



Sacred Heart  
UNIVERSITY

Sacred Heart University  
DigitalCommons@SHU

---

SHU Faculty Publications

---

2000

# The Problem of Religion, Violence, and Peace: An Uneasy Trilogy

David L. Coppola  
*Sacred Heart University*

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.sacredheart.edu/faculty>

 Part of the [Christian Denominations and Sects Commons](#), [Ethics in Religion Commons](#), and the [Islamic Studies Commons](#)

---

## Recommended Citation

Coppola, D.L. (2000). The problem of religion, violence, and peace: An uneasy trilogy. In J.H. Ehrenkranz and D.L. Coppola (Eds.). *Religion and violence, religion and peace: Essays from the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding Conference in Auschwitz, Poland, May 1998* (pp. 15-44). Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press.

This Book Chapter is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@SHU. It has been accepted for inclusion in SHU Faculty Publications by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@SHU. For more information, please contact [ferribyp@sacredheart.edu](mailto:ferribyp@sacredheart.edu).

DAVID L. COPPOLA

---

## The Problem of Religion, Violence, and Peace: An Uneasy Trilogy

There is a season for everything, a time for  
every occupation under heaven:

A time for giving birth, a time for dying;

A time for planting, a time for uprooting  
what was planted.

A time for killing, a time for healing;

A time for tearing down, a time for building  
up. . . .

A time for war, a time for peace.

(Ecclesiastes 3)

**H**uman beings have the power to do good or evil, to build up or tear down, to act peacefully or violently, to respect or oppress others. Drawing primarily on Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts, as well as on philosophical and sociological concepts, I will examine religion and its relationship to violence from three distinct, but related perspectives; namely, that 1) religion is directly linked with violence; 2) religion functions as one among many factors that influence violence; and 3) religions are unwilling participants in the practice of violence. This essay begins by setting a context for the study of religion, violence, and peace, followed by a presentation of the three perspectives mentioned above, concluding with possibilities for the study and practice of future peace-making.

## Overview

Human activity has smudged the glass of God's creation with violence. Wars continue to plague humanity. Military dictatorships, economic oppression, and cultural clashes have left our neighborhoods wounded by mob violence, murder, rape, theft, vandalism, and child abuse. The environment is seriously damaged by pollution and the irresponsible consumption of the earth's resources, and the unrestrained actions by industry, science, and technology have resulted in the extinction of innumerable species and threaten the survival of the human species in a nuclear conflagration.

Further, a culture of violence is manifesting itself increasingly in movies, sports, schools, relationships, on the highways, and in international conflicts. People turn on the television and cannot help but invite some form of violence into their living rooms. When people choose to view or sponsor violent shows or events, they open the doors of their hearts and homes to a culture of violence. The result: many people, young and old, when confronted with a challenge or obstacle, act out their frustrations through violent means.

The challenge in the next millennium is what the Catholic bishops of the United States championed in their pastoral letter aptly called *The Challenge of Peace*. This challenge can only be met with the power of wisdom, virtue, and mutual respect, as well as a commitment to understanding, dialogue, and compassion. Peace for the future will be adequately advanced only if religion is part of the process. It is religion that can reach into the depths of human struggles and the heights of human accomplishments to offer a balm to a wounded world.

Neither peace nor violence is a neutral enterprise. Both occur when people choose to build up or tear down. Peace is a promise of God but still involves human choice. Peace is a complex reality that requires the intergenerational and interreligious participation of individuals, institutions, and societies to seek the common good, based on justice and the dignity of the human person as a son or daughter of God. Peace is not merely the absence of war or the forced maintenance of a precarious balance of forces

between enemies: peace is the choice by people of good will to cultivate a just society.

When a society is at peace, individuals have the potential to benefit from all the elements that promote a happy and fulfilled life: security, trust, freedom, justice, respect, tolerance, art, music, dance, drama, culture, meaningful work, leisure, cooperation, healthy relationships, covenantal living, law, and love. Most important, peace is the best condition for educating others about the values that demonstrate respect for human dignity, promote social solidarity, and allow for free moral choices to be made by individuals, families, communities, and societies. When violence unleashes the dogs of death, persons have little or no opportunity for choice or morality. Peace allows for a clarity, a clear vision of the common good, and is not obscured by anger, desire, or greed. Peace is founded upon God's love and becomes the fruit of love when people strive to achieve harmony and justice.

On the other hand, violence is not merely the natural state of entropy to be expected in the universe. A conventional definition describes violence as "physical force resulting in injury or destruction of property or persons in violation of general moral belief or civil law" (Edwards, 3). Violence is the worst expression of humanity's freedom of choice and is frequently the action of desperate, fearful, angry, ignorant, jealous, greedy or power-hungry people and societies. Violence inflicts the wounds of resentment, terror, and prejudice which fester into bitterness, revenge, and death. "Violence is hubris, fury, madness. There are no such things as major and minor violence" (Ellul, 99). Those who inflict violence or death on others assume the power over life and death. As such, violence is a display of idolatry. When people choose to act violently, they fail to acknowledge the value of life and fail to reverence the creation of God.

The more familiar one becomes with violence, the less violent it seems. The philosopher Paul Dumouchel notes, "Just as violence reduces the individual opponents to mirror-images of each other, so it destroys the differences that normally distinguish justice from revenge, arbitrator from opponent, and finally friend from foe" (13). In short, violence functions like a mirror and peace like a window. The former reflects back on the person in idolatry, and

the latter opens out to a world waiting to be joined with others in the pursuits of justice and love.

### Religion in the Pursuit of Peace

Religion is the result when people of faith in God or the gods participate in a system or set of beliefs, attitudes, and practices in a sustained way. Once a religion is established or institutionalized, that religion functions as a vehicle for the believers to remember God's deeds and revelations in the past and God's continued relationship with the group in the future through prayer, ritual, story, and communal celebrations.

Faith in God is the essential element that draws people together in a religious community, and the understanding and interpretation of that faith directly influences the violent or peaceful commitments and expressions of that religion. It has been said that if one has the faith of a mustard seed, he or she could move mountains (Matthew 17:20). Unfortunately, some people tend to see faith as a powerful sword, rather than a seed. One could ask whether such a sword-bearing faith is indeed faith or force. Religious faith should bring people together in peace. Faith, then, is closer to a journey or a relationship than to a fierce, coercing power of conviction to be right. No one was ever told in the Christian scriptures, for example, "Be healed, your *absolutely* correct answers have saved you." Faith is more about trusting God and becoming like small children, and not about being an army.

The root meaning of religion is "to bind." Religion seeks the ties that bind people of faith together in a common pursuit of worship, justice, art, morality, and a celebration and communication of culture. The gathering of a community of faith is an event that occurs in history, not in meta-history or myth. When a religion joins people together, the weaknesses of one member can be augmented by the strengths of others. When people commit themselves and join together in the name of God, they frequently become enthusiastic about spreading their message and mission.

Religion is a force that can foster unity and love. In contrast, science and technology cannot encompass adequately the entire

truth of the beauty and mystery of human life. Ironically, the molecular structures at the foundation of scientific discovery and advancement, which are constantly changing and not visible to the naked eye, are perceived by many people to be more stable and reliable than religion. Religion is suspect because of its theological formulations based upon transcendent values and claims, as well as the erratic behaviors of some believers. The best expression of religious power binds and draws people together in social, legislative, and humanistic concerns, as well as charitable causes, respectful and scholarly sharing of spirituality and theology, and warm friendships. Admittedly, the past has been less than exemplary when religions have initiated, acquiesced to, or ignored the violence perpetrated in the name of God. Only integrity in relationships, demonstrated over time, can heal the misgivings and pain of the past. In this sense, religion is engaged in what the Jews call *tikkun olam*, the work of repairing the world, beginning with the world of religion.

When studying religion and violence, it would be unfair to compare the best examples of religion's ability to foster peace with the worst examples of society's failures at preserving peace and vice versa. The next section examines three ways that religion is directly linked with violence; namely, that a) religion has sought to experience transcendence with God by taking the life of humans or animals; b) religion may function as a dividing force between those who believe and those who do not believe; and c) religion appears to promote violence when some people affiliated with a religious group engage in or encourage such action.

### Religion Directly Linked with Violence

Saint Augustine once wrote that the human heart "is restless until it rests" in God (43). The cornerstone and stumbling block of religion is the human desire to communicate and to be in relationship with the divine. It is this restlessness and desire for divine communion that can lead human beings down the path of violence or peace. When humans are not able to trust and rest in God, then religion has functioned as a vehicle to manufacture the power of awe, fear, and transcendence through violence and death.

A feeling of unity and commonality is shared by the witnesses of violence who are drawn into the experience and mistakenly equate that counterfeit experience with an authentic encounter with God.

Among human experiences, there is probably nothing more powerful than blood and death to invoke awe. Perhaps a dead human body is the most primitive sacred object. Heschel said, "In the presence of death there is only silence, and a sense of awe" (1969, 533). Girard commented, "In the end, the tomb is the first and only cultural symbol" (1987, 83). The experience and explanation of death is a fundamental concern of all religions. Socrates asserted that the unexamined life was not worth living, but he was also condemned to death by the polis by a vote of 280 to 220. It is probably true that the way a society examines or does not examine death reveals much of what that society believes about the value of life.

Religion was the primary vehicle by which ancient tribal societies and cultures engaged in analysis, interpretation, and synthesis of significant events. Most religions portrayed creation and the workings of the cosmos by telling violent myths that evoked fear and mystification. Through awe-inspiring rituals, which frequently culminated in sacrificial bloodletting, violent encounters, or scapegoating, notions like "sacred violence" for the sake of prayer, protection, revenge, or retribution were woven into the fabric of primitive cultures. These choreographed rituals were laced with myths to heighten the participants' encounter with the beyond while dulling their senses to the fact that violence and killing were about to occur. Worshipers who became warriors offered preparatory sacrifices in order to galvanize their courage and focus their resolve. The violence was intoxicating and contagious and could run out of control, as was perhaps the case in the deaths of Aaron's two sons, Nadab and Abihu, in Leviticus 10:1-3 (Bailie).

Scholars explain the phenomenon of sacrifice with interpretations ranging from a gift offered by individuals or the community to establish communion with God, to a communal meal, to rites of passage until the victim was released into the divine reality (sacrificed), to atonement, expiation, or propitiation for offenses (Williams). Durkheim asserted that sacrifices

functioned as a way for believers both to commune with God and make an offering to God, whereby the ritual sacrifice served to reinforce the social order of the essential interdependence of the individual and society.

Girard (1979, 1986), on the other hand, viewed sacrifices not as expressions or metaphors of a theology or the social order, but as signs of the original violent actions taken against the scapegoated victims by the society. This original violence was then cloaked in the language of myth. Thus, the animal to be killed was portrayed in the ritual merely as an object or scapegoat, and the person to be sacrificed or the people to be attacked were reduced to "others," with their individual humanity obfuscated, while the attackers understood themselves to be participants in sacred violence. This human delusion continued the cycle of myth and violence, and served to conceal the original violent actions taken by the community against the victims.

The first recorded death in the Bible was not a sacrifice but rather, a murder—Cain slays his brother Abel (Genesis 4:8). God banishes Cain and marks him with the scar of his own violence—fratricide. It is significant to note that the mark of Cain is described in Genesis 4 as God's way of protecting him from being killed by others, not a brand of shame or death. This "protection" was apparently accomplished by intimidation, since anyone who saw Cain would know that he was from a clan that would exact blood for blood. Nevertheless, Cain's killing of his brother fills the earth with violence, a reality that became an unfortunate and repeated way of life and death for all humanity (Williams). "The earth was corrupt in God's sight, and the earth was filled with violence" (Genesis 6:11).

Although the murder of Abel highlights the competition between the shepherds and farmers which resulted in a kind of cultural and religious rivalry, the reader is told in Genesis 4 that God favored the animal sacrifices of Abel over the grain offerings of Cain. This is an important point because the writer of the Genesis account is convinced that blood sacrifices "work better" when seeking to command divine attention. The moving but near tragic story of Abraham and his son Isaac (Genesis 22) concludes with a slaughter of a ram caught in a bush as a burnt offering to



God. Child sacrifice is prevented, but sacrifice is still seen as an appropriate way to worship God.

The second way that religion is directly linked with violence is when it functions as a dividing force between believers and nonbelievers. It might seem obvious to many people that it is more important to love God than to spend most of the time defending all of the correct answers and perfect definitions of God to unbelievers. Such has not always been the case. Doctrines and dogmas draw lines in the sand, and defense of those formulas makes people dig battle lines wide and deep into the earth, separating people for centuries. Religions seek to teach the truth of God and how God has been revealed. The definition of truth, when presented in a dogmatic fashion and accompanied by forced adherence, sets up adversarial boundaries where the strong and powerful own, police, and enforce the truth in ways that lead to violence.

The experience of mystery and the interpretation of revelation occasionally lead people to take sides which contribute to the strengthening of other divisions along theological, philosophical, gender, class, ethnic, cultural, and geographical differences. Differences among people can be a source of inspiration and creativity, but social unity is frequently understood in terms of external control, uniformity or permanence, rather than stability, which would allow for an essential unity in diversity. When religion is overly concerned with uniformity, comparison, and competition, then envy and violence begin to seep into its soul. Unfortunately, human violence has been consistently directed toward those who are different or weak. For example, people with physical or mental disabilities or challenges were thought to bear the "mark" of divine violence and punishment. Thus, humans created God in their own image, making God a violent and vindictive force who was as unpredictable as the forces of nature.

On October 26, 1986, the World Day of Peace in Assisi, Italy, Pope John Paul II said, "Catholics have not always been peacemakers." This frank admission by a pope, which could have been spoken by the leaders of every religion about their own traditions, is the beginning of a process of honest self-reflection for the Catholic Church. Religious groups have frequently claimed

that God was on their side, which is much different from the claim to seek to be on God's side. Of course, it is debatable whether God has, makes, or takes sides at all. Nonetheless, the making of sides is a common practice that religion has been unable to escape.

To ask followers to sacrifice and transcend their individual desires to serve a common goal, such as fighting in a war, requires a rationale that appeals to the common good. Religious transcendence requires time, preparation, prayer, discernment, and communal dialogue. Religion seeks to understand the existential and transcendental meaning of life. The most expedient and common way to evoke a spontaneous response from followers is by inciting rage or enacting violence. For violence to be directed outward, there must be an object, an "other," which requires a person or group to be on the other's side. The making of sides, then, galvanizes commitment from followers who are asked to participate in violence against the others. Thus, during the First Crusade, Pope Urban II told the crusaders that God wanted them to enact violence because God was on their side in war. Perhaps similar words have been spoken when religious leaders have gathered at the White House to pray for the successful bombing of another country.

A third way that religion is directly linked with violence is when people affiliated with a religious group consciously engage in or encourage such action. Of course, the Jim Jones and Waco, Texas, incidents illustrate the fact that many people involved in violent actions are not directly associated with religion at all. However, "religious wars," crusades, inquisitions, *jihads*, assassinations of religious and political leaders, fundamentalist revolutions, ethnic cleansings, and the bombing of abortion clinics and government buildings are all examples of violence that have been rationalized in the name of religion by people who have considered themselves to be religious. These events become even more difficult to interpret when the perpetrators of violence selectively use direct quotations from their scriptures to justify their actions, or use symbols inappropriately, as in the case of the KKK burning a cross as a calling card for fear and terror, rather than peace and forgiveness (Douglas).

To further complicate the fact that religious people engage in violent actions, some do so consciously and in accordance with the dictates of their conscience. For example, in the 1960s, despite the criticism of Dorothy Day and several political and religious leaders, people affiliated with several religious groups destroyed private property, burned draft cards, destroyed Selective Service files, and poured blood on people in order to achieve the result of extricating United States troops from Vietnam. Compared to the stunning images on international television of destroyed villages, dead children, and monks who incinerated themselves in protest of the Vietnam conflict, the burning of draft cards was significantly less violent. However, some proponents of "liberation theology" advocate considerable violence if the result is a resolution of unjust, oppressive, and intolerable conditions—provided that the foreseeable result is not worse than the unjust situation to be alleviated. Guzman summarizes this well:

Violence is not excluded from the Christian ethic, because if Christianity is concerned with eliminating the serious evils which we suffer and saving us from the continuous violence in which we live without possible solution, the ethic is to be violent, once and for all, in order to destroy the violence which the economic minorities exercise against the people. (77)

This kind of theological ideology and course of action presents its own set of problems, especially when discerning "serious evils," hopeless oppression, and proportionate ends. Further, an over-emphasis on heaven or another life after this one may have the effect of devaluing the importance of this life, thereby justifying mass martyrdom or suicide and encouraging revolutions and so-called holy wars.

The map for the journey of peace begins with cartographers of faith seeking to identify the roots of violence. So far this essay has examined three ways that religion and people associated with religion have not always been peace makers. The next section examines how religion functions to promote violence. By discussing the four areas of a) human nature; b) the need for

people to survive; c) the social construction of knowledge and ideas; and d) the relationship of religion with the institutional and legal actions of a society, a more adequate appraisal of the role of religion in promoting violence will surface, especially when religion is understood in relation to these other factors and realities of social life.

## Religion as One of Many Factors that Promote Violence

### *Human Nature*

The presence of so much violence around the globe is a clarion call to people of good will to awaken and face the spiritual, religious, and cultural crisis of the modern world. Religion is one among many factors that promote violence. One explanation for this propensity toward violence is a flawed or evil human nature. The famous fragment 80 by the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, asserts that it is, indeed, violence that creates and destroys all things: "We must know that war is common to all and strife is justice, and that all things come into being and pass away through strife" (Copleston, 40). According to Heraclitus, then, all things, including humans and human societies, come into being and pass away through strife. In this view, humans are created in strife and are condemned to express themselves violently. Despite the fact that people act virtuously and wisely on occasion, human nature is essentially flawed and violent.

Some religions have offered another compelling description of human nature: humans are freely created by a loving God. In this view, humans are not the result of a strife-filled, chaotic conception, but are freely called by name as God's beloved sons and daughters to share in the divine image and God-given rights. Thus, when one looks at "the other," one looks into the eyes of God's beloved creation. Humans are good, even if they do bad things.

The discussion of a flawed human nature is complicated by the events of the twentieth century, which are unparalleled in their scope of atrocity, most notably, the dropping of the atomic bomb, chemical warfare, ethnic cleansing, terrorist attacks, and massive genocidal programs undertaken by totalitarian regimes.

The Nazis, for example, killed eleven million people, six million of whom were systematically killed because they were Jewish. Heschel called the *Shoah*, “the altar of Satan on which millions of human lives were exterminated to evil’s greater glory” (1966). In the midst of these grim events, many people lost their lives standing up for what was righteous and just in the sight of God. Presumably, many evildoers lived privileged lives of comfort and security. The question of evil and the responses of theodicy give some indication of the complexity involved in understanding human nature in the context of divine intimacy and human interaction. In short, if human nature is essentially flawed and prone to violence, then religions must commit themselves to cultivate virtue and justice or reap a harvest of violence and strife.

### *The Need for People to Survive*

A second area to be considered when examining how religion functions as one among many factors that promote violence is the need for people to survive. The concept of survival is multidimensional and here is presented from five perspectives: biological sustenance, self-defense, cultural preservation, secure public space, and preserved sacred spaces.

All living things compete to survive. Animals compete, fight, and kill for dominance in the herd or group. Some of this fighting and violence is due to competition for the food supply or mating opportunities. As humans have evolved, we also have participated in this competition, but we now can choose to respond to conflicts and challenges in ways other than violence. A necessary component for biological survival is access to the land’s resources. Land is necessary because it provides food, water, clothing, and shelter—all the elements required for basic biological survival. Religion has always been concerned with simple survival as well as with transcendental pursuits. Ancient religions advocated fertility rituals that ranged from benign dancing to the sacrifice of life in order to gain the attention of the gods for a successful hunt or a fruitful harvest. When threatened with starvation or death, people will obviously do what they can to survive. The need to protect the food and water supply and the competition with

others for these sources of sustenance were ritualized by ancient religious practice to endow warriors with a sense of mission and duty towards the tribe or group. The land, as well as access to the goods or crops from that land, was essential for survival.

The commandment "Thou shall not covet" (Exodus 20:17) attempts to maintain social order and reduce violence as much as "Thou shall not kill" (Williams). The lawful competition for food and goods does not curb the realities of selfishness and greed, which are powerful motivations for many people. When combined with selfishness, greed always leads to taking from others violently. Despite Girard's theory of mimetic desire and the scapegoating mechanism as an explanation for violence (1979, 1986), it is still unclear why some people feel compelled to mar or destroy works of art through vandalism, graffiti, or the taking of a hammer to Michelangelo's *Pieta* in Rome, for example, or what causes some people to destroy or kill that which they cannot possess, as in the story of Susanna found in the Book of Daniel (chapter 13).

On March 26, 1967, Pope Paul VI issued the encyclical letter *Populorum Progressio* (*On the Development of Peoples*). In it, he offered an economic interpretation of the sources of war and argued for economic justice as the surest road to peace. He contended that when societies are unjust, inevitably the stage is set for violence. A structure of violence is built into societies that do not seriously address poverty, unemployment, oppression, disease, exclusion, discrimination, and non-access to technological or basic resources. When colonialism, capitalism, communism, or socialism are governed without a sense of justice or transcendent ethical values, then disparities, inequality of power, and violent popular reactions become more common, and cycles of violence become rooted in the identity of the people struggling to survive. Further, prestige, position, and power are all subtexts of violence. When a religion aspires to positions of power and prestige, it is not only sustaining the social order but also setting the context for violence and oppression.

A second kind of survival is the right to self-defense in order to preserve life and property. In addition to being a necessary biological component for survival, access to a secure land and its resources is also a necessary component for the security concerns of a state or nation which, in turn, preserves the life and property

of individuals, groups, and religions. There is a tension between peace and the need for self-defense, especially when a society's legitimate right to security and justice for its people is threatened by lawlessness or war. In such an instance, the society has the duty to protect itself in the most reasonable and proportional manner possible. The Qur'an succinctly and rhetorically asks, "Will you not fight a folk who broke their solemn pledges and proposed to drive out the Prophet and did attack you first?" (9:13) Of course, the right to self-defense is a complex issue in the arena of international politics, and it is especially difficult to consider any kind of proportionate self-defense in the event of nuclear war.

Secure national borders would not be necessary if wars were eradicated, but such is not the case. Countries strengthen their borders and their identity by creating military and economic boundaries reinforced by cultural and religious differences. Religious people want to preserve their cultural and religious traditions and share them with future generations, and clearly they do not desire to be killed or destroyed. As such, religions do not impede the violence that seems necessary for the protection of human lives, values, and goods.

A third kind of survival is the self-determination and preservation of a nation's identity and culture (deVries and Weber). Human history has been a chronicle of violence where peoples have sought to establish their identity by fighting for their destiny. When a society or culture is threatened or falls apart, "invariably there is violence," that is, "every state is founded on violence and cannot maintain itself save by and through violence" (Ellul, 84). Violence has been disguised under the mantle of respectability and religion in order to settle the chaos and restore the social order. Violence has been the predominant way to solve internal and external problems and has been the primary way that culture has been founded.

Part of the process of forming a cultural identity is differentiation, whereby a group identifies itself as distinct and autonomous from others. But culture does not have a totalitarian character and is marked by the diversity, ambiguity, and selectivity of the people who comprise a society. However, the forming of social identity with a cultural cohesion is most

unfortunate when religion surrenders to the state's claim for autonomy over and against "the others" in the decision to wield violence within and without its boundaries.

A culture's identity is also shaped by its history, as well as by the way it responds to contemporary challenges. In times of adversity or threat, religions have advocated the practice of certain types of violence to stop greater violence. In the midst of this reordering, a kind of sacred violence or sacred social violence is tacitly granted a moral preference by religion or official leaders to restore the social order to a tolerable place. As such, religion functions as a powerful part of the shaping of culture.

The writing of a country's history also becomes complex as Edwards controversially notes:

When established states write and teach their history, they censor from it moral disapproval of the violence that was involved. Guilt and disapproval are transferred to the aboriginal people or the successive enemies of the state whose conquest has been necessary for the manifest destiny of the nation's power. So the writing of history in the various national communities, and even in the sectional subcommunities, consists largely in a chronicle of the glorious violence by which the frontier was expanded, dissident elements crushed, and foreign foes compelled to surrender. (116)

A fourth kind of survival is the preservation of public land or space necessary for relationships and social interaction. Without personal and communal space, people feel oppressed and lash out in violence. Public spaces in the forms of town halls, parks or preserves provide forums for citizens to celebrate the human spirit by participating in political, cultural, educational, and religious activities. The education of children, for example, can most efficiently be conducted in space that allows for focused work, as well as safe recreation. The access to and enjoyment of art by everyone also contributes to the survival and celebration of a culture. When art is stolen or destroyed, it is a loss for the entire community. Allocating space for others to meet socially,



politically, spiritually, and creatively can build unity among diverse people through common pursuits, which is an important concern that religion also shares.

A fifth kind of survival for human culture is the preservation of sacred space and possessions by religions. "Human beings are invariably driven to ground their religious experience in the palpable reality of space" (Lane, 3). Further, there is an inherent social and spiritual "architecture of order" in space (Hamerton-Kelly, 3). Religions have justified the taking and protecting of land for the sake of religious survival and the preserving of the social order. Religions intend to preserve their art, assets, and buildings as well as ensure secure boundaries for their people. Churches, temples, mosques, synagogues, monasteries, and retreat centers are all deemed necessary for the spiritual and cultural growth of individuals and religions. If a religion is not permitted to build a temple or sacred space, it will either leave that area of fight for that space. Similarly, if a religious group owns property or buildings, it is not likely to give up that space without some resistance and would be inclined to encourage its followers to fight against unjust aggressors who might seek to destroy those places or steal those things that inspire people to pray. In the words of the Qur'an, "If God had not enabled people to defend themselves against one another, then all monasteries and churches and synagogues and mosques—in all of which God's name is abundantly extolled—all of them would have been destroyed" (22:40).

Taken together, these five perspectives of biological sustenance, self-defense, cultural preservation, secure public space, and preserved sacred spaces illuminate how religion can be an important influence in the survival of individuals, nations, cultures, and religious institutions, or as a tragic player in the drama of violence. The next section examines how religion functions as one among many factors that promote violence in the social construction of knowledge and ideas.

### *The Social Construction of Knowledge and Ideas*

Power and dominance are sown in the field of culture, allowing violence to grow close to the surface of every society.

Violence can erupt at any time in the form of military coups, revolutions, robberies, riots in response to an unpopular jury verdict, or stampedes at rock concerts or soccer games. If a society is to survive, the members must measure, critique, and balance their participation in this culture of violence through honest self-reflection and clear articulation of their shared values and meanings.

Berger and Luckmann assert that subjective knowledge and meaning are socially constructed. In their view, "social order exists only as a product of human activity" (52). This human activity can be deliberate or unconscious. The self-understandings and meanings of a society are historically conditioned and communicated through the society's symbolic universe and are passed on through cultural structures, such as law, politics, education, language, rituals, and traditions.

In particular, religion is a part of the cultural meaning-making process in society. Religion communicates truth or mystery in ways that are appropriate to the listener's ability to hear and understand the message. Whenever a religion asserts something about God, it is also communicating something about its own self-understanding. The categories and language used to describe God are self-revealing. Bailie agrees with Girard (1979, 1987b) and asserts that religion, myth, philosophical ideas, and metaphors in poetry have *all* functioned to veil violence. He contends that true religion reveals and acts in history, whereas false religion conceals and hides behind the clouds of ambiguity and metaphors.

The philosopher Martin Heidegger noted that violence is inherent in the evolution of ideas. In a limited sense, individuals and societies "remake the world" (80), or at least their particular world, by providing the rational context or backdrop for events and interactions. Philosophical concepts, then, can illuminate the interpretation and understanding of historical events, or they can conceal the actual events in order to hide the reality of violence. Similarly, cultures prefer certain ideas because they have rejected others, depending upon how they wish to identify themselves. For example, Enlightenment thinkers, who disdained religion's propensity toward superstition and overly zealous religious passions among believers, sought to replace religion with rationalism. The

rationalism and secularism of the Enlightenment allowed for many positive advances in society, notably, human rights and religious liberty. However, particularly after the Enlightenment there is also an underlying current of thought that blames religion as the major cause of all the violence in the world, and it appears to many that relativism is the only sensible belief in the modern academy, especially if one is to avoid the passion and potential violence of religion.

Unfortunately, Enlightenment thinking may have also paved the way for the rise of totalitarianism and nationalism. Countries attempt to manufacture the effects of religion through patriotism, power, prestige, and violence. Through violence, a country can be united by the social contagion of a common enemy, an "other," resulting in xenophobia, fatalism, war and valor categories, and violence-bonding. Ironically, extreme nationalism can isolate people from the common good. The idolatry of the state has a predilection for violence against individuals and outsiders. The neo-paganism of Nazi Germany that crested during World War II, coupled with an underlying anti-Judaism in Europe, was an infamous example of such idolatry and violence.

Excessive individualism also has a predilection for violence. Especially when coupled with capitalism, excessive individualism advocates individual profit as the primary motive, competition as the ultimate law, and private ownership in production without limits or social responsibility—all profound challenges to the common good and communal religious values. Money becomes the measure of morality in this social schema, and individuals can be reduced to objects that merely produce or trade capital.

In addition to nationalism and excessive individualism, the social phenomenon of fundamentalism can also become the fuel for violence when people flare up in response to a pluralistic, ambiguous, modern world. Whereas nationalism creates the notion of "outsiders," that is, the people who do not belong inside the borders of the country, and excessive individualism alienates the "self" from the common good, fundamentalism identifies the "other," who is different and combats those individuals, groups, or social trends that are perceived to be a threat to the law and order of the society. By socially constructing the language and reality of

“outsiders,” “self,” and “others” through actions such as stereotyping, typifying, scapegoating, oversimplifying the enemy, advocating prejudice and extreme competition, inciting anger, and dismissing tolerance, groups and governments have a negative impact on others. When these groups or social movements use the language of religion or are supported by religion, the result can be terribly powerful and violent.

A final area to be considered when examining how religion functions as one among many factors that promote violence is the relationship of religion with the institutional and legal actions of a society.

### *Institutional Actions and Laws*

Cultures and societies express who they are by what they say and do through their institutions. Religion is an important voice in the moral and cultural discourse of a society. Religions have a right and duty to form consciences, shape public values, and contribute to the moral consensus of the citizenry. As the perception of religion has gradually become secularized, the law is no longer able to justify its actions on religious grounds or with religious principles. Nonetheless, the arena that strongly holds most people's attention, at least in the constitutional governments of the West, is the justice system. Newspaper headlines, feature magazine articles, and television shows frequently portray disputes that are settled through the courts.

Religions attempt to safeguard against laws that go against the best insights and practices of human morality because the law is a primary carrier of culture. Therefore, the deliberations and considerations of law and faith are compatible. Both seek to work for a society of justice. One difficulty, however, is the contradictory ways that a society determines what is acceptable violence. Through its laws and customs, “institutional violence is given legitimacy within the society's rules of conflict” (Edwards, 7). West aptly notes:

Violence is harm done to another outside the rules of conflict which such a society sets up. It may even be the

redress of grievances by means which society does not permit. For example, the occupation of a building by sit-in protesters may be regarded as violence, but not the planned eviction of the tenants from their homes at the expiration of their leases so that the landlord can tear down the buildings for his profit. Again, if the government of a poor country confiscates without compensation a foreign-owned business, its actions may be called violent, while the owner's systematic retention of the disproportionate profit from his enterprise, which led to the action, will not be so labeled. (14-15)

Both law and religion are threatened by any group that might glorify illegal violence, unreflective pragmatism, selfish hoarding of wealth, or a philosophy of disposableness where life and things are used up and thrown away. Such cultural excesses could tempt individuals and companies to use the law to hurt or oppress people in order to protect investments and contracts, rather than for the pursuit of justice and attainment of reasonable, humanitarian goals and values. Such cultural practices could find it pragmatic and legal to terminate the life of a fetus, eliminate a business competitor, or kill an unproductive elderly person. The philosopher Thomas Aquinas aptly warns in the *Summa Theologica*, "But insofar as it deviates from right reason, it is called an unjust law, and has the nature, not of law, but of violence" (633).

The Code of Hammurabi and the *Lex Talionis* were both attempts to limit violence from escalating into unchecked ethnic passions, hatreds, and blood feuds. During the Cold War of the later part of the twentieth century, where nations promoted a tyranny of fear in stockpiling weapons, the Mutual Assured Destruction Theory (MADT) promised equal results for any country that foolishly dared to initiate a nuclear war. This absurd equality was founded on fear. In daily life, however, individuals who desire to exact justice in the form of revenge might actually have the effect of perpetuating violence rather than limiting it.

The scapegoat ritual described in Leviticus 16 requires the high priest to annually send out a goat into the desert to die as an atonement for sin. This atonement theology was present in the

words of Caiaphas, "It is better that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed" (John 11:50), and has a haunting echo in modern societies that advocate capital punishment as a legal form of vengeance. Consider, for example, the actions of hundreds of people observed at a tailgating party, celebrating the 1989 execution of Ted Bundy in Florida. Capital punishment does not seem to deter crime at all. If anything, capital punishment deludes the public into a false sense of security and robs them of a true appreciation of the sanctity of life with a sacrificial killing. Further, its dark ritual process too closely resembles ancient bloodletting sacrifices to appease the masses. Violence too often begets further violence, as observed in the "mob justice" of American lynchings, where the victims were often photographed, shot, mutilated, or burned—long after they had died (Raper; Tolnay and Beck).

McKenna rightly observes that the legal system has a "primitive liturgical imperative" (85). An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth was meant to be a custom that limited violence and encouraged generosity, not one that demanded and required exact retribution. When it is presumed that someone *must* pay for unfortunate events or even accidents, then the cycle of violence or misfortune continues (Girard, 1986; Schwager). Societies that advocate capital punishment risk imprisoning their own souls in the violence of death row. Retribution and forgiveness are institutional actions inherent in the law and act as boundaries that identify a society and culture. To the extent that religion has advocated revenge and strict justice, rather than forgiveness and mercy, then it has contributed to the violence that vigilantes have exacted on others in revenge, as well as beatings, torture, or capital punishment incurred by prisoners around the world.

By discussing the four topics of human nature—the need for people to survive, the social construction of knowledge and ideas, and the relationship of religion with the institutional and legal actions of a society—this essay has presented the complex role that religion plays in promoting violence in relation to the other factors and realities of social life. A final piece in this presentation briefly examines how religions are unwilling participants in the practice of violence.

### Religion as an Unwilling Participant in Violence

A final aspect of the problem of religion and violence is when religions, as part of a society, are forced to participate in actions that the religions find reprehensible. It is clear that the best of all religions call for love, harmony, forgiveness, justice, and peace. The best of society would also claim the same. Pope Paul VI said:

The Church cannot accept violence, especially the force of arms . . . because she knows that violence always provokes violence, and irresistibly engenders new forms of oppression and enslavement, which are often harder to bear than those from which they claimed to bring freedom. (*Evangelii Nuntiandi*, n. 37)

Most religious leaders would agree with the pontiff's analysis. Yet, because of circumstances beyond their knowledge or control, or because of the "force of habit" to issue "mechanical blessings" in the name of patriotism (Merton, 187); all religions have been unwilling and at times, unconscious participants in the history of violence.

First, politicians and those with ideological or nationalist agendas, who whitewash their violence in valor and holy war ideology, have exploited religion. Many well-intentioned people and religious groups have been manipulated by those more clever and powerful than they. Also, exaggerated fears and prejudices strongly influence the way that people act in life. Ignorance, pain, suspicion, prejudice, lack of security, and loss of faith or hope can all stoke the flames of violence. Despite the fact that religious people can no longer deny that all humans are ethically and anthropologically bound together, some governments willfully oppress, dehumanize, and demonize others in order to tie together a social unity with the thin threads of fear and insecurity. These governments would have their citizens believe that God is a patron of military victories and favors the powerful, the wealthy, and those who are brave enough to be violent. Such notions are seriously challenged by the examples of Job, the Suffering Servant found in Isaiah 53:7-8, the crucified Jesus, or the teachings of

Buddha (Girard, 1987a). Nonetheless, religious institutions reside in countries whose leaders choose war and violence. When these institutions are powerless to protest, then they must make a choice for the greatest possible good.

Second, the vast majority of Jewish, Christian, and Islamic scriptural verses concern themselves with following the will of God through the pursuits of justice, wisdom, peace, and love. However, there are also sufficient instances where the texts advocate violence (Schwager). Also, there is enough ambiguity in the metaphors of some religious texts to warrant a selective or partisan reading that could justify violence. When certain religious texts are used out of context to suit a contemporary political or ideological agenda, then religions have unwillingly aided these unethical and violent activities. The violence in Ireland, apartheid in South Africa, the KKK in the United States, ethnic cleansings, and mafia terrorisms are all shrouded in religious overtones that have nothing to do with the authentic expressions of religion. The solution is not to change the scriptural texts or to rewrite them. Rather, one task of religious leaders is to consciously teach and preach the scriptures in their entire context and moral framework, thus deterring an oversimplified and impatient interpretation that could lead to violence.

Third, religious leaders and religious people are not perfect. The desire to be holy and close to God causes some people to express themselves in purist, fundamentalist, and overly-pious ways. New pilgrims on the path of holiness, frequently excited and insecure about their new-found faith, sometimes may not be able to tolerate others who are following different paths. Also, some religious leaders and religious people abuse the trust placed in them by their people. They use their position for their own benefit and at the expense of others. These violations and abuses leave psychological, spiritual, and even physical scars on their victims. When the noble ideals of religious institutions are compromised by the actions of weak individuals, then religion unwillingly contributes to violence.

This essay suggested some ways that religion is one among many factors influencing violence, and an unwilling participant in the practice of violence. Taken together, these three perspectives



point to the complex, multidimensional, and sensitive relationship between religion and violence. The conclusion of this paper offers some possibilities for future peace-making.

### Moving Beyond: Possibilities for Future Peace-Making

The challenge of peace for religion is to ask how, not whether, violence can be stopped. We have never lacked for voices to proclaim peace and nonviolence. The voices of such people as Ghandi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and the Dali Lama remind us that peace-making is laboriously slow and requires personal sacrifices. Pope John Paul II said in a homily in 1982, "Like a cathedral, peace must be constructed patiently and with unshakable faith." To work for peace, three things must happen: we must move beyond apologies, beyond ideology, and beyond talking.

#### *Beyond Apologies*

All countries and religions have at some time participated directly or indirectly in violence. The first step towards peace is an honest appraisal and apology by people of good will. But the apology cannot be for the sake of political correctness; it must be offered with the sincere desire to repent and begin a new relationship. Religious people must challenge each other to apologize out of love's motivation and move beyond that apology to a relationship of justice and respect.

The human community cannot forget the past mistakes of religion, but neither can the past events prevent the work of peace in the future. The historical memory of pain and hurt cannot be removed by rational arguments alone. Only a gradual building of trust and understanding through relationships and friendships will allow healing and progress to occur. Moving beyond apologies to a *tesbuva*—an act of repentance and renewal of relationships—means a conscious effort to work for healing and forgiveness. Revenge in the form of violence will always breed more violence. Moving beyond apologies will allow people of faith to sow seeds of peace, faith, respect, and responsibility, instead of continuously looking for the stones of accusation to hurl at each other.

Moving beyond apologies also means acknowledging that God is a part of our longings, involved in human history, and offers no religious justification for violence. God witnesses everything and trusts us to be people of courage and honesty who work for peace. All people are made in God's image and have dignity. The victims of war are people, members of families, members of God's family. True justice requires mercy, love, and nonviolence, because God loves all people and lets the sun shine and the rain fall on the just and the unjust.

Religion can offer opportunities to celebrate genuine humanity, perennial meaning, community, ritual, commitment to social justice, and education in virtuous living without violence.

### *Beyond Ideology*

Of course, to speak of moving beyond ideology is an ideological position itself. This section is more concerned with not being stubbornly wedded to thought forms or ideologies that impede the path of peace. The Vatican II document *Gaudium et Spes* (1965) draws on the wisdom of Saint Augustine and Pope John XXIII, and offers an insightful instruction in this regard: "Let there be unity in what is necessary, freedom in what is doubtful, and charity in everything" (n. 92).

Moving beyond ideology means that people of good will must courageously face the oppressors of the past head on and not reduce them to objects, movements, or social trends, but rather consider them as people who acted badly. Forgiveness is one key to freedom from the dehumanizing shackles of hate and revenge. If people move beyond ideology, then they will also move out of the pit where they are primarily identified as "victims." This stigma robs them of their sense of worth and dignity, and breeds a psychology of entitlement without moral responsibility.

Life is more than ideas and abstract faith constructs. Engagement in life is moving beyond ideas to communal living, beyond formulas of belief to secure trust and faith. Imagination, intelligence, and discernment are necessary in order to strive for a culture beyond violence, where nonviolent conflict resolution, education for justice, dialogue, openness, prayer, reverence, respect

for life, service, art, music, dance, and cultural celebrations all teach about others in the context of human dignity and the common good.

Moving beyond ideologies towards tolerance and respect is to choose to walk on a powerful path that leads to sustained peace. The notion of tolerance is predicated upon a choice-based conception of social life, and faces its challenges of instrumental bonds, cultural avoidance, and loss of sustained engagement in community. However, tolerance is a necessary foundation for the building up of respect and harmony among all people.

There is more than one path to the same God, and the ties that join are stronger than those forces which separate. In Islam, for example, the Qur'an says that God intends the existence of different religious communities on earth (49:13, 30:22) and that they must respect each other (49:11). However, the work of peace-making must also honestly challenge "all ethnic and nationalist claims, whether made in the name of Christianity, or Judaism, or Islam, or self-determination, or ethnic pride, or patriotism, or whatever other ideology is made to serve as a veil for violence" (Hamerton-Kelly, 3).

The work of peace does not weaken a nation's will but is concerned with preserving its soul (USCC, n. 304). Moving beyond ideology means that religious people can no longer uncritically observe the signs of the times without realizing that they are participating in a morally significant way. Once a person witnesses violence in the tear-filled and bloody faces of innocent children and adults, there is no returning to the pretense that violence does not injure the entire human family and is a necessary evil.

Conflict prevention is necessary for lasting peace and security, but it is only the beginning. The poet Robert Frost observed:

Something there is that doesn't love a wall. . . .  
 Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
 What I was walling in or walling out,  
 And to whom I was like to give offense. . . .  
 He will not go behind his father's saying,  
 And he likes having thought of it so well  
 He says again, "Good fences make good neighbors."

Strongly fortified boundaries and armed forces may restrain violence for a time but cannot root out enmity or force authentic reconciliation. Moving beyond ideology means that countries choose to beat their swords into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4) and share the bread of their labor with everyone on the planet. After all, the goods of the earth were originally given by God for the benefit of all people.

John XXIII, in *Pacem in Terris*, also offered guidelines for authentic peace beyond ideology. He asserted that every human has certain rights which flow with the common good. Some of these include a right to life and a worthy standard of living (n. 11); a right to moral and cultural values, such as respect, reputation, freedom to search the truth, express opinions, pursue art, and be informed truthfully about public events (n. 12); the right to worship according to one's conscience (n. 14); the right to freely choose one's state of life and education (n. 15); the right to health, fair treatment of women and children, workers' rights, the social duty inherent in the right of private property (nn. 18-22); the right to meetings and associations (n. 23); the right to emigrate and immigrate (n. 25); and the right to participate in the political process (n. 26). For true peace to be realized, John XXIII said that all states and countries must be treated with equal dignity (n. 86) and human society needs to be ordered toward the spiritual and must seek truth, knowledge, spiritual values, pleasure from the beautiful, and pass on a rich cultural heritage (n. 36).

### *Beyond Talking*

A Machiavellian conception of power and violence is losing its ability to re-found culture as the roots of violence are laid bare. Religion must explore nonviolent methods of maintaining peace and resolving conflict (Merton; Sharp). Cooperation, respect, and dialogue can be the new foundations for the future of moral and peaceful action. Religions and religious people have a moral obligation to future generations to formulate behavioral guidelines with a broad, future-oriented perspective.

The common good and peace will be more nearly realized when people are treated with dignity and respect, and unjust,

oppressive economic, gender, religious, and racial structures are dissolved. This will provide the necessary common ground for the common good to become a peaceful reality. This requires a moral conversion, a change of heart (Jeremiah 32:39), which will then change the culture. A peaceful culture presumes civil discourse, genuine dialogue, openness, respect, and the sharing of power and resources for the common good. Peace and justice take time. Personal morality requires reflection, dialogue, and action.

Common human experiences, such as confusion, anger, suffering, dishonesty, temptation, weakness, hunger, or illness, are opportunities for people to be drawn together and respond with love, forgiveness, support, and healing through prayer. A shared insight or understanding of individual religious traditions will shed light on all human spirituality and longing. Unity can be found in the rich diversity that God has chosen to reveal to all religions.

It is true that people will continue to die, and life and property will continue to be destroyed through violence, but that violence does not have to be committed in the name of God. God is the God of creation, not violence. God created all living things, and religious people who seek peace will find in the care of the earth a worthy and religious action for the preservation and passing on of all God's gifts to future generations. The glass of creation, though fingerprinted by our violence, still has the true ring of excellent crystal when raised in peace.

#### Works Cited

- Aquinas, Saint Thomas. 1948. *Introduction to Saint Thomas Aquinas*. Ed. Austin C. Pegis. New York: Modern Library.
- Augustine, *The Confessions of Saint Augustine*. 1960. Trans. John K. Ryan. New York: Image Books.
- Bailie, Gil. 1997. *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads*. New York: Crossroad.
- Berger, Peter, and Thomas Luckmann. 1967. *The Social Construction of Reality*. Garden City: Doubleday.
- Copleston, Frederick. 1955. *A History of Philosophy: Volume I: Greece and Rome*. Westminster, MD: Newman.

- deVries, Hent, and Samuel Weber, eds. 1997. *Violence, Identity, and Self-Determination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Douglas, James W. 1968. *The Nonviolent Cross: A Theology of Revolution and Peace*. New York: Macmillan.
- Dumouchel, Paul, ed. 1988. *Violence and Truth*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Durkheim, Emile. 1965. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Trans. John W. Swain. New York: Free Press.
- Edwards, George R. 1972. *Jesus and the Politics of Violence*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Ellul, Jacques. 1969. *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*. Trans. C. G. Kings. New York: Seabury.
- Frost, Robert. 1979. "Mending Wall." In *The Norton Anthology of American Literature*. New York: W. W. Norton. (originally published in 1914)
- Gaudium et Spes* [Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World]. 1965. In *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Post-Conciliar Documents*. Ed. Austin Flannery, 903-1101. Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources.
- Girard, René. 1979. *Violence and the Sacred*. Trans. Patrick Gregory. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1986. *The Scapegoat*. Trans. Yvonne Freccero. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987a. *Job: The Victim of His People*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1987b. *Things Hidden Since the Foundation of the World*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.
- Guzman, German. 1969. *Camilo Torres*. Trans. John D. Ring. New York: Sheed & Ward.
- Hamerton-Kelly, Robert G. 1994. *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress.
- Heidegger, Martin. 1959. *An Introduction to Metaphysics*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- Heschel, Abraham J. 1966. "No Religion Is an Island." *Union Theological Seminary Quarterly* 21, no. 2: 1.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1969. "Reflections on Death." In *Genesi della morte improvvisa e rianimazione* [Genesis of Sudden Death and Reanimation]. Ed. V. Lapicciarella. Papers presented in Florence, Palazzo Pitti, Oct. 14. Florence: Marchi & Bertolli.
- John XXIII. 1963. *Pacem in Terris*. [Peace on Earth]. 11 April 1963. *Acta Apostolica Sedis*.

- John Paul II. 1982. Homily at Bagington Airport, Coventry. *Origins* 2, no. 12: 55.
- Lane, Belden C. 1988. *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. New York: Paulist.
- McKenna, Andrew J. 1992. *Violence and Difference*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- Merton, Thomas. 1971. *Thomas Merton on Peace*. New York: McCall.
- Paul VI. 1967. *Populorum Progressio* [On the Development of Peoples]. 26 March, 1967. *Acta Apostolica Sedis*.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 1975. *Evangelii Nuntiandi* [Evangelization in the Modern World]. 8 December 1975. *Acta Apostolica Sedis*.
- Raper, Arthur F. 1969. *The Tragedy of Lynching*. New York: Arno.
- Sharp, George. 1970. *Exploring Nonviolent Alternatives*. Boston: Porter Sargent.
- Schwager, Raymond. 1987. *Must There Be Scapegoats?: Violence and Redemption in the Bible*. Trans. M. L. Assad. San Francisco: Harper & Row.
- Tolnay, Stewart E., and E. M. Beck. 1995. *A Festival of Violence: An Analysis of Southern Lynchings, 1882-1930*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- United States Catholic Conference. 1983. *The Challenge of Peace: God's Promise and Our Response*. Washington, D.C.: USCC.
- West, Charles. 1969. *Ethics, Violence, and Revolution*. New York: Council on Religion and International Affairs.
- Williams, James G. 1991. *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred: Liberation from the Myth of Sanctioned Violence*. San Francisco: Harper.