each of them delivers a key emotional turning point in the film.

Oren Jacoby