

# RELIGION

## VIOLENCE and PEACE

*Continuing Conversations  
and Study Guide*

*Edited by David L. Coppola*

**RELIGION, VIOLENCE AND PEACE:  
CONTINUING CONVERSATIONS  
AND STUDY GUIDE**

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*Essays from the  
Center for Christian-Jewish  
Understanding Conference  
in Fairfield, Connecticut  
"Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths"  
April 2003*

Edited by  
David L. Coppola

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## PREFACE

The Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding (CCJU) of Sacred Heart University sponsored a symposium April 28-30, 2003, on the University's Fairfield, Connecticut, campus. The meeting of Jewish, Christian and Islamic scholars and leaders, "Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths," is part of the Center's ongoing work to promote peace through dialogue and understanding.

The purpose of the conference was for leaders and scholars in the Jewish, Christian and Muslim religions to identify those teachings and values in each tradition that promote peace, the failures of each tradition to live up to their ideals, and ways to improve the teachings and practices to achieve peace. The conference did this and so much more. The participants and observers left with many questions answered and with a commitment to continue discussions such as these and open them up to larger audiences.

Jewish presenters included: Rabbi Samuel Sirat, former Chief Rabbi of France; Professor Adolphe Steg, president of the Israeli Alliance of France; and Rabbi Rene Gutman, Rabbi of Strasbourg, France. The principal Christian presenters were Dr. James G. Williams, professor emeritus of Religion, Syracuse University, New York; and Reverend Jean Dujardin, former secretary of the Episcopal Committee of the Conference of French Bishops, Paris. Dr. Azizah Al-Hibri, professor at the University of Richmond Law School, Virginia, and Dr. Louay Safi, Muslim Social Scientists, Herndon, Virginia, presented Muslim paths to peace. All of the presentations were candid and self-critical. Each group acknowledged the difficulties of terrorism and were resolved to stop such distortions of their religion, especially through education.

At the conclusion of the conference, the 40 participants left with a feeling of hope as well as a greater understanding of each religion and each other. If the letters of encouragement and thanks that the Center received are any indication, these scholars and religious leaders will

undoubtedly continue to teach what they have learned for years to come.

The papers from this conference have now been integrated here into a study guide that will build upon other important work of the Center begun at the 1998 conference held in Auschwitz, Poland, that resulted in the book, *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace* (Sacred Heart University Press, 2000). At that time, speakers warned that religions still have the potential to incite wars and, as such, have a vital responsibility to foster a spirituality for life and cultures of justice. Since then, my colleague and associate, Dr. David Coppola and I have been speaking and teaching about the importance of informed, respectful and balanced dialogue between Jews, Christians, Muslims and all people of good will in pursuit of peace—especially in the face of what appears to be a marked increase in the violent expression of fundamentalists and fanatics in the name of religion. Often after a presentation, people would come up to us and ask for additional materials about another religion's teachings or scriptures. This book tries to meet some of those needs for religious leaders and educators on the local level.

We are living in exceptional times and such times require ordinary people to also be exceptional. I hope that this resource will inspire greater understanding and respect between religions and most of all that it will give courage to all to promote peace as God intends.

A special word of thanks is due to Gabriel V. Rossettie, coordinator of conferences and publications at the CCJU, for shaping the study guide; Guillaîne Dale and Joan Jackson of the CCJU staff for their administrative support; Christopher J. Sheehan for his editorial assistance; Roberta Reynolds and Ruth Baxter for their creative and graphic work for the "Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths Conference" and this volume; and Anthony J. Cernera, president of Sacred Heart University, for his support of the Center and championing the cause of peace by working to secure justice for all.

Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz  
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DAVID L. COPPOLA

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## Creating Space for Dialogue

People of good will cannot ignore the challenges of this moment in history. The devastating attacks of September 11, 2001, ensuing wars, continued ethnic cleansings, fundamentalist revolutions, economic oppression and cultural clashes have left the world wounded by violence.

Additionally, despite significant advances in food production and medicine, poverty and disease persist in staggering numbers. Religious people cannot stand by and disinterestedly observe these signs of the times. All of us, especially those living in wealthy countries, are contributing to these human tragedies in morally significant ways.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam teach that it is God's will that all people live in peace with each other. Peace will be adequately advanced only when religious people and religious institutions are integral to the processes of social justice in every part of the globe. It is religion that can help to reach into the depths of humanity's struggles and the heights of human accomplishments to salve such injuries. Unfortunately, dialogue for the sake of building mutual respect, understanding and ultimately, peaceful coexistence seems more difficult than ever, in part due to the resistance and obstruction by some who claim to be faithful religious adherents. Worshipers have become warriors, religious moderates have become violent radicals, and walls (both real and ideological) have replaced noble traditions of hospitality and welcome to the stranger, widow, orphan—"the other." In the face of such obstacles, it is not surprising that many have resigned themselves to pessimism, cynicism, relativism and fatalism, while others have taken up an alarming ultra-defensive posture to the extent of committing so called pre-emptive violence against "the other." What are individuals, families, religious communities or countries to do? The short, obvious and overwhelmingly complex answer is: create space for dialogue.

Without space for dialogue (both time and place) there will be one continuous cycle of violence fueled by each more recent occasion. Without dialogue, there will be no understanding, reflection or possibility for common pursuits towards the common good. Without understanding, we will risk being reduced to xenophobic, scapegoating participants in unreflective vengeance exacted out on others as if an “eye for eye” were an ethical imperative and a matter of entitlement, rather than an opportunity to show mercy and forgiveness to others, thus reducing or even stopping the cycle of violence. Without religious dialogue, the greatest sources of wisdom and inspiration for peacemaking will be removed from humanity’s hands at the very moment when God is offering them in abundance.

In a recently published book, *Mission and Place: Strengthening Learning and Community through Campus Design* (American Council on Education and Praeger, 2004), the authors, Daniel R. Kenney, Ricardo Dumont and Ginger Kenney make a convincing case for planning space on college campuses based on the university’s mission and strategic plans. In their view, buildings and spaces are deliberately created to promote learning and engage students in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and truth. New or renovated buildings can also help to define and enhance surrounding spaces, so that several goals can be accomplished at once, such as, the creation of pathways or walkways for reflection, courtyards and small parks for reading or private conversations, beacons and landmarks for orientation and meaningful memories, sacred spaces for prayer and liturgy, and public forums for celebrations, rites of passage, lectures, discussions, concerts, art exhibits, and the like.

In many ways, the mission and plan for peace by religions is to create and coordinate time and places for dialogue, many of which already exist. A religious perspective looks to a beacon beyond a *Pax Romana*, which could be achieved by power over others while maintaining a precarious balance of forces between enemies. Admittedly, this would at least reduce some forms of violence and some instances of war. However, much like the planting of a public garden or arboretum, the alternative of slowly and deliberately finding common ground and creating space for dialogue takes reflection, planning and focused effort—and significant time to grow. (See also: B. Lane, *Landscapes of the Sacred: Geography and Narrative in American Spirituality*. Paulist, 1988; and B. McGraw, *Rediscovering America’s Sacred Ground*, State University of New York Press, 2003).

Whenever a religion affirms something about the Divine, it is also communicating something about its own self-understandings. For example, in the pre-history stories of the Book of Genesis, God takes the time to speak with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, dialogues with the serpent/evil (does not do violence to it), allows Abraham to negotiate for Sodom and Gomorrah (and does not appear to tire of such heckling) and guides Noah and his family to a new life. In historical illustrations, God speaks to Moses, leads the Israelites to freedom through the Red Sea, and makes a covenant with them, which includes keeping the Sabbath. The categories and language used to describe God and God's activities are profoundly self-revealing. The Abrahamic religions understand God as one who is involved in the lives of human beings and makes time to communicate and interact with humans—even to this day. Accordingly, humans have a responsibility to respond in appropriate and ethical ways to such communication and revelation, including the setting aside of a day each week for reflection, prayer and re-centering one's place in the world with others and God. Such time for renewal was also experienced in God's time, for as many as forty days or forty years. As such, a central mission of the Abrahamic religions is to create space and time to reflect, pray and repair the world by promoting ethical living in love of God and neighbor which can result in peace.

Thus, the invitation from God and the task at hand is to design and create a new landscape for peace to grow. From a global perspective, this requires that religious leaders renovate and make room in their philosophy and traditions to develop adequate theologies of "the other" as part of God's plan in this time and place. Diversity among people could be a source of strength and creativity, rather than seen as a threat to security, faithfulness or unity as some have characterized it. Also, such reflections and practices must self-critically examine whether supercessionism, aspirations to power and prestige within society, and institutionalized classicism, racism or sexism continue the cycles of oppression, injustice and violence. This re-examination and where appropriate, *teshuva*, is not to advocate relativism or a watering down of fundamental beliefs, or even to lay blame on any one group. Each religious tradition can contribute to creating a world where there is greater justice and peace, and by working together all can take small steps down the paths of reflection and action by enlarging the circles of inclusion and understanding, thus fostering peace and overcoming violence. Otherwise,

religion will continue to directly function as a dogmatic dividing force between believers and nonbelievers, thus rousing commitment from followers who are asked to participate in violence against others—usually the “different” or weak. Whether willing or even unconscious participants, all religions and their followers have been a part of the tragic human story of violence.

On the other hand, all religions have been responsible for promoting landmark moments of peace and reconciliation throughout history. In fact, the ability to break through divisions to promote dialogue through mutual cooperation in the pursuit of truth and social justice and to ask for correction or pardon where appropriate is exactly the forte of religion. Religious and theological efforts at reconciliation and peacemaking have rested on the foundational assumption of the absolute value and dignity of human life given by God. Such is still a valuable starting point in creating spaces for dialogue, but this assumption needs to be buttressed with several other elements since it is clear that many people now reject it, given their destructive acts as suicide-homicide bombers.

First, religious leaders committed to peace should work together with their own people, with those of other religious beliefs and with all people of good will to preach and teach unequivocally that by acting violently, one fails to reverence God's gift of life given to every person and every family, including one's own. God does not reward violence and killing with blessings. Only God has the right to give and take life, and others who presuppose such power act idolatrously. Additionally, religious voices must be raised to refute politicians and those with myopic, ideological or nationalist agendas who attempt to dull and blur the reality of violence in categories of bravery and holy war ideology purporting that the God of Abraham is a sponsor of military victories and favors the powerful and wealthy. God does not show particularity and there is nothing valiant or holy about war. Any war is a failure on the part of religion, society and humanity to find creative and life-giving solutions to fulfill their ethical duty to God and others to promote peace. Such education and admonitions can cut through the ignorance, suspicion, anger, prejudice, exaggerated fears, greed or passion of a group or individual who advocates wanton violence. Without such efforts on the part of religious leaders, human dignity, social solidarity, legal rights and due process, and the freedom to participate in self-determination and self-governance processes will be severely diminished.

Second, religious leaders can offer a strong and clear word of hope that peaceful coexistence is not a Utopian dream but a promise of God and a goal that can be achieved with planning and persistence. As God's people we are ethically bound to one another to promote the benefit of all God's creation. World days of prayer, reflection, education and celebrations of cultures are essential, as are regular national celebrations and holidays, to continually lift people's eyes, hearts and creative impulses from pessimism and negativity generated by past failures, to the beacon of mutual cooperation. Joint study trips, retreats, and pilgrimages are also life-changing experiences that create space for learning and trust.

Third, the benefits of such joint collaboration should be heralded. These include the potential to live happy and fulfilled lives filled with adequate time for reflection, religious liberty, secure space for worship, safe and respectful public interaction, and the promotion of ethical and aesthetic values.

Fourth, the overwhelming majority of Jewish, Christian and Islamic scriptural texts concern themselves with loving God and following the will of God by pursuing holiness, wisdom, justice and peace. There are also ample examples where violence is advocated. Therefore, a vital space for dialogue to occur is in joint study of texts and teachings to learn about each other and find common ground to do God's will together. One should expect and applaud the opportunity to wrestle together with interpreting difficult texts and teachings, with which people of good will are likely to disagree. Those who have engaged in such groups insist that as trust and friendships grow through such reflection, the benefits have outweighed the struggles tenfold. (See for example, Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*, Jewish Publication Society, 2004.)

Fifth, religions and religious people are important voices in the moral and cultural discourses of a nation and society. Religions have a duty to contribute to the common good by helping to shape public policy and contribute to the ethical consensus of the polis in promoting such goods as access to dignified housing, sufficient sustenance, security, freedom, law and justice, meaningful labor and leisure, volunteerism, mutual respect, and the promotion of cultural treasures such as art, drama, music and food—none of which can take place in a society ruled by fear, injustice and violence.



Similar to religious leaders, national leaders and educators have an opportunity to demonstrate and advocate the benefits of peace. Those with political, economic or military power must model reflection, patience, prudence and wisdom, doing everything possible to promote the best of human impulses and decisions through genuine dialogue, respect, and the sharing of power and resources for the common good. Poverty, injustice, unemployment, oppression, disease, discrimination, and non-access to necessary resources poison efforts at building peaceful societies. Further, a society is placed in jeopardy by those who glorify or promote violence for selfish or ideological reasons.

Many exemplary groups are working to bring peace through justice by sharing in common political, cultural, economic, environmental, medical, philosophical, ethical, and educational pursuits. These excellent efforts help to cultivate and celebrate the human spirit. In particular, there is need for creation and dissemination of more educational forums dedicated to teaching peace. Universities have an important role to play in this regard in responding to the challenge of peace. There is need for wider communication of a world curriculum for peace to promote learning and engage students in the pursuit of knowledge, understanding and truth. Such a platform is possible with the present technology but also requires resources for actual face to face contact and relationship-building. In this way people can be drawn together in scholarly, educational, social, legislative, and humanistic concerns, while promoting unity by helping to overcome religious, gender, class, ethnic, cultural, and geographical prejudices.

One such concerted effort is the Global Ethic Foundation in Tubingen, Germany, which was inspired by Hans Kung's 1990 book, *Global Responsibility: In Search of a New World Ethic*. The Global Ethic Foundation ([www.global-ethic.org](http://www.global-ethic.org)) fosters inter-cultural and inter-religious research, education and encounter through its programs and publications. One cultural exhibit, "World Religions, Universal Peace, Global Ethic," has been seen around the globe and invites viewers to explore the spectrum of world religions to have a better understanding of the importance of their ethical messages for present-day society. Dr. Kung summarizes the challenge appropriately: "No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. No dialogue between the religions without global ethical standards. No survival of our globe without a global ethic."

Recent discoveries of science and mathematics clearly demonstrate that it is statistically impossible for every person on the planet not to be related. We are all cousins. And yet, peace and justice cannot be achieved by such rational demonstrations or abstract theological explanations alone. It is regrettable that religions have initiated, acquiesced, or ignored violence perpetrated in the name of God. Only by a gradual building of trust and understanding through friendships and relationships, living in the same neighborhoods, participating in cultural and civic pursuits to improve the common good, teaching respectfully about the other, and discussing the religious beliefs that are dear to each, will secure progress occur.

Cooperation, respect, and dialogue can be the new foundations for the future of ethical and peaceful action. Each effort at dialogue or renovation of former ideas about the other will help to define and enhance the surrounding theological and cultural spaces, so that more progress will be achieved than immediately apparent. Religions and religious people have an essential obligation to future generations to create this vital space for peaceful coexistence. It requires reflection, dialogue, patience, prayer, listening to and learning from others, working with others, and the courage to act justly, humbly walking before God. By faithfully sharing such convictions with our children, neighbors, and those of good will, we will help to create the sacred space for dialogue that will one day soon spring forth in justice and peace.



CHIEF RABBI RENÉ-SAMUEL SIRAT

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## A Biblical Meditation on Jewish Pathways to Peace

English translation by Michel Rouge

Sages in the Talmudic tradition, commenting on the long chapters in Genesis which tell the story of the Patriarchs, teach us that the Fathers' actions are signs for their descendants.<sup>1</sup> At first sight, one gets the impression that this implies a kind of determinism: must the Patriarchs' trials, failures and advances in the religious sphere necessarily be reproduced from one generation to the next? In his *Maxims of the Fathers of the Synagogue*, Rabbi Akiba, one of the greatest doctors of the law (who died a martyr in 135), taught that though everything is predetermined, freedom remains intact.<sup>2</sup>

This seems quite clear to Rabbi Akiba. As for us, how are we to resolve this apparent contradiction? Perhaps by linking it to this other assertion: *Teshuva*—repentance—was created before the creation of the world.<sup>3</sup> In other words, *teshuva* is, as it were, a grain of sand wanted by God which can disorganize the perfect order of His work. This work is thus paradoxically brought to a far better completion than if it had proceeded according to the divine design only. It now belongs to both God and man created free and in the image and likeness of God. It leads to the ultimate stage which is the coming into the Eighth Day, symbolizing the messianic era. At that time, God will add to the Hebrew Bible the only missing verse: And there was evening, and there was morning, an eighth day.

I should like to introduce my remarks today with some thoughts about the relations between Joseph and his brothers. Here is what the Bible says:

This is the history of the generations of Jacob. Joseph, being seventeen years old, was feeding the flock with his brothers. He was

a boy with the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives. Joseph brought an evil report of them to their father. Now Israel loved Joseph more than all his children, because he was the son of his old age, and he made him a coat of many colors. His brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, and they hated him, and could not speak peaceably to him. Joseph dreamed a dream, and he told it to his brothers, and they hated him all the more. He said to them, "Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: for behold, we were binding sheaves in the field, and behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and behold, your sheaves came around, and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Will you indeed reign over us? Or will you indeed have dominion over us?" They hated him all the more for his dreams and for his words. He dreamed yet another dream, and told it to his brothers, and said, "Behold, I have dreamed yet another dream: and behold, the sun and the moon and eleven stars bowed down to me." He told it to his father and to his brothers. His father rebuked him, and said to him, "What is this dream that you have dreamed? Will I and your mother and your brothers indeed come to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?" His brothers envied him, but his father kept this saying in mind. His brothers went to feed their father's flock in Shechem. Israel said to Joseph, "Aren't your brothers feeding the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." He said to him, "Here I am." He said to him, "Go now, and see what is the peace in which your brothers live, and the peace within the flock; and bring me word again." So he sent him out of the valley of Hebron, and he came to Shechem.<sup>4</sup>

Many points immediately catch our attention.

1. This is the history of the generations of Jacob. This break in the narrative raises a question in our minds. After the history of the generations of Jacob, one would expect an account of the Patriarch's twelve sons and one daughter. In the text, Joseph alone seems to be the continuation of Jacob's lineage, just as Isaac alone continued Abraham's lineage: This is the history of the generations of Isaac, Abraham's son. Abraham became the father of Isaac...<sup>5</sup>

2. [...with his brothers, the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, his father's wives] Were not the sons of Leah, the eldest sons in the family, also his

brothers, sons of his father's first ranking wife?

3. [...an evil report of them] Contrasting with the impression produced by the preceding paragraph, Joseph visibly lacks generosity.

4. [...he (Jacob) made him a coat of many colors.] How surprising! Instead of scolding his son, Jacob presents him with a multicolored tunic, much to the annoyance of his brothers. [His brothers saw that Jacob loved him (Joseph) more than all his brothers, and they hated him.] Who will tell how much mistakes by fathers (and mothers) in the raising of their children directly contribute to failures in a siblings' group, hatred and jealousy among its members? Rashi, the great exegete of the Bible, like the Midrash before him, judges the Patriarch's conduct most severely.

5. [...they (the brothers) could not speak peaceably to him.] Isn't this a serious lapse from brotherly love?

6. Worse still: by telling his dreams to them, Joseph, perhaps knowingly, makes the situation worse. [Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: ...your sheaves came around and bowed to my sheaf...] Joseph sees that his brothers can no longer speak to him peaceably. Will he be provocative to the point of telling them about a dream the interpretation of which is obvious? He goes even beyond that. In spite of their strong reaction, he perseveres. He tells them about a second dream, thus driving them to hatred. He will soon experience the effects of that hatred.

More surprising still: after hearing about the second dream, Jacob rebukes his son. (Is one responsible for one's dreams? The revealed text seems to say so thirty-three centuries before Freud.) Now, what does the father say to his beloved son: "Will I and your mother (who died many years earlier) and your brothers indeed come to you to bow ourselves down to you to the earth?" What a strange rebuke!

7. Is Jacob the Patriarch—now he is called Israel, the name he has just received from God—unaware of the brothers' hatred and jealousy? He tells Joseph to go and see what is the peace in which your brothers live. Alas! It is a peace which links them only as criminal accomplices preparing a dreadful revenge against their young brother. Is he then responsible for the tragic event that will happen next?

The Bible, of course, provides us with answers to all these questions.

*The break in the account of Jacob's generations.*

This anticipates, if only in part, Joseph's family history. Joseph will later tell his father through his brothers, "There I will nourish you...lest you come to poverty."<sup>6</sup> Indeed, only Joseph can ensure the material and

spiritual survival of his father and brothers. But the end of the story, the meeting and reconciliation of the brothers, contradicts this affirmation. Hence the opening verse of Exodus: "Now these are the names of the sons of Israel who came into Egypt."<sup>7</sup> Understand: upon the generous initiative of Joseph, the Viceroy. This verse provides a definite redress to the verse we have just recalled. The apparent break in the Biblical narrative is given its full meaning.

*Joseph seeking the company of the servants' sons.*

It is characteristic of Jacob's descendants that they go and help the weakest, the sons of the maidservants. Indeed, Bilhah and Zilpah first were servants of Rachel and Leah, respectively, before they became, at their mistresses' request, wives of their common husband. "If your brother has become poor, and his hand can't support him among you; then you shall uphold him."<sup>8</sup>

*Joseph makes known to his father evil rumors concerning his brothers.*

Joseph's behavior is unworthy of the leader he thinks he is (as his dreams demonstrate). Reporting the brothers' evil deeds instead of assuming joint liability with them, the better to make good their errors (*tikkun*) and foster their *teshuva* (repentance) is not morally acceptable.

*Jacob orders a multicolored tunic to be made for Joseph and does not present the other brothers with any.*

One must refer to the rabbis' commentary on this point: "Because of a cheap tunic, hatred made its appearance in Jacob's family, causing it to undergo exile, suffering and servitude."<sup>9</sup>

*The brothers refuse to make a show of a fictitious peace and brotherhood.*

Unlike the negative value judgments just mentioned, the rabbis' comment on this point is paradoxical. It shows, they say, that Jacob's sons are not hypocrites. As they felt resentment toward Joseph, they could not address him with peaceful words. What was wrong is that no one, not even the Patriarch, attempted to restore the necessary peace in their hearts.

Jacob is puzzled by the dream Joseph just recalled before him. Let us recall Psalm 126:

When The Lord brought back those who returned to Zion,  
we were like those who dream.

Then our mouth was filled with laughter,  
 and our tongue with singing.  
 Then they said among the nations,  
 "The Lord has done great things for them."  
 The Lord has done great things for us,  
 and we are glad.  
 Restore our fortunes again, Lord,  
 like the streams in the Negev.  
 Those who sow in tears will reap in joy.  
 He who goes out weeping, carrying seed for sowing,  
 will certainly come again with joy, carrying his sheaves.

This is the *tikkun*, the reparation of the crime that took place in Shechem. Full reconciliation will be achieved between Joseph and his brothers on an equal footing — not as happened at the time of Jacob's death when the brothers tried to stir him to pity, now that he had become the viceroy of Egypt, by proposing to become his slaves.<sup>10</sup>

Then all Israel's children will finally be reconciled, as foretold by the prophet Ezekiel:

Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will take the children of Israel from among the nations, where they are gone, and will gather them on every side, and bring them into their own land; and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king shall be king to them all; and they shall be no more two nations, neither shall they be divided into two kingdoms any more at all.<sup>11</sup>

Then Israel as a whole will be made up of people who dream, whose tongue is filled with joyful singing, who are admired by the nations: "The Lord has done great things for them." Those who went out weeping, carrying grain to be scattered for sowing, sing joyful songs as they return, bending down under the weight of the harvest's sheaves.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, these are the sheaves Joseph, the unloved one, dreamed about.

*Jacob takes the risk of sending Joseph alone to meet all his brothers together.*

At this point, the Biblical text calls the Patriarch not Jacob, the father of sons who are about to murder their brother, but Israel, the father of the people of the ultimate Redemption, a people proclaiming



peace for itself and for mankind as a whole. At the time when the Biblical story takes place, Israel is concerned about the peace and happiness of all his children, and Joseph is precisely the one he chooses to see to it that the necessary brotherhood be established within Israel's family. God himself and Rachel, the mother who died too soon, will acknowledge and proclaim Joseph's *election* in *peace* and *serenity* restored.

For there shall be a day that the watchmen on the hills of Ephraim shall cry: "Arise you, and let us go up to Zion to the Lord our God." For thus says the Lord: "Sing with gladness for Jacob, and shout for the chief of the nations: publish you, praise you, and say, Lord, save your people, the remnant of Israel. Behold, I will bring them from the north country, and gather them from the uttermost parts of the earth, and with them the blind and the lame, the woman with child and her who travails with child together: a great company shall they return here. They shall come with [sweet] weeping and with [touching] petitions. I will lead them: I will cause them to walk by rivers of waters, in a straight way in which they shall not stumble; for I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my firstborn."

Hear the word of the Lord, you nations, and declare it in the islands afar off and say: "He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock." For the Lord has ransomed Jacob, and redeemed him from the hand of him who was stronger than he. They shall come and sing in the height of Zion, and shall flow to the goodness of the Lord, to the grain, and to the new wine, and to the oil, and to the young of the flock and of the herd: and their soul shall be as a watered garden; and they shall not sorrow any more at all. Then shall the virgin rejoice in the dance, and the young men and the old together; for I will turn their mourning into joy, and will comfort them, and make them rejoice from their sorrow. I will satiate the soul of the priests with fat victims, and my people shall be satisfied with my goodness, says the Lord.

Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping, Rachel weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no

more.” Thus says the Lord: “Refrain your voice from weeping, and your eyes from tears; for your work shall be rewarded,” says the Lord; “and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. There is hope for your latter end,” says the Lord; “and your children shall come again to their own border.” I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: “You have chastised me, and I was chastised, as a calf unaccustomed to the yoke: turn you me, and I shall be turned; for you are the Lord my God. Surely after that I was turned, I repented; and after that I was instructed, I struck on my thigh: I was ashamed, yes, even confounded, because I did bear the reproach of my youth.” “Is Ephraim my dear son? Is he a darling child? For as often as I speak against him, I do earnestly remember him still: therefore my heart yearns for him; I will surely have mercy on him,” says the Lord.<sup>13</sup>

Let us not forget that Ephraim is the favorite son of Joseph, the son both Jacob and Rachel loved so much, a favorite also of Jacob himself.<sup>14</sup>

The way in which verses in the Bible mutually shed light on one another makes the text in Genesis brilliantly clear and will allow us to bring out the Biblical lesson applicable to our time. This is what rabbis mean by the sentence I quoted earlier: the Fathers’ actions are signs for their descendants. This long series of chapters telling in detail the story of Jacob’s family will enable us to attempt to draw an indispensable lesson about the conduct we should adopt if we also are to reach the peace to which all aspire. We will now apply these verses to the present time.

Let us first recall that for many centuries, Christians’ attitude towards Jews was a hostile one. If we ask ourselves why this was so, the problem raised by Israel’s election is obviously what comes first to our mind. Having been chosen by God, the Jewish people felt that it had a spiritual mission on a universal scale. Christendom did not accept this choice of God. It could not speak peaceably to the people of the Promise. This rivalry is what we discover in the subsequent verses relating Joseph’s first dreams. The sheaves which the brothers bound in the fields bow down to Joseph’s. The sun, the moon and eleven stars respectfully bow before him.

These verses are wonderfully echoed at the end of the book of Genesis. After the Patriarch has died, the brothers are worried. They are afraid of Joseph’s mounting hatred. A spirit of jealousy or demand for

things due is not, this time, the reason why they could not directly address him with words of peace. What kept them from it is their feeling of guilt and inferiority. They went so far as to resort to language never used before: Your father commanded before he died, saying: "You shall tell Joseph, now please forgive the disobedience of your brothers, and their sin, because they did evil to you. Now, please forgive the disobedience of the servants of the God of your father." (...) Joseph replies: "Don't be afraid, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save many people alive." (...) He comforted them, and spoke kindly to them.<sup>15</sup>

Since events concerning the Patriarchs are bound to be reproduced in the life of their descendants, whether close or remote, let us continue our meditation and try to clarify the Jewish quest for true peace. As distant disciples of the Midrash masters, let us modestly try to ask the same questions again and bring the answers up to date.

*The break in the account of Jacob's generations.*

Let us listen to the reflections in the Talmud about the attitude toward Jesus of doctors of the law—including some of the most famous—who lived at the same time when he did.

This is what the Masters teach; if a man has committed an offence, push him away with your left hand—which symbolizes rigorousness and also relative weakness, compared to the right hand, a symbol of mercy—but draw him back with your right hand, unlike Elisha who pushed away his [errant] servant Gehazi with both hands,<sup>16</sup> or Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perahia who cast off Jesus of Nazareth with both hands.

When king [Alexander] Jannaeus put the Sages to death, Rabbi Yehoshua ben Perahia and Jesus went to Alexandria, in Egypt. When peace returned [to Jerusalem], Simeon ben Shetah [Queen Salome Alexandra's brother] sent to the Master the following written message: From me, Jerusalem, the holy city, to you, Alexandria, in Egypt. O, my sister! My Lord and Master dwells in you and I am reduced to widowhood. Rabbi Yehoshua immediately set out to return. He had to stop at an inn where he was most respectfully treated. He exclaimed: "How wonderful the welcome in this inn!" His companion said: "Yet her eyes are so small!" The Master burst

out: "Is that what concerns you?" He then excommunicated him by blowing four hundred times in his shofar (the ram's horn used for the New Year and Kippur). Jesus returned several times and asked: "Master, accept my repentance." Rabbi Yehoshua paid no heed. One day, as the Master was reciting the prayer in Deuteronomy 6, — Shema Israel...Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might—Jesus asked once more [for forgiveness]. Rabbi Yehoshua decided to accept his repentance. With his hand he gave him a sign [to wait, for he could not interrupt his praying]. His disciple mistook this gesture for a final refusal. He erected a monument and became an apostate. Rabbi Yehoshua came to him and said: "Repent." Jesus replied: "I have received this teaching from you: whoever commits an error which brings along other people in its wake can no longer repent."<sup>17</sup>

This text which dates from the third century gives precious indications about the break which took place in Jewish history at this most important time. Precisely at the moment when Simeon ben Shetah, an eminent figure in the Sanhedrin, informs the undisputed Master (my Lord and Master) that peace has returned to Jerusalem, a schism takes place which is based on a double misunderstanding. One should return to the basic exegesis of this particularly important text, insist on the symbolism of Jerusalem and Alexandria, emphasize the severe judgment passed on Rabbi Yehoshua (He could have referred to the precedent of Prophet Elisha's failing when he treated his servant Gehazi without an ounce of mercy.). One could wonder about his blaming Jesus for showing an interest in the innkeeper (see Luke 7, 36 - 8, 3). Also the strong desire by Jesus to see his repentance agreed to by his master (Don't think that I have come to destroy the law or the prophets... Matthew 5, 17) Then, at the end, the final break, in spite of Rabbi Yehoshua's abjuration, his offer of forgiveness comes too late (Don't think that I have come to send peace on the earth. People from one's own family will be one's enemies. Matthew 10, 34-35) One can understand why for many centuries this text was not promoted by the Vatican. It was known by Jews only through a confidential booklet (texts "omitted" from the Talmud). Even the Vilnius edition—the Talmud Vulgate—did not dare reprint it in its entirety.

The final break between the Pharisees and the Judeo-Christian community mostly took place after Saul of Tarsus prevailed. At the time to which this text about the break refers, dissensions were raging among the people of Judea. A measure of their intensity is the Essenes' hatred of the Sadducees (and, to a lesser extent, the Pharisees).

And the [Essene] priests will bless all the people in God's lot, those who walk perfectly in all His ways, and they will say: "Let Him bless you in every good thing and guard you from every evil! Let Him enlighten your heart with the intelligence of life and let Him favor you with eternal knowledge! And let Him raise before you His gracious face to grant eternal happiness to you!" And the Levites will curse all the people in Belial's lot. They will speak up and say:

"Be cursed in all the works of your criminal impiety! Let God make you an object of fright through all the avengers of His revenge! Let Him throw at you extermination through all the executioners of his punishments! Be cursed, with no mercy, according to the darkness of your works! And be damned in the night of the eternal fire! Let God not favor you when you invoke Him and let Him be without forgiveness to atone for your iniquities! Let Him raise His angry face to take revenge of you, and let there be for you no [word of] peace on the lips of all those who have an attachment to the Fathers' [Alliance]!" And all who tread in the Alliance will say after those who bless and those who curse: "Amen! Amen!"<sup>19</sup>

The Dead Sea manuscripts also provide us with precious details about the persecutions which the Sadducees—being at the time in power—inflicted on other Jewish sects.<sup>20</sup> The flight of Rabbi Yehoshua and Jesus to Alexandria was probably not unrelated to these persecutions and accusations.

Jesus himself shows little kindness to the Jews in Chorazin, Bethsaida and Kfar Nahum:

Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works had been done in Tyre and Sidon which were done in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and

Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. You, Capernaum, who are exalted to heaven, you will go down to Hades. For if the mighty works had been done in Sodom which were done in you, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you that it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom, on the day of judgment, than for you.<sup>21</sup>

During the centuries of persecution endured by the Jews, defensive reactions were in evidence from their side. They mostly demonstrated a will totally to ignore the Christian message and depreciate it as much as possible. A more balanced, more equitable judgment about Christianity as well as Islam had to wait until Jewish thinkers in medieval Spain and Catalonia formulated it for the benefit of their Jewish brethren. I have in mind masters like Maimonides (1138-1204), Nahmanides (1194-1270), and especially Rabbi Menahem ha Meiri (1241-1316).

Israel's election was a bone of contention which led to many misunderstandings and much suffering. It was necessary to reaffirm, on each occasion, that it involves no exclusive rights or privileges reserved for Israel. On the contrary, it confers upon Israel additional obligations. These were willingly accepted at the foot of Mount Sinai when the Hebrew people exclaimed in unison: All that God shall say, we will do and we will hear it. This is recalled by the Bible in Deuteronomy when it says: "You have declared the Lord this day to be your God... and the Lord has declared you this day to be a people for his own possession" [literally: his jewel people].<sup>22</sup> Israel's mission is to spread among all human beings, created in the image and likeness of God the knowledge of and the faith in one only God, Creator of heaven and earth.

To be fair to both Christians and Jews, one must say that they never hid their feelings. They never advocated a fictitious peace, a fictitious friendship. By contrast, all declarations from both sides during the last half-century reveal a deep feeling of fraternity which is affirmed on every occasion. Jews and Christians fully appreciate it. Let me mention just one example: the remarks by Pope John Paul II and Prime Minister Ehud Barak at the Yad Vashem Institute in Jerusalem in 2000. These statements will remain as testimony to Christian repentance after the Shoah and the will for friendship and brotherhood of Jews who survived horror.

The time has come, we fondly hope, to see those who, during many centuries, carried seed to be scattered for sowing and sowed in tears

because of the suffering inflicted upon their people, now return with joy, bending under the weight of their sheaves. Already at the time of the Second Temple, our forebears had crossed the seas so as to convince the God-fearing to come closer to the truth. Jesus paradoxically bears witness to this most difficult mission when he vehemently rebukes the scribes and Pharisees, saying: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel around by sea and land to make one proselyte."<sup>23</sup>

The priests also testify:

Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men, from every nation under the sky. When this sound was heard, the multitude came together, and were bewildered, because everyone heard them speaking in his own language. They were all amazed and marveled,<sup>1</sup> saying to one another, "Behold, aren't all these who speak Galileans? How do we hear, everyone in our own native language? Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and people from Mesopotamia, Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya around Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabians: we hear them speaking in our languages the mighty works of God!"<sup>24</sup>

Even when Israel is surrounded by enemies seeking to ruin it, even when it is worried about its survival and the peace of the world which human folly may destroy for ever, Israel must take upon itself its primary responsibility to be the light of nations, the announcer of good tidings, the peace maker, the builder of the temple of universal brotherhood.

The conflicting relations Christians and the Jewish people have entertained during many centuries culminated at the time of the Shoah. Israel then found itself alone before its persecutors. They were born in Christian Europe, but they held theories contrary to any revealed Faith. In a certain way, they became guilty of the crime of idolatry or, more exactly, self-idolatry. After the fall of Nazism, after the restoration of peace and democracy in Europe, we witnessed a sincere repentance by the Christian community. This culminated in the Declaration by the German bishops in 1997, followed by the Declaration of the French bishops at Drancy in 1998, then the Vatican Declaration in 1999, and the prayer by Pope John Paul II at the Western Wall in 2000. All these events show how far we have gone. They demonstrate a radical trans-

formation of relations between the Jewish and many Christian communities.

In concluding, one must however emphasize that there is a difference between what happened to Joseph and to the Jewish people of the present day. For Joseph it was no more than a time of trial. For the Jewish people, alas! it was the sad reality.<sup>25</sup> This being said, what lesson must we draw from our recalling the family history of Patriarch Jacob, the most important of the three patriarchs according to the Jewish tradition?<sup>26</sup> We have lived through a time of rupture, lack of understanding, persecution and, for Christians, the tragic misunderstanding about the subject of Israel's election, a time of hatred openly declared and endured. We have now come to the time when once again Patriarch Jacob asks us to go to humankind and see what kind of peace is shared by nations, what sort of fraternity rules their behavior. We are asked to lend a careful ear in order to try to discern the steps of Prophet Elijah announcing the coming of the Messiah. We should actively prepare ourselves for this privileged moment which has been awaited for so long. Let God soon, in our days, grant to the peoples a pure language, that they may all call on the name of the Lord, to serve him shoulder to shoulder.<sup>27</sup> Meetings like this one, today, will bring us closer to the fulfillment of this beautiful prophesy by Zephaniah.

In an apocryphal text, *Levi's Testament*, the glory of the new priest is described as follows:

After their punishment is accomplished on behalf of the Lord, priesthood will disappear. Then the Lord will raise up a new priest to whom all the Lord's sayings will be revealed. He will judge on the earth in truth for numberless days. His star will rise in the heaven like a king's, resplendent in the light of Knowledge like the sun shining at noon and he will be magnified in the whole world. He will shine like the sun above the earth. He will remove every darkness from below the heaven and peace will reign all over the earth. The heavens will jubilate in these days, the earth will rejoice and the clouds will be in joy. The Knowledge of the Lord will spread out over the land like the water of the sea and the glorious angels of the Lord's Face will be joyful because of him. The heavens will open up and sanctification will come upon him from the Temple of glory as well as a paternal voice like that of Abraham over



Isaac. The glory of the Most High will be proclaimed over him and the Spirit of intelligence and sanctification will dwell on him in the water. For he is the one who will give the Lord's magnificence to his sons in truth forever and no one will succeed him from generation to generation forever.<sup>28</sup>

Let Prophet Elijah<sup>29</sup>—High Priest Phineas—come soon and in our days, announcing the Messiah.<sup>30</sup>

### Notes

1. *Midrash Rabba* on Genesis 70, 6.
2. III, 19 (16).
3. *Midrash Rabba* on Genesis 1.
4. Genesis 37, 1-14.
5. *Ibid.* 25, 19.
6. *Ibid.* 45, 10-11.
7. Exodus 1, 1.
8. Leviticus 25, 35.
9. Babylon Talmud, *Shabbat* Treatise, 10 B.
10. Genesis 50, 18.
11. 37, 21-22.
12. See also Jeremiah 31,7.
13. Jeremiah 31, 6-20.
14. Genesis 48, 19.
15. *Ibid.* 49, 17.
16. 2 Kings 5, 27. 17. Babylon Talmud, *Sanhedrin* Treatise 107 B.
18. See reference a few lines above, in the same text by Rabbi Yohanan.
19. *Rules of the Community* 2, 1-10 (From A. Dupont-Sommer's French translation in *Ecrits Intertestamentaires*, Editions de la Pleiade, Paris 1997, p. 12).
20. *Writing from Damascus* 1, 13 - 2, 13, *ibid.* pp. 143-144.
21. Matthew 11, 31.
22. Deuteronomy 26, 17-18.
23. Matthew 23, 15.
24. Acts 2, 1-11.

25. Emphasizing this point is the subject for a moving elegy recited until now in Ashkenazim rite synagogues on the 9th day of the month of Av for the commemoration of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem. This elegy recalls the horrors the Jews endured in Christian Europe, especially on the banks of the Rhine River, at the time of the Crusades. The last verse reads: "Go, you martyr, and tell Abraham our father that for him [the binding of Isaac] was just a test, whereas, for us, it is the dreadful reality."
26. *Midrash Rabba* on Genesis 76.
27. Zephaniah 3, 9.
28. *Levi's Testament* 18, 1-8 (From Marc Philonenko's French translation in *Ecrits Intertestamentaires*, op. cit., p. 855).
29. Cf. Malachi 3, 23.
30. M. De Jonge, *The Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Assen, 1953.



ADOLPHE STEG

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## Jewish Pathways to Peace: A Response to Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat

In line with the admirable presentation by Chief Rabbi Renè-Samuel Sirat, I propose to touch on some notions characterizing the word *shalom*—peace—in the Hebraic tradition. To shed light on this, as I am not a Rabbi, I will base this discussion on the teachings of Rabbi Tsvi Yehouda Kook and Rabbi Leon Ashkenazi, as transmitted to me by Eliezer Cherqui, a disciple of these two great masters.

The task of grasping the notion of peace in Judaism is certainly an ambitious one, since the very notion sums up, in a way, the whole scheme of the Creator for his creation.

The Hebrew word *shalom* is, in fact, one of the designations for God himself. We find this usage as early as the Biblical period: the judge Gideon, after having experienced a prophetic revelation, builds an altar to God and calls it *Jehovahshalom*, which means “The Lord is Peace” (Judges, VI, 24). The Talmud, evoking this chapter in the Tractate Sabbath, states clearly that “*shalom* is the name of The Holy One, Blessed be He.” As a matter of fact, to this day some religious Jews avoid writing this word except in abbreviated form (the Tetragramme), due to its sanctity.

Yet, paradoxically, the word *shalom* is the one used by the people of Israel since the most ancient of times to welcome and greet one another. How can we explain this paradox? How can we explain the use, informal and “profane” as it were, of a term so charged with sanctity?

I believe that the answer may reside in the very meaning of the word *shalom*. Indeed, this term not only signifies peace, but also contains the idea of *shelemout*; that is, the quality of that which is perfect, a whole, undivided, unbreakable.

In that sense, *shalom* can very well pertain to God. But it applies also to humanity. Yes, in the earthly reality of our world, the primary

oneness is occult: each being is in expansion and strives to occupy the entire space, therefore to alter the shelemout of the other.

The most spectacular example of the absence of *shalom* in inter-human relationship manifests itself right away in the form of fratricide as soon as we are introduced to the first "brother." It will be interesting to dwell for a moment on this tragedy, and to try to understand its meaning in light of Rabbi Leon Ashkenazi's commentary on it. He writes, history seems to start with a failure.

The first generation, that of Adam and Eve, was a stranger to the social problem. Between the two of them, it was not about a relationship with one another and the test they are put to in the Book of Genesis is that of the couple as a unit and its relationship with the Creator.

On the other hand, the occurrence of society according to the strictest definition of the term, that is, the relationship of an individual with an individual, begins with the second generation, that of Cain and Abel. The birth of violence in the world, its mechanics, its reason for being, is linked to the flaws, the lack or the negation of a true relationship of *shalom*.

Rabbi Ashkenazi explains this deficiency in the following manner: "It is written in Leviticus XIX, 18, thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself and the great Rabbi Akiba adds thou shall love thy neighbor as thyself, which is a key principle of the Torah." The principle may well remain an abstract thought, a pure ideal of good intentions, if it is not applied and applied efficiently. Now, the secret of this efficiency lies in *reciprocity*, which is the meaning of the expression "*as thyself*."

This appeal for reciprocity is, according to Rabbi Akiba, the basic condition for the surfacing of an efficient fraternity, meaning the kind that translates into action. And it is the disrespect for this principle of reciprocity that brings forth the violence of Cain. Indeed, one notices that in the text of the Book of Genesis, Abel alone is assigned the word "brother" whereas Cain is born first and is self-contained. He cannot tolerate the other, born in addition, extra, as the text suggests: "she conceived and bore," then "*vatossef laledet*" (Genesis, IV, 1): she continued to bear, as the Bible adds, "Then she bore again, this time his brother Abel."

To Cain, Abel is the other; he cannot tolerate the other born in addition unless his own excellence is recognized. But this does not

occur: he does away with Abel and the word "brother" is henceforth stricken from the narrative. We will have to wait until the introduction of Abraham for the term to re-emerge and with it, the hope for fraternity. According to Rabbi Ashkenazi, after the murder of Abel, the biblical narrative becomes literally that of the search for fraternity (a little like what we call affiliation – the search for paternity). And this problem will be illustrated again later, after Abraham, with the account of Jacob and of Joseph and his brothers: "Go, I pray thee, see whether there be *shalom* with thy brethren." For Jacob, the problem that man needs to resolve is that of the coexistence of brothers among themselves. This is due to the fact that we are creatures. The Creator readily offers us all the being by letting us be among one another; but, by the very same act, he creates his creatures as rivals to one another and gives us all but the brotherly love which he requires from us for our salvation.

This call for unity in the respect for diversity, this unflagging quest for fraternity is a fundamentally humane task, and it is this quest that we express when we meet another and greet each other with the word *shalom*. In short, the road to peace runs through the recognition of the other in his entirety. As Emmanuel Levinas puts it: "the only path to respect for God is that to respect for one's neighbor."

I would like to tackle at present another theme of our conference. In the letter he sent to us, Dr. David Coppola suggests giving some thought to the following question: "What can we do to improve our teachings and practices to achieve peace?"

After the prodigious and auspicious developments that are Seelisberg, John XXIII, Vatican II, the declaration of repentance, the recognition of the State of Israel, the Pope's visit to Israel and the Wailing Wall, it seems to me that the relations between religions and in particular between Judaism and Christianity can be taken even further and take on new, greater dimensions, specifically if they are inspired by the *shalom* of the *shelemout*, that is of the concept of "entirety," of plenitude. Which means that the condition for the widening of the dialogue requires one not to look to diminish and mutilate the integrity of the faith of one's neighbor. In other words, our discussion cannot take place in the spheres of theology, of our identities. However, our proximity, our intimacy even, I would say, will assert itself thanks to our profound and numerous convergences which are rooted in our respective faiths.

We share, in fact, the same vision of the world and of humankind, the same idea of the dignity of the human being and of life; we have the

same values, same references, and in this de-sanctified and torn world, we are all on the same side. When, for instance, I take part in the proceedings of medical bioethics, which nowadays deal with the essential, I am always struck by how all those who proclaim the Bible share the same ethical approach to questions that often touch respect for mankind, for life and for the preservation of the species. It is our convergences that, in my view, have to be underlined and exalted.

I would like to share with you a personal experience. I have the honor of presiding over the Alliance Israelite Universelle, a venerable institution that was founded over 140 years ago. Its calling is educational, by means of the Jewish school, and cultural, through notably our Judaica Library (the largest in Europe), our Jewish research division, and even more so through the School for Jewish Studies. The Alliance, moreover, is particularly engaged in the dialogue between religions, and notably in the Judeo-Christian dialogue, by means of a committee presided over by Rabbi Sirat. Within this scope, we aspire to undertake all that we can in order to extend and intensify this dialogue. In that regard, I thought that a decisive progress could be achieved thanks to study, and by that I mean the study of texts.

I am basing my words on the elementary fact that we have the same foundation, the same common roots, and I cannot help but cite Romans 11:18: "Thou bearest not the root, but the root, thee." But these roots come from a script, the Bible, and it is in the joint study of this script, this text, that I believe a new fraternity can take shape and grow in strength.

After a long period of "quarrels" (the disputes of the Middle Ages), after that of the "dialogue," it is time to turn to the "study." Indeed, a) In quarrel, it is the struggle for opinions that prevails; b) In dialogue—granted, more appeased—one often seeks to convince the other; c) In study, however, one looks for learning, for understanding an issue and understanding each other.

Well, this idea has become a full-grown reality thanks to Shmuel Trigano, the great Jewish scholar, who has devoted himself to these academic gatherings of the School for Jewish Studies. For three years now, and in collaboration with the Catholic Institute of Paris, we have been developing what we call the "Biblical Dialogues" which, two or three times a year, bring together at the Sorbonne hundreds of listeners.

It is thus that, on the same benches, side by side, leaning over the Scriptures that constitute our common heritage, we have examined the

following themes: 1) reading the Bible; 2) the scapegoat mechanism in sociology; 3) the wolf and the lamb; 4) the suffering righteous; 5) Paul and the issue of “the other;” and 6) the sin of Eve.

The enthusiasm that gives rise to these studies and the fervor with which they are pursued testify to the desire that exists in our world to understand one another more fully. In my humble opinion, these biblical dialogues should serve as an example for all people of faith and good will.

Recently two philosophers—one Jewish, Catherine Chalier, and the other Christian, Marc Faessler—have published a commendable book on Judaism and Christianity. Its title is *Judaism and Christianity, a Shared Listening*. It seems to me that hope could also be expressed by the phrase *Judaism and Christianity, a Shared Studying*. Our common goal of standing united in the respect for diversity, this unflagging quest for fraternity, is an essential human task, rooted in knowledge. But, for the concept of *shalom* to come true, human effort—as necessary a condition as it is—is not enough, hence we must also pray for *shalom*. A case in point: Jews pray thrice a day in the *shemone esre*, which is the Jewish prayer *par excellence*. After having prayed, in 18 pleas, for the fulfillment of all the blessings that will improve the world—knowledge, the Torah, health, abundance, deliverance, justice, Jerusalem, the Kingdom, and so on—we end with one last plea: “*sim shalom*,” which means “*spread peace*.” And since this can only come from above, we add: “May He who establishes peace in the heavens, grant peace unto us.” This is my fervent prayer today.





RENE GUTMAN

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## Jewish Pathways to Peace: A Response to Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat

At first, and to introduce my response to Chief Rabbi Sirat, I shall mention the verse, which we will read this Shabbat, in all our synagogues; Leviticus 19, 33, [Parashat] Keydoshim:

When an alien resides with you in your land you shall not oppress the alien. The alien who resides with you shall be to you as the citizen among you: you shall love the alien as yourself for you were aliens in his land of Egypt. I am the Lord, your God.”

*Ani Hashem Elokehem* is interpreted by Rashi of Troyes, *Elokeha We-Elokaw Anil*, “I am your God, and his God. I find this verse (and its interpretation) very symbolic in supporting the theme of universality in the concept of Election in Israel as it was just taught by Rabbi Sirat. Every day, before saying the *Shema Israel* (Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one,” Deuteronomy 6:4-5), the believer says: “With abounding love, has Thou loved us, O Lord our God, with great and exceeding pity hast thou pitied us. Thou hast chosen us from all peoples and tongues...”

Despite a tragic history that seems to contradict this affirmation, and despite the anguish and sometimes, the agony, the believer acknowledges the presence of God’s love for His chosen people, This love, which does not guard against cruelty or distress, is the one which allows us to pass through with the memory of the promise, the everlasting and living word, alive and transcending this suffering. This is a promise that was given to the Jewish people on the condition that each Jew will transmit it to his or her children, and to all who received God’s

promise, to be also greeted as in Isaiah 56, 28: "For my house shall be called a house of prayer for all peoples." Thus says the Lord God, who gathers the outcasts of Israel, "I will gather others to them, besides those already gathered." This is precisely what a Jew says, when he is called to bless the Torah, with this formula: "Blessed art thou O Lord our God, king of the universe, who hast chosen us from all peoples, and hast given us thy law." The secret of our language is linked with a blessing and a reading, which include the nations. For the God who has chosen us and who commands us at that moment to read the Torah, His Torah, is also the king of the universe. This is a universe and humanity which lives in it that cannot be denied or ignored when a Jew is reading the Torah scroll, because he is bearing his humanity in his prayer whether he likes it or not.

Despite its tragic history,<sup>1</sup> especially in the 20th century, the Jewish people, heirs of Abraham, can not forget the promise that was given to Abraham in Genesis 12:2-3: "I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make you great, so that you will be a blessing and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." Of course, as Franz Rosenzweig pointed out in *Star of Redemption*:

As a man who is created in the image of God, Jewish man as he faces his God, is a veritable repository of contradictions. As the beloved of God, as Israel, he knows that God has elected him and may well forget that he is not alone with God, that God knows others whom he himself may or may not know, that to Egypt and Assyria God says: "my people." He knows he is loved—so why concern himself with the world! In his blissful togetherness—alone—with God, he may consider himself man, and man alone, and look up in surprise when the world tries to remind him that not every man harbors the same certainty of being God's child as he himself. Yet, no one knows better that being dear to God is only this beginning, and that man remains unredeemed so long as nothing but this beginning has been realized. (p. 307)

Notice the double character of God's call to Abraham (Genesis 17): "Go for yourself (*Lekh lekhe*) your country and your birth place and your father's house to the land that I will show you." The divine call (as Rashi pointed out in his commentary), to go for yourself, for your spiri-

tual benefit, makes sense only if it is altogether a singular and a universal call. That is why it is immediately written: "And I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you and I will make your name great and you will be a blessing...and all the families of the earth will be blessed through you." There is no alternative. One has no choice between the blessing of one's people (the singular call) and the blessing of the families of the earth ("*mispahot ha'adama*)." The one and the other in this promise must come together. As the *Sefer Hassidim* say, "All the prayers and all the blessings in the Jewish liturgy are formulated in the plural form." How could he who prays express himself in the singular? How could a faithful Jew dare to say, "Blessed are thou O Lord, my God, king of the universe who hast chosen me?" (*Sefer Hassidim*, 839). The Lord "who has chosen us" implies an unchallengeable solidarity at the heart of prayer as in everyday life.

True prayer, says Rabbi Hayyim Volozhiner in his *Nefesh ha' Hayim* cited by Emmanuel Levinas in his essay, "Prayer Without Demand" (*Etudes Philosophiques*, 1984, n. 38), is never for oneself, never for one's needs, and Rabbi Hayyim states this explicitly. Instituted as it was by the men of the chief synagogue to replace the daily sacrifice made in the now destroyed or far-off temple, how could it contain any human demands? For were those daily sacrifices at the temple not burnt offerings, or holocausts? How could any individual allude to egoistic needs in his prayer and so compromise the pure dis-interestedness of the holocaust?

Or as Levinas wrote in another essay "Substitution:"

The for-itself self signifies self-consciousness: the for-all, responsibility for the others; support of the universe. This responsibility for others therefore, comes to be for man the meaning of his own self-identity. His self (*son moi*) is not originally for itself (*pour soi*)—through the will of God it is "for others." In this way, man becomes, in turn, the *lenefesh hayya*—the soul of the world, as if God's creative word had been entrusted to him to dispose of as he liked, to let it ring out, or to interrupt it...Responsibility for the others, this way of answering without a prior commitment, is human fraternity itself, and it is prior to freedom...The face of the other in proximity, which is more than representation, is an un-representable trace, the way of the infinite...the non-interchange-

able par excellence, the I, the unique one, substitutes itself for others. Nothing is a game.

The Yom Kippur liturgy also illustrates that when the faithful ask for God's mercy for an impressive list of faults, which could not be committed by only one person, this is a prayer which links individuals with others. As the Talmud says, "For all transgressions in the Torah he alone is punished, but here he and the whole world" (*Shevuot* 30b). And for all transgression of the *Lo Torah* is not the whole world punished? So, it is written: "And, they shall stumble one upon another (Lev. 26:57) one because of the iniquity of the other: this teaches us that all Israel are sureties one for another because it was in their power to prevent the sin and they did not prevent it."

The concept of election is true only if the so-called election linked between God and man, links him to a people; and, beyond that to humanity. Such an election is a call to universality. This question has been raised also by Christianity which understands the promises of its proper election as reflected in Matthew 11:27 when Jesus says: "All things have been handed over to me by my Father; and no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and anyone to whom the Son chooses to reveal him." As Franz Rosenzweig has noted, this is a duality in God that is incomprehensible to Jews, albeit Christian life rests precisely on it. Thus, Christians dares to enter the presence of the Father only by means of the Son; they believe they can reach the Father only through the Son. If the Son were not a human he would avail nothing to the Christian. He cannot imagine that God himself, the Holy God, could so condescend to him as he demands, except by becoming human himself.

And so, in the Gospel of John, Jesus says, "No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son who is close to the Father's heart who has made him known"(1:18) and later, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life" (8:12). No one can forget that the expression "light for the nations," "[*or la goyim?*]" was understood by Jews as the inner sense of the election as in Isaiah 42:6 – 49:6 where the prophet describes the vocation of the chosen: "I am Hashem. I have called you with righteousness. I will strengthen your hand. I will protect you. I will set you for a covenant to the people, for a light to the nations" (*Ve'ateneh'a*

*livrith-âm le ôr goyim*) and (49:6): "I will make you a light for the nation so that my salvation may extend to the ends of the earth."

Here the reaction of the Jewish people through the nations is explicit. It is a mission linked to universality. But, by saying that this prophecy of Isaiah does not concern the Jewish people but Jews and Jesus alone, does not John modify radically the concept of election? Does this not make it incomprehensible for Jews, this Christian interpretation? And, this interpretation is not more radical in terms of exclusiveness than the so-called exclusiveness election, as it is taught in the Jewish tradition, the "*pomme de discorde*," the stumbling block, quoted by Chief Rabbi Sirat, which is believed to have separated our two faiths? How can we not conclude that this sort of universality which is promised to those who recognize God through the Son is in the hands of pagans and not of the family of Abraham as it is said in Matthew 22:14: "For many are called but few are chosen?" This belief cannot be ignored by Jews. As the Jewish philosopher Catherine Chalier affirms, we cannot be apathetic to the fact that the Christians consider that they have received the renewal of the covenant through the Son.

Aware of what seems to be here the risk of the deification of man and humanization of God, we may nevertheless, be attentive to the fact that it is by and through Abraham that God—as if Abraham was himself a mediator—gave his promise to humanity, as it is said in Genesis 12:3: "We (*Ni Vreh'u bch'a kol Mispakhot ha Adama*) and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." Perhaps, says Catherine Chalier, it is in that way that the Christian concept of election through the Son can be "heard" by the Jews, that is from the perspective of the promise that was made to Abraham. Here Jesus could be seen by Jews as the heir of Abraham by and through whom the pagans can reach the One who spoke to their ancestors, and speaks to them.

This mediation is of course, is very difficult concerning the questions which may then be asked. Why should the law be kept at a distance from the pagans as the price of this mediation? Why should the mediator be greeted as the Messiah? Why did this mediation become so hard as to provoke such hate against the people who gave birth to the mediator? Without doubt, we face here a difficult task, but this is the skeleton of a possible new way of thinking for Jews and Christians in their understanding of the role of Jesus as a mediator, and for Christians who also make the effort to understand what it means for the Jewish people to be chosen, in order to affirm with Franz Rosenzweig, "Before

God then, Jew and Christian both labor at the same task, He cannot dispense with either" (Star of Redemption, p. 415). Also, to which sort of talk are we called together with our Muslim brothers and sisters?

Let us say with Abraham Heschel:

It is neither to flatter nor to refute one another, but to help one another: to share insight and learning; to cooperate in academic ventures on the highest scholarly level; and what is even more important, to search in the wilderness for well-springs of devotion, for treasures of stillness, for the power of love and care of man. What is urgently needed are ways of helping one another in the terrible predicament of here and now by the courage to believe that the world of the Lord endures forever as well as here and now, to cooperate in trying to bring about a resurrection of sensitivity, a revival of conscience; to keep alive the divine sparks in our souls, to nurture openness to the spirit of the Psalms, reverence for the words of the prophets and faithfulness to the Living God."

That is, dear friends, our universalism. In the cave that represents the resting place of the patriarchs and our mothers, the Talmud also lays Adam and Eve to rest: it is for the whole humanity that we should all work together!

JAMES G. WILLIAMS

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## Finding What Is Good in Jewish-Christian Relations

*Higgid lekha 'adam mah tov umah YHWH doresh mimmekha  
Ki 'im 'asot mishpat wa'ahavat chesed wehatsne'a lekhet 'im 'elo-  
hekha*

He has told you, O human beings, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you but to do justice and to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8).

### Introduction

**M**y title indicates that what links us, Jews and Christians, has to do with the great words from the book of the prophet Micah. But to understand them in context and most deeply, I think I should begin with the human predicament. In one sense, this is to address the question, "Why have we failed?" But in understanding why we have failed we find also the positive teaching, the *deep* teaching, of Judaism and Christianity. If we attain to this understanding, we find a *prophetic* mode, a prophetic way of viewing our human condition. But the prophetic way of which I am speaking does not revolve around prophecy and fulfillment but an *anthropological* connection between the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament.

I would like to say, by the way, that I recognize and acknowledge the importance of dialogue between and among Muslims, Christians, and Jews, but including Islam also in this paper seemed too great a task. However, much of what I have to say about our human predicament and a common theological ground should be relevant also to our Muslim brothers and sisters.



So will begin with our predicament, our common human condition. I will move from there to the common Biblical tradition, as the second part of the paper, and I will speak finally of the need for repentance and conversion.

### *I. Our Predicament*

Over and over again we find humans in conflict and rivalry. Why this is the case I will address further on. Conflict and rivalry may and often do lead to chaos and violence. To avoid this state, or to find a remedy after violence occurs, our human tendency is to find someone to blame. Don't we see and experience this in every walk of life? We want to be able to name someone who is responsible for what has gone wrong. We must not only believe our accusation, but also that it justifies attacking the victim.

The process of blaming in order to rid the social body of its pollution is deeply rooted in human cultures—and I would say also in the human self. The great sacred stories of the world typically point to acts of violence as the solution to human social and political problems, including the principal problem of violence. In other words, they tell of violence done in order to “end violence.” This has been treated at length and with great insight in the works of René Girard and the theologians and critics he has influenced.<sup>1</sup>

There is a mass of evidence from all over the world that our human ancestors practiced two kinds of ritual, whose purpose was to reconcile members of the community to one another and to their deity or deities. One kind of ritual revolved around sacrificing a victim at a sacred site, usually on an altar of some sort. Our ancestors probably offered humans first, and then, later, animals were substituted (there is an allusion to this in Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22). In my own studies and related reading I have seen evidence for human sacrifice in Mesopotamia and Europe—and also in ancient Israel.<sup>2</sup> The key passage in Israelite law is Exodus 22:28: “You shall give me the firstborn of your sons.” Many interpreters argue that this command does not mean literally to slay and offer the firstborn son as a sacrificial victim. But I have no doubt that children, the firstborn and perhaps others, were offered as sacrifices in ancient Israel (2 Kings 16:3; 23:10; Jeremiah 7:31; 32:35; see also 2 Kings 3:27, where the king of Moab offers the sacrifice, but this is not condemned by the Israelite narrator).

This ritual practice is rooted in experiences of violence and the discovery of a way of avoiding the blaming process that could and often does spread to infect the entire community, so that there is "war of all against all." The second type of ritual has the same origin. It may be called "scapegoating," a term based on the ritual described in Leviticus 16, where it involves intentionally transferring the sins of the people onto a he-goat and driving him into the wilderness. But many communities did not select only animals for their scapegoat rituals. Human beings were also chosen. Particularly striking and well documented, for example, are the rituals in ancient Greece in which one or more persons were selected, set aside for a period, beaten, and driven out of the city, often to their death.<sup>3</sup>

Of course, we now use the term "scapegoating" in a sense that seems at first different from ancient ritual practices. Two or three people take out their hostility on one person, who is a substitute for the real object of their anger. Or perhaps there is tension in the group because of rivalry or potential rivalry, so the participants gain a measure of agreement and harmony by joining together against someone or something. The hostility may be expressed only verbally, or it could involve getting "rough" or violent with the person attacked. In ordinary speech in English, scapegoating sometimes refers to excluding or persecuting an individual or a minority group. It may even include execution or lengthy imprisonment. Although they are far apart in time and cultural context, a close examination shows that the modern experience of "scapegoating" serves much the same function as the ancient one: a group or crowd relieves tension or "lets off steam," which would otherwise burst them apart, by turning against someone or some group that is perceived as "bad." In fact, they become "bad" because the dominant group in a given situation needs an object of anger and the scapegoat is a good object because he or she or they are vulnerable.

The vulnerability of the victim is a key point. Sacrificial and scapegoating rituals function to relieve the stress of conflict and violence on the social body. Those selected for sacrifice and for scapegoating are very vulnerable: they are weak and lack means of defending themselves (children, women in most societies, foreigners, people with handicaps)<sup>4</sup> or sometimes because they are apparently so strong and prominent that they are vulnerable "at the top" of the social body. Moses, for example, comes under attack a number of times according to Exodus and Numbers.<sup>5</sup> We know that in various cultures kings were ritually slain by their own people.<sup>6</sup>

Sacrifice and scapegoating relieve the stress of escalating rivalries on the social body and thus their object is to restore social balance and peace. This is not necessarily a conscious object; it probably is not in most instances, and certainly not in ancient traditional societies.

How did this whole process get started? Are we just naturally aggressive and violent? Well, yes and no. No, in the sense that we are not absolutely predetermined by our very natures to be violent. But yes in the sense that something happened in the origins of humanity at various times and places that entered into our cultural heritage and—I believe—has probably entered into our genetic inheritance.<sup>7</sup> Again, I am trying to describe a predicament. Here and elsewhere I look for illumination to the work of Girard and others who have tried to think through to the origins of what we are and have become. What happened apparently was that at various times and places, the hominids in the process of becoming human discovered that peace and order came about, temporarily at least, when the whole group fell upon one of its members. Girard calls this the “single victim mechanism” (*mécanisme victimaire*).<sup>8</sup> A few vulnerable people, or a small subgroup, could also be the object of the attack.

But why does it have to work out this way? Why is conflict and violence inevitable in human relations? As the biblical tradition tells us, we are creatures of *desire*. And this desire is aroused when we see what the other person has. We imitate one another, especially significant models in our lives. And significant models are not only authority figures, but may be peers, with whom we may quickly fall into rivalry.

Desire is not an instinct. It is not something programmed into us, so it doesn't work like instincts in other creatures. It is rather a potential that must become activated for an infant to become human, and it becomes actual for the infant as he or she imitates parents and also other children. We have all noticed the kind of situation where two toddlers are playing independently, each one with a toy. Then if one of them sees another toy nearby and moves to get it, the other toddler suddenly wants it too. Why is this? Is it because there is some inherent value in the third toy? Or isn't it rather that desire arouses desire because we learn to desire by imitating models?

The desire that comes into being through following models is not bad; it is good in and of itself. To desire what models desire is necessary if the child is to be able to learn and love and deal with the world.

But this imitative or mimetic desire can and does lead to conflict and violence. How is this? If our desire to be like a model is strong enough. If we identify with that person closely enough, we will want to have what the model has or to be what the model is. If this is carried far enough and if there are no safeguards restraining and directing desire (one of the functions of religion and culture), then we become rivals of our models. Or we compete with one another to become better imitators of the same model, and we imitate our rivals even as we compete with them. This opens up the possibility of conflict at all levels of human interaction, from personal relations to social and political relations.

Let's return to the blaming process that is at the origin of sacrifice and scapegoating. I will try to spell this out a little more. Any thesis about remote origins has necessarily to be a hypothesis. In this case, Girard's mimetic theory presents a model which can be applied to different human situations, and we can then ask ourselves, "Does it make sense of this or that situation, or not? Does it illumine human interactions?" Please note, by the way, that the model is not simply a hypothesis about the origin of violence. It is above all a model shedding light on human relations here and now. That is why it is so relevant to the theme of this conference and volume.

The hypothetical aspect of the mimetic model proposes the following: As our pre-human ancestors developed a greater and greater brain capacity with a greater and greater ability to imitate others and an accompanying loss of animal instincts, they often found themselves in confusion and trouble because of fear and panic. When frightened or threatened, whatever the cause, they imitated each other's reactions of fear. Sometimes this imitation was in the form of a reaction of striking out at someone in response to a blow (you hit me, I hit you). But at some point various ancestors happened to converge upon someone among them—someone weak or marginal, perhaps an outsider—and killed or expelled this person. They experienced immediate relief from the stress of conflict and violence. This kind of experience, as it repeated itself, began to enter into the human genetic and cultural heritage, especially through ritual procedures. Thus, the origin of sacrifice and scapegoating.

I should stress that much if not most of this process in which mimetic desire leads to conflict and spontaneous scapegoating, or to ritual sacrifice and scapegoating, is not conscious. We are more aware of it

now, largely because of the influence of the biblical heritage as it has worked in our culture. But when we are not analyzing situations but actually engaged in them, we typically find ourselves caught up in the mimetic cycle of rivalry. There is a sense in which we can't help ourselves. The Christian doctrine of original sin and the Jewish principle of the *yetser ha-ra'* the evil imagination, speak to this. There is a common human predicament.<sup>9</sup>

## II. *The Common Biblical Tradition*

What I propose is to see the Jewish Scriptures and the New Testament in terms of an anthropological continuity. I will explain this in a moment. But first, I would comment that I wish neither to deny the distinctiveness of the two traditions nor to reduce them to some common denominator. I would like rather to sketch out where we might agree and form a basis not only for enlightening common inquiry but also for common work in the world, both scholarly and charitable.

By "anthropological" I mean an understanding of human nature and what it is, involved in the human condition. By human nature I don't intend to impose a fixed form or mold on human beings, the kind of concept criticized by Jean-Paul Sartre. I mean rather the fundamental, essential feature of mimetic desire, which is the defining human capability as it expands into human relations and human culture. The Bible exposes this over and over again, as I will briefly show further on. This human capability leads people into loving relationships and cooperation, but it also, and inevitably, leads to rivalry, conflict, and violence.

Now there is a characteristic biblical way of responding to the human condition of mimetic desire, conflict, and violence. I call it "prophetic." At a deep level a current moves through the Bible that I am calling prophecy and prophetic inspiration. Prophetic inspiration arises out of the vision of God and world that understands the human condition in terms of *desire* and its outcomes. Anthropologically—in terms of an understanding of human being—the Jewish Scriptures and the Christian Testament are about desire, which may take the form of human union and community, but also ineluctably takes the form of rivalry, conflict, scapegoating, and violence.

Those representing this prophetic outlook, this sort of insight, are not all prophets, nor are all the texts prophetic in the strict sense. But

since so many are prophets, and so many prophetic texts are involved, and since a distinctive understanding of God's concern for victims of persecution is highlighted, I will use this term. I am not trying to make a theological case for the understanding of God, which is valid in its own right, but presenting it as part of the anthropological understanding. This anthropological understanding is a thread running through the Scriptures, from Cain and Abel to Jesus of Nazareth. It doesn't encompass all the texts, of course. We can't find the distinctiveness of the biblical tradition by counting texts—violent vs. anti-violent, sacrificial vs. anti-sacrificial, exposure of mimetic desire vs. blindness to it. The Bible is, as it were, a "text in travail," giving birth to a new understanding of human existence. As Israel emerges out of the nations, so this new vision gradually emerges out of the tradition of revelation. We find this vision by looking at what is a distinctive, sustained vision of anthropos, of Adam, of human being. As far as I know, this distinctive element is found sporadically in other ancient cultures and religions, but not in the same sustained way informing a history, an ongoing story of what it means both to be human and to have a specific identity.

*Cain and Abel.* Cain desires the favor of God and when the Lord accepts Abel's offering but not his, he is extremely depressed ("his face fell," Genesis 4:5). He is depressed because rivalry with his brother is already present. He murders Abel his brother and tries to deflect the Lord's question, "Where is your brother Abel?" Cain replies, "I don't know. Am I my brother's guardian?" (Genesis 4:9) These two questions strike at the heart of what we are about here: Where is my brother (with whom I am in rivalry)? Am I the guardian of my brother?

The story of Cain and Abel is a founding tale, leading to the founding of the first city by Cain. In this way, we are told, civilization begins. Rome also had such a founding myth, the conflict between Romulus and Remus. Romulus killed Remus because he transgressed the boundaries of the new city to be. But the Roman sources do not condemn Romulus, they just report the deed without moral comment. The biblical narrative is different: the murderer is condemned, yet he is protected from the revenge of other men by a sign God places on him.

*Abraham.* Abraham, like the other patriarchs in the book of Genesis, is pictured as a human being whose motives and deeds are ambiguous, to say the least. But two episodes stand out in terms of our

subject here. One is Abraham's intercession for Sodom and Gomorrah because his nephew Lot and his family have settled in Sodom. "Far be it from you to do such a thing," he says to the Lord, "to make the innocent die with the guilty, so that the innocent and the guilty would be treated alike! Shall not the judge of all the earth do justice?" (Genesis 18:25). Here Abraham is the model of the mediator who even holds the model of the true God up to God. The scriptural tradition, the text in travail, is giving birth to the idea of the true God.

The other episode that stands out is Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. It is very important in the Jewish and Christian traditions. It is an account full of richness and ambiguity. I would simply stress that though it is not an explicit condemnation of child sacrifice, it certainly must reflect a struggle with the problem. The story of Abraham is moved forward by yearning to fulfill the divine promise, yet it turns out that it can be accomplished without violating the life of Abraham's son.

*Joseph.* The Joseph story is a beautiful account of desire and the avoidance of retaliation. The combination of father Jacob's dotting on Joseph and the brothers' jealousy has consequences leading to Joseph's exile in Egypt and finally the deliverance of Israel, Jacob and his family, from famine and starvation. One of the most moving moments of the Bible is the scene where Joseph, who the brothers believe is a great Egyptian lord, says to them in Hebrew, "I am Joseph your brother, whom you once sold into Egypt" (Genesis 45:4). He goes on to reassure and comfort them, relating that God's providence brought this about "for the sake of saving lives" (45:5).

*The Prophets.* In the great prophets in the golden era of prophecy, from about 750 to 550 B.C.E., we see a thread of opposition to the institution of sacrifice, the ritual offering of victims to God. I think we clearly find this in Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jeremiah (Amos 5:24-25; Hosea 6:6; Isaiah 1:10-17; Micah 6:7-8; Jeremiah 7:21-23). It has been argued that they opposed sacrifice only when it was a mere external act performed by people who had no regard for their conduct and the stipulations of the covenant. My own view is that this opposition goes much deeper than that. Why would Amos and Jeremiah, for example, deny that the Lord had even commanded the offering of sacrifice?

However that may be, I think the prophets intuited the connection of sacrifice and bloodshed. We see this in Hosea 6, where the divine

lament, "I desire steadfast love (*chesed*) and not sacrifice" is juxtaposed to God's judgment (Hosea. 6:5) directed against those who have transgressed the covenant and are implicated in murder, robbery, and idolatry (Hosea. 6:8-10). Likewise the Lord, in Isaiah's oracle, tells the worshippers, "Your hands are full of blood!" (Isaiah. 1:15).

This connection of sacrifice to bloodshed really comes out in the reversion to child sacrifice that evidently occurred during the crisis of the Babylonian siege and deportations to Babylonia. (Jeremiah 7:31; 19:5; 32:35; Ezekiel 16:15-21; 20:25-31; 23:36-39.)<sup>10</sup> It seems that both in individual lives and society and culture the human tendency is to revert to earlier behavior in times of crisis. In any event, the animal victim is clearly a substitute for the human victim, and when people feel desperate their desire is overwhelming to do what was believed to be effective when everything began for the individual or the tradition. "Shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?" (Micah 6:7) No, says Micah, you shall not. As he proclaims in a quotation that serves as the epigraph of this paper:

You have been told, O humans, what is good.  
 And what does the Lord require of you,  
 But to do justice and to love kindness [*chesed*]  
 And to walk humbly with your God?" (Micah 6:8)

*Other witnesses.* There are many other witnesses to the anthropological connection and prophetic mode of which I speak. There is Job, who appears to be persecuted by God through the Satan, but who is really persecuted by his friends and refuses to accept that his sufferings are the judgment of God upon him. Through his reflection on his calamities he even offers insight into the function of the scapegoat, as we see in Job 17:8: "Upright people are amazed at this [that is, my suffering]; and the innocent aroused against the wicked [that is, because everyone's attention is directed to me, the scapegoat]; and the righteous hold to their way, and those with clean hands increase in strength" [because they have a scapegoat, and so are not in dangerous rivalry with one another].

Other witnesses include the Psalms, which so often give voice to the single victim who is being persecuted in some way. There is Jesus of Nazareth, who welcomes all, sinners, tax collectors, whomever, to eat at his table; who expels the demons from the Gerasene demoniac, the



scapegoat of his community who so internalized the conflicts and rivalries laid upon him by the community that he continually struck himself with stones (Mark 5:5). Jesus quotes the word of the Lord from Hosea, "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (Matthew 12:7), and he says while suffering and dying on the cross, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). And there is Paul, who according to the Acts of the Apostles was converted to Christ on the way to Damascus when he heard a voice saying: "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" He said, "Who are you, sir?" The reply came, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting." (Acts 9:4-5). Conversion for Paul is thus to side with the Innocent Victim. This has come to mean, for Christians who understand the deeper meaning, that to be "in Christ" is to side with the innocent victim.<sup>11</sup>

### *III. Repentance and Conversion*

The hard thing about our common human predicament is that we are typically blind to it not only in committing obviously evil or sinful deeds, but also in our deeds and attitudes in which we believe we are thinking and acting with the best and noblest intentions. Ordinarily we are not conscious of mimetic desire while it is happening, nor are we aware of our own scapegoating inclinations and our subjection to a scapegoat mechanism. The world in the sense of our everyday relations and language is built upon rivalry and mimetic desire. Everybody at every level, from the individual to the nation state, wants to be number one or to participate in a social body that is number one.

It is difficult to avoid being entrapped in this mimetic scapegoating cycle because we always either presuppose it unknowingly or we fall back on it as if it were absolutely necessary. It is very difficult for me, for example, if I hear someone attack Christianity, or perhaps just voice a criticism of what I have said in the context of inquiry and discussion, not to become defensive and counter the other's assertion and argument. I am most likely then to imitate the other's attack or criticism by attacking or criticizing in return, and the whole cycle begins again. Of course, culture and religion have developed usually to allow such rivalry but also to keep it within safe bounds. In some cultures the very hint of rivalry is avoided in most situations, so much so that anthropologists and other investigators have concluded these cultures were nonviolent. My own sense of what happens is that some peoples have extensive

rules and taboos whose aim is to ensure peace and tranquility in their society, and this is precisely because the culture is so sensitive to the problem of violence. This sensitivity probably stems from violent origins.

I have described our human condition as subject to mimetic desire and rivalry. In this common human predicament what we all need, every one of us, is continual repentance and conversion. The Christian tradition has from the New Testament a Greek word that covers both: *metanoia*. The Jewish tradition speaks of *teshuvah*, return or repentance. For us to come together as brothers and sisters in our common humanity, we have to be open to *metanoia* of our hearts and minds, to *teshuvah* or turning back toward the path of grace and love and justice, and of course we cannot really conceive of a basis for such turning and returning without faith in a creator God who will enable us to engage in acts of restoring his creation, especially the restoration of the image of God in each human being and in humankind as a whole. Here we get into the area of a common theological ground. But if modern Western thought, especially since Feuerbach, has tended to postulate that humans create God in their own ideal image, biblical and biblically based thought postulates that God has created humans in his image. And this image of God in our fellow human beings is what we are to emulate.

The experience of *metanoia* or *teshuvah* will bring various blessings. In our teaching and communications and all our relationships we will ask how we may try to understand and appreciate those who seem foreign, alien to our past experiences and beliefs. We will seek to live by a model of non-retaliation to the extent possible. We will come together, as we have in this conference, in all ways possible. Doing this at the local level, in our towns and cities and communities, is especially important. And nothing is more significant or effective than praying for one another. Like many others, I have found that it is hard to remain hostile or defensive toward one for whom I pray. So we will pray for ourselves and others, so that we may forgive and be forgiven of the injury we do to the image of God. Again, the image of God is what we are to imitate.

Let me tell you something I recently heard from a deacon in the Catholic Church. He was speaking to a group about human sin and the divine grace that breaks through it. One thing he emphasized was the image of God in which all humans are created. He said when he

became a deacon, he learned that he should not only respect all human beings, but he should actually bow down before each person because each of us bears God's image. He decided that would be difficult and misunderstood, so he would bless each person he met. He soon found that this not only embarrassed most people but was also very time consuming if, for example, he was walking down the street or passing through a room. So he resolved at least to nod and smile to each person he encountered as a sign of deep respect for the bearer of God's image. We need, like him, to find some mode of bowing before the image of God in each and every person, no matter what the religious background. In spite of sin and structures of estrangement, the image of God is still there.

This repentance, this *teshuvah* or *metanoia*, will lead us to acknowledge our common human predicament of being under the power of mimesis and the scapegoat mechanism even as we seek to surmount it. This could lead us into uncomfortable, risky situations, because we would be acting as agents of change, as mediators. Recently I had the privilege of hearing the story of John Mkhize, a member of the Zulu people from South Africa who currently resides in Edmond, Oklahoma. He received the Martin Luther King, Jr., Peace Award in 1992. He worked as a mediator between the African National Congress of Nelson Mandela and the Inkatha Freedom Party. He said that as a mediator he had to work clandestinely: people supporting either party were shooting at each other, but both sides might shoot at him! He eventually won the trust of both sides and became an agent of reconciliation. Now he intends to go back in the near future and start a peace center mediating between whites and the African tribes, of which there are eleven in South Africa. He relates how difficult it has been to see white Europeans as his brothers and sisters under God because of the long-standing oppression his people experienced. In school and other settings he was not even allowed to use his Zulu name, Thulani, but had to go by John, and even now it is difficult emotionally for him to use and acknowledge his Zulu name because he so deeply internalized it as bad. But still, there he was, a devout Catholic Christian, standing before us witnessing to the love of God and having us repeat with him, "God is good, all the time. All the time, God is good." A powerful model of mediating love in action. I tell you, a model like that of John Mkhize is powerful: it may provoke opposition, but it will also melt prejudice and change hearts and minds.

In conclusion, we may lament with those of old who mourned the devastation of Jerusalem, but let us turn this lament toward the desire for peace and the affirmation of common humanity under God: *Hashivenu Y'aleykha wenashuv/Chaddesh yameynu keqedem*: "Return us to you, O Lord, and we shall (indeed) return/Renew our days as of old" (Lamentations 5:21). Renew our days as when we were created in the image of God. Cain repented, you know. At least there is a rabbinic tale to that effect in *Leviticus Rabbah* that discusses Genesis 4:16, "And Cain went out." It goes as follows:

On his way Cain met Adam, who said to him, What has happened as regards the judgment passed upon you?" Cain replied, "I repented, and I am pardoned." When Adam heard that, he smote his face and said, "Is the power of repentance as great as that? I did not know it was so."<sup>12</sup>

### Addendum

Is the position presented above compatible with the traditional Christian and Roman Catholic doctrine? I am a Roman Catholic Christian, having converted from the United Methodist Church in 1993. I was, in fact, an ordained minister. My approach is informed by Rene Girard's mimetic theory, not a dominant position yet, but more and more people are paying attention to it as a way not only of understanding the human condition, but also of finding a new way to articulate the Christian message. This is particularly the case in Europe, especially in Denmark, France, and Italy. Interest is also in growing in the United States. Human being as desiring being; humans born with a desire for communion with God, which is their potential to become fully human; sin as diversion and perversion of this desire through pride and envy (sometimes stated as the work of the Devil, which Girard essentially demythologizes); the need for repentance and conversion through the saving mediator or model: all of these basic components of Christian theology are very compatible with the mimetic theory, which, after all, stems from the influence of the Bible itself.

I do not claim to be a representative of all Christianity and I am certainly not speaking officially for the Roman Catholic Church. But I believe that the basic support of my thesis is there in the leading edge

of the Catholic Church and other churches concerned with interreligious and inter-cultural relations.

Concerning the prophets, René Girard, who is a devout Roman Catholic, has said the following:

The Jewish prophets had already proceeded in the same way as the Gospels. To combat the blindness of the crowds and to defend themselves against the hatred directed against their pessimistic insight and discernment, they resorted to examples of incomprehension and persecution of which earlier prophets were the victims. Traditional Christianity draws liberally from these texts whose sensitivity to collective injustice is extremely strong, whereas in philosophical texts it is very weak and in mythical texts it is null. Seeing as "prophetic" the interrelation of all the texts that denounce persecutory illusions is based on a profound intuition of the continuity between the Hebrew Bible and the Gospels.<sup>13</sup>

Regarding mimetic desire, the starting point in the anthropology of this paper, the *Catholic Catechism* says: "Yet certain temporal consequences of sin remain in the baptized, such as suffering illness, death, and such frailties inherent in life as weaknesses of character, and so on, as well as an inclination to sin that Tradition calls *concupiscence*, or metaphorically, 'the tinder for sin' (*fomes peccati*)."<sup>14</sup> The *Catechism* states that "Etymologically 'concupiscence' can refer to any intense form of human desire."<sup>15</sup> In American English it is largely associated with sexual appetite or desire, but its etymological sense is not that restricted. It means to reach eagerly for objects of desire. We are concupiscent beings. The *Catechism* does not, of course, explicate that concupiscence works by means of mimesis, which Girard's model of interpretation highlights.

Also relevant to this conference and for the work of interreligious dialogue, though probably well known to the reader, is the position taken in *Nostra Aetate*, Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions:

Since Christians and Jews have such a common spiritual heritage, this sacred council wishes to encourage and further mutual understanding and appreciation. This can be achieved,

especially, by way of biblical and theological enquiry and through friendly discussions.<sup>16</sup>

Therefore, the Church reproves, as foreign to the mind of Christ, any discrimination against people or any harassment of them on the basis of their race, color, condition in life or religion. Accordingly, following the footsteps of the holy apostles Peter and Paul, the sacred council earnestly begs the Christian faithful to “conduct themselves well among the Gentiles” (1 Peter 2:12) and if possible, as far as depends on them, to be at peace with all people (see Romans 12:18) and in that way to be true daughters and sons of the Father who is in heaven (see Mathew 5:45).<sup>17</sup>

#### Notes

1. Girard's most recent book in English is *I See Satan Fall Like Lightning*, tr. James G. Williams (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2001). For excerpts from Girard's works dealing with religion and Christianity and a bibliography through 1995, see *The Girard Reader*, ed. James G. Williams (NY: Crossroad Publishing, 1996). The most accessible book in English that draws upon Girard's thought is Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled* (NY: Crossroad, 1995). *Violence Renounced*, ed. Willard M. Swartley (Telford, PA: Pandora Press, 2000) addresses biblical studies and peacemaking and has a good bibliography of Girard's own works, the writings of Girardians, and other relevant books and articles.
2. See James G. Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press, 1995), 117-121 and 131-32 and Jon D. Levenson, *The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son* (New Haven: Yale University, 1993), Part I.
3. See Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, 83, 269 nn. 23-24.
4. See Girard on Oedipus in chapter 3 of *The Scapegoat*, tr. Yvonne Freccero (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University, 1986).
5. See Freud's attempt to exploit this in his socio-psychoanalytic hypothesis regarding Jewish origins in *Moses and Monotheism* (NY: Random House Vintage Books, 1967), first published in 1939. See my critique of Freud in Williams, op. cit., ch. 3.
6. See Simon Simonse, *Kings of Disaster: Dualism, Centralism and the*

- Scapegoat King in the Southeastern Sudan* (Leiden and New York: Brill, 1992).
7. Raymund Schwager deals with this issue very acutely in *Erbsuende und Heilsdrama: Im Kontext von Evolution, Gentechnologie und Apokalyptik* (Thaur: Druck- und Verlagshaus Thaur, 1997). I am in the process of translating this book into English, to be published by Gracewing.
  8. Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, 35.
  9. Some of the material in Part I is taken from my foreword to Girard, *I See Satan Fall*, ix-xxiii and my article, "Serpent and the Son of Man," *The Bible Today* 39, January 2001, 22-26.
  10. See Levenson, op. cit., and Williams, *The Bible, Violence, and the Sacred*, loc. cit. See also Bailie, op. cit., 181-184.
  11. It would be interesting if someone would examine rabbinic literature on the themes of human desire, scapegoating, and siding with the innocent victim. I suspect that much common ground with the New Testament texts would be uncovered.
  12. Quoted from C.G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (NY: Schocken Books, 1974; first published 1938), 316.
  13. *I See Satan Fall*, 129.
  14. *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (NY: Doubleday Image Books, 1995), No. 1264, 353-354.
  15. *Ibid.*, No. 2515, 663.
  16. *Vatican Council II*, gen. ed. Austin Flannery, O.P., (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1996), No. 4, 573.
  17. *Ibid.*, 574.

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## Paths of Peace: A Challenge to the Three Monotheistic Religions

In order that our traditions may open up ways of peace, it is absolutely necessary that they begin by examining the challenges that they face today. These challenges belong in part to the past, but that is not a reason for minimizing their importance for they remain present in our consciousness, in the most widespread received opinion. They reinforce the deeply rooted idea that religions have been and still are factors of war rather than factors of peace. Certain contemporary events continue to give credence to this view. And what has been called the return to center stage of the phenomenon of religion, whatever its real depth, runs the risk, on account of the identity factor involved, of being called upon to justify conflicts whose true motivations are less openly avowable.

I shall leave aside the question of the primeval causes of violence analyzed so well by Professor Williams on the basis of the research of René Girard. I lack sufficient competence to discuss their relevance. I will take rather as my starting point the analysis made by the late Father Paul Beauchamp, professor of Exegesis at the Jesuit Faculty in Paris, of the Biblical recognition of the existence of a universal primeval violence.<sup>1</sup> He does so starting with the Old Testament, but he warns from the outset, in the face of a widely held Christian view, that this violence continues to be present in the New Testament. It is impossible to accept the historical perspective of a moral progress beginning with an archaic violence present in the Old Testament and ending with an era of meekness and peace to which the New Testament supposedly bears witness. This simplified vision, incidentally, renders even more unacceptable the violence displayed throughout the history of the Christian Churches. It distorts from the outset the truth of the dialogue between Jews and Christians.



In regard to the Old Testament, Father Beauchamp makes it clear that there are forms of individual violence which God condemns. Violence between brothers, as in the case of Cain and Abel, violence born of desire and the will to power, as in the case of David and Uriah. He recalls the various forms of social violence, those of Pharaoh against the Hebrew people in Egypt, those condemned by the prophets. But he does not conceal those forms of violence that history attributes to religious motives, those committed in obedience to the will of God. Forms of violence that pose problems for the ordinary reader of the Bible, whether he be a believer or not. Far from brushing them aside as unfortunate remnants of a primitive moral state, Father Beauchamp states that "we must let the scandal of the Bible and of its own violence speak freely. Our task is neither to attack it nor to 'defend' it, and even less to excuse it on the grounds of it belonging to a bygone age and a distant culture." And that all the more so, he adds, "since violence is not absent from the history of Jesus."

How indeed could it be otherwise, since God himself is affected by it, before the flood (Gen 6:5-7). The Covenant of the new creation concluded with Noah does not wipe out this violence. Through the laws given to Noah, the Lord does not deny it, he endeavors to contain it. One would need, but it is not my intention here, to retrace the "search for man" carried out by God, to borrow the expression of Abraham Heschel, in order to channel and orientate the lives of men towards peace. As a Christian, as a believer in Christ our Peace, I recognize that violence has not been eradicated by the salvation that he brings. I believe that, through the unconditional pardon which Jesus proclaims, he introduces into the balance that justice always demands an "excess" capable of overcoming violence. But opening up the paths of peace requires a struggle which Christ has inaugurated. Hence the vigilance which is necessary. It is our responsibility, as members of the monotheistic religions, to be fully aware of its expressions and to attempt to eradicate them by reflecting on their causes. For that reason, I continue to recall the warning given by Father Beauchamp: "The great weapon of violence lies in its dissimulation."

I am going to succinctly develop my analysis along four lines, simply underlining the essential points: 1) There is a need to be fully conscious of history and the evils it displays, to be aware of the questions which it poses because there is no consciousness without memory; 2) Can the reading of the Bible protect us against violence? If so, under

what conditions? 3) There is a need for each of us to undergo a conversion; and 4) Interreligious dialogue can be a pathway to conversion.

### The Weight of History and the Questions it Poses

Three kinds of historical events must be recalled to mind because they burden memories and distort our relationships. The crusades were wars waged in the name of the faith, even if they were inspired by other motives. Innumerable forms of violence, torture and execution were decreed by the tribunals of the Inquisition in the name of truth, in the struggle against what Christians considered to be heresies. Wars were waged between different Christian confessions from the sixteenth century onwards in the perspective of the same struggle for truth.

When one studies these events solely from the point of view of history, it is normal to seek to explain the acts perpetrated, for the task of the historian is essentially one of understanding, without at the same time judging the consciences of those who thus acted. But Catholic moral theology as it has developed over the centuries cannot remain simply at that point, for it calls upon us to discern the objective nature of faults not only in function of the circumstances but in relation to the Word of God of which it aims to be the guardian, in particular in relation to the second commandment concerning love of one's neighbor. We must therefore, ask ourselves if we do not wish to fall into the same errant ways, how such deviant forms of behavior have been possible. I would like to quote here the pertinent challenge issued by Professor Denis Charbit of the University of Tel Aviv, at Clermont-Ferrand on the occasion of the commemoration of the 900th anniversary of the Council of Clermont, the starting point of the first crusade. He issued his challenge in the context also of the painful memory of the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin:

Are we not in a situation in which believers of all the monotheistic religions...say to themselves "Since God exists, everything is permitted me?" In other words, because a believer claims to be sent by God...to be the one who understands him better than anyone else, he claims for himself the right to take another man's life. Even if I understand the view that sees in murder committed in the name of God a perversion, a cari-

capture, and if I judge that nothing is more intolerable than to hear people using their faith to justify killing, the doing of evil, I ask myself and I ask you the question: rather than simply wishing to preserve the coherence and integrity of the religious message of each of us, should we not, each and every one of us, in regard to our faith, examine our consciences and ask ourselves: "What is there in my faith and my religious practice which can tolerate such a degree of deviance, such a gap, whether we call it by the name of crusade, or inquisition, or religious fanaticism on the Jewish as on the Muslim side?" To exclaim that it is a false Judaism, that Judaism is pure, is to wash one's hands of all responsibility. . . . If on the other hand, we reflect on those aspects, which in each of the three religions lay themselves open to such admittedly perverse interpretations, there would then be a real gain in awareness. Let each and every one of us search in the depths of his faith and his personal history. . . . Rather than attempting at all cost to save everything, to preserve everything en bloc, I wonder if it is not better, out of pedagogical and ethical concern, to drive away the ambiguities wherever they may come from.<sup>2</sup>

I hear this question resounding in the depths of my own faith, over and beyond the recognized examples of both individual and collective sin. It seems to me that Professor Charbit is asking a fundamental, primordial question. When I read, when I listen to the Word of God, what do I listen to, what do I receive? The Bible, as I stated in my introduction, presents us with violence in all its forms, and at the same time it gives us the means to combat them. How does it come about that we hear it in such a selective fashion? Hear it or not hear it?

### **Reading Our Scriptures: Problems of Hermeneutics, Problems of Tradition**

The problem is above all that of listening to the Word, which is not selective, dictated by our own interests. The problem is that of hearing the whole of the Word. To illustrate my point, I should like to recall to mind here that this is historically the experience of Christians in relation to the Jewish people. What did the Second Vatican Council do but

reopen the way to a more complete listening to the Word of God? In that case, the fundamental question that presents itself to us is that of hermeneutics, not only as a science belonging to specialists,<sup>3</sup> but as the expression of the living tradition of our communities. But the question is even more one of asking ourselves who possesses the authority to interpret this Word in such a way that the understanding of believers may avoid the traps of a reductivist interpretation that justifies deviant forms of behavior. This is quite obviously linked to the conception that each of our traditions holds concerning its relationship to its foundational texts, and I am fully aware that our different religious confessions approach this question in different ways. That is why it is not only useful but urgent that we be able to explain our points of view and recognize our differences. This should be one of the primary themes of inter-religious dialogue.

### Prayer for Peace and the Necessary Conversion

While waiting for such a path to open up, however, the present situation indicates clearly the need for a conversion. Cardinal Etchegaray, at a conference held at the University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis on December 13-14, 1990, expressed his conviction that every religion carries in its own innermost being a desire for peace: "An authentic and above all authentically lived religion bears within its essence seeds of peace," he said. "Every religion according to its own peculiar genius, when it draws upon its foundational texts and inner inspirations, its purest motives and energies, opens up a path of peace."<sup>4</sup> But is such a going back to sources possible without a conversion? In this sense, I believe in the necessity of the steps taken in this direction by religious leaders, for they alone can open up the way for the faithful.

I rejoice in those undertaken by the Church of which I am a member on the occasion of the Jubilee of the year 2000. They were for the Catholic faithful the opportunity for a rediscovery of the in-depth meaning of the Jubilee. But I cannot remain content with such acts, nor *a fortiori* set myself up as judge over them. For the steps taken by religious leaders are one thing, the understanding that the faithful may have with regard to them is another. Much remains to be done. We must work towards this conversion becoming the personal conversion of each of us. I believe that we must situate it in its true place, which

is at the heart of prayer. Prayer is, *par excellence*, its true place, for if it is true, it cannot remain cut off from the events of the world and the way in which men behave therein. When these events disturb us, when we feel overwhelmed by them, we turn to God. It is understandable that we should ask him to grant to men a peace, which they seem incapable of creating. But do we change events through prayer? Such was the question posed by a Catholic priest a few years ago in a meditation addressed to university teachers concerned by the tensions of their age. He added:

Certainly yes. The promise of the Lord is the strength of prayer, it is always answered. But in the midst of this efficacy perceived in hope, prayer exercises another kind of mediation upon events. To pray, in fact, is not to cry out towards a being unknown, wielding an arbitrary power, whose inexplicable will forces itself upon us in the manner of a decree...it is pursuing a conversation which God himself has begun, he has spoken, He has revealed himself in his Word, and this Word illuminates and judges everything that occurs, but we have to discover little by little what is the light that emanates from him, which is cast upon events and things...Events are not thereby explained, but they are situated, and what we perceive is that understanding of the ways of God passes via the path of conversation. Through prayer, we become other: prayer changes the world, because it changes men.<sup>5</sup>

Such is a penetrating question: does prayer change us? In what, and in what direction? We must believe so, but for that several conditions are required. Who is the God to whom we pray? Are we his servants, or do we make him subservient to our ideas and our actions? If so, then transcendence is "placed in captivity,"<sup>6</sup> and God is no more than an idol. Yet, once we have placed ourselves in a correct position before him who remains the Wholly Other, do we hear the questions that he asks us concerning our brothers? Let us recall God's question to Cain: "Where is your brother Abel?" (Genesis 4: 9), and in an analogous sense the teaching of Jesus: "When you go to present your offering at the altar, if then you remember that your brother holds a grudge against you, leave your offering there and go and be reconciled with your brother" (Matthew 5: 23-24).

The truth of our relationship with God demands that we reflect in depth upon the events which affect us and which affect the lives of people, our siblings. This quest cannot be carried out except by taking into account the demands of truth and justice, not only according to our inclinations, our passions and our feelings and, I would dare say, addressing myself to Christians, mistrusting a self-complacent charity which would ignore the demands of truth and justice. True prayer demands, at the deepest level of ourselves, if struggle seems unavoidable, that we remain workers for peace. According to Psalm 37: 8-11, and according to the Beatitude of Matthew 5:4 which picks up its meaning, it is the meek who will inherit the earth and not the violent. The truth of our attitude before God must lead us to the forgiveness of which God is the source. In the face of world events, that may seem derisory, and yet when we look at the deep divisions affecting our societies, we discover the limits of all the means dreamed up by men in order to re-establish, over and above the absence of war, peace in men's hearts, the reconciliation of minds. The founding fathers of a united Europe, who were believers, knew that well. That is why they foresaw the need for Franco-German reconciliation after so many years of hatred, by being in a very concrete way workers for peace.

### Interreligious Dialogue As a Pathway to Conversion of Minds and Hearts in Search of Peace

It is possible that, in this particular sphere, the appeals we make may neither be identical nor immediately convergent. That is why dialogue between us is more urgent than ever. It is absolutely necessary because "in spite of attempts at dialogue and *rapprochement*, tension still persists between these three religions and this latent tension can give rise, amongst peoples, to discriminatory attitudes, can even be the source of sporadic acts of violence."<sup>7</sup> In this particular area, because dialogue is often inflamed by passion and involves the concrete life of our communities, that dialogue is confronted by the problem of the true representation of the other. "I suggest," writes Professor Frémiaux, "that the real issue does not lie in the content of the two Biblical (and Gospel) revelations [yet the hermeneutical problem raised here is fully relevant]...It lies rather in the individual and social representations of which these revelations furnish a prop and a justification, to the point

of creating the feeling, among the adherents of one or other of the two confessions, that they belong to two totally irreconcilable camps.”<sup>8</sup>

Whence the necessity of a deeper knowledge of the other's mind, “as he understands himself,” to borrow the expression employed by the Holy See's Commission for Religious Relations with Judaism, ten years after *Nostra Aetate*. Such a work of understanding does not in itself call into question our deepest beliefs, nor does it aim at a cheap synthesis which cannot in the long run satisfy anyone, but it can lead to a demanding purification of our ideas through a questioning to which a better knowledge of the other must inevitably give rise.

I have spoken of the truth of our attitude towards God; I am not forgetting that it is verified, so to speak, by our attitude towards our brothers. That is why it has a bearing upon the manner in which dialogue is conducted. St. John, taking up the link between the first and second commandments, formulated it in a striking manner: “He who says he loves God and does not love his brother is a liar, for how can he say that he loves God whom he cannot see if he does not love his brother whom he sees?” (1 John 4: 20) We are reminded of this truth in relationships not only in the context of judging our behavior, but it applies also to the quest for truth. In our relationship with God, in the manner in which we conceive of that relationship, we have also to hear the questions of our brother. True, we are all convinced that we possess the truth. It is not a case of asking us to call into question this certainty. But what is our relationship to truth? Is it a relationship of possession or a relationship of service, a relationship of instrumentalism or a relationship of witness? To choose dialogue, with the demands it imposes, is, I believe, to open up paths of peace.

#### Notes

1. Paul Beauchamp, *Testament biblique*, Paris: Bayard, 2001, chap. 8, “La violence dans la Bible,” pp. 163-183.
2. Ninth Centenary, Council of Clermont – First Crusade. Papers presented at the official conference organized by the Diocese of Clermont, 1966, pp. 112-113.
3. For an approach to these difficult questions, the following works in French are useful: Thomas Römer, *Dieu obscur, Labor et Fides*, 1996; Paul Beauchamp, “Violence et Bible: la prière contre les

- ennemis dans les Psaumes," *Documents-Episcopat*, n. 11, June 1981; Paul Beauchamp & Denis Vasse, "La violence dans la Bible," *Cahiers Evangile* n. 76, 1991.
4. Religions et guerres [Religions and wars], Papers read at the international conference organized by the Institut du droit de la paix et du développement of the University of Nice Sophia-Antipolis, 13-14 December 1990, *Mame Editions Universitaires*, 1992.
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A Z I Z A H   A L - H I B R I

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## Islamic Pathways to Peace: From Satanic to Prophetic Logic

Today I am not going to talk to you about specific instances, either in the *Qur'an* or in the life of the Prophet that show that Islam is a peaceful religion or that there are paths to peace in Islam. My approach, rather, will be this: I am going to give you what I think is the fundamental Islamic worldview. Please understand that it is my interpretation; I do not hold others bound to it. In Islam we have the freedom of *ijtihad*, of interpretation. But once we understand this Islamic worldview, then we cannot but understand Islam's views on peace and the importance, the centrality of peace to Islamic belief.

I begin with a story. In northern Virginia over a year ago a woman was inspired to invite what she called “wise women of the world”—five or six women—I do not know how she chose them, but I was included among them. They came from various religions and parts of the world, including, for example, Isabel Allende, from Latin America, who is a wonderful person. We had come together there for peace, and a movement developed from that encounter called Peace by Peace. In the discussion, which was very close-knit and under very friendly circumstances, we asked each other what are the best values to bring about peace. The western women looked at us and said, “Of course, love.” And the Muslim women, and I should say including Muslim western women, looked at them and said, “Justice.” And the other women looked at us and said, “No, you cannot mean that.” It was not really repulsion, but the word justice was not what they were looking for. And we were taken aback by their reaction, because we thought we had just put forth our highest value.

We asked them, why did they react like that? And their answer was, “If you make justice your highest value, then it will always be an eye for

an eye and a tooth for a tooth and you are going to have a toothless and eyeless nation. And we were then horrified at that interpretation of justice. We asked, "Who told you that is what justice means?" We had a discussion, by the end of which it had become clear that we were using the same word with two different meanings.

So here I will present the notion of *adallah*, which is the Arabic and Quranic word for justice. Once one understands this concept, one begins to see the importance of peace in the Islamic worldview, because *adallah* is a fundamental attribute of God. And as Imam W. Deen Mohammed recently said, the most important belief for a Muslim is that of *tauhid*: belief in a single God, monotheism. God's *adallah* is not to be understood in the pedantic sense, where we speak about justice in the courtroom. God's *adallah* permeates the universe and exhibits itself on every level. For example, I would like to point to some statements from the *Qur'an*, which tell us that God created the universe itself on the basis of *adallah*.

In Chapter 55, verses 7-9 the translation says:

And the firmament has He raised high, and He has set up the balance of justice of *adallah* in order that you may not transgress due balance. So establish weight with justice, with *adallah*, and fall not short in the balance.

This one verse extends from universal justice of harmony and balance to the individual justice, of how one relates to others. We have to deal with others in due balance in justice. Harmony is a very important part of the notion of justice, as we shall find out. We will also find out that it is not only harmony and peace, but that justice itself includes love and mercy.

In another verse in the *Qur'an* it says:

We sent aforesaid our messengers. But all these messengers, we sent them with clear signs and sent down with them the book and the balance [the balance of right and wrong, *al-mizan*] that people may stand forth in justice.

The *Qur'an* says very clearly that if standing forth for justice means standing against your brother who is an oppressor, you do that. It is very important to keep the balance of right and wrong, harmony, in the universe.

If we move from the universe to society, we find that *adallah* is expressed in society in many ways. For example, tithing is a very important manifestation of God's *adallah*. We are all allowed to keep what we earn, but then we have to think of the other and of our neighbor. In another *hadid* [a saying of the Prophet], a neighbor is defined as someone whose scream you can hear. It is not just your next-door neighbor. One of my friends asked me, in this age of the Internet, when a scream could be heard around the world, is not the world my neighbor? And the answer is yes. The Prophet has so emphasized good relationships and good treatment of the neighbors, that one of the persons who were listening to the Prophet said, "I thought at one point he was going to tell them to leave them some of their inheritance."

In society, we have the notion of tithing, the notion of *sadaqah*—giving alms, which is different from obligatory tithing. To encourage *sadaqah* and tithing, the *Qur'an* God speaks of the stingy souls. We, by nature, do not like to give away that which we have. We are stingy in our souls, but God says that every *sadaqah* one gives is a loan to God. Give the loan to God and God will give it back to you ten times over. In particular, the Prophet and the *Qur'an* recommend special treatment for the vulnerable people in society—the orphans in particular, women, and in the days of the revelation, also the slaves. All of these people are vulnerable and so, to create harmony in society, to balance the peace in society, one must address the needs of all these people. No one is an isolated person in society.

I now move to the question of the polity. How is *adallah* expressed in a polity? Here I will begin to speak more specifically because it will take us directly to the issue of peace and the absence of peace or disharmony.

All of you know the story of Adam's creation, which is mentioned in the Bible. God created Adam from clay and taught Adam the names of creation. But the *Qur'an* goes on: God summoned the angels and Iblis who had not fallen yet, and ordered them to bow to Adam. The angels, being of a perfect nature, immediately obeyed God's order and they bowed to Adam. But not Iblis; he resented; he refused. Then there is a dialogue between God and Iblis. All who are from the Abrahamic traditions know that our God is all-powerful, all knowing, all good. So God does not need to ask Iblis anything; God knows. The dialogue in the *Qur'an* is for our own benefit. God asks Iblis, "What prevented you from obeying me?" This is a very important question the way it is

phrased. Iblis replied, “How could I possibly bow to Adam? You created me from fire, and you created him from clay. I am better than he is.” Vanity. Arrogance. Hierarchy of creation is what prevented Iblis from bowing to Adam. By doing that, Iblis violated the supreme will of our monotheistic religion—the will of God. Monotheism means there is only one supreme will. One neither associates equal partners with God, nor associates equal wills with God. In fact, Iblis made his own will superior to that of God because he was more willing to be attached to his own hierarchy than to submit to God. And by doing that, not only did he disobey God, but he fell into the sin of *shirk*, the denial of God’s complete sovereignty, the opposite of monotheism. Iblis posited his will as superior to that of God by disobeying him and he was cursed. The *Qur’an* tells us God may forgive any sin, but not that of associating God with partners—that is the notion of *shirk*.

I was first awakened to the significance of this story by the late Mufti of Lebanon who was visiting the United States, who counseled me to reflect deeply on the dialogue between Iblis and God. Since then, I have also looked in older literature and found in the works of the medieval jurist, al-Ghazali, a couple of lines about it. (Al-Ghazali speaks in very measured terms.) He said to the Muslims: If you have been reading the story as if it is something that has to do with the origins of creation—something that happened in the past—then you are not fully understanding the significance of the story of Iblis. He said that this is a story about today, as well. It is the story of a rich person who thinks he is better than a poor person. It is the story of a white person who thinks he is better than a black or a red person. And it is the story of a free person who thinks he is better than a slave. And I would like to add to that that it’s the story of a man who thinks he’s better than a woman. Because all of these are Iblisi hierarchies. Because in Islam we only submit to one will: the will of God. We all stand equal before God, and when we create hierarchies we begin to fall into vanity, arrogance, conflict and disharmony. In short, we are moving away from justice; we are moving away from peace.

What I have described for you is the basics of what I call satanic logic. Satanic logic is when in a polity, someone says, “I am better than you and I am going to tell you what you are going to do.” Tyranny is satanic logic. Tyranny is moving away from the Islamic concepts of *baya* and *sura*; *baa* being the right of the people in a polity to choose their own leader, the necessity of consent of the people for a state to be just

in the view of Muslims. *Sura* means consultation, and it was revealed to the Prophet as an order to engage in consultation with the people, even though he is the Prophet. The *Qur'an* says this is better for their hearts. In Medina, the very first Muslim city-state, this concept of *sura* was put into action. Although he was very well received and the women and the children were singing for him, he did not say: "I am the prophet; I will lead your state." To the contrary, people came to the Prophet and they said, "We give you our *baya*; we want you to be our leader." They gave him their vote.

And guess who was the first to give the Prophet their vote. According to the *Qur'an*, a delegation of Arab women came to the Prophet and said, "We give you our *baya*." And the Prophet answered them. He did not say, "Women, go home." He said, "Let's talk about the basis of the *baya*." He then did this with the men as well. *Sura* is essential because the consent of the people is based not on individuals, but on principles: principles that were later articulated in the Charter of Medina itself. Therefore, when one chooses a leader, you choose him on the basis of a certain set of principles disclosed. Disclosure becomes very important to ensure that it is informed *baya*, informed consent.

The *Qur'an* says: "There is no coercion in religion." In Medina there were Muslims and there were Jews, and the question was: if you establish an Islamic state in the zenith of the power of the Prophet and the power of the Muslims in Medina, what happens to non-Muslims—and to the Jews in particular? The Charter of Medina basically says, "To each his own."

Each group is to be governed by its own religion. No one imposes anything on another, but they are one people. They stand together. They are entitled, the Charter says, to each other's support and succor so long as they are together—that is, they are still one *ummah*. The Charter of Medina articulates a dynamic pluralism, which is proud of religion as opposed to a pluralism that waters down and stamps out religion. In summary, the question of justice, freedom of thought, and the ability to express oneself on a secular and a religious basis are part and parcel of the notion of *adallah*, of the notion of justice in *Qur'an*. That is not only the Quranic point of view, but also the prophetic message, to which I shall now turn.

In the *Journal of Law and Religion*, which it so happens was published right after September 11, 2001, there is an article by a kindred spirit of mine—someone I respect a great deal, named Dr. Jawdat Said,

from Syria. His article is innocuously entitled, "Law, Religion and the Prophetic Method of Social Change." In this article he describes the prophetic method, which I shall explain here. We know the Iblisi method of coercion, vanity, arrogance and tyranny. What is the method of the prophets? Dr. Said points out that all the prophets came with the same message, from Abraham to Moses to Jesus to Mohammed and many others that I have not named. They all represent a chain of prophecy that bears the same ideas—all of which humans have found ways to distort over time.

So what is the prophetic method? It is not the method of Cain and Abel. That is the Iblisi logic. The prophetic logic is based on the fact that relations among people are tenable and important, that, in fact, there are ways of communicating that are peaceful and will result in change. The *Qur'an* is replete with examples of this. In one verse: "A good word is like a goodly tree. It has its roots deep in earth and its branches reach out to the heaven. It bears fruit every single time." It says that however people treat you, treat them with what is better. If you use the good word with people, then suddenly someone you thought was your fiercest enemy becomes your close friend. That is the way to change people—not through coercion.

What happens when the coercion is circumvented in this way? What do people do? How much is left of the arrogance and the vanity of the tyrants once their power is taken away? The poor people, like Jesus and Mohammed who had no real power, may act freely. Take the example of Moses, who spoke to the Pharaoh with no power to challenge him: his power continues to this day. True power is the power in the service of God, in the service of *adallah*.

All people of the book are asked to come to a word of equity. Which book? The Torah, the Bible, the *Qur'an*, these are the revealed books. And there are some other religions that Muslims have also included in this group. We must come together to a word of equity, with fair terms between us; the following verse from the *Qur'an* illustrates this point. (Please note that in my translations of the *Qur'an*, there is paraphrasing because the Arabic is the original and it must be consulted; but I paraphrase to make the intention of the verse clearer.)

Say all people of the book, come to a word of equity between us and you that we worship none but God; that we associate no partners with Him; that we take not each other as deities other

than God, and if they then turn back, say, "Bear witness that we are Muslims."

That is all we say. We call each other to a word of equity and not to associate partners with God, not to take each other as deities—which we often do. Not only each other, but we also take things in our society as deities. The dollar, for example, is one of the deities. The root of all evil is that we are not monotheistic in the real sense of religion, in the real sense of belief. We follow other powers. We follow Caesar; we do not submit to God. We have moved away from *tauhid*; we have moved away from the prophetic message.

Here I return to something Imam W. Deen Mohammed of Chicago has mentioned as fundamental in Islam. This is a principle repeated in many ways throughout the *Qur'an* (if a principle is repetitive, then it is fundamental). The principle says that God created us all of the same spirit or soul. And God made from the soul its mate. So we are now male and female. And then, the verses go in different ways. In one verse it says: "And God put affection, mercy and tranquility between us, male and female." That is the proper relationship: not a power struggle, but one of affection, mercy and harmony and peace at home. But in another instance the verse goes on to say, "God created us from the same spirit into male and female, and of them God created us into nations and tribes."

I always ask my students, could not God have made it easier on us? Could not God have created us all to be of the same sex, the same ethnicity? And then we would not have to fight about gender, about which color is better, which nationality, which ethnicity—we would all be the same. So why did God create us so varied? But the *Qur'an* does tell us why: "We created you of the same soul into male and female and of them we made nations and tribes so that you would *come to know each other*, enjoy each other's company." We are created not to kill each other, not to fight each other, and not to rank each other the way Iblis did by thinking he was better than others. The *Qur'an* goes on to say that the most honored in the sight of God are those who are most righteous. Not the Muslims, not the Christians, not the Jews, not the men, not the women, not the Arabs, not the Americans, but simply the ones who are most righteous. That means any one of us could be, if we are willing to pay the price of being righteous, and these days it is a very high price to pay.



*Azizah Al-Hibri*

This is the Islamic worldview—the view of Islam, of nations, of tribes, of relationships within the polity. It is based on consent, the word of equity, getting to know each other, and communicating; we do this so that we will have *al-mizan*, the balance of peace and harmony that makes the just world, in the *adallah* sense of justice that God has created. That is what we are searching for. And whatever evil we see in the world, if I may dare say, is the result of our indulging in Iblisi logic, satanic logic. Because today we know that very often religion has become the tool of politics. It has become the very Iblisi tool used to put down people and to raise others. And so we need to face our own demons. We need to go back into our own little corners and ask ourselves, whom are we going to follow? Are we truly people of God or are we looking for advantage? The role model for me—aside from the first role model for every Muslim, the prophet Mohammed—is Moses. I have a deep relationship to Moses who is mentioned repeatedly in the *Qur'an* often specifically as an immigrant. It is very important to read and learn from the story of Moses, because we are today in a world of Pharaohs, and we have to stand up and speak truth to power. It is a tremendous idea, it is extremely difficult and I continue every day trying to collect my courage to live up to the prophetic messages of Moses, of Jesus, of Mohammed.

I will end my discussion about *adallah*, harmony and peace in the world, with a paragraph from the article by Jawdat Said mentioned above. *Adallah* must be sought through the collaboration of the religions, not enmity between them. Said says,

Now is the time for the world to understand their message. The prophets did not come to compete in violent combat. They came to compete in goodness, in making a peaceful, global society in which all humans are equal under the law. The path of monotheism, of peace, is the path toward accomplishing the will of God and the dream of the prophets. Those closest to the Lord are those who serve the people, “just as the Son of man did not come to be served, but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

LOUAY M. SAFI

## Islamic Pathways to Peace: Privileging Prophetic Principles over Prophecies

Understanding the worldview that motivates Muslims and gives meaning to their lives, is essential to understanding the tradition of peace in Islam. Dr. Azizah al-Hibri has ably elaborated, in her lecture “Islamic Pathways to Peace: From Satanic to Prophetic Logic,” a conception of an Islamic worldview and described how Muslims see themselves vis-à-vis others. I shall expound on some of the themes she presented and then examine how Islamic values and beliefs have played historically, and effected interfaith relations and interactions. The first-hand experience of early Muslim society will be my chief subject; I shall examine the self-understandings of both the first Muslim community founded by the Prophet of Islam, and of later Muslims in their various relationships with other communities.

Coexistence is our main concern when we talk about peace. We are people who have different understandings of the relationship with the divine, different histories, and different cultures. How can we co-exist? We are moving into a stage of human history where distance no longer isolates us from one another. We may be physically kept apart most of the time, but in many ways what happens in China has an impact on us here in the West; what happens in the Middle East has an impact on us here; and what happens here has an impact on people everywhere. Unless we have a vision of a world where people of different religions, different ideas, and even different values can co-exist, live in peace, and can respect one another, there will be little hope for a brighter future.

I will admit from the beginning that while I'm going to depict a picture that is hopeful and positive, I realize that Muslims historically have been far from perfection. Muslims have gone through ups and downs like any other religious and cultural communities. We can see brighter

periods. In the history of Islam, we see a vast 1400-year historical memory spanning civilizations from China to Morocco to Europe. Each of these diverse cultures hands down to us many experiences and many experimentations.

The proposition I have started with is that Islam is an essential partner in the effort to develop a more democratic and peaceful world. This statement is borne by the Muslim scriptures, the *Qur'an*, and it is borne by the history of the early Muslim community, particularly as illustrated in one meaningful experiment that can tell us a lot about how Muslims strive to live with regard to different communities: This experiment, from which so much can be learned today, is the covenant of Medina. The covenant lends us valuable insights into how Islamic values and understanding of revelation can positively impact people of all faiths. The experiment in Medina was conducted under the supervision of the Prophet of Islam, in the midst of the first Muslim community. Before describing in detail the nature of this experiment, first I shall illuminate some contemporary problems and misconceptions that make a reinvestigation of the Medina covenant so timely.

### Law Rooted in Community Life

Today we hear some Muslims say that for Muslim governments to be true to Islamic values, Muslim states must implement Islamic law, called *shari'ah*. I think that this opinion is based on a very distorted understanding of *shari'ah*, of the state, and of Islam. Interpreted this way, *shari'ah* becomes unlimited in its scope. It interferes in every sector of society, because the law enacted by modern states regulates all aspects of modern society. Modern states regulate education, commerce, health, work relations, industrial production, scientific research, etc.; not even the family itself lies outside the realm of state control. For example, modern states can take children from their families, despite the objection of their natural parents, and relocate with-in other families, if state authorities believe that the parents are unfit to raise the kinds. Such powers were not historically possessed by the Caliph or the Sultan.

Looking at the state and law in modern prism, there are Muslims today who believe that institutions of power should be unlimited in their authority to enforce *shari'ah*, and, hence, argue that modern

Islamic states should impose *shari'ah*—understood as the historically codified rules—on the entire society. This is a serious misunderstanding of what the *shari'ah* means and aim to achieve, and runs in direct contradiction of historical Muslim experience of both the state and the law. For unlike modern law, which is enacted by the state, *shari'ah* was developed to limit the power of the state. Early Muslim scholars concluded that states ruled by dynasties and clans were illegitimate, unless the action of the rules were subordinated to the rules of *shari'ah*. To ensure that the rules would stay within the limits of the law, law was developed by the scholarly community through the interpretation of Islamic sources.

Thus, in classical Islamic political theory, legislative power lied with civil society rather than the state. I say this very often and people are often puzzled, as this run in complete contradiction to modern experience of legislation. But the historical records of Muslim societies show vividly that civil society legislated and developed the rules of *shari'ah*, and state authorities were bound to an elaborate law that they had no control over its formulation, including in such matters as taxation. Taxation was never established or decided by the state; rather, it was decided by civil society and the state then followed the limitations set by *shari'ah*.

### The Formative Pluralist Experience of Muslim Societies

To get a sense of how a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society was organized under Islam, we need to take an overview of covenant of Medina.<sup>1</sup> The covenant established a community based on the notion of *adil*, of fairness, of justice—justice not only from the point of view of Muslims, but also from the point of view of people who belong to other faiths. The Muslims who entered into the covenant, it is important to note, came from various tribes. Although Islam had rejected tribalism, the social functions of tribal affiliation was left intact, since tribes provided important protection and welfare services to members. But the covenant represented a new legal system that superseded tribal traditions and customs, and unified all into one citizenry. Once this function of the law was clear, it posed no difficulty to extend the same covenanted status to those non-Muslims who lived in Medina.

So the covenant of Medina was between Muslims, the Jews and some pagan tribes that were not then within the Islamic fold. In this covenant we have a foundational model of Islamic polity. Of the Jews in Medina it says, "The Jews...are one community with the believers. The Jews have their religion and the Muslim theirs." Muslims are not to interfere in the religious affairs of the Jews. Then it goes on to say: "The Jews must bear their expenses and Muslims theirs; each helps the other against anyone who attacks the people of the covenant. They must seek mutual advice and consultation." It goes on to say: "To the Jew who follows us belongs help and equity. He shall not be wronged, nor shall his enemies be aided." It is clear that the foundation of the Medina polity was not *shari'ah* in the narrow sense of the word as codified laws that Muslims were to follow and then others had to follow as well, but rather, it was a set of political principles that everyone who benefited from the covenant, namely Muslims, Jews, and people of other faiths, was able to abide by. This is the rule of law; the law is above religious affiliation, but it encourages rather than prohibits or interferes with religious solidarity.

The covenant of Medina, further, provided important protections and safeguard to ensure that dignity of both individuals and groups. The document, in addition to establishing freedom of religion, outlawed guilt by association, which before Islam had supported and abetted structures of tribal violence. If someone from one tribe killed a member of another, the killer's tribe was seen as collectively guilty and subject to indiscriminate vengeance. Any member could be selected for retaliatory violence. This is retaliation in the most vulgar sense of the word. Islam and this covenant, on the other hand, made guilt by association unacceptable. The document says, "A person is not liable for his allies' misdeeds." No one can be held accountable for crimes committed by other people. This was very revolutionary in the tribal society, where historically Arab tribesmen engaged in endless acts of retaliation and revenge.

Freedom of movement was protected, into and out of Medina. Except for criminals, all citizens were safe to enter and leave the city as they chose. We know this experiment did not last long, but clearly the intent was to have a multi-religious, multi-cultural society, multi-tribal society, where there is no imposition, but people cooperate and help each other. The people had moral autonomy. What I call moral autonomy was recognized as essential for advancing human life and human dignity.

### Moral Autonomy and Religious Freedom

The commitment of a historical Muslim society to religious freedom and the rule of law did not fade away after the passing away of the Prophet, but remained strong and firm centuries. The early Muslim community was cognizant of the need to differentiate law to ensure moral autonomy, while working diligently to ensure equal protection of the law as far as fundamental human rights were concerned.

Thus early jurists recognized that non-Muslims who have entered into a peace covenant with Muslims are entitled to full religious freedom, and equal protection of the law as far as their rights to personal safety and property are concerned. Muhammad bin al-Hasan al-Shaybani (9th Century) states in unequivocal terms that when non-Muslims enter into a peace covenant with Muslims, "Muslims should not appropriate any of the non-Muslims' houses and land, nor should they intrude into any of their dwellings, because they have become party to a covenant of peace, and because on the day of the Peace of Khaybar, the prophet's spokesman announced that none of the property of the covenanters is permitted to the Muslim. Also because the non-Muslims have accepted the peace covenant so as they may enjoy their properties and rights on par with Muslims."<sup>2</sup> Similarly, early Muslim jurists recognized the right of non-Muslims to self-determination, and awarded them full moral and legal autonomy in the villages and towns under their control. Therefore, al-Shaybani, the author of the most authoritative work on non-Muslim rights, insists that the Christians who have entered into a peace covenant have all the freedom to trade in wine and pork among themselves, even though such practice is considered unlawful by Muslims.<sup>3</sup>

Likewise, early Muslim jurists recognized the right of non-Muslims to hold public office, including the office of a judge and minister. However, because judges had to refer to laws sanctioned by the religious traditions of the various religious communities, non-Muslim judges could not administer law in Muslim communities, nor were Muslim judges permitted to enforce *shari`ah* laws on non-Muslims. There was no disagreement among the various schools of jurisprudence on the right of non-Muslims to be ruled according to their laws; they only differed in whether the positions held by non-Muslim magistrates were judicial in nature, and hence the magistrates could be called judges, or whether they were purely political, and therefore the magistrates were indeed political leaders.<sup>4</sup>

### Political Equality over Religious Solidarity

There is an important dialogue taking place today within Muslim society, initiated by the Islamic Reform movement. This movement takes a leading role in criticizing traditional understandings of *shari'ah* and of Islamic values, and strives to achieve reform in these areas of Muslim society.

This movement has argued that we no longer live in a communalist society; we do not have communities that are autonomous and independent. In this context, the religious notion of "people of the covenant" is no longer valid as a political term, and we must see the non-Muslims in our midst as equal citizens under the law. When there was a communal structure of society, it made more sense to speak of people of the covenant in political terms; for example, a Jewish community, by having its own religious authority, also had its own law which was complete unto itself. There was no nation or state, no central authority within which the Jewish community operated, until Medina. And now, every free nation is like Medina, with legal system that binds all citizens regardless of religious affiliation. We are all one *ummah*, as were the Muslims and Jews under the Charter of Medina.

### Prophetic Principles over Prophecies

I have spoken about the importance of elevating the notion of law over religious solidarity. Some may view this as an expression of secularism, and if secularism is defined as a way to ensure a multi-cultural, multi-religious society living in peace and harmony, then I think this could be correct. But far from being an anti-religious attitude, this "secularism" is very Islamic. In fact, in the 9th century C.E. there emerged a school of rationalist Muslims, called Mutazilites, who were among the most enlightened thinkers in the history of Islam. But these people had an arrogance behind their thinking that caused them to try to impose their own will on society, which for a time they succeeded in doing. They were able to persuade the caliph to impose on society their own understanding of Islam; so for about two decades there was constant execution of people who refused to submit to the set of tests that were established by the caliph. Many Muslim scholars were killed, but ultimately opposition to the Mutazilite tyranny prevailed. The Mutazilites

were overthrown, and in fact, in my view this was a major tragedy for Islamic thought: because of their arrogance, a superior system of ideas was lost. Because they thought they could use the state to impose their own interpretation of Islam on society, society refused their ways. And that was the end of an attempt by the state to adopt a specific interpretation or a specific code of Islamic law. So with regard to secularism, I submit that historically Muslim was a secular society, simply without pushing religion out of the public square; Islam is a secular religion in that sense.

If we really are going to adopt the prophetic way as opposed to, using Dr. al-Hibri's expression, the satanic way—if we will use humility and persuasion instead of hierarchy and imposition—then Muslims will be essential partners in finding a set of principles to do this. We have a unique opportunity in this country, the United States. People of different races, different ethnic backgrounds, different religions can go outside into the workplace and embrace each other. We respect each other. We walk with each other, we are neighbors and we are co-workers. This is because all of us recognize that there is a set of rules, there is a law that is feared and is above any particular community. It is a democratic society, but more than that, it is a society of law—of a fair, just law. Can we take this notion to the world? I think this country has the possibility and the opportunity today; but to do it we must restrain our power. We must be willing to abide by international law, and if some have a quarrel with the terms of international law, let us lay our quarrels out on the table, but not simply violate or abide by that law according to whether it suits our particular situation.

I think if we can do this, we can start transforming international society for the better. If we choose the other way, the way of sheer force without law or justice, I believe it would not only be the demise of this very short experiment so far, in which the United States has taken the lead of establishing international organization, international law—but could lead down the road into a very chaotic world for which the United States would pay a very high price.

Those of us who believe in the notion of law, of justice, of dignity—not only for our own brethren, but for human beings everywhere—must prophetically lead our society in this direction. And although the current climate makes optimism difficult, I know in this country there are enough people committed to fairness and to the notion of law that we can move forward toward peace and justice with the grace of Allah.



## Notes

1. To review the full text of the Compact of Medina, please refer to Ibn Hisham, *Al-Syrah al-Nabawiyah* [The Biography of the Prophet], (Damascus, Syria: Dar al-Kunuz al-Adabiyah, n.d.), vol. 1, pp. 501-2.
2. Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Sarakhsi, *Sharh Kitab al-Siyar al-Kabir* (Pakistan: Nasrullah Mansur, 1405 A.H.), Vol. 4, p. 1530.
3. Ibid.
4. Ali bin Muhammad al-Mawardi, *al-Ahkam al-Sultaniyyah* (Cairo: Dar al-Fikr, 1983/1401), p. 59.

PART II

*Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace:  
Study Guide*



## INTRODUCTION

“How many millions have been murdered in the name of religion!”

“We know that when humans lose their moral compass, their faith in God, the unthinkable becomes possible.”<sup>1</sup>

These two quotations by Samuel Pizar a humanitarian, international attorney and Holocaust survivor, illustrate a tension that disturbs the minds and hearts of all people in whose lives religion has a place. Religion can divide, oppress and incite human beings to violence, or it can unite, liberate, and call humanity to live in peace. Jews, Christians and Muslims have in recent years come together to proclaim that in rejecting the former, they can truly pursue this peace in a spirit of faithfulness to their respective traditions.

This Study Guide explores the questions about violence and peace faced by people of faith and those whom they encounter. It is not a curriculum unto itself, but aims to inspire further study, reflection, and most importantly, prayer and action in the pursuit of peace. The sections are intentionally short to allow for individuals or students study groups to examine the important issues surrounding religion, violence and peace, in one-hour increments.

The main source materials for this Study Guide are gleaned from two conferences (“Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace” in 1998; and “Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths” in 2003) sponsored by the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, Fairfield, Connecticut. The papers presented at the 1998 conference have been published by Sacred Heart University Press, in the 2000 volume, *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*. The previous section of this volume contains the papers presented at the “Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths” conference.

For continued study and reflection, additional bibliographies and resources are provided in the Appendices of this Study Guide.



# Religion and Violence

The twentieth century is often referred to as the most violent century in history. In the wake of two unspeakably bloody world wars, the *Shoah*, the conflicts of the second half of the century in Korea, Vietnam, and the Middle East, as well as the abominable genocides in the Balkans, Africa, Cambodia, and elsewhere, our memory of the century past indeed bears this out. Violence is the tragic milieu of historical world affairs, and remains the scourge of millions of families and individuals the world over.

Violence is a word bearing many different connotations. It can refer to physical combat, emotional subjugation, economic suppression, or other disorders and conflicts; the forms of violence are manifold. But can the origins and root causes of violence ever be adequately understood and acted upon in such a way as to cease it? Such a line of inquiry and study will be pursued in the search for understanding that can lead to peace.

## VIOLENCE AS CHOICE

In the essay, "The Problem of Religion, Violence and Peace: Uneasy Trilogy," in *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, the author writes, "Violence is the worst expression of humanity's freedom of choice."<sup>2</sup> This assertion has three important implications.

1. Violence is an action that is done by human beings.
2. Violence is freely chosen and despite nonviolent alternatives, it is enacted anyway.
3. Violence is a transgression, contrary to life and the common good.

First, despite its prevalence in human history, violence can be rejected by humans. The contingency of violence upon human action is the first and foremost point to keep in mind – a point that is central to religious exhortations to peace. Judaism, Christianity and Islam all emphasize the preeminent responsibility of human persons to discern

and cooperate with the divine plan in bringing violence to an end, for violence is of our own creation.<sup>3</sup> Such a world view is rooted in the hope of God's promise of peace and the belief in the ability of people as God's creation to co-create a world of justice and law. Accordingly, the Abrahamic faiths have the ability to speak out in word and deed against notions of selfishness, greed, fatalism, nihilism and futility in human endeavors.

Second, religious teachings and beliefs call forth an ethical commitment on the part of individuals and communities to work towards the reduction and eventual eradication of violence. But religion and violence have too often gone hand in hand. Why should we have to fear the emergence of violence from the religious traditions that consistently preach and teach its opposite? In the Christian Scriptures, Paul of Tarsus laments in Romans 7, "I find myself doing the very things I hate." He recounts his sins, and in this self-examination, he finds penitence and the hope for redemption. His instance could serve as an example for people of faith to examine their own traditions, and their own personal behaviors, in order that the seeds of violence be identified and rejected.

Third, despite the obvious tear to the fabric of life and the common good, people choose to violently transgress against God, others and themselves. The Code of Hammurabi and the Lex Talionis were both attempts to limit violence from escalating into unchecked tribal blood feuds. The Ten Commandments (Exodus 20) also functioned to maintain social order and helped to reduce the possibility for violence to erupt. The irrationality and selfishness of violence will always threaten the sacredness of life and the security of life in common. The establishment of the central place of law in a society is one of the highest achievements of humans in the pursuit of justice and peace, a development that religions have contributed greatly.

#### *For Continued Discussion*

Think about a personal experience involving violence. What can be learned from direct, first-hand knowledge of violence's causes and effects?

Is it possible for violence to be completely overcome? Does your answer to this question, especially in light of religious beliefs, make a difference in your life and your actions?

If peace is the goal, why is it that religion is used as a weapon? What are the ways that we as individuals or as a nation can work to reduce violence?

Many religious believers hold that the evil in the world exists due to the influence of Satan or evil. Azizah al-Hibri discusses the Islamic interpretation of “satanic logic” in this volume and describes the ways that pride can lead to violence. If violence is influenced by forces other than human choice, then lasting peace will only be achieved through the assistance of God and frequent prayer. Compare these ideas to your own traditions regarding Satan or the devil. Do you see violence as a necessary part of the human condition, “satanic,” or both?

### *Reflections*

When the Lord saw how great was man’s wickedness on earth, and how no desire that his heart conceived was ever anything but evil, he regretted that he had ever made man on the earth, and his heart was grieved. (Genesis 6:5-6)

Our rabbis taught: When the Egyptian armies were drowning in the sea, the Heavenly Hosts broke out in songs of jubilation. God silenced them and said, “My creatures are perishing and you sing praises?” (Babylonian Talmud, Sanhedrin, verse 39b)

We know that all creation is groaning in labor pains even until now; and not only that, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, we also groan within ourselves as we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies...We know that all things work for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose. (Romans 8:22-24, 28)

Islam teaches that God has ordained that there be different religious communities on earth (49:13, 30:22), and that they must all respect one another (49:11). Discrimination is forbidden on any basis including religion, because it is God’s will that there be different religions on earth until the Last Day. The *Qur’an* reads, “Unto every one of you we have appointed a different law (*shari’a*) and way of life. And if God had so willed it, He would have made you all one single community, but He



willed otherwise, in order to test you by means of what He has given you. So vie with one another in doing good deeds, unto Him you shall all return, and then He will make you understand all that on which you have differed.” (5:48)

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.<sup>4</sup>

## VIOLENCE IN HISTORY AND RITUAL

The anthropological theories of mimetic desire and scapegoating, developed by the French scholar Renè Girard, have exerted a dramatic influence on the sociology of religion in recent decades. Girard’s research explores the foundational myths and sacred practices of societies, with an eye toward the ways in which violence plays a role. His system of thought is complex, but can be roughly summed up in the following points.

Violence is nearly always present in the foundational myths of societies and civilizations; well-known examples are the fratricides of Abel (Genesis) or Remus (Roman mythology). An intensive survey of such stories suggests that for societies to develop, something or someone was destroyed or killed. Many, if not all societies sustain internal concord by re-enacting the foundational violence, either in sacrificial ritual, or by the periodical “scapegoating” of a vulnerable member onto whom the society’s anxieties and faults are projected. This violence against one or a few relieves social tension and provides at least a temporary unification of the remaining members.

Scapegoating is driven by a psychological principle that Girard calls “mimetic desire,” a behavior that begins in infancy with the imitation of one’s parents’ desires. It is a necessary part of development in the early years, because a child in order to survive must learn to desire things without cognitively knowing why they are desirable—for example, the ability to speak the parents’ language. Mimetic desire, the fabrication of desires by imitation of others, becomes potentially violent in later stages, for the simple reason that it is a sub-rational behavior. If one desires something not because one has decided it would be good, but only because another

person desires it, a conflict is likely to arise between the two. The conflicts arising out of mimetic desire naturally continue to escalate. At this point, the crux of the theory comes into view: the easiest way out of the cycle of violence between the two parties is to identify another member of the community, someone as vulnerable and undesirable as possible, and they exercise their violent passions on him or her. This "scapegoat" is beaten, killed, or driven out of the community, and the conflict between the two parties subsides, until the next time.<sup>5</sup>

The impact of Girardian theory on the study of history, as well as our experience of religion, raises important questions. The most horrific crimes of genocide resemble very closely the Girardian behavior of scapegoating. The Nazis envisioned bringing about a new world order with the Third Reich, and the Holocaust was to be its foundational myth. Although the society they envisioned would never come to be, six million European Jews were methodically exterminated in the most terrible ways. Nazi propaganda resounded with language that identified the Jews as collectively guilty of widespread societal ills; the Jews became the scapegoat. They were as vulnerable as any other group would have been, and the Nazis succeeded in convincing the greater part of German society of their undesirability, by painting them as sub-human and devoid of dignity. As Gil Bailie puts it, "The Nazi ideologists were trying to put the principle [that violence creates togetherness] to work in history. And they were not the last to do so."<sup>6</sup>

Mimetic theory on the surface seems to conclude that violence is an inevitable fixture of human life. But recall that violence is voluntary; it requires a choice, and there are alternatives to it. Religion seeks to provide the alternatives. James G. Williams' paper included in this volume from the 2003 "Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths" conference, surveys the Hebrew Scriptures with an eye for the ways in which sacrifice and mimetic violence resemble one another, and in turn, how the stories emphasize the human responsibility in rejecting the violence in favor of fidelity to God. For example:

The...episode that stands out is Abraham's near-sacrifice of Isaac in Genesis 22. It is very important in the Jewish and Christian traditions. It is an account full of richness and ambiguity. I would simply stress that though it is not an explicit condemnation of child sacrifice, it certainly must reflect a struggle with the problem. The story of Abraham is moved forward by

yearning to fulfill the divine promise, yet it turns out that it can be accomplished without violating the life of Abraham's son.<sup>7</sup>

The interpretation of this Biblical story is indeed central to Judaism, Christianity and Islam, the Abrahamic faiths. If violence, mimetic or otherwise, is a sub-rational behavior that often grips human beings, then Abraham's story illustrates that a relationship with God can raise us above it. We are made more human (and humane) by our cooperation with the divine will and can break the cycle of mimetic violence; rather than turning our anxieties loose on a vulnerable scapegoat.

Of note here is that sacrifice in Christianity carries a particular meaning. Christians believe that God, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, became an atoning sacrifice—a scapegoat, in a metaphysical and spiritual sense—for the sins of all humanity when he was crucified. The central event that Christianity reveres, then, is a violent sacrifice. Nonetheless, Christianity is a religion that teaches peace, but this paradox is essential to the understanding of the Christian faith. Christians believe that the self-sacrifice of Christ makes liberation from violence possible. One's sins are forgiven, so nothing is to be gained by the blaming or scapegoating of another.

#### *For Continued Discussion*

What are the alternatives to violence when founding a new country or community? Are there any historical models to look to other than those that promote violence and conquest when starting a new community?

Scapegoating was practiced in the past to temporarily free societies from escalating expressions of violence. The Abrahamic faiths teach that scapegoating is unacceptable and wrong and that violence towards human beings can no longer be seen as sacred. Why do some adherents still promote violence as an acceptable way to follow God, and what can be done to correct such misrepresentations?

At various times in history, violence has sprung forth from the Abrahamic faiths. For Christianity, the crucifixion narrative has been grossly misrepresented as an injustice committed by the Jews of Jesus' time for which all Jewish descendants were guilty. This misrepresentation was particularly prevalent in medieval Europe, where Jews were

abused, ostracized and even killed by Christians who regarded them contemptuously as Christ-killers. *Nostra Aetate*, the 1965 declaration of the Second Vatican Council, repudiated this contempt and asserted the commitment of the Church to a relationship with Jews based on dialogue, trust and mutual respect.<sup>8</sup> What are other historical wounds caused by religions need to be honestly discussed and healed?

The scapegoat ritual described in Leviticus 16 required the high priest to annually send out a goat into the desert to die as an atonement for sin. Such a notion is illustrated in the Gospel of John (11:15) where the high priest Caiaphas is attributed with saying, "It is better that one man should die for the people than for the whole nation to be destroyed." How do Christians properly understand this atonement theology today?

What aspects of our faiths or religious practices or supposedly religiously-founded societies that tolerate dishonesty, slander, violence, war? Are there scapegoating mechanisms in place in the legal system of the United States and other countries where the overwhelming number of those in prison are poor, minorities and psychologically impaired? Is there any resemblance in societies that advocate capital punishment as a legal form of vengeance to ancient bloodletting sacrifices? Are these areas where Jews, Christians and Muslims should focus their efforts for civil and religious reform?

### *Reflections*

When they came to the place of which God had told him, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. Next he tied up his son Isaac, and put him on top of the wood on the altar. Then he reached out and took the knife to slaughter his son. But the Lord's messenger called to him from heaven, "Abraham, Abraham!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. "Do not lay your hand on the boy," said the messenger. "Do not do the least thing to him. I know now how devoted you are to God, since you did not withhold from me your own beloved son." Genesis 22:9-12

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)

All who take the sword shall perish by the sword. (Matthew 26:52)

God is a God of Peace and He is Peace Himself. *As-Salam*, peace, in Arabic is both the common greeting and one of the 99 Beautiful Names of God. (Sheikh Abdul Palazzi)

War has made too many victims. It must be outlawed. There is no such thing as a holy war in Christianity, nor in Islam, nor in Judaism. Only peace is holy, for peace is the Name of G-d. Only the beautiful word of *shalom*, peace, *salam* constitutes the greeting through which, when brothers meet, they call out the divine blessings. *Shalom* is the name of G-d. *Salam* is one of the 99 names of Allah. (Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat)<sup>9</sup>

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged—and verily God has indeed the power to give them victory. Those who have been driven out from their homelands against all right, for no other reason than their saying, "Our Lord is God." 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. And God will support those who support Him. (*Qur'an*, 22:39-40)

Once a man has begun to use violence he will never stop using it, for it is so much easier and more practical than any other method. It simplifies relations with the other completely by denying that the other exists. And once you have repudiated the other, you cannot adopt a new attitude—cannot, for example, start rational dialogue with him. Violence has brought so many clear and visible results; how then go back to a way of acting that certainly looks ineffectual and seems to promise only very doubtful results? So you go on using violence, even if at first you had thought that violence would be only a temporary expedient, even if you have achieved thorough change in your own or the general political situation. (Jacques Ellul, *Violence: Reflections from a Christian Perspective*)

What difference does it make to the dead, the orphans and the homeless, whether the mad destruction is wrought under the name of totalitarianism or the holy name of liberty or democracy? (Mahatma Gandhi)

## FUNDAMENTALISM AND VIOLENCE

Fundamentalism is another pernicious attitude from which violence can break out. Not all manifestations of fundamentalism are prone to violence; there are communities of fundamentalists, such as the Amish, who embrace strict pacifism. However, a majority of fundamentalist movements are characterized by an ideological commitment to rigid religious tenets that promote a suspicion and antipathy toward those who do not hold the same things to be true. Martin Marty has studied fundamentalism and cautions how it can be a precursor to violence. He details the cultural paranoia that generates a felt “need for reaction against threats to one’s personal and social identity, [the fundamentalist] having ordered a movement that creates boundaries and distances from ‘the other.’” Marty goes on:

Having chosen fundamentalistic approaches as defenses against modernity, what is next? Most movements see themselves as chosen, as elect instruments to carry out divine purposes as they have been instructed to do in [selectively retrieved] sacred writings, or as recapturing ideal moments in the past. They use this chosenness or election against “the other.” They know where history is going.<sup>10</sup>

Marty acknowledges the subjective sincerity of many fundamentalists; their concerns are truly felt and their zeal is genuine. Whether actual violence breaks out or not, fundamentalism sees itself as at odds with the world, “doing battle for the Lord.” Violence is easily justified in this context, where all things foreign are seen to be essentially hostile—not only to the fundamentalist, but to God as well. Notably, Marty insists that relativism is not the antidote for fundamentalism:

I like Gabriel Marcel’s concept of counter-intolerance, which a fundamentalist will at least understand since he or she might not have any empathy for light tolerance. Instead of saying tol-

erantly, "I don't believe much of anything and I expect you not to, and then we can live and let live," the counter-intolerant says and shows, "I believe something so deeply that I understand what your belief means to you, and I use the attachment to and comprehension of my belief structure as a warrant, a guarantee, of your own."<sup>11</sup>

Such a commitment to one's own tradition facilitates approaching other traditions with a credible attitude of respect and allows for coherent moral objections to the violent excesses of the more malignant strains of fundamentalism. Consider Pope John Paul II's remarks on the subject of religiously motivated terrorism, given in Assisi on the World Day of Peace, January 1, 2002:

Terrorism springs from hatred, and it generates isolation, mistrust and closure. Violence is added to violence in a tragic sequence that exasperates successive generations, each one inheriting the hatred which divided those that went before. Terrorism is built on contempt for human life. For this reason, not only does it commit intolerable crimes, but because it resorts to terror as a political and military means it is itself a true crime against humanity... To try to impose on others by violent means what we consider to be the truth is an offence against human dignity, and ultimately an offence against God whose image that person bears. For this reason, what is usually referred to as fundamentalism is an attitude radically opposed to belief in God. Terrorism exploits not just people, it exploits God: it ends by making him an idol to be used for one's own purposes.<sup>12</sup>

*For Continued Discussion*

What are the social structures, political-historical circumstances and/or economic realities that tend to spawn radical violent religious fundamentalism? Are there realistic ways to intervene in such situations to reduce the possibility of violence? If so, how? What roles do religions, governments, and international organizations have in such work?

In what ways are religious fundamentalism and violence linked? Who is able to authoritatively repudiate unlawful and immoral violent actions?

How can people of faith engage fundamentalists peacefully? When dialogue is impossible, what constitutes a proper response to the challenges of religious and cultural fundamentalism? What does one do when violence breaks out?

Read the first reflection passage below by Martin Marty. Fundamentalism presents tempting answers to the questions of all believers. Identify the strains of fundamentalism that exist in one's own tradition, and think about ways you might be susceptible to the claims it presents.

### *Reflections*

Protestant fundamentalism has tended to be doctrinal above all, while Catholic fundamentalism has concentrated on magisterial churchly teaching, as in nineteenth century papal documents. Jewish fundamentalist movements concentrate on story (for example, its constituents like to tell stories of how God promised a specific land to Abraham and Moses and assured conquest through Joshua). And in Islam, the accent is on law and the literal application of laws in *shari'ah*, the body of law that appears as a kind of commentary on the *Qur'an*. (Martin Marty)<sup>13</sup>

If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. For whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it. (Matthew 16:26)

Selective literalism is a favorite practice of extremists on the one hand and those with secular tendencies in all religions, on the other. For example, extremist Muslims might read, "Fight the unbelievers," and stop. They omit the rest of the sentence, which says, "as they fight you." Unfortunately, they frequently apply this method to all of the fighting verses in order to legitimate their violence. (Amira Shamma Abdin)<sup>14</sup>

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. (Robert Hamerton-Kelly)<sup>15</sup>

There shall be no coercion in matters of faith. (*Qur'an*, 2:256).





# Religion and Peace

## PEACE IN JUDAISM

Even when Israel is surrounded by enemies seeking to ruin it, even when it is worried about its survival and the peace of the world which human folly may destroy forever, Israel must take upon itself its primary responsibility to be the light of nations, the announcer of good tidings, the peacemaker, the builder of the temple of universal brotherhood. (Rabbi René-Samuel Sirat)<sup>16</sup>

As dialogue among the Abrahamic faiths unfold in a new era of growing trust, friendship, and mutual enrichment, participants have identified a commitment to peace in the world as a central concern. As Rabbi Sirat asserts above, there is never a time or a place in which the Jewish tradition is silent about this peace. The Hebrew word *shalom*, so far from being a simple greeting, is invoked as a name of God and an iteration of the covenant with Abraham. This word, *shalom*, peace, is at the heart of the Jewish faith and its identity with respect to the nations.

### Peace in the Hebrew Scriptures

To live peacefully is to “live up to the noblest vision of [the] Abrahamic tradition,” according to Rabbi David Rosen.<sup>17</sup> The tradition of which he speaks is grounded in the teachings of the Hebrew Scriptures. The following passages begin to illustrate the notion of peace that inhabits and nourishes the Jewish religion.

Come and see the works of the Lord, who has done fearsome deeds on earth; who stops wars to the ends of the earth, breaks the bow, splinters the spear, and burns the shields with fire; who says, “Be still and confess that I am God! I am exalted among the nations, exalted on the earth.” (Psalm 46: 9-11)

On that day they will sing this song in the land of Judah: "A strong city have we; He sets up walls and ramparts to protect us. Open up the gates to let in a nation that is just, one that keeps faith. A nation of firm purpose you keep in peace; in peace, for its trust in you." (Isaiah 26:1-3)

Right will dwell in the desert and justice abide in the orchard. Justice will bring about peace; right will produce calm and security. My people will live in peaceful country, in secure dwellings and quiet resting places. (Isaiah 32:16-18)

If your enemy is hungry, give him food to eat; if he be thirsty, give him to drink. (Proverbs 25:21)

Here the tribes have come, the tribes of the Lord; as it was decreed for Israel, to give thanks to the name of the Lord. Here are the thrones of justice, the thrones of the House of David. For the peace of Jerusalem pray: "May those who love you prosper! May peace be within your ramparts, prosperity within your towers." For family and friends I say, "May peace be yours." (Psalm 122:4-8)

#### *For Continued Discussion*

It is clear from the above quotes that peace in the Hebrew Scriptures is more than simply the absence of war. For the Biblical authors, what is peace, and what/who brings it about?

Think about a personal experience where you felt at peace or experienced peace. What can be learned from direct, first-hand knowledge of the causes and effects of peace?

Will there ever be a time when all people on the earth are at peace? Does your answer to this question, especially in light of your religious beliefs, make a difference in how you live your life?

### **Justice and Peace in Judaism**

Justice and Peace in Judaism are inextricably tied to one another: justice is the guarantor, the *sine qua non* of peace. By this logic, peace

cannot be defined as a mere absence of violence, or even a simple shared feeling of fraternity. Rather, peace is what the rightly ordered society enjoys, by ensuring the just fulfillment of obligations to God and among the people. “Horizontal” justice, the lawful interaction between human beings, and “vertical” justice, the fulfillment of covenantal duties to God, are the pillars of this right order that ushers peace into the world.

The dictum “no peace without justice” has become proverbial today, cited as a first principle of international peace and amnesty organizations, governmental bodies, and religious authorities. Despite its widespread influence in world affairs, however, justice retains a special meaning within Judaism, because of the Jewish legal tradition, called *halakhah*. Unlike secular law, halakhic law is equally concerned with vertical justice (toward the Creator) and horizontal (between human persons). It contains not only the Law of Moses as found in the Torah, but also includes a vast corpus of rabbinic teachings about the ethical norms and moral directives by which Jews are to live.

### *Halakhah: A Guide to Justice*

*Halakhah* is an overarching term, denoting the sum of the Written Law (the 613 commandments of the Torah) and the Oral Law (rabbinic interpretations codified in the Talmud and Mishnah). Whether *halakhah* has only a “vote but not a veto” (Mordecai Kaplan, *Not So Random Thoughts*)<sup>18</sup> in contemporary Jewish ethical deliberation, or whether it remains binding even as it continues to develop (David Novak, *The Role of Dogma in Judaism*),<sup>19</sup> the halakhic tradition has always held a central place in Jewish life.

Jewish tradition affirms that conscience and moral knowledge are essential, but not sufficient for the construction of a just society; a binding legislative structure is also necessary, which *halakhah* provides. Divinely instituted and seen to be the ideal guide to achieving justice, *halakhah* is absolutely binding as Rabbi Eliezer Berkovits explains:

The same ethical code may be desired by society or God; the difference will lie in the nature of the obligation. The binding force of a code instituted by society or the state is relative; the force of the one willed by God is absolute...All secular ethics lack the quality of absolute obligation. They are as changeable

as the desires and the wills that institute them; the law of God alone is as eternal as His will.<sup>20</sup>

The ritual laws and the so-called ethical laws (the vertical and the horizontal) are not entirely different in nature or intention; this is because no dualistic distinction is made in Judaism between the body and soul. The two types of norms cross-fertilize one another. Norms like the dietary regulations and Sabbath injunctions help to train the body to submit to the requirements of the mind or inner “soul,” which in turn disposes the person to act justly—to outwardly observe the ethical norms in society with others. Conversely, justice toward others incites a desire for a transcendent and more fulfilling relationship with God, which then is cultivated for its own sake through the ritual practices.<sup>21</sup> *Halakhah*, then, is the legal framework of Judaism by which humans learn to act with justice toward God and toward humanity in a holistic way that orients that community to become just and peaceful.

Jewish law is essential to religious Jewish communities the world over. The different approaches to halakhic observance range from the Orthodox position, that *halakhah* is always and everywhere binding for Jews, in its received form without modification, to the Reform and Reconstructionist approaches, which view *halakhah* chiefly as a useful source of inspiration in a developing tradition within which revelation continues to unfold.<sup>22</sup>

Called to be a “light unto the nations,” the people of Israel have always sought to put their special covenantal gifts to the service of the world. This principle underlies all Jewish ritual and observance, giving it a transcendent direction in the history of the world. Halakhic observance is in one sense nourishes and strengthens Judaism’s relationship with God, but in another sense it fulfills the purpose of preparing Jews to undertake the task of *tikkun olam*, the sanctification and reparation of all that ails the world. As Rabbi Sirat’s words at the beginning of this section make clear, a constant and hopeful commitment to peace is at the heart of *tikkun olam*. Rabbi Joseph Telushkin summarizes this well:

Judaism believes that the purpose of Jewish existence is nothing less than “to perfect the world under the rule of God.” Human beings are obligated to bring mankind to a knowledge of God,

whose primary demand of human beings is moral behavior. All people who hold this belief are “ethical monotheists,” and thus natural allies of religiously committed Jews.<sup>23</sup>

*For Continued Discussion*

According to Judaism, peace is what a rightly ordered society enjoys, by ensuring the just fulfillment of obligations to God and others. What do you think are the starting points or fundamental principles in cultivating a just and peaceful society? Are these similar/different from those presented here about Judaism?

The Jewish principle that justice precedes peace can be interpreted in many ways on a communal and global scale, and indeed has been. Efforts towards peace are tried and tested in the real world. Discuss some contemporary issues where there is disagreement over the appropriate interpretation and application of justice in pursuit of peace. How does one negotiate such disagreements? Can the Jewish ideas discussed above shed any light?

Judaism teaches that by fulfilling one's duties to God and one's neighbors, God's peace will be ushered into the world. What are the challenges to practically living a life of faith seeking to prioritize and balance “horizontal” justice between human beings and “vertical” justice of fulfilling one's covenantal duties to God? Would you think that this struggle common to all conscientious believers of the Abrahamic faiths?

As it relates to the promotion of peace through justice, how do you understand the following passage as a Jew, Christian or Muslim?

For the Lord, your God, is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who has no favorites, accepts no bribes; who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and befriends the alien, feeding and clothing him; so you too must befriend the alien, for you were aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt. (Deuteronomy 10:17-19)

Discuss the April 1994, passage by Pope John Paul II and its implications for peace among religions as a way to promote peace in the world. Do you agree? If so, how can you advance such cooperation and blessing?

Christians and Jews together have a great deal to offer to a world struggling to distinguish good from evil, a world called by the Creator to defend and protect life, and yet so vulnerable to voices that propagate values bringing death and destruction. As Christians and Jews, following the example of the faith of Abraham, we are called to be a blessing for the world and it is therefore necessary for us, Christians and Jews, be first at blessing to one another.

### PEACE IN CHRISTIANITY

Peace is a dominant message in the Christian scriptures. The word occurs 92 times and is found in almost every book of the New Testament. Similar in dynamic to the Jewish principle of justice, peace for Christians has a vertical dimension (God's gift of peace) and a horizontal expression (peace with others). The vertical and the horizontal meet on the cross on which Jesus died as a voluntary sacrifice of atonement for human sins. This is a sacrifice that Christians recall and make sacramentally present during prayer and worship. To prepare for such worship, Christians call to mind their sins and ask forgiveness from God and from each another. Also it is common during a service to exchange a sign of peace with one's neighbor in the hope that all may be made well through the peace of Christ. Some passages that illustrate these themes follow:

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give it to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid. (John 14:27)

But to you who hear I say, love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. To the person who strikes you on one cheek, offer the other one as well, and from the person who takes your cloak, do not withhold even your tunic. Give to everyone who asks of you, and from the one who takes what is yours, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you. (Luke 6:27-31)

For he is our peace, he who made both one and broke down the dividing wall of enmity, through his flesh. (Ephesians 2:14)

Where do the wars and where do the conflicts among you come from? Is it not from your passions that make war within your members? You covet but do not possess. You kill and envy but you cannot obtain; you fight and wage war. You do not possess because you do not ask...Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you of two minds. Begin to lament, to mourn, to weep. Let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy into dejection. Humble yourselves before the Lord and he will exalt you. (James 4:1-2, 8-10)

Canticle of Zechariah:

Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, he has come to his people and set them free; he has raised up for us a mighty savior in the house of his servant David. As he spoke from his holy prophets of old, that he would save us from our enemies and from the hands of all who hate us. He promised to remember his holy covenant, the oath he swore to our father Abraham, to set us free us from the hands of our enemies so that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all the days of our life. You my child shall be called the Prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare his way, to give the people knowledge of salvation by the forgiveness of their sins. Through the tender compassion of our God, the dawn from on high shall break upon us to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death and to guide our feet into the way of peace. (Luke 1:68-79)

### The Early Martyrs and Nonviolent Resistance

Early Christians under the Roman Empire faced an increasingly policy of intolerance and persecution for over two and a half centuries, culminating in the early fourth century with the empire-wide persecutions by the emperor Diocletian. The refusal of Christians to accept the religion of the Roman and the divinity of the emperor, as well as their active seeking of converts, placed them outside the law. Christians practiced their faith in hiding, for suspicion alone was cause for their arrest, consignment to exile or execution. It is likely that tens of thousands of these early Christians were executed by the Roman authorities, until Constantine adopted the Christian religion for the Roman empire in the year 313.<sup>24</sup> From these years of persecution, a tradition of nonvio-



lent martyrdom sprang forth, a tradition that has found expression in movements for justice and civil rights even up to the present day. Cyprian, the bishop of Carthage who became a martyr in the year 258, writes to his diocese:

You must follow the lessons, which I have preached and taught to you time and time again. Remain calm and peaceable. Let no one among you stir up any trouble for the brethren or offer himself up to the pagans of his own volition. But if a man has been apprehended and delivered up, then he has a duty to speak out, in as much as God who dwells within us speaks at that hour. He has shown that His will is that we should do more than profess our faith, we are to confess it.<sup>25</sup> (Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter 81*)

Cyprian was beheaded on September 14, a few weeks after Letter 81 was distributed. The martyr-*acta* (accounts of martyrs' lives and deaths) describe his demeanor in dying as "calm and peaceable," just as he preached to his people. It is important to note that although the vast majority of martyr-*acta* are of dubious historicity, documents such as the *Acta Proconsularia*, which tells of Cyprian, were composed by Roman notaries themselves and are thus seen to be reliable. Equanimity in the face of mortal danger, respect for one's own life (martyrdom should never be sought), and submission to the will of God are the distinguishing features of this tradition. Eileen Egan aptly notes, "The nonviolent response of the Christians to the evils heaped upon them was a mystery to those around them, and above all to their persecutors. It was not only a mystery but a madness, a madness inexplicable without the example of the willing death on the cross."<sup>26</sup>

One of the most important early Christian texts, the *Apologia* of St. Justin Martyr, was submitted directly to the emperor Antoninus Pius in the mid-second century. Justin, in defending the right of Christians to exist in the empire, describes his own people as the epitome of a peaceful community: "It is not right to answer fighting with fighting, nor does God wish us to imitate the wicked; but he has exhorted us to lead all men away from the shame and cupidity of the wicked by patience and gentleness."<sup>27</sup> As Justin's traditional title indicates, his ethic of nonviolence did not save his life. Nor was that his intent. For men, women and

children such as these, death was not the end but a new beginning and its pains were seen as inconsequential in comparison to the eternal blessedness that lay ahead. The words of Thomas Merton illustrate this point in a modern context:

Nonviolence is not for power but for truth. It is not pragmatic but prophetic. It is not aimed at immediate political results, but at the manifestation of fundamental and crucially important truth. Nonviolence is not primarily the language of efficacy, but the language of *kairos*. It does not say, "We shall overcome" so much as "This is the day of the Lord, and whatever may happen to us, he shall overcome."<sup>28</sup>

*For Continued Discussion*

The New Testament understanding of peace carries the rich heritage of the Hebrew *shalom* and seeks to foster spiritual, mental, and physical well being. How can Jews, Christians and Muslims cultivate an environment or social context in which relationships between men and women and God participate in God's plan for humanity's blessing and creation's flourishing? Discuss practical ways to begin with one's family and community.

The radical nonviolence of the early Christians was in direct juxtaposition to the martial virtue extolled by Roman Empire. Discuss the extent to which the New Testament formed the lives of these Christians, especially in the midst of a culture that diametrically opposed many of its central teachings. What can modern Christians learn from the martyrs' reliance on the teachings of justice and peace advanced by Jesus? Discuss the lives of courageous people, such as Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, who are examples of believers responding to injustice. His April 1963, letter from a Birmingham jail follows:

Of course, there is nothing new about this kind of civil disobedience. It was seen sublimely in the refusal of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego to obey the laws of Nebuchadnezzar because a higher moral law was involved. It was practiced superbly by the early Christians who were willing to face hungry lions and the excruciating pain of chopping blocks, before submitting to certain unjust laws of the Roman Empire.

The absence of violent conflict is not the fullest expression of peace, but it is an important precondition for justice to take root. Why isn't the cessation of violence in the world enough for Jews, Christians or Muslims? For the sake of harmony and peaceful co-existence, why is it not enough for believers to be quiet non-participants in the midst of a dominant culture that advocates values contrary to theirs? What are the implications for historical revelation and interpretation, ethics, and hope in such a consideration?

### **The Just War Theory: Insights and Problems**

The legalization of Christian faith in the year 313 ended the imperial persecutions, and at the same time paved the road toward the day when Christians would wield political power in the Mediterranean world. With political power came the responsibility to defend the populace against aggression, making a categorical adherence to nonviolence all but impossible at the practical level of the state. Christian leaders and intellectuals formulated the beginnings of what is now known as the just war theory, which they regarded as an authentically Christian response to the realities of Christian society and the threats from abroad.

St. Augustine (d. 430) exerted significant influence in the formulation of Christian just war theory. In a letter to Boniface he wrote, "Peace should be the object of your desire; war should be waged only as a necessity, and waged only that God may by it deliver men from the necessity and preserve them in peace. For peace is not sought in order to the kindling of war, but war is waged in order that peace may be obtained." In another letter to Darius he wrote, "But it is a higher glory still to stay war itself with a word, than to slay men with the sword, and to procure or maintain peace by peace, not by war. For those who fight, if they are good men, doubtless seek for peace; nevertheless it is through blood. Your mission, however, is to prevent the shedding of blood."

Any interpretation of the Christian just war theory must acknowledge its purpose: to constrain, define, and codify the limits of morally legitimate force. Warfare, in this context, is never the goal, but remains as a possible duty after the exhaustion of all its alternatives. This approach must not be selectively applied to thwart this purpose of limiting and restraining the human inclination toward violence.

By the medieval period, Augustine's teachings would become the basis for law. The canon lawyers in medieval Europe devised a system by which the right to go to war (*ius ad bellum*) and the conduct of armed conflict (*ius in bello*) would be ascertained by a rigorous list of criteria. These criteria have changed as warfare has changed over the centuries, but the criteria remain largely the same today. A contemporary document, the *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, summarizes *ius ad bellum* in the following way:

- The damage inflicted by the aggressor on the nation or community of nations must be lasting, grave, and certain;
- All other means of putting an end to it must have been shown to be impractical or ineffective;
- There must be serious prospects of success;
- The use of arms must not produce evils and disorders graver than the evil to be eliminated. The power of modern means of destruction weighs heavily in evaluating this condition. (*Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 2309)

In brief, the *ius in bello* norms are: noncombatant immunity, by which civilians are spared as much as possible from the direct and indirect ravages of war; proportionality, by which objectives are met with no further force than is absolutely required; and right intention, by which the concern for peace with justice prevents indiscriminate violence and excesses that stem from immoral intentions in conflict.

There are many who have objected to the use of the just war theory as an authentic Christian response to violence. They say that light of the Gospel, warfare can never truly claim to be justifiable. Leo Tolstoy, in *The Kingdom of God Is Within You*, sums this position up simply: "Christianity, with its doctrine of humility, of forgiveness, of love, is incompatible with the state, with its haughtiness, its violence, its punishment, its wars." John H. Yoder, in *The Politics of Jesus*, analyzes this position critically:

The key to the obedience of God's people is not their effectiveness but their patience. The triumph of the right is assured not by the might that comes to the aid of the right, which is of course the justification of the use of violence and the other kinds of power in every human conflict; the triumph of the right, although it is assured, is sure because of the power of the resurrection and not because of any calculation of causes and

effects, nor because of the inherently greater strength of the good guys. The relationship between the obedience of God's people and the triumph of God's cause is not a relationship of cause and effect but one of cross and resurrection.<sup>29</sup>

*For Continued Discussion*

As noted earlier in Part II of this Study Guide, the Code of Hammurabi, Lex Talionis, the Ten Commandments and the establishment of just laws are vehicles to assist in reducing violence. Can we expect more from peace-making efforts than the reduction of violence? If so, what can we expect? If not, why continue trying? Should this discussion be one of what we can hope for, more than what we can expect?

Do you think that the just war theory and a commitment to Gospel non-violence are mutually exclusive? Is it a simple question of "realism vs. idealism," or can there be a conversation between these two positions?

Read Eileen Egan's critique of the effectiveness of just war theory proponents. Do you agree or disagree with her assessment? What might be other viable alternatives to the just war proponents or Egan?

The just war conditions, as a means of preventing war or of lessening its brutality, have shown themselves to be irrelevant to the war-makers. Christians, their role in war always presented to them by the state as the enterprise of justice through violence, have little choice but to join with their nation-state in judging and punishing...The tragedy would be if God's creation met destruction by the power and destructive will of humankind. The expression of this destructive will might well be a war undoubtedly declared just by its perpetrators.

Individuals and groups of individuals (Martin Luther King, Gandhi, and others with their followers) have demonstrated the self-denial and suffering that strict nonviolence seems to require in the midst of adversarial power and injustice. Given the diverse make up of democracies, is it possible for an entire nation to operate with the same principles? Could there ever be such a nation?

Have you ever resorted to violence in self-defense or in defense of others? Have you ever confronted aggression with nonviolence? Think about these experiences and the necessities and choices that they presented.

## PEACE IN ISLAM

### Peace in the *Qur'an*

And if they incline to peace, incline thou also to it, and trust in God. (*Qur'an*, 8:61)

If they let you be, and do not make war against you and offer you peace, then God does not allow you to harm them. (*Qur'an*, 4:90)

The Jews and the Christians all who believe in God and the last day and do righteous deeds, shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve. (*Qur'an*, 5:69).

And know that God invites man to the abode of peace. (*Qur'an*, 10:25)

As for those of the unbelievers who do not fight against you on account of your faith, and neither do they drive you out of your homelands, God does not forbid you to show them kindness and to behave towards them with full equity, for verily, God loves those who act equitably. (*Qur'an*, 60:7)

Peace be upon you and God's Mercy and His blessings. (Obligatory form of greeting)

### Tolerance as a Principle of Peace

In Arabic, *islam* is the word for "surrender" which also comes from the root SLM, from which also comes the word "*salam*," peace. The name of the religion Islam combines the meanings of surrender to God and peace.

Similar to Judaism and Christianity, Islam views justice and peace as necessarily related. Peace is what the rightly ordered society enjoys, by

ensuring the just fulfillment of obligations to God and others. The *Qur'an* is a book of faith from which Muslims derive their laws, philosophy, ethics and theology necessary to constitute the kind of human society that God intends. The *Qur'an* is intended to be studied and interpreted in a holistic way. From the *Qur'an*, principles of tolerance and pluralism emerge as ways to achieve peace through just laws and societies.

As noted above, in the *Qur'an*, it is said that God has ordained that there be different religions on earth (49:13, 30:22), they must respect each other (49:11) and discrimination is forbidden on any basis. Freedom of religious belief is paramount in the *Qur'an*, which states, "There shall be no coercion in matters of faith" (2:256). Further, "Surely, those who have faith in this divine writ, as well as those who follow the Jewish faith, and the Christians and the Sabians, all who believe in God and the Last Day and do righteous deeds, shall have their reward with their Lord, and no fear need they have, and neither shall they grieve." (2:62 and also 5:65).

Islam holds in highest esteem the values of tolerance and respect for all people including non-Muslims. Muslims are permitted to eat the food of non-Muslims and to befriend them as in-laws, relatives and friends (5:5) thus creating the freedom for cooperation and peaceful co-existence. God who is Just (one of the 99 names of God) has sent his guidance and light to every community on earth, each in its own language or way. God has made humans his vicegerents (2:30, 6:165) so that they could continue to do his work on earth. Humans are expected to work for peace by protecting the values of equality, justice and fair dealings as ordered in the *Qur'an*—even between enemies or those one dislikes. The *Qur'an* reads: "O believers, be ever steadfast in your devotion to God, bearing witness to the truth in all equity; and never let hatred or enmity of any people lead you into the sin of deviating from justice. Be just, this is the closest to being God conscious." (5:8)

The Prophet Mohammed was the first person to establish an Islamic polity in Medina, where he drew up what came to be known as The Constitution of Medina. In this document the Jews of Medina were declared to be "one community with the believers, they have their religion and the Muslims have theirs" (n. 25).

#### *For Continued Discussion*

Is it possible and feasible to put the Islamic ethos of tolerance and

peaceful coexistence into practice? What are the conditions under which such a polity could exist today?

What can Jews and Christians learn from the period of the Golden Age in Spain where such an ethos successfully balanced peace and plurality among its community?

How can Jewish, Christian and Islamic intra-religious dialogue benefit from the insights of tolerance and peaceful co-existence advocated by Islam?

### *Jihad, Justice and Peace*

The complexities of sustaining an Islamic ethos over a long period of time in the face of competing and antagonistic political and military forces caused those with the responsibility to defend the populace to develop an authentically Islamic response to such threats. The *Qur'an* allows for Muslims to defend themselves in the face of aggression or violence. Much like Christianity in its just war theory, Islam clearly specifies the defensive conditions under which violence or *jihad* in Islam is permitted.

The word *jihad* comes from the Arabic root JHD, which means to exert effort, to strive, to struggle. There are 14 layers of *jihad*; the highest or greatest of these is to struggle against one's own evil inclinations. Other *jihads* are described as one's efforts to make society more just through peaceful methods such as the *jihad* of the tongue or pen. The least desirable or smallest *jihad* is that with the sword. The *Qur'an* reads:

Permission to fight is given to those against whom war is being wrongfully waged—and verily God has indeed the power to give them victory. Those who have been driven out from their homelands against all right, for no other reason than their saying, "Our Lord is God." 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. And God will support those who support Him. (22:39-40)



Chapter 9 of the *Qur'an* deals with the challenges of war and violence. God is opposed to war, although war is sometimes necessary: "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). It is significant to note that Islam permits violence because of its possibility to defend the just society that God desires. Such a society is the best condition for equality and peace to flourish.

#### *For Continued Discussion*

Expansionist *jihad* is neither cited nor permitted in the *Qur'an*. *Jihad* with the sword should be limited to defensive purposes only. Historically, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have all waged expansionist wars in the name of God. How can the Abrahamic faiths learn from and be challenged by each other to remain faithful to God's desire for peace and justice?

Can cultural, educational or religious programs be promoted in your community to build trust and respect while stemming the tide of those who would twist Judaism, Christianity or Islam into violent religions? What have others done from which you can learn? What can you do?

What are the appropriate interreligious collaborations or programs where the authentic teachings of peace and justice found in Judaism, Christianity and Islam can be advanced? What are the opportunities in your community for such efforts?

#### *Concluding Reflections*

Most significant in this matter is the behavior of Western societies, and above all of their intellectuals, when confronted with the great collective crimes of our century. There exists...an astonishing amnesia, as if these crimes were insignificant mishaps. We know, and yet we do not wish to remember. It is true that the memory of things past is susceptible to the opposite excess. It can become a kind of obsession that suffocates and stifles. We cannot develop here an analysis of the forms of remorse and the forms of guilt. It also happens that the indignant evocation of a distant past can serve as a kind of alibi for the hiding of a more recent past.<sup>30</sup>

Our generation is realistic, for we have come to know what man is really all about. After all, man is that being who has invented the gas chambers of Auschwitz; however, he is also the being who has entered those chambers upright with the Lord's Prayer or the *Shema Israel* on his lips.<sup>31</sup>



## NOTES

1. Samuel Pizar, "Blood and Hope," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, Joseph H. Ehrenkranz and David L. Coppola, eds. Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2000, p. 48, 51.
2. David L. Coppola, "The Problem of Religion, Violence, and Peace: An Uneasy Trilogy," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, Joseph H. Ehrenkranz and David L. Coppola, eds. Fairfield, CT: Sacred Heart University Press, 2000, p. 17.
3. For Scriptural passages dealing with the aspects of human culpability for violence, see: Genesis 4:1-16; Romans 5:12-14; Wisdom 1:13; Wisdom 2:24.
4. Coppola, p. 17.
5. Rene Girard, *The Scapegoat*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986.
6. Gil Bailie, *Violence Unveiled: Humanity at the Crossroads*. New York: Crossroad Publishing Co., 1995.
7. James Williams at the Center for Christian Jewish Understanding conference, "Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths," 2003. The title of Dr. Williams' lecture is "Finding What is Good in Jewish-Christian Relations." Published in Part I of this volume.
8. The Second Vatican Council, *Nostra Aetate: Declaration on the Relation of the Church to Non-Christian Religions*, 1965.
9. René-Samuel Sirat, "The Roots of Peace in the Torah," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, p. 87.
10. Martin E. Marty, "Fundamentalism as a Precursor to Violence," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, p. 64.
11. Marty, p. 74.
12. Pope John Paul II, *Message for the World Day of Peace 2002*; [www.vatican.va](http://www.vatican.va)
13. Marty, p. 61.

14. Amira Shamma Abdin, "The Roots of Peace in the Qur'an," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, p. 107.
15. Robert Hamerton-Kelly, *The Gospel and the Sacred: Poetics of Violence in Mark*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress, 1994, p. 3.
16. René-Samuel Sirat at the Center for Christian Jewish Understanding conference, "Pathways to Peace in the Abrahamic Faiths," 2003. The title of Rabbi Sirat's lecture is "Jewish Pathways to Peace: A Biblical Meditation." Published in Part I of this volume.
17. David Rosen, "The Role of Religion in the Pursuit of Peace," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, p. 122.
18. Mordecai Kaplan, *Not So Random Thoughts*. Reconstructionist Press, 1966.
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20. Eliezer Berkovits, "Law and Morality in Jewish Tradition;" *Essential Essays on Judaism*, David Hazony, ed. Jerusalem: Shalem Press, 2000, p. 17.
21. Berkovits, p. 30.
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23. Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*. New York: William and Morrow Co., 1991, p. 549.
24. Philip Carrington, *The Early Christian Church, Vol. II*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957, p. 16.
25. Cyprian of Carthage, *Letter 81. Martyr-Acta and Propaganda: A Case Study of Carthage in 257/258*, J. Patuot Burns, ed. <http://divinity.library.vanderbilt.edu/burns/>
26. Eileen Egan, *Peace Be With You: Justified Warfare or the Way of Nonviolence*. Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1999, p. 22.
27. Justin Martyr, *First Apologia*. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0126.htm>

28. Thomas Merton, "Peace and Revolution: A Footnote from Ulysses," *Peace* (1968). Reprinted in Gordon C. Zahn, ed. *The Nonviolent Alternative*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1980, p. 35.
29. John Yoder, *The Politics of Jesus: Vicit Agnus Noster*. New York: Eerdmans, 1972.
30. Georges Cottier, "The Great Jubilee: A Time of Remembrance," *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace*, p. 134.
31. Victor Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*. New York: Pocket Books, 1963.

## APPENDIX 1: Suggestions for Further Reading

This appendix offers sources directly related to the contents of this Study Guide. To the student who wishes to continue learning about religion, violence, and peace, these sources will be helpful but certainly not exhaustive. The volume to which this Study Guide is a companion, *Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace* (see below), is an excellent resource with which to begin further study. See Appendix 2 for web resources on interreligious issues.

### Religion and Violence Resources

- Bailie, G. (1995). *Violence Unveiled*. New York: Crossroad.
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## APPENDIX 2

### Websites Concerned with Interreligious Peace and Understanding

Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University

[www.cciu.org](http://www.cciu.org)

Council of Centers on Christian-Jewish Relations

[www.ccsr.us](http://www.ccsr.us)

Global Ethic Foundation

[www.global-ethic.org](http://www.global-ethic.org)

JCRelations: Insights and Issues Concerning Jewish-Christian Dialogue

[www.jcrelations.net](http://www.jcrelations.net)

Marywood University: Tools for Prophets in the Information Age

<http://ac.marywood.edu/skb/prophets/resource2.html>

PBS Religion and Ethics

<http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/>

Association of Religion and Intellectual Life (ARIL)

<http://www.aril.org/World.html>

SIDIC: International Jewish and Christian Documentation Service

[www.sidic.org](http://www.sidic.org)

Yad Vashem: The Holocaust Martyrs' and Heroes' Remembrance

Authority [www.yad-vashem.org](http://www.yad-vashem.org)



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# Religion and Violence, Religion and Peace

Edited by

Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz and David L. Coppola, Ph.D.

Based on papers presented at a 1998 conference held in Auschwitz and sponsored by the Center for Christian-Jewish Understanding of Sacred Heart University, this volume focuses on the role that religion plays in cultivating peace or promoting violence.

Contributors include Amira Shamma Abdin, Anthony J. Cernera, David L. Coppola, Georges Cottier, OP, Cahal B. Cardinal Daly, Rabbi Joseph H. Ehrenkranz, Archbishop Jeremiasz, William H. Cardinal Keeler, Franciszek Cardinal Macharski, Rev. Martin Marty, Elisabeth Maxwell, Samuel Pisar, Rabbi David Rosen and Rabbi Rene-Samuel Sirat.

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*Essays in Honor of  
John Cardinal O'Connor*

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