Holy War: Toward a Holistic Understanding

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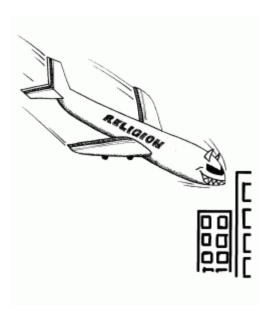Send not to know for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for thee.

John Donne

Is religion a force for peace or war? Or to borrow a phrase from the title of Christopher Hitchen's recent book, God Is Not Great, does religion really poison everything, including the possibility of living in a peaceful world?

The answer is much like posing the question of whether the glass is half full or half empty. That is to say, for every example cited to prove that religion has supported warfare and violence, other examples can be presented to show ways in which religion has contributed to not only peace and the avoidance of war but to the betterment of humanity and the world. When the question is posed in this way, the debate is as endless as it is futile unless the "winner" is the side that amasses the greatest number of examples.

There is, however, a more fruitful way to address the question, at least for those who, like me, recognize that all of the world's major religions have, at one time or another, engaged in "holy war," or more accurately, condoned the organized use of violence against perceived enemies. The question then becomes one of seeking to understand the various factors at work in the world's major faiths that have led them to condone, justify, or at least tolerate the use of violence. And equally, if not more, important is the question of whether there may be some underlying commonalities in the world's major faiths that, transcending differences in doctrine and praxis, result in the sacralization of violence, at least under certain circumstances.

Let me stress that the search for such factors or commonalities is not done with the intent of denying the many positive contributions the world's major religions have made to peace and human wellbeing. Yet, it is also true that these positive contributions are not the problem that is of so much concern to contemporary society, one reflection of which is the creation of the very journal this article appears in. In other words, it is not the bright side of religion

that gives cause for concern but its dark side.

The Dark Side of Religion

Once again, the focus on "darkness" that follows is not meant as a denial of religion's bright side, though it may very well challenge those who believe religion, or at least their faith, has nothing but a bright side.

The Bright Side of Religion

The Dark Side

Somewhat surprisingly, my research into the dark side of religion began not with one of the Abrahamic faiths, but with Buddhism, a faith that, at least in the West, is not known for its advocacy of holy wars let alone religious fanaticism. Accordingly, in one of Buddhism's foundational texts, the Dhammapada, Buddha Shakyamuni is recorded as having said:

All men tremble at punishment, all men fear death; remembering that thou are like unto

them, do not strike or slay.

All men tremble at punishment, all men love life; remembering that thou are like unto them, do not strike or slay.[1]

In addition, the first of the five precepts that all Buddhists, both lay and clergy, pledge to follow is "to abstain from harming living creatures" (i.e. killing). Given this, it is not surprising that in 1938 the well-known Buddhist scholar D. T. Suzuki could claim: "Whatever form Buddhism takes in the various countries where it flourishes, it is a religion of compassion, and in its varied history, it has never been found engaged in warlike activities."[2]

ere Suzuki's statement true, it would mean that Buddhism was the great, and possibly sole, exception to the earlier claim that all of the world's major faiths are guilty of having sacralized violence at one time or another. Butas the distinguished True Pure Land scholar-priest Inoue Enryō (1858-1919) makes clear, as early as the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5, Buddhism had been invoked in Japan to justify warfare by the "army of the Buddha":

In Russia state and religion are one, and there is no religious freedom. Thus, religion is used as a chain in order to unify the [Russian] people. Therefore, when they [the Russian people] see Orientals, they are told that the latter are the bitter enemies of their religion. It is for this reason that on the one hand this is a war of politics and on the other hand it is a war of religion. … If theirs is the army of God, then ours is the army of the Buddha. It is in this way that Russia is not only the enemy of our country but of the Buddha as well.[3]

urther, following Japan's full-scale invasion of China in July 1937, Japan's most distinguished Buddhist leaders lined up in support of Japan's military aggression, describing it as nothing less than a "holy war." For example, in 1939 Sōtō Zen Master Harada Daiun stated:

[If ordered to] march: tramp, tramp, or shoot: bang, bang. This is the manifestation of the highest Wisdom [of Enlightenment]. The unity of Zen and war of which I speak extends to the farthest reaches of the holy war [now under way].[4]

As the Asia-Pacific War progressed, especially in the years following Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, the leaders of Japan's traditional Buddhist sects were ever more strident in

their statements of war support. When, in a final act of desperation, the Japanese military turned to the use of the infamous *kamikaze* suicide pilots, Buddhist leaders saw in these fanatical acts no less than "complete enlightenment." In May 1945 Sōtō Zen scholar-priest Masunaga Reihō wrote:

The source of the spirit of the Special Attack Forces [i.e. *kamikaze*] lies in the denial of the individual self and the rebirth of the soul, which takes upon itself the burden of history. From ancient times Zen has described this conversion of mind as the achievement of complete enlightenment.[5]

Sacralizing Violence

In struggling to understand how Buddhism, or at least Buddhist leaders, had diverged so fundamentally from the teachings of their founder, I could not help but recall that I had once asked the same question about Christianity. That is to say, given the Judeo-Christian commandment "Thou shall not kill" and Jesus' teaching to "love your enemies," how does one explain, for example, the immense slaughter accompanying the multiple Christian Crusades of the eleventh through the thirteenth centuries? Is it possible that despite the great differences in doctrine and praxis among the world's great faiths, in this case Buddhism and Christianity, these faiths might share more in common than is generally recognized, especially in regard to the sacralization of violence?

In the midst of pondering these questions, I came across the following seminal quotation from Martin Marty of the University of Chicago:

Positive thinkers and public relations officers for the faiths would repudiate this notion or evade the fact. They want religion to be nothing but gospel, good news. Apologists for the faiths usually minimize the distress that can come with religion or that religion can produce. You will not read about the destructive element in religious impulses in the advertisements for the church of your choice. Yet if the pursuit of truth is still to be cherished as a foundational theme in the academy, one must note the feature of religion that keeps it on the front page and on prime time: it kills. Or, if, as the gun lobbies say of weapons—that they do not kill; people do—one must say of religion that if it does not kill, many of its forms

and expressions motivate people to kill. Experts on what motivates the scores of wars or, as some would have it, "tribal conflicts," today know that not only do many belligerent partisans wear names like "Protestant" and "Catholic," "Shi'ite" and "Sunni," "Jewish" and "Sikh," but leaders and followers alike fire on the demonized Other, the enemy, in the name of God or the gods.[6]

And, as we have seen above, Marty might well have added: "in the name of the Buddha."

Marty was not, of course, the first student of religion to recognize that "religion kills." As the seventeenth-century mathematician, physicist and theologian Blaise Pascal noted in *Pensées*, "Men never do evil so completely and cheerfully as when they do it from religious conviction."[7]

One of the most significant aspects of these quotes, apart from their brutal honesty, is that they don't place the blame on any one religious tradition. It is not "Islam kills," or "Christianity kills," but rather "*religion* kills." For Pascal, it was *religious conviction* that led the faithful to do evil "so completely and cheerfully." But as to the reason(s) why this was so, both men remained silent.

Students of religion, however, are not the only ones to have recognized this phenomenon. For example, the sociologist Peter Berger noted:

Whenever a society must motivate its members to kill or to risk their lives, thus consenting to being placed in extreme marginal situations, religious legitimations become important. … Killing under the auspices of the legitimate authorities has, for this reason, been accompanied from ancient times to today by religious paraphernalia and ritualism. Men go to war and men are put to death amid prayers, blessings, and incantations.[8]

Again, what the preceding comments all share in common is that they look beyond any one religious tradition in seeking to understand the complex and intricate relationship that exists between religion and violence, especially in the form of state-sanctioned warfare. Secondly, although they accurately describe this phenomenon, these comments do not explore in depth the rationale or causes of what they bear witness to. Let us therefore direct our attention to this question.

An Aircraft Called Religion

For obvious reasons in light of 9/11, the paradigm of an aircraft lends itself to an exploration of the complexities of the relationship between religion and violence. This paradigm is also helpful in revealing the fundamental nature of this phenomenon. That is to say, an aircraft is, in and of itself, "value free," for it can as readily be used to transport large numbers of people quickly and safely as to bomb and destroy cities and their inhabitants (or crash into the side of buildings). In other words, an aircraft's "morality" is not built in but rests completely in the hands of those who operate it.

Viewed historically, it is readily observable that when the Wright brothers first succeeded in powered flight in December 1903, their goal was transport, not destruction. Nevertheless, it was not long before an Italian aviator, Lt. Giulio Gavotti, recognized the potential of his aircraft for more than simple reconnaissance during the Italian invasion of Libya. Thus, on November 1, 1911, Lt. Gavotti flew over a Turkish camp at Ain Zara and manually dropped four Danish-made hand grenades over the side, marking the first aerial bombing in world history. It had taken only eight years for a colonial power to "weaponize" the airplane, employing it as part of the Western world's quest to acquire Arab oil.

Although this article will identify abstract or universal principles of sacralized violence, for purposes of clarity it is critical to introduce these principles in tandem with concrete illustrations revealing how these principles have manifested themselves throughout history. These illustrations have been selected taking into account their familiarity to a primarily American readership, and thus many if not most of them will have some connection to this country's Judeo-Christian heritage.

Some readers may find that what follows unfairly targets this heritage. In one sense that charge is accurate, for it is not difficult to demonstrate that Judeo-Christian adherents have not always lived up to the highest ideals of their faith. But it is also true that, if space allowed, something similar could be said about adherents to all of the world's major faiths. Thus, the illustrations that follow are no more than a sampling of *universal* principles at work across the world's faiths.

Finally, the aircraft paradigm has one further advantage in that an aircraft is made up of a complex mix of distinct parts, for example, wings, motors, fuselage, pilot(s), and so on, all of which are essential to its successful operation. At their best, these parts function harmoniously in accomplishing whatever "mission," peaceful or otherwise, may be given

them. When scrutinized carefully, the complexity of a modern aircraft is truly amazing even though today's passengers typically take it for granted. Yet, issues of war and peace as they relate to the "aircraft called religion" are far more complex; for they relate to that most complicated of all mechanisms—the human heart and mind (and beyond).

Wing = Tribal/Ethnic Religion (Anthropological)[9]

If there is any single feature of an aircraft that distinguishes it from other forms of transportation it is its wing, for it literally keeps the aircraft afloat on a sea of air. Should it fail in flight, disaster is almost immediate.

The wing of the aircraft called religion is its tribal or ethnic character, that is, its anthropological roots. At first glance many readers may wish to deny this claim, not least of all those who are familiar with the writing of philosopher of history, Karl Jaspers. However, before examining what he had to say, let us consider the key features of this particular wing:

1. The focus of religious rituals and practices is on the collective good (rather than individual salvation).
2. Religious rituals and practices become the social glue that unites the tribal, racial or ethnic group. Contemporary manifestations of that unity can be seen in ethnocentric expressions, such as "God Bless America" (rather than "God Bless All Nations" or "God Bless All Peoples" or simply, "God Bless Everyone").
3. Tribal/racial/ethnic religion typically involves supplication to, or manipulation of, some alleged deity (or deities) believed to possess the power to benefit (or harm) the tribe, traditionally including a victory-granting, god/goddess of war. With the advent of monotheism, the god or goddess of war seemed to disappear but in reality was incorporated into the unitary deity as one of its aspects, for example, a jealous God who demands justice rather than solely a God of love.
4. Loyalty to the tribe and its leaders is the chief element of the religiously sanctioned, if not created, moral code. Loyalty is most strongly emphasized or required in times of genuine or perceived danger to the tribe. The popular and long-standing motto "For God and Country" (*Pro Deo et Patria* in Latin) well captures the spirit of religiously inspired loyalty, for it suggests that what is done for country is done for God and vice-versa. In effect, the two become indivisible in the mind of the believer/citizen.

5. Tribal/racial/ethnic religion possesses a strict code of moral conduct toward other tribal members including heavy penalties for breaching the code. However, toward non-tribal members the moral code is typically "anything goes" since the other is seen as more beast than human, a potential if not real threat to the tribe's continued existence. It is thus that the enemy becomes dehumanized as, for example, "savage redskins" in early American history; "Japs" in World War II; "gooks" in Vietnam; and "camel jockeys," "towel-heads," or "sand-niggers" in Iraq.

6. Today the tribal group is known as the "nation," and tribalism has become "nationalism." In practice, tribal/racial/ethnic religion and nationalism have become nearly identical as seen in the now ubiquitous car magnet "God Bless Our Troops" that contains the unspoken but none the less real wish "God Damn/Destroy Our Enemies!" Further, in what appears on the surface to be a step toward racial harmony, members of minority ethnicities and races (including women) are now, after a long struggle, admitted to the body politic, though only on the condition that they profess loyalty and adopt the values of the traditional male power-holders, for example, WASPS in the case of the United States.

Some readers may now be shaking their heads in disagreement, for even if the preceding features were true of religion in our tribal pasts, many if not most adherents of contemporary universal religions would deny these characteristics apply to them. They claim that the founders of their respective faiths, for example Jesus, Mohammed or Buddha, were the saviors or religious teachers of all humanity.

Within the academy, scholars of religion might point to Karl Jaspers, who coined the term "Axial Period" for the era between 800-200 B.C.E. when changes took place in human and religious culture that were so radical that it was as if human consciousness had undergone a giant turn on its axis. In contrast, prior to the Axial Period the many and diverse human cultures were basically tribal, racial or ethnic in nature—their identity and cohesion found in a common pool of blood and genes, their existence dedicated to insuring their own survival. However, following the Axial Period these tribal cultures gave way to cultures focused on spiritual wellbeing, that is, the "salvation" of the individual. Moral and ethical systems became, at least in theory, *universal* in nature, recognizing no tribal, racial, ethnic or (later) national boundaries.

Significantly, this change occurred independently in many different cultures at nearly the

same time. Examples include the Greek philosophers; Semitic prophets (up to and including Jesus and Muhammad); Indian seers (Buddha and Mahavira); and Chinese thinkers (Confucius and Lao-tzu). The trans-ethnic, trans-racial, trans-national religions that developed from the teachings of these spiritual leaders eventually spread from their points of origin to create the Christian-influenced West, Islam-influenced Middle East and Buddhist/Hindu/Confucian/Taoist-influenced Asia.

Nevertheless, it is critically important to realize that these newly created universal religions did not obliterate, at least not totally, the earlier tribal/racial/ethnic cultures. Instead, they merely subordinated them to a higher set of values. Like seething molten lava, the values of these earlier cultures were ever ready to burst to the surface when the opportunity presented itself. This in turn resulted in inevitable conflict, especially during periods of crisis, between two sets of norms: "individual and universal" versus "collective and limited."

Illustrations

n light of the above discussion it can be readily recognized that when, during the Russo-Japanese War, True Pure Land scholar-priest Inoue Enryō referred to Russia as "not only the enemy of our country but of the Buddha as well," he had turned the founder of his universal faith into a tribal or national deity for whom Japanese Buddhists should fight and die.

Yet, one cannot help but wonder why Japanese Buddhists were so easily taken in by this ruse? That is to say, why weren't they able to see through, or reject, the tribalization of their faith?

he truth is that tribal/racial/ethnic and universal religions are not as far apart as they first appear to be, for there is a bridge that not only unites them but readily leads believers to conflate the two, leading to a failure to recognize the inherent conflict. The name of this bridge is loving or compassionate self-sacrifice. In the case of Inoue Enryō, it can be seen when he added:

Buddhism is a teaching of compassion, a teaching for living human beings. Therefore, fighting on behalf of living human beings is in accord with the spirit of compassion. … Beyond that, however, it is the conduct of a [self-sacrificing] bodhisattva seeking to save untold millions of living souls throughout China and Korea from the jaws of death.[10]

Needless to say, these sentiments are by no means limited to the Buddhist tradition. In Islam, for example, we find the following explanation of martyrdom: [In Islam] the martyr witnesses and sees the truth physically and thus stands by it firmly, so much so that not only does he testify to it verbally, but he is prepared to struggle and fight and give up his life for the truth, and thus to become a martyr.[11]

In Christianity we find it in a somewhat unlikely place. Namely, following the Nazi blitzkrieg on Poland in 1939, Germany's Roman Catholic Military Bishop Franz Joseph Rarkowski praised his nation's soldiers, saying:

Their sacrifice for Germany's honor and future lacked nothing of human greatness and glory. And this dying was not only beautiful and sublime in the human sense but towers beyond into a higher world. It is a holy death: for those who have fallen have consecrated and sanctified all their war services through their oath of allegiance, and have thus entered their sacrifices in the legends of God which are preserved in the archives of Eternity.[12]

Some readers may feel it is unfair to call upon a fervent Nazi supporter, albeit a Roman Catholic military bishop, to represent Christianity. If so, what is one to make of the Rev. James R. McGonegal, pastor of Saint Ignatius of Antioch Church in Cleveland, Ohio? On July 17, 2004, *The Cleveland Plain Dealer* carried an article describing Rev. McGonegal's eulogy for a fallen U.S. soldier in Iraq:

Sgt. Joseph Martin Garmback was killed last week in Samarra, Iraq. … "Joey loved being a soldier. He was so self-sacrificing," said the Rev. James R. McGonegal. "This man knew something about living and dying, and giving his life for someone else." Many dried their eyes when McGonegal assured them Garmback was going to a better place, a safer place. "He is safe at home, at last, at peace," McGonegal said.[13]

Needless to say, Rev. McGonegal, a Roman Catholic, did not discuss how many Iraqi children of God Sgt. Garmback might have killed prior to "giving his life for someone else." More importantly, if the references to the particular war in which the soldiers sacrificed their lives are removed, is there any fundamental difference in the underlying religious message between the two Church representatives above? In both instances eternal life was the certain reward for sacrificing oneself for one's country, no matter how much killing of the other was required.

And what of the soldiers who are willing to sacrifice themselves for their country? What makes it possible for them to overcome the basic human instinct for survival? In a lecture by Richard Koenigsberg entitled: "If One Aspires to Achieve Peace, One Needs to Know Why People Love War," he noted, "Soldiers are willing to sacrifice themselves in order to preserve the common love object. What is the beloved object in the name of which people wage war? People wage war in the name of their nation and its sacred ideals."[14]

Expressed in slightly different terms, soldiers are willing to die for something outside of themselves that is more important to them than their own lives. In other words, they sacrifice themselves in the process of self-transcendence. Like self-sacrifice, self-transcendence is a goal that both tribal and universal religions share in common. In the Christian tradition, for example, it is expressed as "love your neighbor as yourself" or "no greater love hath a man than that he lay down his life for a friend."

On the surface, self-transcendence readily gives the appearance of being a universal value until, that is, one questions the goal or object of that transcendence. When the goal is identification with one's nation (rather than all of humanity or God's children, for example), the reality is that while the individual self may have been transcended, it has joined millions of like-minded people to create a new, more powerful, and equally self-centered, collective self called the "nation." Just how attractive the nation can be in terms of eliciting loyalty unto death is revealed by P. H. Pearse, founder of the Irish revolutionary movement, as he observed the daily carnage in France during World War I:

The last sixteenth months have been the most glorious in the history of Europe. Heroism has come back to the earth. It is good for the world that such things should be done. The old heart of the earth needed to be warmed with the red wine of the battlefield. Such august homage was never before offered to God as this, the homage of millions of lives given gladly for love of country.[15]

Thus does the homage of millions of lives given for one's tribe, a.k.a "nation," become equated with "august homage … offered to God." The anthropological nature of the wing on the aircraft called religion remains alive and well, never so clearly as in wartime.

Propulsion = Absolutism (Theological)

Let us next examine what it is that propels the aircraft called religion from point A to B. Simply stated it is religious faith grounded in belief, leading all too often to intolerance, sometimes fanatically so, of other belief systems. For readers wondering why this characteristic is listed second instead of first, the answer is that as important as it is, it pales in comparison to the ease with which ostensibly universal religions revert to their tribal/racial/ethnic pasts. This said, the characteristics of religious absolutism are as follows:

1. My faith has "the whole Truth, and nothing but the Truth, so help us, God, Allah, Buddha, Krishna, et al."
2. At the very least this belief serves to decrease interest in anyone else's faith since, by definition, it can't be true.
3. It serves as the impetus to spread one's faith through missionary activities that have frequently been identified with "civilizing the natives" and "saving the heathen."
4. While there is nothing inherently wrong in this, in terms of historical practice, missionary activities have often employed coercive measures of various kinds: economic, social, political and, all too often, violence directed toward those who resisted.
5. Violence is justified on the basis that the other is associated with falsehood, and therefore evil, and since the faithful are required to struggle against evil, those who refuse to convert to the true faith must be destroyed in order for the Truth to reign supreme.

Illustrations

In today's world, to think of religious intolerance is to think, first and foremost, of Islam. And it must be admitted there is good reason for doing so. For example, in a recent statement the well-known Iraqi Shiite Muslim cleric Muqtada al-Sadr said, "Tell America, tell all the world, tell the Governing Council, that I have God by my side and they have the devil by theirs, and to my followers, I say, do not think we are not powerful. We can fight and defeat anyone![16] While it is possible to interpret Muqtada's words as so much bluster, unfortunately the same cannot be said of the following report in the New York Times:

"The only reward for those who make war on Allah and on Muhammad, his messenger, and plunge into corruption, will be to be killed or crucified or have their hands and feet severed on alternate sides, or be expelled from the land," the man says. With that, the two gunmen

flanking the executioner shout "Allahu akbar!" God is Great, drop their Kalashnikovs and tumble Mr. Fawazi face down on the ground. The killer pulls his knife from behind a magazine belt on his chest, grabs Mr. Fawazi by the hair, severs his head, holds it up briefly to the camera, then places it between his rope-tied hands on his back.[17]

The assertion that a barbarous act of this nature was done as a demonstration of God's "Great[ness]" will no doubt strike many readers, as it does this author, as religious fanaticism at its worst. Especially if one is not a Muslim, it will be easy to point to acts of this nature as proof of Islam's underlying, if not inherent, cruelty.

Yet the question must be asked, how do or should we react to the following story of religiously sanctioned barbarity, this time by the "Christian soldiers" of the United States? In 1906, at the time of the Filipino-American War, Major General Leonard Wood, governor of the Philippines, sent the following report to President Teddy Roosevelt on the occasion of a massacre of Filipino Muslim "insurgents" and their families: "The enemy numbered six hundred—including women and children—and we abolished them utterly, leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother. This is incomparably the greatest victory that was ever achieved by the *Christian soldiers* of the United States." In response, President Roosevelt sent a cable to the American troops praising their "brilliant feat of arms" and the excellent way they "upheld the honor of the American flag."[18] [Emphasis mine]

Are we in the United States, especially those who are Christians, as appalled by this act of Christian depravity, that is "leaving not even a baby alive to cry for its dead mother," as we are by the earlier Muslim beheading? If so, given that this atrocity happened more than a century ago, where or how do we commemorate (let alone atone for) the slaughter of Muslim innocents to match the multi-million dollar memorial being built at "Ground Zero" for the victims of 9/11? Is it only barbarity when Americans are the victims rather than the perpetrators? Furthermore, in the case of 9/11 there was no Arab government praising the terrorist perpetrators for upholding the "honor" of their flag.

It would, of course, be comforting to claim that the above incident was merely a one-off aberration by the "Christian soldiers of the United States." Yet, when placed in the context of the following pro-war address on the floor of the Senate on January 9, 1900, it is difficult to believe that Senator Albert J. Beveridge of Indiana would have opposed their actions:

Mr. President, this question is … elemental. *It is racial.* God has not been preparing the

English-speaking and Teutonic peoples for a thousand years for nothing but vain and idle self-admiration. No! He had made the U.S. the master organizers of the world to establish system where chaos reigns. He has made us adepts in government that we may administer government among *savages and senile peoples*. Were it not for such a force as this, the world would relapse into barbarism and night. And of all our race, He has marked the American people as *His chosen nation* to finally lead in the regeneration of the world. This is the divine mission of America, and it holds for us *all the profit*, all the glory, all the happiness possible to man. We are trustees of the world's progress, guardians of its righteous peace. The judgment of the Master is upon us: "Ye have been faithful over a few things; I will make you ruler over many things."[19] [Emphasis mine]

It should be noted that in the Philippines, U.S. soldiers killed upwards of 250,000 "savages and senile peoples" in the course of their alleged "divine mission."

Needless to say, Senator Beveridge's speech in 1900 was deeply rooted in the earlier doctrine of Manifest Destiny that spoke of God's desire to give the entire American continent to "His chosen nation." This doctrine had first been used to justify the slaughter of Native American "blood-thirsty savages" as part of God's overarching plan. In fact, even prior to the creation of the United States it was claimed that God's hand was at work in delivering this continent to the English invaders. John Archdale was the English (and Quaker) colonial governor of North Carolina who in 1707 wrote the following in *Description of Carolina*:

And courteous Readers, I shall give you some farther Eminent Remark hereupon, and especially in the first Settlement of Carolina, where the Hand of God was eminently seen in thinning the Indians, to make room for the English. … it at other times *pleased Almighty God to send unusual Sicknesses amongst them*, as the Smallpox, etc., to lessen their Numbers.[20] [Emphasis mine]

The belief that God actively intervened to kill the enemies of His chosen people was certainly part of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny, but it was by no means a novel idea, for it had a long pedigree within European Christianity, most especially among the English Puritans who, like so many others before and after, had tribalized their faith into a uniquely English (and deadly) formulation.

Representative of such Puritan leaders was Oliver Cromwell, who in 1641 had been sent by Parliament to restore order in Catholic Ireland. Cromwell proceeded to the port town of Drogheda and ordered his troops to storm its garrison where they massacred four thousand of its inhabitants, including about a thousand women, children and friars in the cathedral of St. Peter. In taking these actions Cromwell was firmly convinced that he was doing the Lord's work, for the Puritans believed that it was they who were the "elect," chosen by God as his people. In fact, they were certain the British people as a whole were uniquely favored by God as demonstrated by the miraculous victory over the Spanish Armada in 1588 and by England's rapid growth as a maritime nation.

"It hath pleased God to bless our endeavors," Cromwell reported after Drogheda. "This hath been a marvelous great mercy. I am persuaded that this is a righteous judgment of God upon these barbarous wretches." The "great thing" that should be done was "done, not by power or might, but by the Spirit of God."[21]

Yet, in one sense it would be wrong to be too harsh in assessing this aspect of Cromwell's (and the Puritans') theology, for they had a mighty teacher in the form of one of the fathers of the Protestant Reformation, Martin Luther. Luther addressed issues of war and peace in his 1523 work *Temporal Authority*: *To What Extent It Should Be Obeyed* as follows:

If your opponent is your equal, your inferior, or of a foreign government, you should first offer him justice and peace, as Moses taught the children of Israel. If he is unwilling, then use your best strategy and defend yourself by force against force. … And in such a war *it is a Christian act and an act of love confidently to kill, rob, and pillage the enemy*, and do everything that can injure him until one has conquered him according to the methods of war. … *Such happenings must be considered as sent of God*, that He may now and then cleanse the land and drive out the knaves.[22] [Emphasis mine]

It is significant that Luther mentioned Moses as a source of inspiration for his teaching on allegedly Christian warfare, for it was of course Moses who led the Israelites out of bondage in Egypt and repeatedly lead successful battles on the way to the Promised Land. The only problem was that when the Israelites finally reached that land, they encountered, then as now, other peoples already living there. For God, however, this was no impediment. According to Deuteronomy 20:10-18, God instructed his chosen people as follows:

But as for the towns of these peoples that the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance,

you must not let anything that breathes remain alive. You shall *annihilate* the—the Hittites and the Amorites, the Canaanites and Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites—just as the Lord your God has commanded, so that they may not teach you to do all the abhorrent things that they do for their Gods, and you thus sin against the Lord your God. [Emphasis mine]

Note that the other must be totally destroyed to the last man, woman and child in order that they may not teach his chosen people "to do all the abhorrent things they do for their Gods." If the Bible is to be believed, it is God himself who is the author of religious intolerance, not to mention what we today identify as "genocide."

Further, given this scriptural basis in the Hebrew Bible, it is hardly surprising to see the following contemporary comments made by Israeli Rabbi Ovadia Yosef, spiritual leader of the Shas political party:

During a sermon preceding the 2001 Passover holiday, the influential Israeli Rabbi Ovadia Yosef exclaimed: "May the Holy Name visit retribution on the Arab heads, and cause their seed to be lost, *and annihilate them*." He added: "It is forbidden to have pity on them. We must give them missiles with relish, *annihilate them*. Evil ones, damnable ones."[23] [Emphasis mine]

Again, should readers think that the Abrahamic faiths are being unfairly singled out here, it could be demonstrated that all of the world's major religions, or at least their leading adherents, have embraced variations of the absolutist, intolerant, and deadly positions noted above. Given limitations of space, the preceding examples will have to serve to demonstrate that like tribal/racial/ethnic religion, the propulsion mechanism of the aircraft called religion still functions if not exactly 'smoothly' then at least 'forcefully' not to mention 'deadly.'

Fuselage = Security (Psychological)

What is it that offers protection to the passengers on the aircraft called religion as they hurtle through the air? It is, of course, the aircraft's fuselage, hermetically sealed, pressurized and, at least in first class seats, quite comfortable. Its chief characteristics are:

1. Rituals and religious practices in their many forms provide a sense of belonging and give purpose and meaning to adherents' lives. They feel a sense of connection to both

the past and the future, as well as to their fellow believers.

2. While there is nothing inherently wrong with this, adherents are also aware that outside their "security blanket" lies a cold and dangerous world.

3. This leads to a deep desire to conform to the norms of the group and its leaders within one's fuselage/faith, for to do otherwise is to risk the danger of expulsion as an unbeliever or heretic.

4. The outside environment is regarded as dangerous, not least of all because it is inhabited by those who don't share one's religious beliefs and practices, making them disruptive at best and potentially dangerous.

5. Thus, when another 'aircraft' with strange markings and strange faces at the windows draws too near to one's cozy world, it is hard to avoid a sense of anxiety, even fear, a ready pretext for violence.

Illustrations

Many readers will recall the varying degrees of discomfort they experienced the first time they visited a denomination (let alone a faith) significantly different from their own. Questions arise such as, When and how long should I stand or sit? Or, Must I kneel to pray? Or, Protestants in a Catholic church might ask, Does my faith allow me to make a sign in the shape of a cross as I enter the Church?

I vividly recall meeting a childhood Catholic friend after a lapse of more than twenty years. He recounted with amusement how concerned his Catholic parents had been when I occasionally invited him over for supper on a Friday night. His mother was suspicious that since my family typically ate meat on Fridays, it was a Protestant plot to lure their son away from Catholicism! If suspicions of this kind can exist between believers in different denominations of the same faith, it is not difficult to understand why far stronger suspicions exist between believers of different faiths. For example, the Taliban in Afghanistan viewed the two giant Buddha statues at Bamiyan as un-Islamic, graven images deserving of destruction, something they accomplished in March 2001. For them, the other, albeit in the form of a statue, could not be tolerated.

The reader will also recall that in Deuteronomy 20:10-18, God instructed his chosen people that, upon entering the Promised Land, they "must not let anything that breathes remain alive." However, when it was a question of how Israelites should treat one another,

Deuteronomy 15:7-10 had this to say:

If a fellow Israelite from one of your villages in the land that the Lord your God is giving you should be poor, you must not harden your heart or be insensitive to his impoverished condition. Instead, you must be sure to open your hand to him and generously lend him whatever he needs. Be careful lest you entertain the wicked thought that the seventh year, the year of cancellation of debts, has almost arrived, and your attitude be wrong toward your impoverished fellow Israelite and you do not lend him anything; he will cry out to the Lord against you and you will be regarded as having sinned. You must by all means lend to him and not be upset by doing it, for because of this the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you attempt.

The tribal mentality of the Israelites of that era is crystal clear. While the other must be completely destroyed, one's fellow tribal members must be treated with compassion and understanding. The question must be asked, has anything changed in the intervening two thousand plus years?

One person who would likely reply in the negative is Josh Rushing, a former Marine Corps media liaison officer in Iraq who went on to become a correspondent for Al Jazeera International and author of Mission Al Jazeera: Build a Bridge, Seek the Truth, Change the World. Rushing recounts how he first began to have doubts about his role as a Marine Corps media spokesperson upon seeing graphic video on Al Jazeera of both dead American and Iraqi soldiers. His initial reaction was one of anger directed toward Al Jazeera for having shown dead American soldiers but little or no anger regarding similar footage of dead Iraqi soldiers.

When Rush asked himself why he had reacted as he had, a process of self-discovery was initiated that led him to recognize that his initial revulsion stemmed from his gut-level identification with his fellow U.S. soldiers. Only later was he able to view the Iraqi war dead with the same degree of concern, leading to resignation of his officer's commission and, subsequently, to work at what many U.S. military and civilian leaders still regard as a media outlet for the promotion of anti-Americanism and Islamic extremism. In short, over a period of months and years, Rush came to recognize the humanity he shared in common with the other, and his life changed dramatically as a result.

A related incident took place in the 2000 TV film Nuremburg, which dealt with the trials of suspected Nazi war criminals in *Nuremburg* in 1945-46. The film focused both on the trials themselves as well as the true story of Jewish-American Gustave Gilbert, a U.S. Army psychologist assigned to monitor the mental condition of the defendants. Seizing this opportunity, Gilbert set out on a personal quest to understand how it had been possible for Nazi leaders to undertake the genocidal acts associated with the Holocaust. After interviewing Reichsmarschall Hermann Göring and other leading Nazis over a period of months, Gilbert had a "eureka moment," following which he confided to the chief American prosecutor: "I told you once that I was searching for the nature of evil. I think I've come close to defining it—a lack of empathy … a genuine incapacity to feel with their fellow man. *Evil, I think, is the absence of empathy.*" [Emphasis mine]

This insight is the key to understanding the psychological relationship between one religion and another, or even tension between different branches of the same faith. The key question becomes whether adherents of any faith can move beyond lip service to such universal doctrines as "we are all God's children" or "all sentient beings have the Buddha nature" to the point where adherents genuinely place the same value on the other as they do on themselves, their loved ones and their fellow citizens. While many would like to think they already embrace this attitude, how many are prepared to travel, for example, to Iraq or Afghanistan to serve as human shields or otherwise aid those innocent civilians and their families who day after day are killed by all sides, including so-called collateral damage from American military actions?

According to John 15:13, Jesus said: "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." But the perennial question for those seated in the comfortable, pressurized cabin of the aircraft called religion is this—just who are our "friends"?

Seating = Hierarchy (Sociological)

As everyone who flies knows full well, not all passengers are treated equally, neither in seat allocation, legroom, food, or even in-flight entertainment. So what are the criteria for deciding which passengers get what on the aircraft called religion?

1. Not surprisingly, high-ranking clergy, the successors of tribal shamans, pilot the aircraft called religion. As such, they are the leaders the laity looks to for guidance

and in whose hands the spiritual safety of the faithful lies.

2. At the same time, only a few clergy ever get to actually pilot the aircraft and most are relegated to either first or business class seats. It is while occupying these seats of privilege that they address the needs of their flocks, most of whom will always remain in economy class.

3. In this situation, the clergy (pilots and non-pilots alike) have a vested interest in maintaining their privileged positions in the aircraft.

4. Unsurprisingly, clergy can easily become attached to their power and prestige, fully aware that challenging the status quo can threaten their position. Thus, in practice they often (though admittedly not always) act as a socially conservative force.

5. In times of crisis, especially at the beginning and in the midst of war, the clergy enjoy, at least momentarily, enhanced status since it is they who validate the justness and morality of the conflict as well as valorize the deaths of combatants on the battlefield and comfort their bereaved at home.

Illustrations

Perhaps no American better understood the danger posed by privileged clergy to the state than Thomas Jefferson. In 1814 he wrote the following to Horatio G. Spafford: "In every country and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own."[24]

While Jefferson was no doubt referring to the long history of a generally mutually supportive, if not corrupting, relationship between Christian clergy and European monarchs and royalty, he was clearly prescient if we examine the relationship in the modern era between both Protestant and Catholic Church leaders and one of the greatest despots of all time, Adolf Hitler.

On the one hand it is true that there were men like Pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer who, albeit relatively late in the day, did actively oppose Hitler's demonic savagery. Yet he was only one of a handful of Lutheran clergyman who acted similarly. This is made clear in the following words of Martin Niemöller who, though he would later oppose Hitler, honestly admitted the role of Church leaders like himself in bringing Hitler to power in the first place:

Hitler promised us [in 1931] financial support, control of the schools, and real collaboration on the part of the State if he should attain power. He promised to restore all the churches' rights, which we could not hope to attain under the Weimar Republic. We were all very favorably impressed with his talk and with his apparent modesty, and I know that from that day on … *Hitler had the full support of the Protestant Church in Germany.*[25] [Emphasis mine]

And what of Catholic Church leaders? Were they any different? The answer to this question can be found in the Church's relationship with the world's first fascist, Benito Mussolini, for in 1929 the Catholic Church signed a pact with his government known as the Lateran Agreements. In celebrating this event, the Catholic press wrote: "Italy has been given back to God and God to Italy." The Vatican itself organized a large tribute to Mussolini, describing him as the "Man whom Providence has sent us."[26]

Given this background, it is not surprising that the Vatican would move to establish a similar relationship with the Nazi regime even though, early on, there had been tension between them. This agreement, known as the Concordat, was signed on July 8, 1933, in Rome and represented an official guarantee to the church in the form of an international treaty that the church would gain everything it had long fought for, that is freedom for Catholic organizations, maintenance of denominational schools, and preservation of the general influence of the Church on the education of German youth.

And what did Hitler's Reich get in return? According to a report written by OSS Director William Donovan at the time of the postwar Nuremburg War Crimes Trials, reciprocation consisted of "a pledge of loyalty by the clergy to the Reich government and in a promise that Catholic religious instruction would emphasize the patriotic duties of the Christian citizen and insist on a loyal attitude toward the Fatherland."[27]

There will, no doubt, be those who will defend both Italian and German Church leaders with the claim that in order to preserve the faith they had no choice but to cooperate if not collaborate with the all-powerful, all-pervasive fascist regimes of their respective countries. Yet, did such cooperation require that, upon the celebration of the birth of the "Prince of Peace" in December 1942, the Catholic Church's Office of Military Affairs provide the following "model sermon" for its approximately 10,000 military chaplains in Hitler's military?

God gave the German people a noble mission in this war—reordering Europe. This reconstruction should be done in the name of Christ. Bolshevism means a Europe without God, and without and against Christ. The front of young nations led by Germany wants a Europe with God, with Christ. … So we celebrate the birth of Christ very purposely. Christianity is after all not just a workshop for the highest spiritual culture but also a construction site for national greatness and power.[28]

Further, Pope Pius XII himself issued the following statement on July 30, 1941: "Hitler's war is a noble enterprise in the defense of European culture."[29]

As much as we should acknowledge and celebrate the handful of Protestant and Catholic clergy who actively opposed Hitler's reign, the anecdotal evidence suggests (even though not proving it definitively), that there were many more Church leaders who, as Thomas Jefferson noted, were indeed "in alliance with the despot," while "abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own."

Of course, it can cogently be argued that self-love/self-preservation is a truly universal human trait—and of course it is. Further, this self-love can apply to the organization of which one is a part, not simply one's person. However, a major difference is that most ordinary folks don't attempt to present themselves and the religious organizations of which they are a part as exemplars of moral rectitude, let alone possessors of "the whole truth and nothing but the truth."

In viewing the hierarchical seating arrangement on the aircraft called religion, one cannot help but recall the passage in Luke 4:23 in which Jesus states: "Physician, heal thyself."

Destination = Salvation (Eschatological)

Needless to say, every aircraft has a destination even if, on occasion, it never reaches its intended goal. So just where is the aircraft called religion heading?

1. Passengers on the aircraft called religion believe their destination is some form of individual salvation, however defined.
2. In general, however, this salvation is reserved for believers only. Non-believers may

not only be excluded from salvation but also doomed to some form of hell or other punishment.

3. The strange thing about this aircraft is that by its nature the passengers, clergy and non-clergy alike, are likely to die before the aircraft reaches its final destination (should it have one).

4. Thus, there is a continual need for the onboard clergy to valorize the deaths of the individual passengers even though they have served as the aircraft's "bombardier" or "tail-gunner," allegedly in defense of the aircraft.

5. While in theory the taking of another human life might run counter to the tenets of their faith, in practice it never does (given its defensive nature) and death in mid-air battle becomes if not holy then at least deserving of eternal salvation.

Illustrations

In the United States it is almost given that the President will hold some sort of prayer meeting or breakfast with leading clergy prior to initiating armed conflict. While such events are typically promoted as opportunities to seek God's guidance, their true purpose is to secure religious support, if not endorsement, for the impending war. That is to say, by inevitably describing the military effort as a struggle between good and evil, the President seeks to demonstrate that he is about to launch a just war. One can only imagine what might happen if a leading cleric like Billy Graham were to emerge from such a meeting to announce that God had informed him America should not commence hostilities!

Yet, something nearly as dramatic actually happened at the beginning of the U.S. invasion of Iraq in March 2003. Namely, the Catholic Church refused to endorse America's full-scale invasion as a just war. To the best of my knowledge, this is the first and only time the Roman Catholic Church has withheld its blessing, at least of U.S. war efforts. In an interview with the Vatican-affiliated Zenit News Agency on May 2, 2003, then Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, head of the Vatican Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, restated the position of Pope John Paul II on the Iraq War including the question of just war:

There were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq. To say nothing of the fact that, given the new weapons that make possible destructions that go beyond the combatant groups, today we should be asking ourselves if it is still licit to admit the very existence of a 'just war.'[30]

This incident clearly reveals just how hollow the doctrine of just war is in practice. Why? Because according to just war doctrine, a war, any war, must, by definition, be unjust if it is not deemed just. Thus if "there were not sufficient reasons to unleash a war against Iraq," it cannot be a just war. But did Pope John Paul take the next logical step and formally declare it to be an *unjust* war? No, he did not.

Let us imagine for a moment what would have happened had he done so. First, he would have issued a papal encyclical to be read in every Catholic Church in the world. It would have not only declared the U.S. invasion of Iraq to be unjust but any Catholic believer who participated in this war would no longer be in communion with the church, that is they would be excommunicated. Together with shattering the notion of "For God and Country," one can easily imagine that the Catholic Church, most especially in the United States, would have split apart, perhaps irretrievably. But, of course, that never happened. On the contrary, as the following news article reveals, Catholic military chaplains, like their Protestant counterparts, continued to minister to the troops in the field:

As American troops cope with life—and death—on a faraway battlefield, military chaplains cope with them, offering prayers, comfort and spiritual advice to *keep the American military machine running*. ... Chaplains help grease the wheels of any soldier's troubled conscience by arguing that *killing combatants is justified*.

Capt. Warren Haggray, a 48-year-old Baptist Army chaplain said: "I teach them *from the scripture*, and in the scripture I can see many times where men were told … to go out and defeat the enemy. This is real stuff. You're out there and you gotta eliminate that guy, because if you don't, he's gonna eliminate you."

"I agree," said Lt. Cmdr. Paul Shaughnessy, a Navy chaplain and Roman Catholic priest from Worcester, Mass.[31] [Emphasis mine]

In Capt. Haggray's remarks we see once again the influence of the Old Testament/Hebrew Bible with its strong emphasis on a God who both instigates war and authors the directive found in Exodus 21:23-27: "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth." What better teachings than these if one wishes to "grease the wheels of any soldier's troubled conscience."

However, even the Old Testament does contain a teaching that, at first glance, appears to preclude warfare, namely the Sixth Commandment: "Thou shalt not kill." Yet, in responding to a query about the meaning of this Commandment, Protestant Air Force Chaplain Major Gary Perry demonstrates that this dictum does not in fact pose any limitation on killing the "bad guys": I interpret killing as a willful taking of life for personal gain, or because of hate or convenience. I view the military as an institution that when going to war, *takes life to save people*. … I believe *it is sometimes necessary to kill in order to preserve life*. Of course, I would always encourage actions short of that.[32]

Once again we see how concern for the wellbeing of others is used to justify killing "in order to preserve life." What is particularly striking is how closely Major Perry's thinking parallels Buddhist-inspired terrorists in 1930's Japan who justified their assassinations of political and financial leaders as an expression of a "mind of great compassion," claiming that they were "killing one in order that many may live."[33] Nor should it be forgotten that Sura 2:191-92 of the Qur'an states that although "God is forgiving and merciful," Muslims should nevertheless "fight in the cause of Allah those who fight you … and slay [unbelievers] wherever you find them."

Today we take the presence of "wheel-greasing" chaplains in the U.S. military as a given. Historically, however, this was not always so. There was a time in the early centuries of the Christian era when Christians were fed to the lions not simply because they were Christians (as is popularly supposed) but because, among other things, their faith led them to refuse military service in the Roman legions. What changed?

What changed was Emperor Constantine's embrace of an all-powerful, victory-granting Christian God at the Battle of Mulvian Bridge outside Rome on October 28, 312 C.E. This battle marked the turning point in Rome's persecution of the early Christian community, an event leading to Christianity becoming, for the first time, a state religion. Constantine, however, would extract a price for his magnanimity, namely, Christian laymen had to agree to serve in the military. On the other hand, Christian clergy would be exempt from military service though with the stipulation that they must pray for victory in battle. In other words, while as holy men they were to remain unarmed, the clergy nevertheless contributed one of the most potent psychological weapons of all to the preservation of soldierly morale—the ability to confer God's blessing (and protection) on their actions. Out of this Faustian compromise the military chaplaincy was born.

Clearly, military chaplains are far from the only clergy to valorize death on the battlefield. As we saw above with reference to Sgt. Garmback, civilian clergy are ever ready to assure the bereaved families that their fallen son or daughter "is safe at home, at last, at peace."

Eternal salvation is indeed the unquestioned destination and reward for all military passengers on the aircraft called religion.

Airline Owners = The Rich and Powerful (Economic)

While no single carrier, for example United or Delta, or individual can be said to be the owner of the aircraft called religion, this does not mean that there are no owners. Rather, ownership is shared among a select group – the rich and powerful.

1. While lay passengers on the aircraft called religion believe themselves to be in the hands of their "pilot clergy," the passengers fly only on the routes and to the destinations determined by the aircraft's owners, that is, the rich and powerful in society.
2. Failing to understand this, lay passengers are readily convinced that by following the calls of their clergy pilots to "fight evil and injustice," they are defending their faith, not to mention their tribe or country. In reality, however, they promote the economic interests of the aircraft's owners and their close allies in the political sector.
3. Should clergy pilots stray off the assigned path or inform their passengers of the truth, the aircraft owners will, through withdrawal of financial support, effectively censure or expel them from the aircraft. This threat also serves as a powerful brake on radical critiques of society's ills.
4. The mutual interdependence between top clergy and the rich and powerful appears to function as a well-oiled, if not harmonious, machine. The only problem is that the cost of this harmony is the death of millions in the name of holy war and its variations.

Illustrations

The reader will recall the earlier words of Thomas Jefferson who wrote, "In every country

and in every age, the priest has been hostile to liberty. He is always in alliance with the despot, *abetting his abuses in return for protection to his own*" [Emphasis mine]. If this quotation aids in understanding what's in it for those clerics who collaborate with despots, the question must also be asked what's in it for the despot (the rich and powerful in this case) who gives material support to the clerics? Since by definition the rich have power, or at least access to it, why do they even bother sharing a portion of their wealth with clerics and their affiliated institutions?

One reason already noted is that, even today, clergy are believed to enjoy a special relationship with the deity or deities. Not unlike shamans in tribal societies, or prophets in the Old Testament, clergy are thought to have special entrée to the Almighty, thereby helping to ensure that the deity will grant blessings to the faithful and their nations, most especially in time of war when victory is paramount. Even if this were not objectively true, the fact that those engaged in the war believe it to be true is a powerful force in and of itself. Emperor Constantine certainly recognized this, as did Napoleon who famously said, "In war, the moral is to the material as three is to one."[34] What military leader, then or now, would not want to tap into this moral power, a form of "force multiplier," that is nearly free for the taking?

Napoleon, however, had more to say, for he recognized two critically important roles that religion played in the service of the rich and powerful. First, "religion is excellent stuff for keeping common people quiet," and second, "religion is what keeps the poor from murdering the rich."[35] Taken together it is clear Napoleon recognized that religion also has the power to make humans accept their lot in life no matter how miserable they may be or how unjust the social and economic system they live under is. There is, after all, paradise (with or without virgins) and eternal life to look forward to.

Some readers will see in Napoleon's words nothing about the true nature of religion but merely the crassly opportunistic viewpoint of a megalomaniacal dictator who sought to twist anything and everything to his grandiose plans for empire. Yet, if this were true, how does one explain the words of yet another great eighteenth-century, military-political leader, George Washington? At his presidential inauguration in New York City's St. Paul's Anglican Chapel in 1789, Washington offered the following prayer: "Almighty God, we make our earnest prayer that thou will keep the United States of America in thy Holy Protection, that thou wilt incline the hearts of the citizens to cultivate a spirit of

subordination and *obedience* to the government."[36] [Emphasis mine] In calling on God in this way, isn't Washington also looking to religion to "keep the common people quiet"? And, coincidentally or not, St. Paul's Anglican Chapel is today located just around the corner from "Ground Zero."

Each religion, of course, has different mechanisms for supporting and reinforcing the status quo. Protestant Christianity, for example, has traditionally viewed social and economic inequality and other misfortunes as manifestations of God's will and/or predestination, both of which are beyond human questioning and understanding. For its part, Hinduism has used caste-affiliation at birth as justification for lifelong discrimination, while in the case of Buddhism, the doctrine of karma justifies not only social and economic inequality but death on the battlefield. For example, in 1941 the Japanese Pure Land scholar-priest Entai Tomomatsu wrote:

Your husband died because of his karma. … It was the inevitability of karma that caused your husband's death. In other words, your husband was only meant to live for as long as he did. In those bereaved that have recovered their composure, one sees the realization that their husband's death was due to the consistent working of karma. No one is to blame [for his death] nor is anyone in the wrong. No one bears responsibility for what happened, for it was simply his karma to die.[37]

The rich and powerful, through their political representatives, typically send the youth of their nation off to war under the guise of defending the "national interest." In reality, however, it is more often than not *their own economic interests* at home and abroad that are endangered. Thus, it is hardly surprising that economic and political leaders welcome *and support* a religion whose doctrine states "no one is to blame."

One of the great ironies in their (mis)use of religion is that it is not at all unusual to find that behind the scenes, and despite their lip service to the contrary, the often morally corrupt rich and powerful despise the clergy and their institutions for their fawning attitude toward them (if not the challenge they present, at least in theory, to their self-indulgent lifestyles). For example, to his confidents, Hitler revealed his true attitude toward both Catholics and Protestants. About Protestants, Hitler said:

The Protestants haven't the faintest conception of a church. You can do anything you like to

them—they will submit. They're used to cares and worries. They learnt them from their squires. The parsons, when they were invited to the Sunday roast goose, had their place at the foot of the table, amongst the children and tutors. It was even an honor that they were not asked to sit at the servants' table. They are insignificant little people, submissive as dogs, and they sweat with embarrassment when you talk to them. They have neither a religion that they can take seriously nor a great position to defend like Rome.[38]

As for Catholics, Hitler claimed:

I am a Catholic. Certainly that was fated from the beginning, for only a Catholic knows the weaknesses of the Church. … If I wished to, I could destroy the Church in a few years; it is hollow and rotten and false through and through. One push and the whole structure would collapse. We should trap the priests by their notorious greed and self-indulgence. We shall thus be able to settle everything with them in perfect peace and harmony. I shall give them a few years' reprieve. Why should we quarrel? They will swallow anything in order to keep their material advantages. ... They are no fools. The Church was something really big. Now we're its heirs. We, too, are a Church. Its day has gone. It will not fight.[39]

As today's incarnation of everything "evil," it would be easy to summarily dismiss Hitler's description of both (German) Protestant and Catholic Churches. However, when the wartime words and actions of these two institutions are examined, it becomes clear that there is more than a grain of truth in Hitler's description.

One of the greatest siren songs for religious leaders favored by the rich and powerful is the opportunity such leaders appear to have to influence political affairs in accordance with the tenets of their faith. In return, *all* the religious leaders have to do is vouchsafe the morality of government policies, especially in times of war, and valorize the unjust economic system on which these policies are typically based. True, there have been authentic religious heroes like Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who refused to be co-opted, but he paid a high price for his steadfastness—death. And in the context of this article, it should be noted that Dr. King was, at least initially, a black man leading a movement for *racial* equality for black people. As praiseworthy and just as his struggle was, it was not unrelated to a tribal mentality.

Be that as it may, how many clerics are prepared to pay the same price for social and economic justice as Dr. King? And in the meantime, how many common folk must die because large numbers of the world's religious leaders delude themselves into believing

they haven't been co-opted, even as they enjoy the material comforts of their calling, that is, the crumbs at the table of their benefactors?

Manufacturer = Evolution (Biological)

Finally, just who or what was it that created the aircraft called religion? While this article takes no position on first causes, it is nevertheless true that once the biological process began on planet earth, the evolutionary process that accompanied it has had momentous impact on the nature of the "aircraft" born out of it. The chief characteristics of this process are:

1. Although evolution does not address first causes, it does suggest that groups, like individuals, may change and adapt over the ages to better ensure their ongoing existence.
2. If, as scholars of evolution like David Wilson claim, religion is a product of group adaptation, then the emergence of tribal religions and their successors, universal religions, must play some role in successful group adaptation.
3. Historically, it is clear that such values as group loyalty, cohesion and altruism have been fostered by religion in ever-expanding groupings.
4. Holy War may therefore be seen as altruistic action designed to: a) destroy outer threats to the group, while b) valorizing death as the ultimate act of sacrifice on behalf of the larger group.
5. The key question then becomes, Can biological evolution help move us to the point where one's "group" expands still further to include the collective welfare of all human beings and living things?

Illustrations

Viewed from an evolutionary viewpoint, one, if not the greatest, contribution of universal religions has been their ability to enable the community of believers to successfully adapt to the real world. While the same thing could once be said of tribal religions, the major and fundamental difference is that universal religions opened, in theory if not always in practice, the community of believers to participation from any tribal, racial or ethnic group, though

always at a price, that is converts were expected to change their lives in accordance with the tenets of their new faith and conform to the norms of their adopted community.

For example, as David Wilson described in *Darwin's Cathedral*, prior to the advent of the Protestant Reformation, the city-state of Geneva was torn apart by internal discord among its disparate inhabitants. However, when city leaders adopted Calvinism, a new sense of unity and purpose was acquired with the result that "the city assumed an importance in world affairs out of all proportion to its economic significance."[40] John McNeill explained how this was accomplished:

Notwithstanding the repressive discipline, harsh laws, and paternalistic controls, the positive and constructive elements of Calvin's system were becoming more and more effective. The people of Geneva listened to preaching several times weekly. A new generation was arising, trained in Calvin's Sunday school, instructed by his sermons, able to recite his catechism, to sing the Psalter, and to read the Bible with understanding. Possibly no community had ever before existed so well indoctrinated and broken to discipline.[41]

This was not, of course, the first time Christianity had played a unifying role in Europe. Christianity had contributed, as the name suggests, to the creation of the Holy Roman Empire (CE 800-1806), generally recognized as a relatively well-balanced mechanism for uniting a multitude of contending European states. Yet, this empire also marked the appearance of a series of Christian Crusades to the Holy Land and within Europe itself (against allegedly heretical forms of Christianity) that lasted from the eleventh through the thirteenth century. According to the Catholic Church, the Crusades also contributed to the further unification of not only Europe but of the world itself. *The [Old] Catholic Encyclopedia* states:

Notwithstanding their final overthrow, the Crusades hold a very important place in the history of the world. Essentially the work of the popes, these Holy Wars first of all helped to strengthen pontifical authority; they afforded the popes an opportunity to interfere in the war between Christian princes, while the temporal and spiritual privileges which they conferred upon crusaders virtually made the latter their subjects. … It was *the spirit of the true crusader that animated Christopher Columbus* when he undertook his perilous voyage to the then unknown Americas, and Vasco de Gama when he set out in quest of India. If, indeed, the *Christian civilization of Europe has become universal culture*, in the highest

sense, the glory redounds, in no small measure, to the Crusades.[42]

Readers well acquainted with the modern history of the Catholic Church will no doubt take exception to the above portrayal of the Church's understanding of the Crusades. For the preceding reference is indeed outdated, in that it was contained in a Church-approved publication issued between 1907-14. Today, thanks to a reconsideration of the historical relationship between Christians and Muslims set in motion by the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), the church has undergone a major change in its outlook. Paul Johnson, an English Catholic Church historian, now describes the Crusades as follows:

The crusades were not missionary ventures but wars of conquest and primitive experiments in colonization; and the only specific Christian institutions they produced, the three knightly orders, were military. … A crusade was in essence nothing more than a mob of armed and fanatical Christians. Once its numbers rose to over 10,000 it could no longer be controlled, only guided. It might be used to attack Moslems, or unleashed against Jews, or heretics. … The fall of Jerusalem [in 1097] was followed by a prolonged and hideous massacre of Moslems and Jews, men, women and children. …

In general, the effect of the crusades was to undermine the intellectual content of Islam, to destroy the chances of peaceful adjustment to Christianity, and to make the Moslems far less tolerant: *crusading fossilized Islam into a fanatic posture*.[43] [Emphasis mine]

The typical response in the West, especially in the United States, to the Crusades is to regard them as ancient history. "Why do Muslims keep harping about things that happened hundreds of years ago?" is an oft-heard refrain. When, in Iraq or Afghanistan, Muslim "extremists" refer to U.S. and Western allied soldiers as "crusaders," this is seen as yet further proof of their fanaticism, grasping at straws to justify their barbaric acts of terrorism.

While there is no doubt an element of truth in this attitude, religious scholar Karen Armstrong points out:

The wars in the Middle East today are becoming more like the Crusades. … They are "holy" war because they are fought on issues that are felt to be sacred by all three participants [the West, Israel, and Arabs], and they could be seen as *the last round* in a long and bitter process that began when the European Crusaders attacked Muslims and Jews at a period when the West was *finding its soul*.[44] [Emphasis mine]

If Armstrong is correct, the first question that must be asked is what has been the cost of Western "soul-finding" in terms of the innocent blood that was shed to accomplish it? Further, what guarantee is there, if any, that the current conflicts occurring in the Middle East are indeed the *last* round?

For some, the most attractive aspect of evolution is its scientific nature, for it suggests the inevitable development of lower life forms to higher, thereby allowing observers to relax and let nature take its course. Thus, inasmuch as tribal religion was limited in its scope and worldview, the advent of universal religions, by definition, seems to be a giant step in the right direction. If allegedly universal religions are, nevertheless, still heavily tribal in nature, can anyone doubt that the next evolutionary step in the process of successful adaptation will be for universal religions to truly live up to their *universality*?

In fact, evolutionary records indicate that numerous species have not evolved, at least not successfully, and therefore became extinct along the way. The impact of meteors, volcanic eruptions, changes in climate, and so on, have had far-reaching, sometimes catastrophic, consequences on biological organisms, humans included. Viewed in this light, there is no objective evidence to suggest that the evolutionary process really cares, let alone guarantees, that any of the multitudes of species it has produced will evolve successfully or continue to exist thousands, let alone tens of thousands, of years from now.

If indeed the evolutionary process is the manufacturer of the aircraft called religion, it must be identified, at least from a human perspective, as amoral in nature, that is, adapt and survive or fail to adapt and perish. Yet if this appears as a bleak prospect for the human species, it does not in any way prevent humans and the religions they embrace from genuinely embracing and acting in accordance with the universal values their respective religions claim to represent.

At this moment, we find ourselves staring into the abyss of a "clash of civilizations," endless "wars on terrorism," and the ongoing possibility of nuclear conflagration. It is no exaggeration to say that the collective conscious decision, most especially by the faithful of all religions, to take the next step in the evolutionary process may well be 'make or break' time for the human species. Failure to make this adaptation may lead, in another 65 million years or so, to the successors of homo sapiens (should there be any) displaying our bones next to those of dinosaurs and other extinct species in their museums of "natural science."

The decision is in our hands, for we are the first species that has the ability (should we chose to exercise it) to consciously direct the evolutionary process to a successful, not to mention humane, outcome.

Conclusion

In summary, the key universal characteristics of holy war are:

1. The individual, tribe, nation is able to access an unseen power or deity that exercises supernatural power to ensure victory for its followers, and, by definition, is more powerful than any other (false) deity or deities.
2. Soldiers are regarded as "instruments" of that deity or power, facilitating, if not requiring, "selfless" acts of courage. Since their acts are in accord with the deity's will, combatants are freed from taking personal responsibility for their acts.
3. Military acts are sacred, just, moral, and compassionate, no matter how horrific or self-serving they may be (both for oneself, one's nation, and the enemy); for such acts are seen as part of a holy struggle against evil in accordance with transcendent goals and in the service of justice, peace, human redemption, civilization, if not human progress. Facts and fact-based logic no longer apply.
4. The result is a sense of moral certainty, if not moral superiority, in the combatants themselves and the nations they serve in that their religious faith removes doubts about the necessity of their destructive acts, thereby effectively serving as a "force multiplier," enhancing the fighting spirit and dedication of both combatants and their civilian supporters.
5. Should physical death occur on the battlefield, clergy valorize it as according with the deity's transcendental goals (even if, as is typically the case, those goals are claimed to transcend human understanding).
6. Further, physical death on the battlefield is seen as guaranteeing some form of eternal life or life beyond death for the slain, a just reward for their loyalty to the deity (and the country, people, or religion the deity favors).

In closing, let me once again reiterate that I have deliberately set out to portray the dark side of religion, fully prepared to acknowledge that there is an equally compelling bright side as well. Yet, it is not religion's bright side that contributes so significantly to the ongoing

carnage in our world, past, present (and future?). If you were to ask if the dark side can ever be eliminated, my honest answer is that I don't know. Nevertheless, I am fully convinced that unless and until those who believe in one or another of the universal religions are prepared to first recognize and then confront the dark side of their *own faith*, no substantial progress can be made in separating religion from sacralized violence.

There may be readers who imagine that the problem is far less difficult or complicated than described above, especially in a country like the United States. Inasmuch as one of the founding principles of this nation is the separation of church and state, why not just further strengthen the separation that already exists. For example, why not simply eliminate the role of chaplains in the U.S. military if indeed their role is to "grease the wheels of any soldier's troubled conscience." Unfortunately, such a proposal is unrealistic, most especially in the United States where religion plays such an important role in national life. As Jacob Neusner noted, "Because religion is comprehensive, it is fundamentally about power and therefore cannot avoid politics. Religion has the ability to ground the use of force in a cosmic and moral order; therefore, *religion constitutes the ultimate legitimation of any political system*."[45]

Given, at least for the foreseeable future, the inevitable involvement of religion in the political realm, the question to be addressed is the willingness of persons of goodwill to actively and resolutely *rectify* those aspects of their respective faiths that contribute to human suffering in its multiple forms. This willingness is most acute as it relates to the massive slaughter of humankind associated with modern warfare, but it extends to all forms of human oppression and injustice. In closing, I leave the last word to Rabbi David Gordis, president of the Hebrew College of Boston. He laid down the challenge that adherents of all the world's major religions must grapple with if their respective faiths are to reach their full potential, i.e. to become *truly universal* in nature:

More than ever before … independent religious communities and cultures must come to terms with the reality of the interdependence of all humanity. Prior to our identity as Jew, Christian or Muslim, prior to our identity as male or female, as Indian, British or American, is our fundamental human identity. Both the nobility and the tragedy of human experience are universal. They cross religious and national lines. This must be part of the religious insight and teaching of all religious traditions. Our very survival on this planet is dependent on our successfully navigating this [terrain].[46]

1. 1. Irving Babbitt, trans., *The Dhammapada* (New York: New Directions Books, 1936), 22.

2. 2. D.T. Suzuki, *Zen and Japanese Culture* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1970), 61.

3. 3. Inoue Enryō, *Enryō Kōwa-shū* (Tokyo: Kōmeisha, 1904), 299-302. Note that like other faiths, Buddhism has a long history of involvement with warfare. For an overview of this involvement, see Brian Victoria, Zen at War, 2nd edition (Boulder, CO: Rowman & Littlefield, 2006), 192-231.

4. 4. Quoted in Ichikawa Hakugen, *Nihon Fashizumu ka no Shūkyō* (Tokyo: Enuesu Shuppankai, 1975), 197.

5. 5. Hakugen, 295.

6. 6. Martin E. Marty, "An Exuberant Adventure: The Academic Study and Teaching of Religion," *Academe* 82:6 (1996): 14

7. 7. Hakugen, 197.

8. 8. Peter L. Berger, *The Social Reality of Religion* (Middlesex, England: Penguin University Books, 1973), 53.

9. 9. The use of the word "tribal" here is not intended as a pejorative, i.e. as a synonym for a society that is "primitive," "backward" or "uncivilized." Rather, the referent is to a social system where human society is divided into small, roughly independent subgroups, called tribes. Tribal societies lacked any organizational level beyond that of the local tribe and appear to be the first social system that human beings ever lived in, lasting much longer than any other kind of society to date.

   Closely connected, yet distinct from "tribal," is "tribalism," used in this article to refer to the possession of a strong cultural or ethnic identity that separates oneself as a member of one group from the members of another. This phenomenon is related to the concept of tribal society in that it is a precondition for members of a tribe to possess a strong feeling of identity for a true tribal society to form. The distinction between these two terms is important because, while tribal society no longer strictly exists in the western world, tribalism, as defined here, is arguably undiminished.

   Some scholars have postulated that the human brain is hard-wired towards tribalism due to its evolutionary advantages. Whether or not this is true, I argue that "tribalism" clearly lives on in and through the modern state or nation and, concurrently, in

allegedly universal religions as well. It should be noted, however, that in modern nations, tribalism is typically referred to as "nationalism." The difference between these two terms is that while ethnically chauvinistic nationalism does exist, modern nationalism also has the ability to join disparate ethnic and racial groups into a unified whole, albeit a whole that continues to act, especially when endangered by a perceived enemy, on the basis of tribalism, i.e. "us" versus "them."

10. 10. Inoue Enryō, *Enryō Kōwa-shū*, 299-302.

11. 11. A. Ezzati, "The Concept Of Martyrdom," Tehran University, Al-Serat, Vol XII (1986), at http://www.al-islam.org/al-serat/Concept-Ezzati.htm#n12 (accessed 11 June 2007).

12. 12. Quote in Mark Mason, *The Christian Holocaust* (Hong Kong: Markwell Press, 1981), 348-49.

13. 13. *The Cleveland Plain Dealer*, 17 July 2004.

14. 14. Richard Koenigsberg in a keynote address entitled "If One Aspires to Achieve Peace One Needs to Know Why People Love War" presented on 2 February 2007 at the Annual Conference of the United World College of the American West.

15. 15. F. N. Martin, "The Evolution of a Myth--The Easter Rising, Dublin 1916," in *Nationalism: The Nature and Evolution of an Idea*, ed. E. Kamenka (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1973), 75.

16. 16. United Press International, Kufa, Iraq, April 23, 2004.

17. 17. *New York Times*, 29 August 2004, p. 8.

18. 18. Quoted in William E. Phipps, *Mark Twain's Religion* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, December 2003), 208.

19. 19. Quoted in the *Congressional Record* (56th Cong., 1st Session) Vol. XXXIII, pp. 705-711.

20. 20. Gerald L. Smith, "God and the Land" at http://smith2.sewanee.edu/texts/Ecology/GodAndTheLand.html (accessed 17 June 2007).

21. 21. Quoted in Frederic Harrison, "Cromwell's Campaign in Ireland 1649" at http://history-world.org/cromwell.htm (accessed 17 June 2007).

22. 22. A slightly freer translation of this passage is available on the Web at http://www.augustana.edu/Religion/LutherProject/TemporalAuthority/ Temporalauthority.HTM (chapter 3).

23. 23. *Ha'aretz*, 12 April 2001.

24. 24. Quoted in Jim Walker, "Thomas Jefferson on Christianity and Religion" at
http://www.nobeliefs.com/jefferson.htm (accessed 17 June 2007). Note that if
Jefferson can be said to have been ahead of his time in this instance he was
nevertheless very much a man of his time when it came to the question of resolving
the question of dealing with Native Americans. As governor of Virginia in 1780 he
wrote: "If we are to wage a campaign against these Indians the end proposed should
be their extermination, or their removal beyond the lakes of the Illinois River. The
same world would scarcely do for them and us. ... I shall need the favor of that Being
in whose hands we are, who led our fathers, as Israel of old, from their native land
and planted them in a country flowing with all of the necessities and comforts of life."
[Emphasis mine] Quoted in part in "Fun 4th of July Facts" at
http://www.bluecorncomics.com/july4th.htm (accessed 18 June 2007).

25. 25. Quoted in Leo Stein, *Hitler Came for Niemoeller* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican,
2003), 78-79.

26. 26. Quoted in John Pollard, *The Vatican and Italian Fascism* (Cambridge: Cambridge
University Press, 2005), 50.

27. 27. William Donovan, "Official Report of the Nazi War on Religion," at
http://www.lawandreligion.com/publications/nazimasterplan01.pdf (accessed on 17
June 2007), 16.

28. 28. Quoted in Heinrich Missalla, *Für Gott, Führer und Vaterland* (München: Kösel-
Verlag, 1999), 51.

29. 29. Quote in Mark Mason, *The Christian Holocaust*, 350.

30. 30. Quoted in "Cardinal Ratzinger on the Abridged Version of Catechism" at
http://www.zenit.org/article-7161?l=english (accessed on 19 June 2007).

31. 31. Associated Press, Najaf, Iraq, 29 August 2004.

32. 32. Quoted in Fuji Flyer, April 1998, Yokota AFB; Tokyo, Japan.

33. 33. Quoted in Brian Victoria, *Zen War Stories* (London: RoutledgeCurzon, 2003),
213. For further information on this terrorist incident, see pages 207-18.

34. 34. Quoted in Brian Rees, "Terrorism, Retaliation, and Victory" at
http://www2.xlibris.com/bookstore/book_excerpt.asp?bookid=17265 (accessed 23
June 2007).

35. 35. Quoted in DB at http://www.quotedb.com/authors/napoleon-bonaparte (accessed

22 June 2007).

36. <u>36.</u> This prayer is posted for visitors outside of George Washington's pew in St. Paul's Anglican Chapel, located on Broadway in New York City.

37. <u>37.</u> Quoted in Brian Victoria, *Zen War Stories*, 159.

38. <u>38.</u> Quoted in Herman Rauschning, *Voice of Destruction* (Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican, 2003), 246.

39. <u>39.</u> Rauschning, 245.

40. <u>40.</u> David Wilson, *Darwin's Cathedral* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 123.

41. <u>41.</u> John T. McNeill, *The History and Character of Calvinism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1954), 190.

42. <u>42.</u> *(Old) Catholic Encyclopedia* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1907-14) at http://en.wikisource.org/wiki/Catholic_Encyclopedia_%281913%29/Crusades.

43. <u>43.</u> Paul Johnson, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Atheneum, 1979), 241-49.

44. <u>44.</u> Karen Armstrong, *Holy War; Crusades and Their Impact on Today's World* (New York: Anchor, 2001), 530.

45. <u>45.</u> William Scott Green, "Religion and Politics: A Volatile Mix" in Jacob Neusner, ed., *God's Rule: The Politics of World Religions* (Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2003), 2.

46. <u>46.</u> David Gordis, "The Essence of Pluralism," at http://wisdomofreligion.blogspot.com/2007/02/religious-dialogue-basics.html (accessed on 16 June 2007).