



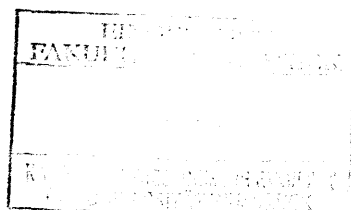
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## Editor's Note

*As has been past practice, the editors of **Contagion** continue to select for referee process papers from the annual meeting of the Colloquium on Violence and Religion. The present volume contains the proceedings, as revised by contributors and as guest edited by Robert Daly, S.J., of the Colloquium held at Boston College in 2000, whose topic was "Violence and Institution in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.*

*But we also continue to welcome manuscripts from authors in all academic disciplines and fields of professional activity which bear on René Girard's mimetic model of human behavior and cultural organization. Future volumes will also include a section for Notes and Comments, allowing for responses to previous essays and discussion of texts and issues related to interests of the journal.*

*We wish again to express our thanks to Patricia Clemente, Administrative Secretary of the Department of Modern Languages and Literatures at Loyola University Chicago, for her resourceful vigilance in seeing the journal through to its timely production.*



## INTRODUCTION

The main theme of COV&R 2000 held at Boston College from May 31 to June 3, 2000 was “Violence and Institution in Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Islam.” In the course of the conference, a one hour and forty-five minute plenary session was devoted to each of these five religions. The pattern was the same in each case. In the first twenty-five minutes, the assigned author summarized or highlighted a paper that had been distributed to the participants several weeks before. In the second twenty-five minutes, the assigned respondent delivered his or her response. The remainder of the time was devoted to discussion or debate open to all participants.

The respective presenters and respondents were, in this order: for Christianity, I myself, Robert J. Daly, S.J. and Paul Nuechterlein; for Judaism, Reuven Kimelman and Sandor Goodhart; for Islam, Qamar-ul Huda and Robert Hamerton-Kelly; for Hinduism, Francis X. Clooney, S.J. and Julie Shinnick; for Buddhism, Christopher Ives and Leo Lefebure. This issue of *Contagion* contains in succession the full text of each of these five papers, but not the twenty-five minute summary of it given at the conference, then the full text of the response, and finally a summary or highlighting of the major points that surfaced in the course of the discussion.

The thinking behind structuring the conference in this way was the assumption the people who call themselves Jews, Christians, Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists have been in the past and are in the present, actively and/or passively, involved with violence, and that this involvement has something to do with the theological, religious, cultural, and socio-political institutions of their respective traditions. In other words, however they may be conceived or expressed, “violence” and “institution” are to be found in all of these traditions. But we must not presume—as indeed became quite clear in the course of the conference—that the ways in which Western civilization and culture understands these realities and tries to make sense of them with the help of mimetic theory will be congenial to people from

the other traditions. That is why the main presenters from each of the five traditions were asked to begin talking about violence and institution first and foremost in ways that make sense from within that tradition, and then, only secondarily, if indeed at all, in ways that can also reach out in dialogue to others in other traditions. As part of this strategy, the main presenters were not asked to try to present their tradition primarily in terms of mimetic theory, but to make their presentations, as far as possible, from perspectives within their tradition. As a matter of fact, these presenters had, for the most part, little or no prior acquaintance with mimetic theory. The assigned respondents, on the other hand, were chosen as established Girardian scholars and asked to respond from the perspective of Girardian mimetic theory.

It was originally thought, somewhat unrealistically as it turned out, that the five major presenters would have been in extensive dialogue with each other before finalizing their papers for discussion with the conference participants. This was what was proposed to the board of COV&R as it was planning this conference. However, it turned out to be more than enough of a challenge to identify and recruit scholars who were able and willing to take up the assigned task. What actually did happen was that Robert Daly, the presenter of the first paper and principal program organizer for the conference, was able to give the other four an early draft of his own presentation. This was designed to serve them as some kind of an analogous model or foil. The adjective “analogous” was stressed, for there was from the outset a strong but still only inchoative sense of what René Girard articulated in the discussion period of the fifth session on Buddhism, namely, that “ninety percent of the words we use to talk about this [violence and mimetic theory] are exclusively Western.” Thus, the basic commission that I gave to the other four presenters was something to the following effect: “Look, this is how one Christian scholar tries to make some sense of the problem of violence and institution in Christianity. Do something like this from your tradition. If my paper serves as a model, or foil, then fine. But don’t be bound by its structure or methodology. The most important thing is to be speaking, at least in your initial presentation, from the experience and concepts of your tradition rather than those of a Western-formulated mimetic theory.”

The plan was indeed an ambitious one for a three-day conference; too ambitious in some respects, but just about right in others. For example, in the wrap-up discussion, Paul Nuechterlein noted that “one of the ways to undertake a conference like this is: just jump in and do it.” And Geoffrey

Price remarked that discussion took place “that could not have happened in another format.” At the same time, several participants remarked that a good keynote address might have been quite helpful. In principle, I agree; but in practice, I eventually despaired of doing this myself, or of finding someone to do it for us. But I also admit to some ambivalence in the matter. The right kind of keynote could have been a great help, could have given us a much sharper focus. But a focus sharpens some things and blurs others. Should these choices be made ahead of time? In the end we did what we did, and are grateful for the opportunity to present it in this issue of *Contagion*.

None of the main presenters could, of course, represent the entire sweep of the traditions they represented. Francis X. Clooney pointed that out very clearly at the beginning of his presentation on Hinduism. Clooney, by the way, was the only one of the major presenters who is not an actual member of the religious tradition he was representing. I chose him for this task not only because of his availability to me as a colleague at Boston College, but also because of his vast erudition in Hindu religious traditions and his experience in interreligious dialogue. After the fact we can now ask ourselves and reflect on whether and how well this worked. Nor should we neglect to ask some of our Hindu brothers and sisters about this.

The subsidiary theme of the conferences was called “A René Girard Bernard J. F. Lonergan ‘Conversation.’” This occupied the first afternoon/evening session of the conference on May 31 begun with papers by James Alison, “On Learning to Say ‘Jesus is Lord’: Girard for Non-Girardians,” and by Charles C. Hefling, Jr., “Some Sketchy Remarks on Lonergan for Non-‘Lonerganians.’” The impetus behind this as a subsidiary—but only subsidiary—theme precisely for this conference had several aspects: (1) a number of scholars are deeply interested both in the work of Lonergan (d. 1984) and Girardian mimetic theory; (2) Boston College, the location of this conference, is a center for ‘Lonerganian’ research; (3) most scholars of mimetic theory are not familiar with Lonergan. Thus, the COV&R board decided that, while initiating or extending a Girard–Lonergan “conversation” might be good, that could not be the main theme of an annual COV&R meeting. Then, since this conversation did not play more than a subsidiary role in the remainder of the conference—although it was suggested, after the fact, that Raymund Schwager’s paper: “Conversion and Authenticity: Lonergan and Girard,” was not far from being a keynote—it was decided not to publish these papers in this issue of *Contagion*.

## Introduction

# VIOLENCE AND INSTITUTION IN CHRISTIANITY

Robert J. Daly, S.J.  
*Boston College*

**W**e need both to define our terms and to indicate whether we are using them in a *normative* or *descriptive* sense. Thus the question: “Is Christianity”—or, if you will—“Are the institutions of Christianity violent or nonviolent?” can be answered with either a Yes, or a No, or with anything in between, depending on the meaning we attach to the terms “violence,” “institution,” and “Christianity” (Daly 1997, 321-43). When we speak normatively, or take Christianity and its institutions according to its best ideals, Christianity is essentially nonviolent. But when we speak descriptively, i.e., take Christianity according to what the institutions of Christianity have actually done, and according to how those who call themselves Christian have actually acted, we can make the argument that Christianity is violent. If analogous distinctions can be made from within the other four traditions, this might offer a good starting point for discussion.

Adapting to my purpose standard dictionary definitions, I understand *violence* to include in a broad way the justified or unjustified human exertion of internal or external power or force in order to achieve an injurious or abusive end, i.e., an end that is against the will, the good, or the interests of those who suffer it. (This includes all war and avoids, at least at the outset, arguments about whether a war is or can be a “just war.”) I understand *institution* in its ordinary meaning of: any significant or established practice, relationship, structure, system, or organization in a society or culture. I understand *Christianity* also in its ordinary sense: the

religion which, derived from Jesus Christ, and based on the Bible, is professed by Eastern, Roman Catholic, and Protestant bodies.

Now, to help set the background for our discussion, I will try to list and briefly describe, relative to this theme, some of the major aspects or “moments” of Christianity (or Christian History), and do this in an approximately diachronic or chronological order. Much of this will be descriptive, but I will not go out of my way to dissociate the descriptions from the effects of all normative claims.

# **I. Violence and Institution in the History of Christianity**

- [1] The biblical foundation of Christianity in the Hebrew Scriptures.
- [2] The pervasiveness of violence in the Bible.
- [3] The Christian Scriptures present themselves as a gospel of peace.
- [4] Jesus and nonviolence.
- [5] Early Christians and nonviolence.
- [6] The early Christians and the military.
- [7] The “Constantinian turn.”
- [8] Caesaro-papism.
- [9] The relegation of Christian pacifism to religious and monastic life.
- [10] The just war theory.
- [11] The medieval Christian taken-for-grantedness of violence.
- [12] The Crusades.
- [13] Medieval Christian peace movements
- [14] Christians and heretics. The Inquisition. See [11] above.
- [15] Christianity and the witches. See [11] above.
- [16] The Reformation.
- [17] The Radical Reformation and the Peace Churches.
- [18] St. Bartholomew’s Day Massacre (August 1572).
- [19] The religious wars.
- [20] Absolutism.
- [21] Modernity.
- [22] The Quakers—Religious Society of Friends.
- [23] The Enlightenment and Modernity.
- [24] Christianity and world mission; Christianity and colonialism.
- [25] Slavery.
- [26] Christianity and the “war” against native cultures.
- [27] Christianity and the First World War.
- [28] The Second World War.
- [29] The Holocaust.

- [30] Christianity and the modern peace movement.
- [31] Christians and the “seamless ethic of life.”
- [32] Christianity and International Communism.
- [33] Liberation theology.
- [34] The liberation of women.
- [35] Christianity and the resurgence of tribal and nationalist violence.
- [36] Christianity and human rights.

[1] **The biblical foundation of Christianity in the Hebrew Scriptures.**

Christians and Jews have the same family origins. Since believing Christians no less than believing Jews accept and revere the Hebrew Scriptures as the inspired word of God, Christians and Jews are indeed, to paraphrase Pope John XXIII, siblings. There is, beyond this, from Judaism to Christianity, a significant parent-child relationship. In recent years (but not early enough to have prevented the Holocaust), the main line churches of Christianity have rejected the supersessionism (the doctrine that the Old Testament has been abrogated by the New Testament) that used to characterize Christian attitudes towards the Jews and that made it possible for Christians to deceive themselves that a certain amount of anti-Judaism was acceptable in Christianity.<sup>1</sup>

[2] The pervasiveness of **violence in the Bible** is a major problem and challenge for Christians and Jews alike. No major Christian biblical theology has yet made sense of this. It is either ignored or allegorized away. Inadequately explained in Christian terms, violence in the Bible tends to obscure the normativity of the central Christian message or, even worse, is available for abusive exploitation by extremists or fringe groups. Girardian analysis may be the only significant theoretical attempt to make sense of violence in the bible that moves us beyond its evil effects, and that still takes seriously the normative faith claims of the Jewish and Christian religions.

[3] **The Christian Scriptures** present themselves as a **gospel of peace**. However, Christians continue to suffer from the defects noted above in [1]

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<sup>1</sup> However, some Christian bodies still cling to supersessionism and to the anti-Judaism that often explicitly accompanies it. Despite the fact that the mainline churches have taken official positions repudiating supersessionism, it is still rampant in the attitudes of many Christians and even in (often unconscious) attitudes of the Christian clergy.

and [2]. Christians are often unaware that the gospel of peace is not a Christian invention but something that was inherited from and grew out of Jewish soil. There was, indeed, an impressive heightening and deepening of peace themes in the Christian Scriptures and in Early Christianity. But this development was not at all unlike similar developments also going forward within postbiblical and early rabbinic Judaism. To present one of these traditions as a tradition of peace and the other as something other than that is, objectively, a mendacious misrepresentation.

[4] **Jesus and nonviolence.** The Nonviolent Cross. Whether one looks (1) to the historical reconstructions of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, or (2) to the “portraits” and teachings of Jesus in the Christian Scriptures, or (3) to the “faith-images” of Jesus developed by Christians through the centuries, the evidence points overwhelmingly to Jesus as a man of peace, a man committed to nonviolence in word, act, and teaching. This does not deny that there have been numerous portrayals of Jesus as a zealot, as a political revolutionary, and the like. Nor does it deny that some evidential support for such portraits can be selectively gleaned from the sources. But it does claim to state what is the main-line scholarly position on the matter, a position which is also consonant with the faith-image which most Christians have of their founder.

[5] **Early Christians and nonviolence.** That early Christianity was an institution committed to nonviolence has been a commonplace. The reality, however, is complex. Recent sociological analysis has pointed out that the early Christians, as a powerless minority, had no choice but to be nonviolent. As we reconstruct Christian life of the first few centuries, there are indications that the first Christians were not, in any simplistic sense, the idealistic pacifists they have sometimes been portrayed to be. Some of the parables of Jesus, John the Baptist’s preaching to the soldiers, and Paul’s acceptance of the protection of a military escort, to list but a few instances, indicate that the first Christians took violence for granted as part of the social fabric of their own lives as well as of the life of the Roman Empire around them. Some have pointed to the frequency of early Christian prohibitions against killing as proof of an early Christian commitment to nonviolence. But since one does not keep repeating prohibitions if the prohibited acts are not being committed, the historical evidence of these prohibitions cuts two ways. These prohibitions do add to the considerable patristic evidence that the teaching of the early Christians was towards

nonviolence, but they also suggests that, in practice, Christians were no less violent than those of other ages.

[6] **The early Christians and the military.** It has also been a widespread commonplace that the early Christians, at least before the time of Constantine, were pacifists and that they avoided military service. But here too, the historical record is complex. For example, the pre-Constantinian acts of the military martyrs all have this in common: the reason for the martyrdom always had something to do with conscience problems connected with the practice of Roman army religion. It usually did not have anything to do with conscience problems arising from the military aspects of being a soldier. And, by the time Constantine arrived on the scene in the early fourth century, Christians were already sufficiently numerous in the ranks for him to take steps to assure their special loyalty (Daly 1985, 48-66).

[7] **The “Constantinian turn.”** The widespread idea that, at this “turn,” an idealistic, pacifist Christian Church suddenly lost its soul and became militaristic, has now been exposed as massively oversimplified, if not an outright historical myth. In the late second century, Celsus is attacking Christians for shirking their civic duties by refusing to serve in the military—even though, at just about the same time, Tertullian is recounting the famous story of the Christian “Thundering Legion.” Towards the middle of the third century, some 70 years later, Origen accepts Celsus’s charge, but defends the Christian abstention from military service on the grounds that their service, as priests, is spiritual. Two things are noteworthy about this. Origen accepts the necessity of the military, and evades dealing directly with the issue by envisioning a world which, as it becomes Christian, will have less and less need, and eventually no need, for military force. The second noteworthy point is that Origen chooses to ignore the, by then, growing body of evidence that Christians are already beginning to take their place in the ranks. The Christian population of the empire at the time of Constantine may still have been less than 10%. We can only conjecture what the percentage was among Constantine’s soldiers, but it was obviously high enough for him to want their special loyalty (Daly 1985, 67-72).

[8] **Caesaro-papism.** The initial edicts under Constantine simply classified Christianity as a *religio licita*, an officially “recognized” religion.



In the course of the fourth century, it gradually became the favored religion, and under Theodosius I (Emperor 379–95) the orthodox Christian state was founded. Arianism and other heresies became legal offenses punishable by law, pagan sacrifice was forbidden, and paganism almost outlawed. After his responsibility for the massacre at Thessalonika in 390, Emperor Theodosius submitted penitentially to St. Ambrose, bishop of Milan. This indicates that, however intertwined church-state relationships had become, the Church at least made attempts to control or mitigate violence (Daly 1985, 67-86).

**[9] The relegation of Christian pacifism to religious and monastic life.**

The beginnings of Christian monasticism are usually associated with St. Anthony in Egypt in the late third/early fourth century. Concomitant with the entrance of Christians into the mainstream of public life after the Constantinian turn, there was a great flowering of Christian monasticism as many chose to flee the world in order to cultivate the life of the Spirit. One of the effects of this was the practical separation of the ideals of Christian pacifism and nonviolence from everyday Christian life, and the relegation of these ideals to a withdrawal from the world that characterized religious and monastic life.

**[10] The just war theory.**<sup>2</sup> Ambrose (ca. 339–97) and especially Augustine (354–430), combining ideas from the Stoics and from Cicero with the ideals of the gospel, worked out that practical and theoretical compromise called the Christian just war theory. With subsequent refinements associated with Thomas Aquinas (1225–74) and Hugo Grotius (1583–1645) this served as the principal source of main line Christian attitudes toward the morality of war until the late 20th century when a wider reappropriation of the traditional principles of Christian nonviolence in the context of the modern turn toward the subject, and of the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction have combined to challenge its hegemony in Christian thinking. In attending to the technical aspects of the theory, one tends to forget the extent to which Augustine insisted that it be combined with radical Christian ideals. For example, the motive with which one entered into or carried out a war had to be love of one's

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<sup>2</sup> The literature on the just war theory is vast. For a quick introduction, see the dictionary articles of Langan and Himes.

neighbor. This excluded killing even in self-defense, for there the motive was self-love, not love of neighbor. Looked at from this perspective, one has to ask whether there ever has been a Christian just war that met this criterion.

[11] **The medieval Christian taken-for-grantedness of violence.** The philosophical and theological achievements of medieval scholasticism set the standards and principles by which modern Christian thought is still guided, or against which (*pace* Modernity, Enlightenment, and Post-modernity) it is still reacting. The medieval world simply took violence for granted. Augustine's acceptance, however sorrowfully, of judicial torture in *City of God*, book 19 helps explain why. When one believes that the only thing that ultimately matters is the salvation of the immortal soul, and that, therefore, what happens to the body is of relatively small importance, and when one is then faced with the common-good requirements of law and order, even torture could be seen as necessary. In other words, however horrible may be the sufferings of this life, they are as nothing compared with the sufferings (the "ultimate violence") of eternal damnation. Similar thinking helped justify the methods used in the Inquisition and in the witchcraft trials. The institutional church was aware that it should not be involved with violence, so it left the execution of the violence to the secular arm. But no honest analysis can absolve the institutional church of that time from moral complicity, if not direct collaboration, in these horrors.

[12] **The Crusades.** This is one of the horror stories of Christian history. As the centuries passed, the earlier Christian hostility to war had been replaced by a rapprochement with the military aristocracy. Crusaders were encouraged by the grant of indulgences and the status of martyr in the event of death. The First Crusade was proclaimed by Pope Urban II in 1095. The Second Crusade was preached in 1147 by St. Bernard of Clairvaux, perhaps the greatest figure in medieval monasticism. In other words, even the best of institutional medieval Christianity was involved in supporting what later ages regard as one of the great Christian scandals. For "little that is specifically Christian can be discerned in the manner in which they [the Crusades] were conducted, and the Crusaders on occasion behaved with extreme brutality, both towards the Jews at home and the subjected people in the East" (ODCC, 435-37).

[13] **Medieval Christian peace movements.** But not all Christians were silent in the face of this scandal. Recent research has uncovered the existence of thousands of cells of peace groups across Europe. With the help of recent research like that of Ronald Musto, we can now look back to this somewhat neglected story of "the new poverty and peace movements of the High Middle Ages" (80) as one of the glories of medieval Christianity. Some of these movements were heterodox, but even when orthodox they had an obviously noninstitutional if not anti-institutional thrust (Musto, 80-96).

[14] **Christians and heretics. The Inquisition.** See [11] above.

[15] **Christianity and the Witches.** See [11] above. The persecution of witches did not take on major proportions until theologians began to argue that witchcraft was a form of heresy because it involved an overt or tacit pact with the devil. Thereafter (after 1398), the Inquisition was given jurisdiction over such cases. A century later, especially in the wake of the infamous and popular 1487 anti-witchcraft manual *Malleus Maleficarum*, there was a steady increase in witchcraft trials in both the Catholic and Protestant countries of northern Europe. They reached their height between 1580 and 1630. It is estimated that about 50,000 were executed as witches. Witch hunting on any scale did not survive the advent of the Enlightenment and the consequent widespread intellectual dismissal of belief in witchcraft. The contemporary advent of feminism and feminist consciousness is now bringing a whole new perspective to the way historians and others look at this phenomenon (ODCC, 1757-58).

[16] **The Reformation.** The early 16th century Protestant Reformation which, at its outset might not have meant anything more extensive than the relatively localized—and usually brutally repressed—attempts at reform and change that characterized the previous centuries (the 12th and 13th-century Albigenses in Southern France, the Wycliffites or Lollards in late 14th-century England, the Czech Hussites in the early 15th century) fairly quickly developed into the division of European Christianity into belligerently opposing Protestant and Catholic camps. In terms of the big picture, all pretense that Christianity was dedicated to nonviolence was, in practice, given up.

[17] **The Radical Reformation and the Peace Churches.** Similar to the anti-Crusade medieval peace movements, this nadir of a supposedly nonviolent Christianity was also challenged by anti-institutional peace movements. The Anabaptists, the Swiss Brethren, the Hutterites, the Melchiorites and Hoffmanites, the Mennonites arose at this time. They were generally free-church in organization, rejected Christian participation in the magistracy, and committed to nonresistance. They were vigorously denounced by Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, and were severely persecuted by both Roman Catholics and Protestants. Those martyred apparently ran into the tens of thousands ("Anabaptists," ODCC, 55-56).

[18] **St. Bartholomew's Day Massacre (August 1572).** This was perhaps the most notorious event in a series of civil wars between Roman Catholics and Huguenots in the late 16th century. In order to cover her complicity in a failed attempt to assassinate Adm. Gaspard II de Coligny, Catherine de Médicis persuaded her son, King Charles IX to murder the Protestant nobles then gathered in Paris for the wedding of Henry of Navarre, later King Henry IV. But the slaughter quickly spread to victimize other Huguenots in Paris and then throughout the country. Modern authors estimate that as many as 3,000 were killed in Paris alone. News of the massacre was welcomed by Philip II of Spain and Pope Gregory XIII as a step in defeating the Protestant cause in France. But the rest of (esp. Protestant) Europe was horrified, and Charles IX had to invent the cover story of a Huguenot plot against the crown. This only hardened the lines between Catholic and Protestant, and helped prepare for and explain the widespread religiously motivated violence that characterized European history from then until the middle of the 17th century (EB, 10.341b).

[19] **The religious wars.** Apart from the relatively few followers of the Radical Reformation, both Protestants and Catholics generally assumed it was their Christian duty to bring secular and military power to bear in favor of the true religion. This, of course, was not uncongenial to the secular ambitions of many princes. The result was a series of religious wars (sometimes not really "religious," but just using religion as a pretext) that raged across Europe until the 1648 Treaty of Westphalia put an end to this scandalous chapter in Christian history. (In England, things didn't settle down until the so-called "Glorious Revolution" and the accession of the House of Orange to the English throne in 1688). The 1648 treaty confirmed the principle of *cuius regio eius religio* (which goes back to the 1555 Peace

of Augsburg) against, incidentally, the protests of the church of Rome because it restrained princes from changing their religion and restricted the Roman See from interference in religious matters in Germany (ODCC, 1733-34).

[20] **Absolutism** is that form of government in which all the power of the state is embodied solely in the person of the prince. The period from about 1660 to 1789 (French Revolution) can be described as the period of "High Absolutism." in Europe. As Just (77) reports, it has the following six characteristics: (1) creation of the modern bureaucratic state; (2) creation of juridical unity through new codes of law and the elimination of feudal rights; (3) establishment of standing armies under the command of the ruler; (4) subordination of the Church under the State with the goal of establishing a national church; (5) replacement of the old nobility with a new nobility of bureaucrats dependent on the ruler; (6) movable wealth (banking, stock markets, etc.) becomes the dominant form of wealth. Along with this came the increasing dominance of secular knowledge and the lesser importance of theology and law. The French Revolution dealt a mortal blow to Absolutism, but it did not totally expire until the revolutions of 1848. For our theme, as we approach the modern scene, two aspects are of special importance. The first is item no. 4 (the subordination of the church to the state). The second is the extent to which absolutist forms of government, esp. through the ecclesiology of Robert Bellarmine, influenced ideas of internal church government. This set up the system which makes more possible—perhaps even inevitable—the exertion of nonphysical forms of violence by religious authority. But also to give credit where credit is due, it should be noted that some of the most successful models for modern social welfare were to be found in the realms of the absolutist prince-bishops of Catholic Germany.

[21] **Modernity** and religion and violence. Some of the most scathing (and quotable) denunciations of traditional religion are to be found in the writings of Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679). His masterpiece, *Leviathan* (1651) is a philosophical exposition of the political absolutism that replaced the supremacy of the medieval church. What is notable about Hobbes's position is (1) the philosophical rejection of the reality of spiritual substances; (2) the scathing denunciations of the use of religious power to gain or maintain political power; (3) the total reduction of all spiritual and ecclesiastical power to civil power under an absolutist ruler.

This is not a philosophy of the separation of powers, such as one finds in John Locke, but the reduction of all power to that of the state. Thus Hobbes decries the violence done in the name of religion not because he is against violence—for him nothing works but by violence—but because it is violence exercised by specious authority and in the name of something that does not exist.

[22] **The Quakers—Religious Society of Friends.** (Compare with [17] above.) Founded in the mid 17th century by George Fox, their refusal of military service and oaths often brought them into conflict with civil authority, but in most countries they do not now suffer any particular disabilities. Their devotion to social and educational work, and (in the 20th century) to international relief has brought them widespread respect (ODCC, 642-43).

[23] **The Enlightenment and Modernity;** theories of the separation of church and state. John Locke (1632–1704) and his *A Letter Concerning Toleration* (Engl. ed. 1689) adapts the traditional two-sword theory of spiritual and secular power to the contexts of Absolutism and Modernity. He is quite different from Hobbes in not reducing spiritual power to civil power. He admits the validity of both, but defines them into (at least in principle) nonconflicting spheres. Should conflict still occur, civil power will have the last word. This theory, which is at the basis of most modern theories of the separation of powers, and which provides the theoretical basis of even some aspects of modern Catholic social and political teaching, removes from the Church, and from all spiritual institution as such, any possibility of using material or physical force or violence. This is a major development in Western civilization. It disqualifies, *by definition*, all religious institutions from the possibility of using external force or violence. This challenges religious institutions (1) to be faithful to this “separation,” and (2) to focus their attention on freeing their houses from all internal or spiritual violence. Many modern religious institutions are doing well with the first of these, the “separation,” but still have difficulty with the latter.

[24] **Christianity and world mission; Christianity and colonialism.** The onset of modernity coincided with the European discovery of the rest of the globe. The widespread narrow understanding of “no salvation outside the Church” unleashed a massive missionary effort, first by Catholics, then also

by Protestants, in an effort to save the “savage” masses from eternal damnation. Without derogating from the generosity and heroism of the hundreds of thousands of Christian missionaries over the past four and one-half centuries, one must also recognize the extent to which Christian missionary activity was both supported by and supportive of a colonialism that was all too often based on violent conquest and exploitive subjugation. The glorious exceptions such as the Jesuit Reductions in Paraguay and the work and writings of the Dominican Bartolomeo de las Casas in the sixteenth century were too infrequent and, generally, unsuccessful in the end.

[25] **Slavery.** In the course of the nineteenth century, slavery, at least as a widespread institution, was abolished in the Western Christian world. One of the instruments in this development seems to have been the awakening of the Christian conscience to the incompatibility of slavery and Christianity. One cannot claim, however, that the institutions of the main line Christian churches played a major role in the abolition of slavery. Neither can one claim that all the exploitative aspects or consequences of the institution of slavery have been eradicated from Western Society. But it may be possible to claim that, at least to some extent, the social teaching of the Christian churches is doing a better job of attending to this.

[26] **Christianity and the “war” against native cultures.** Until quite recently, Christianity tended to identify itself with the dominant Western European culture. Only in recent decades have Christians begun to be aware of a shift from a Eurocentric Church to a World Church. Before this, and once again with some notable but rare and generally unsuccessful exceptions, Christians usually thought that, to put it bluntly, “you have to civilize them before you can Christianize them.” Genuine respect for other cultures—“inculturation,” as it is now called—is new to the Christian missionary scene, new to the attitudes of Christians to interreligious activity. So, there was little or no Christian protest when programs of conquest or colonialism led to the decimation of the native populations of North and South America. Indeed, the historical research of scholars such as Francis Paul Prucha has exposed that it used to be the explicit policy of the United States Bureau of Indian Affairs to undermine Native American culture in order to make these peoples more receptive to Christianity.

[27] **Christianity and the First World War.** This was one of the more senseless major wars in human history. One can at least make the claim that the Second World War in Europe was a War waged over the soul of Europe. But, looked at from this kind of perspective, the WW I looks more like a war waged by a supposedly Christian Europe that had already lost its soul. As Bainton, among others, has documented, religious leaders on both sides wheeled out the religious rhetoric in support of their troops. When Christians of today go back and read those sermons, they can only blush in embarrassment. Tens of millions were slaughtered in order to achieve, as we look back on it, only the conditions that supported the rise of two other monstrosities of violence, German National Socialism and International Communism. We cannot fairly blame Christianity for these ills, but we can note at least the failure of the institutions of Christianity to prevent them.

[28] **The Second World War.** The role of Christianity. The irrelevance of Christianity. As indicated, at least some aspects of WW II in Europe might be described as Europe fighting for its soul. But one might question whether that soul was still Christian. In terms of the "Christian" just war theory, there was less and less in the conduct of this war that conformed to it. The breakdown, on both sides, of the distinction between combatant and noncombatant, and the use of weapons of mass destruction against population centers, was for the modern world a new descent into savagery. At the time, almost no Christian voice was raised against this. Christianity had become irrelevant.

[29] **The Holocaust.** Whether or not there is any justice to the claim that Christianity caused the Holocaust, we cannot deny that Christianity's failure to purify itself of anti-Judaism was one of the things that made the Holocaust possible. The German nation prided itself on being a Christian nation. Roughly half of its population was Catholic, the other half Protestant. No effective Christian protest against the inherently anti-religious, antichristian policies of the Nazis was ever mounted. Considering the ferocious intensity of this cataclysm, it ranks among the most scandalous failures of institutional Christianity in all of history.

[30] **Christianity and the modern peace movement.** Catholicism's reappropriation of its pacifist traditions. Several present-day Protestant church bodies trace their origins to the pacifist churches of the Radical Reformation. (See [17] above.) They are a small minority, but they do



represent over four centuries of consistent Christian institutional commitment to nonviolence. In the United States, the members of these church bodies were generally allowed conscientious objector status during the Second World War. Members of the main line Christian churches were not allowed this status; and when they tried to claim it, theologians and clergy from their own traditions often testified against them. But from about the time of Pope John XXIII and the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, this began to change. The tragedy of the Vietnam War, in which millions died, was a watershed for the development and general public awareness of Christian pacifism and Christian peace movements. These are now generally recognized as integral, albeit minority, aspects of contemporary institutional Christianity.

[31] Christians and the “**seamless ethic of life**”: anti-war, anti-abortion, anti-euthanasia, anti-death penalty. The late Joseph Cardinal Bernadin, Roman Catholic Archbishop of Chicago, helped popularize awareness of the so-called “seamless ethic of life.” This is a somewhat revolutionary ethical position in that it supports life and opposes death across the board, in all aspects of human life. What is revolutionary about this position is that it challenges Christian to be consistent and not selective in their attitudes towards questions of life and death. For example, conservatives will often be antiabortion but pro death penalty. Progressives, or liberals as they are often called in North America, will often be pro abortion, but anti-death penalty, or anti-war. A seamless ethic of life challenges all Christians to be against all forms of violence.

[32] Christianity and **International Communism**. It has often been pointed out that the rise of Communism was made possible by the failure of Christianity to establish equitable political, economic, and social systems. It is a fact that traditional Christianity and many of its institutions tended to identify with the established status quo. Thus, Christianity, as a public institution, resisted the revolutions of 1848, and only when Communism began to make waves, did it, at about the turn of the nineteenth to the twentieth century, begin to develop a social teaching that attended to the needs of the day. This, however, was not enough to stem the tide. Those European political parties which were most opposed to Communism often had “Christian” in their name. But those European political parties which were more supportive of Christian social teaching often had “social” or “socialist” in their name. Apart perhaps from Poland,

where Polish Nationalism and Roman Catholicism tended to be identified, it is not clear that institutional Christianity played a key role in the late twentieth century setbacks of Eastern European Communism. This would seem to be confirmed by the fact that what has replaced Communism does not seem to be guided by a Christian spirit.

[33] **Liberation theology** (Harpercollins 658) is “thinking about God that finds its source for Christian reflection and action in the faith and life of the poorest people while using the tools of social analysis to illumine the structures of their oppression.” Beginning in Latin America in the late 1960s, but since then spreading throughout the world, liberation theology has at times been criticized by the institutional church (especially in the early years when its first, European-trained proponents dared to use Marxist concepts in their economic analysis). Much of the dynamic of liberation theology, especially in its local cell groups, tends to work independently of traditional institutional church structures. It is noteworthy, however, that, contrary to the traditional identification of church hierarchy with the established socio-economic power system, the institutional church has increasingly identified itself with the goals of liberation theology and thus become more an object of violence than complicit in it.

[34] The liberation of women.<sup>3</sup> Only recently has modern civilization, but by no means to the same degree and in all its cultures, come to recognize the basic equality of men and women. Only recently have we come to recognize and attempt to eliminate the pervasive violence, private, familial, and public, that patriarchal societies—often with the complicity and support of their religious institutions—have inflicted on women. The mainline religious institutions of the modern liberal democracies have, by now, largely dismantled the myths of inferiority with which they used to justify what we now see as discrimination against women. But the elimination of inequality in practice and of the unequal violence that is often directed against women remains a goal still to be achieved.

[35] Christianity and the **resurgence of tribal and nationalist violence**. John Langan has pointed out that for many groups in the former Communist empires of Eastern Europe, freedom meant freedom to exploit and oppress

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<sup>3</sup> The literature is vast and constantly growing. One might begin with the review of literature offered by Johnson, Hilbert, Ross, and O'Neill in the 1995 volume of *Theological Studies*.

their rivals the way they always used to ("Nationalism" 122). This has perhaps nowhere been so tragically evident than in the former Yugoslavia in the Balkans and in some of the nations of central Africa. In the Balkans, the intertwining of nationalist, ethnic, and religious passions resulted in what appeared to many to be a hopelessly deadly brew for which there is no obvious antidote. The only hope seems to be to bring to bear enough external force to keep the internal forces from wreaking worse violence. Religion is not only ineffectual to stop the violence, it may also be one of its causes. In Rwanda, one ascertains with embarrassed horror that this was one of the most Christianized areas of Africa. Christianity may not have been the cause of the genocidal massacres, but it was obviously ineffectual in preventing or stopping them.

[36] **Christianity and human rights.** The international human rights movement has two main institutional supporters, the United Nations and the Roman Catholic Church. The strongest single voice in support of human rights, in support of peaceful and nonviolent solutions to the world's problems is that of the Pope. This is one instance—in the area of violence, institution, and Christianity—in which a major Christian institution is, finally, clearly on the side of the angels. The resources of the Church in taking this position are not only the traditional teachings of the Bible and of natural law teaching, but also the theory of the separation of powers as refined by John Locke. The Church now recognizes that the only force it can actually—and properly—use is the internal force of spiritual persuasion. However, the Church has not accepted Modernity's insistence that religion is primarily or solely an individual, internal matter.

## II. Some Reflections on Violence and Institution in Christianity

The historical survey sketched in Section I can help provide some background and a helpful glossary of terms for the reflections we will now undertake. The challenge is obvious: How can we begin to make sense of the clear Christian call to nonviolence on the one hand, and, on the other hand, of the clear historical evidence of the failure of most Christian institutions to live up to this ideal?

As I indicted in the introduction, one can take the concept and term of "Christianity" either *descriptively* or *normatively*, or—as is very common—in a way that combines the two approaches. Actually, it is quite rare to find an approach that comes close to being purely descriptive or purely normative. Modern hermeneutics, with its claim that there is no

“purely objective” approach to anything, suggests that such “purity” is an illusory goal.

An approach that comes close to this illusory ideal of the descriptive would subject Christianity to a penetratingly rigorous historical and social-scientific analysis. It would document Christianity’s self-witness: the nonviolent claims Christianity has made about itself in the past, and the claims it makes about itself in the present. But it would also document, from its presumed rigorously objective standpoint, what Christianity has actually been. This will result in some very diverse pictures. In some frames, there will be striking witness to the ideals of peace and nonviolent love and service (Jesus, Francis of Assisi, Mother Theresa, etc.). In other frames there will be horror stories of just the opposite (persecution of heretics, Inquisition, witch-burning, and even some contemporary ethnic cleansing, etc.). How much weight one gives to one or other of these two contrasting types may vary considerably; but even very sympathetic Christian analysts, if they are honest, will be embarrassed by the weight of the negative evidence.

On the other hand, a committed faith-perspective from within Christianity will try to enter into and make one’s own Jesus’ call to nonviolence, and will look for guidance and inspiration to the countless women and men through the ages who, following Jesus, have lived lives of nonviolent, self-giving love and service. The main focus, in other words, will be on attempts to recover Christianity’s best ideals, and to make them living realities in one’s own life. At the same time, this recovery of ideals, this prescriptive thrust—unless it is totally illusory and thus, by definition, not religious at all<sup>4</sup>—cannot isolate itself from the overwhelming negative witness that comes from the descriptive approach. Thus the idealistic Christian perspective must also include an examination of conscience, an honest recognition of how sinfully violent Christianity and Christians have often been. Penance and reconciliation (or “Truth and Reconciliation,” as the South Africans call it) cannot be sidestepped.

If one’s method is predominantly social-scientific, then one’s approach to the issues of violence and institution in any particular tradition will likely focus on what works, and what doesn’t, towards the reduction of violence in this life. People working from this approach will often look upon religion as a necessary, but somewhat unreliable, ally. One can see,

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<sup>4</sup> Recall the way Sigmund Freud’s *The Future of an Illusion* has tended to associate “religion” and “illusion” in the mind of the modern intellectual.

in South Africa, for example, what begins to become possible when religion focuses its “power” against violence. Religion is obviously a good ally to have in the struggle against violence. But is it a reliable ally? All too strong are the memories, to say nothing of the current evidence, of religion being the cause of violence, of religion being too easily co-opted by such forces as aggressive ethnicity and nationalism, of religion being simply ineffectual against tribally, ethnically, or nationalistically motivated violence.

But if one’s approach is predominantly from a Christian faith perspective,<sup>5</sup> this will tend to make one see success and failure of violence reduction in terms of virtue and sin. This introduces an other-worldly perspective, since the Christian faith perspective believes that the battle against violence will not be completed in this life. This has negative as well as positive aspects. For example, as an excuse for not being more active, Christians have often been too ready to point to the future life as the only time when violence will be totally eliminated and perfect justice made to prevail. But note that even this vision of perfect peace is, in one very important respect, definitely not a vision of eventual perfect nonviolence. In the traditional Christian mind and imagination, perfect or eternal peace is the destiny only of the blessed. Only they—and many Christians have thought this “they” to be few rather than many—will hear the words of Christ the judge: “Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matthew 25:34). The wicked—which in this gospel vision is simply those who did not attend to those in need—will hear the words: “Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:35). For those who do not live right in this life (i.e., mercifully as well as justly), what awaits them is the ultimate violence: an eternity of torture, an eternity of sacred violence.

In other words, Christians, both those committed to lives of nonviolent, self-giving love and service, and those “cultural Christians” who are vaguely at home in a general Christian worldview, include violence—indeed the ultimate violence—in their overall view of things. Nor is this something that is merely marginal to Christianity. Indeed, the more traditionally Christian one is, the more likely it is that one accepts this vision of ultimate, eternal violence. We must honestly face this. The

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<sup>5</sup> Is it possible for a Christian intellectual living and working in the real world to operate exclusively from this perspective, especially if it is construed strictly?

systematic theologian in me screams out: “Stop! There’s something radically wrong with this! It doesn’t make sense! This is not a vision of Christianity with which I can be satisfied!” Ultimately, what I am claiming is that this is an un-Christian vision of Christianity. But it cannot be denied that it is a fairly accurate assessment of traditional Christian belief. *Descriptively*, it accurately describes much of what Christianity has been and much of what Christianity still is. We cannot honestly claim that this is a problem of the past that no longer affects us. *Normatively*, it leaves much to be desired. Let me develop these two points:

*Descriptively*, there is something theoretically helpful about this understanding of Christianity that includes some ultimate, eternal violence as part of its overall view of things. It helps to explain why there has been so much violence in Christian history, indeed so much violence taken for granted, and why so much of this violence has been associated with institutions in Christianity, and with Christianity as institution. It makes it more difficult for honest and informed theologians to claim that the Christian God of the New Testament is a God of love and mercy in contrast to the Jewish God of the Old Testament as a God of justice and punishment. It makes it easier for the historian and social-scientific analyst to explain why, despite Christianity’s ideals of Christic nonviolence, Christian history is so full of violence. It isn’t just a question of equating violence with sin, and thus explaining violence by Christians as failures to live up to the ideals and obligations of being Christian. For many of those committing what we now unqualifiedly condemn as violence (religious persecution, pogroms, Crusades, etc. thought that they were not committing sin, but doing something virtuous. The fact that Christians now tend to see things differently is very significant. It means that, with regard to violence (among other things), Christianity has undergone a number of what Bernard Lonergan would call “intellectual conversions” and “moral conversions” (237-44). Our Christian intellectual *understanding* of what violence is, or of what is allowable violence or obligatory violence, and our Christian moral *commitment* to live accordingly, has been changing, developing, or, in Lonergan’s terms, undergoing conversion.

*Normatively*, these reflections force us to rethink what authentic Christianity is, or what it should be moving towards. We are. I think, moving close to the point that René Girard has repeatedly made to the effect that the Christ-event has done away with sacrifice in the history-of-religions sense of the word. Edward Kilmartin, writing about the Christian

Eucharist, makes the identical point (379-83).<sup>6</sup> Extending this analogously to the theme of violence, we can say that the Christ-event has delegitimized (or, as Bailie writes "unveiled") violence. Just as the Christ-event, and with it authentic Christianity, delegitimizes sacrifice in the history-of-religions sense of the word, so too does the Christ event, and with it authentic Christianity, delegitimize violence.

Thus, as is now quite clear, I am outlining a *normative* vision of authentic Christianity that eliminates violence from the realm of the acceptable. But if this is to be more than just an unrealistic illusion, I must (1) show that such a vision can be internally consistent with Christianity itself and thus, in some way at least initially realizable in its institutions, and (2) bring this *normative* vision of a nonviolent Christianity into effective dialogue with (and, as far as possible, harmony with) a *descriptive* vision of Christianity that has included and, presumably, will continue to include, violence. How can we begin, in other words, not simply to brush away, or theoretically define away, the differences between the normative and the descriptive; how, rather, can we begin to narrow the gap between them?

As a first step, one should note that progress in this direction is already being made. At least the general trajectory of recent events is the right one. The Second Vatican Council of the Roman Catholic Church, with its 1965 decree on religious freedom, formally, and for the first time in its history, condemned the use of force in the support of religion. It has followed this up with increasingly strong condemnations of violence in all forms, especially the violent infringement of human rights, capital punishment, and war. In fact, what is increasingly evolving as the Catholic position is the in-principle rejection of war as a legitimate means of resolving conflict. Most of the other Christian bodies, usually under the leadership of the World Council of Churches, have made similar developments and commitments. In addition, the world's major geopolitical institution, the United Nations, with the obvious support of Christianity and the other major religions of the world, has also made major declarations and sponsored conferences which move in the direction of nonviolence. Even military and political alliances such as NATO can be seen to be moving in this direction.

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<sup>6</sup> Kilmartin's point is that the Christ-event reveals sacrifice to be not the offering up of some "object" (a person or thing other than oneself), but primarily, Jesus' attitude and actions of perfectly obedient, free, and joyful self-giving to the Father and to and for us, and secondarily, our participation in those dispositions and actions.

One can indeed argue that NATO's use of massive air power in Kosovo and Serbia in 1999 was so violent as to be counter-productive—one recalls the antiwar obscenity popular in the American sixties, that “fighting for peace is like fucking for chastity,”—but one cannot deny (unless one opts for the “American conspiracy” theory) that the desire to stop and reverse violent ethnic cleansing was a major motivation behind this military action. This kind of massive intervention in the internal affairs of another country, and *for these reasons*, may well represent a first in modern history. Whether, with all its ambiguities, this will eventually prove to be a part of a salutary movement, remains to be seen.

It is not my purpose to claim all these developments as achievements of Christianity, but they have certainly not been without Christian support, and they also reflect developments within Christianity. Thus, inner-Christian developments towards nonviolence have not been swimming against the stream of current geopolitical developments. My purpose now is to show that these developments are not merely “going with the flow” but are also expressions of the authentic spirit of Christianity.

A few paragraphs back, I claimed that authentic (*normative*) Christianity delegitimizes violence. Many, if not most, theologians, and many other scholars are willing to concede this point. Here, I must content myself with referring to some of the literature that supports this.<sup>7</sup> From this extensive literature let me highlight two points that might be particularly helpful for us here. The first concerns the idea of the use of violence—specifically military force—as a “sub-Christian” phenomenon. The second concerns the relevance of the theme of *apokatastasis* (universal salvation) for our theme.

*First*, regarding violence—specifically military force—as sub-Christian, I refer to a striking passage in Origen of Alexandria writing in the late 240s of the Christian era. Some 70 years before, Celsus, a pagan philosopher of considerable ability, had written a skillful and well-informed polemic against Christianity. Among other things, he faulted Christians for shirking their civic duties by refusing to perform military service and other civic duties (which were usually connected with the military). Origen, *Against Celsus* 8.73, rejects the charge, but with arguments that have some striking implications for our theme. But first, let us set the scene (Daly 1985, 30-44):

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<sup>7</sup> For starters, see the references in Daly 1985 and Culliton.



It has been a commonplace of historical scholarship that the Early Christians were pacifists. Theologians and historians have pointed to an extensive body of early Christian literature to support the claim that this was the common position of the early Christians. In this view, it was only when, after Constantine's victory, Christianity became a *religio licita* (legally recognized religion) and, by the end of the fourth century, the state religion, that Christianity "lost its soul" so to speak, and accepted the legitimacy and even necessity of force. This picture is so oversimplified as to be massively counterproductive. Recent sociological and critical historical analysis points out that, as an insignificantly small and helpless minority, the early Christians, along with whatever institutional life they could muster, had no choice but to be nonviolent (Schottroff, 9-13; Daly 1984 "New Testament," 211-19). That they did not, at least generally, serve in the military, is also apparently true. The charge Celsus makes against the Christians has a certain validity and requires a Christian answer.

But the answer of Origen does not come until 70 years later, from the middle of the third century.<sup>8</sup> For that later period we can piece together enough evidence to suggest that Origen could have answered Celsus by simply suggesting that one look around. By the middle of the third century Christians were already beginning to take their places in the soldierly ranks. The pre-Constantinian Acts of the Military Martyrs give solid evidence that the Christian soldiers who became martyrs did not lay down their lives because they had problems with the "violent" aspects of their profession; their problems were with the religious practices unavoidably connected with it: Roman army religion. But all this Origen chooses to ignore. He seems to want to accept the factuality of Celsus's charge, even though he probably knew that it was no longer so factual. Why? Put in the terms that we have been using, he apparently wanted to keep together both the *normative* and the *descriptive*. So, even though he apparently does not have to, he accepts Celsus's charge that Christians do not serve in the military. This enabled him to argue from the assumption of a *description* of Christianity that actually corresponds to its *normative* ideals. This enables him to make the point that is closest to his heart and his Christian agenda:

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<sup>8</sup> It seems to have been not Origen's own idea to answer Celsus, but the insistence of his patron, Ambrosius. At least some Christians, apparently, thought that this (by then 70 years old) "The True Story" of Celsus needed to be answered. Ironically, our only text for what Celsus wrote comes from the extensive citations which Origen makes before offering his Christian refutations.

Christians refuse to serve because they are priests!<sup>9</sup> They are thus exempt from military service just like the pagan priests. Their civic duty, Origen explains, is not to fight with physical but with spiritual arms, to pray for the military success of the emperor and his armies fighting in his just cause.

Origen is sharp enough to know that he still hasn't proven his point. The pagan will argue that this does not absolve Christians from their responsibilities as citizens because, the more people become Christian, the fewer there will be to defend the empire by force of arms. Apparently, this is just the opening Origen wants. He counters that, as the empire becomes more and more Christian, less and less will be the need for force of arms. This is an excitingly attractive theo-political vision. And there does seem to be some factual correlation between people being good religious people and not needing police force to keep them in order. But as a practical solution, Origen's vision didn't work. We know now that it probably cannot work. And, however much a truly converted Christianity that is true to its *normative* ideals might contribute to eventual world peace, no one now realistically suggests that world peace, if it ever comes, will be primarily a Christian achievement.

It is a noteworthy aspect of Origen's position that he does not argue in principle against military force. He assumes that, until the world becomes fully Christian, military force will remain necessary but, because of their sacerdotal status, not something for Christians to do. Living at a time when Christians were still a small and usually, because of the threat of martyrdom, heroic minority, Origen had the luxury of thinking this way. A century and a half later, when it was the Christians themselves who were responsible for maintaining law and order and the security of the empire, Augustine, who was personally perhaps no less committed to nonviolence than was Origen, found himself developing the just war theory, and even justifying judicial torture.

But Origen (along with many others) has left us with an ideal vision of *normative* Christianity that we cannot forget. It is the idea, the vision, the "dream" (as Martin Luther King, Jr. put it) that to be Christian is to be nonviolent. To be violent or to use force, even necessary force, is to fall

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<sup>9</sup> Origen, of course, appeals to the classical Christian New Testament text: "Like living stones be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices to god through Jesus Christ. . . . You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:5 and 9).

short of the Christian ideal, is to be involved in something that is "sub-Christian." My claim is that this is the only fully authentic Christian position. But the informed historian cannot claim that this *normative* vision was ever actually *descriptively* realized on a broad scale in this world, not even in the earliest Christian communities.<sup>10</sup> However, it remains a Christian ideal, kept alive to our day by "converted" (see Lonergan, 237-44) Christians of all ages, monastic and religious groups, the medieval anti-Crusade movements, and the post reformational peace churches.

*Second, apokatastasis*, the idea of universal salvation, the idea that *all* will *eventually* be saved, has been a minority view in Christianity. I claim here that this minority view is much closer to the ideal *normative* view of Christianity than the majority view which is more *descriptive* of what Christianity actually is. Now I must marshal some evidence in support of the claim that universal salvation is not only a legitimate Christian view, but is closer to the authentic *normative* ideal of Christianity than the common traditional view that foresees an eternity of painful punishment for the damned.

One cannot deny that the expectation of eternal punishment for the wicked is a deeply rooted Christian belief that Christianity not only inherited from its Hebrew and biblical roots, but also strengthened with some strikingly explicit sayings of Jesus recorded in the Gospels. Generally speaking, however. This kind of thinking is not unique to Christianity. The idea that purification (usually a painful process) is a necessary step toward blessedness, however that is conceived, is common in the major religions. But the question is: are some people unpurifiable? Is it the fate of some not to ever achieve blessedness, but to be assigned to eternal punishment? Is eternal punishment *literally* true? Progressive Christianity tends to say No. Conservative Christianity tends to say Yes. But it is far more complicated than that. First, some factual information.

Origen of Alexandria (ca. 185–ca. 254) proposed the theory of *apokatastasis* or universal salvation. He taught, not as an article of faith, but as something that a Christian could piously believe, that all human beings will eventually be saved. Explaining this was not easy. Origen had

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<sup>10</sup> The Acts of the Apostles reports that Anani'as and his wife Sapphi'ra, members of the first Christian community in Jerusalem, were struck dead on the spot in punishment for holding back from the community some of the proceeds of the sale of a piece of property (Acts 5:1–11). Later, St. Paul accepted the protection of a powerful Roman military escort in order to protect himself from a murderous conspiracy (Acts 23:12–35).

to make sense of a number of things that did not easily fit together: (1) the traditional belief, strengthened by the teaching of Jesus, that some are condemned to hell; (2) divine foreknowledge of all things, events, and actions from the past, the present, and the future; (3) the inviolability of human free will; (4) God's universal salvific will—God's will that all should be saved. To solve this massive theological problem, Origen was able to fall back on the theory of what we have come to call the reincarnation—or at least the afterlife—of the human soul. (Subsequent to Origen, orthodox Christian thinking came to reject the idea of the reincarnation of the human soul.) Theoretically, the two points most difficult to reconcile were (3) and (4): human free will over against, as it seemed, the divine will that all be saved.<sup>11</sup> Origen envisioned the solution as follows: God's love is so strong, so infinitely persistent, that eventually, after perhaps untold eons, even the most obdurate of human souls will eventually, *in full freedom*, say Yes to God's love. The Cappadocian Fathers of the late fourth century—often thought to represent the highest flowering of theology in Christian history—generally followed this lead of Origen, even though they could no longer appeal to the idea of reincarnation to support it (Sachs, 1991 and 1993).

Universal salvation has never been an article of faith of the Christian Church. But it has also not been rejected—indeed, it has explicitly and consciously *not* been rejected—by significant parts of main line Christianity. For example, the Roman Catholic Church has repeatedly put its authority on the line to declare officially that this or that person is a saint, i.e., has definitively reached eternal happiness with God. But it has never, not even once, declared officially that any one particular person has definitively been condemned to hell.<sup>12</sup>

In the 20th century, three of the most prominent Catholic theologians, the French Henri de Lubac, the German Karl Rahner, and the Swiss Hans Urs von Balthasar, even though they fundamentally differ from each other on some major theological points, basically agree with Origen and with each other on the issue of universal salvation. Hans Urs von Balthasar more

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<sup>11</sup> Origen's *On First Principles* contains what is probably the first unequivocally clear Christian articulation of the absolute autonomy of the human free will. The universally cited New Testament text in support of the idea of universal salvation is: "This is good, and it is acceptable in the eyes of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Timothy 2:3–4).

<sup>12</sup> This may seem surprising to many people, especially if they assume that the famous poems of Dante and Milton accurately reflect the formal teaching of the Church.

or less speaks for all of them when he observes that we are not obliged to *believe* that all will be saved—it is not an article of faith—but, as Christians, we are obliged to *hope* that all will be saved (Balthasar; Sachs 1993, 622). My claim is that this, or something like this, is much closer to an ideal expression of *normative* Christianity than the still more common Christian view that some (or many) are condemned to the ultimate violence of eternal punishment in hell. This is an extremely important point. Basically, I am suggesting that the traditional Christian view that some, or many, are condemned to hell—eternal sacred violence, if you will—makes it also far too easy for people to accept violence in their lives as Christians.

We are focusing on the question: How does a Christian imagine the world? Practically speaking, our goal, to paraphrase Marx's ninth thesis on Feuerbach, is not so much to imagine the world as to change it, to convert it from violent to nonviolent. However, as Marx and so many others have implicitly and explicitly pointed out, how one imagines the world, or how one imagines the world should be, is what guides and drives our efforts to change it. Some pages ago, I pointed out the difficulty that a systematic theologian like myself has in accepting the idea that God routinely inflicts on some, or on many, the ultimate violence of an eternity of torturous punishment. This does terrible things to our image of God. How do we relate to a supposedly all-merciful and all-loving God who is going to condemn some of us, perhaps even me, to the ultimate violence?<sup>13</sup> It concomitantly does terrible things to our imaginative construal of how things work and how they should work. If a very central and very final part of the big picture includes ultimate sacred violence, how can we muster effective argument against the more ephemeral violences with which we routinely pepper our lives?

Some years ago, David Kelsey pointed out that when we human beings make moral judgments we do so, ultimately, on the basis of a "discrimen," an imaginative, prediscursive construal of the way things are, and of the way things should be (Kelsey 163; Daly 1984 *Christian Biblical Ethics*, 35-65). The story, now more than 30 years old, of the gradual disenchantment of the American people with the Vietnam War, effectively illustrates this

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<sup>13</sup> The traditional theological answer to this dilemma is to point out that it is not God who condemns us, rather we condemn ourselves. God has such respect for our free wills that God allows us to say No to divine love and thus condemn ourselves to eternal punishment. On the abstract theological level, this may satisfy, may avoid the dilemma of turning God into a monster; but on the levels of common sense and imagination—where we live most of the time—everyone knows who the judge and who the executioner is.

point. Why did the American people turn against this war into which it had invested so much? Intellectuals, theologians and bishops were beginning to speak out more strongly, pointing out that the war did not come close to meeting the requirements of a just war. But was that what turned the tide? Of course not! What turned the tide was that Americans were seeing things on their television screens that they could not reconcile with the *images* they had of themselves as human beings and Christians. This was not lost on those who plan and carry out wars. Witness the way the American and allied forces so much more carefully controlled the information and the images they sent back from the 1991 “Desert Storm” war against Iraq, and how thoroughly, a few years later, Slobodan Milošević of Serbia tried to insulate his people from exposure to the violent aspects of his (and their) attempts to ethnically cleanse Kosovo.

But to bring this back to our theme of Christianity, institution, and violence, I am suggesting that the ease with which Christians accept the message of ultimate violence—eternal punishment for the damned—helps to account for the embarrassing presence of violence throughout Christian history. And if we are here not just to understand Christian history, but to change it to something less violent, then that process of “conversion” by which, as I pointed out above, Christianity seems to be institutionally more rejecting of violence than it used to be, needs to be highlighted and hastened. We are talking about changes that must take place not only in people’s minds, but also in their hearts and especially in their imaginations.

Bernard Lonergan’s analysis of conversion as being *intellectual*, *moral*, and *religious*, can help us here (237-44). First, he does not, of course, suggest that conversions take place in some exclusive way on only one or other of these levels. But he does speak of them in terms of levels. The first level, intellectual conversion is, relatively speaking, the easiest. It is the level at which we have a change of mind about something, a change of thinking from the less authentic to the more authentic, from the less true to the more true, etc. It is, from the example I just mentioned, coming to see and understand that the Vietnam War could not be justified by the traditional Christian just war theory. The second level moves from intellectual conversion to moral conversion, although not necessarily as a step that one must consciously take before coming to moral conversion. This now includes the moral commitment to act and live consistently with what one now understands to be right. We are talking about a real, actual change of life because one now has new values, new principles by which to live.

This would seem to be all that is needed, but sad experience tells us otherwise. For us really to change our lives, more than just intellectual and moral conversion are needed. Thus Lonergan invites to take the final step into religious conversion. The pagan poet, and Paul writing to the Romans, and our own sad experience all remind us that knowing precisely what is right and wrong, and being committed to live accordingly—however much effort it sometimes takes us to get that far—is simply not enough. As Paul put it: “I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate” (Romans 7:15). But some, the religiously converted, do live accordingly. They are the Dorothy Days, the Francis of Assisi, etc. They are the ones who accept and live by the power of “God’s love [which] has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit which has been given to us” (Romans 5:5).

In this view of things, the ultimate conversions by which our world might turn from violent to nonviolent will be religious. Can this be analogously verified from within the other major religious traditions in ways consistent with those traditions? A conference like this might bring us a bit closer to an answer. But for the present, I suggest we back off this question at the religious level, and approach it at the intellectual and moral levels on which our Colloquium more comfortably operates. On these levels we can point out that most Christians have an *intellectual* view of Christianity, supported in all sorts of *imaginative* ways in the literature and art of the Christian tradition, that includes the ultimate violence, perceived as sacred violence, of condemnation to hell. If the majority Christian intellectual view did not emphasize this view of ultimate punishment, but instead nourished the hope that all will eventually, in full freedom, say yes to the love of God and be saved, and if the art and literature of Christianity supported this more positive, more hopeful view, then the pre-discursive imaginative construal of reality of most Christians would have been conditioning them to see the world and the authentically sacred in nonviolent rather than in violent ways. Christian history would have been much less violent. And with this, the history of the world, so much of which in recent centuries has been dominated by Western “culture,” would also have been much less violent.

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To round this off a bit, if there is any merit to what I have been developing, then one of the necessary steps towards the less violent world we seek will be the “conversion” of the Christian imagination to something

that is, in normative Christian terms, more authentically nonviolent. The majority Christian pre-discursive imaginative construal (Kelsey's terms) of the world and of how things work needs to be changed. But Kelsey claimed that once one got to this pre-discursive level, one could go no farther. However, as thinkers like Lonergan have pointed out, one can go farther. The "functional specialty" that Lonergan called "Dialectic" (235-666) enables one to sort out less adequate, less authentic positions from more adequate, more authentic ones, even at the level of the prediscursive imagination. I have been claiming that the more adequate, more authentic Christian imaginative construal of reality and of ultimate human destiny focuses more on the hope that all will be saved rather than on the belief that some, will be damned. How can Christians be converted or, more properly, open themselves to conversion to this "more Christian" view? The final steps in religious conversion are, in the Christian view, gifts of grace. We don't control these gifts. We can only try to be receptive to them and faithful to them. But the earlier steps in intellectual and moral conversion are significantly more within our control. We can, especially when we work together in interdisciplinary, interreligious, and intercultural settings like those sponsored by COV&R, learn from each other and at least gradually "convert" our views—eventually even our prediscursive imaginative views—to those that are more authentically representative of what is normatively best in our respective traditions.

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# CHRISTIANITY AND VIOLENCE: A RESPONSE TO ROBERT DALY

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While listening to the presentations up to now, I've found myself to be continually scrapping what I was going to say and going on to something else. The only thing I've saved so far is to begin with a sincere thanks to you, Bob Daly, for this paper. It is such an excellent start on the themes of this conference, to cover such a broad range of the history and the data of Christianity on the theme of violence and institution. And yet, through that broad range of analysis, you also help us to focus on what I see as some very important issues, especially the one that you lifted up and emphasized again just now, the issue of universal salvation. At the risk of sounding a bit like a schoolboy with a new vocabulary word, that issue is for me an insight, to use that Lonerganian term, that brings together many things under a single view.

I know that there's been a broad range of interest in violence in general, and especially as it is manifested in Christian institutions of which I'm a part. Then there has also been an interest in the issue of universal salvation. I've actually already been a believer, a hoper in that for quite some time. But the way that you brought them together in this paper, that is the insight for me. It is something that I honestly will take away from this conference as being very important. You've made us see that connection and from that to raise the question: if, as Christians, we continue to imagine ourselves as possibly destined to an ultimate violence of hell as a place of eternal damnation and torture, how much has that played a part in our earthly willingness to participate in violence? Does it make it easier for us to say yes to violence here in this life, when we can imagine ourselves as possibly destined to an ultimate violence? You make that connection, you mention

it as a massively central problem, and you've convinced me of it. I think it's something we need to work on. We now need to find ways of lifting up that minority viewpoint of hoping for universal salvation to become once again the majority viewpoint.

The question thus focuses on the strategy of how to do that. Because there's always the danger that, as we become zealous about something, we can start presenting it in a forceful and violent way. For instance, people could come away from what we're trying to convince them of, and ask themselves: "Gee, did he just say something like: 'You're going to Hell if you don't stop believing in Hell.'?" We can perhaps come across that way if we're too forceful about it.

Before your remarks, I hadn't made the connection with the Vietnam War. I hadn't noticed how much that could help us toward the strategy we seek. What turned the American people against the war was seeing its violence on their TV screens, violence that didn't fit in with their imaginative view of themselves. Is there a way in which we can work that sort of strategy by replacing our imagination of ultimate violence with at least the hope of universal salvation?

One of my favorite stories—it just came to me as you were talking—is from the Lynn Brothers, Matthew and Dennis, two Catholic priests or former Catholic priests. They have a little book about the goats, from the image of Matthew 25 on the separation of the sheep from the goats. They tell a story about working with a woman who came to one of them in counseling, frightened for her son. Her son had been in all kinds of addiction problems, all kinds of trouble with the law throughout his life, and was coming to a point where he was really bottoming out. And through all of that, the thing that she still worried about the most was: when he dies, is he going to go to hell? The problem, of course, was that she was still holding on to that majority vision, and I think it was Matthew Lynn who had to come to terms with that vision in his own way of religious experience, and face the fact that he also saw things that way. But what he did was, in a prayerful counseling situation, to have her imagine not only her son there with God on judgement day but her there with him. And he asks her, as she's praying, to imagine what she would do for her son. She would of course hold him and hug him and show her love. Then he asked: "Now what would God do here?" God would of course hug us and love us. On this issue, that story has always been an important one for me. It suggests how we can use our imaginations to change the way we think.

Another strategy for dealing with these kinds of issues is nicely laid out

in James Alison's book, *Raising Abel*. You would obviously agree with that since you say some very nice things about the book right there on its cover. It begins with his principle of analogy, where he advises taking the middle road between too easily opting for the utopian vision that's only for the afterlife, or for the other extreme of thinking that we can actually bring it about that there is no more violence in our world. In steering the middle road with his way of normative description, I think he really lays out the intellectual conversion that is needed, specifically the transformation of the apocalyptic imagination into the eschatological imagination. Near the end of his book he takes on the issue of hell and universal salvation in a section on hope. He sees this as the needed rupture in the system.

Another point that I wanted to lift up, a point that was important for me even though you didn't talk about it much in your oral presentation just now, was the issue of the Constantinian turn. I guess I have to make a confession that I'm probably one of those people who has been rather naïvely oversimplistic about taking that Constantinian turn at face value, assuming too uncritically that for the first three centuries Christianity was basically a persecuted minority dedicated completely to nonviolence, and that, after Constantine, and on the way to becoming a majority, the Christian community turned away from its dedication to nonviolence. So I wanted to lift up that part of your paper as a helpful corrective to me, and hopefully to all of us, to be more realistic about those pictures in history.

But on the other hand, I also wanted to comment on the danger involved in trying to introduce correctives; sometimes we overcorrect. In other words, in attempting to correct an overvaluing of the nonviolence of the first three centuries, we might begin to undervalue it. I sense that there was a bit of that in your paper, especially in the way you mentioned a couple of times that those early Christians didn't have the option to take on violence as a strategy anyway, because they were a minority. They simply didn't have the power to do it. Part of me wants to say, well, isn't that the point? Isn't that, in other words, a good reason for taking on a strategy of nonviolence? Gandhi, for example, was very straightforward about this. Why, he would ask, use a violent strategy anyway?—since we don't have the power nor any hope against the forces of the British empire arrayed against us—so let's take a different strategy. I think that can become a positive reason, especially at a conference with mimetic theory and scapegoating theory at its center. Is there an importance in the Constantinian turn—at least in going from the minority to the majority—in terms of understanding the dynamics of minority and majority anthro-

pologically, in other words that unanimity minus one? The majority tends to sacrifice the minority; that's the anthropology of it. I tend to like the way James Alison puts it. Yesterday, for example, he put it in terms of making sense of revelation from a place of weakness. When you're in the minority, doesn't that more easily present the opportunity of having revelation come to you precisely because you are in that place of weakness? Isn't this what Andrew McKenna means by the epistemological priority of the victim, the epistemological privilege of being in the minority position? Again there was value in your correction that, even though Christians were a minority in those first three centuries, they weren't always a persecuted minority. We have to be clear about that and avoid the naïvete of thinking that they were completely devoid of power and position all of the time. But we do need to attend more closely to the dynamic of what happens when one goes from the minority to the majority, and to attend more carefully to precisely what that place of privilege in weakness is.

I'd like to close with this. For Christians this is the feast of the Ascension. The readings for the feast, which some of us heard this morning call up the issue that we talked about yesterday, the realities of weakness and strength. With the Ascension, these two moments are separated: on the one hand the cross and the descending into hell, and on the other, the rising from the dead and the ascending into heaven. Recall one of the verses from today's reading: "God put this power to work in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in heavenly places far above all rule and authority and power and dominion and above every name that is named." Now that's power, that's strength; and the irony of it is that we see this power and strength in one who is crucified. In John's theologizing about it, those two moments aren't separated, they come together. The ascension begins in the lifting up of the cross itself. The moment of coming into God's glory and God's power begin at the moment of the lifting up of the cross, and then continues. The moment of the ascension, then, is not separated in John's theology. On Easter morning he tells Mary Magdalene: "Don't touch me, don't hold onto me, I'm not yet finished ascending to the Father." But the whole irony of what this world sees as weakness—with that dynamic of unanimity plus one—what this world sees as weakness is where God chooses to manifest power and strength through the unconditional love of Christ.

I'd like to finish now with something I'd like to hear more about from you, if there is time and interest. It wasn't in your paper, but I know about your scholarship and your studies on the Eucharist and on the institution of

the Eucharist. We're talking about violence and institution, and Eucharist is our central institution in the Christian Church. So, how does the Eucharist and our practice of the Eucharist relate to our conference theme? How does that relate to our faithfulness in terms of issues of violence? For instance, recall where you talked about the continuing Christian minority and about that place of weakness, in the history after Constantine. There you named the anti-Crusade groups and the radical reformation churches such as the Quakers and the Mennonites. Now the Quakers and the Mennonites are viewed by us sacramental churches as being relatively nonsacramental. Were they experiencing the institution of the Eucharist as something oppressive?—as something violent, and thus to be avoided? In contrast to the Catholics and the Lutherans and the Episcopalians, their church life involved almost a letting go of the sacraments. And yet, if for the main line churches the sacraments are to be our central institutions, we have to ask what their role has been in the history of Christianity and violence. That's a question I'd like to see explored.

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

The discussion moderator (Diane Culbertson) asked the highlighting question: "Do we understand what is at stake and the urgency of the Christian message?"

Sandor Goodhart then remarked, in the context of talking about the conversion to love, that "what one needs is to think about the confession ...of ownership of violence, the way that I participate in violence so that I can then enable the possibility of a return to a relationship with God that moves away from this deviant path."

Regarding the ease with which Christians accept ultimate violence, eternal punishment for the damned, Suzanne Proulx asked: "Has the notion of a final retribution served as a way of deferring our own violent revenge, rather than incorporating it?" I.e., the idea of God as judge and executioner protecting us from the specter of total violence.

Charles McCarthy recalled the prayer of Elie Wiesel: "God of mercy, I plead with you not to have mercy on those who created this place [Auschwitz]," and exhorted us to get beyond a possible attitude of nonseriousness in this regard, and recognize the tension between the understanding of forgiveness in Wiesel's prayer and Jesus' "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." What place does truth have in the Girardian theory? Also, whatever the practice, the Church did not preach or teach a defense of violence in the first three centuries.

Aloysius Lugira then urged Christian theologians and "religiologists" to reflect on the violence in sub-Saharan Africa, a region whose population is predominantly Christian, and on the fact that the munitions used there have been pumped into that region by Western Christian industrial producers.

"Universalism" (speaker unidentified) raises the issue of the in-group and the out-group, and how difficult it is for our imaginations to accept the out-group. E.g., people were less upset by Caravaggio's using a prostitute

and her child as models for the virgin mother and child, than by his including "poor pilgrims in their everyday reality" in the painting. OK to inclusivity, as long as it's "not at my table!" It is not easy to imagine and live a vision of true inclusivity.

Britton Johnston thanked Nuechterlein for bringing up the issue of sacramentalism. In pastoral situations, issues of retribution, and ultimately, theodicy, constantly recur. How do/can we truly reconcile (1) God all good and loving; (2) God all-powerful; (3) bad things happening; process theology; looking to an afterlife where things will be set right; Buddhist reincarnation; Presbyterian/Augustinian predestination; Unitarian-Universalist/everybody gets rewarded? "What I think I understand Girard to be saying is that retribution is mostly just an excuse to punish people ..." A suggested direction: "...if we get rid of retribution as an issue, universalism isn't necessary as a solution, and neither is predestination. ...universalism is a problem because it still thinks in terms of retribution... in the background."

Lisa Bellan-Boyer identified two "gaping holes" in Daly's historical outline: (1) the Church in relation to women, and (2) regarding no. 31, the seamless ethic of life: the violence that can come from an extreme anti-abortion position, and that is already[e.g. the AIDS epidemic in Africa]coming from the Vatican's complicity in blocking progress from reproductive freedom for women worldwide.

(Unidentified) Regarding Nuechterlein's raising the sacramental issues, I ask "whether the non-sacramental character of the Radical Reformation was a response to [Holy] Communion being a model not only of heaven but also a model of hell, inasmuch as excommunication is a synonym for damnation?" Daly immediately acknowledged that Eucharist has been used as a means of power in the Church.

Vern Neufeld Redekop: If we are to replace retribution, then replace it with either restoration of relationships or recreation of relationships. Important along the line is that perpetrators of violence need to self-disclose, show remorse. E.g., I, as a Mennonite, remembering that Ukrainian Mennonites who were exempt under the Russians but formed a Mennonite army when the Germans came in, must acknowledge that not all in the Peace Churches have had clean hands. I cannot judge Elie Wiesel because "what is said is not only what is said but where and when it is said." Maybe if we acknowledged that we (Christians) should have known what we were doing he might have been able to pray a little differently. Although pacifists, we must still honor the warriors who have fallen. I



appreciate the statement (just) made about women; and we do, as Western Christians, have to examine our responsibility for what has happened in the Great Lakes region of Africa.

Paul Bellan-Boyer pointed out an additional hole in Daly's historical outline; it runs all the way through the first 35 items: "the way the Church in its own internal relations is complicitous with violence, the way the Church exercises authority." Distinguishing the normative and the prescriptive is helpful, but "often people point to the normative as an excuse for the descriptive."

Daly acknowledged that his outline was lacking in regard to women, and that it probably would have been less so if written by a woman. He added that the final sentence of his no. 23 was an obviously inadequate reference to the Church's internal abuse of power.

Alice Carter pointed to the need for a definition of salvation that is more than transactional, and for us, without yielding to despair, to accept the responsibility for having gotten the gospel wrong for two thousand years.

Christopher Ives, on the ethics of life, and the "gospel of life" as preached by the current pope—the culture of life versus the culture of death—admits to being scared by the polarizing dualism involved in such thinking and speaking, because of the violence that so often seems to have flowed from that kind of life/death dualistic language. Also want to suggest that the Church's anti-contraception stance may actually be a pro-death standpoint and one that is—in the context of consumption, pollution, overpopulation, and planetary environmental havoc—complicit with violence.

Julie Shinnick, on theodicy and the reality of suffering: "Victims need recognition of their pain and suffering. They need acknowledgement. They need healing. They need forgiveness. They need reparations. They need other things too. Perpetrators need recognition of the suffering caused. I, the perpetrator, need healing. I need acknowledgement of what I have caused." In other words, there is a symmetry between the positions of victims and perpetrators.

Kurt Richardson, speaking as a Baptist: "It's no fun to be right about hell." "McCarthy's statements get at the heart of our struggle with the gospel." Resonate with Wiesel's statement. Try to make sense of the martyrs in the Apocalypse apparently crying out to the God of mercy for retribution and vengeance. How do we deal with the fact that "following Jesus includes, at least textually, very very poignant statements about

retribution."?

At the end of the discussion, Daly expressed his appreciation for the comments made. Nuechterlein added further comment on Wiesel's prayer: (1) esp. that it begins with the address "God of mercy," (2) that we might better compare it with Abraham's (Genesis 18) pleading for Sodom, and (3) that if we are thinking about hell, then, with James Alison, not as "a place for other people but as a possible place for me."

The moderator ended the discussion period with Elie Wiesel's "Heaven is also when the victim will also rise up to embrace his murderer."

# WORKING WARFARE AND ITS RESTRICTIONS IN THE JEWISH TRADITION

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The test case for any political theory of checks and balances is war. It also tests the outer limits of the ethical deployment of power.

## I. Types of Wars

**T**he Jewish ethics of war focuses on two issues: its legitimization and its conduct. The Talmud classifies wars according to their source of legitimization. Biblically mandated wars are termed mandatory (*milhemet mitzvah* or *milhemet hovah*). Wars undertaken at the discretion of the Sanhedrin are termed discretionary (*milhemet reshut*).

There are three types of mandatory wars: Joshua's war of conquest against the seven Canaanite nations, the war against Amaleq, and defensive wars against an already launched attack. Discretionary wars are usually expansionary efforts undertaken to enhance the political prestige of the government or to secure economic gain.

The first type of mandatory war is only of historical interest as the Canaanite nations lost their national identity already in ancient times. This ruling, which appears repeatedly in rabbinic literature, is part of a tendency to blunt the impact of the seven-nations policy. The Bible points out that these policies were not implemented even during the zenith of ancient Israel's power (Kings 9:20; 2 Chr 8:7-9; see also Judges 1:21-33, Ps 106:34). Indeed, an ancient *Midrash* explicitly excludes the possibility of transferring the seven-nations ruling to other non-Jewish residents of the Land of Israel. Maimonides is just as explicit in emphasizing that all trace

of them has vanished. By limiting the jurisdiction of the seven-nations ruling to the conditions of ancient Canaan it was effectively removed from the postbiblical ethical agenda and vitiated as a precedent for contemporary practice.

The second category of mandatory war, against Amaleq, has also been rendered operationally defunct by comparing them with the Canaanites, or by postponing the battle to the immediate premessianic struggle, or by viewing them as a metaphor for genocidal evil.

The two remaining categories, reactive defensive wars (which are classified as mandatory) and expansionary wars (which are classified as discretionary) remain intact. So, for example, King David's response to the Philistine attack are designated *mandatory*, whereas his wars "to expand the border of Israel" are designated *discretionary*. Intermediate wars such as preventive, anticipatory, or preemptive defy so neat a classification. Not only are the classifications debated in the Talmud, but commentators disagree on the categorization of the differing positions in the Talmud.

The major clash occurs between the eleventh century Franco-German scholar Rashi and the thirteenth century Franco-Provencal scholar Meiri. According to Rashi, the majority position considers preemptive action to be discretionary whereas the minority position expounded by Rabbi Judah considers it to be mandatory.

According to Meiri, a preemptive strike, against an enemy who it is feared might attack or who is already known to be preparing for war is deemed mandatory by the majority of the rabbis, but discretionary by Rabbi Judah. Accordingly, Rabbi Judah defines a counterattack as mandatory only in response to an already launched attack. A similar reading of Maimonides also limits the mandatory classification to a defensive war launched in response to an attack.

With these distinctions between mandatory and discretionary wars in mind, we should be able to investigate the Jewish concerns with the problematics of war by focusing on preemptive strikes, declarations of war, ethics of warfare, and draftability.

## II. Preemptive Strikes as Self-Defense

Not only Machiavellians view the security and survival of the state as nonnegotiable. National self-defense is as much a moral right as is personal self-preservation. Whereas it is clear that offensive war cannot be subsumed under the inalienable right of self-defense, the moral status of pre-emptive attacks is not as clear. Is the moral category of self-defense

limited to an already launched attack? The majority talmudic position, according to Rashi, and that of Rabbi Judah, according to Meiri, would answer in the affirmative. Their position is seconded by Article 51 of the United Nations Charter, which states: "Nothing in the present Charter shall impair the inherent right of individual of collective self-defense if an armed attack occurs against a member."

The minority position of Rabbi Judah, according to Rashi, and the majority position, according to Meiri, however, hold that a preemptive strike against an enemy amassing for attack is close enough to a defensive counterattack to be categorized as mandatory. This position holds that to wait for an actual attack might so jeopardize national security as to make resistance impossible. Such an argument was championed by Lord Chancellor Kilmuir before the British House of Lords when he remarked with reference to Article 51: "It would be a travesty of the purpose of the Charter to compel a defending state to allow its opponents to deliver the first fatal blow" (Lauterpacht 531). This judgment lies behind the endorsement by The United States House Appropriations Committee of the concept of a preemptive attack. Its conclusions were formulated as follows:

In the final analysis, to effectively deter a would-be aggressor, we should maintain our armed forces in such a way and with such an understanding that should it ever become obvious that an attack upon us or our allies is imminent, we can launch an attack before the aggressor has hit either us or our allies. This is an element of deterrence which the United States should not deny itself. No other form of deterrence can be relied upon. (Lauterpacht 533)

This understanding of anticipatory defense allows for a counterattack before the initial blow falls. Under the terms of modern warfare, for example, if an enemy were to launch a missile attack, the target country could legitimately retaliate even if the enemy's missiles were still inside their borders. The doctrine of anticipatory defense allows for a preemptive strike even if the missiles are still on their launching pads as long as the order has been issued for their launching.

### **III. The Decision to Wage War: Who Is Authorized to Declare War?**

Discretionary war, as opposed to mandatory war, requires the involvement of the Sanhedrin. Among the reasons for involving the Sanhedrin in the decision-making process is its role as the legal

embodiment of popular sovereignty, the *edah* in biblical terms.<sup>1</sup> Understanding this to imply that the high court was the legal equivalent of "the community of Israel as a whole" (see Blidstein 58), Maimonides uses interchangeably the expressions "according to the majority of Israel" and "according to the high court." Similarly, former Chief Rabbi of Israel, Shlomo Goren, explained that the requirement to secure the Sanhedrin's approval in a discretionary war derives from its representative authority. The involvement of the Sanhedrin in a discretionary war safeguards the citizenry from being endangered without the approval of their representative body.

The Sanhedrin is also involved because of its role as the authoritative interpreter of the Torah-constitution. Since the judicial interpretation for the law is structurally separate from its executive enforcement, the Sanhedrin serves as a check on executive power.

The involvement of the Sanhedrin in discretionary wars helps explain the obligation of citizens to participate. Military obligation is anchored in the biblical perspective that considers the people and the monarch to be bound by a covenant, each with its own obligations (2 Kings 11-17; 2 Chr 23:3; 2Sam 5:3). Presumably, statehood involves a pact of mutuality. On the one hand, the people commit themselves to the support of the state and its ruler. On the other hand, the ruler is forsworn to uphold the constitution and not to unnecessarily risk their lives. Allocating some war-making authority to the Sanhedrin guarantees the presence of a countervailing force to the ruler thereby safeguarding the inviolability of the social contract.

Before granting authorization to wage war, the Sanhedrin must weigh the probable losses, consider the chances of success, and assess the will of the people. As David Bleich writes:

"The Sanhedrin is charged with assessing the military, political and economic reality and determining whether a proposed war is indeed necessary and whether it will be successful in achieving its objectives."

Since wars are always costly in lives, the losses have to be measured against the chance of success. Preventive warfare is unwarranted if the

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<sup>1</sup>B. *Sanhedrin* 16a. For the biblical material, see Abraham Malamat, "Organs of Statecraft in the Israelite Monarchy," in *The Biblical Archaeologist Reader* 3, eds. E. F. Campbell, Jr. and D. N. Freedman (Garden City, N.Y. 1970) 167f.

number of lives saved does not significantly exceed the number of lives jeopardized. Calculations of victory alone are not determinative; the price of victory must be considered. The great third century Babylonian talmudic authority Mar Samuel deemed a government liable to charges of misconduct if its losses exceeded one-sixth of the fighting forces. Thus in addition to projecting future losses a government is required to take precautions to limit them.

Nonetheless, as is well known, precision in military projections is well-nigh impossible. The gap between plan and execution characterizes the best of military calculations. Linear plans almost always fail to deal with the nonlinear world that rules strategy and war. Rabbi Eleazar in talmudic times noted, "Any war that involves more than sixty thousand is necessarily chaotic." Modern warfare has not significantly changed the equation. In the words of Prussian Field Marshal Helmuth von Moltke, "No plan can survive contact with the battle."

The *Talmud* and *Midrash* provide several considerations for the exclusion of the ruler from making these judgments alone. They can be divided into two categories. One, a ruler may be too prone to go to war; two, he may be too hesitant to go to war. With regard to the first, a ruler, may be insufficiently disinterested, predisposed to perceive war as an opportunity for enhancing personal prestige, for stimulating the economy, or for consolidating his political base. As the *Talmud* notes, nothing diverts public attention and deflects the opposition while simultaneously creating the need for a strong leader as war. Reflecting a similar insight, Josephus, well aware of the machinations of opportunistic rulers, pointed out that the biblical laws of warfare are meant to deter conquest by preventing war "waged for self-aggrandizement" (*Contra Apion* II.272 and 292).

With regard to the second, a ruler may be too reluctant to commit his army for fear of incurring excessive financial burdens. The *Talmud* justifies excluding the ruler from some of the deliberations out of this fear that the expense of maintaining a standing army could unduly influence his judgment. In a government where the executive is responsible for balancing the budget similar considerations would obtain. There is also the concern that executive dilly-dallying might become a ruse to extend one's tenure in office (*Numbers Rabbah* 22:6).

In sum, before the populace may be endangered, the ruler's reasons for waging war have to be checked by the Sanhedrin's assessment of the people's interest. The Sanhedrin's participation is imperative. Being the more disinterested party, it is better positioned to assess the people's

interest. Such a system of countervailing powers allows the interest of the state and the interest of the people to achieve a modicum of equilibrium.

#### IV. The Ethical Conduct of War

##### A. *Who is subject to immunity; what is subject to destruction*

The estimation of one's own losses and one's own interest is insufficient for validating discretionary war. The total destruction ratio required for victory must be considered. This assessment involves a "double intention," that is, the "good" must appear achievable and the "evil" reducible. For example, before laying siege to a city, a determination must be made whether it can be captured without destroying it. There is no warrant for destroying a town for the purpose of "saving" it.

The other rules for sieges follow similar lines of thought: Indefensible villages may not be subjected to siege. Negotiations with the enemy must precede subjecting a city to hunger, thirst, or disease for the purpose of exacting a settlement. Emissaries of peace must be sent to a hostile city for three days. If the terms are accepted, no harm may befall any inhabitants of the city. If the terms are not accepted, the siege is still not to begin until the enemy has commenced hostilities. Even after the siege is laid, no direct cruelties against the inhabitants may be inflicted, and a side must be left open as an escape route.

Philo warns that national vendettas are not justifications for wars. If a city under siege sues for peace it is to be granted. Peace, albeit with sacrifices, he says, is preferable to the horrors of war. But peace means peace. "If," he continues, "the adversaries persist in their rashness to the point of madness, they [the besiegers] must proceed to the attack invigorated by enthusiasm and having in the justice of their cause an invincible ally" (*The Special Laws* IV.221). Although the purpose of an army at war is to win, both Philo and the ancient rabbis rejected the claim of military necessity as an excuse for military excess. Despite the goal of victory, indeed victory with all due haste, aimless violence or wanton destruction is to be eschewed. As the Spanish commentator Nahmanides makes clear, acts of destruction are warranted only insofar as they advance the goal of victory. Weapons calculated to produce suffering disproportionate to the military advantage are not countenanced.

Excessive concern with moral niceties, however, can be morally counterproductive. When moral compunction appears as timidity and moral fastidiousness as squeamishness, they invite aggression. To ensure that moral preparedness be perceived from a position of strength, it must be



coupled with military preparedness.

Philo, reflecting this concern for the military ambiguity of moral scruples, sounds a note of caution in his summary of the biblical doctrine of defense:

All this shows clearly that the Jewish nation is ready for agreement and friendship with all like-minded nations whose intentions are peaceful, yet is not of the contemptible kind which surrenders through cowardice to wrongful aggression. (*The Special Laws* IV.224)

Much of the moral discussion of the conduct of the war derives from the prohibition in Deuteronomy 20:19-20 against axing fruit-bearing trees in the environs of the besieged city. The principal points deal with the issues of wanton destruction and the immunity of the noncombatant.

So, for example, Philo extends the prohibition against axing fruit-bearing trees to include vandalizing the environs of the besieged city:

Indeed, so great a love for justice does the law instill in those who live under its constitution that it does not even permit the fertile soil of a hostile city to be outraged by devastation or by cutting down trees to destroy the fruits." (*The Special Laws* IV.226)

In a similar vein, Josephus expands on the prohibition to include the incineration of the enemy's country and the killing of beasts employed in labor (*Contra Apion* II.212-24). Despoiling the countryside without direct military advantage comes under the proscription of profligate destruction.

Maimonides takes the next step in extending the prohibition to exclude categorically all wanton destruction:

Also, one who smashes household goods, tears clothes, demolishes a building, stops up a spring, or destroys articles of food with destructive intent, transgresses the command "You shall not destroy."

According to *Sefer Ha-Hinukh*, *mitzvah* #529, the prohibition was meant "to teach us to love the good and the purposeful and to cleave to it so that the good will cleave to us and we will distance ourselves from anything evil and destructive." If the destructive urges provoked by war against nonhuman objects can be controlled, there is a chance of controlling the destructive urge against humans. The link between these two forms the

basis of two *a fortiori* arguments for the immunity of noncombatants.

The first argument for the immunity of noncombatants is grounded in the biblical prohibition against axing fruit trees during a siege. Since the prohibition against their destruction can be formulated in a rhetorical manner, to wit, "Are trees of the field human to withdraw before you under siege?" (Deuteronomy 20:19), it is deduced that just as a tree had it fled would not be chopped down, so a person were he to flee should not be cut down. The logic of the argument is spelled out by the sixteenth-century Safedean exegete, Moses Alshikh. After mentioning the prohibition against the wanton destruction of trees, he notes, "all the more so it is fitting that he have mercy on his children and on his creatures."

The second argument is rooted in the ruling that a fourth side of a besieged city be left open. It is unclear whether the motive here is humanitarian or tactical. Whatever the case, the opportunity to escape saps the resolve of the besieged to continue fighting. Otherwise, as the fifteenth century Spanish-Italian exegete, Abarbanel, observes, they will out of desperation take heart "and seek to avenge themselves before they die... since one who despairs of life and well-being will risk his life to strike his enemy a great blow." Thus it is important to take measures to ensure that the chance to flee not be exploited for the sake of regrouping to mount rear attacks.

Now, if (unarmed) soldiers have the chance of becoming refugees, then surely noncombatants and other neutrals do. The principle may be stated as no harm to those who intend no harm. Thus Abarbanel says with regard to the immunity of women and children, "Since they are not making war they do not deserve to die in it." Similarly, the *Midrash* explains that the fear of Abraham noted in Genesis 15:1 was due to him saying, "Perhaps it is the case that among those troops whom I killed there was a righteous man or a God-fearer" (*Genesis Rabbah* 44:4). As noted, the principle of the immunity of noncombatants discriminates in favor of those who have done no harm. Even this principle that those who intend no harm should not be harmed is derived, according to Philo, from the case of the fruit tree: "Does a tree, I ask you, show ill will to the human enemy that it should be pulled up roots and all, to punish it for ill which it has done or is ready to do to you?" (*The Special Laws* IV.224). Obviously, the immunity of non-combatants cannot be sacrificed on the altar of military necessity.

In sum, as Philo notes:

The Jewish nation when it takes up arms, distinguishes between those whose life is one of hostility, and the reverse. For to breathe slaughter against all, even those who have done very little or nothing amiss, shows what I should call a savage and brutal soul. (*The Special Laws* IV.224-25)

From the limitations of sieges it can be extrapolated that weapons directed primarily at civilian targets would be proscribed. As such the military option of counter-people warfare in conventional war as well as mutually assured destruction (MAD) in nuclear warfare would be precluded. Multi megaton weapons whose primary goal is civilian slaughter and only secondarily military targets would be totally proscribed. As there are unacceptable weapons, so are there unacceptable targets.

#### **B. The human dimension in war: the image of the soldier and the humanity of the enemy**

These ethical intrusions in the waging of war have two major foci: safeguarding the moral character of the soldier and preserving the human image of the enemy.

Any system that appreciates the realities of both the moral life and the military faces a dilemma in promoting the moral perfection of the individual while allowing for military involvement. Some systems forswear war as the price of moral excellence. Others apportion the moral life and the military life to different segments of the population. If the two are mutually exclusive, then a division of labor is a possible solution.

Neither alternative is totally acceptable in Jewish ethical theory. Regarding forswearing war, Maimonides pointed out that it was "the neglect of the art of warfare that brought about conquest, destruction, and exile" at the time of the Second Jewish Commonwealth. Clearly Maimonides would find it, in the words of Abba Eban, "hard to see why the advocates of unilateral renunciation are more moral than those who seek to prevent war by a reciprocal balance of deterrents and incentives" (Eban 325). Solutions to conflict have to be judged by their effectiveness as well as by their virtue (see Proverbs 20:18). Indeed, there is no reason to concede, as Eban continues, "that prevention of conflict by effective deterrence [is] less moral than the invitation to conflict by avoidable imbalance" (Eban 325). For deterrence to be credible, the capacity to make war must be credible. Paradoxically, as Raymond Aron notes, "the possibility of unlimited violence restrains the use of violence without any threats even being proffered" (Aron 345).

As noted, unilateral disarmament cannot be judged morally superior if it invites attack. A policy of abdication of power that results in condemning others to subjugation has a questionable moral basis. Since political naïveté can result in moral sin, Maimonides concludes his critique of the political sagacity of ancient Israel's leaders lamenting, "Our fathers have sinned, but they are no more."

While a division of labor on ethical lines is always a possibility, those who reject solutions predicated on the exemption of the ethical elites from the maintenance work of society have struggled with the challenge of sustaining the moral stature of the soldier.

These ethicists have focused on the brutalization of character that inevitably results from the shedding of blood in wartime. Indeed, as mentioned, Philo explained the prohibition against slaying the defenseless out of concern with the savagery of the soul of the soldier; whereas the *Midrash* even condemned a king for the ruthless slaying of an enemy. In the thirteenth century, Nahmanides, who elsewhere expressed his apprehension that "the most refined of people become possessed with ferocity and cruelty when advancing upon the enemy," opined that the Torah wants the soldier to "learn to act compassionately with our enemies even during wartime." In the fourteenth century, *Sefer Ha-Hinukh* (*Mitzvah* #527) explained the requirement to leave open a fourth side of a besieged city saying, "the quality of compassion is a good attribute and it is appropriate for us, the holy seed, to behave accordingly in all our matters even with our idolatrous enemies" (*Mitzvah* #527). Isaac Arama noted, in the next century, that since "War is impossible without murder and hatred of humanity...and there is nothing like it to undermine all sense of right and wrong" (*Aqedat Yishaq, sha'ar* 81, 4:104b), that the Torah requires "the fighter be a man of peaceful intentions" (*ibid.* 93, 5:74a). In the eighteenth century, Ayyim Attar underscored how killing, however justified, "gives birth to a brutalization of sensibilities," requiring special divine grace to be palliated.

In the nineteenth century, Samuel David Luzzato argued that since the Torah's purpose is to strengthen the forces of compassion and to counter the natural drive for only self-serving acts, it is concerned that we not become ingrates by casting stones into the well from which we drink. Such would be the case if, after eating the fruit of a tree, we were to chop down that very tree. Such agonizing over the moral stature of the soldier is summed up in the twentieth century in the words of former Justice Haim Cohen of the Israeli Supreme Court, "It seems that constant violence, even in self-defense, is not easily compatible with moral sensitivity" (Cohen 332). All

the more reason to promulgate an ethic of soldiery in order to limit any skewing of the balance between military and moral competence.

The concern with the humanity of the enemy is also a significant issue. Referring to Deuteronomy 21:10ff., Josephus says the legislator of the Jews commands "showing consideration even to declared enemies. He...forbids even the spoiling of fallen combatants; he has taken measures to prevent outrage to prisoners of war, especially women" (*Contra Apion* II.212-13). Apparently reflecting a similar sensibility, R. Joshua claimed that his biblical namesake took pains to prevent the disfigurement of fallen Amaleqites, whereas David brought glory to Israel by giving burial to his enemies. It is this consideration for the humanity of the enemy that forms the basis of Philo's explanation for the biblical requirement in Numbers 31:19 of expiation for those who fought against Midian. He writes:

For though the slaughter of enemies is lawful, yet one who kills a man, even if he does so justly and in self-defense and under compulsion, has something to answer for, in view of the primal common kinship of mankind. And therefore, purification was needed for the slayers, to absolve them from what was held to have been a pollution. (Moses I.314)

Since, alas, there are times when evil has to be used to hold evil in check, the problem, as Rabbi Abraham Kook noted, is how to engage in evil without becoming so. His solution requires even the righteous to be constantly involved in repentance. In a similar vein, Philo, as noted above, requires rites of expiation even after necessary evils. Since there is no war without evil either because killing can never be deemed a good, or because war inevitably entails unnecessary killing there is no war that does not require penance. This explains, according to some, why the slaying that ensued after the Golden Calf episode required acts of expiation. The ongoing dialectic between the demands of conscience and the exigencies of the hour was caught by Martin Buber in the following words:

It is true that we are not able to live in perfect justice, and in order to preserve the community of man, we are often compelled to accept wrongs in decisions concerning the community. But what matters is that in every hour of decision we are aware of our responsibility and summon our conscience to weigh exactly how much is necessary to preserve the community, and accept just so much and no more; that we not

interpret the demands of a will-to-power as a demand made by life itself; that we do not make a practice of setting aside a certain sphere in which God's command does not hold, but regard those actions as against his command, forced on us by the exigencies of the hour as painful sacrifices; that we do not salve, or let others salve our conscience when we make decisions concerning public life. (Buber 246f.)

Buber stands in the tradition that brooks no compromise with the idea that, whatever the pretext, necessary evils remain evils.

### **C. The principle of purity of arms**

Those concerns for the moral quotient of the soldier and the life of the enemy inform the "purity of arms" doctrine of the Israel Defense Forces. The doctrine of purity of arms limits killing to necessary and unavoidable situations. Although the expression was apparently coined by the Labor-Zionist ideologue Berl Katznelson, it was former Prime Minister David Ben Gurion who made it a dogma of the Israel Defense Forces. How successfully it has been maintained under wartime conditions is illustrated by the following account of an Israeli unit entering Nablus during the Six-Day War:

I entered first into Nablus after the tanks...There were many people with guns...I said to the battalion CO: "There are many people here with guns, to shoot or not to shoot?" Then he said to me, "Don't shoot." It could have been that several casualties could have been avoided afterwards if they would have gone straight into the city firing...The battalion CO, furthermore, got on the field telephone to my company and said, "Don't touch the civilians...don't fire until you're fired at and don't touch the civilians. Look, you've been warned. Their blood be on your heads."...The boys in the company kept talking about it afterwards... . They kept repeating the words...."Their blood be on your heads." (Shapira 132)

According to Israeli colonel Meir Pail, the purity of arms doctrine maintains the moral stature of the soldier without seriously compromising his fighting capacity:

There can be no doubt that the turning toward extreme and consummate humanism can endanger the I.D.F.'s [Israel Defense

Forces] ability to function, but experience has proved that the proportions of this danger are extremely small and that it does not constitute a phenomenon that really endangers the operative capacity and the efficiency of the defense forces. (Pa'il 215)

#### **D. Summary**

A consistent thread weaves its way from biblical ordinance through medieval reflection to modern practice, as noted by exponents throughout the ages. Just because an army is legitimately repelling an aggressor does not allow it to wreak havoc with civilian life. The warrior is the enemy, not the noncombatant civilian. A just war does not justify unjust acts. There must be a consonance between means and goal. If peace is the goal, the reality of war is to be conditioned by the vision of the reconciliation between the warring populations. In this sense, education for peace forms part of military engagement.

#### **V. Imposing on mandatory wars the limitations of discretionary war**

Many of these considerations for maintaining the moral stature of the soldier and the humanity of the enemy received their initial stimulus from those biblical passages on war that have been categorized as discretionary. Nonetheless, many of them became applicable to mandatory wars. Although the better-known tendency distinguishes between the two types of war, the inclination to underscore the overlap between them figures significantly in the classical discussion.

This drive toward moral convergence between the two types of war finds its roots in the Bible. Thus, in 1 Samuel 15:6, provisions are made to evacuate neutrals from the battle area even in the biblically mandated war against Amaleq.

In addition to some moral considerations, the two types of war share strategic considerations. Since the statement by Rabbi Eleazar in the *Midrash* about the chaotic nature of warfare derives from the numbers involved in the conquest of the Land of Israel, it follows that even the mandatory war of the original conquest of Israel required a weighing of victory against losses not unlike those of discretionary wars.

The *Midrash* traces the blurring of the distinctions between the two types of war back to the Torah. It finds in the following dialogue a way of parrying the assumption that overtures of peace are limited to discretionary wars:

God commanded Moses to make war on Sihon, as it is said,

"Engage him in battle" (Deuteronomy 2:24), but he did not do so. Instead he sent messengers...to Sihon ...with an offer of peace (Deuteronomy 2:26). God said to him: "I command you to make war with him, but instead you began with peace: by your life, I shall confirm your decision. Every war upon which Israel enters shall begin with an offer of peace."

Since Joshua is said to have extended such an offer to the Canaanites, and Numbers 27:21 points out Joshua's need for applying to the priestly Urim and Tumim to assess the chances of victory, it is evident that also divinely-commanded wars are predicated on overtures of peace as well as on positive assessments of the outcome. Even in the mandatory war against Amaleq, as mentioned, the fallen were not disfigured. Finally, as discretionary wars require the assent of the Sanhedrin, so mandatory wars require the concurrence of priestly appurtenances. In any event, chief executives lack *carte blanche* to commit their people to war.

The move to impose upon mandatory warfare some of the procedural or moral restraints of discretionary warfare counters the sliding scale argument, namely, the belief that "the greater the justice of one's cause, the more rights one has in battle."<sup>2</sup> The move from convictions of righteousness to feelings of self-righteousness is slight. The subsequent move of regarding the enemy population as beyond the pale of humanity is even slighter. Since this tendency is especially pronounced in ideologically and religiously motivated wars, any countermove is noteworthy.

The greater the blurring of distinctions between discretionary and mandatory war, the greater the chance of removing from the military agenda the option of total war. Strapping mandatory wars with some of the restrictions of discretionary wars precludes them from becoming holy wars. According to Yoder (26f.), holy wars differ from just wars in the following five respects: (1) holy wars are validated by a transcendent cause; (2) the cause is known by revelation; (3) the adversary has no rights; (4) the criterion of last resort need not apply; (5) it need not be winnable.

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<sup>2</sup>The expression and definition are found in Walzer 246.

<sup>3</sup>This is not the place to assess the propriety of imposing the Arabic term *jihad* "holy war" on the biblical material. Suffice it to say that the term is absent in the Bible, and that the phrase "wars of God" (Numbers 21:14; 1 Samuel 19:17; 25:28) has little to do with the rabbinic discussion of mandatory war. For a recent discussion of the terms, see Ben C. Ollenburger, "Gerhard von Rad's Theory of Holy War," which introduces the English translation of Gerhard von Rad's *Holy War in Ancient Israel* (Grand Rapids, 1991).



The above discussion illustrates how the antidotes to 3, 4, and 5 were woven into the ethical fabric of mandatory wars. To repeat, the fallen of Amaleq were not to be disfigured, the resort to war even against the Cannanites was only pursuant to overtures of peace, and even the chances of success against Midian were weighed by the Urim and Tumim. By replacing the category of holy war with that of mandatory war and subjecting it to many of the limitations of discretionary war, all war became subject to ethical restraint. Although a sliding scale of limited warfare is ethically feasible, an ethic of unlimited warfare is a contradiction in terms. It is therefore not surprising that the expression "holy war" is absent from the Jewish ethical or military lexicon.<sup>4</sup>

## **VI. Exemptions from Military Service**

The obligation of the citizen to participate in a mandatory defensive war flows from three assumptions. The first is that national defense is based on an analogue of individual self-defense (*Midrash Tanhuma, Pinhas*, 3, p. 90). The second is that the duty of national defense is derived from the verse, "Do not stand idly by the blood of your neighbor." The implication is that the duty to come to the rescue of compatriots under attack is comparable to the duty to intervene to rescue an individual from an assailant.

These two assumptions alone prove inadequate. With regard to the first, if escape is available, self-defense is optional not mandatory. Thus the domestic analogy on its own remains insufficient for extrapolating the right of national defense from the right of home defense. As for the second, while classical legal opinion is divided on the obligation of risking one's life for another all agree that there is no duty to save a life at the cost of life.

Justifying risk of life in the name of national defense requires the additional assumption that the duty to save the community mandates the risk of life, for if, as the *Midrash* states, "it is preferable that one life be in doubtful danger than all in certain danger" (*Genesis Rabbah* 91:10) then, as Maimonides notes, "The public welfare takes precedence over one's personal safety." "Indeed," according to Judah Halevy, "It is proper for the individual to bear worse than death to save the community" (*Kuzari* 3:19). The responsibility to defend the community increases when the community

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<sup>4</sup>How it got insinuated into Protestant biblical scholarship based on the model of the Islamic *Jihad* is a fascinating story but not ours here.

is the state whose mandate includes the protection of the total citizenry.

In a defensive war, the lives of the citizens are imperiled by the initial attack. Since the counterattack is undertaken to diminish the risk to life, it may be authorized by executive action. Such is not the case in discretionary wars, which, by seeking to extend the political or economic influence of the government, initially increase the peril to life. Even in a preemptive attack, according to one school of thought, the lack of imminent danger to the population precludes the executive from independently making the decision to endanger the lives of the citizenry. Thus the endorsement of a policy of war is left to the discretion of the Sanhedrin.

Since discretionary wars initially increase the peril to life, the deliberations of the Sanhedrin need to include the weighing of popular support in its endorsement. This does not imply a government by referendum. Even those who maintain that sovereignty ultimately rests with the community hold that during their tenure, representatives are authorized to express the collective will. Representative government is not government by the people, but government by their agents.

Nonetheless, concurrent with theories of majority rule are provisions for minority rights. As there is general agreement that the majority cannot impose unfair rules that discriminate against the minority, so there is a consensus that the majority has the right to impose on the minority in matters that are clearly for the benefit of the community. Legal opinion, however, is split on whether the minority can be imposed upon in those discretionary areas (*devar ha-reshut*) which though desired by the majority are not clearly for the benefit of the community as a whole.

Whether such provisions would apply in war is an open question. It would appear that once the government has complied with proper procedure, the individual would have no recourse but to fight. After all, if the duly constituted authorities have determined the necessity of war, who is the individual to review the government's decision? This surely holds in defensive wars where no one is exempt from self-defense, the duty to rescue others, and the obligation to defend the state that secures the well-being of all.

The question is whether these considerations apply equally in a discretionary war or whether majority rule is limited by the discretionary nature (*devar ha-reshut*) of the war and thus must meet the requirement of benefit to the community as a whole. Although these considerations are not made explicit, they may help us understand the peculiar biblical rules of warfare with regard to exemptions from military service.

According to the Torah, before commencing hostilities, the officials are to address the troops as follows:

Is there anyone who has built a new house but has not dedicated it...or planted a vineyard but has never harvested it...or spoken for a woman in marriage but has not married her...let him go back home, lest he die in battle and another...[do] it. The officials shall go on addressing the troops and say, is there anyone afraid and tender-hearted: Let him go back to his home, lest the courage of his comrades flag like his. (Deuteronomy 20:5-8)

Individuals in these categories are required to report for duty before being assigned alternative service.

Another category not only is exempt from reporting for duty but is excused from all alternative service such as provisions and weapon supply, road repair, special security expenditures, or even oversight of defensive installations. This category derives from the following verse: "When a man has taken a bride, he shall not go out with the army or be assigned to it for any purpose; he shall be exempt one year for the sake of his household, to give happiness to the woman he has married" (Deuteronomy 24:5).

According to the *Mishnah*, the absolute exemption of one year for one who has consummated his marriage applies also to "one who has built his house and dedicated it" as well as to "one who has planted a vineyard and harvested it" (*M. Sotah* 8:4).

All the exemptions are characterized by their universal access. There are no exemptions based on birth, on education, on professional class, or even on religious status. This fits the moral purpose of conscription, which is to universalize or randomize the risks of war across a generation of men. By not creating a special exclusion even for religion, the Torah underscores that when life is at stake there can be no respecting of persons.

The purpose of all of the exemptions is not made explicit, although the value of removing from the field those who cannot concentrate on the battle is noted. The presence of such people increases fatalities resulting from disarray and failure of nerve. Other explanations for the exemptions include the need to mitigate individual hardship, to give courage to those who remain, to maintain the sanctity of the camp, or to prevent depopulation of urban areas.

The talmudic rabbis understood each case as illustrative of a principle and extended the exemptions to cover four categories of handicaps: the

economic, the familial, the psycho-moral and the physical. Claims for economic and familial exemptions are subject to substantiation. The other two are assumed to be self-evident.

Although the psycho-moral exemption does not require independent confirmation, its meaning is far from self-evident. The Torah mentions two categories: "afraid" and "tender-hearted." According to Rabbi Yosi Hagalili, *afraid* means apprehensive about his sins; *tender-hearted* means fearful of war lest he be killed. According to Rabbi Akiva, *afraid* means fearful of war; *tender-hearted* means compassionate—apprehensive lest he kill. Taken together, there would be grounds for exempting the psychologically timid as well as the morally scrupulous.

Besides having to be substantiated, the economic and familial exemptions share another common denominator. Projects such as starting a house, planting the initial vineyard, or getting engaged mostly affect men in their prime, which is the age of maximum combat readiness (standard domestic triad; see Deut 28:30 and Jer. 29:5-6). Since in defeat these people have the most to lose, they would be most willing to fight a necessary war and most reluctant to engage in an unnecessary one. A large number of exemptions for this age group could so hamper mobilization efforts as to impair the military effort, as Nahmanides implies when he notes, "Were it not for [the requirement of substantiation], a majority of the people would seek exemption on false pretenses." Nahmanides' fears were borne out by the experience of the biblical judge Gideon, who, upon making provisions for the psycho-moral exemption, lost two-thirds of his fighting force (Judges 7:2-3).

But this is precisely the point. There is a loophole in the war legislation, a loophole so gaping that it allows those not convinced of the validity of the war to reassert their sovereignty through legal shenanigans. Doubts about the validity of the war will stir up their own social momentum and induce to seek wholesale exemptions. The result is a war declared by the executive and approved by the Sanhedrin which sputters because the populace has not been persuaded of its necessity.

Mobilization will fail without a high degree of popular support. Many will express their halfheartedness by dragging their feet in the hope of being, as the *Talmud* says, "the last to go to war and the first to return" (*B. Pesahim* 113a). When their lives are at stake the populace retains a semblance of sovereignty. By impairing the mobilization process, they end up passing judgment on the necessity of the military venture and on the legitimacy of the political ends. Without popular support, political ends

which endanger large parts of the population are *eo ipso* illegitimate.

In a similar vein, Abarbanel points out that those mobilized for war must go "willingly without coercion or duress." Arama also mandates "those who speak to the fighting forces to see whether they have accepted the risks of war." That this populace principle, as it were, is a factor in legitimating acts of state is evinced in the ruling that for conquered territory to enter the public domain the military venture must have commanded the approval of the majority. Notwithstanding the need to secure the approval of the Sanhedrin before incurring the risks of war, wars it appears still need to command popular legitimacy to be valid whether politically or morally.

One of the reasons it is so difficult to justify a non-defensive war is that Judaism makes it difficult to forgo one's sovereignty. Life and liberty are divine gifts not to be squandered. According to the Torah (Exodus 21:6) a person who chooses to remain a slave is to have his ear pierced with an awl. Rabbinic tradition saw in the piercing of the ear a symbolic punishment for forgoing one's divinely-given freedom:

Because the ear heard on Mount Sinai: For they are My servants, who I freed from the land of Egypt; they may not give themselves over into servitude" (Leviticus 25:42), and it divested itself of God's authority and accepted human authority—let it be pierced.

If such be the penalty for frittering away one's freedom, how much more so for frittering away one's life? The sense of being responsible for one's life works to prevent one from signing it over nonchalantly to a government. The demand to live by the Torah rather than die by it ensures that the decision to wage war be handled with the requisite gravity by both government and individual.

It follows that the resort to military force requires a moral as well as a political *raison d'être*. Otherwise the war effort risks being undermined by the morale of the very community that constitutes the resource of power. As former Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion noted, "two-thirds of military prowess is popular morale."

Since military success is as much a function of "staying power" as it is of "striking power," striking power is subject to both quantitative and qualitative assessments of military resources. Staying power, however, is a correlative of the strength of motivation which itself derives from unity of purpose and popular consensus with regard to national aspirations. The

result is that victory is not only a function of military might, and national resources, but also a product of the social fabric and the national will.

In sum, the issue is not just the proper use of force (*jus in bello*), but also the proper means of assessing whether to resort to force (*jus ad bellum*). Since such calculations exceed formal military considerations, official responsibilities for assessment lie with the Sanhedrin. Nonetheless, since large numbers of lives are at stake, there exists a legal technicality in the mobilization process that allows for discerning popular sentiment. As the justification for the war loses credibility, and the war itself loses popularity, so grows the likelihood of mass petitions for exemptions on dubious grounds. In the final analysis, the consent of those called upon to make the supreme sacrifice can weigh as heavily as the approval of the Sanhedrin.

Thus the greater the numbers of elements in the body politic needed to approve a war, the greater the check on unnecessary wars and their attendant abuses of power.

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# READING HALACHICALLY AND AGGADICALLY: A RESPONSE TO REUVEN KIMELMAN

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Professor Kimelman's talk is a hard act to follow. I also find myself in a difficult situation because this is the first moment in our gathering in which someone who is genuinely from outside the COV&R group has come in to speak to us. So there is always the potential for the activation of the processes of the sacred that we know all too well. We'll try to resist that activation, however, and I will attempt to offer my response to Professor Kimelman's paper with humor, although I may not always be entirely successful in my efforts.

## **Part I. Mandatory, discretionary, and holy warfare**

Professor Reuven Kimelman's paper, "Warfare and its Restrictions in the Jewish Tradition," is a testament to the author's erudition and deep knowledge of the Jewish tradition and in particular the Talmudic tradition on the matter of mandatory and discretionary warfare and its relation to ethical conduct. No one who reads Professor Kimelman or who hears him speak can come away without having learned something new, something that will in turn confer new knowledge in other areas and thus contribute to the overall understanding of Torah and thereby to the goal of the ancient Rabbis who compiled these halachic and aggadic materials which is to see Torah as a blueprint of the world. The paper is brimming with the understanding and references appropriate to the subject matter he has chosen to examine, and from the perspective from which he has chosen to read that subject matter.

But therein also lies its difficulty. The problem from my point of view is that it is difficult to see how, in the form in which I read his text two weeks ago, it has anything to say to Girardian theory, either in general, or



with specific relevance to this conference. Moreover, and this is perhaps more troublesome to me, steeped as his paper is within one major tradition of reading within Jewish history, namely, the legalistic tradition of Talmudic reading, it is difficult to see how his paper has anything to say to the other major tradition of reading within the history of Judaism, namely, the prophetic tradition.

Let me elaborate. It is difficult to see how Professor Kimelman's paper has anything to say to Girardian theory in at least three different ways. (1) The paper seems to be largely unaware of Girardian theory and one wonders why this paper is being read here. (2) The paper seems to be largely unaware of the purpose of this particular conference, which is to think about and discuss the institution of violence read from a Girardian perspective. (3) The paper seems to be largely unaware of the dynamics of mimetic phenomena whether from a Girardian perspective or from any other. Rather the paper seems to be largely focused on a *realpolitik* of ethical life in context of mandatory and discretionary warfare as discussed in the Talmud to the virtual exclusion of the mimetic aspect of things, the political to the exclusion of the ethical (at least in the sense that I am going to speak about it), the public conception of the ethical to the exclusion of the personal conception of the ethical.

Perhaps more troubling, however, is that the paper seems to be largely without commentary upon an alternative understanding of scriptural phenomena, which is, namely, that they are *scriptural* phenomena, textual phenomena, and not matters of historical reality, of what really happened, or even matters of moral reality, except as that reality passes through Scripture. As an exclusion of this scriptural dimension, and an abstraction of the issues of mandatory and discretionary warfare from their scriptural context, the paper appears to be the product of what I would call a literalist imagination and therefore potentially of theodicy.

Why, then, is Reuven Kimelman here? Presumably Bob Daly has told him what this conference is to be about, that it is focused upon Girardian theory, either in general or in specific guise of the topic: namely, violence and institution in Judaism. Presumably, Reuven Kimelman also knows about the other tradition of Judaism beside the legalistic tradition from which he reads since he quotes at one point from its primary expositor, Martin Buber. We can only surmise, therefore, that in the possession of these assumptions, Reuven Kimelman's exclusion of the Girardian and of the Jewish prophetic from his discussion is a form of polemic, a form of attack or assault upon us, a form of military strategy, not in the sense of

course that he has or is planning to kill somebody (although he may well feel that after hearing this paper [laughter]), but in the way that academics engage in that sort of behavior, and especially Jewish academics, namely, as a form of *polemos*, or intellectual warfare.

But what kind of warfare? you may ask. It seems to me that what we have here is the perfect context in which to ask this particular question about the nature of Reuven Kimelman's strategy, since that of course is his subject matter. Is Kimelman's warfare mandatory or discretionary? Mandatory warfare, he reminds us, is a form of warfare of the kind Joshua is said to have waged in Canaan, or the warfare against the Amalekites, or the waging of a defensive war in response to a prior attack. But no one has come to Reuven Kimelman's door to attack him, at least no one of whom I am aware. I assume that Reuven Kimelman does not suppose that he is Joshua, with an entitlement to this auditorium and this set of group resources, either at Boston College or within the Girardian organization. And I further assume that Reuven Kimelman does not assume that Girardians, or prophetic Jewish readers like Martin Buber, or like myself, are Amalekites. Perhaps I am wrong.

That leaves discretionary warfare. Has Kimelman come here to expand his academic holdings? That seems unlikely. (laughter) His holdings are already substantial and it is hard to imagine what he would want with ours. So what then is he doing here? What does he mean by coming here among Girardians, among fellow Jews, and speaking to us as he does? What does he take to be the source of *his* legitimation? There is still, of course, the possibility of the preemptive, that Reuven Kimelman thinks that if he attacks Girardians first, before they attack him, [laughter] or if he attacks prophetically inclined Jews before they attack him, then he will defeat his opponents in that manner. Let us leave aside for the moment such frivolous fantasy. (laughter)

The reason that Reuven Kimelman is here attacking Girardians and prophetic readers by such exclusionary sacrificial tactics, I suggest, is to be found elsewhere. First, Reuven Kimelman has walked into a situation that is clearly unwinnable. There is no way in which he could win a battle here. Secondly, he cannot appeal to the Sanhedrin, because there is none. I'm reminded of George Burns, who near the end of life said, "I like to date older women, unfortunately there aren't any." (laughter) If Reuven Kimelman's position is to be validated, it must be validated by a transcendent cause known only to him and to the group he represents. Moreover, thirdly, he must have been given that validation only by direct

revelation to that group or to him personally. Fourthly, the Girardians and his prophetic Jewish adversaries would appear from his perspective at least to have no rights since he gives them no voice in his paper to speak. There's not a trace of René Girard in his paper. And when he quotes Martin Buber, he does so in a non-prophetic connection. Finally, there is certainly no exigency in his coming here. He could well have declined the offer and found some other more pleasant way to spend his afternoon. So the criterion of last resort would not seem to apply in this particular case.

I think we have to conclude, in other words, from Reuven Kimelman's own definition, that Reuven Kimelman is waging against us a holy war: a holy war as he, after John Yoder, has defined it in his text. And secondly, that the action that he has taken, again in the context in which he has defined the terms for us, is not Jewish.

Here is Reuven Kimelman on the notion of the relationship of Judaism and holy war:

Although a sliding scale of limited warfare is ethically feasible, an ethic of unlimited warfare [ie holy war] is a contradiction in terms. It is therefore not surprising that the expression "holy war" is absent from the Jewish ethical or military lexicon.

So, what are we to do? Reuven Kimelman has come here to wage holy war against us. We could kill him. We've done that before in this group. We could bow down and pray to him. We could kill him and *then* bow down and pray to him. We certainly know how *that* works. But to do that of course we'd have to treat him as a kind of sacred violence, a scapegoat, a monstrous double of ourselves, and we're against that—as the lapel pin that Lillian Dykes has constructed for us lets us know.

We could ignore Reuven Kimelman, as he seems to be ignoring us in the paper that he posted on the internet—an earlier version of which, I am told, already appeared in print (which, of course, is another way of ignoring us). But ignoring him, silencing him, not letting him speak, would only be, of course, another form of dangerous reciprocity about which we are also concerned in this conference. How about locking him up? We could treat him as one does anyone who embeds him or herself within the mantle of alternative behavior clearly out of context. And of course if all else fails, we could offer him Prozac, and send him cheerily on his way.

But I suspect that none of these alternatives will appeal to this group. And I suspect that Bob Daly in his own wisdom would not have invited

Reuven Kimelman here unless he thought there were something available for us in his coming. And so perhaps we should try harder to engage him, try to understand him, see what we can learn from him, what he can learn from us, despite the barriers that have been erected.

## **Part II. Halachah and Aggadah**

To what holy war would Reuven Kimelman he commit us? To what God does Reuven Kimelman pray in this paper? Reuven Kimelman is a political theorist. He informs us in the first line of his paper that his discussion of war is a "test case for any political theory of checks and balances" (1). He is interested, in other words, in government, more specifically, in the "ethical deployment of power" (1).

But his political theory is anchored in limit and restriction. As he writes:

A consistent thread weaves its way from biblical ordinance through medieval reflection to modern practice, as noted by exponents throughout the ages. Just because an army is legitimately repelling an aggressor does not allow it to wreak havoc with civilian life. The warrior is the enemy, not the non-combatant civilian. A just war does not justify unjust acts.

Reuven Kimelman is a servant of military action tempered by morality, of strength tempered by wisdom, in short, of right reason as it has been expressed throughout a long history in our culture, some time ago in Europe in the figure of the Christian soldier, but more recently in the writing of nineteenth century German philosophy, and especially that of Immanuel Kant.

Reuven Kimelman would have us look reasonably at warfare. He wants to argue, to spell out thematically, the Talmudic, rabbinic distinction between mandatory and discretionary warfare. He wants to show us that even in the most mandatory of conditions, there is in the rabbinic conception of warfare always a secular, humanist component at work, always an awareness of the face of the other individual, and as a result of the personal. But such personal exception in the context in which he has presented it only proves the rule. If his position is not finally Jewish in the manner articulated by Martin Buber or Emmanuel Levinas, and certainly not Christian in the manner articulated by René Girard, it is because it is finally a species—whatever other alignments it makes within the Jewish tradition—of secular humanism as articulated by Kant and grounded in

reason and a reasonable limit-based approach to power, values, and historical reality.

Coming before us, in other words, in a conference on violence and institution anchored in René Girard's thought (and for me at least in Jewish prophetic thought, of which I take René Girard's thought to be in part at least an expression), Reuven Kimelman would wage a holy war against us on behalf of the gods of Platonic and Kantian reason. And the question of what to do about it is a serious one.

In considering this question, I am reminded of the anecdote told, the midrash told, in the aggadic material in Shabbat 30 of the Talmud about Rabbi Hillel, when he was approached by someone who claimed to want to know something about Torah. "Teach me the whole of Torah while standing on one foot," the individual requested of him. Hillel, of course, understood immediately that the pretended request was in fact a form of attack. The Torah that can be taught during the duration that I am able to stand on one foot, he knew quite well, is not Torah. And he understood moreover why when the request-maker came earlier in the day before Hillel's more orthodox colleague—Shammai—his more orthodox colleague shooed him out of the synagogue, the text tells us, with a "builder's cubit." (It's comforting to know that the Orthodox Rabbis of two thousand years ago used the same disciplinary methods as the Rabbis who taught Hebrew school in America in the 1950s!). Shammai did not have time for this kind of nonsense; he had other things to do. Hillel, who is said to represent the more liberal wing of ancient rabbinic response, also perceived the only slightly concealed aggressiveness of the question, but he decided to entertain the man anyway, perhaps to utilize the occasion as a teaching opportunity. And what he said to him succinctly of course was, as no doubt many of you know: "What you don't want done to you, don't do to me. That is the whole of Torah. The rest is commentary. Go and learn it."

What is the connection of this ancient story of Hillel and Shammai to our current dilemma? It might appear to you that I am suggesting that if Rabbi Hillel can engage an individual who, in the guise of an innocent inquiry would in fact attack him and attack Judaism, then it seems to me that we can certainly engage someone whom we have invited here, and who has at least accepted to come here in the spirit of genuine inquiry to display his wares before us, even if he hasn't yet begun to engage us.

But the comparison is not entirely apt. Professor Kimelman is hardly a novice to Jewish study. He may be the leading academic Talmudist in the country. In fact it is his status as an academic Talmudist that connects him

to this anecdote. For in many ways, the paper he has read represents the tradition of Hillel's more orthodox colleague Shammai, that is to say, the tradition of orthodox legalistic literalist Jewish reading, and the alternative position that I have offered thus far could well be described as the position of Hillel, the position that is concerned less with the literal doctrinal assertions of Torah or Talmud than with the scriptural contexts in which such literalist assertions are constructed.

And so perhaps it is time we drop the humorous facade that Professor Kimelman is waging a holy war against us and take up the real issues that I see dividing us. Is Professor Kimelman arguing a Shammaian position to my Hillelian position? In this connection, I would offer basically two kinds of comments. The first and primary comment has to do with reading, with non-literal reading, and specifically non-literal reading of Talmud. And the second has to do with the specifics of Reuven Kimelman's paper.

There is a confusion of history with text in Reuven Kimelman's essay. Professor Kimelman argues the difference between mandatory and discretionary warfare as if the Rabbis were arguing such a distinction politically, historically, morally, or in some other abstract fashion. But it is never clear that the Rabbis in their Talmudic discourses were offering any commentary whatsoever on what actually happened—politically, historically, morally, or otherwise, except as what actually happened passed through scripture. Let me say that again. It is never clear that the Rabbis were offering any commentary whatsoever on what actually happened—politically, historically, morally, or otherwise, except as what actually happened passed through scripture. It is never even clear that the Rabbis thought they *knew* what actually happened, let alone that they were commenting on it. What they *were* commenting on, what they were constructing, was always (is always, as we continue to read them) a text, a bit of scripture, and scripture as the Rabbis say in *Yoma*, is always a matter of reading and praying, never of sacrifice. It is always a matter of texts, never of history, unless it be of the history of precisely such textual or scriptural strategies.

On the other hand, the text is not arbitrary. Having asserted that it is a text or scripture that we read and not history, we are obligated to ask more specifically the function of that text or of scriptural reading. Is scripture neutral, for example? Do we read purely for the sake of demonstrating the textual or constructed nature of our representations? Here is where we might say structuralism and poststructuralism failed. Having demonstrated the textuality of all cultural constructions (of historical, anthropological,

linguistic, psychoanalytical, philosophical claims), poststructuralism, for example, forgot to take the second step of asking the function of such textual construction, of investigating what kind of textual interpretation it was, and what end it served. And thus the poststructuralist project got stuck in its own tracks and became what we might call a "fetishism of beginnings."

I would like to suggest to you that this question must be asked, that the answer is that scripture in Judaism is never neutral, and in particular that the ancient scriptural and Talmudic text is an ethical text, one to which we have given the name "prophetic," a name that we are not of course the first to apply. A prophetic text as I define it is one that recognizes the dramas in which human beings are involved and shows us the end of those dramas in order that we may choose to go there or not, a text that has, as Martin Buber likes to characterize it, a conditional or "if-then" structure, even if it appears to speak to us apodictically and oracularly. What the text does not show us, in other words, is what is—either what appears to be but is not, or what really is as opposed to what only seems to be, or any other version of representation or ontological conception). Buber calls such a text (no doubt thinking of Moses) a "stammering text," and that characterization seems apt. As in the case of the stammerer, we do not step in and say where the stammerer is going, even if we would like to think that we know where the stammerer is going. We respect the right of the stammerer to stammer, to not get there, to fail, to display weaknesses, James Alison might say.

In the specific context of Reuven Kimelman's paper, what we are concerned with is the reading of Talmud and through Talmud of Torah, not of historical reality or of rabbinical commentary on historical reality. Between the year 70 of the Common Era and 1948 there was no state, and so war was never a sacrificial institutional act. What the Rabbis are talking about is scripture. It is always a debate over scriptural interpretation. The distinction between mandatory and discretionary warfare already presupposes a sacrificial crisis in the Girardian sense, and in the hands of the Rabbis it is always already an interpretive act. The question is never whether a given war is or is not mandatory, but what does it mean in a scriptural context to say as much; how does saying as much function scripturally, which is to say, in the vocabulary I have used to characterize it, prophetically.

**Part III. The Talmudic two step**

I will conclude with an example. Joshua's invasion of Canaan is often taken as the very model of mandatory wars, because God is said to have mandated it explicitly. If Joshua's invasion of Canaan is not mandatory, what is it? (I remember an extended discussion with Norbert Lohfink several years ago, in 1983, at the conference in René Girard's honor at Cerisy-la-Salle, on this point.<sup>1</sup> I want to turn to look at this question of Joshua's war in Canaan by looking at part of Reuven Kimelman's text. If you consult your copy of the text we will do a little close reading here. It's the passage that begins as follows:

God commanded Moses to make war on Sihon, as it is said, "Engage him in battle" (Deuteronomy 2:24), but he did not do so. Instead he sent messengers...to Sihon...with an offer of peace (Deuteronomy 2:26). God said to him: "I command you to make war with him, but instead you began with peace: by your life, I shall confirm your decision. Every war upon which Israel enters shall begin with an offer of peace."

What we have here it seems to me is a wonderful little midrashic account with which we can begin to introduce a Girardian, and perhaps even a prophetic, analysis. It seems to me that there are four facts that we have to deal with in this particular text: 1) God commanded Moses to make war on Sihon. As it is said, "engage him in battle"; 2) Moses "did not do so"; 3) God said to him "I command you to make war with him" [i.e. Sihon], but instead you do something else, "you begin with peace"; 4) "By your life, I shall confirm your decision." It seems to me what we have here is a brilliant textual moment, one that is subject to all the kinds of mimetic analysis that we love so much in this context.

That is to say, clearly, the question of the passage is, why does God confirm Moses's decision not to engage the enemy in battle straightaway, and in particular, why does He confirm it "by Moses's life?" I have talked elsewhere in print about the life of Moses and the way in which that life may be described as a move away from retributive justice and toward restorative justice.<sup>2</sup> The life of Moses begins with Moses seeing an

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<sup>1</sup> For a record of the proceedings of this conference, see *Violence et Vérité. Colloque de Cerisy autour de René Girard*, edited by Paul Dumouchel (Paris: Grasset, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> "From Sacrificial Violence to Responsibility: The Education of Moses in Exodus 2-4," *Contagion: Journal of Violence, Mimesis, and Culture*, No. 6 (Spring 1999), 12-31.



Egyptian beating an Israelite. Moses intervenes and kills the Egyptian, and his intervention actually causes things to go from bad to worse because the next day two Israelites are fighting and they say: "Are you going to do to us the same thing you did to the other guy?" Soon news of the event spreads throughout the kingdom and Moses is forced to leave the land. So the mimesis leads in that case to expulsion and exile.

Later on in the same story, God says to Moses, "I have seen the suffering of my people, and I want you to charge in there and bring those suffering Israelites out of bondage." Moses hears, in other words, from God's own lips this time, so to speak, the same kind of narrative appeal to which he responded so precipitously before when he charged in and rescued the Israelite from the Egyptian. But now, instead of doing what he did previously, Moses has a new response. He poses the questions that it never occurred to him to pose on the earlier occasion, namely, "Who am I to do it?" And "I cannot speak." And so forth. And God deconstructs each of his questions at each moment he offers them. "You have a brother, don't you? He can talk. You have an arm, don't you? Take it out. See, it has turned leprous. Now put it back. See, it has turned back into healthy flesh. Do you have a staff? Put it on the ground. See, it has turned into a snake. Now, pick it up again. See, it has turned back into a staff." And so forth.

All these verbal games, all these midrashic exchanges taking place between God and Moses, turn out to be ways of getting Moses to pose the questions he failed to pose previously. So that when he finally does return to Egypt, he does so not with a mind to rout the Egyptians (as he might well have done if he were still the same man as before). Rather he now goes in and says to the Pharaoh politely: "Please, sir, let my people go; let them worship as they wish to worship." He speaks politely allowing the consequences to fall where they may. In that way, the episode becomes among other things an account of how a restorative justice emerges from a situation that began as a scene of retributive justice.

So, returning to our passage, it seems to me, there is something that is readable here that could give us the beginning of the basis for discussion of the issues we have raised. Moses in the course of his "life" has learned to read commandment. He has learned that when God says do this or do that, or I have commanded you to do this or do that, he is *not necessarily to do it*, that he must hear God's commandments prophetically, that he must learn to hear God's commandments sometimes "in quotation marks," so to speak, as the future of the path he is traveling, but not a future he is necessarily to pursue, as what he might do if he were someone else, and if

he were simply to continue in that alternative identity, but as what he should perhaps *not* do given who he is and in the circumstances in which he finds himself, that he can, in short, question God midrashically, and in some circumstances God will affirm that questioning of explicit commandment as the proper response to commandment, that sometimes, as the Rabbis say in *Baba Metzia*, "we are not to listen to heavenly voices."

And this prophetic interpretation of commandment offers us a foundation—especially since the above scriptural passage invokes other scriptural passages through the phrase "by your life"—for scriptural reading in general, for understanding this text not in terms of historical reality, nor in terms of any literal account whatsoever, but rather in terms of the overall scriptural context from which these texts derive.

And thereby we may rescue the text of Reuven Kimelman for a Girardian conference. Having begun by characterizing Reuven Kimelman's paper as a military assault, we conclude by suggesting the ways in which it offers us resources for prophetic scriptural reading. My criticism of Reuven Kimelman's paper is not that it is Shammaian while my own is Hillelian, but that neither position taken alone is sufficiently Talmudic, that the goal of Talmudic interpretation is to move precisely from one to the other, from a Shammaian legalistic position first to a Hillelian prophetic position after, and that such a one-way, two-step movement (and only such a one-way, two-step diachronic or sequential movement) constitutes Talmudic reading as distinct from either perspective taken independently of the other. Far from accusing Professor Kimelman of not being sufficiently Girardian or sufficiently prophetic (why, after all, *should* he be? he has not chosen those modes as his own and has come here in good faith to offer us what he does do), I am suggesting rather that neither of us (as I have thus far characterized our positions) is sufficiently Talmudic, since neither the abstract halachic formulation of a distinction between mandatory and discretionary warfare nor an aggadic prophetic reading of their scriptural context alone is sufficiently Talmudic (which is the mode both of us have chosen). To read Talmudically is to recognize from the position of Shammai that the position of Hillel is *necessarily* to follow, and concomitantly to recognize from the position of Hillel that the position of Shammai is its necessary prior foundation.

As Moses could reform his life in contradistinction to God's express commandment, and then God could affirm Moses's action, so the action commanded of us is to be similarly construed. Torah offers us the future of the path we are following. If we continue to follow the course we are on,

here is the result: we will go to war. But by means of his experience, Moses learned the necessity in certain circumstances of not doing that, of hearing commandment in some circumstances as what not to do, as what will accrue only if one continues mindlessly and idolatrously to pursue one's prior itinerary. To fetishize the Talmud as saying uniquely this or that, as offering a singularly defined course or set of distinctions, independently of the scriptural circumstances from which it derives, is to fall prey to the very dangers Torah and Talmud are describing. The only way out of that conclusion, for the Rabbis, is to read and pray: to read commandment as the future of the path one is traveling and to sue for peace, to ask politely that one's people be free to worship as they choose.

It may be that wars will in fact continue and there is certainly no guarantee that our pleas for peace will be successful. It may even be that wars will follow inevitably from our efforts at peace. But external historical fact does not invalidate the commandment: namely, in certain circumstances, to suspend at least initially commandment itself, even the commandment to make war upon our perceived enemy, and to substitute instead an offer of peace, to move in other words from an academic sacrificial distinction between mandatory and discretionary warfare (or from a distinction between Reuven Kimelman and myself) to the substitution instead of aggadic reading and a halachic prayer.

Let us give the last word to Reuven Kimelman who points out for us that in the case of Canaan, the action of Moses with Sihon set a precedent.

Since Joshua is said to have extended such an offer to the Canaanites, and Numbers 27:21 points out Joshua's need for applying to the priestly Urim and Tumim to assess the chances of victory, it is evident that also [sic] divinely-commanded wars are predicated on overtures of peace as well as on positive assessments of the outcome.

Commandment commits us to a "Thou must" which takes no account of a "Thou can."<sup>3</sup> The ethical imperative of the text enjoins us to the assumption of an infinite responsibility for the other human being. It is in that Talmudic spirit that I urge us to read scripture halachically and

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<sup>3</sup> On the notion of commandment as a "Thou must which takes no account of aThou can," see Levinas's essay, "Revelation in the Jewish Tradition" in Sean Hand's *The Levinas Reader*, translated by S. Richmond (London: Basil Blackwell, 1989), 190-210.

aggadically, that I affirm the necessity of Reuven Kimelman's legalistic reading of Torah and Talmud, and having done that, that I urge him then to read the texts that he reads prophetically, to engage René Girard's work on violence and the sacrificial (and other writers like Martin Buber, Franz Rosenzweig, and Emmanuel Levinas) as an expression of the Jewish prophetic tradition that the Rabbis felt to be so important.

With that observation, I will stop and open the floor to questions.

## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

James Alison opened the discussion by asking why in the world rabbis from back in the 11<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries were talking about this. Kimelman (with Goodhart agreeing) replied that talmudic reflection, though it may have some reference to “reality,” was not primarily reducible to the social-political conditions of the people doing the thinking, that it is primarily reflection upon reflection upon reflection of texts, plus interpretation and commentary.

David Vanderhooft asked about the apparent dichotomy of text versus history. Goodhart noted that there is always *some* correspondence. Talmudic interpretation doesn’t violate history, but doesn’t depend on it either. Kimelman noted that history exists in the mind of the perceiver. Thus, unless you are God, there can’t be an argument between what actually happened (which only God can know) and how it is perceived. There’s no such thing as history that has not been constructed through a text.

Robert Hamerton-Kelly then began a long debate/discussion with Kimelman which began with Hamerton-Kelly trying to get Kimelman to take some kind of practical ethical position regarding contemporary Israeli extremist violence, and regarding the claim of these people—such as the venerated Baruch Goldstein, the Hebron mass murderer of Muslim Palestinians—to legitimate their violence from a recently revived tradition traceable back from the anti-Roman zealots (see Josephus) to the Maccabees, and back to Joshua. Kimelman, while indicating his ethical disapproval of the violence of these extremists, maintained that this too was an illustration of his basic position that it was a situation of different traditions of text-based arguments. In the course of this he also illustrated not only how the Jewish traditions managed to deal with embarrassingly violent biblical texts by finding ways to de-absolutize, limit, or relativize

them, but also pointed out how the strong—dominant, he would claim—tradition of talmudic interpretation had an amazingly strong trajectory in the direction of limiting violence.

When Hamerton-Kelly insisted that we are dealing here not just with textual interpretations, but living historical interpretations, Kimelman was able to point out that, even here, the radical extremists, because they were Jews, tried to base their argument and their practical legitimizing of violence on a text. Their favorite texts are those (such as Deuteronomy 25:17–19 and 1 Samuel 15:1–35) that command the eradication of the Amalekites, thus turning Amalek into a metaphor for a people desiring the total annihilation of the Jews. However, in modern history, the only ones who can “live up” to this metaphor are the Nazis of 1943 when Hitler commanded that trains continue to be assigned to bringing Jews to Auschwitz rather than to bringing much-needed help to the then retreating German forces on the Russian front. This seemed to answer the apparent objection that Kimelman was attempting to deal only with texts and not with reality.

Vern Neufeld Redekop then proposed putting this whole discussion into the perspective of the grand Girardian scheme and how, in that scheme, destructive mimetic violence is dealt with either by scapegoating or by introducing teaching that tries to get beyond scapegoating and limiting it. That, precisely, is what Kimelman has shown Torah (and talmudic interpretation) to have been doing. Redekop, recalling his own research into the death penalty in the Bible, reported that his research showed that the direction of the Torah is toward limiting the violence, and thanked Kimelman for pointing out that the tradition of talmudic interpretation he has been expounding has been doing that in spades.

Kimelman then recalled his earlier studies on nonviolence. The first step in countering violence is to recognize and counteract the tendency to demonize the enemy. The second step is, then, in the Jewish tradition, to fight texts with texts. Kimelman also took this occasion to “demythologize” the common scholarly misunderstandings about “holy war” that have been popularized by Gerhard von Rad and followed by most Protestant scholarship.

Goodhart took this occasion to support Kimelman’s position that the Jewish way is to fight texts with texts. He also, at this point, qualified somewhat the criticism he made in his formal response about Kimelman espousing a position of *realpolitik* to the neglect of the prophetic tradition. He also pointed out that this debate/discussion, although not planned that

way, has turned out to be a striking illustration of how Judaism work. As he put it, "We've performed Judaism." In other words, this has been a debate between one interpretation and another. Kimelman added to this a comment about the inadequacies of the "purely" prophetic tradition, that it often doesn't go beyond muckraking power and those in power. The ethical tradition, he asserted, is not fulfilling its responsibility if it only attacks power.

Britt Johnston expressed some disagreement with Goodhart's (now qualified) criticism that Kimelman disregarded the prophetic tradition. He suggested that there was much that was "prohetic" in what Kimelman was doing, especially by at least implicitly raising the question: why, and from where does Judaism have and get this impulse to limit violence? Kimelman allowed that he was unable to answer this directly, and then expounded a bit more the challenges that Judaism faces in actually going about it. It is the challenge of beginning from (1) a biblical tradition that allows for capital punishment and, while (2) still preserving the authority of that tradition, nevertheless (3) still finding ways to limit its violence. One does that by fighting texts with texts. Then he added: "The question is: how do you make that a real tradition?" Goodhart also allowed that it is hard to say where the urge toward limitation comes from.

In a brief intervention, René Girard cautioned against the danger that so strong a text-based approach might not end up being fair to, or might not be giving proper due to the actual people who are real victims, e.g., the real people, the real experiences behind the laments of the Psalms.

After Kimelman pointed out how extraordinary is the strong talmudic-tradition critique of Moses for killing the Egyptian, a brief exchange between Goodhart and Bob Hall brought out the contrasting tendencies between a Jewish tradition bent on limiting violence, even legitimate legal violence, and an American legal tradition with its apparently primary strategy of attempting to identify the guilty party. The discussion concluded with Kimelman recounting the charming (and even entertaining) talmudic discussion about how to stone a condemned man. The procedure is to throw him out of a building. The discussion is about which floor from which to do it in order to have it be effective and still as painless as possible, and still preserve as much as possible the dignity of the condemned man's body. The biblical text quoted to support the solution (from the second floor) was: "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

# THE PROBLEMS OF VIOLENCE AND CONFLICT IN ISLAM

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**T**his paper is a work in progress and it analyzes the Islamic reasoning for the use of violence and conflict while also examining the reconciliation of violence in accordance to the Qur'ân and sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (Hadîth). Generally the ethics of violence and the interpretation of its use in the Islamic tradition was historically connected to legalists and theologians who collaborated in devising policies for the imperial state. Their reading of the sources to support violence can be explained in areas of survival, self-defense, and resistance to oppression. Here, violence is explained in terms of the needs of the state, meaning that what is good for the government is good for the religion of Islam. More modern scholars of Islam are revisiting the problem of violence and the weaknesses of classical interpretations, and also examining, in light of the Qur'ân and Hadîths, contemporary issues like rights of the unborn, abortion, individual versus communal self-defense, domestic violence, and unprovoked aggression. The scope of this paper is, first, to discuss the ideas of harmony and divine unity in Islamic theology and also the reasons I think they are crucial to any understanding of violence. Second, I proceed to analyze some of the ideas relating to violence “for” and “against” God in the Islamic tradition and how those ideas fit into the larger Islamic theology. Third, I am interested in presenting the specific verses from the Qur'ân, as well as Hadîths or sayings of the Prophet that deal with war, conflict and violence, and demonstrate that their contextuality is crucial. Fourth and last, but not least, I will suggest some new hermeneutics for



using all of the above for developing, enriching, and incorporating it into an Islamic liberation theology that is desperately needed in the modern Islamic world.

### **I. Islamic Theology, Muslims, and Divine Unity**

The beginning of all Islamic thought begins with God, or more specifically, with the testimony of faith or *shahadâh*,<sup>1</sup> the statement that “There is no God but God, and the Prophet Muhammad is the Messenger.”<sup>2</sup> This attestation for Muslims is understood to be a unique certainty upon which all other truths depend and exist. With this as the starting point for Islamic belief and practices, and indeed for all Islamic theology, the logical question for us here at COV&R is, then, to ask: “What is the Islamic perspective on peace and violence as it is related to God and to the testimony of faith?” Also, along the same line of thinking, one needs to pursue the question: “How does the Islamic faith respond to the problems of violence, i.e., destructive behavior to oneself or to others by persons who thus believe that they are thereby serving and surrendering to God?”

The word *islâm*<sup>3</sup> stems from the root *salâm*, “peace.” The literal sense of the word is to be liberated from something or to gain peace in respect to it. Those who participate in this act of surrendering to the Divine are called Muslims, and through submitting one’s will to God’s Will, one gains safety from error, deviation, and corruption. One is integrally tied into the Divine Unity and is in harmony with the Divine. With this in the background, *al-*

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<sup>1</sup> The *shahadâh* was established during the early period of the Prophet’s missionary work. The belief that “There is no God but God, and the Prophet Muhammad is the final Messenger” was hostile to the religious practices of the Arab Bedouin culture. What distinguished the new Muslim converts was that they publicly affirmed the *shahadâh* and rejected contemporary cultural and religious norms of idolatry.

<sup>2</sup> After each reference of the beloved Prophet Muhammad, it is the custom in *islâm* to recite or write “peace be upon him” (or pbuh). The actual Arabic benediction is *sa’ala allahu alayhi wa salâm* sometimes written in English as SAWS. For the sake of non-repetitiveness and to make it easier for the reader’s eyes, this paper will not include that benediction after each reference.

<sup>3</sup> I use the word *islâm* with the lower case “i” to indicate the personal piety of surrendering to the divine and the journey of making one’s faith meaningful. A capitalized “I” *Islâm* in modern standard English is synonymous with contemporary political movements and social activism, sometimes referred to as Islamists. The capital “I” *Islâm* also reflects the impersonal institutional and cultural approach to the study of religion and neglects the true essence of islâmic spirituality and the inner desire to bring forth a Divine reality.

*salâm* or "the peace" is one of the names of God.<sup>4</sup> The Qur'ân calls God "the Peace" as in the following passage:

He is God; there is no God but He. He is King, Holy, Peace, Faithful, Preserver, Mighty, Compeller, Sublime. Glory to be God above everything they associate with Him. He is God, the Creator, the Maker, the Form-giver. To Him, belong the Names Most Beautiful. All that is in the heavens and the earth glorifies Him. He is Mighty, Wise. (Q: 59:23)

In many ways, this Qur'ânic verse reflects themes that epitomize the essence of Islamic theology. More specifically, it expresses two very important ideas about God which are repeated in the Qur'ân. First and foremost, the transcendence of the Divine reality. The name of "Peace" for God signifies that God is absolutely free from and infinitely exalted above all defects and imperfections. Perfection is reserved for the divine while errors and imperfections are reserved for His creation, not the Creator. In Himself God knows no violence, hostility, conflict or antagonism. Second, this verse reflects that Divine immanence is in all created things. He is close enough to His creatures, in spite of His transcendence, to shape and form all things. All attributes or qualities found in the world derive from Him; so the Qur'ânic verse "Where soever you turn, there is the Face of God" (Q: 2:115). His creation can not forget to see and then acknowledge the "face of God" in this world. Again, the words of verse 59:23 quoted above "All that is in the heaven and the earth glorifies Him" alert us not just to the fact that He is exalted beyond creaturely imperfections, but mainly because of the fact that every positive and beautiful attribute comes from Him. This idea is constantly repeated in the Qur'ân; everything in the universe displays God's 'signs' or *âyat*.<sup>4</sup> For example:

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<sup>4</sup>The holy Qur'ân attributes at least ninety-nine names to God, e.g., The Merciful, The Truth, The Guider, and so forth. Historically in accordance to the custom of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims recite these names which brings one closer to God and this proximity gives a stronger sense of God consciousness. See Kenneth Cragg, "Taddabur al-Qur'ân: readings and meaning."

<sup>4</sup>In the Qur'ân, each verse is referred to as *âyat* or a sign to illustrate that God's signs are in the word itself as well as all around His creation. The stylistic technique of communicating through signs shows that one understands Him better through an unfolding God-conscious awareness. One may see a sign but not connect the significance of it until it is seen in conjunction with other signs. *Âyât* for Muslims speak about an ongoing communication with the Divine while trying to structure a life around Divine unity.

Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth, and the alternation of the night and day, and the ship that runs in the sea,...and the clouds compelled between heaven and earth—surely there are signs for people who understand. (Q: 2:164)

To return to my original point, the name of “Peace” symbolizes that no imperfection, conflict or any type of violence is found in God. By implication “There is no God but God” means that “there is no Peace but God” and “There is no perfection but God.” Moreover, “everything other than God” (*ma siwâ Allâh*), which many theologians have defined as the concept of the world (*al-âlam*) is different from God. Essentially, everything other than God is imperfect by definition; true peace belongs to God alone, while any peace possessed by His creatures can only be imperfect and perishing.<sup>5</sup> It is the challenge for Muslims seeking complete self-understanding and in search of the “ultimate peace” to access God’s self-disclosure.

For *islâm*, God’s Peace follows upon His Unity: He is one in every respect, so there is nothing in Himself other than Himself that could oppose or contradict Him. His Self is totally unlike the human self, which is understood to be constantly flooded with conflicting thoughts and feelings. Human beings are never wholly at peace with themselves, at least in the way I am using here, because they are made up of opposing faculties, emotions, and energies. According to this line of thinking, peace as such belongs only to God, while its opposite—war, violence, conflict—is to some extent intrinsic to everything other than God, to all created things.

It would be simplistic to assume that if God is absolute Peace, then the world and the creation in it is “absolute war.” The world is only “relative war” or imperfect. But because of God’s presence in all things it is also relatively peaceful too. The world’s peace—the harmony and equilibrium that does exist among its opposing forces—is, in Qur’ânic terms a “sign” or, really, a reflection of God’s Absolute Peace. For Muslim theologians, the world is a mixture of opposing forces that may conflict or harmonize depending on the situation. Its relative peace is to be increased or achieved;

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<sup>5</sup> The Qur’ânic verse “All things perish except His Face” (Q: 28:88) illustrates the idea that imperfection rests in creation not in the Creator. For more on this theme see Fazlur Rahman, *Major Themes of the Qur’ân*.

this can be done only by bringing it closer to the Absolute Peace of God. Islamically speaking, then, does this lead us to re-think whether all types of war, violence, conflict, and all other types of hostility are necessarily bad? Not according to Islamic theology since violence is inherent to the world, and the world is God's good creation. Hence, all conflicts and violence must be working towards God's end, even if they *appear evil* in our eyes. In other words, conflict, violence and "opposition" may in fact make up the different dimensions of an equilibrium that escapes our human views. What Muslim theologians have argued historically is that conflict, violence, and 'opposition' must ultimately derive from God since He created the world and accomplishes His aims through all the opposing forces found within it.

### ***God's Names***

In islâmic piety, that is be-ing in the constant process of surrendering oneself to the one God (Allâh), a Muslim has a variety of relationships with God. He is the Life-Giver, the Most Compassionate, the Forgiver, and the Avenger. At any given time, creation, specifically human beings, relate to these names and others. We are connected to the divine by the fact that every ontological moment comes from the nature of the divine. Muslim theologians have argued that since we constantly undergo physical, emotional, spiritual, and material changes illustrates that God is interested in being involved with His creation and bestows a new relationship with the names mentioned above. For Muslims, each name conveys to us a manner in which God establishes relationships between Himself and us. At times, we may perceive that these ways may conflict at any given moment, but what is important to keep in mind is that the complete totality of existence represents harmony of all the different modes. This is due to the fact that all existence pours from God's reality, just as a ray of light from the sun. There may be numerous colors of light, yellow, red, or blue, but all of them are essentially the same light from the same source.

The multiplicity of God's names does not infer the pluralistic nature of God, but affirms the oneness of Divine unity.<sup>6</sup> To restate a point made earlier, the names coexist in God Himself and are harmonious, i.e., they are essentially "Peaceful." In *islâm*, the names of God are no different from His

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<sup>6</sup> This controversy concerning God's names and attributes was taken up by a ninth century intellectual movement called the Muta'zilites, literally "those who cut-off." For more see, Farhad Daftary, ed., *Intellectual Traditions of Islam*.

Being. The “Compassionate” is God, and the “Forgiver” is God, and the “Vengeful” is also God; the “Life-Giver” is also God. While in this world and in human perception the names of the Forgiver and Vengeful appear to us to be in opposition, that is to say, in conflict with our understanding, in reality, the opposition works together in a context of Divine Unity. A common reference in theological texts of the medieval period, as, e.g., in Ibn ‘Arabî, is that “All colors in the spectrum are manifestations of the One Light” (Chodkiewicz).

For a clearer example, in *islâm* God is both Merciful and Wrathful. While on the surface it may appear that there is a contradiction, the Prophet Muhammad once stated that “God’s Mercy precedes His wrath.” Muslim theologians have understood that Mercy is prior to His Wrath because God’s Mercy represents the divine nature itself, while Wrath is an attribute that God assumes only in relationship to certain creatures. It is not only the idea that He is Merciful toward all creatures and Wrathful to some, but also that His Wrath must be considered an extension of His Mercy. In addition, in the Qur’ân, each chapter (*surâ*)<sup>7</sup> begins with the statement: “In the Name of the God, the Merciful (*al-rahman*), the Compassionate (*ar-rahim*).” This reinforces the priority of Mercy in God’s nature. One should also note that these two words “Merciful” and “Compassionate” stem from the same word *rahma*.

### ***God’s Harmony and Conflict with Human Beings***

“Everything in the heavens and the earth glorifies God” [Q: <24:1, 57:1, 61:1>] is a verse (*âyât*) found repeatedly in the Qur’ân, implying that the glorification of all creatures is a type of work that fosters harmony. On every level of created existence, creatures, in particular human beings, need to be harmonious with, *not* in conflict with their Creator. For example in verse 51:56, the Qur’ân states, “I have not created *jinn* and human kind except to worship Me.”<sup>8</sup> Our existence in this world means to worship, to

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<sup>7</sup> This formula to praise God has been extensively written about by Islamic theologians and all of the possible meanings, inner and outer. As a point of conciseness, it should be stated that the praise is often found in the text itself. Also one *surâ*, *surâ* number nine, does not begin with this praise.

<sup>8</sup> In *islâm* *jinn* are beings made of fire, while the angels are made of light and human beings are made of clay, an element that is part of the earth. Essentially, *jinn* are semi-spiritual and semi-corporeal, just as fire is neither pure light nor pure clay. Just like human beings, they are given free-will and can also use it to obey or disobey God. While angels can not disobey God, Iblis (or Satan) was first *jinn* and then an angel that refused to obey God. See C. E.

worship the Creator so that there is harmony, peace, and a direct contact between the Creator and His creation. The antagonism and conflicts that come with creation, i.e., with the experience of human beings, is the movement away from worship of the Divine Reality, and toward the worship of this world or, as explicitly stated in the Qur'ân, the worship of *al-dunyâ*.<sup>9</sup> For example, "He has commanded that you worship none but Him. That is the right religion, but most men know not" (Q: 12:40) illustrates a prescriptive command; those who follow it will know and others who disobey will not know. What is unique with human beings as creation, at least as understood Islamically, is their unique sense to grapple with free will, to think, assess, evaluate, and reflect upon God's nature. If human beings choose to ignore the prescriptive command (*al-'amr al-taklîfî*)<sup>10</sup> then a conflict arises between Creator and creation. While there is no original sin concept in the Islamic tradition, there is an idea that human beings were made with imperfections in order to overcome them and thereby prove their surrendering to the One God. Connected with this is the idea of forgetfulness or *ghaflah* and its remedy: remembering. One way to be in constant reminder of the Divine is to remember, either through the signs of creation or through worship.<sup>11</sup>

According to Qur'ânic theology, God made human beings as His vicegerents or representatives (*khalîfâh*) on earth (Q: 2:30). The Qur'ân calls this representation a type of trust that no other creature can carry out (Q: 33:72). The corruption or disobedience of this trust between God and human beings is what brings about evil consequences. This type of conflict and violation leads to further violation of the earth. For Muslim scholars

Padwick, *Muslim Devotions*.

<sup>9</sup> *Al-dunyâ* or the living world is not understood as a place to resist, but the enjoyment of life and the pleasures of the world cannot supercede the islâmîc living the life of worshipping the one God. This is not a fixed and steadfast formula as many early ascetic Sûfis between the 8<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries clearly wrote treatises on rejecting the world because of the distractions and attachments that come with the world. For them, any living in this world was a separation from the union of the Divine. For more on *al-dunyâ* see *Encyclopaedia of Islâm*, and the invaluable work of Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islâm*; specifically one can not ignore the classic work by Louis Massignon, *La Passion de Husayn Ibn Mansur Hallâj*, or its English translation by Herbert Mason.

<sup>10</sup> The idea that there is a particular type of command, in this case classified as prescriptive command (*al-'amr al-taklîfî*) is to call attention to Qur'ânic categorizations that analyze human-God relations.

<sup>11</sup> For a good analysis on *ghaflah* see in particular chapters two and three of Seyyid Hossein Nasr's *Ideals and Realities of Islam*.

like al-Ghazzali (d. 1111) and Muhyiddin Ibn 'Arabî (d. 1240), the closer human beings are connected to Divine Mercy (*rahma*), the tighter the bond is built on harmony with Divine Peace. However, if believers stray away from this bond, they inevitably fail to be trustworthy custodians on earth. This corruption or *fasâd*, mentioned in the Qur'ân over fifty times, is produced from human error, human free will, and from being neglectful. The verse in Qur'ân 30:41 ("Corruption has spread over land and sea from what men have done themselves that they may taste a little of what they have done: They may haply come back to the right path") demonstrates that God is actively involved with human affairs: whether it is obedience or disobedience, the Creator desires His creatures to witness the result of their capriciousness. Human corruption or the ongoing drama of human *fasâd* on earth is meant for them to help human beings to find ways to rectify the corruption they have created. The Qur'ân speaks on this subject of violence on earth (*fasâd*) that can have a positive return to God through repentance. Human disobedience does not merely bring the misuse of earth's resources and profane violence against the trust, the custodianship of earth, but more importantly, there is another level of human disobedience that fails to affirm God's Unity. At the heart of Islamic theology is the oneness of God (*tawhid*); and any association of partners to the One God (*shirk*), or erroneous inclusion of the multiplicity into the single God, the single Source, forces the believer away from the center into dispersion. The association of partners or constructing the "manyness" to the One God is understood to be the ultimate sin in *islâm* and the very trust God gave to His believers.

## II. The "justification" for violence

For Muslim believers, the doctrine of *tawhid* or the oneness of God is the single major feature of professing the Divine Unity. Every moment, every level of existence requires the believer to assert *tawhid*.<sup>12</sup> Believers must struggle to conform themselves to God's nature on every conceivable level, i.e., the mind, heart, and soul. The active affirmation of *tawhid* means that believers need to struggle in daily affairs so that, through one's piety and acknowledgement, each moment is connected to the be-ing with the divine.

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<sup>12</sup> For an elaboration on the concept of *tawhid*, see the *Encyclopaedia of Islâm* or Kevin Reinhart, *Before Revelation: The Boundaries of Moral Thought*, and of course, William Graham, *Beyond the Written Word in Early Islâm*.

The Qur'ân commands its believers to work toward establishing a life of *tawhid* and in order to establish this realization, it describes it as a human struggle or effort, *jihâd*.<sup>13</sup> Usually mistaken as a "holy war against non-Muslims," *jihâd* is used repeatedly in the Qur'ân<sup>14</sup> in the sense of a striving toward a life of God-consciousness, which often means resisting the attractions of things that are ungodly. While Muslim caliphs (kings) of the Ottoman, 'Abbassid, and Mamlûki dynasties applied the word *jihâd* to fight and defend their territories either against Muslim or Christian invaders, one can not compare the "holiness" of striving for an internal harmony with God with that of battling opponents of the state.<sup>15</sup> Many Qur'ânic verses, such as 22:78 "Struggle (*jihâd*) for God as is His due," illustrate a transcendence of the inner soul which tries to struggle against all of the distractions away from Divine Unity. The Prophet's often-quoted saying "I have come from the lesser struggle to the greater struggle" is used to point out that there are elements of the soul, sometimes called the lower soul containing caprice, which is the real *jihâd* for believers to control.<sup>16</sup> The Qur'ân verse speaks of the struggle of the inner soul in surâ 29:6 where it states "Whosoever struggles, struggles only for his own soul; surely God is independent of all the worlds." The main point here is to demonstrate that the word *jihâd* has been misused and misinterpreted both historically

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<sup>13</sup> For recent works on the subject of *jihâd*, see Reuven Firestone, *Jihâd: The Origin of Holy War in Islâm*; Abdel Haleem Harfiya, Oliver Ramsbotham, Saba Risaluddin. and Brian Wicker, eds., *The Crescent and the Cross*; : Fred Donner, "The Sources of Islamic Conceptions of War," in John Kelsay and James Turner Johnson, eds., *Just War and Jihad*; and, Stephen Humphreys, *Islamic History*.

<sup>14</sup> The Qur'ân uses the word *jihâd* or in its root form about ten times, with the majority of obvious references to specific historical situations for the first Muslim community members who were under siege by the ruling Quraish tribe and their political allies.

<sup>15</sup> This type of reasoning to use *jihâd* to defend borders and aggression or "state-driven jihad" as I refer to it was common in revolutionary Iran and its war against Iraq; for example see. Âyatullah Ahmad Jannatî, "Defense and Jihâd in the Qur'ân."

<sup>16</sup> For more specific hadîths, see Muhammad ibn Ismâ'il Bukhârî, *Sahîh al-Bukhârî*, or the biography of the Prophet by the famous eighth century biographer, Ibn Ishâq, *Al-Sîra al-nabawiyya*.



and in contemporary times in order to justify one's own political agendas.<sup>17</sup>

To take the word out of its theological context, which is to struggle to preserve *tawhid*-awareness in one's faith, is to ignore the way it was intended by the Qur'ân and the spiritual model set by the Prophet Muhammad.

The inner *jihâd* is a struggle to eliminate this inner warfare, and by doing this one attains peace with God, while the outer *jihâd* signifies working toward a fair and non-corrupt society. The trust of being a representative of God or vicegerent is not a symbolic gesture, but often in some classical and modern sources the primary role of being a believer.

Violence or war against God has both inner and outer dimensions; i.e., struggling against corruption, oppression and non-provoked aggression means the individual is striving to establish peace in the world. This war is a war between believers and non-believers, that is between people who stand to uphold God's unity and justice in this world and those who 'prevent' one from being on that path. The inner struggle of a purified heart struggles at all times to maintain a "*tawhid* awareness."<sup>18</sup> In Qur'ânic verses 4:167 and 11:19 it states, "Surely those who disbelieve and bar from the way of God have gone astray into far error," demonstrating the slippery path of *tawhid*. In Islamic theology, peace in God is the goal of human existence, while war against His enemies, including the inner soul, is one of many ways to achieve this peace. Those who become distant from the Creator are essentially turning their backs upon the vicegerent trust from God.<sup>19</sup> For Islamic theology, to be a complete believer or even to be fully

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<sup>17</sup> Legally, only the highest trained jurists can issue the call for a "jihâd," and only after they have reached a majority consensus with other scholars and policy makers. Historically, many nationalist movements used this as a battle cry against colonialism. In recent times, desperate despotic rulers, e.g., Saddam Hussein, and rogue fundamentalist political movements like Osama bin Laden's al-Qa'ida have attempted to be the authorities in using the term for their agenda. However, Muslim scholars and non-scholars alike recognize their weak appeal and baseless rational grounding.

<sup>18</sup> "Tawhid awareness" is a term I coined after becoming familiar with the Buddhist tradition, particularly the Mahayana text called the *Dhammapada*. In this text it is written, "All we are is the result of what we have thought" which is to strive toward the ideal bodhi wisdom or *bodhisattva*. For more see Philip Kapleau, ed., *The Three Pillars of Zen*, and Shunryu Suzuki, *Zen, Mind, Beginner's Mind*.

<sup>19</sup> The Qur'ân refers to those who have rejected God's message in numerous places, and uses anatomical metaphors such as deaf ears, sealed hearts and eyes, and blinded sight. For more see Q. Huda's "Anatomy in the Qur'ân" in the *Encyclopaedia of the Qur'ân*.

human, one needs to be with Him and constantly struggle against the movement away from the Creator, because it is only through proximity with God's Unity that can one attain peace with Him. This explains why most Muslim theologians agree that the ultimate struggle (*jihād*) in the world for believers is to exist in the domain where God wishes you to be, e.g., prayers,

fasting, charity, etc...; all of these areas bring forth His Peace.<sup>20</sup>

In this short theological account of *jihād*, one can see that Muslim scholars have been primarily concerned with ways in which struggling brings one nearer to God in the context of sharing in a harmonious divine unity.

### III. Qur'ānic verses on violence

For some not familiar with Islām's sacred text as a revelation given to the Prophet Muhammad from 610-632, it is difficult to understand why God would include revelations that addresses the issue of violence. The Qur'ān is not a book about the divine but rather it is revelation for human beings to redirect their attention to the divine. As with previous revelations to earlier Prophets (and the Qur'ān states that there were 124,000 in history), the Qur'ānic revelation was a message for human beings to reconstitute their lives so that they would know what it means to be God-conscious and also be aware of those actions that lead one away from the divine.

According to Islām revelation is a communication from God to believers, that is, God revealed Himself through the miracle of the Qur'ān. The holiness of the Qur'ān means that it incorporates the directives of God, as well as, the specific requirements needed for human beings to establish a sacred relationship with the divine. The Qur'ānic verses that contain specific instructions on violence are understood as instructions from the divine to preserve an order at a particular time and place.

For example, two important references to violence are found in verses 17:33 and 25:68. They state: "*Wa-lā taqtulu an-nafs allatī harrama Allāh illā bi-li-haqq*", which is translated as "Do not kill the soul that God has made sacred, except for a just cause." The taking away of life is means to remove the sacredness of life from that soul which God has created. Each individual's life or soul is precious because of God's original creation and

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<sup>20</sup> See in particular the Qur'ānic commentary in sections of *qitāl wal- jihād* by 'Imād al-Dīn Ismā'īl Ibn Kathīr, *Tafsīr al-Qur'ān al-'azīm*.

because He is present in it at all times. For human beings to interfere in God's work by destroying it is entirely against the desires of the divine. The Qur'ânic verse is instructing believers, in particular the new Muslims of the seventh century, to not kill any human life. The condition attached to the end "except for a just cause" is a direct instruction that conflict or violence is unacceptable unless there is a just cause for it. How is a just cause defined? During the life of the Prophet and the first generation of Muslims a "just cause" was interpreted as a situation in which the lives of Muslims were threatened by hostile aggression. That is, from the earliest Muslim jurists of the seventh century, the use of force was acceptable only if it was used for self-defense and self-preservation.

Qur'ânic references to violence are not only restricted to self-defense or to counterbalance attacks, but also to protect the innocent new born. For example, the verse 6:140: "And do not slay your children for fear for poverty. We provide for you and them." This verse is a good example how revelations served as instructional practices for new believers so that they know what practices are pleasing to God and which practices are thought to be against God's wishes. The killing of infants because of poverty was a normal cultural practice, especially if the family or tribe was progressively becoming poor. Qur'ânic verses revealed to the Prophet were meant not only to remind humankind of the God's presence in all things but to alter behavior patterns that met the ethical standard of a loving God. This specific verse redirects believers to care for their infants regardless of their social standing and to have the faith in the one God who is present at all times to support each living soul. "We provide for you and them" reflects an absolute unconditional statement that no one is ever left alone in raising children, in particular, the poor are especially reminded of God's interest in their conditions.

Another example dealing with the death of infants is verse 81:8-9: "And when the female infant buried alive is asked for what sin she was killed" are concerned with changing the practices of female infanticide. Pre-Islamic Arab tribal cultural norms were to prefer a male infant because of the primary roles a man had in a patriarchal society. Qur'ânic revelations strictly forbade this practice in order to show that God will provide for each infant born. In addition, these verses wanted to connect a very important theological concept of the accountability (*ahsân*) of each believer. To randomly kill infants without thinking that all actions produce consequences is to not recognize the eventual encounter with the Creator in the hereafter, and that at that time each individual will be accountable for

each action. Verses 81:8-9 explicitly reminds the believer how unjust killings will be assessed; those lives that were unfairly taken away will demand to know why this injustice was done to them.<sup>21</sup>

To demonstrate that the references on violence in the Qur'ân are not always a spiritual and temporal guide or a theological reminder of the hereafter, there are numerous stories of the Biblical prophets who were tested for their allegiance to the one God. The story of the Prophet Abraham is viewed in this way: all of his trials and tribulations are as a prophet who desired his family and fellow tribespersons to adhere to the single God. The Qur'ân views his achievement, specifically his challenging experiences as an outcast, as a testimony of God's commitment to guiding human beings. It is Abraham's story in the Qur'ân that reminds Muslims that even against our own good judgement and desires, there is a level of "violence" needed to prove our love and obedience to God. For example, the Qur'ânic verses 37:104-113 "We called out O Abraham, you have fulfilled your dream. Thus do We reward the good. That was indeed a trying test. So we ransomed him for a great sacrifice" refer to Abraham's last test of being willing to sacrifice his son.

The story of Abraham and his family is a central event for Muslims who every year in the 11<sup>th</sup> month of the Islamic calendar re-enact Abraham's sacrifice. There are theological reasons for Muslims to re-connect to Abraham's plight in order to have an annual fresh understanding of what it means to kill for the Lord. This is summed up in the *hajj* or pilgrimage, which is conducted in the first ten days of the eleventh month of the Islamic calendar.<sup>22</sup> Abraham's paradigm substitutes humans with animals which gives the believer to view life, life taken away, the struggle to keep life, and the resistance to death, all as a divine sacrifice. This annual ritual has multi-level lessons for the believer to reflect on the preciousness of life and to whom life ultimately belongs. While the *hajj* ritual is intended to reconnect to the plight of Abraham and Haggar, it ultimately is concerned with believers returning to the most sacred site for Muslims, which stands under the Heavens, and prove to the divine of one's total surrender to Him. On one hand, pilgrims are astonished at the global community of islâm, and on the other hand, pilgrims are there to satisfy a

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this subject see, Toshihiko Izutsu, *Ethico-Religious Concepts in the Qur'ân*, and Bruce Lincoln, *Death, War, and Sacrifice*.

<sup>22</sup> For a more in-depth study on the Islâmic pilgrimage, see F. E. Peters, *The Hajj: The Muslim Pilgrimage to Mecca and Holy Places*.

major religious tenet of faith, i.e., to visit the Ka'ba.

In light of these verses, these examples illustrate the ways in which early Muslims viewed the body, soul, death, life, sacrifice, devotion, worship, faithfulness, and the overall function of the human anatomy in the presence of God. To take life away was to dishonor and disobey the commandments of God. To participate in violence and ultimately in conflict with another human being, it meant that one was using it as the final alternative for the purpose either of defending oneself against hostility or of re-establishing a harmonious order.

#### **IV. New hermeneutics for an Islamic liberation theology**

One of the main problems in the subject of violence and religion, at least within Islamic terms, is that there is very little work in Islamic studies that addresses new innovative ways of analyzing violence and religious practice. The only two recent works with a systematic inquiry are by Farid Esack and Shabbir Akhtar. Their works are very important to my own thinking and to my re-assessing the principle hermeneutic keys that are tied to Islamic faith and the purpose of being free with this faith. While their works are groundbreaking works in the field of Islamic studies, both Esack and Akhtar miss the focus of a new Qur'anic theology that speaks for and guides the faithful toward a praxis of liberation. Each of them accurately identifies Qur'anic verses and hadiths, and the ways in which both types of texts were interpreted by the classical scholars. However, the task at hand is not so much to demonstrate that liberation is in the sacred texts, and to draw it out of these texts, but rather to ask why we are not learning, internalizing, and implementing all of these hermeneutic keys and bringing them into our struggle to be with the Divine's Unity.

While Esack is accurate in speaking about the Qur'ân as a revolutionary text, a sacred universal text with new meanings for every time, I am afraid he is confined to the meaning of "revolutionary" in political terms, e.g., Shî'î Iranian *Islâm* and South African apartheid *Islâm*.<sup>23</sup> A sacred text must not be read in a way that restricts it to the limitations of the aims of current political and social movements. Apart

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<sup>23</sup> This is not at all to dismiss his work, but only to highlight that his interests focus on two major social-political events of the twentieth century; as with many Shî'î scholars of Iran, the Qur'ân became for him one of the main sources for revolutionary legitimacy and institutionalizing the new political order.

from this, I think he does identify two important doctrines from the Qur'ân as a foundation for hermeneutic use, that is, *tawhid* and *taqwa*. Both *tawhid* and *taqwa*, are integrally tied to Islamic theology and faith;<sup>24</sup> *tawhid*, as already discussed above, is on the Unity of God, whereas the purpose of *taqwa* is to preserve and raise the conscience to an awareness that one is accountable to God (Esack 85-88). The combination of *tawhid* and *taqwa* is not only concerned with the self and God, but runs more along the lines of having the self interact in the community (*al-nâs*) for social justice and the defeat of corruption. Qur'ânic verses are clear that *tawhid* and *taqwa* are mandated from God for believers; but in the whole spectrum of divine unity these two complement one another and also force one away from thinking individually and toward thinking communally. This is significant because most classical and modern commentaries on the Qur'ân refer to *tawhid* and *taqwa* as the doctrine that points to the ultimate individual accountability to God. What this does is erase the larger context of the accountability of the self toward the larger community. Instead of focusing on the day when one meets God, a day of merely individual reckoning and accountability, the same reckoning needs to be seen in this world, in this community, in our lifetime. As one will account for one's actions in the future, one needs to account for one's actions in the now and the present *as an active accountable member in the community*.

*Zakât* or charity is one of the main articles of faith in the Islamic religion. If one has earned only an incremental salary from the previous year, then only at that moment can he/she give two and-a-half percent toward the poor and marginalized of the community. *Zakât* is often translated as charity and too often just viewed as the process of writing a check to the poor, although, there are hundreds of hadiths of the Prophet that illustrate that *zakât* could be as simple as smiling to a stranger.<sup>25</sup> However, the root word *z-k-w* means to purify oneself or the act of cleansing the self and the root word appears 59 times in the Qur'ân. By giving one's possessions to others we begin to acknowledge that what we have is a loan or, more accurately, a blessing from the divine. Neither do we really own something, especially in the sense of capitalistic consumerism where we have deeds and titles that 'prove' ownership, nor

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<sup>24</sup> The term *taqwa* is used in the Qur'ân in 2:197; 2:237; 5:2; 5:8 and in 18 other verses. The verbal noun *ittaqa*, "to be godfearing or to guard oneself from evil" appears 309 times in the Qur'ân.

<sup>25</sup> For *hadîths* on *zakât*, see Muhammad ibn Ismâ'il al-Bukhârî, *Sahih al-Bukhârî*.

is it ours forever.<sup>26</sup> The Islamic idea of *zakât* brings the believer to give thanks, to remember, to see the gift as a sign (*âyat*) from the divine. The *zakât* as an *âyat* connects possessions to the signs in the sacred text as well as to the 'things' in the world. For a real liberation to occur in the islâmic community and its individuals, I believe that the *jihâd* must move from a one-time fragmented *zakât* offering to an everlasting unfolding of *âyât*s from God. An Islamic liberation theology, again an unfolding of constant surrendering to God, needs to press the individual to understand that the community is part of him/her and that he/she is an organic part of the community. Neither one can survive or prosper without the other, nor can the individual cut oneself away from the community or *al-nâs*.<sup>27</sup> If the original purpose of *zakât* in the seventh century was to liberate oneself from one's possessions, then returning to the original idea of purification and liberation is desperately needed in the modern period. If we were to practice *zakât* exemplified by the beloved Prophet Muhammad, where giving to the poor was his norm and associating with the poor and enslaved was his example, then I think his *zakât* would radicalize our simplistic understanding. The area of *zakât* is just one example where Muslims can reinterpret the real meaning of self-liberation from the madness of worldliness that alienates the self from the self and the self from the larger community.<sup>28</sup>

A true Islamic liberation theology (*azâd-i-madhabî*) not only needs a new hermeneutical interpretation of the inner/outer, the self/community, texts/doctrines, prophets/followers, and practices/beliefs aspects of *islâm*, but all of them need to answer something very elementary: whether or not

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<sup>26</sup> Often forgotten or never even encountered in advanced capitalistic life styles, the islâmic notion of consumption is that whatever is consumed can not be taken for granted because it is not ours permanently. The impermanence of life and the ultimate return to God is repeated thousands of times in the Qur'ân in order to remind the believers not to get lost in the consumption game. What is acquired also needs to be re-circulated back to the community or *'ummâh*.

<sup>27</sup> There are a great deal of hadîths and Qur'anic texts that support this idea of the self and community; the beloved Prophet himself once said that "The community is like the body, if one part aches then the whole body aches." These hadîths are available in the canon of hadîths by Imam Bukhari and Muslim works.

<sup>28</sup> I use "madness of worldliness" to refer to the post-modern technologically driven commercial trends of explicit individualism and the philosophy of the priority of the self's prosperity over that of the larger community. It is madness because of the way the mind is preoccupied with what is required to reach a level of economic security and also, at the same time, with trying to sustain that status.

the acting, doing, and thinking of surrendering are really freeing us. Muslims who claim to be believers of the one God need to re-assess, re-evaluate and ultimately challenge whether their faith is bringing *in* justice ('*adl*) and love (*mûhabât*) to the poor of this world. Any liberation from oppression needs the entire community, that is an awakened community that sees itself as a holistic and inter-connected community, not compartmentalized by class, wealth, profession, and ethnicity. These very barriers are the obstacles that the Prophet himself worked against and in doing so achieved an egalitarian, pluralistic, and open society. Justice and love is not reserved for distinguished affluent members of our society, but it rests entirely on our purification with God and the complete community. I hope it is clear that in order to be harmonious with God's Unity, individual Muslims must struggle—in both inner and outer ways—toward the liberation of the larger community '*ummâh*. In Islamic theology salvation comes from repentance, but the question we need to address is, repentance for whom? Clearly, the individual approach is concerned merely with individual repentance. But that is not enough; it is not in accord with God's unity as laid out in the Qur'ân.

In addressing the subject of acceptable and forbidden violence in Islam, modern Muslim scholars need to pursue this avenue of thinking about living and outlining a new spiritual and ethical code based on Qur'anic virtues of establishing harmony by liberating the self. The traditional way of focusing on Islamic law as the primary hermeneutical key to implement new innovative ways of liberation will not open new doors of enlightenment and compassion. Instead, for the new millennium, scholars and laity need to reconnect and recapture the Qur'anic message as it was originally revealed to the Prophet. This requires Muslims to unshackle many layers of dogmatic thinking and doing in order to access the essential life embracing and love message from God.

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## RESPONSE TO QAMAR-UL HUDA

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**Q**amar and I communicated by email. The text of my response is basically what I sent him by email.

Dear Qamar: Thanks for your greeting. I have read your paper with interest and learned from it. Here is a brief account of what I plan to say. My response will be chiefly from the point of view of the mimetic theory which holds that religion in its human, pagan, unrevealed form is a structure of sacred violence that lives by scapegoating and sacrifice and generates culture out of the victim by means of, firstly ritual, the repetition of the first murder as sacrifice, secondly prohibition, religious law that enforces differentiation, and thus prevents the crisis of undifferentiation, that is the precursor of surrogate victimage and thirdly myth, the account of the originary violence told from the point of views of the perpetrators, coverup for their violence. Islam's monotheism is a powerful antidote to this pagan sacred, indeed, in terms of mimetic theory, all the great religions are more or less in reaction against the pagan sacred, against generative violence; and one of the marks of their greatness resides in the candor with which they address the problem of the residual sacred violence in themselves. This was my problem with Rabbi Kimelman's presentation yesterday, and I confess it is my problem with your presentation. In this regard I consider the Buddhist contribution to this symposium to be the best of the lot, precisely because it is so candid about the residue of sacred

violence in this truly great religion. I think that the presentation on Christianity too was, in this regard, candid.

Islam's monotheism is a powerful antidote to this pagan sacred, and I want to draw just for a minute on that. As you yourself mentioned, the rise of Islam was a conflictual phenomenon within the pagan diversity of Arabia in the sixth century. And that itself is disclosive of the relationship between this emerging monotheism and the residual pagan sacred. Now, you understand, that in terms of mimetic theory, the god is the transfigured victim. So the god is essentially a center of violence. And the emergence of monotheism emerges as a critique of the pagan sacred, the transfigured victim. Now here are some indications in the biblical tradition that illustrate this that I find are quite interesting. You recall that monotheism in the Bible first emerges in the texts of Second Isaiah, Deutero Isaiah. Where the Israelite—in this case Jewish—experience of exile leads the prophet to perceive that God is not just the God of Israel—that is, it's not just henotheism—but is the God of all the world, and that he can indeed work through Cyrus, King of the Medes and Persians. It is surely significant that monotheism emerges in the very same text in which the figure of the Suffering Servant of Yahweh appears. It seems as if the emergence of monotheism goes along with the emerging recognition that the victim is innocent. That, if you like, is the demythologization of the sacred victim of the pagan divinity.

I refer you now, secondly, to the ten commandments, the ten words of Moses from Sinai in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 6. As we discussed in our seminar at Stanford and as René has made clear in his most recent book (*I See Satan Falling like Lightning*), the tenth commandment, "Thou shalt not covet" is indeed a prohibition on mimetic desire. This is what the Apostle Paul understood when he picked up in a book epithumesis—in Greek: "you shall not desire." By the way *thuo*, the root *thu* in Greek is the root for sacrifice. So *epithumia*/desire is etymologically in Greek linked to sacrifice. "You shall not desire" is a prohibition on sacred violence. That's the last commandment and, I take it as an important summary of the previous nine commandments. What I have not seen generally appreciated is that the first commandment is a prohibition on idolatry. It is in fact the establishment of the absolute monotheism. So it is as if the ten commandments are bracketed by two stridently mimetic antimimetic injunctions: the injunction on idolatry and the injunction on mimetic desire. And I think you can expound on the ten commandments from a mimetic point of view very satisfactorily, showing that indeed this bracket is

intended to interdict mimetic desire and idolatry. So, to the extent that Islam appreciates and makes so much of monotheism, it fits well into the mimetic paradigm as an antimimetic and therefore antiviolent force. And I have to say that's the most valuable thing I got out of this paper and I appreciate it very much. I was very grateful to be instructed about the etymological link between Islam and *salaam* and *shalom*, about the perfection of God and the perfection of the believer, the possible perfection of the believer as the cessation of violence, given that imperfection is by definition a status of unfulfilled desire. By that token, then, the satisfaction of desire in God would be a state of *shalom*, *salaam*, *salaama*. But by this mimetic token I think we need to accept as a standard of the sincerity and, I would say, of the greatness of the great religions their candor with reference to the residue of sacred violence in themselves.

OK, that's my first point. Now, to return to my email message, There are, however, questions inspired by mimetic theory that I would put to you.

### Question One

If Islam is as intrinsically structured as peace and tolerance—and I do appreciate being taught that there is a close ink between Islam and *salaam*—what do we make of Islam's history of warfare, especially its contemporary history? Now I know you said you would stick to theology, but those of us who are uninformed and perhaps the victim of the Western media will ask this question, and I think we should have it out on the table here. Is this history all an aberration necessitated by politics and threats to survival, or is there some causal link between it and Islamic theology? Why should we not construe this history of violent conflict—and these are genuine questions by the way, these are not rhetorical questions, they are not loaded questions—why should we not construe this history of violent conflict as evidence that Islam's struggle against the pagan sacred is not uniformly successful? Dare I say that it is evidence of a jihad in the sense that you propose, that is of a struggle with oneself to purify oneself of—in this case—violence or any other undesirable occurrence? Is this not evidence of a jihad, in that sense, fought within the bosom of the faith itself against the generative violence of the pagan sacred that is still present within it? Sometimes Islam loses in the struggle and then succumbs temporarily and partially, to be sure, to the power of generative religious violence. If we cannot admit this we risk presenting a myth in the mimetic sense of a false alibi for sacred violence; and I confess that I find your paper too defensive in this regard, that is, verging on the mythical in this

mimetic sense of myth as cover-up of sacred violence. Can we not all, and should we not all—and this is why I highlight Ives’s paper on Buddhism as an example of what I think can best be done in a seminar like this— should we not all admit that the pagan sacred is still present in our religions, just as sin is still alive and well in our mortal bodies? That’s my first point.

## Question Two

My second question is a series of three related inquiries that go the phenomenon of inclusion and exclusion. This pertains to the central mimetic category of the scapegoat. The goat is the living sacrificial victim by relation to which the group maintains its stability. Periodic attacks on the goat function like ritual sacrifice to unite a group. This brings me to the first subset of this question.

In this regard I ask: is it correct, as I have read in the *Encyclopedia of Islam*, the great work published by Brill of Leiden—and I’m quite willing to be told that it’s a piece of Western propaganda, but at least this is what I read — [Huda interjects: “It’s a piece of Western propaganda.” (laughter)] — Well, let me just tell you what I read, and you can tell us why it is inaccurate. Is it true that Islam puts unbelievers in two categories: peoples of the book, and others, and that the former, Jews and Christians, are tolerated in Islamic society with some disabilities, but that every seven years an attempt must be made to “sacrifice” them in the sense of removing them by converting them, and that no treaties with these peoples are valid for more than seven years, while the latter, that is, the other peoples not of the book, are simply to be enslaved or exterminated? That is my first subquestion under the larger question about inclusion and exclusion. Tell me why that is inaccurate.

Secondly, is it the case that in some branches of the religion, Muslims who convert to other religions incur the death penalty? I’ve heard of this, certainly, in Saudi Arabia. Now I know that the Saudi version of Islam is a very austere, almost extreme version—you can inform me on that. Is it the case?—I simply want to know, yes or no, and get some explanation [about the claim] that Muslims who convert to another religion incur the death penalty.

Thirdly, I understand, and indeed have myself read in the text of the Koran, that there is a difference between the Mecca suras of the Koran and the Medina suras on the subject of how to treat unbelievers? Now the Koran, as you claim, may indeed be the words of God literally, but we do know that they came in two geographical locations to the Prophet, in Mecca

and in Medina. The Suras that were revealed to him in Mecca where he was a rejected suppliant, rejected even by his own Quraish tribe, are all full of religious tolerance and concern for the outcast and unbelievers, and they clearly seem to reflect the situation of the Prophet in which he himself is looking for some place in which to exercise his ministry. So they are soft on unbelievers. The Medina suras, however, are very hard on unbelievers. And in Medina we know that the Prophet gained political and military control. So it seems here that the divine revelation is historically conditioned by the social and political status of the Prophet receiving this message, and particularly on the issue of inclusion and exclusion. Now you talk about a "new hermeneutic," and I must say, I'm puzzled as to what a hermeneutic of an absolutely inviolate text and inviolable text would look like. And in this case I would like to hear from you what the interpretation of the relationship between these two categories of suras having to do the unbelievers is. It is my impression that the Medina suras take precedence in interpretation, and that the hard line against non-Muslims is the predominant one.

### **Question Three**

My third question goes to ethical concerns having to do with the status of women in Islam. We've got to get this on the table. I know you've told me that these things are basically irrelevant, but they're not irrelevant to half the human race, as far as I can tell. History—compare the practices of the Taliban in Afghanistan or the Shi'ites in Iran; at present these are ongoing situations—suggests that Islam inflicts severe and violent disabilities on women. Perhaps you can inform me about the relationship between Islam and clitoridectomy as well, since it seems to be predominantly practiced in areas where Islam is the predominant religion. But it may not have anything to do with Islam; it may be a pre-Islamic pagan custom. Nevertheless, something like two hundred million women are subject to clitoridectomy, and that is, of course, well, to put it mildly, hard to take. The orthodox forms of many religions impose disabilities on women, but in some religions there is at least movement in the direction of lifting these burdens. What is the situation in Islam, if one can generalize? From a mimetic point of view, the religious penalties against women are strictures of sacrificial differentiation imposed by the prohibition energy of the pagan sacred. I would be disappointed, frankly, if you failed to admit this violence against women and simply told me that they were well treated and that I was misinformed. I would take that as another instance of

mythology.

Well, that is enough for now. I'm signaling to you what I have in mind so that you may be prepared to respond and not be taken by surprise. My knowledge of Islam is limited, and so I need to be instructed. I have, however, studied the Muslim Brotherhood somewhat, in my last two years in a think tank at Stanford on international security.

I studied Islamic terrorism, particularly as it pertains to the Balkans. I studied the background of the Bosnian Muslims. And it traces back all the way to the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt which, of course you know, traces back to the Cultural Congress of 1924, I think, in Pakistan. And I must admit that my memory is not as sharp on that subject as it might be, since it's been some years since I investigated this. I have also tried to understand the ideology of political Islam in the present time. I have read most of the Koran, albeit in translation, a grave disability, I agree, but with introductory commentaries, and some very helpful ones, I think. So I probably have just enough knowledge to be dangerous. I do, however, know mimetic theory, and for that reason venture to enter this discussion with you. I hope it will be fruitful and I look forward to meeting you and hearing you.



## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

**Q**amar-ul Huda noted that the bulk of Robert Hamerton-Kelly's questions and concerns were about the Islam that he does not work with: the capital "I" Islam, the institutional Islam, the cultural/ social/ political Islam. The institutions that make up this Islam are multi-dimensional. They cover the full spectrum, ranging from groups that work for social justice and maintain clinics to groups whose purpose is to eliminate the government. Unfortunately, [so Qamar] I am not a specialist in contemporary Islamic movements, and those movements are at the center of most of the questions regarding things like human rights, women's issues, violations of people, conflicts within Islam, etc. Obviously, I'm just one of many people in the Islam community who thinks that this is absolutely atrocious. But there's also a historical context there that needs to be taken into consideration.

Mecca and Medina. The opening of the Qur'ân speaks of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate: This is tied into the Prophet's experience when he was in Mecca, when he and his followers were a minority under siege. The verses that speak about standing up and fighting those who are aggressive to you, as some 10<sup>th</sup>-century commentators already pointed out, are associated with the later Medina phase when the Prophet was more in control. I would argue, agreeing with most scholars, that there is no Mecca/Medina priority, that one needs to look at the entire text. So, too, those texts that speak of believers and nonbelievers, those of the book (Christians and Jews) and those not, and how one relates to these different peoples; it is not easy to locate these texts, some of which eventually move

into Islamic law, as “early” or “late.” I know of no texts to the effect that converts away from Islam are to be killed; I think that’s part of the popular myth about Islam. Remember, Saudi Arabia, in which there is an extreme reading and application of Islamic law, represents only three million of the total one billion Muslims. “Jihad” does not mean “holy war”—those are two different words in Arabic—it basically means “struggle.” Religiously, it means the spiritual struggle against evil, or to purify oneself. Recently, it has been used—or coopted—by political leaders for political gain.

Alice Carter suggested that we are practicing a form of historical anachronism from two perspectives: (1) that in the East, the early scapegoating of Mohammed by Christians lays the responsibility for Islam at the feet of the Christian community, and (2) that in violence and holy war, Christians have been pioneers. It is thus presumptuous for us to hold other peoples to standards that we ourselves are still struggling to discover. I respect, [said Carter] but do not agree with, the views of Hamerton-Kelly, but I do want to hear more about attitudes towards women in Islam, especially in North Africa and the Middle East.

Qamar responded that, actually, the Prophet’s encounter with Christians was widespread and from the beginning; there were both Christian and Jewish tribes in Mecca and Medina. In fact, one of his closest advisors was a Christian woman, the daughter of a priest. She affirmed the Shahada, but it is unclear whether she ever fully converted to Islam. Theologically, men and women are the same, as is repeatedly stated in the Qur’ân. In God’s eyes they are seen as equal, “but they are unequal in terms of piety.” This does not, of course, deny that there are social and cultural milieus and constraints that influence the treatment of women.

Aloysius Lugira reminded us that, as human beings, we have positives and negatives. Unfortunately, in our communities, when we speak of Islam, the negatives tend to have the upper hand. I applaud Qamar’s presentation of “Islam in a new key.” Thus I disagree with Hamerton-Kelly’s critique and his applying the word mythical/mythological to Qamar’s approach. But I also think Qamar should give more attention to the Sharia. And remember, the reason why Islam was welcomed when it came to Africa is found in Qamar’s title: “Liberation Theology.”

Fred Lawrence, recalling Girard’s pointing out that it has become de rigueur to criticize Christianity, noted that the same thing is happening with regard to monotheism. Question: What’s the relationship between institutionalization and mimesis?

Charles McCarthy: Were I the respondent, I’d probably have criticized Qamar even more severely than Hamerton-Kelly. However, I’m

uncomfortable that the same severe analysis wasn't brought upon Judaism and Christianity. Why do we let slide, e.g., Daly's suggestion [Daly was surprised that this was thought to be his meaning] that Christianity is gradually growing into a peace church. Baloney! (This was followed by several examples of violence in contemporary Christianity.) So it's not a question of the mere existence of God, but of what kind of God that God is and what that God expects. Monotheism can be a cover for sacred violence as well as can polytheism. So, if we don't bring the same strong critique against Judaism and Christianity, we are making Qamar a scapegoat.

Robert Hamerton-Kelly: I repeat: all the great religions struggle against the pagan in themselves. Ives's paper is the best example of that among the papers in this conference, and McCarthy's remarks exemplify what I was trying to communicate. Lugira's objection to my use of "mythical/ mythological" is misplaced, since I clearly stated that "in terms of mimetic analysis" which is what this conference is all about.

An unidentified speaker thanked Qamar, but asked: isn't there a problem in seeing Mohammed as a to-be-imitated founding father, since he is also a warrior.

Qamar responded that we don't refer to Mohammed as a founding father but as one selected as a prophet. To spread the message was not his choice, but something he was chosen to do. Islamically, we perceive him as someone who had a balance of the world and a spiritual dimension. This at times involved not just passively accepting evil, but actively resisting it.

Maria Korusiewicz: Is there a difference between institutionalized and noninstitutionalized Islam? Isn't it still the nomadic tradition in Islam? In the Shiite religion, the imam seems to be the only person of authority. Does that have something to do with the violence that you can see today?

Paul Bellan-Boyer asked about the annual Haj and the role of the story of Abraham as a central theological event for Muslims who reenact mythic history. The final event of the Haj is the stoning with pebbles of a stone pillar, which symbolizes the casting out of evil from one's life. But in 1998 (and not just in that year) this was the occasion of a stampede in which hundreds were killed. Would you comment on that?

An unidentified speaker recalled the difference between the message and the institution, and the usefulness of Daly's distinction between the normative and the descriptive. Then: I see your position, Qamar, as "prophetic" and focused on the normative. This can serve to protect us from acting in a sacrificial way. So, then, are institutions sacrificial? The answer

is Yes.

Another unidentified speaker noted the irony that we, of all people—that our first reaction here has been to scapegoat the tradition that was being presented. Concerning jihad: There are forces that lead us away from God, and forces that lead us toward peace. But the highest and ultimate peace is “where the two forces are brought into harmony.” The task, therefore, is not simply to “cast out” the violent force (that’s scapegoating), but “to integrate ourselves into a kind of higher peace with God.” Is that right?

Qamar: Yes, you’ve got that right. The Haj is a reenactment of the prophet Abraham’s plight. The three pillars of Islamic legend correspond to the three tests of Abraham and his resisting moving away from saying that there is one God. The 1998 Haj incident in which hundreds were killed was a panic caused by failed air conditioning.

Vern Neufeld Redekop recalled the view that Jesus was against community, because community draws boundaries. Jesus, however, was always welcoming in people who had been excluded. So, I welcome you and your Islamic voice into our COV&R community. You certainly can be of help to us; and perhaps mimetic theory can help Muslims to a better understanding of themselves.

Unidentified speaker: I did research at U.C. Berkeley on the theological dimensions of Jihad. Are there Sufi overtones in your position? Jihad is a struggle against corruption, oppression, and non-provoked aggression by individuals striving to establish peace in the world. In another sense, it is a war between believers and nonbelievers. In all this there is the potential for troublesome areas and pitfalls. What kind of peace (spiritual, social, political) and what kind of liberation (spiritual, social, political) are you talking about—since this moves us beyond the purely religious to the institutional?

# **VIOLENCE AND NONVIOLENCE IN HINDU RELIGIOUS TRADITIONS**

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## **Outline**

### **I. Violence, Sacrifice and Ritual**

1. Some basic attitudes toward the killing of animals
2. Resolving the problem of sacrificial violence by internalization
3. Substitutions
4. Renunciation and nonviolence: an elite pathway
5. Violence and nonviolence in relation to vegetarianism: Hans Schmidt's theses

### **II. Traditional Hindu Theorizations of Violence in Mimamsa Ritual Theory and Vedanta Theology**

1. The ritual analysis (at *Mimamsa Sutra* 1.1.2) of the Shyena rite which is performed in order to harm enemies
2. The Vedanta analysis (at *Uttara Mimamsa Sutra* 3.1.25) of ritual violence in relation to the prohibition of violence

### **III. Violence in the Life of the State**

1. The royal power to punish (*danda*)
2. The synthesis of the ideals of brahmin and king
  - a. The distribution and management of violence in the *Laws of Manu* (1st century CE)
  - b. Policy toward warfare in the *Arthashastra* of Kautilya
3. The collapse of the brahmanical synthesis—and the emergence of a (seemingly) more nonviolent Hinduism
4. A comment on Gandhi (1869–1948) and the contemporary emergence of post-Gandhian Hindu perspectives

#### IV. Alternate Views from Outside the Sanskritic Tradition

1. Tamil Wisdom on Violence and Nonviolence:
  - a. *Tirukkural* (c. 2nd century CE)
  - b. *Cilappatikaram* (5th century CE)
2. Blood and Goddesses
3. From a Village Perspective
  - a. Some Trouble with Cows
  - b. Mahasweta Devi and the Literary Exposure of Violence

#### V. The Question of a Christian Perspective on the Hindu Treatment of Violence and Religion: Are Victims Necessary?

##### Some Presuppositions:

- The following reflections, complex as they are, are governed by a reluctance to simplify Hindu teaching. I seek to avoid the view that the Hindu traditions had only one view of violence and nonviolence.
- I use the term “Hindu” loosely and as a shorthand, without claiming that there is a single Hindu tradition, or a single creed shared by all Hindus, or a single attitude toward violence. But neither do I claim that there are simply many traditions without any common elements which justify the appellation “Hindu.”
- I am reluctant to idealize the Hindu traditions as if nonviolence must necessarily be taken as the epitome of Hindu thought. India’s traditions are complex, and require complex treatment.
- A serious artificiality of this paper is that I treat Hinduism without simultaneously looking into Buddhist and Jain materials, though both were traditions with important and enduring commitments to nonviolence. Particularly with respect to the renunciant, marginal components of traditions, one ought not to make overly neat or decisive distinctions

between the Hindu, Buddhist, and Jain theories and practices related to violence and nonviolence.

- I attempt to give preference to indigenous discussions of issues related to violence and nonviolence; the context and mode of thinking are important, not just the conclusions drawn. I therefore avoid simply mining Hindu texts for an answer to a contemporary question, “What is the Hindu attitude toward violence and nonviolence?”
- In most of what follows we must distinguish contexts where “violence” indicates “physical action which causes pain to some living being,” from contexts where “violence” indicates “an intention, rooted in anger or malice, to hurt someone.” I use the word “violence” for both in order to highlight the complex issues of distinction involved. In considering the Sanskrit formulations, one likewise has to distinguish *himsa* as “causing pain” from *himsa* as “intending to harm.”
- It is often difficult to date ancient texts, and even when one narrows down a date—within 200-300 years—its significance still depends on other, often equally broadly stated dates. Nevertheless, I do offer dates throughout, as summarized here:
  - ancient Vedic sacrificial practices, from before 1200 BCE
  - Vedic ritual analyses and reformulations of sacrifices as ritualized acts, in the Brahmanas, from after 1000 BCE
  - the Upanishadic exploration of the deeper meanings of ritual and interiorized alternatives to ritual, from after 900 BCE
  - the Buddha, c. 500 BCE
  - key texts in the theorization of royal power, *The Laws of Manu* (beginning of Common Era) and *Arthashastra* (c. 150 CE)
  - the Tamil wisdom text *Tirukkural* (100 CE)
  - Goddess texts as evidenced in Sanskrit formulations, from after 500 CE; the *Tantrasara* (16th century)
  - Indian Independence (1947)
  - Mohandas Gandhi (1869-1948)
- Finally, though rather amply developed, the following pages must be treated as “notes toward a description of the Hindu views of violence and nonviolence” meant to aid our treatment of the topic at the June 2000 conference, and not as a finished, focused essay on the topic. I am aware too that at some points I do not provide sufficient context on Indian thought, for those who may have no prior familiarity with India. I will attempt to correct this in the context of discussion at the conference, and in the meantime recommend reliable secondary sources, such as Gavin

Flood's *Introduction to Hinduism* (Cambridge University Press, 1996). For ease of pronunciation and electronic reproduction of this essay, I have adopted a simple phonetic form of transliteration from the Sanskrit and Tamil.

## **I. Violence, Sacrifice, and Ritual**

### **1. Some basic attitudes toward the killing of animals**

The primary starting point, and perhaps most fully documented location, for our consideration of violence in the Indian Hindu context is the Vedic sacrificial/ritual context where, from before 1200 BCE, the killing of animals had been both an expected practice and a problem, already subject to practical critique by being marginalized as a necessary but secondary part of the ritual activity. Some of the fundamental Hindu attitudes toward violence were most explicitly worked out in relation to animals, and not humans. Even in the oldest parts of the Veda, the killing of animals seems to be relegated to a secondary role, as peripheral to the primary and proper event, the performance of a sacrifice which may happen to use animal parts as an offering. By attention to shifting ritual calculus, one can trace the larger shift in Hindu religious thinking and practical reflection, from the killing of animals to a limited ritual killing of animals, to a complete cessation of killing them even in ritual contexts, and to a transformation of the performer into a "non-sacrificing person," and thus to a wider "discovery" of nonviolence. This transformation is also manifest, socially, in the shift to very largely nonviolent temple rituals.

Ritualization entails the control and limitation of violence by its circumscription in the language of ritual injunctions. The slaughter of animals is normal, but the violence is "obscene" in the ritual context; the focus is not on killing of the animal itself as significant, but on the use of the parts of the animal in ritual offerings.

In the context of ritual directives and prayers, the actual killing itself is downplayed and its importance minimized. As Hans Schmidt has observed, in general the words "to kill" and "to die" are not used. For leading the animal up for sacrifice and killing it *a labhate* "he takes hold of" is substituted, for killing alone *sam jnapayati* "he makes consent." The slaughterer is called *shamitr* "appeaser." And where the killing and dying is explicitly stated... it is done only in order to nullify or deny it on the spot. The idea that the animal does not die, but goes to the gods whose herd it joins, is attested in the Rgveda. And a Brahmana [text] says: "Not to death, in truth, do they lead (the animal) which they lead to the sacrifice." But



apart from these more general conceptions the whole ritual is pervaded by acts meant for immediately eliminating any killing and injury, the acts of appeasing (*shanti*). (646)

In the *Rg Veda* (before 1000 BCE) we accordingly find these instructions for the treatment of animals to be sacrificed:

The axe penetrates the thirty-four ribs of the swift horse: the beloved of the gods, (the immolators), cut up (the horse) with skill, so that the limbs may be unperforated, and recapitulating joint by joint.

There is one immolator of the radiant horse, which is Season (*rtu*); there are two that hold him fast: such of your limbs as I cut up in due season, I offer them, made into balls (of meat), upon the fire.[Then words are addressed to the horse:]

Let not your precious body grieve you, who are truly going (to the gods). Do not let the axe linger in your body. Do not let the greedy and unskillful (immolator), missing the members, mangle your limbs needlessly with his knife.

Truly, at this moment you do not die, nor are you harmed. For you go by auspicious paths to the gods. The horses of Indra, the steeds of the Maruts shall be yoked (to their cars), and a courser shall be placed in the shaft of the ass of the Asvins (to bear you to heaven). (I.162.18-21)<sup>1</sup>

So too, the *Shatapatha Brahmana* (before 900 BCE), indicates a desire to pacify the animal to be sacrificed:

Thereupon the Agnidh priest, taking a (new) firebrand, walks in front; whereby he places Agni in front, thinking, 'Agni shall repel the evil spirits in front!' and they lead the victim after him (to the slaughtering place) on a (way) free from danger and injury. The Pratiprasthatri priest holds on to it from behind by means of the two spits, and the Adhvaryu priest (holds on to) the Pratiprasthatri, and the Sacrificer [donor holds on] to the Adhvaryu. As to this some say, 'That (victim) must not be held on to by the sacrificer, for they lead it unto death; therefore let him not hold on to

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<sup>1</sup> Slightly adapted from the translation, *Rig-Veda Samhita*, by H.H. Wilson.

it.' But let him nevertheless hold on to it; for that (victim) which they lead to the sacrifice they lead not to death. . . (3.8.1.10)<sup>2</sup>

Just as the issue of the sacrifice of animals was closely reconsidered, so too a rule was put forward, in renunciant circles, against extra-ritual violence against animals. In the old *Chandogya Upanishad* (c. 800 BCE) we see both the prohibitions and the continuing exception for ritual violence:

From the teacher's house—where he learned the Veda in the prescribed manner during his free time after his daily tasks for the teacher—he returns, and then, in his own house, he does his daily vedic recitation in a clean place, rears virtuous children, draws all his sense organs into himself, and refrains from killing any creature except for a worthy person—someone who lives this way all his life attains the world of *brahman*, and he does not return again. (8.15)<sup>3</sup>

Thus there is a condemnation of evil intent and of most violence, but not absolutely a condemnation of violence.

## 2. Resolving the Problem of Sacrificial Violence by Internalization

J. Heesterman has masterfully described the process by which the sacrificial contest is ritualized. By Heesterman's terminology, *sacrifice* "is the arena of conflict and alliance, the field in which honor and position are to be won, the market for the distribution of wealth...Combining in itself all functions—social, economic, political, religious—sacrifice is the catastrophic center, the turning point of life and death, deciding each time anew, though endless rounds of winning, losing, and revanche, the state of human affairs here and in the hereafter. Broken at its very center, it is forever hovering on the brink of collapse..." *Ritual* "is the opposite. It is called upon to control the passion and the fury of the sacrificial contest and

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<sup>2</sup> Slightly adapted from the translation, *The Shatapatha-Brahmana: according to the Text of the Madhyandina School*, by Julius Eggeling.

<sup>3</sup> As translated by Patrick Olivelle in *The Upanishads*. Olivelle has a helpful footnote on the phrase "except for a worthy person:" "*except for a worthy person*: the phrase *anyatra tirthebhyah* is somewhat ambivalent. It has been translated as: 'except at sacrifices', 'except at holy places', and 'except in the prescribed manner'. The term *tirtha* can mean all these. The hospitality shown to honoured guests included the slaughter of a good animal for their food." (356). The matter is important, since Olivelle's translation suggests killing as a regular practice, for the purposes of food.

to keep such forces within bounds" (2-3). The first two chapters of *The Broken World* elaborate respectively on sacrifice and ritual, charting the apparently deliberate transition from the one to the other, as sacrifice is domesticated: "No wonder the dharma texts consider sacrifice to be too much for our morally decayed age, the fourth or *kaliyuga*. The institution of sacrifice broke down in the sacrificial battle of the epic and thereby ushered in our own decrepit era. The dharma cow, having only one leg left to stand on, has been definitively destabilized" (43).

The third through seventh chapters of Heesterman's book document this ritualization by attention to the cult of the fire (chapter 3), the fire's periodicity and mobility (chapter 4), the priest and sacrificer (chapter 5), the consecrated (chapter 6), and the sacrificial meal (chapter 7). The end point is a "second-order ritual monism," where the significance of sacrifice is "reduced" to the sacrificer himself, who is increasingly committed to the sure mastery of ritual rules and who transacts his ritual business with gods and priests he "hires" to aid his project. At issue is a practical shift in paradigm, from a combative and conflictual configuration of reality to one which is, as it were, encompassed by the mind of the ritual specialist so that even oppositions occur within a broader expanse of underlying harmony.

Heesterman closely links the double upanishadic emphasis on the self and the cessation of ritual activity with the dynamics of ritualization: *it is a process of interiorization*. As sacrifice and sacrificial combat are tamed and made ritually predictable and safe, the religiously significant world is increasingly internalized. With the breakdown of the sacrificial contest, the ritual performer emerges as the all-important player, in a duller game: "What gave the concept of the *atman* its thrust and overwhelming importance was the breakup of the agonistic pattern of sacrifice and the resultant monistic ritualism...man as sacrificer was put in the center as the sole actor transcending both gods and humans...The monistic reform achieved by the Vedic ritualists...completely changed the institution of sacrifice. When they stated that 'man is sacrifice,' this was no longer an enigma but a flat, unmysterious equation that made man as a sacrificer a universe unto himself governed by a static rule of ritual. It was this that gave the *atman*, the single sacrificer's self, its transcendent quality as the principle and seal of immortality" (218). Thus, "it was ritualism that achieved the decisive break and so led over to the Upanishadic *atman-brahman* doctrine."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The "Upanishadic *atman-brahman* doctrine" is a doctrine of equivalence which tends

As the upanishadic discourse gains prominence, the possibilities of serious conflict are discounted, and the real battles are narrowed to an internal field within the self. To generalize, we might say that in much of the Hindu tradition the real place for the struggle against violence, where nonviolence will triumph if it is to triumph at all, is within the individual person. External arenas in which combatants clash have already been judged either irrelevant or merely symptomatic of interior struggles. We might read the famous *Bhagavad Gita* in this light. Although the dialogue between Lord Krishna and the warrior Arjuna occurs literally on a battlefield as a highly bloody war is about to begin, and although the direct result of the *Gita*'s teaching is the beginning of the fighting, the tradition has generally seen the *Gita* as a teaching about the internal transformation of the warrior, in whom the discovery of self-identity is accompanied by the rooting out of anger, fear, greed, and hatred, and the cessation of the practice of dividing the world into enemies and friends.<sup>5</sup>

This opens a potentially fruitful line of inquiry: the doctrinal side of Vedanta—which can stand forcefully as an including or excluding truth—is enfolded back into the ritualization process—and therefore into the overcoming of the conflictual dynamics of “sacrifice.” Vedanta can be understood to be linked to an understanding of the world in which conflict no longer makes sense because the very idea of opposition is increasingly reduced in influence and relevance.

### 3. Substitutions

An important practical implication of Hindu religious thinking was the shift from a wider spread killing of animals to a limited ritual killing of animals, and then to a complete cessation of killing them even in ritual

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toward the identification of the ultimate cosmic reality (*brahman*) with the individual self (*atman*).

<sup>5</sup> In Heesterman's account this is all a kind of bureaucratization, where an overly developed attention to details takes the place of a contention of “real-life issues” - a kind of United Nations approach to peace-keeping, one might say, yet which, in the upanishadic inquiries that constitute the basis of the Vedanta, give this attention to detail a more serious religious meaning. One might conclude on the basis of Heesterman's comments that domestication, urbanization and bureaucratization are the antidotes to conflict: more established societies have more to gain from stability and predictability, and less enthusiasm for the excitement of contexts and raids. If Vedantic learning flourishes in settled societies, its learning may have a valued sedative/sedentary result. If not at the start the elitism of a sacred learning about a self that transcends oppositions of every sort, it is at least the elitism of settled property owners.

contexts, as the performer is transformed into a “non-sacrificing (non-killing) person.” This peripheralization of violence was in a certain sense a permanent solution, since even today one can see it operative as a theoretically defended solution. However, there are alternatives, such as the following three.

First, an important indicator of the move toward the elimination of violence is the substitution of vegetal offerings for human and animal offerings. This is seen clearly in the rite which retains the title, “Human sacrifice” (*purusha-medha*), but in which vegetal offerings are the only offerings made.

Second, by some calculations, the essence of sacrifice is the act of renunciation—alienating some part of one’s possessions or even one’s self, then in principle there is a straightforward path to non-animal offerings which still meet the requirement for this alienation. One might then substitute a language of ‘gift’ for a language of sacrifice.

Third, *puja*—temple worship before images—is an enduring and popular resolution of ritual violence, in the completion of the shift in ritual practice from fire sacrifice of invisible gods to the worship of gods who are present and iconically presented. Violence is no longer appropriate, and usually animal sacrifice is not allowed in temple contexts.<sup>6</sup>

#### **4. Renunciation and nonviolence: an elite pathway**

There is a further calculus involved when we turn to renunciant calculations of the best way of life, since in this context we see a rejection (or non-acceptance, by those who never shared it) of the traditional orthodox calculation of some kinds of violence as required while others are not. Renunciation may be a transformation of the person offering the sacrifice.

Here we encounter a variety of reflections—Buddhist, Jaina, and Hindu—on the evil of violence, yet also of its near inevitability, since the harm seems intrinsic to life: we kill, and eat what is killed (animals or plants) in order to live. The goal becomes a separation of oneself from the broader sweep of a killing-and-eating society, which ideally aims finally at the termination of ordinary life as a whole. In Hindu circles, this is put positively in terms of an eternal self, which neither kills nor is killed, and

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<sup>6</sup> But some Goddess temples are an exception; see below for some comments on Goddess worship and violence.

which, in its pure and uncompromised form, stands apart from all the ordinary negotiations of life.

In Jaina traditions (which have a different calculus again, not dependent on the notion of self) more clearly than in Hindu, this is ultimately the ideal of a kind of religious suicide, where one simply stops the cycle of killing-in-order-to-live, in order to avoid permanently the deleterious practice of violence.

### **5. Violence and nonviolence in relation to vegetarianism: Hans Schmidt's theses**

In his comprehensive essay "The Origin of Ahimsa," Hans Schmidt has sorted out the complex multiple strands which combined to create the dominant traditional Indian understanding toward nonviolence. His research is too complex to summarize briefly, but here I paraphrase his major theses:

- i. Nonviolence is the duty of all four classes, according to the *Laws of Manu*;
- ii. nonviolence is related to vegetarianism; therefore, animals are not to be killed and eaten at all,
- iii. but an exception is made for the ritual killing and eating;
- iv. brahmins are especially bound by injunctions of nonviolence, while
- v. renunciants are subject to even stricter rules regarding vegetarianism, with no exceptions allowed, as an indication of complete nonviolence;
- vi. religious students (brahmacharins) keep a vow of nonviolence/vegetarianism;
- vii. nonviolence/vegetarianism is an austerity which removes sin;
- viii. nonviolence is connected with an increasing awareness of self/*atman* as present in all beings; included is also the fear that one might eventually be eaten by animals such as those one eats.

## **II. Traditional Hindu Theorizations of Violence in Mimamsa Ritual Theory and Vedanta Theology**

In the course of subjecting Vedic ritual texts and Upanishadic meditative texts to careful exegesis, theologians in the Mimamsa and Vedanta schools fashioned a narrowly-argued and legally-based analysis of action and its effects by the measure of intention; in this way they were able to exclude violence whenever the underlying intention was evil.

**1. The ritual analysis (at Mimamsa Sutra 1.1.2) of the Shyena rite which is performed in order to harm enemies<sup>7</sup>**

Mimamsa theorists (from 200 BCE and thereafter) are the “liturgical theologians” of ancient India, and they are renowned for their close exegesis of ritual texts and ritual activities, with a particular interest in the relationship between what one does and the motivations for action. Typical of the Mimamsa attitude, the discussion of violence and nonviolence occurs not as a topic in itself in the early texts, but via an analysis of a curious Vedic injunction, “Let a person intending harm perform the Shyena sacrifice,” i.e. the “eagle sacrifice” which is aimed against one’s enemies. While the text seems to enjoin and therefore authorize a harm-intending rite, the Mimamsa decision is that the initial qualification—the person intending harm—excludes all persons interested in righteousness, and therefore excludes all harm-intending rites. Dharma is righteousness, and it is incompatible with evil intent.

The key Mimamsa discussion of violence and its relation to righteousness is found in the commentaries on I.1.2 in the *Mimamsa Sūtras* of Jaimini (ca. 2nd century BCE). In commenting on the notion of *dharma* (moral, religious, social, cosmic rightness) as related to injunctive force as mentioned in the first and second *sūtras*, Shabara (ca. 2nd century) asks whether rites which intend harm to enemies, such as the Shyena sacrifice, are in keeping with *dharma* or not. Can acts of injury, prescribed or not, and intentions to harm, mentioned in the Veda or not, be interpreted in such a way as to maintain a sanctioned realm of harm such as is protected in the Veda itself, yet without sanctioning the use of religious acts in order to hurt other persons? The Shyena rite, enjoined with the explicit intention of harming enemies, is introduced as a particularly illuminating case. Because enjoined, it should count as in keeping with *dharma*; but its result is intentional harm of other persons, outside the ritual context, so it seems that it would be wrong actually to perform the rite.

Kumarila’s comment in his *Shlokavartika* (8th century) on the Shabara’s passage extends for about 70 verses (*vartikas*).<sup>8</sup> Kumarila sorts out the complex issues raised by Shabara, and makes this basic distinction:

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<sup>7</sup> The *Mimamsa Sūtras* of Jaimini, 2700 verses (*sūtras*) which in parts require commentary, have been translated by Ganganatha Jha along with the ancient commentary of Shabara, as *Sabara-Bhashya*. Jha has also translated Kumarila Bhatta’s *Shlokavartika*. For an introduction to Mimamsa reasoning, see Francis X. Clooney, S.J. (1990).

<sup>8</sup> *Vartikas* 201–276 under *sūtra* I.1.2.

(1) killing which has the sanction and obligation of scripture is not wrong, while (2) killing which lacks the sanction and obligation of scripture is wrong. In turn, the distinction enables him to determine that the Shyena ritual is a complicated case if one confuses (1). and (2); i.e., (3) the Shyena ritual is evil because of its intention (to harm) and its result (the harm of one's enemy). These are factors external to the proper ritual context. But the core authorization of the ritual as enjoined remains intact, with reference to the unquestioned ritual imperative. Insofar as Shyena is enjoined, it is sanctioned (by i.); but insofar as it is undertaken for the sake of evil results (by ii.), it is to be judged by external standards, as ordinary violence, and therefore prohibited.

Two subordinate discussions in Kumarila's comment are particularly relevant. First, he argues that the calculation of pain and pleasure is an insufficient basis for the determination of right and wrong. Likewise, of course, disgust toward the killing involved in sacrifice is not a determinative factor. Factors such as pain, pleasure, and disgust vary, and one cannot depend on them to decide what is right or not—which must be decided by the Veda alone. Second, a passing objection raises the point that it is quite clear from the Veda itself that killing is wrong. If so, other passages in the Veda cannot be used to justify ritual killing, since “scripture neither adds to nor subtracts from the capacities of substances and actions.”<sup>9</sup> Kumarila rejects this line of reasoning, arguing that there is no natural, general validation or prohibition of actions. Actions are always all articulated and specified in terms of particular performers under particular circumstances. The Veda provides precisely the required specification which justifies ritual harm.

## **2. The Vedanta analysis (at Uttara Mimamsa Sutra 3.1.25) of ritual violence in relation to the prohibition of violence**

While the Vedanta—a subsequent (from 500 CE and thereafter) and important grouping of theological schools which inherit much from Mimamsa but widens the category of texts, acts, and objects of knowledge to be interpreted—had no problem with nonviolence as a standard, expected “virtue” of the life of the truth-seeker and renunciant, it did also intend to work out grounds for distinguishing kinds of violent activity, so as to approve of those which are Vedic while excluding those which are not.

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<sup>9</sup> See *varitikas* 249-254, in Jha, *Shlokavartika*.



Shankara (8th century) puts the negative and positive positions this way, in his comment on sutra 3.1.25:

It was argued that sacrificial actions are impure inasmuch as they are connected with animal-killing, etc. Therefore their results can be inferred to be evil...

No, since knowledge of what is right (*dharma*) and not-right (*adharma*) is derived from the scripture, which alone is the source of knowing that one act is right, and another act is not-right. For both right and not-right are beyond the senses, and they are not invariable for all places, times, and occasions. A deed that is performed as right in relation to one place, time, and occasion, may become not-right in relation to other times, places, and occasions. No one can have any knowledge about right and not-right unless it be from the scriptures, and from the scriptures it is certain that the Jyotistoma sacrifice, which involves injury, favor, etc., is right. So how could it be declared impure?

But scripture says, Do not harm any being, and thus shows that injury done to any creature is impure. True, but that is only a general rule, and there is an exception, "One should immolate an animal for Agni and Soma."<sup>10</sup> Both the general rule and the exception have their well-defined scopes. Hence, the Vedic rites are quite pure. Moreover, they are practiced by good people and are not condemned by them. (3.1.25)<sup>11</sup>

In Vachaspati Mishra's *Bhamati* 9th century commentary on Shankara, we find a more elaborate explanation. In the context of examining whether one can be reborn even in a vegetative form as part of working out one's deeds, Vacaspati discusses how the prohibition of violence relates to the obligation to commit ritual violence:

[681] One should not object: "The general teaching on violence, 'Do not hurt any living being' is superseded by the qualification regarding violence done to the animal dedicated to Agni and Soma, since the general teaching comes by way of a general claim about violence, while the qualifying [exception for ritual

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<sup>10</sup> I.e., at the sacrifice where the twin deities are Agni and Soma.

<sup>11</sup> The basic Vedanta text, the *Uttara Mimamsa Sūtras* (more commonly known as the *Brahma* or *Vedānta Sūtras*) is a very laconic set of about 450 short verses, sūtras. It is necessarily read with commentaries. I have used the translation by Swami Gambhirananda, the *Brahma-Sūtra Bhāṣya of Sankarācārya*, with slight adaptations.

violence] becomes effective only more slowly, by way of qualifying [the general prohibition]; so the qualification is 'slower' due to its dependence on the 'faster' teaching." Even here, the stronger does not block the weaker in general, but only insofar as there is contradiction. And there is no contradiction here, since the realms are different. In the context of the ritual it says, "Let him kill [take] the animal dedicated to Agni and Soma. This indicates that the killing is for the sake of the ritual. But it does not remove the notion that it causes undesirable results for the performer, such as are indicated by the prohibition. Due to the prohibition we know that violence causes the undesirable for a man, but that by injunction [the killing] is instead for the sake of the ritual. So what contradiction can there be? As they say, "Who performs a ritual, let him eat red garlic... ",<sup>12</sup> etc. In that case, there is no deficiency in the ritual, since it is the accomplishment as commanded [and not the violation of the prohibition not to eat red onion]."

... It is not possible that performing a sacrificial offering would lead to the increase of those deeds which cause suffering of the kind that would be experienced in immobile bodies; in this case the fact that the action is right leads to positive enjoyment.

Nor does the prohibition, "Do not harm" prohibit harm to the [sacrificial] animal, nor does it indicate that the harm done will have its fruition in suffering. "Do not harm" prohibits only that harm which a person does for his own sake. Thus, "Do not harm" is a prohibition which is specific regarding what is to be prohibited, [682] and the prohibition makes known what is prohibited, in relation to what...

The bare prohibition "Do not harm" applies only to the action of a person who is otherwise obliged by the injunction [to do harm, in the ritual context]. It indicates that his goal is attained by giving up that violence which of itself leads to suffering and is contrary to the injunction. For a person not already indicated by the verbal claim ["Let him sacrifice"] is established here merely by indicating the performer's deed, a deed undertaken merely out of desire. The prohibition "not" refers to a deed which is forbidden as a person's own goal [i.e., killing outside a ritual

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<sup>12</sup> As discussed at *Mimamsa Sūtras* 6.2.19-20.

context]. The prohibition is aimed at this specific form of human intention.

The general rule then is: "Whatever killing is done merely for a human goal is not to be done." But if [the killing] is done for the sake of the ritual, the violence can be taken as helpful to the sacrifice. If it is evident that the killing is just helping the person [and is not ritually commanded], there is no ground for conjecturing the opposite, [that it is ritually justified] . . . To summarize: the prohibition [of killing in relation to] the human goal does not refer to [the killing which occurs for] the ritual goal. One can therefore presume that these sacrificial offerings, etc., have only desirable goals and do not result in suffering such as is to be experienced [by rebirth] in an unmoving [vegetative] body.<sup>13</sup>

This rather complicated piece of Vedanta theological analysis is striking in part because of the firm distinction between killing in the ritual context, which is allowed, and killing outside it, which is forbidden. It is striking also because of the rationale that ritual violence is justified simply because it is required in scripture, whereas killing for mundane goals is *always* forbidden. Here there is no attempt to justify ritual killing on its intrinsic merits: whatever its effect, the sheer fact that it is obligatory is what justifies it.

### **III. Violence in the Life of the State**

To turn now to another aspect of the issue, we need to consider the rather different attitude toward the second class, the *ksatriyas*, for whom force was an appropriate instrument.

#### **1. The royal power to punish (*danda*)**

The situation is different when we come to writings on the duties of *ksatriyas*, the second class (caste), and particularly the duties of kings. For to kings is entrusted the obligation of the "stick" (*danda*), to uphold righteousness by the use of force. Although renunciants and brahmins in general are urged to avoid violence, and although likewise ordinary Hindus in lower classes are so urged, such exhortations assume that kings will be the ones exercising force when necessary to maintain or restore order. Here the calculation has to do with necessary force and proportionate response, but there is no ideal of a king who entirely forswears violence.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The translation of passages from Vachaspati Mishra's *Bhamati* is my own.

<sup>14</sup> One might also explore epic accounts of ideal kings, most famously Rama, the hero of the *Ramayana*, and also the ideology proposed in the *Mahabharata*. Such accounts could be

## 2. The synthesis of the ideals of brahmin and king

### a. *The distribution and management of violence in the Laws of Manu (1st century CE)*

The *Laws of Manu* (from around the beginning of the Common Era) is a classical text which highlights the distribution of violence and nonviolence in the Hindu society. Brahmins are urged to a life of purity and focus on learning and meditation. The lower classes had no right to violence, either in the ritual context where it is generally reserved for the upper classes (brahmin and kshatriya) or in ordinary life, where violent actions would be punishable, on the grounds of the common good. Kings, of the second, kshatriya class, are reminded of their duties in protecting the kingdom and the right order of society. They were encouraged to use violence when necessary, yet also to create situations in which violence was not needed. They are also warned, however, to avoid violence prompted by motivated by anger or greed. By this allocation of virtues—brahmin purity, kshatriya force—the several necessary functions of society were maintained, with a hierarchy of values.<sup>15</sup>

### b. *Policy toward warfare in the Arthashastra of Kautilya (150 CE)*

Kautilya's *Arthashastra*, a manual of guidance related to governance aimed at kshatriyas and kings, gives a good summary of the attitude toward force/violence as a right and duty allocated to kings:

The pursuit of [the people's] welfare as well as the maintenance of the philosophic tradition, the Vedas and the economic well-being [the society] are dependent on the scepter wielded by the king. The maintenance of law and order by the use of punishment is the science of government. By maintaining order, the king can preserve what he already has, acquire new possessions, augment his wealth and power, and share the benefits of improvement with those worthy of such gifts. (1.4.3, p. 108)

The progress of this world depends on the maintenance of order and [proper functioning of] government. (1.4.4, p. 108)

Force is a last resort:

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contrasted with accounts of Ashoka, the Buddhist emperor who embraced nonviolence.

<sup>15</sup> See *The Laws of Manu*, tr. by Wendy Doniger and Brian Smith (New York). Their introduction, notes, and indices, are particularly helpful in sorting out *Manu's* views on violence and nonviolence.

Some teachers say, "Those who seek to maintain order shall always hold ready the threat of punishment. For there is no better instrument of control than coercion." But Kautilya disagrees for [the following reasons]. A severe king [meting out unjust punishment] is hated by the people he terrorizes while one who is too lenient is held in contempt by his own people. Whoever imposes just and deserved punishment is respected and honored. A well-considered and just punishment makes the people devoted to dharma, artha and kama [righteousness, wealth, and enjoyment]. Unjust punishment, whether awarded in greed, anger or ignorance, excites the fury of even [those who have renounced all worldly attachments like] forest recluses and ascetics, not to speak of householders. When, [conversely,] no punishment is awarded [through misplaced leniency and now law prevails], then there is only the law of the fish. Unprotected, the small fish will be swallowed up by the big fish. In the presence of a king maintaining just law, the weak can resist the powerful. (1.4.5-15, p. 108)

Kautilya likewise expresses no hesitation about warfare; one of the duties of the king is to defend the kingdom even by aggression when it is needed. The latter part of the *Arthashastra* is a full-scale analysis of ways to deal with the external enemies of the state.

### **3. The collapse of the brahmanical synthesis and the emergence of a (seemingly) more nonviolent Hinduism**

The above synthesis works well then when the normative brahmanical activity, along with its renunciant extreme, and also the proper functioning Hindu kingship, are functioning properly. However (to speculate somewhat), when kingship broke down—i.e., when non-Hindus, first Muslim and then European—took over positions of power in India, there was no longer scope for the proper allocation of force to a particular Hindu group. The principles remained the same, but the exercise of force temporarily 'disappeared' in Hindu society, being alienated and assigned to non-Hindu rulers whose specific concern, however useful they might turn out to be in practice, could not be the defense of *dharma* in the expected Hindu sense.

In this situation, the broader array of Hindu attitudes on violence and nonviolence was no longer evident. Not only by principle but also by default, the society became more evidently characterized by a lack of force, nonviolence. There were no Hindus in power who had the right to use force. Today, more than 50 years after Independence, and although India

is in a situation which is by no means restores an idealized, ancient Hindu sense of kingship, Indians are manifesting again a wider range of attitudes toward violence and nonviolence. I.e., the option to use force is back in the hands of Indians, who are mostly Hindu, and therefore the duty and option to use force is again in Hindu hands. “Violence” again acquires the place in Hindu life which had been largely missing in the preceding nearly more than 500 years.

#### **4. A comment on Gandhi (1869–1948) and the contemporary emergence of post-Gandhian Hindu perspectives**

It is in this context that one must see the remarkable role played by Mohandas K. Gandhi and similar figures who, however generally they may have made their claims on the virtues of nonviolence, nevertheless were still representing their class—Hindus who were not kings.

I deliberately have little to say about Gandhi here, even though for most observers of Indian culture he is the foremost exemplar of nonviolence in Indian culture. Such estimations of this very great man are legitimate, provided they do not serve to reinforce the view that there is a simple or exclusive attitude in favor of nonviolence and against violence in Hinduism. Gandhi tapped into deep impulses of Hinduism, and Jainism too, in favor of a nonviolent attitude toward the world, and brilliantly adapted them to the situation of the emerging independence movement and the shifting momentum against British colonialism. Gandhi’s *satyagraha*, a grasping of the truth which is a powerful positive rendering of nonviolence, has had a pervasive influence throughout India and the much wider world. In their recent essay summarizing a contemporary Hindu view toward nonviolence, Sunanda and Yajneswar Shastri had this to say about Gandhi:

In modern times, Mahatma Gandhi has been the greatest advocate of the principle of nonviolence. His nonviolent methods made him the leader of the freedom movement in India. He has influenced and inspired many great world leaders. He used nonviolence as a weapon to overthrow British rule, social injustice, and the fight against exploitation. According to Gandhi, equanimity towards all living beings is *ahimsa*—and in this we recognize his debt to classic Hindu thought and the ascetic traditions. He expounded a comprehensive philosophy of nonviolence. He tried to apply nonviolence in *every* walk of life: domestic, institutional, economic, and political. He was unique in extending nonviolence to the domain of

economics, thus introducing moral values as a regulating factor of international commerce. According to Gandhi, even criminals, whose crimes are a disease in need of a cure, must be treated with nonviolent methods and regarded as our brothers...For Gandhi, ahimsa meant a transformation of the heart that would result in the freedom of his country and the creation of a casteless society.<sup>16</sup>

Gandhi is in a sense a very traditional figure who rightly and powerfully taps into ancient Indian traditions of nonviolence. Yet, as soon as Gandhi seemed to have canonized nonviolence as the greatest of Hindu ideals, the emergence of an independent India, which had the potential (though only that at first) of reestablishing the Hindu exercise of authority, immediately seemed to distance itself from his ideals by slipping back into state violence, e.g., wars with Pakistan and China, the explosion of nuclear weapons, etc. But it should be clear by now that there is nothing surprising about this, since the Hindu tradition of the allocation of force would inevitably entail its exercise again when the opportunity would present itself.

Yet I also suggest that his universalization of nonviolence, however brilliant and inspiring it might be, was due in part to special factors in the colonial period. Today, more than 50 years after Indian Independence (and although in a situation which is by no means a restoration of an idealized, ancient Hindu sense of kingship), Indians are manifesting again a wider range of attitudes toward violence and nonviolence.

That not every Indian today follows the Gandhian model of nonviolence neither detracts from his powerful example, nor indicates that Indians have somehow fallen from the ideal. Rather, the fuller range of options, violent and nonviolent, are again available to Hindus.

The emphasis on nonviolence as the highest ideal of Hindu culture is represented in continued reverence for Gandhi's teaching—and continued disappointment with any wider array of attitudes in Indian culture. Sunanda and Yajñeshwar Shastri, in the essay mentioned above, interpret Indian culture so as to locate nonviolence as its highest ideal.

#### **IV. Views from Outside the Sanskritic Tradition**

The preceding reflections have been based on the dominant brahmanical and Sanskritic tradition. But as in almost all areas of Indian

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<sup>16</sup> "Ahimsa and the Unity of All Things: A Hindu View of Nonviolence." On Gandhi, see also Margaret Chatterjee (1983), and Mark Juergensmeyer (1984).

thought, here too one must at least signal notice of the vast array of non-brahmanical and non-Sanskritic theorizations about violence. I can do so here only by way of suggestion, alluding briefly to the Tamil language wisdom tradition, the ritual context of Goddess worship, and several modern and more sociological studies.

# **1. Tamil Wisdom on Violence and Nonviolence**

## *a. The Tirukkural (ca. 2nd century CE)*

Early Tamil literature is deeply influenced by Jainism, a radically nonviolent tradition; yet there is also an ancient Tamil respect for kings, especially the king who exercises authority and keeps the kingdom in order, even working heroically in battle. These two songs from the *Tirukkural* (c. 2nd century CE), even today perhaps the most widely revered work in the Tamil language, illustrate the views common in ancient south India:

The sum of virtue is not to kill  
 All sin comes from killing.  
 The first of virtues in every creed  
 Is to share your food and cherish all life.  
 The unique virtue is non-killing;  
 Not lying comes next.  
 Right conduct may be defined  
 As the creed of not killing.  
 Ascetics fear rebirth and renounce the world:  
 How much better to fear murder and renounce killing!  
 Death that eats up all shall not prevail  
 Against the non-killer.  
 Even at the cost of one's own life  
 One should avoid killing.  
 However great its gains, the wise despise  
 The profits of slaughter.  
 Professional killers are vile  
 To the discerning.  
 A diseased, poor and low life, they say,  
 Comes of killing in the past. (321-330)

Searching inquiry, an impartial eye, punishment as prescribed  
 Are the ways of justice.  
 The world looks up to heaven for rain  
 And his subjects to their king for justice.  
 The king's scepter provides the base  
 For scripture and right conduct.  
 The king who rules cherishing his people



Has the world at his feet.  
The king who rules according to the law  
Never lacks rain and corn.  
Not his spear but a straight scepter  
Is what gives a monarch his triumph.  
The king guards the land, and his own rule  
Will guard him if he is straight.  
A king inaccessible, unprobing and unjust  
Will sink and be ruined.  
For a king who would guard and cherish his people  
To punish crimes is a duty, not defect.  
The king who punishes wicked men with death  
Is a farmer weeding the tender crops. (541-55)

Further verses in the *Tirukkural* explore righteous rule, the damage that unjust kings can do, the importance of good defensive measures, the importance of valor and courtesy in war, etc. On the whole, *Tirukkural* sees violence as necessary, though only rarely in the kingdom of a just and wise king.

*b. The Cilappatikaram* (c. 5th century CE)

The ideals presented ideally and poetically in the *Tirukkural* are more vividly presented in other works of ancient Tamil literature, such as the famous *cankam* era (c. 200 CE and thereafter) heroic poetry,<sup>17</sup> and in the famous drama *Cilappatikaram* (*The Tale of the Anklet*) of Prince Ilanko Atikal. In the key central section of *Cilappatikaram*, for example, a crisis resulting in terrible and widespread violence is instigated by the carelessness of a king who neglects his duty and allows an innocent man to be executed as a thief. The destruction of his city, and his own death, are interpreted as order (*dharma*) gone awry, and the necessary purification of what is disordered. Had the king been careful and just, no such violence would have been necessary. The third and final section of *Cilappatikaram* is an account of another king's conquests and restoration of the right order of society, under a powerful, firm, and just ruler.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> See for instance *The Four Hundred Songs of War and Wisdom*, a translation of the ancient *Purananuru* anthology by George Hart and Hank Heifetz (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999).

<sup>18</sup> *Cilappatikaram* has been well translated by R. Parthasarathy as *The Tale of An Anklet* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993). For a brief analysis of some key elements in

The following chart may be useful in sorting out the layers of conflict and deeper rectification in the drama:

A. *Love in an ordinary world* (Act 1)

A tale of two lovers, Kannaki and Kovalan—in *a peaceful kingdom*  
- his infidelity, return and reconciliation

B. *Injustice, the violation of right order, and the inevitable consequences*  
(Act 2)

Kovalan's murder due to the intrigue of an evil goldsmith  
- the sorrow of the grieving widow, Kannaki

The demonstration to the king of the injustice done to Kovalan, and the king's swift demise due to his failure to protect the right order of things:

*Interlude 1: Rebellion against injustice:* Kannaki's rejection of the status of widow

- Her fierce anger and her manifestation as a goddess
- The fiery destruction of the city (with or without selectivity of punishment)
- Her quieting and resignation

*Interlude 2: The invariable law of cause and effect:* the Goddess of the city explains to Kannaki:

- the invariable working out of karma
- the purification of the city as long fated
- the destinies of Kannaki and Kovalan as due to past karma

C. *The restoration of right order by a victorious new king* (Act 3);

- the new king
- the punishment of the goldsmiths
- a monument to good wives,

D. *Concluding "homily" on the virtuous life*

## **2. Blood and Goddesses**

A key alternative theorization about violence is found in the ritual theologies related to the worship of Hindu Goddesses. Many of these Goddesses are strikingly connected with violence, in myth, ritual, and iconography. In the cult of some Goddesses at least, one encounters a dramatization and cultivation of the imagery of violence as representative of the inevitable patterns of violence and death to which humans are victim. In the cult of these Goddesses, one is transformed and transcends violence by confronting it directly and passing into it/through it. These traditions are presumably very old, though often they can be dated only to the (rather late) time period when they appear in Sanskrit, usually after 1000 CE.

In some Goddess traditions, e.g., in certain Kali traditions and most notably with Goddesses like Chinnamasta—who is portrayed as beheaded and holding her head, with blood spurting extravagantly from her neck—there is the ‘positive’ confrontation with violence and narratives of the efficacious nature of the expenditure of blood. This passage from the 16th century *Tantrasara* gives a vivid sense of the direct encounter with violence mediated by encounter with the Goddess:

Visualize in your navel a half-opened white lotus and in its center is a solar disc red as a hibiscus flower and resembling a red bandhuka flower. This disc is decorated with an equilateral triangle pointing downward which is formed by three lines, each representing a guna (beginning in the left in a counter-clockwise direction), rajas, sattva, and tamas.

Standing in the middle is the Great Goddess who is as effulgent as ten million suns. In her left hand she holds her own head; her mouth is wide open, and the tip of her tongue is lolling. She drinks the sanguine stream issuing from her recently-severed throat. Her hair is loose, disheveled and decorated with various flowers. In her right hand she holds a scimitar; she is nude, extremely fierce to behold, decorated with a skull rosary, and stands in the pratyalidha stance. She wears a bone necklace and has a snake as her sacred cord. She is a perpetual sixteen year-old with full firm breasts. She stands on Rati and Kama who are in reverse sexual embrace (Rati, female, is above Kama, male). One visualizes in this way saying the mantra.

She is flanked by Dakini and Varnini to her left and right respectively. Varnini is drinking from the nectar-like sanguine

stream which is shooting up from the Goddess' neck. She is red with a smiling face, has loose hair, and is nude. She holds a skull and a scimitar in her left hand and right hand respectively. She wears a snake as her sacred thread and has a fiery splendor. Decorated with various ornaments and a bone rosary, she stands in the pratyahita stance and is a perpetual twelve year old.

On the Goddess' left side is Dakini whose brilliance equals the fire at the end of an eon. Her matted hair glistens like lightning, her teeth with protruding canines are as white as cranes and she has swelling breasts. This great Goddess is terrible to behold—nude with loose hair, a great flickering tongue and ornamented with a skull rosary. Her left and right hands hold a skull and a scimitar respectively. She drinks the ambrosial sanguine stream issuing from Chinnamasta's neck. She is extremely terrifying and holds a terrible skull.

A wise devotee should meditate upon this Goddess attended by these two, Varnini and Dakini. The Bhairava Tantra states, "She holds in her left hand her own head with a skull and drinks her blood with her mouth." The Tantra also states that whoever performs this worship without meditating on Chinnamasta, the Goddess will sever his (or her) head and drink his (or her) blood.<sup>19</sup>

I have not researched the Goddess traditions sufficiently to be able to extrapolate from the imagery and practices a fuller sense of the implied theological positions specifically regarding violence. However, this is clearly (and I suspect intentionally) a transgressive approach to violence, one which holds in central focus the distasteful elements—bodies, corpses, members, blood, and other bodily fluids—which are neatly excluded from the brahmanical management, rationalization, and peripheralization of violence. With Goddesses like Chinnamasta, the confrontation with violence is at the very center of ritual performance.

### 3. From a Village Perspective

It will be abundantly clear to the reader by now that this essay has been

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<sup>19</sup> As cited in *Chinnamasta: The Awful Buddhist and Hindu Tantric Goddess*, by Elisabeth Anne Benard (Delhi: Motilal Banarsidass, 1994), p. 87; see also *Tantric Visions of the Divine Feminine*, by David Kinsley (Berkeley: University of California, 1997).

generated from reflection on textual material, and primarily erudite scholarly writings. But even now, as I readily concede the need for more sociological studies exploring closely and intimately the ways in which ordinary Hindus experience and negotiate violence and nonviolence, I rely yet again on two textual references to illustrate directions further, complementary study might take.

*a. Some Trouble with Cows*

First, in 1994 Beth Roy published a volume entitled *Some Trouble with Cows*, which analyzes a riot that occurred between Hindu and Muslim villagers in Bangladesh in the 1950s. Roy explores in particular the way the riot was remembered, explained, and preserved in the minds of those who had lived through it and among their children and grandchildren. Although the volume is not focused on an analysis of violence per se, Roy succeeds wonderfully in aiding her readers to enter the villagers' world and begin to understand the complex mix of fears, resentments, and self-protective instincts, all played out in terms of economic and local political realities—which both led to violence and hindered the healing of its wounds.

*b. Mahasweta Devi and the Exposure of Violence*

Second, I wish to draw attention to the author and social activist Mahasweta Devi (born in 1926), an activist and writer living in Bengal who has dedicated her life to people in situations of violence. In particular she has focused her attention on the plight of tribal people, the indigenous inhabitants of India who have never been fully integrated into the wider Indian society, who have been marginalized and exploited in many ways; from among those, she has tried particularly to understand the experience of tribal women. Mahasweta is an activist who has undertaken many forms of community organizing in order to protect tribals from violence against them—religious and social, economic and political, even governmental. Her consistent goal has been to enable tribals to interact and work more closely together, wherever they live in India. For this purpose she has founded several organizations, e.g., the Lodha Organization (1978), the Bonded Labor Liberation Organization (1979), and the Tribal Unity Forum (1986). She has persistently kept after governmental agencies, targeting officials in key positions of power. So determined is she in her letter-writing that in one interview she muses that some officials have done the right thing simply to avoid getting more letters from her. Like Gandhi, she

is a journalist, writing regular newspaper columns. She too has sought to put herself on the line, choosing to live with tribals in order to see the world through their eyes and to write from that perspective.<sup>20</sup>

Thanks to recent translations, Mahasweta Devi is finally becoming known in the West as activist, critic, and above all as a writer of short stories. Her stories provide scenarios, fictional but clearly based in experience, which make the honest reader face up to the violence and falsehood evident in a modern society. In these stories she pushes Indian society to confront the falsehood and violence of its own history, and particularly to look directly at the suffering of its concealed and marginalized members. To read her stories is to enter into an encounter with violence as painfully and vividly imagined.

Mahasweta Devi's strategy for uncovering reality in all its violence is most vividly shown in the short story "Draupadi," about a woman in trouble. The woman is named Draupadi, after the heroine of the *Mahabharata* who was saved from the humiliation of being stripped publicly only by the intervention of Krishna. In this short story, Draupadi is a tribal activist involved in a regional insurgency. After her closest comrade is killed, she is captured by the crafty police official Senanayak; he is an "expert" on tribals, known for his astute grasp of the tribal mentality. He has her "prepared" for interrogation by a night of torture and gang rape; later on, the plan is, she will be disposed of and listed as "countered," killed in an encounter with the police. When the time comes for her interrogation by Senanayak, he orders that she be cleaned up and dressed and brought before him; he does not want to see the violence that has been inflicted on her. But she tears up the clothing given her, she refuses to be clothed; still bloody, she strides naked into Senanayak's presence. Literally, she lays bare the truth of the situation, the violence endemic in his clever police campaign:

Draupadi stands before him, naked. Thigh and pubic hair matted with dry blood. Two breasts, two wounds. "What is this?", he is about to bark. Draupadi comes closer. Stands with her hand on her hip, laughs and says, "The object of your search, Draupadi Mejhen. You asked them to make me up, don't you want to see how they made me?" "Where are her clothes?" "Won't put them on, sir. Tearing them."

She is no classical Draupadi, for no deity intervenes to help or cover

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<sup>20</sup> Some information about Mahasweta Devi can be found in the preface and introductory interview with her in *Imaginary Maps* (1995), and in *Dust on the Road* (1997).

her; rather, she has become like the Goddess Kali in all her dark terrifying power as she taunts this later-day demon general:

Draupadi's black body comes closer. Draupadi shakes with an indomitable laughter that Senanayak simply cannot understand. Her ravaged lips bleed as she begins laughing. Draupadi wipes the blood on her palm and says in a voice that is as terrifying, sky splitting, and sharp as her ululation, "What's the use of clothes? You can strip me, but how can you clothe me again? Are you a man?"

For the first time in his life, Senanayak is afraid; he backs away, he has seen too much:

She looks around and chooses the front of Senanayak's white bush shirt to spit a bloody gob at and says, "There isn't a man here that I should be ashamed. I will not let you put my cloth on me. What more can you do? Come on, counter me, counter me—come on, counter me!" Draupadi pushes Senanayak with her two mangled breasts, and for the first time Senanayak is afraid to stand before an unarmed target, terribly afraid ("Draupadi " 196)<sup>21</sup>

This is truth, a truth manifest and thrown back into the face of violence. In my reading, this is a kind of Goddess-theophany, now in a contemporary situation devoid of settled religious signs and explanations. It is the exposure and gaze upon a raw, untreated, unmediated truth. Mahasweta assigns no meaning to what she sees and shows, she is content simply to uncover the spectacle, and lets the reader find what wisdom may lie there.<sup>22</sup>

While the experiences and problems examined in different ways by Beth Roy and Mahasweta Devi do not immediately mesh with the other aspects of violence and nonviolence considered in this essay, there may be deeper interconnections, ways in which the theories, practices, and experiences cooperate to create the specific context in which violence and nonviolence are to be understood in India today. In any case, a complete theological understanding of violence and non-violence in the Hindu Indian context requires attention to both the classical textual materials and a wider

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<sup>21</sup> "Draupadi," as translated by Gayatri Spivak in *In Other Worlds* (New York: Routledge, 1988).

<sup>22</sup> These paragraphs on Mahasweta Devi are adapted from a similar and longer account in Chapter 7 of my *Hindu Wisdom for All God's Children*. For a sampling of her non-fiction writings, see her *Dust on the Road*.

array of resources illuminating Indian society today.

## **V. The Question of a Christian Perspective on the Hindu Treatment of Violence and Religion: Are Victims Necessary?**

In the preceding pages I have put forward a large body of varied materials that will, I believe, merit consideration by those who wish to understand Hindu attitudes toward violence and nonviolence. I have touched on an array of topics: the ritual problematic of killing animals, the strictures placed on students and renunciants, the connection of nonviolence and vegetarianism, theological distinctions regarding kinds of violence and the measures in accordance with which one makes decisions about violence, the duty of kings to maintain order even if force is required for this, the encounter with death and blood in some Goddess traditions, plus all the vernacular and village wisdom on violence and nonviolence even more sketchily indicated here. Of course, much more could be said in order to supplement what we find here, and also to explain and make sense of it. But, in expectation of the important and clarifying discussions to occur during the conference itself, I conclude for now with just a comment on the Christian appropriation of this material.

As I indicated at the beginning of this presentation, I have not been eager to put forward a Hindu answer to a question about violence and nonviolence posed, after all, in categories largely developed and refined in the Christian West. My reluctance is in part due to the fact that I am not a Hindu, but more importantly due to the fact that possible answers will be premature and probably confusing if they are not located within the context of an understanding of the “grammar” of Hindu reflection on violence and nonviolence. I have sketched aspects of this grammar with reference to a whole array of texts, categories and ideas that have mattered in Hindu India. A Christian should be able to begin to think through the issues of violence and nonviolence in terms of the points I have raised.

Of course, our reflection can be helpfully focused, lest one end up trying to compare every Hindu view with every Christian view. For instance, one might compare Hindu thinking with the Christian tradition of reflection on the notion of victims, in both ritual and moral contexts. We are accustomed to ask how Christ, Christians, and others who suffer can be seen as victims who bear and share burdens in ways that can either threaten obliteration or promise redemption for oneself and others. One can then also notice how the Hindu traditions described here, and right from their earliest recorded stages, displaced the animal victim from the center of the



sacrificial arena. Hindu thinkers did not develop a theology of the victim, and did not interpret violence and nonviolence in terms of victims. The victim was first moved off-stage, and then rendered symbolic through substitution with simpler, lower life forms. Finally—if one wants to identify a trajectory—the notions of victimizer and victimized are interiorized, as one's own self becomes both the agent and recipient of violence. Consequently, the Hindu emphasis seems to have been focused less on victims and more on human persons as agent—as confronted with the opportunity to be violent or nonviolent, having to decide how to react in the face of others' choices. It is ultimately the agent of violence who suffers most, after all.

Certainly, from a Christian point of view one misses a connection between a sacrificial language and the valorization of the meaning of suffering in terms of the value of suffering. Are Hindus missing something if they do not nurture a sense of the victim and by extension of the power of sacrificial love and even of dying for others? If we take comparative study seriously, we have to be open to the possibility that there is a deficiency, although any such deficiency must be stated in terms of concrete particulars. On a specific issue, considered in specific terms, one tradition may seem deficient compared with another.

But comparative study also and more immediately tells us that such deficiencies are rarely as significant as they may seem to have been, before one knows enough about another tradition actually to begin to understand how it works. "Deficiencies" are more often signs of larger differences in traditions. What is valuable in one tradition "disappears" (or never appeared) in another tradition which is configured differently in its parts and as a whole. From a Hindu perspective, if indeed there is no real vocabulary of victims, this is probably because (as just mentioned) there is a different sense of human experience and agency in the face of the possibility of violence. The question is then turned back upon the Christian observer: can the Christian tradition of reflection on violence and nonviolence find room for reflection on violence and nonviolence which is not based on the image and vocabulary of oppression, victims, and suffering for others?

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# HINDUISM AND MIMETIC THEORY: A RESPONSE

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## Introduction

I would like to thank Professor Clooney for his thorough presentation of the enormously complex and layered treatment of violence within Hindu religious traditions. In his paper I found many aspects of Hinduism that directly engage the mimetic theory, and I hope that I can articulate some of these in such a way as to initiate discussion during the next hour or so this afternoon.

As one of the so-called "Girardians," my first impression in response to Professor Clooney's paper is that the complexity of Hindu attitudes toward violence and sacrifice seem to indicate an awareness of the ritualization and control of violence, as developed over a very long period of time.

## I. Language of Avoidance/Denial: The Horse

I would like to start with a small detail, but one which seems to me key to many larger issues in light of the mimetic theory: the ritual directions and prayers [I.1] in which the words "to kill" and "to die" are carefully avoided through the substitutions of such words as "he takes hold of" and "he makes consent."

I might add here also, that the avoidance of using "real" words for what is "really" being done—killing the animal—reminds me to some extent of the use of language by contemporary torturers as analyzed in the book *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* by Elaine Scarry. Scarry argues that the language used by torturers avoids any acknowledg-

ment of the real actions they are committing, as well as any acknowledgment of the very real pain they are causing their victims; furthermore, it is a dehumanizing language, referring to the victims as, for example, submarines, in one particular type of torture. This discrepancy between language and actual action is intriguing in both cases. Granted, the sacrificers in the Rg Veda do not deny that they are sacrificing the horse, and the "apology" (the words to the horse—"Do not let the axe linger in your body...") is not part of an act of torture, but the words have in common with Scarry's report a certain denial or avoidance of the reality of both the actions of killing and/or harming and the result of these actions, pain and/or death. Furthermore, the avoidance of the words "to kill" and "to die" would fit in with the mimetic theory's idea of prohibiting the ritual from bringing actual facts of the founding murder to consciousness.

## II. Sacrificial Instructions

The words addressed to the horse in the Rg Veda [I.1] and the instructions for the treatment of animals to be sacrificed—"The axe penetrates the thirty-four ribs of the swift horse...so that the limbs may be unperforated, and recapitulating, joint by joint"—seem to me to intersect with the mimetic theory in terms of ritual sacrifice as a reenactment of the founding conflict. As I understand it, in the mimetic theory, one reason for careful, detailed ritual instructions and the sense of great danger in sacrifice (the sense that if the ritual is not carried out exactly and correctly, something horrible might happen) has to do with a non-conscious fear of unleashing the mimetic crisis all over again. I see aspects of this in the minutely detailed instructions to the priest such as the importance of leading the horse but not holding on to it, and the desire to pacify the animal to be sacrificed. These kinds of details are of course also present in other sacrifice rituals. For example, in *Perpetua's Passion: The Death and Memory of a Young Roman Woman*, Joyce Salisbury speaks of the simultaneous sacrifice of hundreds of children in ancient Carthage during the Punic Wars. The children had to be (appear) "willing" to be sacrificed. If they cried out, the sacrifice was considered invalid. The parents also had to be (appear) "willing;" if the mother shed a tear, the sacrifice was invalid. Thus, immediately before the fatal knife thrust, the sacrificing parents would caress their children and tickle them to make them laugh.

## III. Violence and Kings

According to James Williams in his introduction to chapter 6 of *The*

*Girard Reader*, one of the main functions of sacrifice is to distinguish or maintain the distinction between "good" and "bad" violence. Williams states, "Sacrifice is not simply violence; it is violence that is limited for the sake of achieving or maintaining order." This resonates with the Hindu emphasis on maintaining order [III.2.a] wherein Kings "are reminded of their duties in protecting the kingdom and the right order of society" and are "encouraged to use violence when necessary, yet also to create situations in which violence was not needed." In the mimetic theory, a king can be scapegoated as easily as anyone else and possibly more easily, since along with the power of his position, a king bears responsibility for maintaining order. Thus in the Kannaki drama [IV.1.b] the consequences of the King's neglecting his duty and allowing an innocent man to be executed as a thief include both the destruction of the city and the death of the careless King—"the necessary purification of what is disordered."

Vachaspati's 9th-century comments [II.2] on the prohibition of violence, how it relates to the obligation to commit violence, and the firm distinction between killing in the ritual context and killing outside of it recall Girard's words that a sacrificial victim "is a substitute for all the members of the community, offered up by the members themselves," a victim which "serves to protect the entire community from its own violence."

On a different note, Ghandi's brilliant and inspired use of nonviolence as a "weapon" [the quote in III.3] has much in common with Christian ideals of nonviolence evident in the actions and advice of Jesus such as the admonition to turn the other cheek and the advice to the disciples to be cunning as serpents but innocent as doves. As Ghandi must have realized and as he brilliantly carried out, a consciously non-mimetic response to violence helps to bring to awareness the mimetic nature of violence, even as it short circuits the cycle of violent reciprocity.

#### **IV. The Developmental Move away from Animal Sacrifice**

The movement away from human and animal sacrifice in Hinduism to vegetal sacrifice to the different rationale of temple worship where (in Professor Clooney's words) "the imagery of the meal becomes not so much the dynamics of killing-and-eating but rather the dynamics of the meal-as-hospitality" seems to me to parallel the similar movement in Judaism. Perhaps this constitutes an implicit response to the silent voice of the victim or to a prophetic voice within the Hindu traditions. The correspondences between the Hindu meal-as-hospitality and the Christian Eucharist offer

potentialities for exploration as well.

### **V. Interiorization: A Connection with the Concept of Mimetic Doubles?**

The movement away from sacrifice and violent opposition continues in the interiorizing re-interpretation of the Krishna/Arjuna passage in the Gita [I.2 (at n.5)] "cessation of the practice of dividing the world into enemies and friends"). For me, this has relevance to the concept of mimetic doubles as follows: To the outsider, watching, for example, the feuding Hatfields and McCoys, there would not seem to be much difference between these two angry families, engaged in reciprocal violence. Of course to the Hatfields, the McCoys would seem very different from themselves. The Hatfields would see their own violence as justified self defense, and the violence of the McCoys as violent aggression. And of course the McCoys, if asked, would most likely express the opposite viewpoint. Could we theorize that through the process of interiorization (documented in Upanishadic times), the individual Hindu is enabled to view his own potential actions objectively (from a point of view similar to that of the outsider observing the feuding Hatfields and McCoys)? If so, this could provide him a means to avoid becoming trapped in the role of a mimetic double mired in the cycle of reciprocal violence.

### **VI. Karma, Agency, and the Lack of a Victim Language**

Professor Clooney's summary of conscious attitudes towards violence in Hinduism is comprehensive and thorough, and he has noted a lack of victim language in the tradition. This, I think, is in keeping with the mimetic theory's idea that institutional religion tends both to silence the voice of the victim and to conceal the scapegoat mechanism. One aspect of Hinduism where I as a Westerner might suggest seeking the invisible victim has to do with the ideas of reincarnation, karma, and the caste system, all three of which, to my way of thinking, could be seen as concealing a basic type of violence and scapegoating in that they could be seen as functioning to justify the societal practices of casting out and marginalizing certain people or groups of people. Two specific references point to the idea that the impersonal system of karma could function as an agent of retribution or mimetic violence, punishing those who behave violently by giving them a diseased, poor life in future reincarnations: (1) the reference from the 2nd-century Tirukkural to the concept of karma [IV.1.a]: "Professional killers are vile / To the discerning. / A diseased, poor and low life, they say,

/ Comes of killing in the past," and (2) the reference from the 5th-century tale of Kannaki [IV.1.b]: "The Goddess of the city explains...the invariable working out of karma."

It seems to me that here the problem of projection raises its head. As a Westerner, trying to imagine myself a Hindu, I could imagine that I might avoid direct violence out of a conscious idealization of non-violence and also out of a perhaps conscious, perhaps not conscious, wish to advance my own soul on its journey to "attain the world of Brahman" and "not return again" [at end of I.1]. Furthermore, I (a Westerner) might also project that the Hindu idea of karmic justice provides an unconscious retributive and substitutive (mimetic) violence against those who commit violence. (My neighbor commits a violent or harmful act against me; I succeed in choosing not to respond in kind [mimetically], but comfort myself with the idea that he or she will receive his or her just rewards via the impersonal karmic system and will suffer in the future for his or her violence/harm against me. Or, I see an impoverished person whom I do not know personally; I might consider him or her in the same category as my neighbor who committed violence against me and thus substitute the stranger for my neighbor in my mind, assuming that the stranger deserves this state of life because of harmful or violent acts he or she has committed in the past.) Thus I might be (non-consciously and indirectly) using karma psychologically as a means of mimetic retribution against my violent neighbor. Of course, since the Hindu scriptures forbid not only actions that do harm but also one's having any intention to harm, such non-conscious use of the idea of karma is not sanctioned within the tradition, much as it might present a danger or temptation to the individual believer.

Along these lines, I do not have a satisfactory answer to the question Professor Clooney has raised of whether Girard's point can be made in a language where "victim" is not a key word (i.e., could Girard's work be translated into Sanskrit?). I do remember hearing that when *The Scapegoat* was translated into Japanese there was some difficulty with the fact that there is no word or concept for scapegoat in that language.

## **VII. Draupadi/Christ**

In the story by Mahasweta Devi, the confrontation between the victimized woman (Draupadi) and her perpetrator(s) provides a fascinating example for consideration. In terms of the mimetic theory, the Draupadi of the *Mahabharata*, saved by the intervention of Krishna, might present an example of the voice of the victim speaking indirectly through the text.



(Krishna's rescue of Draupadi could suggest the innocence of the victim for readers/hearers of the *Mahabharata*.) The Draupadi of the modern short story, however, captures our attention in a more dramatic way. Here, it seems to me, we have an innocent victim confronting her perpetrator(s) with the "raw, untreated, unmediated truth" of her victimization. This calls to my mind Pilate's question of Jesus ("What is Truth?") as well as Jesus's wordless, raw, and unmediated answer.

### VIII. Hedgehog Paranoia and Obsession

James Alison's metaphor of the obsessive, paranoid hedgehog seems pertinent and useful at this point. As a Westerner, a Christian, and a definitely mimetic hedgehog, I have been reassured by a friend intimately familiar with Hindu religious traditions that karma "is another one of those spiritual concepts that has to be understood from within the tradition." My friend also provides some valuable cautionary advice when she says that karma "is best not seen in a black and white sense, just as with Christianity, which, to outsiders, can seem like a particularly gruesome religion, worshipping a man who was murdered and then celebrating that murder at every available opportunity."

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## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

Fred Lawrence asked Clooney to say something about the transitions from Jainism to Buddhism to what follows.

Clooney: The context of this is extremely complex. From 1200 BC to the time of the Buddha, all kinds of different attitudes were developing. What to do with/about the ritual tradition and the sacrifices, how they “work,” etc. Keep it all going? Internalize it? Engage it polemically like some of the early Buddhist texts? A retrievable tradition, or a rupture? Then, all the Vedic practitioners regrouping themselves in response to the new religious movements, including Buddhism, and becoming more what we today comfortably call Hinduism—Bhagavad Gita, yoga practice, temple worship, etc.

As for Jainist extremism and the renunciant traditions, the common-sense consensus is that you’ve got to eat something as long as you’re not dead. What seems to work in these traditions is a sense of something on the horizon that is far more radical than we’re ready for and can do, but thinking about it changes what we do do.

Sandor Goodhart: I’ve come to think of violence as the failure of a sacrificial system, something like difference (or the good) gone wrong. From your remarks, I sense our need for more flexibility, more differentiation in our understanding of violence: and we can perhaps get a more equipoised perspective on it by looking across various traditions, and not be restricted just to what works and doesn’t work for us.

Clooney: In cross-cultural work we have to get beyond the stage of thinking that various “terms”—like scapegoat, victim, violence, *himsa*—simply refer to something obvious that everyone is talking about, especially in the cross-cultural religious context. And then there is a final step of, while recognizing the differences, still seeking out points of

similarity or contact.

Goodhart: So, if we agree that there is, or can be, something comparable, across traditions, in breakdowns or collapses that we call “sacrificial crises,” then exploring these in ways that make sense within the different traditions...

Clooney: Yes, not in the sense that things from my tradition are to be sought for in others, but in the sense that *something* like what I am talking about would have to have happened in that other culture, because there are human beings involved. And then go on to say that this theory (from my culture) helps me to illuminate what I’m thinking about when I think of Hinduism; and then further go on to be open to the ways in which what I learn from Hinduism might change the way I think about the Christian story. I would think that any kind of richly worked theory would have such a mutually modifying effect on the way we think about our own and the other tradition.

Andrew McKenna: Your mention of “history”—Christian values insinuating themselves into Indian education—brings up Gandhi, and the way he tapped very deeply into the impulses of Western Christianity.

Clooney: Yes. Begin with the idea that Gandhi was a human being like us. In his early years (in South Africa, etc.) he was learning a different way of thinking about being Hindu. He learned a lot from his Christian friends and from Western culture, things that he brought back to his understanding of India and Hinduism, e.g., after learning about Jesus, being then able to find in the story of Rama more resources for the kindness of Rama, and against the assumptions of caste and status. Much of Gandhi’s great power came from his ability to engage the modern world across religious boundaries in a way that was still recognizably part of his own culture.

In response as to how Hindu sacrificial ritual impacted his understanding of the Christian Eucharist, and how mimetic theory has been helpful to him, Clooney replied that he is still a novice in mimetic theory, but beginning to be aware that much of it can perhaps be found, implicitly, in his own work. He admits it may have been better to have a Hindu give this presentation; but then he pointed out the way in which his Roman Catholic priest background made him look in Hinduism for things that could make sense to him coming from that background, and how that, in turn, gives him a resource for studying and understanding things that have been developing in Catholicism, especially after Vatican II, especially his awareness of stronger, deeper patterns in ritual practice that make for continuity. There are things he now understands about Christianity that he

might have learned just from within Christianity, but, *in fact*, he learned them after, and partly because of Samkara, Ramanuja, and others. Something like that may help explain Gandhi's piercing ability (and our incipient ability?) to look through colonial, Christian India, to look through the Roman Catholic Church, and say, "Jesus is in there somewhere."

Christopher Ives: How Christocentric is Girard's mimetic theory? Is there a privileging of Christianity there, a lurking Christian exclusivism? Assuming the key centrality of scapegoating, is Christianity, as understood by Girard, the only effective, adequate, acceptable response to that? So, is mimetic theory culture-specific? Might not there be a range of responses to violence that have nothing to do with the Christ event? E.g., the interiorization of ritual? In all the traditions we seem to have this discrepancy between theology and actual practice. To what extent is there a Hindu response and resolution of this issue, just like the transition at the time of the crucifixion, maybe as a defining, resolving moment for Hinduism, that works for that culture and has nothing to do with Christ? In brief, can mimetic theory work in various other cultures?

Clooney: First, a general remark about good theory and bad theory. Any theory can become blinders, become so well-worked-out and powerful that it prevents you from actually learning about and learning from what is right there in front of you. But the good power of theory is to help you find something in another religious tradition that maybe even people there may not have noticed. Girardian theory, for example, may enable us to ask, is there a kind of "redemptive moment" in Hinduism, an event that opens up things? The work I've done on the Bhakti devotional traditions in South India comes up with something analogous: that even the Sanskrit-speaking Brahmins, confident of the perfect completeness of their tradition, still came to recognize and accept the beauty and the sacredness of low-caste saints singing in the Tamil language. A similar "moment" might be sought in the fact that goddesses were not talked about in early India, but became very important later on. So, we can ask, analogous to what happened in Jesus, was there something like that going on in 8<sup>th</sup>-century South India, or 5<sup>th</sup>-century BC North India?

Lisa Bellan-Boyer: Why the prohibition against eating red onions? And, more seriously, what about sati and bride-burning for dowries?

Clooney: Let's talk about red onions (laughter). Red onions are not mentioned in the Veda and there is no Sanskrit word for them. But it probably has more to do with reluctance to eat something which is thereby totally destroyed, as opposed to plucking fruits and leaving the vine or plant

still alive. Regarding sati and dowry bride-burning, this is the kind of point at which, for some, the whole thing breaks down. These practices are condemned both by law and by all branches of the religions, and even the medieval texts condemn involuntary sati. But more to the point, what is there, or what has there been in the cultural or religious mind or imagination that makes it possible to imagine burning a person alive? First, you have a culture which defined a woman solely in terms of the men in her life. Second, a husband on his funeral pyre is going up on his last journey; it was possible to think how beautiful it is for a wife to accompany her husband on this journey. But texts abound that condemn this as horrible and gross. Dowry bride-burning, which is also condemned as crass, crude murder by the vast majority of Hindus does seem to be connected, at least in the imagination of some (and also by way of a pernicious "slide") to the sati tradition of the woman in the fire. This makes it possible to imagine doing such a thing. But we, if we humbly put our minds to it, could probably find analogies in our own culture.

Sandor Goodhart: Back to the question Ives raised about the possible Christocentricity of mimetic theory; the insight about scapegoats is absolutely central to human culture; so, too, it seems, is mimetic dynamics. Then come the ethical questions, consequences, implications. One might claim these (or some of them) as being specifically Christian, or Jewish, or Islamic, or Buddhist. *But*, the way in which mimesis opens itself into a scapegoating process seems to be ineluctably human. We are hard wired for that. So, regardless of religion, we have to respond.

Andrew Marr: One of the purposes of this conference is to look at resources for dealing with violence. E.g., in what we learned from the talmudic tradition, note the mimetic aspect of the whole question of military exemptions. Then from our Islamic discussion, the interiorization of the issues of violence. Similarly, Gandhi internalized the Bhagavad Gita. In Christianity, we have this in the monastic tradition, and in the way it allegorically spiritualized/internalized the violence of the Bible. Just about every major tradition does something like this. But that's not the whole, final solution, because allegorizing covers up the fact that the invasion [of Joshua] actually happened (or that people wished it did happen), and we could end up not confronting the actual reality of violence in our traditions.

René Girard: A remark about the fact that sacrificial systems "work." If they didn't, the culture would stop existing. Yes, I agree with Goodhart that mimetic theory is an intellectual effort to understand. In this vast effort, what are we looking for? Some of the systems that appear most cruel to us

work very well, perhaps work too well. One danger in what we do is that it can become an exercise in apportioning/distributing guilt, in scapegoating. But we should attend to the fact that things “work.” We must, therefore, reject the deconstructors, who claim everything is gratuitous story, because when you realize things work, two apparently distant things come together and become meaningful. And there, you feel you’re really “grabbing something” real. Yes, enjoy the intellectual activity of the analysis, but also use it to avoid implicating the other as a scapegoat.

Sebastian Moore: Don’t forget, the [our Western culture’s] rejection of the most abhorrent forms of violence came not from Christians, but from Jesus via the Enlightenment—the “Jesus effect” that Girard talks about. The Christians, left to themselves, didn’t accomplish this. What the Christians did, they resacralized the whole bloody thing. This relationship between Jesus and his followers fascinates me. It’s got something to do with Jesus being the genuine article, in the end and not necessarily his followers or their church.

Clooney: Following up on Sebastian’s comment: without saying that every culture has its Jesus, we should look in different cultures for those liberative moments where people actually change things, or stood up to things. The Buddha is an example. So too the story I told [IV.1.b] about Kannaki and the ankle bracelet. Because we know Jesus, we can find Jesus-like people elsewhere. But remember, in conclusion, the process we’ve begun or gotten into in this conference is a long-term and difficult project. Some of the next steps might be to take the theory and give it concrete tests in very specific situations, e.g., in 9<sup>th</sup>-century South Indian Hinduism, or in some particular Hindu saint, or Buddha in a particular text, etc.

# DHARMA AND DESTRUCTION: BUDDHIST INSTITUTIONS AND VIOLENCE

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Photographs of gentle monks in saffron, the cottage industry of books on mindfulness, and the Dalai Lama's response to the Chinese invasion of Tibet have all helped portray Buddhism as the "religion of nonviolence." This representation of Buddhism finds support in Buddhist texts, doctrines, and ritual practices, which often advocate *ahimsa*, non-harming or non-violence.

The historical record, however, belies the portrayal of Buddhism as a "religion of nonviolence." By reinterpreting early doctrines of *ahimsa*, Buddhist thinkers have legitimated violence in particular situations, practitioners have committed acts of violence, and Buddhist institutions have lent support to other institutions—social, political, and governmental—engaged in violence. In this paper I will examine Buddhist perpetration and justifications of violence,<sup>1</sup> with particular focus on Japan, arguing that, historically, Buddhists' desire for institutional security has taken precedence over total rejection of violence.

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<sup>1</sup> I have restricted my discussion to the killing of other human beings. I do not consider suicide and the killing of non-human animals. For a discussion of Buddhism, (self-)sacrifice, and suicide in relation to Girard's theory, see Charles D. Orzech, "'Provoked Suicide' and the Victim's Behavior."

## Non-violence

The doctrine of *ahimsa* figures prominently in early and Theravadan Buddhism. The first of the five moral precepts (*panca silani*) in Buddhism is *ahimsa*, and in the *Dhammapada* the historical Buddha purportedly states,

All are afraid of the rod.  
Of death all are afraid.  
Having made oneself the example,  
One should neither slay nor cause to slay. (Ross 202)

The Buddha also sketches the consequences of hurting or harming (*himsa*):

Who with a rod does hurt  
Beings who desire ease [of *nibbana*],  
While himself looking for ease—  
He, having departed, ease does not get.

Theravadan monastic codes and practices, such as the *uposatha* bi-weekly confession of moral transgressions and recitation of the 227 rules in the *Patimokkha* (Skt. *Pratimoksa*), are closely tied to *ahimsa*. One of the *Patimokkha*'s four "offenses of defeat" (*parajika dharmas*), for which the punishment is immediate expulsion of the monk or nun from the order, is killing another human being (Prebish 11). Mahayana texts continue this exhortation against violence. For example, in the *Dasabhimika-sutra* we read that a Buddhist "must not hate any being and cannot kill a living creature even in thought."<sup>2</sup>

Early Buddhist texts include depictions of the ideal Buddhist king, the *cakravartin-raja* or "monarch who turns the wheel [of the Dharma],"<sup>3</sup> as an exemplar of nonviolence. Contemporary Buddhist activist Sulak Sivaraksa expresses it, this king is a "an ideal ruler, a world-conquering monarch, who subdued the earth through righteousness rather than war" (Sulak 129), and whose ten main duties include striving for peace and ruling with nonviolent benevolence (129). For well over 2000 years

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<sup>2</sup> Cited in Har Dayal, *The Bodhisattva Doctrine*, p. 199; quoted by Kraft, 5. In much of the first section of this paper I am indebted to Ken Kraft's introduction to his volume.

<sup>3</sup> The metaphor of turning the wheel refers to the historical Buddha's teaching of the Dharma and the later propagation of it by others.



Buddhists have lifted up Indian king Ashoka (c. 272-236) as an instantiation of this ideal.

The early Buddhist doctrine of *ahimsa* should not, however, be construed as compassionate altruism. Luis Gómez and other scholars have delineated how *ahimsa* at first did not express some sort of underlying altruistic concern for the well-being of others. Vegetarianism and other ways of avoiding *himsa*, harming or violence, derived from ancient Indian ritual taboos against blood and other bodily liquids (Gómez 36). Buddhists ethicized and psychologized earlier notions of physical pollution, and advocated abstention from violence primarily as a means of self-cultivation, as a way to keep the mind pure, like an unstained cloth (36). (Scholars have even argued that the positive expression of *ahimsa*, the practice of directing *metta* (loving-kindness) to others, originally had as much or more to do with the spiritual benefits accrued by the person directing the *metta* as it did with the well-being of the person receiving it. Only later was *ahimsa* further reinterpreted as positive regard for others, as seen in the bodhisattva ideal of Mahayana Buddhism.

### Violence in Buddhist History

At numerous times over the past 2500 years Buddhists have directly and indirectly participated in acts of violence. According to the *Mahavamsa*, a Buddhist history of Sri Lanka, to defend Buddhism the pious King Dutthaamani (107–77 BCE) led his armies—inclusive of monks, one of whom became a general—into battle with Indian invaders. A relic of the Buddha adorned Dutthagamani's spear; and after his victory eight arahats appeared and proclaimed that while the king's armies had slain thousands, only one-and-a-half humans had been killed, for the rest of the enemy were evil or heretical, on a par with animals.<sup>4</sup> Rahula Walpola comments, "From this time the patriotism and the religion of the Sinhalese became inseparably linked. The religio-patriotism at that time assumed such overpowering proportions that both bikkhus and laymen considered that even killing people in order to liberate the religion and the country was not a heinous crime" (Walpola 1974, 21, quoted by Harvey 257). Monks interviewed by Richard Gombrich in the 1960's argued that Dutthagamani's "killing of Tamils was sin [*pava*], but not great, because his main purpose

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<sup>4</sup> Walpola 78-80; cited by Welch 280. This information also appears (without a citation) in Ferguson 52.

(*paramartha*) was not to kill men but to save Buddhism; he did not have full intention to kill" (Gombrich 142, quoted by Harvey 257).

Violence by Buddhists did not disappear with that battle two millennia ago. In 1959, a Sri Lankan monk, Talduwe Somarama Thero, assassinated Prime Minister S. W. R. D. Bandaranaike (Juergensmeyer 20). Since the outbreak of heightened violence between Sinhalese and Tamils in 1983, Sinhalese nationalists in the sangha (monastic order) have supported hard-line government responses to Tamil rebel groups in the north, tacitly accepting if not advocating the use of violence to resolve the ongoing civil war. In Burma, King Anawrata attacked the kingdom of Thaton in the eleventh century to obtain Buddhist scriptures that Thaton would not relinquish (Harvey 262). In this century the Burmese monk U Pandita became a revolutionary who reportedly made explosives (Ferguson 57).

In Thailand, the Supreme Buddhist Patriarch in preached to King Vajiravudh (Rama IV) in 1916 the importance of national defense and preparation for possible warfare. The patriarch celebrated those who "sacrifice their lives for the sake of their religion and their country (Ling 136), and the preface to the printed version of the talk claims that it is "an erroneous view to suppose that the Buddha condemned all wars and people whose business it was to wage war" (Ling 137). In the 1970's Thai monk Kittivuddho averred that killing a Communist is not murder or a violation of the precepts, "because whoever destroys the nation, the religion, the monarchy, such bestial types are not complete persons. Thus we must intend not to kill people but to kill the Devil (Mara); this is the duty of all Thai."<sup>5</sup> Criticized widely for these remarks, Kittivuddho laer elaborated, "If we want to preserve our nation, religion, and monarchy, we sometimes have to sacrifice *sila* (rules of morality) for the survival of these institutions."<sup>6</sup>

On several occasions armies have invaded from both sides of the border between Burma and Thailand. Surveying the history of these highly Buddhist countries, Trevor Ling writes:

The historical record of the Buddhist kingdoms of South-East Asia does not support the view that where Buddhist institutions and ideas have a prominent place in national life the consequence will be peaceful international relations. Nor is there any clear evidence that in countries where Buddhism is the state religion national wars have been regarded as un-

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<sup>5</sup> Kittivuddho Bikkhu, *Caturat*, 26 June 1976, 31, as quoted in Keyes, "Political Crisis ..." in B. L. Smith 153.

<sup>6</sup> Quoted by Suksamran 155, cited by Harvey 261.

Buddhist activities. The evidence suggests, on the contrary, that Buddhism in South-East Asia has been successfully employed to reinforce the policies and interests of national rulers, often in their competition with one another for resources or prestige. Burma and Thailand provide excellent examples in this respect. (Ling 136)

Buddhist legitimization of, if not involvement in, violence carries over into Mahayana Buddhism and the cultures in which it has flourished. Chinese monks have taken up arms to support rulers in civil wars and to fight against foreign invaders. Shao-lin Temple monks fought for Emperor T'ai-Tsung at the beginning of the T'ang dynasty (618-907),<sup>7</sup> and monks from Kiangsi province battled the invading Mongols in the 13th century, rallying around a banner on which was written the command, "Subdue demons" (*hsiang-mo*)<sup>8</sup> (Welch citing Demiéville 367). Buddhists advised the Chinese emperor that although defense of China in the face of invasion would cost many lives, the ruler had a duty to protect the country and hence had to use the military, i.e., violence (Nakamura 178).

More recently, in the first decade of the People's Republic of China, Buddhist monks helped the government eliminate "counter-revolutionaries" and justified the use of violence to do so (Welch 278). During the Korean War, Chinese monks formed a "war drum squad" and an "axe squad," and the latter reportedly marched while yelling, "Kill, kill, kill, kill, kill the American wolves!"<sup>9</sup> At that time Buddhists raised funds for a fighter plane, named "Chinese Buddhist".<sup>10</sup> And several times in Chinese history, far from supporting the ruler or the state, monks have also led rebellions. In 515 C.E. monk Fa-ch'ing led an army of 50,000 in an uprising against the Northern Wei, declaring that any soldier who killed one of the enemy would become a bodhisattva.<sup>11</sup>

In Korea, monks have fought for rulers against the Jurchen (12th c.), the Mongols (14th c.), the Japanese (16th c.), and the Manchus (17th c.)

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<sup>7</sup> Welch 281, who cites the eminent French Buddhologist Paul Demiéville, "Le Bouddhisme et la Guerre," 361-63.

<sup>8</sup> Welch 281, who cites Demiéville 367.

<sup>9</sup> Welch 278; the quotation appeared in one of Welch's main sources, *Hsien-tai fo hsüeh* (Modern Buddhism) 3/52, 10-11.

<sup>10</sup> Welch 278. This information in Welch is cited by Paul Williams, *Mahayana Buddhism: The Doctrinal Foundations* (New York: Routledge, 1989) 162.

<sup>11</sup> Welch 280. As his source Welch cites Demiéville 385; Demiéville cited as his source Tsukamoto Zenryu, *Shina Bukkyoshi Kenkyu: Hoku-gi hen* (Tokyo, 1942) 247-85.

(Ferguson 52). In Tibet armed monks have engaged in violence against other Tibetan Buddhists or Chinese invaders. Certain Tibetan Buddhist texts include what have been characterized as "spells for destroying enemy armies," and Tibetan Buddhism has formulated the notion of bodhisattva assassins who effect "liberation" (*[s]grol ba*) through killing.<sup>12</sup>

In Japan, as Buddhist institutions grew wealthier through tax-exempt estates and politically more influential in the 10th through 13th centuries, temples become militarized, and "warrior monks" (*sohei*), fought together with aligned laypeople for the temple or sect's interests (McMullin 292n). The most famous of these monks resided up in the Tendai Buddhist head temple, Enryakuji, on Mt. Hiei overlooking Kyoto. For several centuries they descended to Kyoto repeatedly, threatening violence as they pressed their interests on the court. They also fought against the warrior monks of Kofukuji in Nara<sup>13</sup> and Onjoji (also known as another Tendai institution, Onjoji (also known as Miidera), on the eastern side of Mt. Hiei. An emperor around that time, Cherokee (r. 1073-86) bemoaned the three things he could not control: the flooding of the Kam River, the outcome of gambling, and the warrior monks from Enryakuji (Williams 158).

In the Camacari Period (1185-1333), soon after the importation of Zen from China, the Manumit and Hobo warrior dictators protected Zen founders in Japan from established sects, especially Tendai Buddhism with its warrior monks up on Mt. Hiei. It was at this time that Zen established its longstanding connection to the samurai class, swordsmanship, and, by extension, warfare.

In the Muromachi (1333-1568) and Momoyama (1568-1600) periods, lay followers (*monto*) of True Pure Land Buddhism (*Jodo-shinshu*) begin to arm themselves, especially under the leadership of Rennyo (1414-1499).<sup>14</sup> Peasants adhering to the "one-practice" (*ikko*)<sup>15</sup> approach of True

<sup>12</sup> At the 2000 annual meeting of the American Academy of Religion, Geoffrey B. Samuel and John D. Dunne set forth these dimensions of Tibetan Buddhism in papers titled, respectively, "Vajrayana Spells for Destroying Enemy Armies and their Context in Indic Religious Life" and "Licensed to Kill: Ethics, Authority, and the Bodhisattva Assassin in Tibet."

<sup>13</sup> One of the main conflicts between these two Buddhist monasteries revolved around ordination, with the Nara monks wanting to retain sole authority to ordain monks and resenting Emperor Kanmu's having moved the capital out of Nara in 784, in large part to flee ecclesiastical power there.

<sup>14</sup> Around this time, Negoro-dera, the head temple of the Shingi branch of Shingon Buddhism, started making firearms.

<sup>15</sup> The practice here taking the form of having faith in Amida Buddha.

Pure Land Buddhism organized themselves and rose up in local rebellions (*ikki*).<sup>16</sup> Some "parishes" (*kyodan*) that became what historian of Buddhism Tamamuro Taijo refers to as "combat groups" (*senjo shudan*) (McMullin 48). In defense of the Dharma (*goho*) these Buddhists battled in the 1560s and 1570s with such warlords as Oda Nobunaga.

The True Pure Land confederations also fought other Buddhist organizations. In 1465 they battled and lost to Tendai monks from Mt. Hiei, who proceeded to burn the True Pure Land head temple of Honganji in Kyoto. Military victory eluded the Pure Land Buddhists again in 1532, when they were defeated by armed followers of Nichiren Buddhism.<sup>17</sup> Alliances shifted, and in 1536 about 30,000 soldiers under the leadership of Tendai warrior monks from Mt. Hiei, with support from Honganji, destroyed Nichiren temples in Kyoto. In 1571, Oda Nobunaga razed the roughly 3000 structures on Mt. Hiei and slaughtered the clerics that resided inside, thereby eliminating the military power of that religious and political stronghold. In 1580 his forces laid a successful siege on Ishiyama, a True Pure Land Buddhist citadel in Osaka (McMullin 101). While fighting to the death in their temple in Ishiyama, the True Pure Land Buddhists reportedly shouted out a battle cry, "The mercy of Buddha should be recompensed even by pounding flesh to pieces. One's obligation to the Teacher should be recompensed even by smashing bones to bits!"<sup>18</sup>

The connection between Buddhism and violence extended beyond the feudal rule of samurai and into the modern era. From the Meiji Period (1868-1912) until the end of the Second World War, Buddhism assisted Japan's nation-building and expansionist imperialism, earning it the sobriquet, "Imperial Way Buddhism." This assistance took such forms as participating in propaganda campaigns; encouraging lay Japanese to fight in the war, make sacrifices on the home front, and buy war bonds; engaging in "patriotic alms begging"; donating funds for the construction of war-planes; forming patriotic groups; running training programs for officers; chanting sutras and performing ceremonies to promote Japanese victory; assisting the families of soldiers killed overseas; serving as military chaplains; and propagandizing in colonies and occupied areas, particularly by helping colonial officials in their efforts to "pacify" (*senbu*) those areas

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<sup>16</sup> The expression for the True Pure Land Buddhist uprisings is *ikko ikki*.

<sup>17</sup> The military activities of Nichiren's followers are referred to as "*hokke ikki*," lotus rebellions, the lotus here referring to the *Lotus Sutra*, the main sutra and soteriological vehicle championed by Nichiren (1222-82).

<sup>18</sup> Quoted in *Sources of Japanese Religion*, Vol. I 205.

and turn the colonized Asians into imperial subjects.<sup>19</sup> Concurrently, D. T. Suzuki and other prominent Buddhist figures wrote, lectured, and preached extensively on the Buddhist legitimacy of Japanese imperialism, the emperor system, and warfare across Asia.

### Buddhist Justifications of Violence

Buddhist texts set forth several scenarios of justifiable violence. The *Upayakausalya Sutra* recounts how in a past life the Buddha killed a man to keep him from killing others and suffering the consequences in hell; though exposing the Buddha to the possibility of time in hell for his action, actually advanced the Buddha—technically, at that point a bodhisattva—on his path and enabled the man he killed to be reborn in one of the realms of heaven (Williams 145).

In the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* the historical Buddha states that in an earlier life he killed several brahmins for slandering the Dharma and thereby spared them the retribution that would follow from their actions (Williams 161). That sutra also argues that there are cases when one must ignore Buddhist precepts against violence and take up arms to protect the Dharma. In one passage it reads, "Men of devout faith, defenders of the True Dharma, need not observe the five precepts or practice the rules of proper behavior. Rather they should carry knives and swords, bows and arrows, prongs and lances" (Yampolsky 33). This scripture also exhorts the laity to use force to protect the sangha (Williams 159).

In his chapter on ethics in the *Bodhisattva-bhumi* (Bodhisattva Stage), Asanga (310-390) echoes the *Upayakausalya-sutra* when he argues in a utilitarian mode that killing one person can be justified if it functions to save the lives of others or to prevent the potential murderer from falling into hell. He writes:

...the bodhisattva may behold a robber or thief engaged in committing a great many deeds of immediate retribution, being about to murder many hundreds of magnificent beings... for the sake of a few material

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<sup>19</sup> I outline Japanese Buddhist participation in the war effort in an unpublished piece, "Buddhism and the 'Spiritual Mobilization' of Japan, 1912-1945." Also, see Kashiwahara Yusen, *Nihon Bukkyo-shi, Kindai* (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 1990); Yoshida Kyuichi, *Nihon no kindai shakai to Bukkyo* (Tokyo: Hyoronsha, 1970); Winston Davis, *Japanese Religion and Society: Paradigms of Structure and Change* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992); and Brian Victoria, *Zen at War* (New York: Weatherhill, 1997).

goods. Seeing it, he forms this thought in his mind: "If I take the life of this sentient being, I myself may be reborn as one of the creatures of hell. Better that I be reborn a creature of hell than that this living being, having committed a deed of immediate retribution, should go straight to hell." With such an attitude the bodhisattva ascertains that the thought is virtuous or indeterminate and then, feeling constrained, with only a thought of mercy for the consequence, he takes the life of that living being. There is no fault, but a spread of much merit.<sup>20</sup>

In his gloss on this text Robert Thurman comments: "If we define violence as force used in connection with hatred, anger, or aggression, then the taking of life by the bodhisattva is not violence. However, if we do not include this motivational factor in the definition of violence and only consider the effect on others, then this act of the bodhisattva is indeed violence" (Thurman 78).

Asanga's allowance for murder indicates a shift from the ethics of the *Dhammapada*, the *Vissudhimagga*, the *Patimokkha*, and other seminal works in early and Theravadan Buddhist ethics. That ethical tradition, with an emphasis on purifying oneself of unwholesome factors (*akusala-dharmas*) or mental "pollutions" or hindrances (*klesas*) and cultivating wholesome factors (*kusala-dharmas*), prohibits violence more universally. Mahayana thinkers expand purification of mental states and the underlying intention (*cetana*) behind actions to include the purest of intentions: the intention to engage in the altruistic effort to liberate sentient beings. For example, in his chapter on ethics in the *Bodhisattva-bhumi*, Asanga outlines three levels of ethics: "the ethics of the vow," "the ethics of collecting wholesome factors" (*kusala-dharma-samgraha*), and "the ethics of benefitting sentient beings (Asanga, in Tatz 48ff.)" The first two correspond to the type of self-realizational, virtue ethic seen in the Theravada, while the third is the full expression of the bodhisattva's compassionate resolve to utilize skillful means (*upaya*) to liberate sentient beings. As long as the bodhisattva acts from the purified, compassionate intention of liberating suffering beings, he or she may kill, lie, have sexual intercourse, and engage in other behaviors proscribed by the Five Precepts, the 227 precepts in the *Patimokkha*, and other early ethical formulas.

The apparent justification of certain acts of violence as expressions of compassion directed toward enlightening others finds expression in several Ch'an/Zen texts. Lin the Wu-men-kuan (J. Mumonkan, the gateless

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<sup>20</sup> Tatz, trans., *Asanga's Chapter on Ethics ...* 70-72; cited by Kraft 6.

barrier), the Chinese master Chü-chih (J. Gutei) cuts off the finger of a young acolyte and thereby brings him to awakening, and master Nanch'üan (J. Nansen) cuts a cat in half to demonstrate a point about dualism to the monks under his tutelage (see Shibuyama 42–47 and 107–13).

In his analysis of Mahayana ethics, Damien Keown points out that this Mahayana allowance for killing is "the provenance of the Buddhas and Great *Bodhisattvas* and does not concern normative ethical conduct" (Keown 159).<sup>21</sup> Indeed, in setting forth the doctrine of *upaya*, Mahayana Buddhism generally accepts and builds upon earlier Buddhist moral guidelines, integrating them into its ethical system, albeit as lower-level guidelines, which, though self-oriented, are necessary as preliminary purificatory steps to the highest level of purity: the wisdom and compassion through which one works to liberate others.

Though early Mahayana Buddhism attempted to limit such extreme forms of *upaya* to only buddhas and advanced bodhisattvas, the allowance for the violation of sanctions against killing opened the door in the Mahayana to broader justifications of violence. And in the hand of Buddhists apparently less advanced on the religious path, this "loophole" has, ironically, led to violence perpetrated in the name of compassion and skillful means. In his oft-cited essay on Buddhism and war, Paul Demiéville writes, "the Lesser Vehicle, which tends to condemn life, has remained strict in its prohibition of killing; and it is the Greater Vehicle, which extols life, that has ended up by finding excuses for killing and even for its glorification."<sup>21</sup>

Nichiren justifies violence in his *Rissho ankoku ron* (The Establishment of the Correct [Teaching] for the Protection of the Realm; 1260). At the beginning of that treatise Nichiren highlights "unusual disturbances in the heavens, strange occurrences on earth, famine and pestilence, all affecting every corner of the empire and spreading throughout the land" (Nichiren 13), and he notes that "attempts now to move the gods fail to have any effect, and appeals to the power of the Buddhas produce no results" (14). He argues that these calamities derive in part from the failure of rulers to propagate the *Sutra of the Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light* (14–15), one of the "realm-protecting sutras," and, more importantly, their failure to protect the correct Dharma—which to Nichiren was the *Lotus Sutra*—and thereby ensure peace and prosperity across the land (18). As a result, the common people were listening to the false teachings of "evil" monks,

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<sup>21</sup> Demiéville 353; cited by Welch 283.



especially Honen (1133-1212), founder of Pure Land Buddhism (*Jodo-shu*) in Japan. Nichiren points out that another of the realm-protecting sutras, the *Sutra of the Wisdom of the Benevolent Kings*, regards evil monks as causing the "destruction of Buddhism and of the nation" (20). For his slandering the correct Dharma of the *Lotus Sutra*, Honen will plummet down into the "hell of incessant suffering" upon his death (24).

Nichiren also considers measures for the interim while Honen is still alive. He appeals to several sutras for a justification of violence as a possible response to "heretics" like Honen (32-33). He lifts up aforementioned sections of the *Mahaparinirvana-sutra* as a basis for the legitimate use of weapons to defend the True Law. He notes that buddhas before the historical Buddha said that slanderous priests could receive the death penalty, though from the time of the Buddha the sanction had been reduced to withholding alms, which leads Nichiren, with apparent frustration over the watering down of punishments, to advocate not giving alms to Honen and monks like him (37).

Several hundred years later, Rennyo and his followers marshaled arguments to justify their use of violence. In his medieval Japanese universe, Rennyo regarded *bushi* (the samurai in power) as a threat to Buddhism, yet early in his career as a True Pure Land leader, he deferred to *bushi* and provincial officials; with his doctrine of *obo-ihon*, he subordinated the Dharma or Buddha's law (*buppo*) to the more fundamental (*ihon*) ruler's law or law of the land (*obo*), and spoke of "engraving *obo* on one's forehead and *buppo* in one's heart" (McMullin 38). Later, after violence started between his followers and *bushi*, Rennyo exhorted his followers to take up arms and fight if not die "in battle for the sake of Buddhism."<sup>22</sup> He reversed his earlier position and began to elevate *buppo obo*, advancing the doctrine that "faith is fundamental" (*shinjin-ihon*) and advocating defence of the Dharma (*goho*), by violent means if necessary. This later stance legitimated his followers' use of violence in their battles with Oda Nobunaga and others.

In terms of modern Japanese Buddhist justifications of violence, before D. T. Suzuki became a renowned Zen missionary to the West, in his *Shinshukyo-ron* (Treatise on New Religion 1896) he justified the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95. In his controversial publication, *Zen at War*, Brian Victoria summarizes Suzuki's argument:

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<sup>22</sup> Quoted by McMullin 38.

(1) Japan has the right to pursue its commercial and trade ambitions as it sees fit, (2) should "unruly heathens" (*jama gedo*) of any country interfere with that right, they deserve to be punished for interfering with the progress of all humanity, (3) such punishment will be carried out with the full and unconditional support of Japan's religions, for it is undertaken with no other goal in mind than to ensure that justice prevails, (4) soldiers must, without the slightest hesitation or regret, offer up their lives to the state in carrying out this religion-sanctioned punishment, and (5) discharging one's duty to the state on the battlefield is a religious act. (Victoria 25)

Over the next fifty years, Japanese Buddhists marshaled a range of arguments that echoed Suzuki's stance in the 1890s. Their justifications for Japanese military operations—that is, state-sanctioned violence overseas—fall into a cluster of related arguments:

1. Japanese warfare aims at destroying evil, whether "unruly heathens" or people who disrupt public order. (Victoria 27, 36)
2. The enemy represents falsehood and must be eliminated for the sake of truth. As Zen master Harada Daiun Sogaku put it, "If you see the enemy you must kill him; you must destroy the false and establish the true—these are the cardinal points of Zen."<sup>23</sup>
3. Warfare is justifiable insofar as it serves to defend and preserve the Dharma. (Victoria 92)
4. Military service is the means of performing one's duty to the state, and this action is religious.<sup>24</sup>
5. The Japanese are waging war to defend the state, and through fighting in war they can repay their debt (*J. on*) to the state (Victoria 131).

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<sup>23</sup> Harada Sogaku, quoted by Ichikawa Hakugen in *Nihon Fashizumu ka no Shukyo* 283; further quoted by Victoria 138.

<sup>24</sup> D. T. Suzuki wrote that "...if one simply discharges one's duty according to one's position [in society], what action could there be that is not religious in nature?" D. T. Suzuki, *Shin Shukyo Ron*, in vol. 23, *Suzuki Daisetsu Zenshu* 139-40; quoted by Victoria 25 (bracketed words added by Victoria).

6. Military service helps the Japanese repay their debt to the Buddha.<sup>25</sup>
7. Military service helps them repay their debt to the (sacred) emperor (Victoria 29-30, 143).<sup>26</sup>
8. The actions of the Japanese military benefit the Chinese by liberating them from Western imperialism and communism. (Victoria 134)
9. When killing is necessitated, the Japanese military operates on the principle of "killing one so that many may live (issatsu tasho). (Victoria 87)
10. Or, rather, "killing" is not exactly what is taking place, for the Japanese army wields "the sword that gives life, not the sword that takes life."<sup>27</sup> Zen master Harada Daiun Sogaku wrote, "The Japanese are a chosen people whose mission is to control the world. The sword that kills is also the sword that gives life. Comments opposing war are the foolish opinions of those who can only see one aspect of things and not the whole."<sup>28</sup>
11. The actions of the Japanese military benefit the enemy by "giving life" to the enemy (Victoria 91).
12. War and violence are neither good nor evil, for as expressed in the Mahayana doctrine of emptiness (Skt. *sunyata*), nothing has any substantial, enduring "self-nature" (Skt. *svabhava*; J. *jisho*); hence one must look at the purpose of the war, which is the elimination of war (Victoria 89), or from the viewpoint of another Buddhist thinker, the liberation of sentient beings from suffering (88).

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<sup>25</sup> Prior to the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, prominent Meiji Period Buddhist leader Inoue Enryō wrote. "In the event hostilities break out between Japan and Russia, it is only natural that Buddhists should fight willingly, for what is this if not repaying the debt of gratitude we owe the Buddha?" (Victoria 29).

<sup>26</sup> For an analysis of the ways in which Buddhist thinkers in the 1930's meshed Buddhist doctrines and values with the reigning imperial ideology, see my article, "The Mobilization of Doctrine . . ."

<sup>27</sup> This notion comes from Zen master Takuan (1573-1645), who wrote in his "Annals of the Sword Taia" that "the accomplished man uses the sword but does not kill others. He uses the sword and gives others life" (see Wilson 81).

<sup>28</sup> Quoted by Ichikawa Hakugen in *Nihon Fashizumu ka no Shukyo* 163; cited by Victoria 137 (I here slightly adapt Victoria's translation of Harada's statement ).

13. Japanese military operations are thus expressions of Buddhist compassion<sup>29</sup> in a war of compassion (Victoria 91),<sup>30</sup> a "sacred war incorporating the great practice of a bodhisattva" (134).

14. The war deepens compassion, creating even stronger compassion (89).

15. It is an army of bodhisattvas that engages in Japanese warfare.

Representing the war Japan waged in the 1930's and 40's in this way, many Buddhists, not surprisingly, further construed it as a just war (*gisen*) or holy war (*seisen*) (Victoria 21). Obviously, their arguments stand in stark contrast to the overall Buddhist commitment to *ahimsa*, and to the passage in the *Fang-wang ching*, "O, you, son of Buddha! You should not act on behalf of a country, nor join an army, nor organize an army to kill people, in order to make profits. No[,] a bodhisattva should not even frequent an army. How much less become the enemy of a country" (Nakamura 177).

In support of their justifications of the violence of World War II, some Japanese Buddhist figures appealed to the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra* passage on "protecting the true Dharma by grasping swords and other weapons" (Victoria 119). Yet one might wonder how Japanese Buddhists squared their support for war with precepts against killing. One Zen master argued that insofar as it is just to punish those who disturb public order, the precept against killing is not violated (36). Apparently cognizant of the *Mahaparinirvana Sutra*, Sugimoto Goro, a military officer steeped in Zen, claimed that "everyone in the world should grasp swords and other weapons to reverently protect the emperor. This is the world's highest observation of the precepts, the highest morality, the highest religion."<sup>31</sup>

In the early years of the PRC, Chinese Buddhists justified in several ways their support of attacking "counter-revolutionaries" and waging the Korean War. They appealed to scriptural passages describing how the

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<sup>29</sup> Shaku Soen writes, "Even though the Buddha forbade the taking of life, he also taught that until all sentient beings are united together through the exercise of infinite compassion, there will never be peace. Therefore, as a means of bringing into harmony those things which are incompatible, killing and war are necessary." Quoted in the 7 August 1904 issue of *Heimin Shinbun* (No. 39), cited by Victoria 29.

<sup>30</sup> Victoria, 91. Victoria sees this pattern as continuing after the war: "As the spiritual advocates of this code, Zen priests and the priests of other sects continued to discharge their duties even as they joined the ranks of 'industrial warriors.'"

<sup>31</sup> Sugimoto Goro, *Taigi*, 53; quoted by Victoria 119.

historical Buddha killed one person (a scout for a band of robbers) in order to save a caravan of five hundred merchants (Welch 276).<sup>32</sup> They lifted up a passage in the *Lotus Sutra* about "the Tathagata [Buddha] and all the elect fighting demons" and a passage from the *Avatamsaka Sutra* to justify their own "subduing of demons," now external enemies rather than, metaphorically, mental pollutants (*klesas*) (Welch 589n, 276). They argued that to kill heretics, robbers, counter-revolutionaries, and American imperialists is to prevent these demonic types from doing evil acts, save innocent people from hardship, and generate merit for the Buddhists who do this compassionate killing (277–78).

Welch notes that Chinese Buddhists did not utilize another possible justification: the claim that because the people killed had no enduring self or soul (*atman*), there was no substantial or real person being killed. Welch writes:

...the justification for killing that Buddhist leaders in New China did not and could not utilize was the metaphysical one—to look upon the killer and killed as illusions that disappeared into nonduality. In the new Buddhist thinking the phenomenal world was very real indeed and the dualism of good and evil, progressives and reactionaries, was of the first importance. Idealism, nonduality, and other worldliness of any kind reduced the enthusiasm of monks and nuns not only for class struggle, but also for socialist construction. (Welch 288)

## Discussion

The historical record undermines portrayals of Buddhism as a religion of thoroughgoing nonviolence. Throughout Asia Buddhists have justified violence, and their justifications have centered on several overlapping arguments:

1. Violence is justifiable when wielded by a highly realized Buddhist to prevent robbers, murderers, and other "evil" people from engaging in violence and thereby exposing themselves to dire karmic consequences, and to prevent them from harming the potential victims of their violence. Insofar as this violence serves the evil person on the receiving end and protects innocent people, it may be meritorious for the wise and compassionate perpetrator.

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<sup>32</sup> This story appears in the Chinese text. *Ta fang-pien fo-pao-en ching*.

2. Violence is justifiable when it serves to protect the Dharma, especially by eliminating the threat posed by heretics and other evil people.
3. Violence is justifiable when it serves to protect those who protect the Dharma, whether the ruler or, more broadly, the state.

These arguments emerged over the history of Buddhism as Buddhist institutions accommodated realpolitik in order to establish and sustain themselves in Asian societies. As Nakamura Hajime writes, "When secular power became strong, Buddhist orders had to make compromise with it. Buddhist orders came to pray for the victory of the state and the prosperity of the ruling family. This trend came into existence already in the period of the Sakya dynasty in Northern India in the second and first centuries B.C. and became very conspicuous in China and Japan. In Tibet the state and religion became inseparable" (Nakamura 177). From the introduction of Buddhism to Japan in the 6th century, Buddhist institutions have generally followed the broader Buddhist pattern of flourishing in close institutional symbiosis with ruling powers. As Imanari Jiko writes, "with the *Sutra of the Wisdom of the Benevolent Kings* and the *Sutra of the Sovereign Kings of the Golden Light* as realm-protecting sutras, [Japanese Buddhism] was always centered on the imperial household and was a prayer Buddhism directed toward the protection of the country and prosperity of the people."<sup>33</sup> This stance is one facet of the long history of "state Buddhism" (*kokka Bukkyo*) and "Buddhism for the protection of the realm" (*gokoku Bukkyo*). In return for Buddhist support, the government patronized and, as needed, protected particular Buddhist institutions. This symbiosis is conveyed by an expression bandied about in the 19th century, *goho-gokoku*, "protecting the Dharma, protecting the state."

While accommodating the socio-political situation to ensure institutional survival in Japan and other countries, Buddhist institutions have made compromises, subordinating central Buddhist values like *ahimsa* to the protection of the religion. As Sulak Sivaraksa explains, "The institutionalization of the Sangha was typically linked to state control, so that instead of holding the state to the ethics of nonviolence, the Sangha was increasingly called upon to rationalize violence and injustice" (Sulak 128). Having put themselves in this position, Buddhists "have usually chosen to violate their belief in nonviolence, hoping that the results of their

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<sup>33</sup> Imanari Jiko, "Nihon Seishin to Bukkyo ni tsuite," *Chuo Bukkyo*, 18/3, 149.

own use of violence in resisting aggression or oppression would be preferable to passive submission to the violence of others" (Sharp 113). As indicated above, the political opportunism or "accommodationism"<sup>34</sup> demonstrated by Buddhists does not necessarily violate some pure stance of non-violence at the beginning of their tradition.

Insofar as Asanga and other Mahayana Buddhists allow for the violation of precepts for the sake of compassion, they present us a set of issues: How does one determine which acts of violence conduce to greater awakening (and merit) as opposed to generating greater suffering? Which Buddhists are equipped to make this utilitarian calculation of the net increase or decrease in awakening or liberation (ultimate Buddhist "happiness"), perhaps defined Buddhistically as the degree of extrication from the suffering targeted by the Buddha? In the case of Zen, which ascribes authority primarily to the enlightenment of awakened masters, many of whom advanced the justifications for Japanese warfare sketched earlier, who other than Zen masters is qualified to judge the actions of those masters, and on what basis?

We are also left with the issue of the "malleability" of Buddhist psychological and ethical constructs.<sup>35</sup> Just as Jews and Christians have formulated divergent interpretations of, for example, the Ten Commandments, the first Buddhist precept about non-violence has not occupied any absolute, categorical status. Like most religious concepts, it has lent itself to varying interpretations through history, whether by more religiously conservative Theravada thinkers soon after the Buddha's death, Asanga nearly a millennium later, or Chinese and Japanese Zen Buddhists fifteen-hundred years after that. The various interpretations, the allowable exceptions, and the subordination of *ahimsa* to the protection of the Dharma and the state all militate against the claim that *ahimsa* is an absolute or overriding Buddhist value or commitment.

A further issue emerges when we reflect on the discrepancy between images of Buddhism as a religion of non-violence and the actual historical record. The divergence between this representation and reality derives in part from the Orientalism permeating the transmission of Buddhism to the West. For over a century disenchanted Westerners have sought Shangri La

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<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of metaphysical and epistemological factors that have predisposed Zen to accommodate if not valorize existing socio-political conditions, see my essay, "Ethical Pitfalls . . ."

<sup>35</sup> A further issue is that of whether *karuna* is, properly speaking, an ethical category as opposed to a soteriological category.

in the mystical "East," projecting their hopes for an unblemished, nonviolent Orient to replace the religious warfare, inquisitions, and intolerance they had rejected in the biblical traditions. After centuries of belligerent Western imperialism and colonialism, their Asian hosts and gurus have been more than willing to deliver up (invent, in some cases) that alternative religion, replicating the Orientalist moves of the disciples at their feet, thus displaying what some have termed "Reverse Orientalism." For example, in *Zen and Japanese Culture*, D. T. Suzuki preaches an intuitive, non-violent Japan over and against a rational, violent West, about which he writes, "The [Western] intellect presses the button, the whole city is destroyed, and hundreds of thousands of human souls are crushed ignominiously to the ground. All is done mechanically, logically, systematically, and the intellect is perfectly satisfied, perhaps even when it destroys itself together with its victims" (Suzuki 338n). Oddly, he ascribes violence to the "intellect," not to the collapse of socially legitimate violence à la Girard, nor to irrational human instincts, nor even to the Three Poisons (ignorance, greed, and hatred) and other defilements that early Buddhists regarded as the cause of violence.

Suzuki and other Japanese Buddhists have engaged in their discourse on Buddhism, Asian culture, and violence in the specific historical context of the 19th and 20th centuries. In several respects, Girard's notion of mimetic desire finds expression in these Japanese thinkers, and Japan as a whole, in the decades prior to World War II. In 1853, when Matthew Perry's ships knocked on the closed door of Japan, the Japanese feared that they would succumb to the fate of most other Asian nations and be colonized by Western powers. Concern over national survival prompted the Japanese to pursue rapid nation-building, industrialization, and militarization (in effect "modernization" and "westernization") and, by the 1890s, they joined the game of imperialism, albeit as a late-comer.<sup>36</sup> In emulating the West and desiring its type of armies, industries, and other institutions that generated the West's military and economic power, Japan also came to desire the same things as the West did, especially access to and control

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<sup>36</sup> To this day Japan positions itself between advanced Western countries and Asia, using the Japanese term *ajiajin* ("Asian") to refer to other Asians (not themselves), and sometimes construing the scenario in racial terms, with the Caucasian West Japan emulates (and simultaneously scorns) and a darker-skinned "Asia" over which many Japanese feel superiority.



of resources in other Asian lands<sup>37</sup> and the political and military dominance of the people in those places.

On the domestic front, by the early twentieth century negative side effects of Japan's modernization had become clear, as had the concomitant potential for violence. Rapid industrialization and urbanization produced large numbers of dislocated and disenfranchised workers, many of whom were organized by recent converts to socialism, communism, and anarcho-syndicalism; new religious movements proselytized those workers and other Japanese disorientated by rapid change and formed mass movements that were perceived by the increasingly authoritarian state as a threat; the Tokyo earthquake in 1923 provoked riots against Koreans, who were scapegoated for the fires that erupted after the tremors; farm crises in the 1920's and the Great Depression exacerbated rural-urban tensions and right-wing frustrations with industrial conglomerates (*zaibatsu*) and parliamentary politics; on several occasions in the late 1920's and 1930's Japanese police cracked down on socialist and communist groups, torturing certain leaders until they either recanted or died; in the 1930's mid-level army officers staged coups or assassinated government officials and industrialists they had blamed for domestic problems.

Though Girard has not examined violence in Buddhism and Asian history, justifications of violence against "heathens," "heretics," Chinese (who were portrayed by Buddhist leaders as practicing a lower, impure form of Buddhism than Japan's),<sup>38</sup> and the imperialist West lend themselves to a Girardian analysis. In the case of Japan, interwoven into the ideological rationale of this violence were Japanese notions of purification; paradoxical juxtaposition of taboos against blood and the valorization of blood (in acts of sincere, self-sacrifice and so forth); the longstanding historical challenge of alterity for the Japanese; and the way the Japanese, while imitating the West since the mid-nineteenth century, also made claims about Japanese uniqueness (if not superiority), in effect masking their mimetic stance and the presence of foreign (polluting?) elements in Japanese culture and society.

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<sup>37</sup> In the case of Japan, with its relative scarcity of natural resources necessary for large-scale industrialization, the coal of Manchuria, oil of the Dutch East Indies, and wood and rubber of the Philippines loomed large as objects of desire.

<sup>38</sup> Japanese Buddhist leaders often portrayed Japan as being the only true Buddhist country, or having the purest or truest form of Buddhism, with the Buddhism of other countries being impure or decadent.

In closing, though I have not explored Girard's thought at great length and hence cannot fully judge the adequacy of mimetic theory vis-à-vis Buddhism, I am left with several questions about Girard's theory, its interpreters, and its applicability to Buddhism. First, as reflected by the early Buddhist concerns for purity, Buddhism emerged from a cultural matrix featuring Vedic ritual praxis. But how important is ritual sacrifice in Buddhist religious life? Through close readings of Buddhist texts, scholars have argued that the Buddha, in setting forth precepts against, among other things, killing, the Buddha rejected Vedic sacrifice. Theravadan monk Hammalawa Saddhatissa writes, "A Buddhist does not sacrifice living beings for worship or food, but sacrifices instead his own selfish motives; in India the Buddha stopped cow killing and all blood sacrifices" (Saddhatissa 60). Though one would be hard pressed to support Saddhatissa's claim about the Buddha's success at stopping blood sacrifices in India, his characterization of Buddhist approach to sacrifice does seem accurate. In short, Girard's theory, with its major focus on sacrifice and sacrificial systems, may have less heuristic value for Buddhism than for other religious traditions.<sup>39</sup>

Second, at several points during the COV&R conference at Boston College in May-June 2000, participants spoke of residual traces of the "pagan sacred" in Christianity and other religions. What is not clear to me is the exact denotation of the term "pagan" here. Judging from Girard's writings, I assume that for Girardians it designates human religious experience prior to and apart from Christianity as understood by Girard, and it consists of religious practices that still entail violence and scapegoating. I am not convinced, however, that "pagan" religions, whether Buddhism or shamanistic traditions in the Ecuadorian Amazon, South Dakota, and the Australian Outback, engage in scapegoating and violence to the extent that Girardians imply they do.

Practitioners of so-called "pagan religions" might even claim that their traditions offer alternative ways of overcoming the violence endemic to human societies. Arguably, Buddha subverted violence just as much as if not more than the crucifixion of Christ did, not by revealing once and for all the innocence of the scapegoat, but through a non-theistic psychological analysis, moral discipline, and meditative praxis. Perhaps both the Dharma and the Gospel—as understood by Girard—undermine violence, at least at

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<sup>39</sup> Unless one were to argue that Buddhists have engaged in acts of violence precisely because their religion lacks cathartic ritual sacrifices.

the theological level, though to varying degrees in historical actuality. Recognition of Buddhist and other non-Christian strategies for subverting violence could help rid mimetic theory of violence in human history. Of course, we would still need to address the discrepancy between the ideal and the actual, between Buddha's Dharma and Imperial Way Buddhism, between Girard's Gospel and the Inquisition.

Certain "pagans" might also claim that insofar as they or their religious institutions commit or legitimate acts of violence, this violence can be attributed to factors other than the "pagan sacred."<sup>40</sup> Buddhists might argue that their involvement with violence during, for example, the Second World War in Japan derives from basic patterns in the ordinary human ego, especially in its collective manifestation when groups of people succumb to desires for institutional security and national protection, that is, get co-opted by or swept up in secular concerns for safety and survival. The issue for Buddhists, then, is not how to weed out some remnant of the "pagan sacred" but how to make sure that *ahimsa* does not get subverted, to clarify the factors—historical, epistemological, "theological"—that have made it difficult in times of crisis for Buddhists to resist violence or speak out prophetically. In short, more than a postulated *presence* of the "pagan sacred," Buddhism at times suffers from the *absence* of a firm basis for and motivator of speaking truth to power.

Buddhism can benefit from mimetic theory in significant ways, however. In spite of their doctrines of *n0*-self and interrelational arising, Buddhists tend to set forth desire as individual clinging to objects of desire *in a social vacuum*. That is to say, Buddhists usually treat desire as an existential but not socio-political issue. (We can detect a similar pitfall in Christian theologies that construe sin in narrowly individualistic terms.) Insofar as Buddhists need to address violence more fully and critically by drawing out the social import of such traditional doctrines as desire and suffering, they can learn much from mimetic theory.

Moreover, as outlined above, over the course of Buddhist history the practice of *ahimsa* has been trumped by concerns about protecting the Dharma, or, more accurately, protecting the sangha, i.e., Buddhist institutions. Mimetic theory can help Buddhists clarify the "other(s)" over and against which the sangha delineates and protects itself, the others Asanga and later Buddhists saw as threatening innocent people, attacking

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<sup>40</sup> Though a dogmatic Girardian might claim that the attribution masks the true features of violence there, best understood in Girardian terms.

the Dharma, acting destructively as heretics or demons, subverting the ruler or state that protects the Dharma, posing a counter-revolutionary threat, or endangering the sangha and state from abroad. Self-critical Buddhists can draw on mimetic theory to investigate why those others were designated as an threat in the first place and unmask possible scapegoating. In this way, mimetic theory can play a valuable role in helping Buddhists bring actual, historical Buddhism more in line with the core doctrine of nonviolence.

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# **BUDDHISM AND MIMETIC THEORY: A RESPONSE TO CHRISTOPHER IVES**

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Christopher Ives offers a very clear and thoughtful exploration of the relation between Dharma and Destruction. His discussion helps us to understand the historical relation between institutions and violence in various Buddhist traditions. His overview of the historical record is quite compelling, offering us an important counterpoint and corrective to the widespread images of Buddhist peacemakers in the popular media. From the beginning, the Buddhist tradition has had a mixed record in its understanding and practice of the first moral precept, nonviolence.

The encounter between Buddhist perspectives and mimetic theory poses interesting challenges for both partners to the discussion. Mimetic theory offers Buddhists an analysis of the construction of desire and the self that in many ways complements traditional Buddhist perspectives. It also offers a naming of the mechanisms of violence in the formation of societies that may be helpful for Buddhists' social analyses. Buddhism for its part offers mimetic theory a centuries-old tradition of reflection on the role of desire in the construction of an illusory self as well as a body of practical wisdom on non-violence that, even if it has not always been put into practice, challenges and instructs the human community today. The popular images of Buddhist peacemakers are, after all, deeply rooted in the early Buddhist tradition and powerfully represented by contemporary figures such as the Dalai Lama, Mahaghosananda (the Patriarch of Cambodian Buddhism and Thich Nhat Hanh (a Vietnamese Zen Buddhist leader who has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize).

I approach this discussion not as a professional scholar of Buddhism but as a Christian theologian who has been involved in Buddhist-Christian dialogue and who is interested in both Buddhism and mimetic theory, as well as in the relations between these two trajectories today.

One model for further discussion would be to take the historical data that Ives has set forth and then apply mimetic theory, asking to what degree mimetic theory can illumine the dynamics and developments of Buddhist history. Using Bernard Lonergan's image of the scissors, which Charles Hefling mentioned in his discussion in this conference, this approach would cast Buddhism in the role of providing the lower blade of the scissors, the data to be understood, and mimetic theory would provide the upper blade of the scissors, the analytic concepts to understand the data and to make judgments and decisions. In this method, Buddhism would be relatively passive and mimetic theory would be more active. I am sure that there is ample material in Buddhist history that lends itself to mimetic analysis (one can think of the traditional treatment of the so-called "outcasts" in Japanese society). One could, as James Alison noted in his opening address, go on endlessly, even obsessively applying mimetic concepts to different areas of human experience.

I am not sure this qualifies as true dialogue, however. It risks continuing the older Orientalist assumption that only Western concepts are capable of understanding Asia's experience and that Asians themselves have relatively little to contribute.<sup>1</sup> For a true dialogue, the voices of both traditions must play a rather more active role. Both traditions can furnish material for both the upper and the lower blades of the scissors. In Lonergan's terminology, we are moving beyond interpretation, which seeks understanding, and beyond history, which for Lonergan asks what is going forward in history, to the distinct functional specialization of dialectic (Lonergan 125-30). This discipline reflects upon the underlying values at work in historical processes and the assumptions behind these values. In this inquiry we ask about the status of differences of perspective: to what degree are they complementary and where are they contradictory?

I would like to organize the discussion between Buddhist perspectives and mimetic theory around the three central points of mimetic theory, which René Girard himself has described as his three most important discoveries: (1) the mimetic construction of desire as the source of human identity, (2) the surrogate victim mechanism as the central dynamic of

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<sup>1</sup> On Orientalism, see Edward W. Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).



primal religion and culture, and (3) biblical revelation as the unique, unparalleled unmasking of the surrogate victim mechanism (Girard 1996, 262). In each case mimetic theory provides a provocative challenge to Buddhist perspectives, but I would like to suggest that the Buddhist tradition has important contributions of its own to make in these areas. Shakyamuni Buddha is remembered as summing up his own message: "I teach suffering and the end of suffering." The first two of Girard's discoveries have correlations to Shakyamuni's teaching of suffering, and the third discovery of Girard has correspondences to the Buddha's teaching of the end of suffering.

First, however, I would like to note a challenge to the conversation itself. Girard insists on a sharp contrast between the revelation of God in the biblical tradition and all other religions. For Girard, all non-biblical religions turn to epiphanies of sacred violence to resolve social crises. Girard asserts that there is no common ground between the violence-ridden mythologies that dominate all other religions and the revelation of God in Judaism and Christianity (1986, 82). Girard claims: "Violence is the controlling agent in every form of mythic or cultural structure, and Christ is the only agent who is capable of escaping from these structures and freeing us from their dominance" (Girard 1987, 219). Chris's presentation certainly demonstrates that the Buddhist tradition has repeatedly been caught up in patterns of religious justification of violence. There is, nonetheless, the ancient teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha himself on non-violence, which challenges and judges the later Buddhist tradition. Regarding the Buddhist teaching of nonviolence, Girard has charged that it comes at the price of a total refusal of action. He charges that Buddhism completely withdraws from society and offers no constructive solution to the social problems of rivalry and violence, but only an individual strategy of escape which he has described as "ce renoncement nirvanesque total" (1981, 81, 83). More recently Girard has repeated his charge that "Buddhism advocates getting out of the world altogether" (1996, 63).

On Girard's own terms, there seems to be little room for constructive dialogue with any of the non-biblical religious traditions. Nonetheless, I would like to suggest that there is enough common ground for an interesting conversation to take place between Buddhism and mimetic theory. Chris's presentation demonstrates amply that Buddhism has not simply renounced the world and withdrawn. From the beginning, Buddhists saw the reordering of human consciousness as inextricably linked to the reordering of society. The Buddha's teachings as recorded in the earliest Buddhist scriptures, the Pali canon of Theravada Buddhism, included

questions of social ethics, right livelihood, economic justice, and the responsibilities of a king. The early Buddhist tradition spoke of the two wheels: the socio-spiritual wheel (*dhmma-cakka*) and the socio-political wheel (*anacakka*). The teaching of nonviolence was not simply a renunciation of action. The Emperor Ashoka made it state policy in the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century B.C.E. Even though Buddhism and mimetic theory obviously differ in many important regards, they share common concerns that make possible a mutual enrichment.

Robert Daly's distinction between the normative and the descriptive elements in a religious tradition is helpful. A tradition may well have an empirical history dominated by violence while also remembering normative ideals that judge that history harshly and that challenge practitioners to different patterns of thought and action. Ives has illustrated how violent Buddhist institutions have been and how Buddhists have justified the use of violence. Nonetheless, many Buddhists would be horrified at the thought of identifying the heart of authentic Buddhism with the history of violence that Ives has described. For example, at the Gethsemani Encounter in 1996 the Ven. Samu-Sunim, a Korean Zen Buddhist leader, spoke of the unsmiling bodhisattvas who are distressed at the behavior of Buddhists in condoning nationalism across Asia in recent decades (*Gethsemani Encounter* 242–43). It would be inappropriate for me as a Christian to instruct Buddhists in what they should take as normative in their tradition. While there is no single interpretation of Buddhism's message, the vast majority of Buddhists are united by their reverence for the Buddha himself. I will use the earliest accounts of the Buddha's teachings in the Pali canon as representative of his teaching and of the value of nonviolence that challenges Buddhists and the entire human community down to the present day.

### **No-Self and the Interdividual**

The first of Girard's discoveries is the mimetic construction of desire and the interdependent character of the self. Like Girard, the Buddhist tradition denies the reality of an autonomous, independent self and calls attention to the interdependence of all realities. Both Girard and Shakyamuni Buddha, as portrayed in the Pali canon, identify a deep-seated illusion concerning the self as the cause of much unnecessary human misery. For both Girard and the early Buddhist tradition, our usual sense of our-selves is a profound deception caught in a web of desires without beginning or end. Social and personal conditionings program us to react to stimuli in definite patterns, usually dominated by competition, envy, and

rivalry, leading sooner or later to suffering, loss, and the desire to get even. As long as we take these patterns for granted, they operate behind our backs and imprison us in destructive patterns of desire, envy, and revenge.

Both Girard and the early Buddhist tradition propose a social theory of the self. Both deny that there is an independent, autonomous self that constitutes itself apart from the network of social relationships. According to the early Buddhist scriptures, the illusion of a separate individual existence sets up the distinctions between "me" and "mine" and "you" and "yours." Once this distinction is made, desire is engaged; for "I" almost inevitably want to acquire what is "yours." The "I" however, is an illusion; and thus is always insecure and in need of reassurance. No amount of power, money, or prestige is ever enough. We seek reassurance through possessing people and positions and things, but the very thought that we can possess things is itself an illusion. In *The Acts of the Buddha (Buddhacarita)*, the Buddha teaches his charioteer the meaning of impermanence: "Since this world is in a state of continuous separating, therefore the feeling that 'this is mine' is improper with regard to a coming together that is transitory as a dream" (6:48). In the *Dhammapada* (an early collection of sayings of the Buddha), the Buddha quotes a fool who seeks to reassure himself: "These are my sons. This is my wealth." The Buddha comments: "In this way the fool troubles himself. He is not even the owner of himself: how much less of his sons and of his wealth!" (*Dhammapada* 5:62).

Girard stresses that the illusion of our autonomy works behind our back, hiding from us the power of models in the constituting of our own desires. We think we will spontaneously, but in fact we are caught in a hall of mirrors, grasping at images we see outside of us and asking them to make us real. Our desires, which we think are our own, render us more and more like others.

The Buddha responded to the illusory self by denying its existence. This teaching is not a nihilistic denial of the value of human life, nor is a withdrawal from involvement with others. The Buddhist teaching of no-self stresses the interdependence and impermanence of all beings. Nothing is anything in itself, apart from its relationships. It is the illusion of separate, independent, enduring existence that causes so much mischief.

Buddhists could well accept Girard's term "interindividual" to interpret the ancient teaching of interdependence. According to Thich Nhat Hanh "To be' is to inter-be. You cannot just *be* by yourself alone. You have to inter-be with every other thing (p. 4)."

In Girardian terms, the very act of proposing a new doctrine risks entering the game of mimetic rivalry. As presented in the early Buddhist texts, Shakyamuni Buddha was aware of this danger. He found himself in a world of bickering religious sects who eagerly debated their own particular views, but he refused to be drawn into the game of devising and defending one more "view."<sup>2</sup> Instead, he declined the normal routine of arguing and presented himself as a peaceful, unargumentative sage. The Buddha's title, Shakyamuni, means "the sage of the Shakya clan." "Muni," the word translated as "sage," literally means "the silent one." The Noble Silence of the Buddha is an expression of a wisdom beyond words, beyond the competitive bickering of rival factions. His attempt to end the round of competing arguments set up a dialectic between speech and silence that would shape the hermeneutics of later Buddhist teachings, especially the doctrine of no-self, down to the present day. Many later Buddhist traditions would hold that one cannot capture the wisdom of the Buddha in a theory or a doctrine, but one can demonstrate it in the transformed awareness and conduct of one's life. The Buddha invited his followers to follow the Eightfold path of the Middle Way and learn for themselves the wisdom of his teaching. To those who doubted his teaching, he did not argue, but only pointed the way.

### **The Surrogate Victim Mechanism**

Regarding Girard's second discovery, the surrogate victim mechanism, Shakyamuni Buddha did not single out scapegoating itself as explicitly as Girard. Nonetheless, he was aware of the tremendous danger of projecting blame onto someone else and of thinking violence can furnish the resolution of a problem. The Buddha advised: "It is easy to see the faults of others, but difficult to see one's own faults. One shows the faults of others like the chaff winnowed by the wind, but one conceals one's own faults as a cunning gambler conceals his dice" (*Dhammapada* 18:252).

Girard stresses how mimetic violence is, and how rivalries almost inevitably render us like our opponents. We turn to violence to drive out violence, but we only deepen our own entanglement in the cycle of violence. The Buddha warns against thinking of human relationships in

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<sup>2</sup> See the *Aggivacchagotta Sutta*, in *The Middle Length Discourses of the Buddha: A New Translation of the Majjhima Nikaya*, trans. Bhikku Nanamoli, ed. and rev. Bhikku Bodhi (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1995) 590–94; and Steven Collins, *Selfless Persons: Imagery and Thought in Theravada Buddhism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982, 1992) 116–42.

terms of rivalries to be won. He cites the words of an injured party: "He insulted me, he hurt me, he defeated me, he robbed me." But Shakyamuni Buddha warns: "Those who think such thoughts will not be free from hate" (*Dhammapada* 1:3). The Buddha repeats the words of the injured man and adds: "Those who think not such thoughts will be free from hate. For hate is not conquered by hate; hate is conquered by love. This is a law eternal. Many do not know that we are here in this world to live in harmony. Those who know this do not fight against each other" (*Dhammapada* 1:4-6).

Buddhist meditation practice trains the practitioner to become more and more conscious of thoughts, feelings, and actions from their first arising. The Buddha warned his followers to accept responsibility for their own development: "You should do your work, for the Tathagatas [the Buddhas] only teach the way" (*Dhammapada* 20:4).

The Middle Path of the Buddha rejects in principle the entire cycle of blaming, striving, envy, competition, and vengeance. As long as we blame someone else for our suffering, we have not yet understood who we are. Shakyamuni advised: "If a man sees the sins of others and forever thinks of their faults, his own sins increase forever and far off is he from the end of his faults" (*Dhammapada* 18:253). The Buddha stressed self-reliance: "One is one's own refuge, who else could be the refuge" (*Dhammapada* 21:4). Awakening from the illusion of a separate self paradoxically strengthens one's self-reliance. The more we rely upon ourselves and accept ourselves and become aware of ourselves, the more we realize our interdependence with everyone and everything in the universe. The Buddhist virtue of self-reliance challenges us to abandon the quest either for a scapegoat or for a mediator who will confer "being" upon us. The quest itself is the problem. The Buddha teaches: "By oneself the evil is done, and it is oneself who suffers: by oneself the evil is not done, and by one's Self one becomes pure. The pure and the impure come from oneself: no man can purify another" (*Dhammapada* 12:166).

The Buddhist tradition does not name the scapegoat mechanism with the same level of precision as Girard, but the Buddha did reject the brahmanic system of sacrifices. It is important to note Shakyamuni Buddha's own critique of the brahmanic sacrificial system. According to the *Kutadanta Sutta*, Shakyamuni Buddha criticized the brahmanic sacrifices for being ineffective, wasteful, and cruel. In their place he proposed five true sacrifices: (1) to offer alms to ascetics, the *shramanas*, (2) to build a dwelling place for Buddhist monks, (3) to go with a trusting heart to the

Buddha as a guide, (4) to take the five precepts of Buddhist morality, and (5) to enter the Sangha as a monk.<sup>3</sup>

### Nonviolence and the *Brahma-viharas*

Girard's third discovery is the biblical revelation as the unmasking of the surrogate victim mechanism and the divine response of identification with the victims. Girard argues that this is the only full understanding of violence and the only adequate response. Chris's presentation has made clear that Buddhist history is far from ideal. Like Christians, Buddhists have often found religious justifications for paths of violence. Nonetheless, there remains the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha himself regarding nonviolence as a precept for every follower of the path: "Forsake anger; give up pride. Sorrow cannot touch the man who is not in the bondage of anything, who owns nothing" (*Dhammapada* 17:221). Given the violent history of Christianity, Christians should not be surprised if members of other traditions have found it difficult to live by the precept of nonviolence.

Mimetic theory does offer a greater level of specificity than the Buddhist tradition in identifying the dynamics of the scapegoat mechanism. Girard's proposal for overcoming this mechanism tends to remain on the level of general insight, with relatively few specific proposals for transforming awareness and feelings. Girard hopes that when we see through the scapegoat mechanism by learning from the biblical heritage, the surrogate victim mechanism will lose its effectiveness. The Buddha taught his followers to respond non-mimetically to violence: "Overcome anger by peacefulness: overcome evil with good. Overcome the mean by generosity; and the man who lies by truth" (*Dhammapada* 17:223).

Theravada Buddhist meditation practice, even though not based on as detailed a description of the scapegoat mechanism, does offer very precise techniques for overcoming the problem. From the perspective of practical implications, one of Buddhism's greatest contributions to Girard's agenda lies in the tradition's concrete strategies for accepting responsibility for one's own feelings and desires, acknowledging envy and jealousy, and overcoming the urge to strike back in anger and vengeance. Buddhist meditation practice challenges practitioners to become conscious of the sources of their own feelings and thoughts, to accept responsibility for them, and to be liberated from violence.

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<sup>3</sup>*Kutadanta Sutta*, in *The Long Discourses of the Buddha: A Translation of the Digha Nikaya*, trans. Maurice Walshe (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1987) 133–41.

The four classical Buddhist virtues of loving kindness (*metta*), compassion (*karuna*), appreciative joy (*muditha*), and equanimity (*upekkha*), known as the *Brahma-viharas* or the Dwelling Place of the Buddha, shape the consciousness of the practitioner and transform the human heart into the sublime dwelling place of the Buddha. Loving-kindness or *metta* practice is a method for patiently exposing and healing the envies, resentments, hatreds, jealousies, annoyances, and impatience that distance us from others. As Ives notes, this meditation has a direct effect on the practitioner; the effect on the other person depends on the other person's own choices. This principle follows from the recognition of the basic responsibility of each of us for ourselves.

*Metta* practice directly aims at overcoming the temptations identified by mimetic theory. Loving kindness and compassion embrace all beings, even those with whom we are in competition. The virtue of appreciative joy or sympathetic joy calls for rejoicing in the success and well-being of others, even our rivals. This is perhaps the hardest of the Buddhist virtues and the one most important in answering the double bind identified by Girard. The practitioner wills to say: "May your success be unending" even to one's fiercest rival, the person who threatens one the most. To perform this meditation, it is not necessary to be able actually to will this wish; it is necessary to will to be able to will the wish. The fourth virtue, equanimity is balance, the state of being peaceful in all outward circumstances. This is the peace of mind that frees one to work with and for others in society without clinging to results. Whether one's specific efforts are successful or not, meditation practice provides a source of equanimity for the path. Taken together and practiced over time, the Four Dwelling Places of the Buddha structure a conversion of consciousness, thought, feeling, and behavior that corresponds in many ways to the conversions that Girard describes in the Bible or in modern Western novels.

Ives has reminded us that Buddhists have often not lived up to the teaching of Shakyamuni Buddha. This should not surprise Christians. G. K. Chesterton remarked about Christianity: "The problem is not that Christianity has been tried and found wanting; it has been found difficult and not been tried." Perhaps a similar dynamic has been at work within the Buddhist tradition.

In structuring the conversation between Buddhism and mimetic theory, the exclusive claims of mimetic theory threaten to drive out non-biblical religious voices from the conversation, claiming a monopoly on revelation. The perspective of Bernard Lonergan, however, provides a different model. Lonergan assumed that the love of God which Christians experience as

flooding the heart and calling to religious conversion is offered to all human beings, regardless of their religious tradition. While scotosis (the blind spot resulting from systemic bias that shuns insight) constantly threatens human existence, Lonergan trusted that the grace of God is always also at work and is manifested in various ways in different religions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Lonergan 282–83. See also Vernon Gregson, *Lonergan, Spirituality, and the Meeting of Religions*, College Theology Society Studies in Religion 2 (Lanham, Md.: University Press of America).



## DISCUSSION SUMMARY

**S**andor Goodhart: Great paper and response! I heard a great deal about the individual, and some about the political, but not much about the ethical. How does Buddhism, as a way of thinking, address this intersubjective—what in Judaism one calls intersubjectivity?

Lefebure: Actually, the beginning of the eightfold path is morality. E.g. (from the story of the prince trying to trap Shakyamni Buddha) it's a question of when to tell the truth. Is it helpful/beneficial in this situation? There's a whole set of principles of guidance, involving a nuanced back-and-forth, in the Buddhist Pali canon.

Ives: the Pali canon from early Buddhism stresses an ethics of self-cultivation, uprooting unwholesome factors. This does have social ramifications, but it's often more willy-nilly than systematically developed. Work needs to be done here. Is, e.g., the Buddhist notion of compassion an ethical category? It may involve something like a (Kierkegaardian) teleological suspension of the ethical—i.e., enlightenment requiring a seemingly unethical act. The lack of ethical “system” may contribute to Buddhism getting co-opted historically.

Goodhart: There's still room for something in between the personal-ethical and the political/social-ethical: responsibility not just for myself, but also for the other.

An unidentified speaker then reflected on Buddhism's attractiveness to students. They like the notions of reincarnation and pacifism. But they never seem to mention Buddhism's demands to modify/extinguish all one's negative desires. Both Ives and Lefebure resonated with this comment.

Andrew Marr: Commenting from the point of view of Christianity, light can be blinding. It can lead one to think that, after Christ, there's nothing else one needs to listen to. Note the very big difference between Buddhism and Christianity: in Christianity the passion and resurrection of Christ; in Buddhism the story of the Buddha's journey from his sheltered

environment, a kind of founding narrative that, by contrast, seems to have nothing to do with violence, though poverty could be institutional violence. How, as Girardians, do we approach these basic narratives? Does a major religion need a narrative of violence?

Diana Culbertson: In the history of religions, prohibitions and taboos are a second stage. The Buddhism that has been described to us is at the level of prohibitions and taboos. What is the foundational story out of which these emerged? There has to be some origin to the structure that Buddhism provides.

Lefebure: Among the wide variety of Buddhist traditions, the most widely accepted is probably the *Buddhacarita*, written by Asvaghosa several centuries after the life of the Buddha. The prince, Siddhartha, as a young man, goes out on a famous series of journeys with his charioteer. On successive journeys he confronts, for the first time, old age, sickness, death, and then a wandering beggar, an ascetic. All of these are illusions created by the Hindu gods to shock him into the realization that the life he has been living is unreal. This seem to be the beginning of the foundational narrative for Buddhism. But it's not what we would now call a social narrative.

Wolfgang Palaver: Both Buddhism and Christianity are very much aware of the problem of desire. Buddhism seems to try to overcome desire completely. Christianity, however, tries to aim one's desire at God, and to invite one's friends to do the same. This helps explain Buddhism's attractiveness to the Western World which is losing its belief in a personal God whom we can desire. But, giving up desire completely means giving up our human beingness. Does it also mean to abolish human beings as such?

John Makransky: Very grateful for the fine analyses and comments of Ives and Lefebure. I suggest that the apparent lack of sophisticated social analysis for the conditioning of suffering may be linked to the apparent lack of prophetic voices within Buddhism. But this may be partly due to *our* radar screens which don't notice them; they are unusual voices, and we marginalize them. Mimetic theory may have something, perhaps a great deal, to bring to this.

There are two hats that some of us wear: on the one hand the hat of Western social-scientific analysis, something that Buddhism needs to appropriate and, in face of which, Buddhism seems to be naïve. But on the other hand, putting on my formed-by-Buddha cap, what I see seems, from the Buddhist perspective, to be quite naïve. From within Buddhism there's an analysis of the movement that Girard has initiated, a movement towards transforming cultures. But such a profound social transformation requires

many parallel individual transformations. Without these, the attempts at social transformation too easily get co-opted. Attention to individual transformation (or, intensely contemplative traditions) is too easily, too quickly dismissed from our Western radar screens. Within Buddhism, ultimate transformation requires three fundamental, interrelated steps: first step, wisdom coming from hearing and studying the teaching; second step, wisdom coming from careful reflection and criticism; third step, wisdom coming from disciplines and practices that lead to direct, moment to moment to moment to moment awareness. Such disciplines or practices have been present in Christian, Jewish, and Islamic traditions, but they don't come under the radar screen of this conference. There's a certain naivete in thinking that only the second level or step of wisdom will be enough for a really world-transforming event to take place. I'm skeptical.

Robert Hamerton-Kelly: What I had in mind in talking about monotheism versus polytheism is specifically the nationalism that becomes a form of religion and then becomes demonically murderous in things like Nazism, something that many historians call neopaganism, and which becomes horrendously worse in some of the Marxist ideologies. That is what I really mean by "the pagan sacred," and "the structure of sacred violence." At the same time, we shouldn't overlook that murderous, witch-hunting, victimizing violence is still alive and well in some of the traditional cultures of our world (witness my personal experience in Zululand, South Africa, and the report about a New Guinea tribe from our 1999 Atlanta conference). Our respect for and desire to preserve traditional cultures cannot go as far as approving the murderous victimization that can be present in and even form the heart of some traditional cultures. As René points out, the biblical witness on such matters is uncompromising.

Britt Johnston: To go back to the narrative of the Buddha Gautama's conversion, you can think of it as a founding narrative, something that reflects some social thing that has happened. His seeing the victims and reacting to that is the cultural event one looks for. But his response is not Christian because he does not identify with the victim but tries to cast out his own tendency to victimize in order to avoid becoming a victim himself. To avoid victimization one has to cast out victimizing; but casting out is a "satanic" kind of behavior, the paradox of "Satan casting out Satan." This helps explain why there is so much "negativity" in Buddhism, Buddhism's fascination with death, and why, in contrast to the Shintos in Japan, Buddhists have such "great funerals." This also helps explain Buddhism's popularity in the West today, because, mostly, what we in the West are

trying to do is to cast out Satan. That's not quite as demanding as the Christian thing of identifying with the victim.

Billy Hewett: The one who showed me most about applying Zen Buddhist techniques in a Christian situation was the late Tony DiMello whose practical genius led to all sorts of social applications. Then, some recent work on the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius of Loyola challenges a traditional assumption that Ignatius dealt with the purgative and illuminative ways, but doesn't talk about the unitive way. But this misses the fact that Ignatius's "election" of a state of life is not where it ends; it's rather the beginning of a conversion process, of becoming a contemplative in action, of focusing intensely on the sacrament of the present moment [and, like the moment-to moment-to moment etc. Buddhist awareness Makransky just spoke of (editor)] of living "the reality of the presence of God in the moment-by-moment election of the power of that presence."

Both Ives and Lefebure welcomed this comment.

Laris Salins: I'm becoming conscious that, as a Lutheran, "the reason I don't turn to the other resources within the Christian tradition is some rivalrous relationship to Catholic and other branches of Christianity." Very valuable to me was yesterday afternoon's workshop with Rusty Palmer and Tom Pace, their "emphasis on method in terms of becoming aware of mimetic desire."

Robert Nellis: As a hematology/oncology nurse, I'm a witness to the moment of death. There's a noetic moment at death. But it's outside the wisdom categories we are mostly using in this conversation. There's a direct apprehension of knowledge that is outside the mind, in a sense, or it's supra-rational—it really does happen. "There's a recognition, and a direct apprehension, of some sort of knowledge or wisdom that actually happens when the breath leaves the body." A resource for our dealing with this could be the classical, Christian, contemplative language about the *nous*, about noetic, and about *theoria*.

Raymund Schwager: Leo, you said something to the effect that the Girardian assertion about Christian revelation threatens to block dialogue. Could you explain what you meant by this?

Lefebure: I was thinking of the situation when one tradition claims that it has an exclusive lock on the truth and claims to see that the other side is completely dominated by violent patterns of which it is unaware. Exclusivist claims of this nature can hinder dialogue. Perhaps René could explain further.

René Girard: There is an exclusivist claim, but it's not an individual claim. It's not a question of who does or doesn't have the truth; that leads

to mimetic rivalry. Rather, it's a question of language we all have to use. Ninety per-cent of the words we use to talk about this are exclusively Western (e.g., the idea of "humanity"). So it is not a question of whether any theory is absolute truth, but, who can present an alternative, present another language? The Enlightenment, you may recall, thought that it was enough to be anti-Christian in an institutional way, whereas thinkers like Voltaire and Locke were actually incorporating/making the Christian language broader, "and I think today we are going through a process of exactly the same type." Remember, "the precedence, the dominance of Christianity is the dominance of a language which is beyond philosophy, I think, which affects us at a level so deep that we do not realize we have no alternative to it."

Duncan Ragsdale: René says that an anthropology of scapegoating is impossible because... nobody identifies themselves as a scapegoater. Where is the primitive, the pagan sacred? We can see that every day when we look in our mirror.

## WRAP-UP SUMMARY

Robert Daly called attention to the COV&R Home Page, gave special thanks to the eight Boston College graduate assistants who greatly contributed to the smooth running of the conference, and reminded COV&R members about the Business Meeting immediately after lunch. Then, after gratefully acknowledging compliments about the organization and running of the conference, he invited comment and criticism about what had been attempted, what may have been learned, and what might be kept in mind for the future.

Fred Lawrence, while grateful for the Lonergan–Girard conversation, noted in retrospect that we might have gotten into it more efficiently had we begun with a speaker (like Raymund Schwager, perhaps) who could lucidly communicate a fair sense of either position. Lawrence had in mind Schwager’s paper, “Conversion and Authenticity: Lonergan and Girard,” one of the concurrent lectures on the morning of June 1, that several others also recalled as one of the high points of the conference.

Paul Nuechterlein remarked that this is indeed one of the ways to undertake a conference like this: just jump in and do it. But he too noted that a keynote address, with reflection on how we do interreligious dialogue with mimetic theory, might have helped. Paul then singled out two themes from the conference. The first was the “idolatry-of-anti-idolatry” theme, the “Satan-casting-out-Satan” image, and the asking about how mimetic theory might shed light on the challenge of recognizing false gods without becoming idolatrous ourselves. The second theme or question is the matter, which kept coming up throughout the conference, of “being able to take the place of the victim, or the place of weakness.” The two themes are linked, Paul suggested, because “to be anti-idolatrous without falling into idolatry means to go to those places of the victim.”

Daly acknowledged that a keynote address might indeed have helped, but that he eventually despaired of finding someone ahead of time to do it.

But, after the experience of the conference, he suggested, we probably have a good handful of people who could now do this quite well.

Diana Culbertson offered the distinctions between love-talk, truth-talk, and power-talk as a way of understanding how, for example Christians, who talk about Jesus as the unsurpassable and unsurpassed Savior, can still engage with open honesty in ecumenical and interreligious dialogue. Love-talk—e.g. when a young woman proclaims that her future husband is the most wonderful man in the world—is something we do not challenge. We “concede that the other loves his or her convictions as deeply and as profoundly as I love mine.”

Charles McCarthy lamented that someone like the psychiatrist James Gilligan, who would have brought to us the concrete perspectives of clinical reality, was not part of the conference. We missed things, and left things unsaid, in our process. For example, the violence done by atheistic communism was done in spades by capitalism, “and atheistic capitalism is as much a religion as atheistic communism.”

Sandor Goodhart reinforced Daly’s suggestion that we participate in the various forums COV&R makes available: *Contagion*, the *Bulletin*, the Internet. Then he thanked Nuechterlein for his highlighting of the idolatry-of-anti-idolatry theme. As a helpful remedy, he suggested the Jewish idea of conversion: “the abandonment of sin and the return to the way of God.” The problem is, that when we are so sure we have the truth, we are not far from idolatry—the worst form of tyranny. Goodhart then connected this with Girard’s emphasis on the importance of thinking from within our own language. We can’t step out of our own—indeed Western—language. How, then, have infinite respect for the other individual? It has to be “infinite respect from within what I have available to me. And what I have available to me is this language of victims, this language of scapegoats and mimetic desire, as René has analyzed it.” This is how, using our Western concepts and language tools, we must try to avoid the idolatry of anti-idolatry, namely by identifying with the victim, with weakness, wherever weakness occurs.

An unidentified participant welcomed the emphasis on the existential and interdisciplinary, but then noted the danger of becoming a sect. Against this danger, he observed, an academic profile would be a healthy remedy.

Gerhard Larcher appreciated the enlarged possibility for personal encounters, and the good preparation; but he would like to have followed a methodological line a bit more strictly, e.g., the way Raymund Schwager and Wolfgang Palaver took up the Lonergan–Girard conversation. We “need a philosophical criteriology together with mimetic theory for this

encounter [of religions] in this ever more globalized world.” He also would have welcomed more immediate responses to the many questions that were raised.

Andrew McKenna welcomed the way Larcher “rethematized” what he himself had been planning to say. But, in contrast, he welcomed the fact that so many questions could be raised and that the presenters were willing to yield the microphone. He encouraged us not to over-castigate ourselves about our lack of inclusiveness. But above all, he wanted to thematize the motif of silence that had come up so strongly in the last session on Buddhism: “a silence of wisdom beyond words.” He reminded us that Jesus’ response to Dostoevski’s Grand Inquisitor—Girard points out that there is no response to the Grand Inquisitor’s argument—is a silent kiss. Out of this motif of silence comes our listening to another, each other, and that is what leads us to the ethical and the moral.

The wrap-up session then wound down with Daly reviewing plans for the publication of the conference’s proceedings. Geoffrey Price observed how valuable he found the breakout sessions; that there was “some very novel and unusual theology going on in these”; and that this conference “has been an extremely creative place,” fostering discussion that could not have happened in another format.



## EPILOGUE

Robert J. Daly, S.J.

*Boston College*

April 2002

I will arrange my comments under four headings: (1) what we had hoped to accomplish; (2) what we actually did accomplish; (3) what we may have learned from this; (4) what this might now enable us to do in the future. This epilogue is being written in April, 2002, twenty-two months after the conference. To draw what good we can from this delay, writing at this distance allows me to summarize and draw conclusions with, perhaps, a bit more balance. On the other hand, my listening again to the audio record in the course of preparing this publication has enabled me to relive something of the original experience.

(1) As I indicated in the introduction, we had unrealistically hoped that, by the time of the conference, the five presenters, and perhaps also the two principals in the "Girard-Lonergan Conversation," would have already exchanged with each other not just first drafts, but even second drafts of their papers, and that the conference itself would then be invited to join a conversation that was already well under way. As it turned out, I couldn't muster the organizational skills and resources needed to achieve this. But reflecting after the fact, I can see that so carefully detailed a preparation might have been counterproductive. Carrying out our original plan might have been at the cost of imposing more of a Western analytic pattern on our discussion of other traditions, and of thus smothering from the outset some of the insight that did occur. We had also hoped that the opening "Girard-Lonergan Conversation" would provide an analytic resource for the rest of the meeting. But that did not happen to any great extent.

(2) The proximate preparation for this conference began with a draft version of my paper being sent to the other major presenters. I opened with

a series of brief sketches of salient points in the often unhappy but also occasionally felicitous history of Christianity on this theme of violence and institution. Then, after emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between the normative and the descriptive, I tried to make some sense, both rational and theological, of all this data, especially by reflecting on the influences and consequences of the belief in hell, on the one hand, and the hope of universal salvation, on the other.

The next major religious theme was Judaism. Reuven Kimelman provided a detailed—and, for some, overwhelming—glimpse of the way the talmudic traditions deal with the theme of war and its restrictions. This highly text-oriented and interpretation-of-texts driven presentation seemed to many, at first, to be irrelevant to mimetic theory and to the need to be confronting actual violence. But, in the course of Sandor Goodhart's response, and in the course of the at times spirited discussion that followed, we began to understand that how one interprets texts and traditions, and how these are played off against each other, is indeed fundamental to the way Jews typically try to deal with the practical challenges of violence.

Qamar-ul Huda's presentation on Islam focused strongly on the way the spiritual teachings of Islam—i.e., islam as a religion rather than Islam as a political or national institution—foster peace. The initial reaction was somewhat similar to the reaction to Kimelman's paper: disappointment that Huda was not talking more directly about contemporary Muslim extremist violence. But here, too, the discussion enabled us to catch a glimpse both of the inner spiritual resources of Islam, and of the limitations of the range of concerns that Westerners typically bring to the table.

Francis Clooney, in his presentation of Hinduism, strongly emphasized the great variety in Hinduism, stressing that one cannot speak of Hinduism as such. Much of this variety comes from the several millennia of Hindu history, and from the complex relationships to Buddhism and Jainism which, themselves, are important parts of Hindu history, and also from the fact that only recently have Hindus, after centuries of Moslem or Colonial domination, once again returned to positions of political and military power.

Finally, Christopher Ives's presentation on Buddhism, in a way similar to my presentation on Christianity, but more extensively or more consequently, pointed out the various ways in which Buddhism has been politically and nationalistically co-opted. Whether for this reason or not, this was the session that seemed to bring out the strongest similarities to the Christian history and experience of violence and religion.

Following each twenty-five minute summary by the main presenters

was an equally long formal response that engaged the paper from the point of view of mimetic theory. This, in turn, was followed by about fifty minutes of open discussion from the floor. In many ways, what happened in these discussions constituted the high points of the conference. It was noticeable that the discussions became richer and deeper as we went on. This was, happily, what the organization of the conference had planned and hoped would take place. Both the formal and the social organization of the conference contributed to this. Formally, each of the five plenary sessions around which the conference was built—six, if we count the opening evening's Girard–Lonergan conversation—allowed for almost an hour of open discussion. The lunches and dinners were unhurried. Each of the morning and afternoon periods had a full one-half-hour coffee break, and the final session each evening was followed by an open-ended social gathering which practically everyone attend for one or two hours, and some for as much as three or four hours.

(3) What did we learn? Rather than attempt to prioritize or synthesize in a formal way, I will simply bullet-list what comes to mind and simply allow whatever personal judgments I have to be reflected in the language I use.

- With the right organization and a supportive setting, a conversation-intense or dialogue-intense conference can succeed. Put another way, with a serious issue to talk about, bring good people together in a supportive setting, turn them loose on each other, and good things will happen.
- COV&R members and scholars of the world's religions have much to learn from each other.
- COV&R members are not exempt from the scapegoating impulse, as several interventions pointed out. But we also seem to have, when we are talking and listening to each other, the resources at least to begin to acknowledge, correct, and move beyond scapegoating.
- Our conference probably could have benefitted from a keynote address. But judgments on this point were varied. For if the keynote were given from a Western analytic point of view, it might have impeded insight from non-Western quarters.

- Mimetic theory is a Western theory. That granted, our conference did suggest that mimetic theory might be helpful to non-Western cultures, as long as it is not applied in a procrustean manner. And conversely, this conference raised awareness of the limitations of mimetic theory's exportability.
- We gained, I think, a deeper awareness of the role of conversion in the move from violence to nonviolence. Along with this grew an awareness of how complex a phenomenon and experience conversion is. (Loneragan pointed out, for example, that complete conversion is intellectual, and moral, and religious.) Conversion can be intensely personal or individual; it can also be broadly social, cultural, and political. And it can be both "secular" and/or religious and spiritual. By the end of the conference, a number of comments seemed to be suggesting that conversion on all levels is necessary if there is to be genuine progress toward a more nonviolent world.
- Mimetic theory—or perhaps more precisely, COV&R members using mimetic theory from the perspectives of their various disciplines and professions—could use a more sophisticated analytic methodology. This was apparently the thinking, but not as clearly articulated as this, that was behind the idea of the "Loneragan–Girard Conversation." However, cautions about the limitations of a "Western" methodology must also be kept in mind.

(4) What are we, as a result of this conference, are now able—or more able—to do? Many will have their own thoughts about this. But speaking for myself, my own ideas would inevitably be the positive and future-looking implications of what I have just bullet-listed under point (3). Perhaps it is not time for COV&R members to come together for some constructive navel-gazing, to take stock of what we have been accomplishing, and, as we plan our annual gatherings and our research and writing projects, to be reflecting on what issues we might possibly want to prioritize or single out for special attention.

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## NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

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Sandor Goodhart directs the Jewish Studies Program at Purdue, and authored *Sacrificing Commentary: Reading the End of Literature* (Johns Hopkins UP, 1996) and *Reading Stephen Sondheim: A Collection of Critical Essays* (Garland Press, 2000).

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Qamar-ul Huda, assistant professor of Islamic Studies and comparative theology at Boston College, is the author of *Striving for Death: Spiritual Exercises for the Suhrawardi Sufis* (Curzon Press), and is also developing a new paradigm of liberation theology for Islamic studies.

Christopher Ives is Professor of Religious Studies at Stonehill College. In his scholarship he explores Japanese Buddhist ethics and modern Zen thought. His publications include *Zen Awakening and Society* (1992) and *The Emptying God: A Buddhist-Jewish-Christian Conversation* (co-edited with John B. Cobb, 1990).

Reuven Kimelman (Ph. D., Yale) is a professor of rabbinic literature at Brandeis University. The author of numerous essays on Judaic law, he has taught at Amherst, Hampshire, Mt. Holyoke, Smith, Trinity and Williams Colleges as well as at The Jewish Theological Seminary and The Hebrew University in Jerusalem.

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# COLLOQUIUM ON VIOLENCE & RELIGION

Contagion is the journal of the *COLLOQUIUM ON VIOLENCE AND RELIGION*, an international association of scholars founded in 1990 and dedicated to the exploration, criticism, and development of René Girard's mimetic model of the relationship between violence and religion in the genesis and maintenance of culture. COV&R is concerned with questions of research and application. Scholars from diverse fields and theoretical orientations are invited to participate in its conferences and publications. Membership includes subscriptions to *CONTAGION* and to the organization's biannual Bulletin which contains recent bibliography, book reviews, and information on the annual conference as well as on relevant satellite sessions in conferences of diverse disciplines.

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