Exercising Power
The Role of Religions in Concord and Conflict
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Based on Papers Read at the Symposium on
Exercising Power: The Role of Religions
in Concord and Conflict
Held at Åbo, Finland, on 17–19 August 2005

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Published by the Donner Institute for Research
in Religious and Cultural History
Åbo, Finland

Distributed by Almqvist & Wiksell International
Stockholm, Sweden
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Editorial Note

On 17–19 August 2005, the Donner Institute and the Finnish Society for the Study of Religion organised an European Association for the Study of Religion (EASR) Conference in Turku, Finland with the theme Exercising Power: The Role of Religions in Concord and Conflict. The topic was a well-chosen one; however, it must be admitted that quite a few conferences on similar subjects were organised during the last few years before the Donner conference, not least the International Association for the History of Religions (IAHR) Conference in Tokyo 24–30 March 2005 on the theme Religion: Conflict and Peace.

Nevertheless we, as organisers, are very pleased with the outcome of our conference. A majority of the papers presented are included in the present volume of Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis. The readers themselves can thus decide whether they share our satisfaction with the results or not.

On the whole, our impression is that the participants found each others’ company as well as our arrangements pleasant. I would like to present the hardly falsifiable hypothesis that good organisers and stimulating conference arrangements contribute to making papers better than they would be in other circumstances.

The Editor
In God’s Name

Practising Unconditional Love to the Death

In this article I consider some of the ways in which those with religious authority might exercise their power by persuading believers to perform actions that they (the believers) would not have dreamed of performing had not justifications been presented to them in the name of religion. There are, of course, reasons other than religion – love and money, to take but two obvious examples – that lead people to do things that they would not otherwise have done, but religion would seem to add that extra something (for good or evil) that can inspire people to believe and act with an added fervour, an extra commitment, and an extra disregard for other considerations. If we really believe that it is God who wants us to do something then we are more likely to do it (or at least feel more guilty if we do not do it) than if George or Tony or even our guru asks us to do it – unless we believe that our guru is God, or is the only one with a direct hotline to Him (or Her). We may even be prepared (in both the active and the passive senses of the word) to kill ourselves and others for what we have come to believe is ‘the cause’, as happened in a situation described in this article.

The term ‘brainwashing’ has frequently been resorted to in order to explain the control that religious leaders have exerted over their followers. Most scholars have argued against the use of such a term as an explanation of why people join or stay in new religious movements or ‘cults’. This is because they see it as little more than a metaphor that expresses the speaker’s distaste for the end result of a process of conversion, without actually explaining the process itself. This, however, is not to suggest that people cannot be strongly influenced by others – indeed, the whole exercise of sociology assumes that, to a greater or lesser extent, we are all affected by the social situation in which we find ourselves; we have to take others into account, consciously or unconsciously, in most of the things we do in our everyday lives (Weber 1947: 88). The problem is not usually to declare either that a person is totally free of society or that (s)he is totally controlled by it, but to assess the degree to which the position of each is negotiable as
part of an on-going process of interaction that affects both the individual and the social environment (Barker 1995a, 1995b, 2003).

However, in the 1970s, when the contemporary ‘cult scare’ was entering public awareness, one of the most frequent explanations of why young people joined a new religious movement was that they had been brainwashed or subjected to some sort of irresistible and irreversible mind-control technique. It was then that I decided to attempt to explore this hypothesis in a somewhat more systematic manner than was being employed by the media, the movements’ opponents and/or by those, such as deprogrammers, with a financial interest in suggesting that something had been ‘done to’ the passive ‘victim’, rather than any kind of rational choice being involved in a decision by an active agent.

I had never been very impressed with rational choice as either an explanatory theory or even a very helpful descriptive tool if it is being assumed that we perform actions because they are the most efficient means to achieve a desired goal. It has always seemed to me that such an explanation must be either a tautology or wrong. Even if we knew what goals people would choose, it is obvious enough that they do not always, or even usually, use the most rational means to achieve their goals. All manner of quirks and moral and religious sentiments interfere with the most efficient means being adopted. One might suggest that infanticide is one of the most rational means of controlling population expansion, but few societies go down that road – and, once we admit all the *ceteris paribus* clauses, we have merely moved to alternative explanations, making the ‘rational’ element of the choice pretty well otiose.

But this does not mean that the question: ‘What connection is made between means and ends?’ is not an important one. When, for example, I was trying to understand why bright young people from the middle classes who had joined the Unification Church should give up ‘everything’ to spend long hours witnessing and fundraising on the streets, one plausible explanation was that these were achievement-oriented young people who rejected what they had come to view as the secular, materialistic rat-race of contemporary society, and that the man whom they saw as the Messiah, the Reverend Sun Myung Moon, had succeeded in persuading them that there was a connection between a religious goal (bringing the Kingdom of Heaven on earth) and mundane, observable means. They could *measure* their achievement – how many dollars they fundraised and/or how many people they brought to a centre to hear their truth. The trick was that they understood there was a link between their visible actions and an invisible religious goal – and once the Unificationists had accepted that this rela-
tionship existed, it was ‘rational’ for them to spend long hours fundraise-
ing in the street rather than continuing their university careers – despite
the fact that most other people, particularly the parents who had brought
them up to be *both* idealistic *and* achievement oriented, considered their
behaviour incredibly irrational.

But my main concern was to find out why the Unificationists had joined
in the first place – whether they had done so freely or whether, as the media
were suggesting, as a result of being subjected to irresistible and irrevers-
ible techniques. The first challenge was to ‘operationalise’ the concept of
choice in such a way that it could empirically be recognised as being either
present or absent. The definition I used for this purpose was as follows:

> A choice would involve reflection (in the present), memory (of the past)
and imagination (of possible futures). A person would be an active agent
in deciding between two or more possible options when he could antici-
pate their potential existence and when, in doing so, he drew upon his
previous experience and his previously formed values and interests to
guide his judgement. (Barker 1984: 137.)

This gave rise to four main variables: (1) the individual concerned, with
all his/her genetic and psychological characteristics, previous experiences
and predispositions (values, hopes, fears, etc); (2) the social environment,
which was one over which the Unification Church had near-complete
control. It was a residential weekend seminar, which was cut off from the
outside world and in which the guests had minimal opportunities to talk
among themselves without a Unificationist being present. Even visits to
the bathroom were likely to be accompanied. The two other variables were
the alternative outcomes: (3) joining the Unification Church, or (4) return-
ing to the wider society.

Having defined the question in these terms, the null hypothesis to
be tested was that the environment alone would be responsible for the
outcome – that is, the participants would, as suggested by the media and
‘anti-cult’ proponents of the irresistible-and-irreversible-brainwashing
explanation, all end up as Unificationists. What I found, however, was
that ninety per cent of the thousand-plus participants whom I studied did
*not* end up as Unificationists, but returned to life outside the movement,
thereby proving that the process had not been irresistible. Furthermore,
the majority of those who did join went on to leave the movement of their
own free will (that is, without the assistance of deprogrammers or other
outside interventions), clearly demonstrating that the process, even when
it had been successful, was not irreversible. More recently, a quarter of a century later, I have found that the vast majority of the first cohort of second-generation Unificationists have left the religion their parents had joined, indicating that the movement has still not acquired a very effective means of controlling people, even those upon whom it has had the opportunity of imposing their primary socialisation. The original hypothesis has, it would seem, been unambiguously refuted.

Looking at patterns of behaviour is an essential part of sociology in that it allows us to see trends and, through comparisons, evaluate the ways in which variables are related to each other. By looking at all those who were subjected to the environment of a Unification workshop and seeing that the vast majority did not join (rather than by just looking at those who did join), we were able to conclude that while the workshop might have been necessary for conversions, it was not sufficient.1

The next step was to compare the joiners with the non-joiners, and both these groups with people of a similar age and background who had nothing to do with the movement, and by this method to discover some of the characteristics that might predispose someone to join the Unification Church – and some of the characteristics that might ‘protect’ others from its persuasive influence. Rather than the joiners having weak and highly suggestible characters as was sometimes assumed, it turned out that the converts were disproportionately white, middle-class youth with somewhat idealistic aspirations to make the world a better place, and they were frequently looking for a religious answer to the world’s problems.2

A Case Study

Although the statistical comparison of different groups is an essential part of sociological methodology, we also need to look at individual cases if we want to understand a ‘cult career’. Of course, no two cases will ever be the same, but the rest of this article concentrates on a terrorist who joined a movement significantly different from the Unification Church, and whom I have got to know over the past ten years. I shall call her Amy. The ques-

1 In fact, it was not even necessary. I have met a few Unificationists who joined after having themselves read the movement’s Scripture, Divine Principle, without ever attending a workshop.

2 Further details of these findings can be found in Barker 1984.
tion now to be addressed is ‘How could she, a well-educated woman in her early twenties from a privileged background, come to be in prison for her role in an attempted hijacking that could well have resulted in her own death, as well as that of several innocent passengers and crew?’

An initial point that should be stressed is that, when looking at any group, even those that claim to be totally democratic, a distinction needs to be drawn between those who exercise power and those who ‘go along’ with whatever is being suggested. Indeed there are various finer distinctions that can be made between, say, (a) the leader who defines a goal in religious terms; (b) second-level leaders who translate the goal so that it can be achieved through secular means; (c) followers who draw up a specific plan for practical action; (d) foot soldiers who execute and/or ‘go along’ with the plan; and (e) followers who know little, if anything, about what is going on. Members in each of these categories are likely to join the movement for different reasons and to have a different perception of what it is that they are doing and/or should be doing as a member. Understanding what makes the leader tick is unlikely to help us all that much in understanding how the foot soldier operates (or vice versa).

Amy was a foot soldier who consciously participated in a terrorist act. However, despite the atrocious nature of the act of which she was a part, I do not believe that it would be helpful to dismiss her as an intrinsically evil person; nor do I believe it would be helpful to label her as a brainwashed zombie. No one pressed (nor, I believe, could they have pressed) a button instantly transforming Amy A (the idealistic but naïve young woman) into Amy B (the dangerous terrorist); and Amy C (the mature and exemplary citizen that she is today) did not suddenly become ‘reset’ to Amy A as the result of some miraculous deprogramming. To understand what happened it is necessary to take into account both the coming together, synchronically, of a number of particular people with particular interests in particular social environments, and, diachronically, a gradual accumulation of processes that contributed to Amy’s reaching a stage where she was prepared to play her part in the hijacking.

3 The vast majority of grass-root members of Aum Shinrikyō were totally unaware that the leadership was planning to deposit sarin gas in the Tokyo underground.
There was nothing very dramatic about the way that Amy had come to join her group in the first place. She had not been a seeker in the sense that she had been trying out various new religions before meeting the group, nor was hers a sudden ‘Road to Damascus’ conversion as sometimes seems to happen (Barker 1984: 171). There were, however, a number of predisposing variables that would seem to have facilitated her joining the movement. These included (1) her psychological makeup; (2) a number of pushes from the social environment in which she was at the time; and (3) the pull of the attractions that the group appeared to be offering.

According to several criteria, Amy came from a ‘good home’. However, she considered her father to be overbearing and she wanted to get away from her family but was not yet quite ready to venture out into the world. In this respect she was not unlike the young people described by Saul Levine in *Radical Departures* (1984), who wanted to get away from their parents but still sought the womb-like protection of a family. Not that Amy had been looking for a group to join, and she would have been unlikely to join most new religions. She had, however, been interested in yoga and Eastern religions, having become disillusioned with traditional religions, so when she saw an advertisement for some yoga classes she went along to try them out.

But Amy had not just wanted to meditate in a passive, navel-contemplative manner; she also had a well-developed social conscience and had been looking for some way in which she could contribute to making the world a better place. She wanted to be someone and to make her mark. Like many other young people in the 1970s, she was critical of the rat-race materialism of capitalism, but she was also critical of the dialectical materialism of communism. She discovered that the yoga classes were being given by a group that offered a combination of spirituality and caring for others, and that it was involved in running projects such as schools for orphans and providing disaster relief in third-world countries.

This commitment to improving the world and the spiritual practices seemed to Amy a perfect combination. ‘The ideology fitted my way of thinking before joining, took it further and provided the possibility of putting it into practice – as part of an organisation rather than as an idealistic individual with no power.’ She enrolled in further classes and eventually moved in to live with the group. The fact that the movement had a strict authoritarian structure, with clear guidelines and an uncompromising attitude towards its moral position might also have resonated with
her family background. Reflecting the pattern found in Levine’s work, her joining as a rebellion against her father involved her moving into an environment that bore some clear similarities to the one from which she was escaping. This was not altogether surprising: in my research into the Unification Church I had found that it was often easier to see the converts as having joined their movement because of rather than in spite of their family background (Barker 1984: 210 and 1989: 95).

Life in the Community

In several ways Amy’s movement bore a resemblance to several other new religions that are led by a charismatic leader and have a membership made up of converts rather than those who have been born into and brought up in the movement (Barker 2004). It promoted a dichotomous world view that made a clear separation between good and bad, godly and satanic, right and wrong, truth and falsity, and them and us – part of ‘them’ being the converts’ biological family. The imposed detachment from family and former friends resulted in Amy’s coming to believe that she had nowhere but the movement to which she could turn. However, although initially she had felt that she had joined a friendly and loving community, with the passage of time she found that it was difficult to form close friendships with her new ‘brothers and sisters’. Full-time committed membership entailed celibacy, and if two people (of the same or a different sex) seemed to be forging too strong a bond they were liable to be separated by sending them to different parts of the world. Although constantly surrounded by other members, life could become very lonely within the movement. ‘Everyone had their own problems and didn’t want to know about yours.’

The more socially isolated the members were from each other, the easier it was for the leadership to control them. It became increasingly difficult to question and check out reality when it appeared as though her peers all agreed with the beliefs and opinions formulated by the leadership. The

4 It is a common feature of close-knit religious and political communities that the members refer to each other as brother or sister, with leaders frequently being referred to as Mother or Father and the group as a whole as The Family.

5 The influence of peer pressure on an isolated individual was classically illustrated by experiments conducted by Solomon Asch (1959) in which a roomful of students all said that the second-longest of a series of lines drawn on a blackboard was the longest. In a significant number of cases the last student to be asked (who was not
special in-group language or jargon that the group employed also served to isolate the members from ‘them’ and to direct their thought in a specific direction. Anyone who questioned or deviated from what the leadership decreed had to be ‘dealt with’ in one way or another. On the rare occasions when Amy expressed any doubts she was told not to intellectualise; she must learn to surrender more completely to gain more spiritual understanding – perhaps she needed to devote more time to mediation until she saw how mistaken she had been. One of the punishments for minor misdemeanours was an extension of the time engaged in the fasting that all members were expected to undergo on a regular basis. This, together with an inadequate vegetarian diet and limited hours of sleep, undermined Amy’s health to a certain extent and sometimes left her feeling physically weak.

The Hierarchy

As was mentioned earlier, Amy’s movement offered not merely a means for gaining spiritual enlightenment but also the promise of creating a much better, more just society. This goal, Amy was taught, could justify whatever means were necessary to overthrow the present bad society. The leadership was granted a special expertise, and followers were expected to be just that: followers.\(^6\) As in the army and elsewhere, the rule was that even if a lower-level leader were to make a mistake, those under him should still follow, rather than each individual doing his or her own thing and, thereby, destroying the strength of the group.

The movement was led by its founder, an Oriental who wielded a charismatic authority over his followers. Unconstrained by either tradition or rules, the guru was both unpredictable and unaccountable to any other authority. Amy had not known about him when she joined, but was in-privy to the fact that all the others had been told to pick the second longest line) would also say the second longest was the longest, either not wanting to be the odd man out, or actually doubting the evidence of his own senses. When only one other person chose the longest line, then the ‘naïve’ student would be far more likely also to choose the correct one.

\(^6\) Some experiments by Stanley Milgram (1974) illustrated how a significant percentage of subjects would be prepared to administer painful, in some cases apparently lethal, electric shocks to others when they were told to go ahead by an ‘expert’ dressed in a white coat.
roduced to him through pictures and stories related by older members. When she did meet him it was only in the presence of many other devoted followers. She soon, however, came to see him as a parent figure and created in her mind a personal relationship with him. He spoke to her, she believed, in her dreams. ‘At that time I’d have followed anyone who gave me attention – made me feel important.’ The interesting point here, of course, is that the guru not only paid no attention to Amy whatsoever, but was almost certainly in total ignorance of her existence.7 At the same time, there was a part of Amy that disliked her guru; she told me her first impression on seeing him was how very ugly he was!

Beneath the leader there were a well-defined number of hierarchies. Some of these were related to the person’s reputed spiritual development but others were less achieved than ascribed. Orientals were superior to Westerners; men were superior to women; older members were superior to younger members; celibates were superior to those who had been married. Amy soon realised that while she could achieve some ‘promotion’ (on her path to enlightenment) she would, nevertheless, remain of inferior status because she was a young, female Caucasian.

It was within this general culture and structure that Amy found herself at a special training centre in a remote region of South America, hoping to advance towards enlightenment – and to advance her position within the movement. Here she came under the authority of a trainer who would seem to have had not only a lust for power, but also a decidedly sadistic streak in his character. So far as Amy was concerned, her time at the training centre was one of fear, humiliation and exhaustion. The trainees were subjected to long periods of fasting; they had to engage in continuous periods of devotion that involved dancing and chanting with little sleep. Amy also found herself being sexually abused under the pretext of being taught detachment and submission, but which had the effect not only of humiliating her in her own eyes but also of inducing a state of numbness: ‘In the end, I just didn’t feel.’ At the same time, she was in constant fear of punishment and, above all, of not passing the examinations that would lead her to the next stage in her path towards spiritual enlightenment.

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7 I have used the term ‘charismatization’ to describe a process whereby followers seem to conspire together to build up a picture of their leader, according him (or, occasionally, her) a special charisma which authorises him/her to have an unfettered control over all aspects of their lives (Barker 1993).
It would seem that her trainer was a past master at manipulating the aspirations, strengths and weaknesses of those over whom he was in control to the advantage of both the movement’s and his own ends. One girl was encouraged to kill herself as a revolutionary gesture, the trainer helpfully writing the leaflets that were distributed at the time of her death. Others were spurred on to take part in demonstrations and an attempted assassination.

There was a slightly older member of the group of trainees who had attained a higher position in the spiritual hierarchy than Amy and, although not one of the movement’s leaders, belonged to a more active category than Amy. She had been an ardent communist, but had undergone a politically radical change when she joined the group, becoming an equally ardent anti-communist. It would seem, however, that this had not amounted to any radical psychological change. To use Amy’s phrase, ‘she took herself with her’; she would appear to have been what Eric Hoffer (1951) has termed the True Believer. She was determined to fight for the cause and her enthusiasms were undiminished just because the goals she now championed were, in some ways at least, diametrically opposed to those that she had previously espoused. It was she who, with the trainer’s encouragement, thought up the scheme to hijack a plane to bring attention to the cause. The plan was that the plane would be forced to land behind the Iron Curtain, when the team leader would commit suicide on the runway. Amy’s role was to be an innocent bystander who would write a report of what had happened. She did, however, smuggle an inflammable substance onto the plane in a juice bottle as a potential Molotov cocktail.

Luckily for everyone concerned, the plan failed and the conspirators were overwhelmed shortly after the plane had taken off. It was acknowledged that Amy had played a minor role and she consequently served considerably less time in prison than her co-conspirators.\(^8\) When she was released she felt that she had nowhere else to go and so, despite having considerable misgivings about the movement, she returned to it, still hoping to pursue her path to enlightenment, although not under the instruction of her previous trainer who had been removed from his post. Eventually, however, she managed to forge a close relationship with another disillusioned member and together they managed to escape. It took them some time to get the group out of their system and to create a life that would fill

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\(^8\) She was given six months for aiding and abetting, most of which she had already spent on remand by the time she was sentenced.
the gap left by the movement which, they continued to acknowledge, had some very positive aspects.

Ich kann nicht anders

There was a point just before the hijacking at which Amy was actually told by a member of the movement who was of superior status to herself, not to take part; but, she told me, by then she felt that it was too late – she had ‘gone too far to stop’; there was no longer a way out – although physically all she had to do was obey the instruction to abort the enterprise.

It might be argued that Amy’s conviction that she just had to proceed showed that she had been well and truly brainwashed, and it would certainly seem that her mind had been ‘bent’, if not completely controlled. She had reached a stage in a process of submitting to a religious authority where it would have been extremely difficult for her to extract herself from the influence of the situation. And, of course, she did go ahead. We might, however, be in danger of resorting to a dubious kind of hindsight if we were to conclude that, merely because she did it, she had to – any more than saying that the one person in nine who converted to the Unification Church had to do so. It is possible that there was still something about Amy herself that prevented her from opting out at the last minute. She still wanted her moment of glory, and admitted this quite freely. People, she said, were going to listen and take notice of her once she explained what the movement had done because of its idealistic beliefs. In other words, the movement (in the persons of the trainer and the team leader) was taking advantage, consciously or unconsciously, of something ‘inside’ Amy.\footnote{The extent to which the trainer’s manipulation of those in his charge reflected the movement’s policy and culture cannot be explored in detail here. Suffice it to say that he was given a position of authority that he undoubtedly abused. When his superiors learned of some of the things that he had done in over-stepping his authority, they first chastised him and then, when his behaviour did not change, they removed him from his post. Amy heard later, however, that he had been reinstated and had returned to some of his earlier practices.}

Of course, the circular petitio principii that Amy could not have done otherwise because she undoubtedly did do what she did cannot be countered – except to point out that it does beg the question. I am, however, resorting to my earlier definition of choice by suggesting that it was not
only the social situation that was the independent variable – there was still something of Amy functioning, albeit at a very diminished level and under a considerable amount of influence from her co-conspirators, and if we want to understand what led Amy to that final phase of the process, we should not close our eyes to the possibility that there was just a bit of her that was positively collaborating.

Another way in which our understanding of the sense of inevitability that Amy felt might be enhanced by recognising that there are other situations when we might feel the odds are overpoweringly against our ‘going along’ with the expectations of others, or indeed, ourselves. At the risk of seeming to trivialise the situation, when Amy told me of how she felt she had no longer a way out I was reminded of Susan, who told me that she went ahead with her marriage because, her mother having made all the arrangements and she and her fiancé having received scores of presents from all their friends and relations, she just could not go against their expectations. She had acquiesced for too long and it was just too late. I was also reminded of another, again very different situation – that of Martin Luther when he declared *Ich kann nicht anders* (I can do no other) at the Diet of Worms, 1521. But many people might think that he was being brave and making a stand just because he could have done other. We might also remember that history can provide us with innumerable examples of martyrs who have faced burning at the stake and various other horrible deaths rather than renounce their faith. In recent times there were the Jehovah’s Witnesses who were prepared to be killed in Nazi concentration camps rather than submit to the demands of the regime (King 1982).

On several occasions I have come across people who would seem to have been completely under the spell of a guru or leader, or utterly submissive to the group. There has seemed, however, to be a point beyond which they will not go – though that point may not seem entirely ‘rational’ to outsiders. There was, for example, a young woman who had let her baby die because her husband, the leader of a fundamentalist Christian group, told her it was God’s will that she should only breast-feed her baby, although she knew she was unable to provide the needed nourishment. The baby eventually died of starvation to the mother’s deep distress. She, like Amy, had felt that in the circumstances she could not do anything about the situation, yet she also told me that when she was ordered by the group to carry the dead body of the baby round above her head in a ritual, she refused, saying that she just could not believe God would want that. In another instance, a young man who had appeared to be completely under the control of his guru, to the extent that he was physically abusing other
members of the group, including his brother, at the guru’s command, told me that when he was instructed that he could not wear sandals because God did not like those sandals, he had decided that this was ridiculous and, shortly afterwards, he left the group. Returning to Amy’s movement, although the trainer was able to persuade Amy and her fellow believers to carry out several deadly actions, when he had suggested that they should throw one of the group into a fire when she was causing problems, they had refused to do so.

It has not been argued that group pressure might not become irresistible and irreversible under certain conditions for certain individuals. It has been argued that group pressure can be extremely effective. Individuals can be induced to perform actions that they would have strenuously resisted had they not been led along a certain path by those to whom they have accorded (a religious) authority over them. It has, however, also been suggested that it is possible, even in extreme circumstances, that some element of choice may yet remain open to the individual – though whether he or she will decide to exert that choice is a question that may only become apparent after the event. In other words, even when the situation seems as though it is having a well-nigh irresistible effect on the individual, the individual may still, at least in some of the cases I have examined, be capable of resisting the pressure.

Concluding Remarks

My limited conclusion is that it is possible to recognise a series of predispositions, values, hopes, fears, actions, reactions, interactions, structures and processes that can contribute to our understanding of how individuals can find themselves on a path that leads, not inevitably, but understandably, to an outcome that is not only one that they would not have chosen at the start of their journey, but one that would seem to be diametrically opposed to their starting position.

Because each individual is an individual, starting from different positions, it is not a path that all would follow should they find themselves at the starting point – some will follow different directions from the start or later along the journey. None the less, one can discern bundles of characteristics that predispose certain people to follow certain paths; and one can observe patterns of behaviour that tend to lead to certain outcomes. One can also observe that the pressures of certain situations may be resisted at one time but be persuasive at another time.
The fact that these processes can be recognised might mean that they become more negotiable. To say the least, it might alert us to a greater awareness than resorting to simplistic labelling of terrorists or people involved in other kinds of religious confrontations as being either intrinsically evil people or as passive robots who have been subjected to irresistible or irreversible brainwashing or mind control techniques. Our understanding of how such things come to pass can be increased only by a meticulous charting of a series of journeys from A to B to C to D, recognising the progress of the individual and his/her relationship to the social environment at each stage in the journey, discovering how the individual and the social situation and the relationship between them changes as a continuous process.

In short, there is not one straight path to conflict and another to compromise or accommodation; but the journeys to either outcome are not entirely idiosyncratic. Others have travelled recognisably similar paths before and will travel them again – paths along which, in God’s name, many have learned to practice unconditional love to the death.

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Ritual Rivalry and Targeted Tradition in Glastonbury

Introduction

Glastonbury, a small town in the south-west of England, is considered significant by a wide variety of spiritual seekers, including Christians of various denominations, pagans, Druids, Goddess devotees, self-styled ‘New Agers’, Buddhists, Sufis, earth energies researchers, healers and others who feel that they have in some way been ‘called’ or ‘drawn’ to the town (Bowman 1993, 2005; Prince and Riches 2000; Draper 2002; Ivakhiv 2001). Although, for the most part, groups and individuals of very different religious persuasion co-exist comparatively peacefully and a largely laissez-faire attitude to pluralism has developed in the town, increasingly some rivalries and differences in worldview are being played out publicly in ‘traditional’ forms such as processions, rituals and calendar customs (activities which occur once a year, or according to fixed cycles of time).

While such traditional religious means are used on occasion to express concord rather than conflict, proclaiming and reclaiming are very much part of the ethos of ritual and processional activity in Glastonbury at present, with pageantry and calendar customs regarded as valuable tools in establishing presence and priority in both overt and subtle ways. The extent to which rival claims to territorial and spiritual supremacy are being played out in the (re)creation of rituals and other forms of public display are examined here briefly through two sets of case studies which feature vernacular religious forms being used in relation to contemporary spirituality. The first set involves the Christian Glastonbury Pilgrimage processions and their pagan counterpart the Goddess in the Cart Procession; the second involves the Glastonbury Thorn Ceremony and the Chalice Well Winter Solstice Celebration. Although I have written in considerably greater detail about both the processions and the Thorn Ceremony elsewhere (Bowman 2004, 2006), I focus here on the comparative and tactical aspects of these events. It is worth noting, however, in relation to both case
studies that although current usage of such forms is of primary interest, it is clear that there is continuity as well as change in the way in which ritual and custom are being strategically employed.

Case Study 1: The Glastonbury Pilgrimage and The Goddess in the Cart Procession

As I have argued elsewhere (Bowman 2000), although often cast as the ‘mainstream’ against which ‘alternative’ spirituality is measured, Christianity in Glastonbury has long been characterised by ‘views and practices of religion that exist among the people apart from and alongside the strictly theological and liturgical forms of the official religion’ (Yoder 1974: 14).

For many Christians past and present, the attraction of Glastonbury has been its claim to be the ‘cradle of English Christianity’, where, according to legend, Joseph of Arimathea (the person who provided a tomb for Jesus after the crucifixion) established the first Christian church in the British Isles. On arrival in Glastonbury, Joseph is said to have thrust his staff into the ground at Wearyall Hill; this staff took root and became the Glastonbury thorn, which flowers twice a year, in spring and around Christmas.

Even more significantly, due to a complicated set of extrapolations from the St Joseph legend, some believe that Jesus himself visited Glastonbury and that he may even have spent some of the time before he commenced his ministry living there (Bowman 2003–4). By the Middle Ages, Glastonbury Abbey was a major pilgrimage centre, boasting a huge collection of relics and a fine library, and a Lady Chapel allegedly built on the site of Joseph’s original church. The Abbey was brutally suppressed at the time of the Reformation, with the elderly Abbot Richard Whiting and two monks being dragged through the town and hanged on the Tor, the strangely contoured hill that rises above Glastonbury. Although Glastonbury Abbey fell into private hands and was left to ruin, in 1908 ownership passed to the (Anglican) Bath and Wells Diocesan Trust (Carley 1996: 175) and the Abbey, whose grounds dominate the centre of the town, is administered as an historical site.

Glastonbury’s Christian past and its historical significance are celebrated in the annual Glastonbury Pilgrimage, centred on the Abbey ruins. For one weekend each summer, on Saturday there is the Anglican Pilgrimage and on Sunday the Roman Catholic Pilgrimage, perhaps the most superficially ‘traditional’ or conventional processions in Glastonbury. Although for the sake of clarity I refer to the Anglican Pilgrimage and the Catholic
Pilgrimage, both refer to themselves as the Glastonbury Pilgrimage. While for participants the culmination of the day is the service in the Abbey grounds, the most public aspects are the processions.

In 1908, to celebrate the purchase of the Abbey, after a procession from the Anglican St John the Baptist Church on the High Street, a service of thanksgiving was held in the Abbey grounds. In 1926 the West of England Pilgrimage Association was founded, and Anglican pilgrimage processions between St John’s Church and the Abbey grounds have taken place more or less continuously since the 1930s (Hext 2004). As Anglicans involved in the Pilgrimage tend to be Anglo-Catholic or ‘High’ Church of England, and because there is an Orthodox Christian presence at the Pilgrimage, the Anglican Pilgrimage does not allow female clergy to participate, despite the ordination of women priests in the Church of England for over a decade. As a result of this decision, St John’s Church felt unable to participate in the Pilgrimage and participants no longer robe within and process out of the church. This situation was further exacerbated by the appointment in 2002 of a female vicar St John’s. While some Glastonians are involved, many outsiders come to the Pilgrimage. In the Anglican Pilgrimage, a statue of the Virgin Mary is carried, banners from the participating churches are displayed, hymns are sung, and a grand array of male clerical ceremonial garb is on display during the short procession down the High Street and into the Abbey grounds.

Meanwhile, across the road from the Abbey ruins, stands the present Roman Catholic St Mary’s Church and the Shrine of Our Lady of Glastonbury. Perhaps not surprisingly, St Mary’s claims continuity with pre-Reformation Glastonbury and describes its shrine as ‘a successor to the ancient Shrine of Our Lady of Glastonbury’. The Tor is the starting point of the Catholic pilgrimage, in memory of Abbot Whiting and the two other monks who were hanged there at the time of the Dissolution, and the climax of the Pilgrimage is Mass in the Abbey grounds. While there are visually similar aspects between the Anglican and Catholic pilgrimage processions – the carrying of the statue of Our Lady of Glastonbury, the display of banners, the singing of hymns and an obvious hierarchy of male clerics – significantly more of the town is encompassed by the Catholic pilgrimage than the Anglican one, from the ruined chapel of St Michael on the Tor, through town to the Abbey ruins. While many outsiders do come to the Catholic Pilgrimage, there seems to be a much greater degree of local participation.

Since the 1980s the Catholic Pilgrimage has been held on the same weekend as the Anglican Pilgrimage, mixing ecumenism and practicality as the
costs of hiring facilities can be shared, and a supermarket was built on
the site formerly used by the Catholic Pilgrimage for their open-air Mass.
Many have seen the weekend of pilgrimage as a positive development
for ecumenism, and there was a particular irony in 2003, when the Rev.
Maxine Marsh, the female vicar of St John’s (who cannot take part in the
Anglican Pilgrimage) was invited to participate in the Catholic Pilgrimage
as a symbol of Christian unity.

On the one hand, the Glastonbury Pilgrimage events – and in particular
the processions – underline the theological and historical differences be-
tween Christians who commemorate the past and, by extension, view the
present through rather different denominational lenses. Furthermore, the
Anglican Pilgrimage highlights the current strains and divisions within
the Church of England over female ordination, and is now physically and
doctrinally estranged from the Anglican Church in Glastonbury. On the
other hand, however, it is important to understand that in recent decades,
when Christianity has appeared embattled in relation to the great variety
of ‘alternative’ spiritual activity that has been taking place in Glastonbury
since the 1970s onwards, the Pilgrimages have functioned as an important
means for Christianity to reassert its place in and claim on Glastonbury.
Together, these two pilgrimages have been reclaiming Glastonbury for
Christianity, and the processions in particular have been the vehicle for a large, public band of Christians to commemorate Christianity first taking root in England and to celebrate the town’s Christian heritage and identity.

However, since 1996, there has been considerable additional procession-al activity, connected with the annual Glastonbury Goddess Conference, and I now turn to the development of this ‘tradition’, its fluid nature and the different agendas addressed in the Goddess in the Cart Procession.

Many devotees of the Goddess believe that Glastonbury was significant focus of Goddess spirituality in pre-Christian times, and that the Abbey was deliberately sited on the cultic centre in an attempt to obliter ate devotion to her. Since 1996 the Glastonbury Goddess Conference has been held around what is considered the ‘Celtic’ festival of Lammas/Lughnasa (1 August). Although the conference organisers and many participants are Glastonbury based, the majority of conference attendees are outsiders, coming from all over the UK, as well as Scandinavia, the Netherlands, America and Australia.

Inspired by ‘an old Celtic image’ of a cart with huge wheels containing an image of the Goddess, the Conference co-organiser Kathy Jones had the idea of the ‘Goddess in the Cart Procession’, in which an image of the Goddess would be pulled through the streets of Glastonbury, (re)establishing her presence in the town. Over the years this procession has developed in a variety of ways, with changes and expansions in the ground covered – physically and metaphorically – by the Goddess effigies.

Jones likes the idea of ‘beating boundaries’, and from the start she has seen the procession as ‘claiming space’, as a way of saying that ‘this belongs to Her’. The Goddess Procession used to take a less public route, but since 2000 it has gone ‘sunwise’, leaving from the Town Hall (which is just beside the entrance to the Abbey), up the High Street past St John’s Church, ‘circumambulating the Abbey’, to the Tor. It is now, in effect, a mirror image of the Christian Pilgrimage processions, in particular the Catholic Pilgrimage procession which starts from the Tor and proceeds to the Abbey. The Goddess in the Cart Procession started as a procession through the streets of Glastonbury and up the Tor, originally with a large effigy of the Goddess constructed at the conference pulled in a cart. Each year in rotation a model of the maiden, the mother or the crone goddess was made for the procession on the last day of the conference, the Sunday, the most public aspect of the event. However, after the cart was stolen, smaller wicker goddess figures, light enough for an individual or two people to carry, were made instead. In recent years the procession has also featured large colourful banners depicting a range of female deities, including Cel-
tic, Egyptian, Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Indian, African and other indigenous goddesses, Bodhisattvas in female form and the Virgin Mary. Processions are lively, colourful and noisy, with chants and songs familiar in Goddess spirituality, as well as those developed at the conferences.

With the establishment of the Glastonbury Goddess Temple in 2002 and a Priestess training programme, the Goddess movement’s rivalry with Christianity continued to develop. Having created a mirror image of the Christian pilgrimage processions and, through the banners, incorporated the Christian Virgin Mary into the Goddess in the Cart Procession, the 2004 Conference events further exemplified both the flexibility and the politicised agenda of processional activity in Glastonbury, as well as the increasing confidence and ambition of the Goddess movement there. In 2004 the Conference was a celebration of the Goddess Bridie (or Bridget). For the first time, the procession was staged on Thursday, rather than Sunday, making it considerably more noticeable to a greater number of people and taking in more sacred sites than ever. In addition, on the Friday afternoon the image of Bridie was carried to Bride’s Mound, a site associated with the Celtic St Bridget, devotion to whom many in Goddess circles believe was a thinly veiled continuation of Goddess worship. The route took the procession past the Catholic church, and past the Holy Thorn, which some
stopped to decorate. More ground than ever was covered for the Goddess, and further ‘Christian’ sites reclaimed.

Processions can be used to celebrate and commemorate; to protest and contest; to include and exclude; to display and convey messages and meanings on a variety of levels. Both Christians and Goddess devotees regard Glastonbury as a significant site, and for that reason want to be there in the public, celebratory and assertive manner provided by procession. Both groups creatively utilise the traditional forms of banners, images and song to declare their allegiances. It is probably fair to say that the Goddess processions most self-consciously exploit the fluid nature and visual power of pageantry, and the political/politicised potential of the procession. Nevertheless, as the internal politics of the Glastonbury Pilgrimages demonstrate, such usage is not entirely novel.

Case Study 2: The Glastonbury Thorn Ceremony and the Chalice Well Winter Solstice Celebration

I have already alluded to one of Glastonbury’s most significant Christian myths, that St Joseph of Arimathea’s staff became the Holy Thorn which blossoms both in spring and in winter, and this has given rise to a calendar custom, the Holy Thorn Ceremony.

Allegedly a ‘revival’ of an ‘ancient tradition’, the Holy Thorn Ceremony in its present form dates from 1929, when it was ‘revived’ by Rev. Lionel Smithett Lewis, then vicar of St John’s and a passionate advocate of Glastonbury’s vernacular Christian legends. The ‘revival’ of the custom gave Lewis a vehicle through which to champion Glastonbury’s status as the first church in England and to perpetuate her legends; for him, the Glastonbury Thorn was an ‘ever-present testimony to the story of St Joseph’ (Lewis 1985: 5). However, his enthusiasm was matched by the scepticism of the then Dean of Wells, Dr Armitage Robinson, who was scathing in his dismissal of the Glastonbury legends, and his disagreement with Lionel Smithett Lewis on that topic was played out publicly in print (see Armitage Robinson 1926, Lewis 1985).1 Lewis started the ceremony two years after

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1 This is a good example of the unsatisfactory nature of making any simple division between ‘folk’ and ‘official’ religion in relation to vernacular tradition; both Armitage Robinson and Lewis were ostensibly representatives of ‘official’ religion.
his rebuttal of J. Armitage Robinson in the foreword to the second edition of *Glastonbury—The Mother of Saints; Her Saints, AD 37–1539*.

The focus of the ceremony is the cutting each December of sprigs from the winter-flowering Holy Thorn outside the Anglican church of St John the Baptist in Glastonbury to be sent to the Queen. (As they are perpetuated by grafting, a number of Holy Thorns are found in Glastonbury in addition to the one allegedly growing on the site of the original on Wearyall Hill and which was badly mutilated by Reformers and Puritans.) The ceremony takes place in the presence of the vicar of St John’s and other clergy, the Mayor, members of the town council, children from the Church of England St John’s Infants School and some of their parents and other relations. The Thorn is cut by the eldest child at St John’s School. At some point in the ceremony, the children sing ‘The Holy Thorn’ song, retelling the legend of St Joseph of Arimathea bringing the Holy Thorn to Glastonbury.

The Holy Thorn Ceremony has been an event for and about Glastonbury, with resident Glastonian participants, rather than outsiders – as is often the case with the Anglican Pilgrimage, and many of the ‘alternative’ events that take place in the town. Many of the adults who attend the ceremony as parents, friends or relations of the children participating remember taking part themselves as youngsters, and they tend to be most insistent that it is an ‘ancient’ custom. It is clear that some parents consider it a great honour for their son or daughter to be given the role of Thorn cutter. Local press
and television are always in attendance, and photographs of the Thorn cutter, the vicar and the Mayor beside the Thorn tend to appear each year in local papers.

Although at its inception the Holy Thorn Ceremony was in part about the internal politics and the status of Glastonbury’s legends, it has been particularly significant since the 1970s as a form of civil religion. Again, it is helpful to remember that from the 1970s many Glastonians were experiencing great discontinuity and upheaval with the decline of the local economy and a great influx of ‘alternative’, seemingly alien, spiritual activity. The Holy Thorn Ceremony not only reaffirmed Glastonbury’s special status as a Christian site, but it also provided a means of expressing and celebrating mainstream values. The letters sent each year by the vicar of St John’s to accompany the thorn sprigs constantly affirm the loyalty of the (‘real’) people of Glastonbury to the Queen.

However, the Holy Thorn Ceremony is now experiencing rivalry both internally and externally, as it were (Bowman 2006). There are Christians who are not comfortable with Glastonbury’s vernacular myths and traditions. Furthermore, in 2002, some of the Glastonbury clergy and others involved in ‘Christians Together in Glastonbury’ decided that it would be appropriate to bless the town’s Christmas tree, as a way of ‘reclaiming Christmas for Christianity’. This Christmas Tree Blessing seems to be developing into an annual ‘tradition’, and the event is attended by the Mayor and members of the Council. (One Glastonbury cleric, supportive of the development of greater ecumenical activity and stronger Christian involvement in the wider community, nevertheless remarked wryly, ‘What is it about this town that if there’s a tree you’ve got to dance round it?’)

Moreover, since 1998, an increasingly elaborate Winter Solstice Celebration has been held at Chalice Well, a chalybeate spring which stains red. Some associate its red (and reputedly healing) water with the Chalice (or Grail) St Joseph of Arimathea is said to have brought with him to Glastonbury, and the blood of Christ, while others regard the waters as the menstrual flow of the Goddess. Chalice Well is situated in a garden maintained by a charitable trust, open to and used by people of all spiritual paths. As a Trustee commented, ‘Chalice Well attempts to include all in its activities, but more often than not it ends up offending both the Christians and the pagans!’

In addition to a Solstice fire, the Chalice Well Winter Solstice Celebration features the decoration of the Holy Thorns there. When I asked why the decorating the Holy Thorn was included in the Winter Solstice ceremony, Nicholas Mann (Glastonbury resident, author and Chalice Well Trustee) replied:
Decorating the Holy Thorn trees in the garden of Chalice Well just seemed the right thing to do at a Winter Solstice celebration. It combined a wide-spread tree decoration custom with a Glastonbury tradition as well as with what we felt to be an ancient recognition of the cycle of the year. (Email communication, 23 December 2005.)

Another person associated with the ceremony saw decorating the Holy Thorn as a parallel to decorating the Christmas tree. Asked how the decoration of the Thorn has been presented in the context of the ceremony, Mann responded:

As an honouring of the tree and of trees in general, as a celebration of the season, and, sometimes but not always—given this is a Glastonbury event—as an honouring of Joseph of Arimathea and of the Christian tradition in Glastonbury (email communication, 23 December 2005).

If the latter comment seems paradoxical, the explanation lies in the ways in which vernacular Christian traditions are perceived and used by many of Glastonbury’s spiritual seekers (see Bowman 2000, 2003–4). For those who are convinced that Glastonbury was an important Druidic centre of learning, or who consider it a major centre of earth energies, it seems only natural that St Joseph would have made his way there. Reversing the Christian assumption that Glastonbury is special on account of St Joseph and possibly Jesus having come there, an alternative view is that all sorts of people have been drawn to Glastonbury because it is inherently sacred and special. This typifies the inclusive (as opposed to confrontational) nature of some aspects of contemporary spirituality in Glastonbury. In this context, myths can be recycled and rewoven, traditions can be blended, customs can complement rather than compete.

To return to the issue of ‘mainstream’ and ‘alternative’ touched on at the start of this article, a recent survey revealed that roughly one third of Glastonbury’s approximately 9,000 residents consider themselves to have had some sort of calling to be in Glastonbury. Some of those who came as spiritual seekers and pilgrims decided to stay and have now settled, many involved in the unique spiritual service industry that has evolved in the town. If the Holy Thorn Ceremony in the latter part of the twentieth century functioned as a form of civil religion in Glastonbury, it is interesting to note that at the 2004 Winter Solstice Celebration, the first person to decorate the Chalice Well Holy Thorn was the Mayor of Glastonbury. It may be that we are seeing in this ritual context a reappraisal of, or at
least some recognition of a shift in, what might constitute ‘mainstream’ in Glastonbury for the twenty-first century.

Conclusion

As scholars from a variety of disciplines and perspectives have observed, ritual and tradition are powerful, multivalent devices that can both convey and generate meaning, and performative rituals such as processions and calendar customs can help to engender feelings of solidarity, community and continuity. As Ian Reader and George J. Tanabe comment, religion is ‘a matter not only of doctrine and belief but of participation, custom, ritual, action, practice and belonging’ (1998: 5). In Glastonbury, not only are different religious groups developing their own ceremonial cycles and ritual practices, they are also creating traditions in relation to and in reaction to each other, to promote particular versions of the past and visions for the future.

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MÅNS BROO

Bhaktivedanta Swami’s Rhetoric of Violence

Introduction

The Bhaktivedanta VedaBase is a database containing all the recorded words of Bhaktivedanta Swami (1896–1977), the founder of the International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON), a modern form of Gaudiya or Bengali Vaishnavism, the devotional Hindu movement started by Sri Krishna Chaitanya in the sixteenth century. The VedaBase naturally contains electronic versions of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s books, articles and letters, but also much more. Bhaktivedanta Swami himself started recording his lectures as early as in 1966, right after his arrival in the USA, and his disciples quickly took over. As time went by, disciples also started recording less formal talks, such as his meetings with important persons. Towards the end of his life, they endeavoured to record every word he spoke. Eventually, all of this material was transcribed and published, and also entered into the database. Since the first DOS edition in 1991, new editions have been continually produced and, given their low price and active pirating, the Bhaktivedanta VedaBase is widely available within ISKCON.

Having such a massive and easily accessible record of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s words is of course a boon to his followers. Apart from simply collecting all of his works onto a single CD, the database is also easy to navigate and search. Given the massive amount of material it includes, it is possible to find answers to practically any question, as well as quotations from Bhaktivedanta Swami to support almost any viewpoint in current theological debates within ISKCON.

While the VedaBase has been compiled for members of ISKCON (http://www.vedabase.com/index.php?main=home&content=reason), it has to some extent also been used by academic scholars (e.g. Ketola 2002; Madsen 2001). For ISKCON, this may prove to be a mixed blessing, the effects of which have yet to be fully felt. Because of the unique status Bhaktivedanta Swami and his teachings enjoy within the movement, the database is completely uncensored: every single recorded word of his
has been included (except for when he speaks in Hindi or Bengali), even the words of seemingly very casual conversations. Not everything found in the VedaBase corresponds to the image of Bhaktivedanta Swami that ISKCON strives to promote.

In two closely related articles, Ekkehardt Lorenz (2004a and b) has used the VedaBase to examine some of the more controversial viewpoints of Bhaktivedanta Swami. One of the topics he focuses on is violence. Speaking about the role of kshatriyas (the administrative class) in his ideal society, Bhaktivedanta Swami says:

You can kill one boar. Some disturbing elements, you can kill. You can kill some tiger. Like that. Learn to kill. No non-violence. Learn to kill. Here also, as soon as you’ll find, the kshatriya, a thief, a rogue, unwanted element in the society, kill him. That’s all. Finish. Kill him. Bas. Finished. (4269121)

It is not that because the Kshatriyas were killing by bows and arrows formerly, you have to continue that. That is another foolishness. If you have got … If you can kill easily by guns, take that gun. (324206)

So the killing art is there. You cannot make it null and void by advocating non-violence. No. That is required. Violence is also a part of the society. (344572)

Combining this with statements indicating the superiority of the Aryan race, contempt for democracy (‘demoncracy’), doubts about the truth concerning Hitler and the Jews, etc., Lorenz (2004b) paints a picture of a not very pleasant man, one far removed from the Gaudiya Vaishnava ideals described in the classical texts of the tradition.

It need come as no surprise that ISKCON members have been displeased with these articles. In reviewing the book the articles appeared in, the reactions have been total silence, stating that Lorenz, as an ex-ISKCON devotee, suffers from a blinding, negative bias towards Bhaktivedanta Swami, and that he takes phrases out of context. However, on the subject of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s statements on Hitler, one ISKCON reviewer also mentions something else:

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1 These numbers refer to the catalogue number of the entry in the Bhaktivedanta Vedabase 4.11 where the particular quotation is found.
Even as his disciple, I have reservations about how “absolute” his historical perspective actually is. About spiritual matters, yes, I willingly and fully defer to him. But on material matters, a disciple has a right to question.2

What this disciple implies, then, is that some of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s teachings are relative to the circumstances and times in which he grew up and lived his life before coming to the US and therefore may or may not be true, in contrast to his absolute spiritual teachings. Bhaktivedanta Swami has to be seen in his proper context. A truism, but as Frederick M. Smith, while reviewing the same book, writes,

> It is no longer viable to isolate Bhaktivedanta from [his] contexts and view him only within the context of his Gaudiya Vaishnava predecessors. It is this very problem of context that has led a growing number of scholars, beginning with Sheldon Pollock, to criticize the entire field of religious studies. The field, Pollock and others assert, has remained bumblingly but studiously detached from these contexts. (Smith 2004: 188.)

Smith goes on to call for a measured analysis of the intellectual and, especially, political contexts of Bengal in the mid-twentieth century. In this article, that is exactly what I wish to do: put Bhaktivedanta Swami in a political context, to help understand his rhetoric of violence.

**Bengal in the First Half of the Twentieth Century**

Bhaktivedanta Swami was born Abhay Charan De in Calcutta in 1896, the only son of a relatively well-to-do Gaudiya Vaishnava cloth merchant. He attended Scottish Church College, a prestigious British school, and eventually became a chemist. Even though he lived for many years outside of

Bengal (in Allahabad and Bombay), he remained a part of middle-class\(^3\) Bengali society (53389; Dasa Goswami 1993).

Politically, the first half of the twentieth century was a tumultuous time in Bengal. Gone was the time of the ‘Bengali renaissance’, characterized by a symbiotic relationship between the emerging, western educated Bengali middle class and the British colonialists. With the emergence of the second generation of Indian politicians and the Swadeshi (‘own country’) movement, political life and interest slowly filtered down to the rank-and-file Bengalis. Headed by luminaries such as M. K. Gandhi, C. R. Das and Subhas Chandra Bose, the goal for Bengali politicians was no longer slow improvements through loyal subservience to the British crown, but independence. At the same time, Bengal was plagued by ever-increasing political infighting and religious communalism (for a classic study, see Gordon 1974).

What do we know about the political leanings of Abhay Charan De? According to his own words, when in 1922 he first met his future guru, Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati (1874–1937), the charismatic founder of the Gaudiya Math, he was ‘addicted to Gandhi’s movement’. Following Gandhi’s call, he had shortly before refused his B.A. diploma from Scottish Church College. He mentions having argued that India first needs to become independent before anyone would take the message of Sri Chaitanya seriously, an argument that Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati ‘defeated’ (313962). Abhay Charan De did not become an initiated disciple of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati’s until 1933, but he started supporting his movement well before that (401941).

As I have shown elsewhere (Broo 1999: 26–8), politically the Gaudiya Math was loyalist, something that was recognized and publicly appreciated by the British, but that at times also got the movement and its founder into trouble with nationalist Indian politicians. Subhas Chandra Bose (1897–1945) accused Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati of diverting young Bengalis from the nationalist cause, to which Bhaktisiddhanta jokingly replied that these men were too skinny and weak to be of any use to Bose anyway (Dasa Goswami 1993: 76).

\(^3\) I have purposely avoided the term ‘bhadralok’, ‘gentlemen’, often used to describe the new, Western-educated and influenced Bengali middle class that grew up in the nineteenth century. As Leonard A. Gordon (1974: 7) points out, using the term is complicated on many levels. It is very imprecise: those included were often political adversaries, and it does not correlate closely enough with economic indicators. Most importantly, it is used to explain so much that it in actual fact explains little.
Gandhi was by far the most popular of the nationalist politicians all over India, but not in Bengal after the mid-1920s whereas Bose was. Even Rabindranath Tagore tried to get the Bengalis to rally around Bose in 1939 (Gordon 1974: 287–8), and he had his admirers amongst Bhaktisiddhanta’s disciples as well. B. H. Bon Maharaja (1901–82), for example, one of the leading preachers of the Gaudiya Math, mentions being ‘greatly elated’ when hearing that Bose would come to one of his lectures (Maharaj 1981: 98).

Bose was a complex character (for a balanced picture, see Gordon 1974: 223–63). Like many of his Indian contemporaries (see e.g. Gordon 1974: 273), he openly admired Hitler and Mussolini⁴ (though, in all fairness, it must be added that his admiration was by no means blind) and tried to create a synthesis between socialism and fascism tailored especially for India. Although he started out within the Congress party, Bose always had a difficult time with Gandhi’s non-violence, and eventually literally went his own way. During World War II, he escaped house arrest and travelled to Germany where he founded the Indian National Army (INA) which was made up of Indian prisoners of war and whose aim was to fight the British. He journeyed to Japan by submarine, fought the Allies with INA troops in Burma with little success, and finally died in a plane crash in 1945.

Immediately after the war, several leading members of the INA were tried by the British, but the trials aroused massive Bengali protests, something that many Bengalis see as the critical factor that made the British determine to leave India. According to this view, it was thus Subhas Bose, not Gandhi who won independence for India (Gordon 1974: 292). Writing in the early seventies, Leonard A. Gordon (1974: 368) points out that at that time Bose had achieved fame of almost mythological proportions: quite a few Bengalis believed that he was still alive, and that he would shortly return to India and set everything right. I have myself heard Bengalis comment that he probably is dead by now, since he would after all be over a hundred, but you never know …

Bhaktivedanta Swami had been in the year below Bose at Scottish Church College (535389), and considering the way ‘old boy’ ties among graduates often led to political ties as well (Gordon 1974: 175), it is hardly surprising that Bhaktivedanta Swami also appreciated Bose. While not holding any eschatological views of Bose, he agreed with the view that

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⁴ It is easy to understand that Indians admired Hitler until the end of the war, after all, they had a common enemy. Why he still seems to be so popular (just observe the proliferation of Mein Kampf in Indian bookstalls!) is more of a puzzle.
Bose was the real liberator of India as mentioned above (444328, 486608, 535389, 594734), and appreciated his opposition towards Gandhi’s non-violence (569469).

But why this fascination with a – to put it in less flattering terms – failed fascist? Apart from Bose’s individual charisma, there are several underlying factors that have to be taken into account. First of all, there was a steadily growing opposition to the way Bengalis were portrayed by British sources. The English divided the peoples of India into ‘martial races’, such as the Gurkhas, Jats and Sikhs, and ‘non-martial races’. Among the non-martial races, they were particularly scornful towards Bengalis. The humid climate had made them soft, effete and oily ‘babus’, good for nothing but talking (Gordon 1974: 6–7). These ideas were well-known amongst Bengalis – indeed Bhaktivedanta Swami uses the term ‘martial races’ several times (372205, 562510, 594734) – and they were keen to show that these ideas were wrong.

The British saw themselves, of course, as a martial race, and that was carried over into religion as well. Until the First World War, Christianity combined with an ideal of physical, chivalrous and moral manliness to form what it generally known as ‘muscular Christianity’ (for a general study, see Vance 1985). Propagated by authors and intellectuals such as Charles Kingsley (1819–79) and Thomas Hughes (1822–96), this idea originated with liberal, incarnational theology, but was later taken up by evangelical Christians as well. Since the world comes from God, it is good, and a proper Christian life is thus one in which one works to improve oneself and the world. Sports, household life and an active social life were all seen as good, while fasting, celibacy and the like were seen as leading to weakness and effeminacy.

As Joseph S. Alter (2004: 502) and others have pointed out, muscular Christianity was intimately and subtly linked to colonialism, through race, but also through ideas about the muscular nature of masculinity manifest in physical fitness and body building. While muscular Christianity was by no means unopposed in Britain (Vance 1985), to justify their rule, British men in India during the early twentieth century behaved in an ultra-masculine way (Collingham 2001). Mrinalini Sinha (1999: 448) argues that Gandhi’s profound challenge to British colonialism was that he refused to accept the inherent superiority of a ‘masculinity’ that was increasingly equated with rationality, materialism and physical strength. That may be true, but it should be stressed that most other Indian politicians accepted it with enthusiasm. All over India movements promoting physical fitness kept growing. This was the time of Professor Ram Murti Naidu’s mass
drill exercises; Rajratan Manikrao’s revolutionary gymnasiums in Baroda with paramilitary drill regimens; the Raja of Aundh popularising *Surya Namaskara*; the invention of yoga as an indigenous form of physical culture, and so on (Alter 2004).

Not only did the British regard the Bengali ‘race’ as weak and effeminate, they saw the Hindu religion in a similar light, and of all Hindu gods, Krishna was deemed the worst:

... there has been no more potent source of degradation in the whole Hindu religious history than the vile legends concerning Krishna in the Puranas. They have corrupted the imaginations of millions of the human race, and their evil influence is still potent in India at the present time (C. F. Andrews, quoted in Sharpe 1998: 87.)

There were different responses to this challenge (for a general review, see Chand 1974: 391–429). Ram Mohan Roy rejected epic and Puranic Hinduism altogether, while Bankim Chandra Chatterjee attempted to clean away ‘unwholesome’ parts of the mythology, making Krishna into a sublimated representation of masculinity defined by the love of action and rational self-control (Sinha 1999: 447). The Gaudiya Math did not leave out any parts of the legends, but insisted that if understood correctly, they were not at all immoral, and that the moral standards of his true devotees were unimpeachable (e.g. Sanyal [n.d.], 1984, 2002).

Perhaps the most important reformer was Swami Vivekananda (1863–1902), disciple of the equally famed mystic Ramakrishna (1836–86). Based on a neo-Vedantic philosophy, Swami Vivekananda created in the Ramakrishna Order and Mission his own brand of a strongly masculine and militant Hinduism. In one of his talks, he told some schoolboys, ‘You will be nearer to Heaven through football than through the study of the Gita’ (Gordon 1974: 79). As Mrinalini Sinha (1999: 448) states, he wanted to create a superior Indian/Hindu spiritual masculinity, and in this, he was followed by countless Bengalis. While both the Ramakrishna Order and Mission stayed outside politics, they did provide inspiration for political activity. Gordon (1974: 80) points out that the route from the selfless, autonomous, energy-generating *sannyasin* to the resourceful political worker was not a long one. The ideals of conduct for Brahmo Samaj preachers and for members of the Ramakrishna Mission were taken over as role models for the political or nationalist worker (Gordon 1974: 121).

Not only Vivekananda preached a militant Hindu gospel. During his brief political career, the would-be Sri Aurobindo (Aurobindo Ghose 1872–
BHAKTIVEDANTA SWAMI’S RHETORIC OF VIOLENCE 45

1950) represented some of the most radical views in Bengali politics. He argued that for Indians, loving other races – especially their foreign rulers – was against nature (Gordon 1974: 118). He justified the use of violence in the struggle for independence partly by a literal reading of the Gita (Gordon 1974: 118–21). As Bhaktivedanta Swami does in the quotations given at the beginning – and indeed Hinduism always has – Aurobindo holds that different classes of men have different standards of morality:

The morality of the Kshatriya justifies violence in times of war … the sword of the warrior is as necessary to the fulfillment of justice and righteousness as the holiness of the saint (quoted in Gordon 1974: 120).

While Bhaktivedanta Swami in his recorded talks rejected Aurobindo and lumped him together with other ‘bogus rascals’ such as Ramakrishna, Vivekananda and Mahesh Yogi (443082, 509574), in his earlier writings, he showed some appreciation for his ‘spiritual realizations’ (327379, 327419). He himself often invoked a literal reading of the Gita against ideas of complete non-violence (1248, 423925, 441018). In opposing the idea of non-violence, Bhaktivedanta Swami is, of course, like Aurobindo and many Bengali politicians, taking a stand against Gandhi.

But let us return to Vivekananda. Theologically, he and Bhaktivedanta Swami were at loggerheads: Vivekananda was one of the ‘mayavadins’ whom Bhaktivedanta Swami was so vehemently opposed to (see Lorenz 2004a). When Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati instituted saffron-clad sannyasa for himself and his disciples – a radical innovation which is still contested within Gaudiya Vaishnavism – he borrowed many of the details from the Sri Vaishnavas of South India, but the whole organisational set-up is taken from Vivekananda’s Ramakrishna Order. As in the Ramakrishna Order, the asceticism of the sannyasins of the Gaudiya Math was largely inner-worldly. While they did not engage in the philanthropic activities of the Ramakrishna Movement, they were not supposed to turn away from the world but to act within it, travel around as ‘living drums’ of Sri Chaitanya’s message, in the words of Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati himself (Saraswati 1989: 384). Similarly, he used to call his way of propagation ‘aggressive mercy’ (Eidlitz 1998: 123).

As mentioned previously, celibacy was seen as effeminate by the early British ideologists of muscular Christianity, but in India the picture is partly different. The celibate Vivekananda is a pan-Indian hero, strong and fearless. As Alter (2004: 525) has shown, an important factor behind not only religious teachings but also the health movement in India in the first
decades of the twentieth century, was the idea (based both on Tantric and Western health movement sources) that moral character, celibacy and self-control are the basics of a strong, healthy life. This is particularly evident in the life and teachings of Gandhi, who saw celibacy as essential for gaining the strength needed to carry out the struggle for independence (Alter 1996). Similarly, in the Gaudiya Math, the *sannyasins* were the big heroes. While Abhay Charan did not become the *sannyasin* Bhaktivedanta Swami until his late fifties, and was much more accommodating towards women than his own guru had been, his own movement did become increasingly masculinised during his last few years (Knott 2004).

To sum up: Bhaktivedanta Swami’s rhetoric of violence is representative of the new, aggressively ‘male’ Hinduism that grew up in Bengal in response to the British challenge towards Hinduism, and Gaudiya Vaishnavism in particular. As has been many times pointed out, Gandhi’s extreme pacifism is not representative of all Hinduism, no matter what many Hindus today would have us believe, and many of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s statements against non-violence are aimed directly at Gandhi. As for many of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s seemingly extremist political views, they were shared by a majority in pre-1945 Bengal.

**Other Factors Behind the Rhetoric of Violence**

Apart from his cultural and political background, there are some other factors behind Bhaktivedanta Swami’s statements on violence mentioned above. One is his (perhaps rather Bengali) flair for drama and overstatement. For example (502004, 502400, 502591), he loved to speak about different classes of men to reporters, well-aware of how politically incorrect it was. It is difficult to decide how seriously any single remark is meant to be taken from a transcript. This is why I call these statements Bhaktivedanta Swami’s ‘rhetoric of violence’.

The immediate contexts of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s statements mentioned above are discussions about *Varnashrama-dharma*. Bhaktivedanta Swami was convinced that the ideal society should be made up of self-sufficient agrarian communities (this is perhaps the most obvious remnant of his early Gandhian leanings), where mankind would be divided into four *varnas* and four *ashramas*, based not on hereditary but on individual qualifications. He had inherited this idea from his guru, but while Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati used it to create an alternative society for his disciples within Bengali society, Bhaktivedanta Swami took on a much
larger task when trying to implement these ideas in a completely new context. While encouraging his disciples to start farm communities along these lines, he never fully developed these ideas. It should also be noted that these are theoretical discussions: Bhaktivedanta Swami certainly never had anyone killed, and the only case when one of his disciples ever did kill an ‘unwanted element in society’ was connected with New Vrindavan, a wayward farm community in West Virginia that was subsequently expelled from ISKCON (for a racy exposé of this and other crimes in and around ISKCON, see Hubner and Gruson 1988).

Bhaktivedanta Swami’s conviction about the need for strong and if necessary violent Kshatriyas was also based on his very literal reading of the Bhagavata-Purana, where an evil but strong ruler is often portrayed as being better than none at all (e.g. BhP 4.14). Just as he accepted, for example, the cosmological statements of the Bhagavata at face value, giving quite a challenge to those of his disciples wishing to prove him and the scripture right on everything (see e.g. Thompson 1991, 2000; Goswami 2003), he read the Bhagavata as a description of the perfect ‘Vedic’ society.

Conclusion

In this article, I have tried to put part of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s rhetoric of violence into a larger context that has previously been neglected: that of early- to mid-twentieth century Bengali politics. I have also pinpointed some other factors behind them, such as his literal reading of the Gaudiya Vaishnava scriptures and his flair for drama. In this, I have not tried to exonerate Bhaktivedanta Swami for his more radically politically incorrect opinions. There is no reason why in the 1970s even an Indian could believe, for example, that Hitler killed Jews because they financed his enemies (589820). Rather, I have tried to begin broadening the picture of Bhaktivedanta Swami by looking at him as a product both of his spiritual predecessors and of his more worldly background.

As mentioned above, seeing Bhaktivedanta Swami not only as the great ‘transcendental’ founder-acharya of ISKCON, but also as an elderly gentleman, at times erring on relative, human issues, is a viewpoint shared by many ISKCON intellectuals today. For some apologists within the movement, however, taking this path is seen as exceedingly risky, and they fight it vehemently, claiming that the entire future of the movement hinges on being faithful to all the words of its founder. After all, if one set of statements of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s is relativized, who is to judge what is and
what is not absolute in his teaching? The traditional answer would be to say his successor, but since none of his disciples within ISKCON has come even close to his authority, this is a conflict that is not likely to be resolved soon.  

I began this article by describing the VedaBase, the database of Bhaktivedanta Swami’s works and talks that Lorenz used to find the rhetoric of violence that served as the catalyst for this article. It is somewhat surprising that it has been so little used by scholars. Because of its uniquely uncensored nature, it is an extremely useful tool when used with care and complemented with other sources. However, for the same reason, it may just as well, quoting Jan Brzezinski, prove to be the ‘permanent Achilles heel’ of ISKCON (http://www.gaudiyadiscussions.com/index.php?showtopic=1585&st=15). For those of us interested in the canonization of religious teachings, it will be interesting to see how ISKCON will deal with this threat. Will future editions of the VedaBase be censored, footnoted or left as they are now? I hope to return to this question in the future.

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5 This conflict is illustrated well on the Web, with www.chakra.org often giving a voice to the ‘liberal’ side of ISKCON, and www.siddhanta.com to the conservative.
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They Bewitched the Generator

State Power and Religious Authority at the New Year’s Festival in Makunduchi, Zanzibar

Introduction

The New Year’s festival in Makunduchi, Zanzibar, has been one of the central sites for the interaction between state power and religious authority. It has changed considerably since colonial times, as political rituals were grafted onto religious ones, and a commercial fair developed. I argue that these changes can be explained in part by the renegotiation, both in conflict and co-operation, of the relationship between local religious experts and state officials.¹

In this article I will first analyse the New Year’s rituals as central practices for the production of local religious authority. Then I will discuss the colonial history of the festival, before finally turning to the interactions between state power and local authority at the festival in post-colonial times.

Religious Rituals and Local Political Authority

The religious rituals of the New Year (re-)establish reciprocal relations between the people of the town of Makunduchi and local spirits. These spirits (commonly called shetani, pl. mashetani) reside in specific places, called mizimu (sing. mzimu), which are marked by natural features like caves, stones, trees or thickets. Often small huts are built for the spirits. The ritual interactions with the spirits take place at the mizimu. The main feature of the practices is the sacrifice of food or cloth to the spirits: within

¹ This article is based on research conducted in 2001 and 2002, made possible by a scholarship by the University of Bayeruth. My thanks go to the people of Makunduchi, especially to my host Dume.
the reciprocal relations the spirits are given their due. In return, the spirits ensure the fertility of the land and the people, and aid their human relations in case of sickness or other personal problems.

From local perspectives the rituals relating to local spirits are classified as *mila* (local/traditional/rural customs) as opposed to *dini* (‘orthodox’ Islam). Nevertheless Islamic elements, like prayers to Allah or recitation of the Koran, are part of most of them. The terms *mila* and *dini* are used in a strategic fashion within the discourse on acceptable religious practices, and representatives of reformist Islam criticise rituals relating to spirits for being idolatrous. In Makunduchi however, most people participate in practices of the *mila* kind and still consider themselves to be good Muslims.

More specifically the rituals of the *mizimu* are considered as *uganga*, i.e., religious practices of healing, as opposed to *uchawi*, religious practices of harming. This distinction is somewhat ambivalent: It is generally suspected that the practitioners of *uganga* are able to practise *uchawi* as well, although there are no public accusations and no one admits to practising *uchawi*. Both practices employ similar means to achieve opposite ends: plants, spirits, and the Koran. In both cases the Koran is thought to be most effective.

Every citizen of Makunduchi inherits relations with local spirits. This is a strong marker of local identity. A citizen is a member of a local descent group, which is linked to local spirits. As descent is reckoned both matrilineally and patrilineally, individuals can belong to several descent groups, and therefore be linked to several *mizimu*. Within every descent group...

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2 In 2001 an article entitled ‘Avoid the superstitions of the New Year’s festival’ was published in a Muslim newspaper. *An Nuur* 2001: 3.

3 E.g., there are Muslim teachers who participate in the rituals of the *mizimu* or spirit possession groups. Interviews with Amina 06.08.02, Hassan 09.06.02. I have changed the names of all my informants.

4 Interviews with Mzee 10.06.02, Haji 19.06.02, Kazija 15.08.02. For *uganga* and its relation to western medicine, see Nisula 1999. Klaus Hock (1987: 89–130) provides an overview of the ‘popular/instrumental/magical’ religious practices of the Swahili; for the question of sorcery, see Lienhardt 1968: 51–80. Michael Lambek (1993: 237) describes the link between knowledge and the suspicion of ‘sorcery’ for Mayotte: ‘One of the best, if left-handed, compliments I received in the field was from a man who said near the end of my first field trip that it was a good thing I was leaving for home so soon. When I asked why, he replied that I would surely begin to practice sorcery if I stayed. With some surprise, I protested my innocence, but he brushed that aside saying that I simply knew too much. People are curious; no one with power will forego the experience of trying it out. No one with knowledge is innocent. Sorcery is inherent in human practice.’
group religious experts, called wavyle (sing. mwyale), take care of the rituals directed towards the spirits. Most wavyle are elders, because it takes time to acquire religious expertise. Both men and women can be religious experts. In the past the wavyle controlled access to land through the rituals required for the appropriation of local resources.5

The New Year’s rituals integrate the religious practices of the various descent groups on the level of the town. Some of the local spirits are considered especially powerful, and therefore important for the protection of the town. The rituals take place at the mizimu of these spirits. They are led by the wavyle of the related descent groups. These religious experts are called elders of the year (wazee wa mwaka).

In preparation for the New Year’s festival a number of rituals take place. Two weeks before New Year’s day the Koran is read at some of the mizimu which guard the borders of the town. Thereafter the town is circled, while Allah is praised. Both of these practices are thought to drive away evil spirits. Finally an animal is sacrificed to the spirits.

One week before New Year the spirits of important mizimu receive their due. On this day the spirits are believed to celebrate New Year, and they receive sacrifices of food and cloth. During the night before New Year’s Day uchawi is said to be practised.6

But the New Year’s festival is most famous for the public performances on New Year’s Day. In a central area a hut is build, set alight, and as it burns, it is circled by women singing. The smoke of the fire is used to predict the weather during the coming year. The young men of the southern and northern half of Makunduchi fight each other, armed with sticks. In the evening there are dances.

The traditional political leadership of Makunduchi was closely linked with religious expertise. It consisted of a council of five elders, who were

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5 The spirits, and the religious experts, had to be given their dues three times within the context of millet cultivation. A first ritual took place in the clearing of the field (located in the bush land outside the town proper), a second when the cultivators moved out to the field to guard the growing crop, a third before the harvest. Likewise, rituals had to be performed in connection with hunting, net and trap fishing. (Middleton 1961: 29–30; Pakenham 1947: 8–10.) Land rights continue to be based on membership of a local descent group, but the religious rituals are no longer practiced in this context.

6 I did not see these rituals, and they are shrouded in secrecy. A number of informants alluded to sacrifices, dances and a ‘magical’ competition, but only one claimed to have taken part. He considered uchawi the most important of the New Year’s rituals. Interviews with Haji 19.06. and 19.08.02.
called elders of the town (*wazee wa mji*).7 They represented the most important descent groups of the town. Their authority was backed up by religious practices. Some of the elders of the town were also elders of the year. The elders of the town were responsible for relations with outsiders. When strangers wanted to settle in, or use the resources of the town, they had to seek permission from the elders, who then performed the necessary rituals at the *mizimu*. They were also in charge of the town purse, and used this money, gained from fees for ritual services and collections among the citizens, to finance communal undertakings and rituals (Pakenham 1947: 5, 9 f.).

With the establishment of the Omani state in Zanzibar in the first half of nineteenth century, state representatives were added to the local leadership. The government headmen (*masheha wa serikali*, sing. *sheha wa serikali*) were responsible for the collection of taxes.8 They were recruited from the dominant local descent groups, and they were also represented in the New Year’s rituals: The public performances of the New Year’s day were presided over by the *sheha* of the south of Makunduchi.9

The power of the traditional leaders was not based on the use of physical force, and its effectiveness was disputed among colonial administrators.10 Their authority was to a large extent based on symbolic capital, on

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7 Interview with Jecha 09.09.02. In other towns different terms were used for the political leaders (e.g. *watu wanne* – four people). My reconstruction of traditional political authority in rural Zanzibar is based both on the reports of colonial administrators (Pakenham 1947, Middleton 1961), who studied the system in a state of serious decline, and on information given by my informants, who experienced ‘traditional’ authority within the colonial context only. Both sources are liable to offer a somewhat idealised account of the ‘good old times’.

8 See Nicholls 1971: 281–5; Sheriff 1991: 117. Before the advent of the Omanis Makunduchi was part of a regional political organisation, headed by the *mwinyi mkuu*. Local *masheha* might have been part of this earlier political system. See Middleton 1961: 17.

9 Today the performances are presided over by a descendant of the last pre-revolutionary *sheha*.

10 ‘The *Watu Wanne* are chosen from different kin-groups that compose the proprietors of the town. In most indigenous settlements they are still known (and were usually introduced to me), but except for their religious and magical tasks their duties are now rarely performed and their authority has been superseded by that of the government *sheha*. The traditional sanctions for their authority seem to have been very weak. Troublemakers could be expelled, if the majority of their co-residents agreed, and diffuse sanctions of ostracism, ridicule and general disapproval could be marshalled by the *Watu Wanne.*’ (Middleton 1961: 17.) Conversely,
their status as acknowledged by their fellow citizens. The symbolic capital was produced primarily through the religious practice of the communal rituals, which transformed cultural capital, i.e., the religious knowledge and practical mastery of the elders, as well as social capital, i.e., their position within the dominant descent groups of the town, into the acknowledged status of *mwayale* / elder of the year / elder of the town. Rituals produce ritual leaders, but in the pre-colonial context this leadership was not restricted to the religious field. The rituals produced legitimate local power that included more or less effective control over access to the productive resources of the town.**

R. H. W. Pakenham (1947: 4) judges the traditional sanctions to be highly effective means of social control: ‘Within the clan, and between inter-related clans, exist a tolerance, generosity, and a code of loyalty which constitute an unwritten law, and he who violates it is liable to suffer the most effective penalty of social ostracism viz. People will not attend his celebrations, will rise and leave when he joins a group or enters a room, and so on.’

Pierre Bourdieu compares the actors within a field of practice with players of a game: ‘C’est à chaque moment, l’état des rapports de force entre les joueurs qui définit la structure du camp: on peut imaginer que chaque joueur a devant lui des piles de jetons de différente couleurs, correspondant aux différents espèces de capital qu’il détient, en sorte que sa force relative dans le jeu, sa position dans l’espace de jeu, et aussi ses stratégies au jeu, ce que l’on appelle en français son «jeu», les coups, plus ou moins risqués, plus ou moins prudents, plus ou moins subversifs ou conservateurs, qu’il entreprend, dépendent à la fois du volume global de ses jetons et de la structure des piles de jetons, du volume global de la structure de son capital … (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992: 74). In the field of religious practice in Makunduchi the players employ two kinds of capital: cultural capital, i.e., the knowledge (taken to include the incorporated mastery to put this knowledge into practice, as in Bourdieu’s concept of habitus) of how to ritualise one’s actions when facing the spirits, of the rules/taboos of the *mizimu*, of how to divine the time and nature of the sacrifices, of the uses of plants, of the uses of the Koran, etc., and social capital, i.e., membership of the dominant descent groups, together with the accompanying relations to powerful spirits, and high status within this descent group. This capital is used to gain positions of leadership, e.g., to become one of the elders of the year, or to become a leader among the elders, who decides what kind of animal is to be sacrificed. In pre-colonial times local authority based on this religious leadership extended over economic and political matters.

Following Roy Rappaport (1979: 175) I take rituals to be ‘more or less invariant sequences of formal acts and utterances not encoded by the performers’. Two aspects of Rappaport’s concept of rituals serve to explain how rituals produce symbolic capital. First, the rituals appear not to be encoded by the players. In Makunduchi the elders follow the tradition inherited from the ancestors, or change the tradition because of demands by the spirits. This serves to hide the per-
Although the field of religious practice was clearly structured, it was not static. Spirits of certain *mizimu* and their related descent groups had been established as powerful through past practices, and in order to become a leader it was certainly helpful to be a member of these dominant groups. But as local authority was both traditional and charismatic, positions of leadership were competed for, and the structure of power relations was subject to change. Within the field of practice it was possible to invent new *mizimu*, to challenge the position of a senior religious expert within a descent group, and it was even possible to gain a leading role within the town without any connection to a local *mizimu*, as the case of Mwita shows. According to local histories, Mwita came to Makunduchi (from the African mainland) as a stranger sometime in the middle of the nineteenth century. He received permission to settle in Makunduchi from the elders of the town and started out in a subservient position. But he managed to gain a

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sonal interests of the actors. The power of the elders ‘… cannot take place overtly and must be disguised under the veil of enchanted relationships … in order to be socially recognized it must get itself misrecognized’ (Bourdieu 1977: 191). Second, rituals convey (indexical and canonical) messages, and the most important indexical message is that the participant ‘… accepts, and indicates to himself and to others that he accepts, whatever is encoded in the canons of the liturgical order in which he is participating’ (Rappaport 1979: 193). A participant in the New Year’s rituals publicly accepts the leadership of the religious experts, who lead the rituals in practice, and acknowledges the spirits’ agency, at least in the sense that the elders appropriate wealth on behalf of the spirits. The only ‘consumer’s choice’ is not to participate in the rituals, but that might have been difficult in pre-colonial times, when the rituals were mandatory for the appropriation of local resources.

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12 As defined by Max Weber (1976: 124, 140): ‘Im Fall der traditionellen Herrschaft wird der Person des durch Tradition berufenen und an die Tradition gebundenen Herrn kraft Pietät im Umkreis der Gewohnten gehorcht. Im Fall der Charismatischen Herrschaft wird dem charismatisch qualifizierten Führer als solchem kraft persönlichen Vertrauens in Offenbarung, Heldentum oder Vorbildlichkeit im Umkreis der Geltung des Glaubens an dieses sein Charisma gehorcht‘; ‘“Charisma” soll eine als außeralltäglich (ursprünglich … als magisch bedingt) geltende Qualität einer Persönlichkeit heißen, um derentwillen sie als mit übernatürlichen oder übermenschlichen oder mindestens spezifisch außeralltäglichen, nicht jedem andern zugänglichen Kräften oder Eigenschaften oder als gottgesandt oder als vorbildlich und deshalb als “Führer” gewertet wird.’

13 A colonial report on Uzi Island, to the west of Makunduchi, mentions both cases (ZNA AK 12/15: 42–5). As this is a late source (1951), it is possible that competition for positions of leadership, i.e., the charismatic aspect of local power, was accompanied by the decline of the religious field of practice during colonial times. But I doubt that competition was completely absent from the pre-colonial system.
position of leadership among the elders of the year. Several of the current (2001–2) elders of the year claim to be his descendants. One of his sons became *sheha* for the south of Makunduchi, and this line of descent held on to this position until the revolution in 1964. Another one of his descendants was among the elders of the town during late colonial times.\(^{14}\)

**Colonial Times**

The British colonial state took an ambivalent stand towards traditional authority. On the one hand, it used the symbolic capital of local authority. The colonial state took over the structures of its Omani predecessor to implement a system of indirect rule, within which the local political leaders formed the lowest level of the colonial administration.\(^{15}\) On the other hand, the state tried to replace local authority with institutions of state power. There were some attempts to exert more direct control over Makunduchi, but these failed. In the late 1920s, increased police patrols were used, but judged ineffective and abandoned soon after. In the 1950s, the institution of an elected town council, which would have replaced the elders of the town, failed in Makunduchi.\(^{16}\)

\(^{14}\) Interviews with Mussa 01.08.01, Ali 13.06.02, Ameir 18.06.02, Haji 19.06.02. The stories I was told do not specify how Mwita gained a leading position, but as he became a leader of the communal *uganga*, he must have been competent in this field. Through his religious expertise he founded one of the dominant descent groups of the town.

\(^{15}\) For the history of Zanzibar, see Middleton and Campbell 1965, Nicholls 1971, Sheriff 1987. Zanzibar became a British protectorate in 1890, and was administered by the Colonial Office from 1913 until 1963.

\(^{16}\) In 1928 two policemen were injured when they intervened in a fight between villagers (not *mwaka* fighting, the incident occurred in October). The annual report comments: ‘This large village will shortly be connected by roads with headquarters. Both from an administrative and police point of view, it is most desirable that this portion of the island should be brought under closer supervision.’ (ZNA BA 30/2: 3.) In 1934 the new system of increased police patrols was judged ineffective for the south of the island: ‘Where the population is mixed, shifting and fairly thick, uniformed police is required, but in the coral rag country and at Makunduchi where the people form an homogeneous group the only effective control is exercised by the Mudirs, Shehas and Elders.’ (ZNA BA 30/4: 11.) In 1951 the colonial administration tried to form a local council at Makunduchi. This failed ‘… since the villagers are unwilling to elect the representatives to sit on a council’ (ZNA BA 30/13: 4).
But while the local leaders were somewhat successful in fending off state intrusions in the political field, the system of local authority based on religious practice was weakened by economic changes. In order to supply the plantation economy with workers to replace the freed slaves, the state strove to establish a system of paid labour. To this end, the colonial administration employed forced labour, and implemented a legal code that included offences like vagrancy, drinking and dancing. (See Cooper 1980: chapter 3.) The introduction of a labour economy was not only successful because of the use of force by the state, but also because it opened up new economic opportunities to local actors. Especially the young men (but also young women) of rural towns like Makunduchi could escape the strictures of the local gerontocracy by working for money.¹⁷ This seemed to have had direct consequences on religious practices. By the 1940s, the rituals at the mizimu relating to the use of local resources were no longer practised, and the elders complained about the lack of respect from modern youth.¹⁸

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¹⁷ Jonathon Glassman (2004: 748 f.) notes: ‘Within the Hadimu fringe itself [i.e., the southern and eastern areas of Unguja island – M. E.], mounting generational conflicts in the 1930s and 1940s had given rise to acute anxieties about the cohesion of village institutions and to dreams of community renewal. Hadimu elders were convinced that the seasonal outmigration of younger villagers had caused a loss of respect for village traditions. In fact, much of the rancor arose when the migrants used their wages in efforts to intrude in village customs more forcefully than their elders deemed proper, paying bridewealth or sponsoring other festive rites by which authority and prestige were accrued.’ The (seasonal) involvement in the paid labour economy seems to have been high: ‘The social survey carried out in southern Unguja in 1989 showed that 91 out of 93 informants had worked as clove pickers before the Revolution on plantations owned by both Arabs and Shirazi, especially in Pemba. Moreover, some had even worked as weeder and coconut collectors, and 22 of them had worked in town as house-boys and in construction work.’ (Sheriff and Tominaga 1992: 15; see also Cooper 1980: 96 f.)

¹⁸ ‘… to-day the impact of the materialistic influences above mentioned, arising from the ingress of novel economic and social factors in the past half century, have led to an irreparable dissolution of the indigenous social structure … The village lost its leadership, and authority was dissipated. They have tried to muddle along in a ragged and individualistic way without the substance of power which comes of unity. Their children withhold the respect which parents used to claim and, as they grow up, submit to no control save the economic laws which are taking a greater hold on village life. The young are mostly ignorant of local tradition and custom.’ (Pakenham 1947: 4 f.) There were local differences in the decline of traditional authority: in Chwaka, the town this report was concerned with, the traditional leaders were replaced by an elected council, in Makunduchi they were not.
Thus the power of the colonial state can be defined by its means: the use of coercive force. But the colonial administration also strove to dominate the production of symbolic capital, the production of legitimised power. The use of force was legitimised by an ideology of rationality. The fight against ‘irrational’ practices was considered central to the modernising effort itself. In this context religious practices, and especially religious festivals, became targets of government action. In Makunduchi police stopped young men fighting on New Year’s Day from the 1930s onward, i.e., the state enforced its monopoly on the use of force.

Not only British officials participated in the discourse on rationality, modernity and religion, but also local intellectuals, Zanzibari schoolteachers, i.e. local actors within an institution of the colonial state, predominately from an urban, upper class, ‘Arab’ background, discussed the value of rural religious practices within the framework of barbarous–civilised and African–Arab dichotomies. Muslim scholars from reformist

19 According to Bourdieu (1999: 56): ‘the state … successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence over a definite territory and over the totality of corresponding population. If the state is able to exert symbolic violence, it is because it incarnates itself simultaneously in objectivity, in the form of specific organizational structures and mechanisms, and in subjectivity in the form of mental structures and categories of perception and thought.’

20 State action was commented on in colonial records: ‘Much to the disappointment of the multitude orders were issued that sticks for the fight were not to be thicker than the little finger and rather than comply with this reasonable restriction the parties preferred not to fight. A rather mediocre year is anticipated by the prophets.’ (ZNA BA 30/6, Report for the 3rd quarter, 1935: 8.)

21 ‘Hardinge clearly saw dances (ngomas) and the drinking of palm wine (pembo) as alternatives to work. Unable to restrain themselves, ex-slaves and other “natives” would drink and dance all night and sleep all day. Edward Clarke, Consul-General in 1912, was particularly eager to “prevent a number of childish savages from wasting their money and their very small stock of energy in a demoralising dance” that was also likely to lead to a “dangerous state of sexual excitement”, as well as crime. The Government banned all ngomas in public places and required a permit for dances in private homes, for which a small fee had to be paid.’ (Cooper 1980: 114 f.)

22 Glassman (2004: 744) summarises the discourse within the teacher’s magazine (Mazungumzo ya Walimu): ‘The schoolteachers published many condescending essays on village customs, particularly dance rituals, in which they stressed an obligation to reform popular culture along the lines of modernity and (Arab) civilization. The critiques were often harsh: dances were described as foolish, indecent, and unhealthy – a common adjective was kishanzi, barbarous – and at least one headmaster thrashed pupils he caught participating in them.’ This discourse was part of a constant differentiation and reconstruction of local identities. For other practices of identity construction in Zanzibar, see Fair 2001.
movements similarly attacked local/rural/traditional religious practices in their attempt to redefine orthodox Islam.

Post-revolutionary Times

In Zanzibar, independence was quickly followed by a revolution (1964) which overthrew the Omani dominated ruling-class and replaced it with an African-oriented autocracy, supported by a socialist-flavoured one-party system which permeated all aspects of social life. No organisations outside the party were tolerated, and a secret police and people’s courts were installed.

After the revolution the political structure on the local level was changed decisively. In Makunduchi, the elders of the town lost state recognition and practical importance. The former two masheha were replaced with four government appointed officials. Some of the important descent groups were completely excluded from political positions, but there was also some reconciliation with traditional authority and political opposition on the local level. However, party membership became more important than membership of the right descent group for access to political positions.

23 Kai Kresse (2003: 300) summarises the critique of one such reformer: “Sheik Muhammad Kasin explains why some Swahili Muslim practices are not reconcilable with the ideals of Islam, why they should not constitute elements of East African Islam. As in much popular discourse (and anthropological literature) of the region, he invokes the dichotomy of mila (custom) and dini (Islamic religion). He portrays the practices of mila as threatening cultural counterforces to dini, the “true” religion of Islam.” For reformist Islam in East Africa, see also Pouwels 1987 and Loimeier 2003.

24 During the reign of Karume (1964–72), all organisations were aligned with the party (ASP – Afro-Shirazi Party, later CCM – Chama cha Mapinduzi), a secret police and people’s courts were established. There were sanctions against Asians, but also Comorians and Shirazi (who at least in part had been ASP supporters). Private business was prohibited and a policy of autarky was implemented which led to food shortages (Clayton 1981: chapter 4). Even membership in an initiation dance group became dependent on party membership rather than on proper initiation (Fair 2000: 171, note 75).

25 The sheha from the south lost his position; his descent group claims to have retaliated by using their mystical power and religious expertise (interview with Haji 19.06.02). One former elder of the town became one of the four government appointed sheha, as did one of the local leaders of the ZPPP, one of the political parties opposing the ASP in late colonial times (interview with Jecha 09.09.02).
The elders of the year continued to perform the New Year’s rituals, but the ASP Youth League (the youth organisation of the ruling party), and later the District Commissioner, took over the organisation of the commercial aspects of the festival. Commercial activities in the context of the festival had started in colonial times, but were now intensified. Dance halls, which charged entrance fees for entertainment, became an important source of income.

Fighting was permitted again, although weapons were restricted to the stems of banana leaves. Probably around this time women and young men started singing obscene songs as part of the public performances of New Year’s Day festival.

In the late 1970s, struggles between the elders of the year and state and party representatives increased over the income generated by the festival, but in the early 1980s the New Year’s committee was founded. Within this committee co-operation between traditional authority and state power was organized. Its members invented the political rituals that were grafted onto the religious ones. During the festival, the guest of honour, a (male or female) state or party official, is greeted by committee members, as well as by representatives of the state and the party. Members of the youth organisation give presents to the guest of honour. The guest of honour cuts a ribbon to open the central performance of New Year’s Day, and is then led around by elders of the year. The instructions regarding the religious practices include a visit to the mzimu msikiti kichaka (bush mosque), which the guest of honour, if he is a Muslim, is made to enter in order to pray there. Thereafter, a banquet takes place, attended by invited dignitaries, including state and party officials, the members of the New Year’s committee, as well as other high-ranking citizens. Here the guest of honour gives a speech.

The foundation of the New Year’s committee and the invention of the political rituals constitute a renegotiation of the relation between the state and local authority. In this context it is interesting how the religious experts tell the story: the elders of the year claim that they bewitched (or rather asked the local spirits to interfere with) their opponent’s generator, thereby spoiling their commercial enterprise. The generator provided elec-

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26 E.g., interviews with Ramadhani 11.06.02, Ali 13.06.02, Vatima 25.08.02, Mzee 30.08.02. For the political role of the ASP Youth League, see Burgess 1999.
27 For the political rituals, see Racine 1994, Madumulla 1995. For a list of the past guests of honour, see Chum 2000: 26.
tricity for night time dancing, and it broke down on three consecutive nights. Thereafter the state officials gave up and handed over control of the commercial festival to the religious experts. Thus, the elders of the year claim that they succeeded in their conflict with the state because of their religious expertise.28

From a less local point of view, the early 1980s were also a time of political and economic reforms which loosened strict state control in a number of areas (Bakari 2001: 130–3; Crozon 1994: 114 f.). But irrespective of its real origin, with the establishment of the New Year’s committee, including chairman and treasurer, the elders of the year adopted a form of organisation from the field of political practice.29 The religious experts turned into players within the field of ‘modern state’ politics, and while the members of the committee continued to be drawn from the descent groups connected with religious expertise and traditional authority, the committee soon included members who lacked religious expertise, and who were not therefore proper elders of the year.30

The religious experts managed to improve their situation through their co-operation with the representatives of the state, and they solved the problem of how to finance communal rituals by gaining control over the income generated by the commercial festival.

But their position did not remain unchallenged. During the time of my research in 2001–2, the New Year’s committee struggled with the District Commissioner over the economic benefits of the festival. In 2001 the District Commissioner together with the District Committee took control of part of the income generated by the festival. They charged the members

28 Interviews with Ali 13.06.02, Ameir 18.06.02 and Haji 19.06.02. There is a second, conflicting interpretation of the incident, which claims that Allah interfered with the generator because there should be no dancing during Ramadan. Interview with Baraka 18.08.02.

29 In Zanzibar committees form the usual institutionalised relation with the state. Sally F. Moore (1977) analysed the rituals of similar political bodies in mainland Tanzania.

30 E.g., the chairman of the New Year’s committee in 2002 was a descendant of Mwita (from the line of descent that held the position of sheha, and that was ousted from power after the revolution). He was a teacher at the Teachers Training College near Zanzibar Town, and he visited Makunduchi only on some weekends. He had no idea of how to perform the New Year’s rituals, or of how to divine the date and type of sacrifice. He was not a religious expert, not a mzee wa mwaka. But he was very good at public relations and political activities such as giving speeches, explaining the history of the festival, or arguing against criticism from reformist scholars. Interview with Masema 22.06.02.
of the New Year’s committee with using the money for their own purposes and with neglecting the welfare of the town. The New Year’s committee countered by claiming that the festival belonged to the people of Makunduchi, and not to outsiders like the state administration (the D.C. was from mainland Tanzania), and by pointing out that they needed the money to perform the communal rituals.

Two months after New Year, spirits took possession of about 20 primary school pupils and the school had to be closed. The child first possessed was the daughter of the D.C. Religious experts, including some elders of the year, had to perform cleansing rituals before the school could be reopened. The rituals had to be paid for by the state (the district) because the religious experts lacked the means to finance communal rituals.

The religious experts had been able to show their worth, but the conflict continued. In 2002 the wazee wa mwaka threatened not to perform the religious rituals unless they were given full control over the festival. There were meetings between the New Year’s committee and the District Committee, the rituals were delayed, and there were high winds which could be interpreted as a manifestation of angry spirits. In the end, high-ranking politicians from Makunduchi (the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education of Zanzibar) intervened and the conflict was decided in favour of the elders. The religious rituals were held, and the festival took place with the president of Zanzibar as guest of honour.

The invention of the political rituals can also be interpreted as the attempt to invent a national festival. In a sense the political rituals put into practice the demands of earlier intellectuals ‘to reform popular culture along the lines of modernity’. When the president of Zanzibar declared in 2002 that the culture of the New Year’s festival is the culture of all Zanzibaris, he shifted the frame of reference from the town of Makunduchi to the whole of Zanzibar. Following Max Weber, who argued that although it is interests, not ideas, that dominate human action, it is still the ideas that shape the frames for future interests, it is necessary to place the New

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31 The description of the incident is based on information provided by Edward T. Clark (Edinburgh) who conducted research in Makunduchi at the time (personal communication).

32 For the invention of tradition in colonial Africa, see Ranger 1983.

Year’s festival within its ideological framework, in order to understand why it is suited as a national festival.

When the president participated in the New Year’s festival, he positioned himself within two ideological frames: the discourses on Zanzibari identity (African versus Non-African origins) and religious identity (‘orthodox’ versus ‘local’ Islam).

Within the discourse on national identity, the president took an ambivalent stand. Towards the end of colonialism, local intellectuals developed two conflicting concepts of nationalism: one based on the Omani sultanate, the other on African origin (see Lofchie 1965, Glassman 2000 and 2004). The indigenous people of Zanzibar identified themselves as Shirazi, i.e., they claimed to be of Persian origin. According to Jonathon Glassman (2000: 405), Shirazi identity is ambivalent about what constitutes its ‘other’. The Shirazi can side with the ‘Africans’ versus the ‘Arab oppressors’, or they can side with the ‘Arabs’ versus the ‘African barbarians’. In the political struggles leading to independence and the revolution they did both. Makunduchi, as a remote rural town, easily qualifies as a centre of indigenous culture, and two intellectuals from Makunduchi have claimed that the New Year’s festival is a Shirazi festival, i.e., a religious tradition of Persian origin. (Chum 1988, Muombwa 2002.)

In relation to the discourse on religious identity, the president positions himself unambiguously, as the New Year’s rituals are clearly considered mila (customs) only, and criticised for being idolatrous by representatives of reformist Islam. But the president may gain votes in the next election by this, as both these discourses on national and religious identity have been central to the ideologies employed in the struggle for power within the multi-party system established in 1995 (see Husby 2001).

Conclusion

In this article I assumed that actors within the religious field of practice, like in any practice, play for stakes. I argued that the New Year’s festival has been an important site of interaction between local authority and state power, and that the changes in the festival can be explained in part by the renegotiation, both in conflict and concord, of the relationship between local religious experts and state officials.

The ritual practices relating to spirits produce symbolic capital (the authority and status of a mvyale, as acknowledged by others), or, rather, they transform cultural (knowledge and expertise in the use of rituals, taboos,
Koran, and herbs) and social capital (relation to the right spirits, position within a descent group) into symbolic capital (the acknowledged status of the religious experts).

Within the traditional context political authority came with ritual leadership, because the communal rituals, particularly the New Year’s rituals, were the most important practices that integrated the various descent groups on the level of the town, i.e., the practices that re-constructed the social structure of the town. Citizens were made by establishing reciprocal relations with local spirits, and local leaders were made by taking leading roles within the communal rituals.

The colonial state made use of, and backed local authority within a system of indirect rule, but intervened directly to enforce its monopoly in the use of force. Fighting in the context of the New Year’s festival was judged irrational, and not considered to be legitimised by religious tradition.

The post-revolutionary state devalued traditional authority within the one-party system. With regard to the festival, fighting was permitted again, but state or party officials exerted greater control, especially over its economic aspects. With the invention of the political rituals the representatives of local authority co-operated with the state. The state gained legitimacy (symbolic capital) through the rituals. The religious experts gained the support of state power and money. However, the relations between state power and local authority are not fixed, but constantly renegotiated. In the open conflict of 2001–2, the representatives of local authority used the ultimate threat: a refusal to practice religious rituals, i.e., they relied on the capital at their disposal: their expertise to lead the communal rituals.

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Albania’s Self-image as a Haven of Religious Tolerance

Albania has become infamous for its dysfunctional state, human trafficking, blood revenge, guns, prostitution, and generally miserable situation, while ‘Albanians’ generally have a bad reputation abroad. In contrast, the Albanian media, politicians, common people and religious experts assert that one of the essential qualities of the Albanians is their religious tolerance. In this country which under Communism had a total ban on all sorts of religious life, Albanians claim they never had any religious conflict. Judging from public discourses, the conception of ‘religious tolerance’ is at the hub of contemporary Albanian identity politics.1

Albania is one of the smallest and most ethnically homogeneous countries in Europe, with an abundance of Christian and Muslim traditions. The traditional religious communities that are reckoned as national religions, besides the Orthodox Autocephalous Church of Albania and the Roman Catholic Church, include Sunni Islam, as well as a wide range of Sufi orders such as the Bektashi, Halveti, Rufai, and Tixhani, to mention just a few. The only census of religious affiliation is more than 60 years old. According to this, the population of Albania consisted of 70 per cent Muslims, 20 per cent Orthodox Christians and 10 per cent Catholics in 1942. Under communism, there were decades of aggressive atheism and the almost total destruction of religious institutions. Any estimate of religious affiliation in Albania in the post-communist period tends to be speculative, although it does seem reasonable to claim that the majority of Albanians are strongly secularised, semi-agnostic, non-practising Muslims.

1 My focus here is on Albanians in the Republic of Albania. The substantial ethnic Albanian minorities living in the former Yugoslav republics and in Greece have traditionally had a higher percentage of Muslims. In addition to the language barrier, Islam has reinforced the ethnic boundary between Albanians and the Montenegrins, Serbs, Macedonians and Greeks.
‘Religious Tolerance’ and Albanian Civil Religion

After the fall of Communism, ‘religious tolerance’ has become an elaborated concept and is today a characteristic feature of the national self-image which Albanian politicians even use to promote their country abroad. In trying to convince the European Union that Albania should become a member state, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, for instance, referred to the country’s stabilising effect in the region as a result of Albanians’ ‘religious tolerance’.2

The continual references to ‘religious tolerance’ in Albanian public life represent a mechanism aimed at preventing the population from fragmenting along religious dividing lines and lies at the core of Albanian nationalism, which is based on ethnicity and language and is fundamentally secular in character.

The belief in religious tolerance can be seen as a form of secular, civil religion that binds Albanians together across religious boundaries. As a tenet of a civil religion, it includes both a set of beliefs and rituals, and is practiced in political, social and religious life. Especially in connection with religious holidays, politicians across the spectrum echo the Prime Minister’s insistence that ‘Albania is the kingdom of peaceful co-existence between three religious communities: Orthodox, Catholic and Muslim’.3

At an international conference in Tirana, the President stressed that the religious communities ‘have never experienced disharmony’ and that co-existence and concord ‘identifies the Albanian society and family’.4 There are hundreds of similar examples. The President also quoted the Albanian poet Vasko Pasha, who one hundred years ago wrote that ‘the Religion of the Albanian is Albanianhood’, a slogan all Albanians are familiar with. On this occasion, the President also drew attention to a tradition of giving children names from another religion. Although this has been a custom in some places, it has hardly been a mainstream phenomenon; its significance here lies in how the head of state elevates it to a national tradition all Albanians should be proud of.

4 Speech by President Alfred Moisiu at the International Conference ‘Religions and Civilizations in the New Millennium’, Tirana, November 14, 2003 <http://bjoerna.dk/tolerance/President.htm> (accessed 1 December 2004).
Tolerant Theology

The notion of ‘religious tolerance’ is deeply entrenched in the religious practice and theological interpretations of the national religious establishments. Both Muslim and Christian clerics praise it as a national asset and publicly encourage it.5 Frequently, they make assertions such as ‘religion has never created conflicts among Albanians’ or that ‘Israel should take Albania as an example’, emphasising the religions’ shared values. Religiosity as such is considered beneficial for creating good and patriotic citizens, although all the communities highlight their own contributions to the nation building process.6 As it appears in the nineteenth-century slogan ‘without a fatherland, no faith!’, nationalism has traditionally been endowed with a sacred superstructure, at the same time underlining the ‘Albanian’ character of the religious traditions. It has also been a taboo for the religious leaders to get involved in party politics. Given the irreconcilable and polarised political climate,7 this may have averted bickering among the religious communities.

The religious tolerance propagated by Albania’s religious leaders is facilitated by their pragmatism and converging humanistic interpretations of religious doctrine. The other monotheistic religions are considered to be complementary, fulfilling the same functions. Religious tolerance is interpreted as a form of religious dogma. The late Grand Mufti in Tirana used to assert that ‘in God’s sight we are not divided. We serve him in different ways. As religious leaders our duty is to love others as ourselves – and

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5 Expressions like ‘religious tolerance’, ‘religious harmony’, etc. often occur in public statements by the religious leaders, especially in connection with celebrations of Greater and Little Bajram, Christmas, and Easter, which are all public holidays in Albania. On these occasions even politicians talk heartily about religious tolerance. See e.g. Korrieri, 26 December 2003; Panorama, 2 February 2004. See also ‘Statement of shared moral commitment’ <http://www.interfaithnews.net/wp/2005/05/30/albania-shared-commitment> 18 March, 2005 (accessed 19 April 2005).

6 Formal and informal interviews conducted by Cecilie Endersen with clerics in Shkodra, Tirana and Dibër between March 2002 and April 2004 (fieldwork material).

7 Albanian politics have for the last 15 years been dominated by the struggle between the two main parties, the Socialist Party (1997–2005) and the Democratic Party (1991–7, from 2005). The former is the formal successor to the Communist Labour Party, while the latter was the first anti-Communist movement, and the two are personified by the archenemies Fatos Nano and Sali Berisha.
that includes honouring each other." A young Mufti insisted that ‘the core of Islam is religious cooperation’, while a Catholic priest claimed that the faiths are theologically interdependent.

Practicing Tolerance

As a cornerstone of the Albanian civil religion, ‘religious tolerance’ also has ritual aspects. One of these is when clerics and politicians visit the religious communities during their religious festivals. Demonstrating respect for the other religions, the Muftis and Sufi sheiks are special guests of the Orthodox and Catholic clergy for Easter and Christmas, and vice versa during Bajram and Sufi festivals like Ashura. These rituals thus also celebrate mutual respect and cross-religious unity.

Politicians from across the political spectrum visit the four main communities on such occasions, and give speeches praising the traditional tolerance of the Albanian people. The leaders’ public embracing of ‘religious tolerance’ as a core value is widely published in the Albanian media. At the Easter service in 2004, both the President and the deputy Prime Minister, independently of each other, stated that the Easter message to the Albanians was one of tolerance and coexistence. In this way, a Christian holiday, which within Orthodox and Catholic theology celebrates the resurrection of Christ, is given a supplementary function as a civil religious ritual. The same is the case with Muslim festivals.

In their coverage of religious festivals, the media, which during the rest of the year normally approach socio-religious issues in a rather critical manner, use cross-religious terminology such as ‘sacred’ and ‘blessed’. During Bajram in 2004, the newspaper Koha Jonë which otherwise uncritically reiterates the anti-Islamic conspiracy theories that circulate, wrote that Bajram celebrates peace and understanding. The Orthodox Prime Minister at that time, Fatos Nano from the Socialist Party, who on other occasions plays the anti-Islamist card in international relations, asserted that Bajram should be a day of belief in God, in each other, and for a better Albania.

8 Interview with Sabri Koçi on <www.mra.co.uk/fac/aug2000> (accessed 20 February 2002).
9 News bulletin on TVSH, TV Koha, and Top Channel, 11 April 2004.
The civil, or national, aspect of these rituals is twofold. Firstly, participation is a symbolic act; in this way Muslim and Christian leaders show that they respect each other by respecting what the other holds sacred. Moreover, the ritual is loaded with its own, secular meaning. Mere attendance is in itself a celebration of peaceful religious pluralism, as well as national and local unity. The clerics explain that this is a deep-seated tradition ‘inherited from our forefathers’. When they meet in public, they embrace each other and talk kindly about the other religious communities. This is not only a symbolic gesture, they assert, but is based on genuine mutual respect and old Albanian traditions. In addition, the feelings of sympathy are reinforced by shared experiences under Communist persecution and mutual interests in protecting religion as such.

Clerics as Peacemakers

Albania has over the last 15 years been surrounded by ethnic conflicts along religious dividing lines, and the Albanian state has collapsed twice. Fortunately, Albanian clerics have not exploited provocative situations or social antagonisms, rather, they have used their authority to promote concord and minimise conflict. This has made the religious institutions, which are almost the only representatives of civil society in post-totalitarian Albania, a stabilising force in times of high social tension. In the spring of 2005, the Prime Minister stated that ‘religious leaders are far more important [to Albania] than any political officer’. Their tolerant attitude is important simply because nobody knows what the impact might have been on inter-communal relations had religious leaders in Albania acted more like their colleagues in the former Yugoslavia (see Perica 2002).

An example of how clerics avoid using their positions to become demagogues occurred in 1997, during the nationwide unrest after pyramid schemes collapsed and all state structures broke down. When the riots began spreading northwards, the clerics of Shkodra, a bastion of both Sunni Islam and Catholicism in Albania, feared that the unrest in this town might acquire religious overtones. As angry crowds were setting fire to public

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buildings, it was rumoured that Catholics were planning to blow up the great mosque. This aroused Muslim anger and gangs of armed Catholics threatened that if any Muslims touched their churches, they would retaliate by destroying all the mosques.

The local Mufti, the Catholic priest and the Orthodox parish priest decided to react to prevent an escalation of the unrest. Thus the Catholic priest turned himself into a human shield inside the mosque, while the Mufti kept watch inside the cathedral. Afterwards, the religious triumvirate launched public appeals around town encouraging people to ‘stay together as brothers’, reminding them that ‘we are all Albanians’.\(^\text{14}\) In this way, they managed to convince their respective flocks not to become involved in any religious conflict.

Rejecting prejudices and conspiracy theories, Albanian clerics publicly insist that the other religions are tolerant and have good intentions. This is important. Since the fall of Communism there have actually been some examples of hate speech or attacks on religious symbols. When such things happen, the first reaction of the religious leaders is to draw attention to Albanians’ tradition of tolerance and to define the incident as something abnormal, which is totally unrepresentative of any good believer or Albanian institution, and to urge Christians and Muslims to stand together against such tendencies.

**Taboo**

Since the first political efforts to create an Albanian nation state there has been, for historical reasons, anxiety that the religious factor might tear the nation apart. Albania has a long history of invasions, and consequently there is a traditional fear that religion might be used by more powerful nations in the region with a strong religious profile and territorial ambitions in Albania. The Turks, the Greeks, the Serbs, and the Italians have all had religious ties among Albanians, and these religious communities have sometimes been viewed as fifth columnists. Against this background, the Communist dictator Enver Hoxha took advantage of Marxist ideology

\(^{14}\) Interviews with Monsignor Luçjan Agostini, the Mufti of Shkodra, Faik Hoxha, and the Orthodox parish priest, Aleksander Petani, conducted by Cecilie Endersen in Shkodra, March 2003. See also description of events in Bishop Massafra’s autobiography: Massafra 2002: 102–14.
and tried to get rid of the ‘religious issue’ once and for all by eradicating religious institutions and leaders.\footnote{The anti-religious policies had gradually become more radical after the Communist takeover in 1944. In 1967, Albania was declared the first atheist republic in the world, and the Constitution of 1976, § 37, all religion became illegal (see Constitution 2006).}

In addition to its normative function, ‘religious tolerance’ has now become a framework for interpreting the socio-religious situation. Given its almost sacred status in Albanian civil religion, its opposite, the notion of religious tension, has become a taboo; it is a dangerous issue to raise. There is therefore a tendency to explain disagreement or conflict where religion really seems to be an element, as ‘something else’. Normally, religious leaders simply tend to exclude the possibility that religion or religious differences can be a source of aggression. Systematically, they remove the religious factor from the conflict and turn to external enemies instead, explaining it as ‘politics’ or ‘anti-Albanian interests’.

The taboo status of religious disagreement nevertheless has its side-effects. Often Albanian clerics interpret completely profane phenomena such as the composition of the government, the return of religious property by the state, the appointment of ambassadors or the theft of icons, as religious discrimination of their own community. After the re-establishment of religion, there is a tendency to indirectly make other traditions scapegoats for negative aspects of Albanian society and history and understand one’s own religious community as being more patriotic than the others. It is not unusual to suspect other religious groups of representing interests that supposedly are, have been, or might be detrimental to its own.

Conclusion

In public, the clerics unequivocally emphasise concord and unity. Albanians want to preserve the religious tolerance, and that is why it works. Since conflicts in other parts of the region have often followed religious dividing lines, religious concord in Albania is noteworthy. However, there is little room for sober discussion about pluralism in a democratic system, since Albanian ‘religious tolerance’ is to a great extent based on ethnic nationalism. Behind all the references made to religious tolerance, prejudices and fears simmer underneath the surface. The fact that during the 2005 elector-
al campaign the leaders of the main political parties signed an agreement not to exploit ‘religious divisions’ that might trigger hate and tensions between the different communities,\textsuperscript{16} indicates that one cannot theoretically exclude the prospect that religion may also create divisions in the Albanian society. In spite of all its social advantages, the taboo about mentioning disagreement prevents Albanian leaders from discussing socio-religious realities, although there is much resentment in the religious communities that ought to be taken seriously.

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Introduction

Buddhism is considered by many today as the non-violent religion par excellence. The concept of *ahimsa* (non-violence) coupled with the notion of *pratityasamutpada* (i.e. that everything is casually interconnected, with the implication that pain inflicted upon others is therefore really done to oneself and thus to be avoided) seems to be one of the main arguments for promoting Buddhism as an excellent method for promoting world peace.¹

One of the more prominent advocates for this is peace researcher Johan Galtung. In 1993 he published a book named *Buddhism: A Quest for Unity and Peace*. In this book he argues that Buddhism has a tremendous potential as a source for active peace politics. He writes: ‘The basic contribution of Buddhism in the creation of peace lies in its absolute rejection of direct violence: the doctrine of *ahimsa*, of non-violence’ (Galtung 1993: 117).

It is true that there are Buddhists who have used non-violence in a magnificent way, for which they have received the Nobel Peace Prize.²

However this non-violent, serene picture of Buddhism is not the only picture. Buddhists on occasion speak of a need to use violence, and employ it. Buddhists kill. Sometimes they also kill each other. The history as well as the present of Buddhist Asia is bloodstained.

So while there is a *vianaya* rule of *ahimsa*, at the same time there also seem to be an acceptance amongst some Buddhists of a need to go against it. This acceptance does not seem to be restricted just to one of the major

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¹ I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Michael Pye who so kindly read my manuscript and gave me useful comments about grammar and punctuation, at the same time also giving suggestion for corrections. I am deeply thankful for this.

² Primarily the 16th Dalai Lama, Tibet, and Aung San Suu Kyi, Burma/Myanmar, as well as the laureate Thich Nhat Hanh, Vietnam.
branches of Buddhism. Examples can be found in Theravada regions such as the Sri Lanka of today, which is caught up in civil strife and atrocities; in Mahayana countries such as Japan, where more or less the whole of the Mahayana Japanese Buddhist sangha stood behind the Japanese military and colonial politics starting with the Sino-Japanese war in 1894, and ending, approximately, with Second World War (cf. Victoria 1997); and in Vajrayana Tibet, both at present and historically. Examples can also be found at all levels of the Buddhist community, both among laypersons as well as almspersons (i.e. sangha-ordained persons).

How do Buddhists justify approving of and using violence? How do they legitimise their pro-violent utterances and actions when such actions ought to result in excommunication? What are they saying?

I believe there are several answers to this, some of which are presented here, with the primary focus on Buddhist Tibet.

### Intra-religious Conflicts and Violence

One instance of intra-religious violence in the Tibetan context is the so-called Shugden Affair. It is a story about Tibetan Buddhists killing Tibetan Buddhists of the same Tibetan Buddhist School, namely the Gelukpa.

In February 1997 three members of the Dalai Lama’s inner circle were brutally murdered while asleep. One of them was 70-year-old Geshe Lobsang Gyatso, a very close friend and confidant of the Dalai Lama, and his two younger disciples (one of them being the Dalai Lama’s Chinese-language interpreter). They were stabbed to death, each having received 15–20 cuts. A couple of days after, death threats were expressed against 14 other members of the Dalai Lama’s entourage. Still today the Dharamsala police do not know who committed the murders but they suspect followers of the Tibetan Buddhist divinity Dorje Shugden. Professor Robert Thurman has said that ‘The three were stabbed repeatedly and cut up in a way that was like exorcism’ (Clifton 1997: 25). He seems to be convinced that it is the followers of Dorje Shugden who have committed the murders and call them the Talibans of Tibetan Buddhism (Clifton 1997: 25).

Dorje Shugden was chosen as the Dharma Protector for the Gelukpa School in the early twentieth century by a reform movement within the School lead by a lama named Pa-bong-ka, primarily because Dorje Shugden had the ability to use violence to protect the tradition and to kill its enemies. That is, the ‘protector’ was responsible for the elimination of actual people (Dreyfus 1998: 249 ff). An enemy, according to his followers,
is anyone who is too eclectic towards other Buddhists schools, especially any person practising the Nyingma-cult, thus undermining the purity of the Gelukpa faith. Such a person will attract the anger of Shugden and dies a premature death.

This is exactly what the Dalai Lama is considered doing as part of his striving to build the Tibetan nation on a broad basis, seeking to create harmony between the different Tibetan Buddhists. For this reason, partly, he is very eclectic towards the other Tibetan Schools. He also has strong personal feelings towards Padmasambhava and the Nechung Oracle, both being associated primarily to the Nyingma tradition.

In 1996 the Dalai Lama forbade the Gelukpa monks to worship Dorje Shugden and more or less threatened that if they did not stop, he would not live long. This of course upset many as devotion to Shugden was strong among the Gelukpa hierarchy as well as large factions of the exile community. The Dalai Lama was accused of being religiously intolerant, and some even claimed he was not the true Dalai Lama.

One who did not follow this was Geshe Kelsang Gyatso. He was living in England where he has established a reform-school, The New Kadampa Tradition. The (old) Kadampa School was the first monastic school to be established in Tibet in the ninth century. Calling his school the New Kadampa School is thus ideologically delicate: what he is thereby saying is that he and his followers are closer to the authentic teachings than then the rest of the Gelukpa establishment, including the Dalai Lama.

It is they who are suspected to be behind the murders in Dharamsala.

Inter-religious Conflicts and Violence

I believe the Shugden Affair gives one of the answers as to when violence can be justified according to some Buddhists. In the eyes of the followers of Dorje Shugden, they are defending what they consider to be true Dharma against those who are considered to be the enemies of that Dharma, no matter if the enemy be even the Dalai Lama. This seems to be what the murders in Dharamsala are about.

But the enemy may also just as well be ‘external’, as in the case of Tibet, where China is considered by most Tibetans to be the enemy.

Up till 1989 the Tibetan Youth Congress, an organisation that has several thousand members, was in favour of using violence, even terrorism, in the struggle against the Chinese. Tashi Namgyal, one of their General Secretaries, says:
In our opinion, we should fight to the bitter end until we regain our independence. This is what the Tibetan Youth Congress thinks, and this is what the Tibetans think. To talk to the Chinese is a fruitless exercise. What we have to do is fight for what is rightfully ours. We have to fight, not talk! … The Dalai Lama’s proposal is bad. He says he is the Buddha of Compassion. Well, I am not. The Dalai Lama wants happiness, not only for the Tibetans but for all being … But we just can’t see things in the same way. Let’s be quite frank. We can’t say: since the Dalai Lama doesn’t hate the Chinese, we won’t either. We simply cannot. On the contrary, we hate the Chinese. They invaded our country. Why should we let them sleep in peace? (Donnet 1993: 185 f.)

When asked if he would support activists targeting bombings at the Chinese in Tibet his answer is:

… with no hesitation. That would make things difficult for the Chinese. In this context any means are justified, absolutely. Look, if the occupation of Tibet by the Chinese is justified and the Chinese, as you know, use every method of torture against the Tibetans, then I can only reply ‘Yes’. Every type of struggle against them is justified! (Donnet 1993: 185 f.)

Moreover, when asked if terror tactics could be a combat option in Tibet his attitude was absolutely clear, namely that terrorism could be acceptable. He said: ‘We don’t believe in terrorism. We don’t believe in killing innocent people … If we kill Chinese, no one should accuse us of being terrorists: no Chinese who comes to Tibet is innocent.’ (Donnet 1993: 186 f.)

This tells us that violence could be regarded as justified when the enemy is considered to be not innocent. In the words of the Mahavamsa, the Pali chronicle, it is justified when the enemy is not human. The eight arhats comforting Duttagamani when he (in a very similar manner to the Mahabharata-hero Arjuna) was feeling guilty for the killing of 60,000 men of the enemy army, told him that:

Only one and a half human beings have been slain here by thee, O lord of men. The one had come unto the (three) refuges, the other had taken unto himself the five precepts. Unbelievers and men of evil were the rest, not more to be esteemed than beasts. But as for thee, thou wilt bring glory to the doctrine of the Buddha in manifold ways; therefore cast away care from the heart, O ruler of men. (Bartholomeusz 2002: 56.)
Or in the words of the Thai monk, Kittivuddho Bhikku, who thought it was legitimate to kill communists: ‘Whoever destroys the nation, the religion, or the monarchy, such bestial types (man) are not complete persons. Thus we must intend not to kill people but to kill the Devil (Mara); this is the duty of all Thai.’ To him the most important thing was to protect the country, because if the nation were destroyed, religion would be destroyed. Enemies of the nation were the communists.

Kittivuddho Bhikku even refers to the Buddha and the scriptures and claim that the Buddha taught men to kill. He writes:

He taught us to kill. Venerable sirs, you are likely to be suspicious about this teaching. I will tell you the sutta and you can investigate: (It is) the Kesi-sutta in the Kesiya-vagga, the sutta-nipitaka, anguttara-nikaya, catukaka-nipata. If you open (this text) venerable sirs, you will find that the Lord Buddha ordered killing. (Keyes 1978: 154.)

When commenting on his statement and on the sutra he writes:

The Buddha kills and discards, but the word ‘kill’ according to the principles of the Buddha is killing according to the Dhamma and Vinaya of Buddhism. To kill and discard not by teaching is the method of killing. I don’t mean that the Lord Buddha ordered the killing of persons. But [he ordered] the killing of the impurities of people. (Keyes 1978: 154.)

Rhetorically, he is not saying that one should kill other human beings but communists who are not humans but personifications of Mara, comparable to the impurities (klesa) which the Buddha had taught were to be killed (Keyes 1978: 154).

So to Buddhists ‘the dichotomised Other’ are either ‘not innocent’ or ‘not human’. They are considered to be enemies of the religion, or in other words, the entire order of things. Facing such situations, violence may then – to some – be justified.

3 Keyes 1978: 153. What Kittivuddho Bhikku thought was so terrible about Communism was everything that happened in Cambodia during the Pol Pot regime, as well as when the new Communist government of Laos abolished the Lao monarchy in 1975. Thus he was convinced that Communism was a threat also to the monarchy. Cf. Keyes 1978: 151. This is an echo of how Singhalese Buddhists are afraid of communists after having seen how the Chinese communists have treated the Tibetans.
One of them is Namgyal. He was one of the monks who participated in the uprising in Lhasa in 1959. He tells why monks of his monastery took arms: ‘One reason that we decided to take up arms was that we wanted to defend ourselves, and secondly we wanted to defend our monastery. We didn’t mean to kill; we just wanted to protect ourselves …’ (Goldstein-Kyaga 1999: 29.)

Another one is Rinpoche Ribhur Tulku who was subjected to thirty-five so called ‘struggle sessions’, humiliating occasions when he had to ‘make apology’ in front of people. He is a Rinpoche, an honorific title used for reincarnations and learned or specifically honourable monks.

When asked how he feels about the Chinese, if he hates them, or if he feels compassion towards them in accordance with the teachings of the Buddha, he answers:

Of course I hate them. After living through such a harrowing time, how could I fail to hate them? Compassion is not at issue here. They destroyed our culture and our civilization. There is nowhere they can hide from our culture. Compassion for them is out of the question … As a matter of fact, I decided to leave Tibet because the hatred in my heart was getting to be more than I could bear. (Donnet 1993: 80.)

There are also people close to the Dalai Lama who speak in favour of using violence if necessary.

One of them is Phuntsog Wangyal, a former representative of the Dalai Lama and Director of The Tibet Foundation in London. He says that since China has already given Tibet a death sentence the question is whether the Tibetan nation should die fast or slowly. Because of this he thinks the Tibetans should fight for total independence, and that violence and terrorism are justified for that cause.

If the people inside Tibet decide the best way is for each person to struggle individually for the country, they will have my unqualified support! … Asked: Even if they resort to terror tactics? Oh yes, definitely yes! Look, we have to be realistic. People always say terrorism is a very bad thing. Killing is very wrong. But nobody tries to find out why a person has been led to become a terrorist. What reasons impel him to resort to violence? You must ask yourself these questions! When the causes vanish, the violence will vanish as well … . What are the reasons that incite these people to choose violence? It is the suffering that the Chinese inflict upon us! Let me tell you that the Chinese will not leave
voluntarily. No colonial power has ever yielded on its own initiative without being unequivocally invited to go by the oppressed peoples themselves. (Donnet 1993: 188 f.)

Also the Dalai Lama’s younger brother, Tenzin Chogyal, could consider using violence to make the Chinese leave Tibet.

The situation is like this: someone has broken into another person’s house without having been invited. That undesirable person should leave. That would solve the problem … It is extremely unlikely that the Chinese will simply move back … we have to try to bring some pressure to bear on them, and the only pressure they recognize is violence. I am talking like a radical. I am too old now to be a member of the Tibetan Youth Congress, but I still think we should do something. We have to make blood flow … There are things we have to do without the knowledge of the Dalai Lama. He must not be told. He is above violence. But as you know, we live in a sad world. I hit you, you hit me, we both feel pain. That is what it takes to get the message across. It seems to me that the Chinese only understand the language of violence … Very well then! Let us confront each other at that level! (Donnet 1993: 187.)

Some Twentieth Century History

The situation in Tibet, with all that the Chinese have done to the people, religion and culture, is seen by some Tibetans as a challenge to and even the destruction of the entire order of things. Because of this they consider violent counter-action to defend oneself as justifiable. Moreover this has indeed occurred.

When the Chinese started to invade North-Eastern Tibet in 1950 the General Governor asked Lhasa for reinforcement. He had the support of the Khampa leaders as well as the monks of the Dargye monastery to fight the Chinese. What he wanted was to arm 500 of the monks to help in the struggle, a decision that needed sanction from a higher religious authority. The one giving it was Tri-jang Rinpoche, the younger tutor of the Dalai Lama.

In the years of 1955–6 conditions got worse in Kham and Amdo as the Chinese started their collectivization. This lead to several armed uprisings among the Tibetans. One of the larger revolts was in Chamdo where thousands of Khampas joined and killed the Chinese wherever they met.

Very early a guerrilla force was formed in Kham, called ‘Four Rivers,
Six Ranges’. The guerrilla force got support both logistically and instructionally from the CIA for many years.

The Monlam ceremonies in 1959 were especially important that year as the Dalai Lama was going to finish his Geshe studies. At that time a rumour started in Lhasa that the Chinese were going to kidnap him. This made people go in thousands to the palace of Norbulinka, the crowd getting more and more agitated at both the Chinese as well as the Tibetan government whom they thought had betrayed the Dalai Lama. The demonstration soon evolved into a national uprising directed towards the Kashag and its policy against the Chinese.

The Kashag realized it could not control the people and started instead to think about the security of the Dalai Lama. The State Oracle Nechung was consulted and it said that it was not safe for the Dalai Lama in the palace. Thus, on March 30th 1959 the Dalai Lama went into exile. For three days afterwards Lhasa was in a violent phase of war, with Tibetans fighting against the Chinese with all the weapons they had.

Taking a leap in time, on October the 1st 1987 China was celebrating the 38th anniversary of the People’s Republic. Early that morning hundreds of Tibetans gathered in front of the temple of Jokhang in central Lhasa. Pilgrims and monks were circumambulating the temple, and tourists were walking the streets. All of a sudden some forty monks came out of Jokhang shouting slogans against the Chinese presence in Tibet. A couple of minutes later the police had dragged the monks in to the police station while thousands of Tibetans, men, women, and children, gathered outside and started to throw stones at the house. The police station was set on fire. The area around Jokhang was in a state of riot. Many Tibetans fled while others were fighting the police who shot at them. The Chinese shopkeepers in the area were also harassed by the Tibetans. (Donnet 1993: 110 ff.; Schwartz 1994: 25.)

Before the Monlam celebrations of 1988 in Lhasa, the Chinese were prepared for an upsurge of nationalistic sentiments by the Tibetans. Towards the middle of February thousands of pilgrims started to flood the streets of Lhasa, and by the middle of the month they numbered about 20,000. Many, especially people from Kham, had been prevented from coming into the city. On the surface there was calmness. The Chinese had positioned special ‘anti-riot units’ weeks ahead to prevent any kind of riots. There were about 6,000 active policemen in the city.

Everything was calm until the last day but one. In the morning hundreds of monks had gathered in front of the Jokhang as well as more than 25,000 pilgrims. The Chinese had promised to release prisoners in ex-
change for calmness among the Tibetans, and some monks went to ask for the prisoners’ release. But the Chinese authorities got scared and fled. That became the start signal. Some of the younger monks took a microphone and started shouting ‘Free Tibet, Free Tibet! Down with Chinese oppression! Long live the Dalai Lama!’ This was done although they knew they were being video-taped by Chinese security people and despite the danger of punishment.

Soon a hail of stones rained over the police who were around the temple. Monks started to circumambulate the temple, and thousands of Tibetans joined in. From the roof of the Jokhang, monks threw stones at the police vehicles and television reporters who were there to report the Monlam Chenmo-ceremonies. Pierre-Antoine Donnet writes that at that moment, no power on earth could have stopped the people (1993: 120).

After a while, police reinforcements arrived. Two thousand armed policemen confronted 6,000 Tibetans (Donnet 1993: 118 ff.). Chinese shops were plundered and burnt. Many policemen were beaten and lynched. Donnet writes:

At nightfall, Lhasa still echoed with AK-47 gunfire. The whole of the Tibetan quarter had risen up against the Chinese. In the middle of the crowd, a twenty-year-old monk fired a stone with all his strength at a plain policeman in full flight. Further on, an even younger monk lobbed a stone at the security forces before crumpling to the ground with a bullet right between his eyes. Young and old, every Tibetan in the street was caught up in the revolt, helped by women who piled up the stones. Far from being an isolated handful, as Peking maintained, the monks were actively supported by thousands of Tibetans. (Donnet 1993: 121.)

In the 1990s there were several bombings in Lhasa, carried out by Tibetans wanting a free autonomous Tibet.

**Buddhism and Politics, or, the Sacred Versus the Secular**

The need for defence is often both religiously and politically motivated. This raises the question of how the relationship between religion and politics, between the secular and the profane, is seen from a Buddhist perspective. This will now be touched upon here, as it will also give further explanation of the role and importance of the office of the Dalai Lama as head of state of a Buddhist nation.
I believe religion and politics to be structurally intrinsic within Buddhism. Buddhism is not only meditation and inwardness, it is also politics and outwardness, like any religion. There are no watertight compartments between religion and politics, they interconnect. Within Buddhist societies this is expressed by what is called ‘two wheels of Dharma’.

When the Tibetan Buddhists are confronted with the ethical dilemma of *ahimsa* versus *himsa* (non-violence versus violence) they often argue on two separate levels, one being that of ethical principle, the other being the tactical practical level. Thus in one sense one could say they separate idealism from pragmatism (Goldstein-Kyaga 1999: 32). This they can do because there are ‘two wheels of Dharma’ functioning.

The ‘two wheels of Dharma’ tell of two complementary sides of the religion/community. One wheel belongs to the Buddha, the other to Ashoka, or the righteous king, or the head of state.

In one sense Buddha and Ashoka handle different spheres, Buddha the spiritual nirvanic sphere, Ashoka the mundane samsaric sphere. And yet, in another way, Ashoka is a carrier of both roles. In his role as *cakravartin* (‘wheel-turner’) he may be considered the earthly representative of the Buddha. As such, he combines religion and politics in his person. Moreover his legitimation for this came from the Buddha, as recounted in the Pali canon. So in one sense one could say that the Buddha has justified politics within Buddhism. We may therefore also conclude that there is a basic structure which has been built within Buddhism for a political agenda as well as a spiritual one.

This integration of politics and religion is clear in the case of Tibet. Traditional, pro-exile, Tibet was a combination of a religious and a secular system, (*chos srid gnyis ldan*). The ideal administration was seen as a balance between two types of officials: monks and ‘lay noble officials’. This division can be said to mirror ‘the accommodation of power between the two sections of estate holders, the monasteries and the aristocracy … At every level of administration, the duality of monk clerics and nobles was reflected … At the top of the hierarchy, the Dalai Lama bridged a gap between clerics and nobles.’ (Kolås 1996: 53 f.)

The office of the Dalai Lama is considered to be the embodiment of Ashoka-cakravartin as well as the embodiment of the bodhisattva Chenrezig/Avalokiteshvara. Thus the Dalai Lama is the carrier of two roles. He is both a political leader (at least of the Tibetans belonging to the Autonomous Region of Tibet, not always to those belonging to ‘ethnical Tibet’) as well as a spiritual leader (to some of the Tibetan Buddhists). Thus the office of Dalai Lama is a continuation of the Buddhist paradigm
of statehood. Pro-exile Tibet could be said to be a good example of ‘two wheels of Dharma’ at work.4

Summing Up

I have presented here a few fragments from the history of twentieth century Buddhist Tibet. The background for violent resistance is all that China has done to the Tibetan population and the religion since their invasion in 1950. The Chinese terrorised monasteries and villages, monks and abbots were tortured, many were burnt alive, others sent to work-camps. Children were forced to shoot their parents. Monks and nuns were forced to copulate in front of Chinese soldiers. Villages were completely destroyed, and so were temples and monasteries. (Donnet 1993: 31.) The nation and its population were threatened.

Lama Ribhur Tulku witnessed the destruction of the Jokhang, which was part of the Cultural Revolution. He tells:

It was the twentieth day of the sixth Tibetan month (6 August) in 1966. Several hundreds of the Chinese and Tibetan Red Guards in their late teens or early twenties suddenly burst into the Jokhang, in the company of some Chinese cadres. There were several hundred chapels in the temple. Only two were spared. All the others were thoroughly looted and soiled. Every single statue, holy scripture and ritual object was smashed or taken away … Only the statue of Sakyamuni Buddha at the entrance of the Jokhang escaped their fury. The rampage went on for almost a week. Then the Jokhang was turned into barracks for Chinese soldiers. They used a corner of the temple as a toilet.5

4 In this connection it is nevertheless important to remember that the monasteries in Tibet were rich and powerful landowners, with political power for long time periods. Within the monasteries there is a complex hierarchy with high-ranking lamas at the top, coming mostly from the nobles. Historically this structure has been ruling the political life in Tibet. Most of the Dalai Lamas have died young, so the actual political power has often been with the interim regents and the Kashag.

5 Donnet 1993: 77 f. The Chinese were also using Dharma scriptures as toilet paper.
As for the Tibetan people ‘they have not only been shot, but also beaten to death, crucified, burned alive, drowned, vivisected, starved, strangled, hanged, scalded, buried alive, disemboweled, and beheaded’ (Shakya 2000: 38).

A large statue of the protector of Tibet, the bodhisattva of compassion, Avalokiteshvara/Chenrezig in the Jokhang temple was scattered to pieces (Donnet 1993: 78). It would be easy to interpret this as symbolically related to the exile of the Dalai Lama, the country’s religious and political leader, some years earlier, the Dalai Lama who is considered to be the personification of Avalokiteshvara.

This is vital in this context because as Tsering Shakya writes: ‘The Dalai Lama was the pivot of Tibetan society. He was the incarnation of Avalokiteshvara, the Buddha of compassion and the patron deity of Tibet … The decline in the Dalai Lama’s authority was more complex than a mere loss of political power in the Western sense; it was equated with degeneration of Buddhist Tibet. The Chinese, therefore, were seen not as political foes but as “enemies of the faith”.’ (Shakya 2000: 209.)

When this is all taken together, it means that world order changed into chaos. The Chinese were seen as responsible for this situation of adharma (non-Dharma). They are considered the enemy, the enemy of the nation, of religion, and of the people. This legitimises the use of violence for some Buddhists.

In this article, the focus has been on Vajrayana Buddhist Tibet. The same emic answer has been given in statements coming from other Buddhist countries as well: Sri Lanka, Japan, Burma, Thailand (cf. Gillberg 2005). According to the Buddhists themselves, violence can be justified, when there is adharma. When a situation is considered religiously-politically threatening, when the world is considered chaotic, when evil forces threaten the good, them some Buddhists find justification for using violence in defence.

A Tibetan Style Intifada?

So how about the future? What will happen? Will the violence escalate? Or will the non-violent strategy of the Dalai Lama succeed? What will happen after his death? Is there anyone to continue his non-violent struggle? The Dalai Lama and the exile government have a problem concerning the future. This is affirmed by Melvyn Goldstein:
The Dalai Lama has several options ... Tibet is being transformed in a manner the Dalai Lama and his followers abhor, and if that continues for any length of time, the transformation will likely be difficult to reverse ... An alternative direction is escalation – encouraging (or even organizing) violent opposition in Tibet ... This option would also be extremely difficult for the Dalai Lama to sanction given his commitment to non-violence, but it may be difficult for him to prevent, even if he is personally opposed it. His own failure to force China to moderate its policies when the character of Tibet is so obviously being altered could lead more militant Tibetans to declare his civil disobedience approach a failure and turn to more violent approaches on their own. The crux of the matter is that Tibetans are unlikely to sit by for much longer watching Beijing transform their homeland with impunity. ... There were three bombings in Lhasa in 1996, the last a large blast that damaged a government office building and neighboring hotels and shook buildings half a mile away. (Goldstein 1998: 91 f.)

The situation in Tibet is very fragile and the question is how long the Tibetans can stand watching the Chinese destroying the country. Of course the Dalai Lama wants China to change its politics. But if not, there may be a danger of what Goldstein calls ‘a Tibetan-style intifada’. As he says: ‘Nationalistic emotions coupled with desperation and anger make a powerful brew. And there are Tibetans inside and outside Tibet who are intoxicated with the idea of beginning such a campaign focused on violence – in their way a “war of conscience”, a Tibetan-style intifada.’

Christa Meindersma, interpreter for the Red Cross from Holland, says about young Tibetan monks:

Those young monks are mostly between twenty and twenty-four years old. They are fighting against what they have experienced up to now. They never knew the old pre-1959 regime. They are not trying to restore anything. They are trying to put an end to the violations of their basic rights, of their fundamental freedom. They live in constant fear ... I think now things have come to a point where not only monks but the Tibetan people as well have realized that there has been no genuine improvement in the situation and that the things that the Chinese gov-

ernment puts on the paper are nothing but lies. So there is a tremendous solidarity and an incredible feeling of urgency. I think the Tibetans now feel they are on the verge of being completely exterminated by the Chinese and they have to do something to show the world that they are prepared to die to defend themselves. (Donnet 1993: 125.)

The Tibetan Youth Congress took the decision in 1989 not to use violence and terror, the Dalai Lama having apparently managed to persuade them to wait and see if his non-violent methods will give positive results.

However the situation inside Tibet does not seem to instil temperance, at least not among the younger population. A resistance movement in Tibet, The Tiger-Leopard Youth Association, have said they want to give up their policy of non-violence if international society continues to ignore the difficulties in Tibet. They have written a statement to the Secretary General of the United Nations which says:

Our non-violent methods have been taken as a sign of weakness. We are determined to regain our freedom, and the recent vote at the United Nations clearly shows us that without bloodshed, sabotage and aggressive acts, we will not gain publicity, sympathy and support ... Hijacking and sabotage are tactics used by Palestinians, and still world bodies supply them. Now we feel that if these acts of aggression bring results, why should we not do the same? The world believes in these acts. (Donnet 1993: 190.)

This may be the place to make a reminder that Tibet historically is not a specifically non-violent culture. The presentation of Tibet as a non-violent, peaceful country is part of a myth-making process. As Ronald Schwartz comments, ‘Diaspora Tibetans have managed to portray themselves to Western sponsors and benefactors as a deeply religious people ... as a non-violent people, and as hapless victims of oppression deserving aid and support’ (Schwartz 1999: 235 f.). Like any other country Tibet and its history is not without violence.

**A Buddhist Armageddon**

That the Tibetan future is not to be expected to be without violence may also be seen from another perspective. In the Kalachakratantra an eschatological war is described that is destined to occur in the year 2425.
WARRIORS OF BUDDHISM

the Shambala-bodhisattva-king and his army will defeat and destroy the enemy army, the barbarian Muslim army and their religion, in a kind of Buddhist Armageddon. Thereafter Buddhism will prevail.

It is a very powerful army which the king, the Cakravartin Kalkin Raudra Chakri, will have at his disposal:

90 million cavalry mounted on horses swift as the wind, four hundred thousand battle-intoxicated elephants, five hundred thousand golden chariots, and uncountable infantry, all brightly caparisoned. Composed of six divisions, the army will be led by the ninety-six satraps of Shambala. However, this war will involve more than the mere earthly forces, for the demons will side with the barbarians, and Raudra Chakri will be assisted by the twelve great gods: Hari (Vishnu), Nairrti, Vayu, Yama, Agni, Skanmukha (Skanda), Kubera, Shakra (Indra), Brahma, Rudra (Shiva), Samudra, and Ganesha. (Newman 1985: 78 f.)

It is possible to make an allegorical interpretation of the war but John Newman writes:

It is worthwhile to remember that, like anything else in this intricate system [the Kalachakra], they operate on more than one level of meaning. The ‘Great War’ and the Age of Perfection that follows it can be interpreted literally as external historical events predicted to occur in about four hundred years. (Newman 1985: 79.)

The present Dalai Lama has been giving initiations in Kalachakratantra all over the world for many years now, and all of those initiated, of whom many are Westerners, are to participate in this future war and its triumph.

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Conflict and Concord on the Internet: selvet.dk

The Internet as Medium

The Internet epitomizes globalization. Spanning most of the globe, yet leaving out the most marginalized populations, it reproduces the power structures and inequalities of the world at large. Nevertheless, as technologies become more widely available and more user-friendly, there is the potential to interact on an unprecedented scale with people of other nationalities, backgrounds and religious affiliations. Interaction may, of course, foster dialogue, but can also lead to polemics and aggressive behaviour. In discussion groups, Internet forums where opinions are exchanged, the potential for disagreement is evident. In a sensitive area such as religion, the risk of conflict is obviously present. People in different localities, who may well never meet face-to-face, and who do not even need to present themselves on-line under their real names, might in fact find it particularly tempting to handle conflict situations by using verbal invective. This risk is recognized by Internet users, who have adopted the militant metaphor ‘flame war’ to denote such excessive verbal aggression.

Most research on religion on the Internet has focused on the use of this medium within one particular religious tradition, usually Christian or Muslim. Considerably less attention has been devoted to the question of what happens when members of different traditions interact and confront the opinions of others. To quote a recent article by sociologist of religion Christopher Helland: ‘Because of the structure of the Internet itself people are exposed to a variety of traditions when they begin searching for religion or spiritual information. How that will affect the perspective of the web traveler still needs to be determined.’ (Helland 2002: 301.) The present article looks at some of the ways in which potential conflicts in this confrontation between various traditions are managed. The empirical material analysed has been chosen with one main objective in mind: the need to find a discussion group where people of sufficiently divergent opinions meet. Literally thousands of groups exist on the Internet, many catering for the needs and interests of very specific segments of the population (users of particular computers, aficionados of one sport or another, mem-
bers of specific religious communities, etc.). In such single-focus discussion groups, common interests may lead to discourses in the Foucaultean sense: participants share an implicit understanding of what constitutes the acceptable range of opinions; outsiders with radically different views will not be represented. The Danish site selvet.dk, by contrast, is a forum where people of quite different persuasions meet, and thus need to work out a *modus vivendi* when sharp divergences become manifest.

**Introducing selvet.dk**

Selvet.dk – Danish for ‘the self’ – is a very large site consisting of paid advertisements, chat rooms and discussion groups. The vast majority of participants write in Danish and most of them presumably live in Denmark, but the occasional message in Norwegian is also posted. Debates are moderated, which means that strong verbal hostility will not be tolerated by those who administer the site. Beyond that, the most diverse opinions are found, and participants can represent any religious group or none at all.

Messages are archived, and the total number of messages is very large: at the time of writing there were 25,832.¹ The considerable traffic on the site is made manageable by dividing debates into 111 different topics. The difficulties in neatly sorting various discussions into distinct categories are obvious from the fact that the two topics with the largest number of posted messages are simply called ‘Aktuelt’ (Current Events) and ‘Generelt’ (General). Of the remaining 109 categories, there is a spectrum ranging from those with considerable traffic to a few that are in effect empty, set up by the moderators to accommodate any messages that may eventually be posted. Only eleven categories contain more than 350 messages. In descending order they are ‘Vegetar m. m.’ (Vegetarian, etc; 1,610 messages), ‘Etik og forretning’ (Ethics and Business; 973), ‘Kristendom og Folkekirken’ (Christianity and the Danish Lutheran Church; 634), ‘Liv i rummet’ (Life in Space; 624), ‘Gud, religion & tro’ (God, Religion and Belief; 592), ‘Humor’ (Humour; 411), ‘Film’ (Movies; 397), ‘Digte’ (Poems; 387), ‘Dagbog’ (Diary; 386), ‘Healing’ (Healing; 378) and ‘Familjen, parforhold, børn’ (The Family, Relationships, Children; 374). A strong tendency towards inner-worldly concerns can be seen from the fact that topics such as food, business life,

¹ All figures in this and the following paragraph were checked on September 5, 2005.
family and cinema, which might as well be construed as private or secular, constitute major topics. Considering selvet.dk defines itself as a site devoted to the spiritual (however defined), it is significant that there are nearly three times as many messages concerned with food than with God.

Participants

Selvet.dk is viewed passively by many. Of the 4,673 registered users, only 1,287 were active, even in the minimal sense of having posted at least one message. Moderators divide participants into new, medium and senior participants, depending on the number of messages they have posted. Relatively few are medium and senior participants, but their traffic on the site is intense. This implies that most of the messages have been written by individuals who have been well socialized into the written and unwritten rules of social interaction that apply on selvet.dk.

A categorization that is not made by the moderators, but is crucial for present purposes, is the religious affiliation of the participants. Some can be classified on the basis of their self-descriptions, whether explicit or apparent through verbal clues. Beside many Christians, there are members of Soka Gakkai, ISKCON, of the Karma Kagyü tradition within Tibetan Buddhism and of other groups. All such identity markers need to be interpreted with some caution, since, for example, Christians can hold widely divergent opinions.

Numerous participants, however, avoid using any particular labels to designate their own religious perspective. In fact, several explicitly repudiate the term ‘religion’, and describe themselves by means of adjectives that can be translated as ‘spiritual’. Many of these individuals express themselves in a terminology that from an outsider’s perspective would be perceived as New Age, but that term is rare in the postings, and is in most of the few instances where it occurs not used as a self-designation. Their understanding of their own beliefs and practices as non-religious comes across from quotes such as following:\footnote{All quotes from selvet.dk have been translated from the original Danish by the present author. The original messages have been archived by the author.}

Many in the West feel disillusioned to a greater or lesser extent. Many long for something to believe in. They would like to feel a purpose in
life. They don’t believe in the old religions because they have in a way outlived themselves. Especially the Church. Obviously, the Church can’t give answers to what people are looking for. … I believe like many others that people are slowly but steadily reaching a new consciousness which is more directed towards the spiritual world. (Posted by signature Poul P on August 11, 2004.)

This ostensibly ‘post-religious’ spirituality can be seen by participants on the site as the latest evolutionary step in human history. Thus, not only is it claimed that ‘spirituality’ is different from religion, but also that it is better: ‘I think the era of religions is coming to an end and that human evolution is reaching a phase called: thinking for oneself’ (signature Amy, May 8, 2003).

Contested Issues

As will become clear from the following discussion, the communities of belief present on selvet.dk – Christians, New Agers, ISKCON members and others – disagree fundamentally on a number of core issues. One way to bring such differences into focus is to see how participants discuss three central questions: What suprahuman agents do they postulate? How do they suggest that these suprahuman agents intervene in the empirical world? How, according to them, is it possible for humans to gain knowledge about suprahuman agents and their activities?

Suprahuman Agents

Christians are professed monotheists, whose descriptions of the supreme suprahuman agent are clearly coloured by biblical myths, as filtered through mainstream theological notions. Since religious education is part of the public school system in Denmark, this is hardly surprising. This is a fact that sets them apart from the New Agers on the site. In messages posed by the latter, a supreme suprahuman agent, a god, does appear. The god of the New Agers is very vague, and there is remarkably little consensus about his, her or its properties. There are pantheistic notions, references to a divine core within each of us, to god as a force or energy, as an abstraction (‘God just IS’), even the contours of a *via negativa*, i.e., the suggestion that all human language is inadequate when it comes to speaking of God.
New Agers are also much less committed monotheists than Christians are. Their pantheistic, abstract or impersonal god is part of a polytheistic suprahuman universe. Spiritually advanced beings from outer space, ascended masters, spirit guides, and other – often very vaguely sketched – transcendent beings are mentioned in quite a few messages.

New Agers can be considerably more specific about what the suprahuman world is not. In particular, the views of the divine expressed in biblical texts can be seen as erroneous. In particular, the mainstream Christian understanding of Jesus as divine is repeatedly branded as mistaken:

I have a great respect for Jesus, he was a great master and an excellent example, from whom we certainly can learn a lot. I just don’t think he is a god. Just like Buddha, he was a highly developed being incarnated in a human body, but the person Jesus is dead, just like the person Buddha.
(Posted by signature Peter, May 11, 2003.)

The Activities of Suprahuman Agents

Christians are socialized into a religious culture that conceives of its god as an active being, both on the grandest of scales (creating and upholding the world) and on the smallest and most personal (intervening in the lives of individual people). New Agers tend to give their suprahuman agents a much more limited role. It is affirmed that they exist, and that they play a significant role in communicating spiritual insights to human recipients, either directly through visions, experiences in meditation or channelling, or indirectly through the scriptures these agents are understood to have transmitted. In everyday affairs, however, it is as if religious actions are curiously divorced from the suprahuman agents. In one of the categories on the site, Prayer (‘Bøn’), people post prayers for others who are in need. The way these prayers are phrased makes it appear as if they were wishes for, for example, the health and well-being of a recipient, but not addressed to any god. It is as if New Agers construct cognitively ‘natural’ forms of religion, in which, following Pascal Boyer (1992), ontology and actions belong to different cognitive modules, whereas Christians are socialized into a belief system which postulates a more direct relationship between suprahuman agents and their acts.
Claims to Knowledge

How can we know anything about the suprahuman world? Here, the opinions of Christians, New Agers, ISKCON members and so forth diverge radically. Christians will, of course, refer to biblical passages. Several active participants will readily supplement the raw text of the Bible with summaries of what various Bible commentaries have to say on a given passage. Similarly, a ISKCON member will refer to the Bhagavadgita in the commented translation prepared by their founder Prabhupada. Common to such members of institutionalized religions is their reliance on a particular canonical text or set of texts together with an exegetical tradition to provide plausible knowledge.

New Agers discuss issues of knowledge from a quite different perspective. They tend to have a rather limited interest in answers supplied by authorities in the traditional religious sector of society: the opinions of the Church as an institution, of priests as sources of knowledge, of academic schooling in theology or philosophy as a means of acquiring credible information. New Age participants on the site who do refer to external authorities, often point to a few well-known canonical texts or genres from different religions. The interpretive traditions that have accumulated around these texts within each religious community are rarely mentioned. In part, this is no doubt because these interpretive traditions are unknown to them, but when one does find references, it is common to dismiss interpretation per se as an unwanted accretion to the suprahuman message. Texts, according to this opinion, have a manifest content that can be readily understood. One message appears to regard the concept of textual interpretation with considerable exasperation:

Why do people think everything needs to be explained??? The Bible, the Vedas and Sutras explain themselves, if you will just read them as they are written and with an open mind. (Posted by signature Qualgeist on June 6 2003.)

‘Qualgeist’s’ mention of three different texts from as many different traditions is echoed by other participants. Pluralism reigns in quotes such as ‘I ENJOY a large part of the Bible and I ENJOY a large part of the Buddhist faith and I ENJOY “Conversations with God”’ (posted by Simona, June 6, 2003).

Nevertheless, different religious texts are by no means seen by all New Agers as equally valid. The Bible is repeatedly met with considerable scepticism. It is contended that the Bible does not represent Jesus’s true teach-
ings, perhaps because the text has been corrupted or censored, in order to fit the ideological needs of the Church:

I believe that if Jesus came back as a human being, Christians would be the last to listen to him.

Precisely because what he would say wouldn’t fit with what the Bible says or what the Church says:

Unfortunately, the Bible, for some Christians, has become more important that the real, living Jesus. (Posted by Thomas Halskov on July 31, 2003.)

 Paramount among the textual references, one finds discussions of books from within the New Age milieu itself. The posts on selvet.dk show how volatile interests in that milieu can be. Books that, at least internationally, dominated the scene a mere decade or two ago (e.g., *A Course in Miracles* or James Redfield’s *The Celestine Prophecy*) are marketed on the commercial forums of selvet.dk, but generate practically no interest whatsoever in the discussion groups. In the messages, the previously mentioned topic ‘Conversations with God’ has a dominant position.

Beside written texts, personal experience is treated as the most legitimate source of knowledge. An interesting point is that whereas Wouter Hanegraaff’s survey of the New Age literature of the 1970s and 1980s indicated a positive interest in mysticism (Hanegraaff 1996: 180–1, 328 et passim), this is a quite marginal concern in selvet.dk. Spiritual experience on this site is to be narrowly understood as the personal insights of every individual seeker. Experience can be seen as so paramount that insights gained by one person cannot really be transmitted to others.

Experience God. You can do that through meditation, kirtan, chanting, dance, prayer, etc. Once you have experienced God, you still won’t be able to describe it to others, because they won’t be able to understand it.

(Posted by signature adeldharma, October 24, 2004.)

This emphasis on individual experience becomes particularly apparent in messages that concern suprahuman agents other than god, since such postings tend to be more specific. The details presented in such messages can thus be traced historically to their sources. Suprahuman agents with a well-documented history can be presented as if they were the trans-historical insights of the individual participants. In one message, a healer presents a pantheon reminiscent both of post-theosophical lore in general
and of the ideas current at Findhorn, the Scottish spiritual community, in particular. He does so, however, in terms strongly suggesting an individual opinion, an insight valid ‘for me’.

For me angels are as real as you and I are. They don’t descend into matter as we do, but by following their own evolutionary spiral we can work together on many levels of consciousness.

They are in a direct and conscious way connected to the plan for Earth.

Devas are often seen as angels, but they have their own evolution. Whereas angels consciously cooperate, devas create forms. (Posted by signature Erik, May 29, 2003.)

Handling Potential Pluralism

New Agers, Christians and others have incommensurable opinions on a number of topics. All the structural elements we have surveyed are potential sources of disagreement. It should therefore be stressed that the tone of very many posts is civil and accepting of divergences of opinion. Nevertheless, as long as extended *ad hominem* attacks are avoided, negative opinions about the religion of other participants can certainly be posted. The following message voices a not uncommon sentiment about Christianity:

As I have written on several previous occasions, I myself grew up in a Christian environment. I do understand that there can be big differences. However, the angle I could see was one that I didn’t like, and that’s something I really feel inside me every time Christianity is mentioned. The quote you posted fits completely with the experiences I have of Christianity at its worst. (Posted by Simona, June 6, 2003.)

Conflicts arise about the status and truth of the various religions, whether their scriptures are authentic or even make sense, and so forth. A series of posts that attacked the validity of the Bible, on the grounds that it had been censored and mistranslated over the ages, escalated until an upset respondent finally suggested to another participant that his preferred religious texts were even more dubious: ‘the sutras are just an invention by some mad monks and prove absolutely nothing’ (signature Qualgeist, May 12, 2003).

There are untold occasions for conflict, and in this case repartees finally
did end in personal attacks. It is a well-known element of Internet communication that levels of aggression can be much higher than in face-to-face interaction, since angry responses can be sent off in a split second, and one rarely sees the reactions of those one has insulted. More specifically for selvet.dk, the level of debate is kept animated by an implicit assumption accepted by many: that in spiritual/religious matters, personal opinion has precedence over evidence, and that evidence can in fact be an irrelevant concept in such matters. A thread on whether Jesus may have visited Tibet and received instruction from Tibetan monks is thus carried on in a considerable number of posts. None of the participants mentioned the possibility of checking whether there could in fact have been any Buddhist monks in Tibet around the first years of the Common Era, or considered the implications of the generally accepted historical fact that Buddhist missions only reached Tibet in the 8th century CE. Since factual checking rarely occurs, such disagreements can run on indefinitely and escalate over time.

There are, however, also several mechanisms that contribute to defusing conflicts before they reach such levels. Probably as a result of the character of the discussion post, especially the brevity of most messages, these mechanisms operate at very simple levels and those who post messages tend to deploy little in-depth argumentation. Although boundaries between different discursive mechanisms are by no means clear-cut, several such mechanisms for reducing conflict can be analytically distinguished:

(1) **Maintaining bounded communities.** Boundaries between various discursive communities are generally maintained throughout discussions. There seems to be a widespread consensus that spiritual matters cannot be solved empirically, and that the point of discussion is to get to know the views of others participants. Differences are often simply stated and restated, and it is rarely argued that the other participants should accept one specific point of view as more valid than any other. When opinions differ too sharply, there is a tendency to keep up discussions primarily within one’s own tradition and to avoid too much interaction with others.

One example of this concerns a debate on the meaning of a passage from Psalms 2:11–12 (‘Serve the Lord in fear, rejoice in trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little’, in the King James Version) which was felt by some participants to be a symptom of the negative sides of Christianity. Christians entered into the debate, suggesting that such quotes need to be read within their context. Some participants proposed that one read commentaries on the passage, in order to gain some perspective on what was intended.
A representative of ISKCON entered the discussion, contributing a very long post (signature Bhakta Ulrich, June 8, 2003) which attempted to place Christian opinions within his own, Hindu Vaishnava context. Nobody addresses his post, which remains an isolated piece of text in the ongoing debate. In the same forum, a participant later suggested that the Bible is a ‘placebo’ and that there in reality are many gods, who originally came from outer space (signature Løven, July 20, 2004). He too was simply ignored.

Closely related to the relatively low levels of interaction with religious communities that diverge too much from one’s own, is the fact that overt disagreements are held in check by the sheer lack of knowledge of the views held by others. A question concerning Buddhism was referred to a representative of the (Hindu) ISKCON movement. A post asked whether Hinduism is derived from Buddhism or the other way around. Somewhat more adequately, questions about Buddhism in general are answered by quoting a specific, Tibetan view as filtered through a Danish representative of the Karma Kagyü lineage. Conflicts will rarely arise with a representative of a religious perspective about which one knows so little.

(2) Encompassment. In his survey of New Age concepts of the divine, Hanegraaff (1996: 185) was struck by ‘the singular lack of interest in precise formulations’. Of course, verbal vagueness is not a definite indicator of imprecision in one’s own mind. Rhetorically, verbal vagueness does, however, allow for true differences of opinion to remain undetected or to be glossed over as unimportant. Discussion group messages are particularly prone to vagueness, since they are usually short, are written on the spur of the moment and lack in-depth argumentation. Threads can be characterized by interchanges where utterly malleable signifiers – God, ego, good and evil, spirituality, love, evolution, Christianity, tolerance – are exchanged. As Andrew Cohen (1985) has remarked, semantic indeterminacy can make various participants feel that they are in considerable agreement, when they are in fact projecting their own meanings onto these vague terms.

Semantic vagueness may gloss over disagreements, but does not necessarily lead to syncretism or genuinely shared views: selvet.dk is emphatically not a cultic milieu as defined by Colin Campbell (1972). Thus, the bricolage of elements floating around in the cultic milieu that Campbell describes is rarely found. Participants in discussions will typically enter debates holding a specific set of opinions, and when others are viewed sympathetically, differences are often just acknowledged as such.
Where syncretism does seem to take place, it is often an example of what Louis Dumont, in the appendix to the Chicago edition of his *Homo Hierarchicus* (1980), called encompassment. One’s own view becomes the interpretive model through which other opinions can be interpreted and under which they are subsumed, as if saying: ‘your belief is similar to mine, in fact it’s a more limited version of my own view’. An example of encompassment is the response to several lengthy messages by ISKCON member Bhakta Ulrich. In a set of posts, he describes his perspective on the concepts of knowledge and ignorance, as coloured by ISKCON theology. The soul, to summarize this perspective, is the eternal spiritual component of a human being. When the soul is incarnated in this world, it is housed in a body and is accompanied by several other components, not least the false ego. The false ego, our everyday personality, mistakenly believes that it is our true identity, but we have the ability gradually to wake up from this condition and gain knowledge of our true identities as souls and our relation to Krishna (posts from March 16–17, 2004). His respondent (signature Erik) replies that he finds reading Bhakta Ulrich’s posts fascinating and rewarding (*spændende og lærerigt*). Nevertheless, the scriptures he (Bhakta Ulrich) refers to are thousands of years old, and some things will have evolved over time. Erik’s evolutionary view can thus encompass Bhakta Ulrich’s understanding as one interesting, albeit limited, expression of a larger truth. In a superbly polite game of one-upmanship, Bhakta Ulrich in turn encompasses Erik’s spiritual evolutionism. Bhakta Ulrich responds that Erik’s partial disagreement is perfectly understandable; he also has times when he finds it difficult to believe. That is because not all souls are ready to hear about Krishna.

(3) **Relativism**. Debates between New Agers and others are at times characterized by a lack of common ground rules. Christians and other members of institutionalized movements will look for quotes in scriptural texts, commentaries and secondary literature, and can attempt to construct arguments based on these. New Agers tend to regard these as derivative sources of information. A thread on whether Christianity and Buddhism are compatible religions generated several posts comparing the two, but also several messages carefully phrased as personal comments and opinions. Rather than presenting purported facts, such messages soften the tone by insisting that what is said is just ‘my opinion’. This mild relativism permeates many postings, and defuses potentially heated debates. A post by signature Mark (January 29, 2004) made this point explicitly:
I don’t really like the way you mention something quite dubious … as if it were the truth. … Out of respect for others, I always talk about these things as if they CAN be true, even if I within myself believe that they are true. That’s both because it prevents endless discussions, and because nobody can be 100% SURE that they are right.

A topic that generated considerable animosity was whether the doctrine of reincarnation was part of Christian beliefs in biblical times but had been expurgated from the New Testament at the Council of Constantinople in 553. New Agers insisted this might well be the case, and quoted passages that they felt supported their view. Christians retorted that reincarnation was simply not part of Christianity, and that there was no hard evidence. One participant appears to have felt that emotions were beginning to run too high and posted: ‘it’s not about being right or proving anything. This is the way I understand things right now … at least give me the right to have my own belief’ (posted by signature Peter, May 12, 2003). Finally, the thread stopped and, rather unsurprisingly, the two camps remained convinced of the opinions they had held when they started the debate. As we will see below, there is indeed considerable scepticism regarding participants who voice very assured opinions.

(4) **Drawing boundaries against outsiders.** There are thus implicit norms that encourage participants to speak modestly of their own opinions, to accept individualism and a plurality of opinions, and to retreat from debates where genuine disagreements become too apparent. Such norms are not without built-in contradictions: as noted by Hanegraaff (2001), adherents of religious positions that put a premium on tolerance will necessarily find it problematic to deal with what they perceive of as intolerant views. Relativists on selvet.dk may find it hard to accept participants who maintain that there are absolute values and definite truths.

Christians may have distinct opinions about what is right or wrong, but they are present on selvet.dk and constitute a sizeable membership, and a basic norm of courteous interaction prevails. Other groups are either very small or conspicuously absent, and harsher comments can readily be found. Three such outsiders can be identified: participants with very distinct and strongly held minority views, atheist sceptics, and Muslims.

*Holdes of distinct and potentially exclusivist views.* Signature Rebuild TheTemple posted a long message (August 23, 2003) stating that Christ had been incarnated as a human being and was living in London. This information was supported by referring to the Scottish prophet Benjamin
Creme and his organization, who were preparing for the Millennium under the guidance of this – as yet hidden – world ruler. The rather ecstatic tone of assured knowledge quite clearly irritated some other participants, who replied in dismissive terms such as these:

- How do you know that the ‘new’ Jesus lives in London … hooooow do you know all these things? (Simona, same date).
- What do you know, I’m surprised, I talk to God every day and he hasn’t told me that his son is in London (martin, same date).

A less radically ‘other’ opinion, perhaps best characterized as a conservative Christian view, was equally offensive to the respondent:

- Working under GOD’s will is a far greater blessing than working under the will of the ‘EGO’.
  - When we pray for Jesus Christ to enter our lives, there’s no point in doing your own thing [køre sit eget løb].
  - It’s hard, and many don’t understand that they are just a drop in a vast sea. (Signature Kim Michael, May 3, 2003.)
- Well, isn’t it neat to always be able to excuse what you are doing by saying that it’s God’s will … (signature Qualgeist, same date).
- Nobody has a patent on God’s will! But many claim to have one! (Qualgeist, later post on the same date.)

Representatives of non-religious ideologies, sceptics and atheists. No matter what their differences may be, participants on selvet.dk are united by their deep-seated feeling that there is a suprahuman realm, and that suprahuman forces manifest themselves in the empirical world. Materialistic philosophies and their representatives are ipso facto outsiders. Signature Martin (in a message posted September 4, 2003) voices an opinion that one will readily come across off-site, for example, in conversations with individuals from various religious communities:
Science has become a modern quasi-religion. It delivers society’s myths regarding the origin and meaning of life. That was traditionally the task of the church.

Priests have been replaced by scientists and doctors.

Universities and other institutions of higher learning are temples for the worship of the new golden calf – human reason.

*Muslims.* In a relatively short space of time, Islam has become a major presence in Danish society. The Danish scholar of Islam Jørgen Bæk Simonsen estimated that in 2001 there were approximately 170,000 Muslims in Denmark (Simonsen 2001: 169). Any figures, of course, involve one in problems of definition (e.g., how religiously observant must one be in order to be counted as a Muslim?). Nevertheless, Islam has by any account come to represent one of the fastest growing religions in a country which until around 1960 was remarkably homogeneous, and where there were very few Muslims. Islam has also been a highly contested tradition. By focusing on politically activist or culturally very conservative interpretations of Islam, the media as well as public opinion have often lost sight of the broad variety of opinions that can be found in the Muslim community.

Few posts on selvet.dk mention Islam, and hardly any represent a Muslim point of view. These are remarkable facts in themselves, considering the role Islam plays in the media and in Danish society. The opinions on Islam that are presented differ widely. Occasionally, Muslims are presented as underdogs in Danish society: signature ‘Martin’ (post dated Jan 23, 2005) remarks how unfair it is to judge an entire religious tradition and its members by the activities of its fundamentalist wing. On the other hand, some participants on selvet.dk reflect a wide-spread islamophobia. Signature ‘shenpen’ (message posted August 4, 2003) associates Islam with Shari’a law, capital punishment and mutilation, and signature ‘Martin’ (March 15, 2005) mentions female genital mutilation as part of Islamic traditions. The impression of Muslims as invisible Others is reinforced by the remarkably vitriolic tone of some posts. An absent third party can be described in partial, ironic or even insulting terms, that one would surely avoid in a discussion with another person who is actually present on selvet.dk:

Islam has chosen the ultimate solution to prevent the feelings of guilt that can be provoked by the temptations of the flesh: a woman has to be covered up so she doesn’t tempt men and place too great demands on them controlling themselves ... Woman is responsible for the preven-
tive measures, since she is the temptress. The man can’t help himself, can he … [ironic Smiley] (Being a woman in a Muslim country where Shari’a law prevails: yesterday one could read about a woman in Dubai who was sentenced to 150 lashes for being pregnant out of wedlock).
(Signature Houdini, posted March 16, 2005.)

Muslims who live according to the letter of the Koran have a problem. According to the Koran, they are supposed to hate those who have a different faith (what a sick way of thinking …)

The Koran doesn’t accept democracy. Nothing above and nothing beside the Koran. Koranic conditions in Denmark? No, thank you.
(Løven, March 15, 2005.)

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The Alevi and Questions of Identity, Including Violence and Insider/Outsider Perspectives

Alevilik is the second largest religious movement in Turkey after Sunnite Islam. The Alevi worship Ali and the twelve Imams of his family. Ali is more or less deified and therefore Alevis are considered as being ghulat (‘exaggerated’, ‘extremist’) and heterodox. The elevated Ali personifies an aspiration to justice and righteousness. He fought on the side of the weak and oppressed against those with power in society. Theologically, Ali is assumed to be blessed by the divine light and is therefore able to see into the mysterious spirituality of Islam (Ataseven 1997: 256). Many Alevis today however totally dissociate themselves from Shi’ism. Still, the degrading label kızılbaş (‘red-head’) is associated with Ali and thus is something alleged to be anti-Osman, since Isma’il fought against the Osman Empire. The colour red represents the blood of Mohammed: he was wounded in battle and Ali saw the prophet’s blood flowing. As Ali grew older, he wanted to remind people of Mohammed’s struggle and therefore started wearing red headgear. Red thus became the colour of the Shi’ites and over time a symbol of Shi’ite martyrdom. Later red also gained political significance for the Alevis (Ataseven 1997: 259). The religious and the political are closely intertwined, but despite this, neither the Left nor Shi’ism does simply stand on one side and the Right/Sunni on the other – there are no such simple dichotomies in reality.

As for martyrdom, blood has indeed flowed, and early attacks on Alevis have great symbolic significance today. The massacre in Kahramanmaraş which took place between the 22nd and 25th December in 1978, is regarded as one of the worst bloodbaths to occur in Turkey in the 1970s.

On Thursday 21st December, two teachers with leftist opinions were shot on their way home from the vocational high school where they taught. Their funeral was to be conducted the following day, the 22nd, but armed encounters outside the mosque where the mourners were to pray held up the ceremony. Three people were killed and many wounded. The attackers demolished houses and gardens, offices and shops in the town. Over
the days that followed (Saturday, Sunday and Monday), the violence escalated and more than one hundred people were killed, whilst hundreds were wounded. Many women and children were murdered in their homes; thousands managed to flee and sought shelter with politicians of high station. Parts of the town of Kahramanmaraş were plundered, burnt and left in ruins. Armed groups ignored the curfew and cut off certain areas for civilians, but the police and the army were also kept at bay. It has been asked why the armed groups did not stop the mobsters rampaging with firearms, iron bars and meat cleavers, but it seems to be the case that there was nobody to organise the resistance and nobody made the decisions needed to stop the massacre. The individual soldiers were confused since they had not received orders to take any serious action, that is, use their arms to forcefully stop the atrocities. Later, Prime Minister Bülent Ecevit claimed that the army had in any case used the incident to further its own programme, since the violence ceased only when the Government made a decision to proclaim a state of emergency (Sinclair-Webb 2003: 222–6).

On 26 December, the situation in the town was more or less under control, and the event was debated in the press. As has been said above, the Government had decided to proclaim a state of emergency for two months, starting immediately, in thirteen provinces, including Istanbul and Ankara. This can be seen as the beginning of (or a phase in) the process that ended with the military coup of 12 September 1980 (Dagdeviren 2005).

In the areas mainly inhabited by Sunnite Muslims, the murder victims were Alevis. Already on the 19th, a bomb had exploded, placed in a cinema by right-wing idealists in order to cast suspicion on the Alevis. This was revealed in the questioning during a trial. However, the press depicted the event in different ways, depending on their political bias. Hürriyet and Tercüman did not ascribe the right-wingers with any responsibility for the massacre, neither did these newspapers write anything about Sunnite Muslims and religious motives; however, they did emphasize that many conservatives had been wounded. Tercüman, for example, accused militant communists of having provoked the incident. Social liberal newspapers, Milliyet and Cumhuriyet, showed a much greater interest in various moti-

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1 ‘On 23 December, an imam (prayer leader) standing on an official vehicle of the Technical Department of Kahramanmaras Municipality, agitated people with the following words: “My Muslim brothers, do not dread, just hit and destroy ... Muslim Turkey’s, Kahramanmaras’s, heroic children, take our revenge on the communists!”’ (Gürel 2004: 9).
vations and models of explanation. These papers tried to describe which groups led the offensive and which were attacked (Sinclair-Webb 2003: 223–4).

The two teachers belonged to TÖB-DER (leftist organization for teachers), and they were therefore seen as a threat. When the teachers were to be buried, right-wing groups demonstrated and shouted: ‘Funeral prayers for communists and Alevi are not to be conducted!’ About 10,000 people attacked the funeral procession close to the Ulu mosque. In the ensuing commotion two right-wingers who wanted to hinder the prayers were killed. The rightist newspaper Tercüman did not write anything in their reports about what the demonstrators had shouted. Liberal-left Milliyet reported that other slogans used outside the mosque were ‘Muslim Turkey!’ and ‘Let the army and the nation join hands!’ (Sinclair-Webb 2003: 224–5).

In the indictment drawn up during the military trial, any mention of ‘Alevi’ is omitted from the description of the events. The proceedings reveal that the incident originally was not a clash between two groups. According to all the witnesses who managed to escape and seek shelter, their homes and possessions were attacked and plundered and their houses set on fire. The Alevi were threatened and many of the defenceless ones were murdered; most of those who managed to escape saw neighbours being assaulted or killed. The areas of the town that were attacked (Karamaraş, Yörükselim and Yenimahalle) were inhabited by Alevi. Rumours circulated that Kurdish Alevi in Kahramanmaraş were allied with lawless remnants of the Osman era (N. N. 2005).

Sunnis Muslims and Alevi are mutually dependent on each other. There is an essential power balance in the figure that the groups form. But since the Sunnites monopolise all the important posts in the small towns of southern Anatolia, the power balance is very unequal. Factors of group charisma and group disgrace are at work in a very obvious way. A stigmatisation process dominates society and several Alevi have tried / are trying to expressly take on the norms of the established group, while others who have chosen to live as Alevi in their particular way, quite unconsciously absorb the view that the established group holds of them, so that the we-

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2 ‘According to the trial indictment (Iddianame), on 22 December, one of the leaders of the group that attacked the Namik Kemal district, Mirza Doğan, exhorted those around him by shouting, “Shoot the leftist!” … That night, about 300 ilkicis [= idealists] held a demonstration, shouting slogans such as “Nationalist Turkey!”, “Damn the communists!”’ (Gürel 2004: 9).
image is affected and occasionally creates an attitude of resignation, despite resistance. Thus, the tension between the groups is constantly being heightened. In circumstances when the Alevis have been able to financially compete with the Sunnites, the power balance has been less unequal; at these times, rebellions have arisen, opposition has been clearly expressed and attempts at emancipation have taken place. The historical chain of events and the position of the Sunnites in the Osman Empire are essential; their oppression of the Alevis has influenced and shaped this outsider group. The way in which both groups have been dependent on each other has made them strive towards certain goals and formulate claims or demands on a certain lifestyle. Since the Sunnites have been in the majority, the unequal power balance has resulted in a distorted view of reality. The image of ‘the Others’ is twisted and imaginary; and in the same way, the self-image is also warped. ‘[A]fter an intervening period of heightened tension and conflict, the more nearly equal is the balance of power, the more favourable are the conditions for more realistic mutual perceptions and the more likely a high degree of mutual identification’ (Mennell 1992: 138). However, it is the Alevis who have to crawl to the mosque; if they adopt the Five Pillars of Islam, they are allowed to join the game – at least be on show as tourist objects.

By illuminating collective fantasies that are expressed in rumour, the theory of the established and the outsiders complements Norbert Elias’s theory on the civilisation process. Collective fantasy is a complex phenomenon; power relations are characterised by collective praise and slander, and these fantasies develop in a diachronic manner. The issues observed and explained must be seen as parts of processes, and therefore tradition plays an important role. The fact that differences between the features of ‘old’ and ‘new’ are still perceived as relevant for structural differences between groups is largely due to the fact that the dominant notion of ‘social structure’ makes people see structures as ‘still pictures’, as ‘structures in a stable state’, while the movement of structures in time, in the form of development or other kinds of social change, are treated as ‘historical’, which in the language of sociology often means that they are looked upon as separate from the structure, and not as an inseparable part of it (Elias and Scotson 1999: 11).

The massacre in the town of Kahramanmaraş in 1978 was the culmination of a long process. The abounding rumours had built up over a long period of time, and the moral panic that broke out in December can partly be interpreted by using Elias’s theory of the established versus the outsiders.
The Sunnite, and right-wing extremist, attack on the Alevi cannot merely be explained by gossip, but rumour and outbreaks of violence are nevertheless connected. Rumours often trigger riots; at least they aggravate the situation and pave the way for violence in combination with other factors. ‘Rumour crystallizes the perceptions that members of each group have of the group towards which they feel hostile’ (Goode 1992: 130).

Rumours are concrete representations which are preserved by the members of a group; gossip dramatizes imaginative perceptions and gives them material substance. Gossip can be seen as real-life enactments or embodiments of spiteful notions of other people. Rumours confirm that prevailing ideas are ‘true’ by seeming to demonstrate that they are rooted in reality. Paranoid fantasies and infamous stories play the main part in the rumours spread before, during and after attacks manifesting group conflicts. When moral panic breaks out, rumours are often an indicator of hostility. ‘In short, rumours reflecting intergroup hostility provide moral-ity tales, each complete with a plot, characters, a message, and sometimes even a call for action’ (Goode 1992: 130).

Seen from a political perspective, it is not the rootless and alienated who participate in collective violence, but rather those individuals who are most attached to important religious, social and cultural institutions. Even if moral panic appears as something irrational, collective violence can be rational and intentional, a means that members of a certain group use to attain their goals. The attackers usually have a perception of what they want when carrying out destructive actions – such acts of violence are not unpredictable, emotional and arbitrary assaults (Goode 1992: 128).

Elias has analysed genocide and group violence and notes that rational motives are often the explanation behind these, but belief and religious confession are more important than reason (Fletcher 1997: 163).

What, then, are the rumours that the massacre in Kahramanmaraş were based on?

In addition to the Alevi’s, from a Sunnite Muslim perspective, religious deviance, as well as their leftist stamp, which irritates the conservative Sunnites, their immorality is emphasized as being the greatest threat against society. What does this immorality consists of? Simply of the fact that men and women conduct religious worship together. ‘In the setting of a moral system that puts great emphasis on the chastity of women, the Alevi ritual could become an easy target for all kinds of speculations: the main ritual, the *ağin-i cem* (ceremony of gathering), was clandestinely held at night; men and women gathered in one room, there was singing and ‘dancing’ (Alevi would qualify the *semah* not as a dance, bound to worldly affairs,
but as a form of devout meditation) and drink of an often alcoholic nature were essential elements of the ritual’ (Vorhoff 2003: 105).

This is in stark contrast to the Sunnite lifestyle, where men and women are strictly separated in religious rituals. Şeriat is very powerful in Turkey today, and the Alevis are among those who therefore will suffer the most. ‘Şeriat’ will attack the Alevis with more aggression even than they will the communists. Their own history emphasises this as a sacred duty (Shankland 2003: 165).

According to David Shankland, an anthropological expert on Turkey, who has conducted extensive fieldwork among Alevis, they are now subject to attacks which are unlike any in history. Over many years of hangings, massacres and threats of exile, the state has succeeded in creating fear and passivity, but still it has not managed to erase the Alevis. The rulers have now changed tactics and are trying to win the Alevis over to their side, persuading them to become Sunnites, assimilating them and thus dispersing the members of the group. The Alevis are repeatedly faced with questions like ‘Why do you feel like an outsider?’ and invitations such as ‘Do not stand outside the country’s umbrella, you are also children of this state!’ , or made to hear declarations such as ‘Thanks to God we are all Muslims – there is one Koran, one nation and one flag!’ Mosques have been built in all Alevi villages, the children are forced to attend Sunnite Muslim classes and learn the correct way of praying in the mosque. The Turkish-Islamic synthesis still functions as a kind of basic ideology on radio and TV stations, which naturally influences the content of their broadcasts. Programmatic Islamist Refah Partisi (The Welfare Party, later called Fazilet Partisi, the ‘paragon of virtue’) borrowed statements by Pir Sultan Abdal as slogans for the party, while MHP (Milliyet Hareket Partisi, ultra-nationalists) took wise words by Hacı Bektaş Veli and arranged them in a way unfavourable for the Alevis. For example, they quoted the motto of the Sufi master: ‘Let us be united, let us be strong, let us be active’ and mocked this maxim by contrasting it with the words of the old Dervish leader Ahmet Yesevi as he disciplined his student Hacı Bektaş Veli by asking: ‘Why do you not follow the words of the wise?’ (Shankland 2003: 165).

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3 Şeriat, roughly ‘the Sunnah path’, referring to those following the Sunnite way, opposed to Tarikat, the Alevi way. Şeriat is the Sunni way of life, but şeriat can also be Islamic law (Shankland 2003: 239).

4 ‘According to the Vilayetname, Bektaş was a disciple (mürid) of Ahmet Yesevi … the first Turkish Sufi and the first to establish a Turkish mystical tarikat. Since Yesevi lived a century before Bektash, it is obvious that he was not an actual disciple.
The Islamisation of Turkish politics gives the Alevi only one alternative, that of organising themselves into a more hard and fast group; and one way is by forming a deeper connection with the Bektaşi Sufi Order.

There might not be a solution to the outsider problem in the eyes of the Sunnite Muslims, but when Alevi and Sunnites realise that they strive for common democracy and human rights, perhaps the Alevi connection with the Bektaşi is so solid and powerful that it no longer exists far beyond the Sunnite field, but as a part thereof. The opinion of those hoping for cooperation is that Alevis and Bektaşi members must strive together. Professor Faruk Bilici speaks of an Alevi-Bektashi Theology, but for many Alevis, there is a big difference. ‘The Alevi, whose culture is predominantly oral, cannot find satisfaction in written sources which stem mainly from the Bektashi tradition’ (Bilici 1998: 58).

The debate in the Turkish Parliament has, to a certain extent, been a reaction to the demands for collaboration between Alevi and Bektaşi members, clearly presented in a publication called ‘Alevi problems in our daily lives and suggested solutions to these problems’, written in 1994 by Ali Balkız (who writes in the Alevi paper *Nefes*).

According to the hopes among Alevis today, there will be a development where the antagonists move closer to each other, so that a pluralist democracy is a fact. However, the treatment of the Alevis points in another direction. Extra-institutional groups, with connections to established political parties, but with varying violent agendas, appear in unexpected ways in the ‘de-Kemalised’ Turkey. Theoretically, a wider political development in the form of increased democracy, where more people would have access to both resources and opportunities, was seen as the solution to the problems of violence (Apter 1987: 40). Yet certain groups are singled out as marginal, and the increasing violence is largely a function of the current social process (cf. Apter 1987: 37). Instead of wondering who deserves most sympathy, it is important to consider how the conditions of violence create their own discourse. Violence must not be seen as irrational, but as symptomatic of something – a diagnostic phenomenon (Apter 1987: 40, cf. p. 48).

If violence is characterised as a performative language which functions according to a strategy concerning order and disorder, it appears that the...
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general notion of the logical disjunction of violence, that violence only represents disorder (when order and disorder are juxtaposed as mutually excluding alternatives), does not hold true on all levels, since violence can give rise to re-ordering in some situations (du Toit 1990: 119).

Violent actions are often a question of revival and planning; each new attack or clash overlaps similar past episodes of violence and reawakens a complex heritage. Those attacked create their own mythology and martyrs, they turn to a wider circle and the chain of events is transmitted in narratives that grab hold of us, that is, people who are not directly concerned with the events (Apter 1987: 40, cf. p. 48). At the same time, the revived heritage generates plans for future actions that are thus based on the myths of the outsider group. In this way, violence can develop a kind of symbolic capital, an independent source of power to change the meaning of the discourse. However, the practical ingredients of the symbolic capital must be close at hand and recognisable. When ordinary phenomena and events are suddenly loaded with a special meaning and depicted as an overall pattern signifying something – a recovered ‘truth’, a particular representation, a narrative, a myth, a certain kind of logic, special theories – a process that enriches the group has been started. This is a question of substantiating and supporting a distinctive character so that symbols, signs, markers and traces can be mobilised to ascribe a mythically coloured logic (associated with terror, riots and protests) with symbolic weight (Apter 1987: 43).

The dynamics of violence express a narrative of battle. The description based on the innate ability of violence to trigger change can be seen as a semiotic field defining morality, the symbolic effects of which spread so that the re-experienced history and the planned reactions that this gives rise to prompts demands for universal acknowledgement. Thus a moral architecture is created which produces engagement and spurs to action (Apter 1987: 41, 237, 249–51).

The experience of violence and harassment can be transformed into symbolic capital. This happens through a shift of perspective that allows those who have experienced violence not only to be seen as victims, but also as potential actors in the context of the larger struggle. Alevis in present-day Turkey can, partly with the support from Alevis in the diaspora, create a powerful community. In the summer of 1998, eighteen Alevi organisations united in the publication of a declaration: seven of these are based in Europe and eleven in Turkey. The declaration signed by the organizations included sixteen points that they regard as constituting the base for what ‘Alevism’ is. These points suggest what the essential characteristics of the
Alevi identity is (Schüler 2000: 208). The Alevi organizations demand that Alevilik is recognized as a confessional group striving to maintain its financial, social, political, cultural and religious identity. Further, they insist that Alevilik is no longer to be denied, that Alevi civil servants may not be dismissed because of their allegiance, that state employees are promoted following the same pattern as Sunnite Muslims, that violent attacks against Alevis must stop, that the murderers in Maraş, Sivas, Çorum and Gazi are to be tried in court; that DİB (Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı) is abolished, that schools and social institutions are built and founded instead of mosques in Alevi villages, that libel and disparaging statements about Alevis are erased from school books, that the press, the radio and TV stop accepting material criticising the Alevis, that the reactionary Islamisation of society is stopped, that Sunnite Muslims and certain ethnic groups tied to that belief are no longer to dominate Turkish society and that modern, democratic civil rights are to be granted all inhabitants of the country (Schüler 2000: 208–9).

Since children in Turkish schools learn that Alevis are sinful, carry out incest and group sex, totally lack morality, and so on, Sunnite Muslims are indoctrinated with this view from a very early age. The majority view is that Alevis can be tolerated as long as they keep away from the public sector, but they have no legal status and do not officially exist. The Alevilik are denied legal recognition either as a religion (din), or as a religious or confessional community (mezhep) or order (tarikat). The state authorities are adamant and do not want to concede to the Alevis. What is more, the Alevis are not in agreement among themselves about which of the above categories they want to belong to (Schüler 2000: 209).

If the Alevis are recognized by the Turkish state, the relation between state and religion is altered in the country. This could be problematic, but school books can be revised and religious Alevi material can easily be included in the subject of religion. The Social Democrat Party (CHP) could make an effort to gain Alevi votes and implement the general political demand of the Alevis concerning the education system. CHP re-emerged in 1992 and included the precarious situation of the Alevis in its programme; they stated, for example, that various religious beliefs should be allowed. Everything was, however, expressed in an indirect way, and words like ‘Alevi’ or ‘mezhep’ were not used. Neither did the Social Democrats touch upon the question of whether Alevis should get state grants for cultural activities, for example, if Alevi cultural organizations should get funds from DİB or the State Cultural Department (Schüler 2000: 213).

Alevis live both in big cities and central Anatolian villages, and the So-
cial Democrat Party has held a strong position in typically Alevi areas. Unfortunately, these areas suffer from regional underdevelopment. Instead of flirting with the new middle-class, the Social Democrat Party could show that it understands that disadvantaged and neglected social groups turn to the Social Democrats hoping that the party will use its voice for them and against discrimination. The oppressed Alevis need a party with distinct, credible ideas and principles that can offer them a better future. The Social Democrats suffered a disastrous setback in the elections on 18 April 1999. According to analyses of the results this was caused by the Alevis having lost their faith in the party.

Furthermore, what can the European Union offer the Alevis?

In June 2000, Karen Fogg, representing the EU Commission, organised a meeting between EU civil servants and leaders of some Alevi organisations. This meeting caused the Turkish Foreign Minister to scold Fogg and rage with anger. Turkey chose to interpret the organised meeting as interfering with internal issues and the EU Commission was blamed for acting behind closed doors (Çelik 2002: 199–200).

The Alevis hope that membership in the EU will grant one of Turkey’s largest minority groups human rights and the freedom to practice their own religion. However, power is also an issue at stake here. When the ‘binary configuration’ of power, that is, the legal model for the oppressors and the oppressed, is dismantled, strategies for subverting hierarchies are enabled.

The liberated form of social intercourse between the sexes in the Alevi community is culturally structured, imbued with dynamic power, and therefore political problems similar to the problems created by the oppressive culture arise implicitly. Liberation and public acknowledgement could free them from these problems. There is an ill-concealed legal model of power that assumes a binary opposition between Sunnite Muslims and Alevis. If such a binary opposition is dismantled, the oppositional pairs change; not by one party being brought to the fore, but because perspectives are multiplied in such a way that binary oppositions eventually become meaningless in a context teeming with all kinds of differences (cf. Butler 1987: 137–8).

There are strategies available which pertain to changing the old power game (consisting of oppressors and the oppressed). With the aid of the EU, the Alevis do not only want to transcend power relations, but also multiply various forms of power so that the oppressive and regulating legal power model can no longer constitute sole supremacy. When the oppressors are themselves oppressed and the oppressed develop alternative
forms of power, post-modern power relations are at hand. This interplay leads to new and more complex power liaisons, and the power in the binary opposition seems to disseminate through the power present in the ambiguity.

In the actual constitution of the subject, the materialization power operates – ‘in the principle which simultaneously forms and regulates the “subject” of subjectivation’ (Butler 1993: 34).

Power, rather than law, includes both the legal (prohibitive and regulating) and the productive (creative by mistake) functions in differential relations (Butler 1990: 29). Since power can be neither removed nor denied, perhaps the Alevi could focus on a replacement of power, instead of making any endeavour to become elevated to a completely normative status (cf. Butler 1990: 124).

If the self cannot be seen as the subject in a life-story, ‘there is no “being” behind doing, effecting, becoming; “the doer” is merely a fiction added to the deed – the deed is everything’ (Butler 1990: 25). But it is impossible to completely discard the subject and still claim to be a fully responsible participant in the discursive community (Benhabib 1992: 239).

Various Alevi stereotypes are both generated and nurtured by conservative Sunnite ideology; furthermore, these stereotypes provide the rhetoric apparatus with information that maintains the ideology in question. Thus, the power in such discourses is not the old supreme political power that is uniformly placed over a subordinate population. Power is manifested in local ‘truths’, descriptions and prohibitions. Power appears in both impersonal structures and concrete violent actions – it is tangible in the exclusive as well as in the inclusive.

**Concluding Remarks**

History, the memory of violence and representation are, in the case of the Alevi, parts of a process in which a group identity is created through negations. This process actually ties the Alevi to the majority Sunnite culture, rather than separates them from it. They need their enemy for their self-definition (cf. Weaver 1953: 222).

As always when identity is created through negation, the Alevi produce a new domain when they incorporate the environment enclosing and threatening the group. This is done by including influencing factors as negative introjections. They thus integrate Sunnite norms, attitudes and values, but in an indirect way (cf. Stallybrass and White 1986: 89).
When looking at the Turkish state in a wider perspective, the attacks against Alevis to a certain extent seem to be a question of stabilising and strengthening the nation’s ambivalent marginal regions (cf. Bhaba 1990: 4). When Sunnites attack Alevis, they assault the space of ‘the Other’ in order for identities to appear as clear-cut and to be able to free more space for self-representation. The struggle about the market in the cities is a source for new rhetoric fantasies. This is largely a question of space; the Alevis take up space with their cultural events.

‘The memory of massacre creates history, identity and the focus for future mobilisations. The political significance of massacres is that they continue as a defining moment beyond the event and become part of historical collective memory reference point in the past ... The political significance of a “massacre” is, as a collective act, its ability to define conflicts as communal, precluding other cross-cutting constructions.’ (Bozarslan 2003: 36.)

There is a generating reciprocity between violence and representation which is clearly discernible in symbolic acts carried out by various ethnic or religious groups. Unfortunately, violence is the basic linguistic form for social symbols (Feldman 1991: 260).

Textual violence will exist as long as language creates differences through violent acts. Texts do not pop up from a void, but appear in a sometimes painful manner from a context that forms the struggle for existence – they also replace other texts. Each text takes on a position in relation to other texts and thus receives both its significance and ethical strength. Those involved feel their presence through the constantly dominating resistance (Conquergood 1994: 213).

Norbert Elias combines the actor and structure perspectives in his concept of ‘figuration’. This refers to a network of mutually dependent people who are tied to each other in various ways and on several levels. In these networks, gossip and rumour have great power. Rumour keeps the oppressed in place, and the Turkish media contributes to the stigmatisation of Alevis. On the other hand, the media is also a channel for the Alevis to reach out and present themselves. They can show that rumour and gossip convey a stereotypical image of them with the object of making them powerless.

Rumour is the breeding ground for moral panic. ‘In most cases, a deviant category or stereotype exists, but is latent and only routinely activated. During the moral panic, the category is either created or, more often, relocated, dusted off, and attacked with renewed vigour. New charges may be made, old ones dredged up and reformulated.’ (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 74–5.)
Moral panic reveals variations in condemnations and dissociations. The Sunnites have stigmatised the Alevis in different ways during various time periods, and apart from alleged religious deviance, rumours of financial problems and political accusations, sexual and moral issues also recur constantly in the gossip about the Alevis. When those accused of deviance act according to the roles ascribed to them, which existed already before moral panic broke out, they might very well underline certain traits that the agitated mass perceives as immoral or sinful. They might even make something up further to emphasize the deviance of the group. ‘The part that individuals who are designated as deviants play in moral panics is crucial – indeed, central – but their precise role is creatively assigned, dynamically acted out, and to some degree reformulated with each episode’ (Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994: 75).

Hatred of the Alevis has existed since the sixteenth century, but the reasons for which Sunnite Muslims harass Alevis are constantly being renovated as various stories are spread through rumours, and the gossip is lethally sharp. Generally, intellectual Alevis claim that Alevilik represents a modern way of living, compared with the Sunnite Muslim lifestyle. Often the view of women is brought up; Alevi women are regarded as being treated much more equally than Sunnite women (Çaha 2004: 335). Perhaps it is the position of women in the Alevi community which is most disturbing and threatening in the eyes of the Sunnite? During the prayer rituals, tarikat, all look into each other’s faces, women as well as men. By praying face to face, the Alevis look into each other’s hearts and thus come closer to God. This collective form of worship is called muhabbet, and the Alevis regard the Sunnite Muslim prayers in the mosque, where only men sit in rows without being able to see each other, as a sign of falsehood (Shankland 2003: 120).

Nevertheless, we must carefully scrutinize myths; we are constantly dealing with stories of a reality that shifts according to the perspective from which it is viewed. Exploitation of ‘history’ and ‘tradition’ is something that the revived Alevism has in common with many ethnic and nationalistic movements. This is largely a question of pointing out ‘the Other’ – the dichotomy of ‘us here’ and ‘them there’ is an obvious motif in almost all texts produced by Alevis during the 1990s.

In many writings their own group is glorified, for example: we belong to Ehlîbeyt, that is, the household of Mohammed, where Fatima, Ali, and their sons Hasan and Hüseyin are included. Hüseyin’s passion symbolises the historical struggle between good and evil. The pathos and significance associated with Hüseyin’s martyrdom – with themes such as oppression,
tyranny, social justice and atonement – are revealed in liturgical handbooks that recount the fatal struggle (Esposito 2001: 152). This pertains to Shi’ism generally and the Alevis often refer to Hüseyin’s martyrdom in Kerbela in 680.

Binary oppositions exist everywhere in the descriptions of the history of the Alevis. They envision their own history from Prophet Mohammed to today’s Turkish society – they remember it. The Sunnites are on one side and the Alevi on the other; in the writing of history persons who have contributed to the Alevi community are highlighted, they are eminent persons who have formed their religion. Throughout history Alevi and Sunnites are described in a stereotypical manner as two morally different societies. Of course, it is understandable that this dualism is important for those who wish to create a collective sense of community, an Alevi identity. It is always easier to identify with heroes and innocent victims than with abstract principles. The powerful forces acting in Alevi history are mostly concrete persons. Historical representation is a specific means of recounting history; it is a process pertaining to group formation that provides a historical basis for the reshaping which is constantly taking place. History is presented as an endless repetition of a pattern where the good, righteous and innocent are set against the evil, irreverent and cruel. The Alevis are writing their history according to a classic narrative form of historiography. The manicheistic features in the Alevi religion emerge clearly, since the society is divided into two categories of people: one side consists of humble nomads, modest farmers, poor workers, weak and unprivileged who are all innocent, just, good and prepared to suffer for their ideals. They live in a democratic society based on equality, justice, freedom and solidarity. The other side is represented by the Sunnites who are thoroughly unjust. Such thinking got Elias to bring the concept of charisma even closer to the theory on social behaviour, groups and relations in order to eliminate all essentialist and normative associations (Goudsblom and Mennell 1998: 105).

Ali, Hüseyin and Haci Bektaş Veli are not only men of principle who fought for the Alevi ideals, they also embody the moral norms connected with the principles. Since the world has not changed for the better, these men and today’s Alevi are being discriminated against, oppressed, exploited and murdered by their evil opponents.

In the Alevi historical stories the good who are oppressed are of Central Asian origin while the oppressors are Arabs or decadent Turks, such as the Osmans. Thus, there is an open ethnic or nationalistic rhetoric in the contemporary Alevi discourse.
According to the Alevis, Sunnite Muslim leaders make up rumours about them: ‘These despots invented the slander of the character of the Alevi religious service to break the solidarity of the common people and to discipline them’ (Vorhoff 2003: 105).

At the same time as the Alevis use the passion drama and Hüseyin’s martyrdom to enclose themselves in a cycle of eternal repetitions, they look forward and create a new identity through their modified image of Alevism. Through an invented tradition, which is rather a mirror image of the present historical enactments of tradition, the Alevis express current circumstances. Karl Marx would probably have said something about the traditions of dead generations weighing on the minds of the living like a nightmare (Marx 2003: 150).

In societies characterised by mythical thinking, the social structure can be seen as a holy, timeless order which is justified by the myths. They explain the great importance of the community and the way in which it has been shaped. Furthermore, rituals are very important, since they strengthen the solidarity between those who belong to a certain group, and thus the solidarity of the society at large is undermined. This gives rituals a clearly more important political role than if rituals only existed to cement society. Since a ritual can bring together various political groupings, rituals also hold a key role in the political struggle between power-seeking factions and sub-groups; rituals are also an important tool when a nation is created and a useful instrument for chauvinists (Kertzer 1988: 69).

Cultural identity is never enough as the sole guide in life. We all have multiple identities of many kinds, and even if we accept one basic cultural identity, we might not totally adapt to it and correspond to the image thereof. Theories of culture turn our attention away from all that we have in common instead of encouraging us to communicate across national, ethnic and religious borders, and take the risk of going beyond these marked dividing lines (Kuper 1999: 247).

When people create their history and carry out something unprecedented, they feel insecure and therefore try to invoke representations that ensure their context and reveal the connection to times past. If the continuity is threatened they quickly invent a past that re-establishes the calm: And, just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not yet exist, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans and costumes (Marx 2003: 150).

In this shuttle between the past and the present there is, nevertheless,
a kind of development taking place; it is not merely an endless, limitless repetition of the same old pattern. The collective memory of ‘Alevism’ grants accesses to many updated versions of the Alevi self. May the image of the oppressed Alevi be blurred in the European Union!

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Love, Responsibility, Otherness

Finnish Church Leaders on Interreligious Dialogue

No peace in the world without peace among the religions; and no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions. This well-known argument by Hans Küng (2000: 28) could function as the guiding-star for the statement of interest in this article: a Peace Appeal signed by leaders of several Christian Churches in Finland. In this article, I will focus on the subject matter addressed in this appeal, i.e. peace and dialogue. The aim is to analyse how these Christian leaders view the role of religions, and especially interreligious dialogue, in creating and promoting peace.

I will begin by presenting the Peace Appeal and the interviews which form the empirical material upon which my research is based. I will then concentrate on five issues which emerge from my analysis of this material as being especially important: the question of peace, love and reconciliation in a religious perspective; the question of otherness in interfaith dialogue; the relationship between dialogue and mission; the question of God’s presence in other religions; and personal responsibility and action. Emphasis is placed on presenting and analysing the empirical material, but the topics are also tied to a theoretical framework based on current thoughts within moral philosophy and the dialogue philosophy of Martin Buber. The discussion is, in conclusion, summarised with the help of the three notions which form the topic of this article: love, responsibility and otherness.

The Peace Appeal

The event Ecumenical Christmas in Turku (Åbo) is a well-established tradition in Finland, familiar to the public through the ecumenical service broadcast on national TV on Christmas Eve. In connection with this event, a joint appeal for peace was signed on the 16th of December 2004 by Archbishop Leo for the Orthodox Church, Archbishop Jukka Paarma for the Evangelical Lutheran Church, Bishop Józef Wróbel for the Roman
Catholic Church and the Methodist minister, Timo Virtanen for the free churches. By signing this Appeal at Christmas – a festival celebrating the birth of the Prince of Peace – the message of peace as a central theme of the Christian faith was emphasised at a time of global conflicts and anxiety. I will quote the peace appeal in its entirety:

The role of religion in the world has recently become ever more topical. In many parts of the world religion is unfortunately associated with wars and conflicts. The situation between Christianity and Islam is becoming critical, especially in the shadow of the Iraq war and the battle against terrorism. As representatives of our churches and communities, we would therefore like to make an appeal for world peace and harmony.

We believe that religion can contribute to peace and harmony. The Bible tells us to love God with all our hearts, and to love our neighbours as ourselves. The Golden Rule known to many different religions tells us to do unto others as we would have them do unto us.

In order to create a more peaceful world, we need to fight injustice, free poor countries from the debts that they cannot pay, as well as actively work for forgiveness and reconciliation. We are now preparing to celebrate the nativity of Jesus Christ who taught us to pray, saying: Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors.

Lasting peace means that we have to come to terms with our past so that forgiveness and reconciliation will take the place of hatred and disbelief. One who has experienced forgiveness shall be free and become a sign of hope, a light in the dark. Where there is light, there will soon be more light. This thought encourages us to live. Jesus Christ came to the world to provide us with a future and hope. It is this hope that we want to express to you today.

This statement contains many ideas calling for a deeper analysis. I have conducted interviews with the four church leaders who signed the Appeal, to discuss their reflections on the Appeal and more generally on interreligious dialogue and peace from their points of view as Christian leaders in Finland. The interviews were conducted in March and April 2005 in Turku and Helsinki. They were loosely structured around a few central themes that the interviewees elaborated quite freely upon. The interviews were recorded on mini-disc and later transcribed. The discussions each lasted about one hour; three of them were conducted in Finnish (Paarma, Leo, Virtanen) and one in German (Wröbel). Except for the interview in
German, which is presented in its original language, the quotations have been translated into English by me (the original Finnish text is presented in the footnotes). This empirical material has been deposited in the Folkloristic archive at Åbo Akademi University.

The church leaders all regard the Peace Appeal as an important statement directed to the surrounding world and their own members. By drawing attention to the fundamental position peace has in all religions, and stating the wish of the churches to co-operate, the Appeal is thought to have an impact on the public opinion.

**Theoretical Framework**

The Peace Appeal is the fruit of ecumenical co-operation, but in addressing the issue of world peace, the role of Islam in world politics and the Golden Rule, the Appeal touches upon interreligious dialogue, i.e. the striving towards relationships based on understanding, respect and equality between religions. As this dialogue is a central topic in the interviews and one of the main focuses of this analysis, I will begin by discussing the theoretical view of dialogue upon which this analysis is based.

My understanding of dialogue is derived from Martin Buber’s philosophy. Briefly outlined, his well-known argument states that a person’s world-view always includes an ‘other’, an opponent in the form of an It or a Thou. The distanced attitude I–It is supplemented by the relationship I–Thou, which represents encounters – *Begegnung* – mutuality, and dialogue. These two attitudes are not competing but rather complementary (Buber 1958). In my reading of Buber, I–It is interpreted as a way of creating boundaries, and I–Thou is as a way of crossing boundaries. Creating boundaries can be understood tangibly, as distancing oneself from the other, but it can also describe situations where we, for example, delimit areas of experience for the sake of analytical description. Crossing boundaries implies letting the reality of the other into one’s own consciousness, and experiencing the encounter without reservations (analysing, categorising). The complementary character of the attitudes I–It and I–Thou means that every person approaches the other both as an It and as a Thou, both creating and crossing the boundaries of her own interpretation (Illman 2004: 205). We are not faced with a binary opposition between Thou and It, but rather with a continuum. Sometimes we experience the spontaneous encounter, the dimension of the Thou; sometimes we need the distance and the matter-of-fact descriptions, constituting the I–It attitude. For the moments of true
dialogue to arise, however, we need to be able to recognise our counterpart as an autonomous other, a Thou (Illman 2005).

Inspired by the hermeneutics of, for example, Hans-Georg Gadamer (1975: 269–72), understanding and interpretation are emphasised in the analysis. The dialogue is seen as a complex process involving intellectual knowledge, attitudinal and emotional dimensions, formed by cultural, religious, social and personal traits. Focus is placed on how and why we create boundaries between ‘us’ and ‘them’, i.e. how similarity and difference are defined. Dialogue is a complex, human process of meaning creation, rather than a necessary process abiding by genetic rules (Illman 2004: 53). Indeed, interreligious dialogue can be viewed as a ‘hermeneutics of the other’ (Tracy 1990: 51). Contemporary researchers of moral philosophy, such as Peter Winch (1987), D. Z. Phillips (2001) and Raimond Gaita (1991, 1999), who deal with the ethical dimension of encountering others, constitute another source of inspiration. On the basis of their reflections, the emphasis on individual responsibility and actions advanced in the Appeal are discussed.

**Religion, Peace, and War**

The Peace Appeal states that the role of religion in the world is of growing importance today, a claim supported by the church leaders. Also in Finland, interfaith dialogue is experienced as urgent as a consequence of September 11, 2001. As religion is often connected with contemporary conflicts and wars, the Appeal emphasises that religion can instead contribute to peace and harmony. How, then, can this be done and what can religion bring to global peace work that other, secular efforts lack?

In the interviews, all church leaders stress the importance of peace and reconciliation as core values in all religions. Thus, religions not only *can*, but *should* play an active part in global peace efforts. Asked about the most important message of the Appeal, Archbishop Paarma expresses himself in the following way:

This idea of peace is common to all great religions. Even though history, the history of the churches and religions, also shows that religion has been used for the opposite purpose too, as an instigator of war, hatred and violence, and is still unfortunately used in this way here and there. But the true nature of these religions is to proclaim peace. It is expressed in slightly different ways in different religions: the Jews say *Shalom* and
the Arabs have the same term, and we talk about peace or a happy, good life – that is the original meaning of all religions. And this core should be emphasised, and then we notice that we have something that unites all religions; and that we can work together.1

Peace is thus interpreted as a basis of Christian faith, as the fundamental message of the Bible and of Jesus Christ. By signing the Appeal, the church leaders stress the urgency of this message to all Christians. Bishop Wróbel talks about a theology of brotherhood: as God’s creations we are all brothers and should not fight. This is the primary motivation for Christians engaging in peace efforts. He stresses that Christianity is concerned with more than our relationship to God: it is concerned with horizontal relationships in the world, i.e. the interpersonal dimension. Such pacifist ideals are, however, not always strong enough to compete with other ideologies, such as power and money, Archbishop Paarma concludes. It is a challenge to live one’s life in a way that is faithful to the demands of Christ, Mr Virtanen says.

Religion can motivate people to engage in peace work, the church leaders stress, and encourage people to actively further reconciliation. Such motivation can, of course, come also from other, secular ideals of pacifism and humanism, but religion is the most powerful motivator, Bishop Wróbel claims. Nevertheless, peace cannot be achieved only through interreligious dialogue; there must also be a dialogue between believers and non-believers. Otherwise, we can never achieve peace on earth, he states.

In elaborating the special traits of peace in religions in general, and in Christianity in particular, the notion of love emerges as the central theme in the interviews. Especially Mr Virtanen brings out love as a key concept. Peace among the people of the world presupposes peace of mind, and such peace is built on love, he argues: ‘the Christian notion of peace is always based on loving your neighbour as yourself. On that foundation

1 ‘… tämä rauhanajatus on eri uskonnoille, kaikille suurille uskonnoille, yhteinen. Vaikka historia, ja kirkkojen ja uskontojen historia osoittaa myös myöskin sitä, että uskontoja on käytetty aivan päinvastaiseen tarkoitukseen myöskin kihottimena so-taan, vihaan ja väkivaltaan. Ja yhä edelleen käytetään siellä täällä, valitettavasti. Mutta niitten uskontojen varsinainen olemus on julistaa rauhaa. Että se on eri uskonnoissa vähän eri tavalla ilmaistu, juutalaiset sanovat Shalom ja samaa on sitten arabilla, sama termi, ja me puhumme rauhasta taikka onnellisesta elämästä – sehän on kaikkien uskontojen perimmäinen tarkoitus. Ja se ydin pitäisi nostaa esille, ja silloin me huomaamme, että on jotain joka yhdistää kaikkia uskontoja, ja me voimme yhdessä toimia.’ (IF mgt 2005/10.)
it is, of course, easy, easier, to build peace. \(^2\) We are commissioned to love God and our neighbours, he continues; thus there should be no limits to our love. In his view, this trait separates Christianity from other religions and ideologies: ‘As a Christian, I think it is easiest to encounter other religions because we have a message with which we can encounter everyone, and that is precisely the message of God’s peace and God’s love.’ \(^3\)

The perception that religions cause war and conflict, on the other hand, is strongly repudiated by the church leaders. Using faith to promote hatred is seen as the gravest of distortions of any religion (a claim which, of course, begs the question of who has the power to define ‘genuine’ religion). So-called religious wars in the world have more complex backgrounds, the leaders underline, with many aspects contributing to conflicts. The most important aspect is all kinds of inequality between people, Archbishop Leo underlines: ‘it is not religions that stand against each other, but human circumstances.’ \(^4\) War is not caused by religious people, but by godless people, or people who have thrown out God from their hearts, Bishop Wróbel believes: ‘Man findet genug viele Beweise dafür um zu sehen, dass nicht die Religionen die Ursache des Krieges sind, sondern diejenige die an keinen Gott denken, sondern … egoistisch sind.’ \(^5\)

In such heated situations, religion is, however, an excellent weapon for those wanting to deepen the conflict, since religion has a strong effect on people’s emotions. Even if religions are not seen as the genuine cause of conflicts, the fact that religion and violence are confused in the minds and rhetoric of some believers cannot be ignored. This is acknowledged by some of the church leaders, who stress that the issue of religion and violence cannot simply be dismissed as illegitimate. There will be no world peace before the religions learn to live in peace with each other, Archbishop Paarma notes, paraphrasing Küng.

As mentioned above, the language of love is seen as a vital part of the Christian peace message. The church leaders unanimously claim that Christianity can contribute to the global peace movement by stressing the

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2 ‘… kristinuskon rauhan perusta on koko ajan se, että rakasta lähimmäistä niin kuin itseäsi. Ja sillä perustalla tietysti on helppo, helpompi rakentaa rauhaa.’ (IF mgt 2005/8.)

3 ‘Kristittynä minusta on kaikkein helpoin kohdata toisia uskontoja, koska meillä on kuitenkin sanoma, joka voi kohdata kaikkia ihmisiä, ja se on nimenomaan Jumalan rauhan ja Jumalan rakkauden sanoma’ (IF mgt 2005/8).

4 ‘… eihän siinä uskonnot ole lähtökohdaisesti vastassa, vaan ihmisten olosuhteet’ (IF mgt 2005/9).

5 IF mgt 2005/11.
values of forgiveness and reconciliation in solving conflicts and creating the impetus for a better future. In order to create lasting peace, we must come to terms with the past and fight injustices, the Appeal states. The experience of forgiveness makes us free to love our neighbour: that is the message of the Christian Church, Mr Virtanen believes. Yet, the past should not be ignored, it is argued: we must know our past, but also know how to forgive and forget Archbishop Leo says. Nevertheless, the issue of compensation for the injustices of the past should not be suppressed, Bishop Wröbel underlines: we need to speak freely of reconciliation.

This discussion of the characteristics of religious peace work can be illuminated by reference to Buber. In his view, dialogue has a specifically religious dimension: ‘in each Thou we address the eternal Thou’ (Buber 1958: 22). Buber’s philosophy builds on the thought that the relationship to the eternal Thou always forms the background against which we meet other persons as Thou. It is not a relationship apart from our human relationships, but it encompasses all relationships within itself (Buber 1958: 77, 81). This idea places dialogue efforts based on religious conviction in an interesting light, giving them a unique function in the global peace movement. This aspect is important in the interreligious dialogue portrayed in the Peace Appeal and in the interviews. Today, it is often assumed that active believers of one faith or another are more narrow-minded than others; that belonging to a religion makes people intolerant by definition. But in Buber’s view, it is rather the other way around: Our relationship to God is what makes interpersonal relationships and dialogue possible. We are different, but all part of God’s creation. We are bound by the same life conditions as human beings in an imperfect world. Religiously-based dialogue efforts thus serve the I-Thou relationship in a special way.

Valuing the Unique Individual

The importance of interreligious dialogue is acknowledged by all four church leaders. As mentioned above, peace, love and reconciliation are seen as cornerstones of the Christian faith and as fundamentals also in other religions. Dialogue between religions should have as its starting point the many values and beliefs we have in common, they stress: its first goal should be to let the participants get to know each other, which involves finding the values they share and possibilities for co-operation. The question of peace, Archbishop Paarma notes, has become the issue around which it has been easiest to unite.
The similarities between monotheistic religions – above all the companionship in faith between Judaism, Christianity and Islam – are especially mentioned by Paarma, Leo and Wróbel. Many Christians are afraid of Islam, Archbishops Leo and Paarma note, but this is due to a lack of – or the wrong kind of – information. When I learn to know a Muslim as a person, I can see that he is just the same kind of person as I am – he only believes in another way, Archbishop Paarma explains. Respecting and valuing all human life is a central principle also in Islam, Bishop Wróbel reminds us. Furthermore, Archbishop Paarma, as well as Bishop Wróbel draw attention to the fact that all the children of Abraham believe in the same God. Furthermore, Bishop Wróbel notes that dialogue is needed also inside the churches because the differences among, for example, the members of the worldwide Catholic Church are immense. This is significant, since acknowledging the diversity within one’s own tradition is an important step in developing an understanding for the plurality of religions at large (Tracy 1990: 55).

The absolute value and equality of all individuals is mentioned as another reason why believers should engage in peaceful, respectful dialogue. In Christianity, the value and uniqueness of each individual is fundamental, Archbishop Leo stresses:

> Every person is absolutely equal in their human dignity, no matter what religion they belong to, or if they belong to no religion at all ..., the value of the individual is immeasurable, that is boundless. And that is precisely because he is God’s image.\(^6\)

Respecting individual dignity and freedom, regardless of religious conviction, is thus seen as a religious task. In Mr Virtanen’s words: ‘without personal freedom, you cannot say to another person: I love you.’\(^7\) In fact, Bishop Wróbel states that religions should be the most uncompromising guardians of human rights and dignity: ‘es ist wichtig zu sagen zugleich, dass die Religion, oder der Glaube an Gott, also richtige Glaube an Gott,'

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6 ‘… jokainen ihminen on ihmisarvossa täsmälleen sama, kuuluu sitten mihin uskontoon tahansa tai ei kuulu yhtään mihinkään. […] yksilön arvo] on mittaamaton, se on siis määrätön. Ja se on juuri se, että hän on Jumalan kuva.’ (IF mgt 2005/9.)

7 ‘… ilman tämmöistä omaa vapautta, niin ei voi sanoa toiselle, että rakastan sinua’ (IF mgt 2005/8).
die tiefsten, die größten Begründungen der Menschenwürde ist, und der Menschenrechten.8

Thus, the effort at dialogue based on religious conviction is once again seen as fulfilling a function of its own, this time in its advocacy of human dignity and equality. Along the same lines, Raimond Gaita argues that religion can contribute to interpersonal understanding by offering a language that facilitates a way of talking about the uniqueness of every individual. He brings together the acknowledgement of the unconditional preciousness of every individual, which is indispensable in dialogue, with the religiously coloured notion of holiness. This term, he believes, captures an important quality in our dialogue with others: by encountering the other as a unique and precious person in her own right, we obtain a feeling for the inviolable dignity of every human being, or, to use another word, holiness (Gaita 1991: 1, 35). Therefore, religious language can shed light upon the way in which other persons limit our selfishness and form our lives as nothing else does. We can talk about the freedom of the individual, our right to respect and dignity, but no secular terms can capture this human quality as easily and forcefully as the notion of holiness (Gaita 1999: 19, 23).

This quality of holiness, I believe, is what the church leaders allude to in their descriptions of religion as a guardian of the human values needed in dialogue. We can, therefore, as Gaita stresses, find a distinctly religious contribution to peace ideology in the linguistic arena – none of the church leaders, however, uses the notion of holiness in the interviews.

Respecting every person as a unique individual, as equal in value and dignity, is thus an important aspect of the Peace Appeal, the church leaders stress. This makes the openness needed in dialogue possible. According to Buber, genuine dialogue belongs to the I–Thou-relationship; it is about reciprocity and response, it requires that I reach out towards the other, that I am truly present and ready to see. A dialogue requires two separate parties, otherwise there is only a monologue (Buber 1947: 23). Hence, it is vital to underline the importance of acknowledging otherness in dialogue. Otherness can be understood in relation to Ilham Dilman’s notion of human separateness: that we all are unique individuals in our own right. This is, in his view, a prerequisite for understanding, rather than an obstacle to it. Separateness should be acknowledged and valued in dialogue; separateness is not isolation, but rather autonomy and relation in union (Dilman 1987: 78, 105).

8 IF mgt 2005/11.
Otherness may – but must not necessarily – imply difference. The point of dialogue is to facilitate unity in spite of differing opinions and convictions. Understanding does not require sameness: neither party must give up their own identity in order for a ‘fusion of horizons’ to occur. Differences are seen as possibilities rather than obstacles during dialogue (Buber 1958: 57; Gaita 1999: 271). In my interpretation of Buber, this means that there are possibilities for understanding and fellowship that are not based on consensus. We need not share one opinion or one religion in order to enter into dialogue. Our fellowship is based on our common situation, as human beings in the world, a situation characterised by anguish and expectation, according to Buber (1947: 9).

Otherness may also however imply similarity. The important issue, therefore, is not that we are different, but rather that we, as Dilman argues, value each individual’s separateness and autonomy. This otherness is not estrangement, but lets us come close and affirm the value of diversity. By encountering the other in this way – as connected to ourselves, but at the same time independent and unique – the other becomes what I have called an autonomous other: an other, who is not under my power, who can surprise me and be different but still equal, interesting and important (Illman 2004: 183–4). Every interpersonal relationship is formed in the constantly changing juxtaposition between similarities and differences. Both polarities are constantly present, intricately united in every encounter: we are neither completely similar nor completely different. The notion of otherness, in my interpretation, acknowledges this multiple identity, building on separateness and autonomy.

How do the church leaders respond to this call for difference? Otherness in dialogue, as defined above, is mostly regarded by the church leaders as a valuable trait which is worth safeguarding. Even though different religions have many values in common, we are still different and do not have to become alike in order to understand each other, they stress. The aim of dialogue is not to change the other but to try to understand the difference, and to understand that difference does not necessarily imply antagonism, Archbishop Leo and Bishop Wróbel argue: even if the other is not my friend, he does not have to be my enemy. Neither is the aim of dialogue to try to find a compromise between the religions, Archbishop Paarma stresses: ‘Dialogue is easy to pursue when we have sorted out what our aim is, that we are not striving towards some kind of common religion, and we are not trying to convert each other.’

Furthermore, the interviewees underline the importance of knowing oneself – a demand which is not so easy to meet as it may seem: it requires
reflexivity, honesty, and, at times, courage. Dialogue is possible only if you know your own starting point, and respect the values that you yourself want to be true to. Without recognition of your own starting point you have no platform to build your dialogue on, Archbishop Paarma claims, a point advocated also by Archbishop Leo, who states: ‘the better the Christians know their own faith, the better they know Islam, the better they know Jews.’ Dialogue does not always lead to agreement and understanding, and we cannot always accept each other’s views. But the greatest problem facing interreligious dialogue today is not the strongly held opinions, but the weakly held ones, Archbishop Leo believes, paraphrasing the words of the Bible: Christian salt is losing its saltiness.

When you are secure in your own identity, it is easier to be tolerant and understanding towards others, as their differing beliefs are not experienced as a threat, Archbishop Paarma and Bishop Wróbel claim. As Christians, we must be able to face everything, we have nothing to lose, Mr Virtanen argues. Referring to the words of the Bible, which, in his opinion, are quite clear, he says, ‘If we read the Bible as it is written, it says that if God is for us, who can be against us? And this makes me free to respect my neighbour, whether he is a Muslim or an Eskimo or anything, whatever he believes in.’

Otherness is, to conclude, an important value to be cherished in interreligious dialogue: every person is unique and worthy of respect. Even though the aim of dialogue is not to make the participants change their views and become more similar or more different, it is still valuable to recognise the many similarities between religions. This attitude towards otherness, David Tracy describes by the analogy similarity-in-difference (Tracy 1990: 42), offering a common base on which to build peace. The same spirit is found in the following statement made by Archbishop Paarma:

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9 ‘Ja täätä dialogia on helppo käydä silloin kun tämä on selvitetty, mihin pyritään, että ei pyritä johonkin yhteiseen uskontoon, eikä pyritään käännöstämään toinen toistaaan’ (IF mgt 2005/10).

10 ‘Jos kristityt tuntevat omansa..., mitä paremmin he tuntevat omansa, niin sitä paremmin he tuntevat islamin, sitä paremmin he tuntevat juutalaiset’ (IF mgt 2005/9).

11 ‘Jos me luemme Raamattua niin kuin se on kirjoitettu, se sanoo että jos Jumala on meidän puoliamme, niin kuka voi olla meitä vastaan, niin silloinhan se vaaputtaa minut kunnioittamaan lähimmäästä, oli hän sitten muslimi tai eskimo tai mikä tahansa, uskoo hän sitten mihin tahansa.’ (IF mgt 2005/8.)
I believe that if difference is not acknowledged, then the contact is – I will not say false but it is at least not fair. It is fair if we confess that we are different and we differ in that and that and that way. But nevertheless we have much in common … and we can understand each other on that basis: accept the difference but at the same time search for that which unites us. And peace is what most obviously unites representatives of different religions.12

The Tension between Dialogue and Mission

Valuing otherness is, as discussed above, the idea and aim of interreligious dialogue. In discussing such a topic with Christian church leaders, the issue of mission arises in its wake because the missionary character of Christianity seems to have a bearing on any relationship between Christians and representatives of other faiths. Jesus gave his followers the commission to ‘go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’ (Matt. 28:19–20, NIV). In contemporary discussions of interreligious dialogue, this is often associated with an illegitimately aggressive tendency, excessively embodied in colonialism and imperialism (Ariarajah 1999: 101). Mission is seen as a problematic issue, a reminder of a time when the world was divided into civilised and barbaric people, and different religions were placed in a hierarchical system with Christianity at the top as the crown of evolution.

Have missionaries then outlived their usefulness in the contemporary world, since dialogue is the new way of responding to people of other faiths? Is dialogue replacing missionary work, are they complementary or even contradictory? In considering this relationship, the four interviewees present a rather complex image of the issue, encompassing several different perspectives. The church leaders keenly underline the fact that mission today is a multifarious activity: it includes, e.g., social, health and

12 ‘Luulen, että jos sitä erilaisuutta ei tunnusteta, niin se yhteys on – en sano että valheellinen, mutta se ei ole niin semmoinen reilu. Se on reilu jos tunnustetaan, että me olemme erilaisia, me eroamme siinä ja siinä ja siinä kohdassa. Mutta siitä huolimatta meillä on paljon yhteistä [... ja voimme] ymmärtää siltä pohjalta, hyväksyä se erilaisuus, mutta etsiä samalla niitä, mikä meitä yhdistää. Ja rauha on se, joka niin kuin kaikkein selvimmin on se mikä yhdistää eri uskontojen edustajia.’ (IF mgt 2005/10.)
educational work, and it takes place in distant developing countries as well as at home. Above all, this work is always performed with an attitude of respect, co-operation and community. Mr Virtanen avoids making a clear-cut difference between dialogue and mission, but underlines the importance of personal relationships in both fields: getting to know each other on a personal level, thereby creating possibilities for discussion and respect towards the other and her religion. Dialogue, in his view, is not unproblematic, and concord on a theoretical level is not always achieved without modifying one's own views. Therefore, the most fruitful dialogue is carried out on the practical level, in connection to some concrete task uniting the different parties. In that way, one gets to know the other on a personal level and can initiate a discussion which opens up opportunities to influence the other – a comment which could be interpreted as revealing missionary intentions again.

According to Archbishop Paarma, openness is a key concept in mission as well as dialogue. There should be no hidden agendas, one should clearly state from the outset the purpose of the contact, otherwise, doubts about one's motives are easily created. According to Paarma, both dialogue and mission deserve to be carried out in their own right: dialogue involves discussions aiming at increasing mutual understanding and finding ways of co-operating in order to create a more peaceful, just and prosperous world. Mission, on the other hand, is preaching the gospel and teaching the Christian faith.

As expansion is an inherent aspect of most great religions, there will always, on a practical level, be tensions between dialogue and mission, Paarma believes. He is not convinced, however, that this is inevitable. Although Christians are commissioned to try to convert others, there are also other, equally important Christian principles to be cherished, e.g., respecting the other, valuing her freedom and trying to build a common understanding. Thus, there should be room for both mission and dialogue in the Christian contacts with other religions, Paarma argues. The important thing is to keep them apart, and to engage honestly either in dialogue or in mission.

According to the church leaders, dialogue and mission are not irreconcilable opposites and the similarities between the two are emphasised: both are seen, for example, as motivated by love and peace. In Archbishop Leo's view, interreligious dialogue can perhaps be seen as the common missionary striving of the different religions directed towards the secular world; it is not a competition between different religions, but rather their joint venture. If the aim of mission is defined as making everyone believe in Jesus Christ as their personal saviour, then dialogue cannot achieve this,
Archbishop Paarma notes. But if we realise that both dialogue and mission aim at creating a better and more peaceful world, then we open up a new perspective: ‘And maybe, if we together, co-operating with different religions, could make this world better, then we have already come closer to one another, and some of the goals of missionary work will have been achieved.’\textsuperscript{13}

Also Bishop Wróbel argues that the perception of a polarity between mission and dialogue builds on uninformed views of mission. Mission is not solely about winning persons for Christ on the intellectual level, it concerns all that we are as humans. It is about love and respect for other persons, a wish to share the good things that God has given. Therefore, mission is in no way contrary to dialogue. Bishop Wróbel even argues that mission brings with it such values that are fundamental for peace and understanding among people of different faiths: ‘Ich denke eben, dass die Mission, oder Evangelisierung heutzutage …, das bringt mit sich was für Frieden fundamental ist, ja, weil es bringt mit sich den Gebot der Liebe, der Gerechtigkeit und den Respekt, den Respekt des Menschen.’\textsuperscript{14}

To summarise the views of the church leaders, the issue of mission is not such a stumbling block to relations between religions as is often assumed in a post-colonial perspective. Dialogue and mission are both different and similar in character. Their motives are similar, but in practice they should be kept apart. One exception exists, however; aid and development efforts included in missionary work should not be restricted to persons sympathetic to the Christian faith. Rather, it should be motivated solely by the need of the other. Archbishop Paarma stresses that one must not take advantage of a person’s needs for religious purposes. To shed light upon this idea, Mr Virtanen refers to the example of the recent tsunami catastrophe in Southeast Asia. In the aid work that followed, he argues, what mattered was not a person’s religion, but rather their need. In Mr Virtanen’s opinion, this should be the order of priorities: first, caring for the needs of the other, then perhaps discussing differences in faith.\textsuperscript{15}

\textsuperscript{13} ‘Ja voihan se olla, että jos me yhdessä, eri uskontojen yhteistyönä, voisimme teh- dä tämän maailman paremmaksi, niin me olemme silloin jo tulleet lähenmääksi toinen toisimmalle, ja jotain siitä lähetystyöstä on tapahtunut’ (IF mgt 2005/10).

\textsuperscript{14} IF mgt 2005/11.

\textsuperscript{15} ‘Ja siellä tuli ne käytännön teot mukaan, siellä ei kysytty, että mitä uskontoa edustat, vaan siellä kysyttiin mitä sinä tarvitset, ja se on minusta se tärkein kysymys ensin. … Että kuka sinä olet ja mitä sinä tarvitset? Sen jälkeen sitten voidaan keskustella, että jaa, että mimmoinen jumala sinulla on?’ (IF mgt 2005/8.)
God in Other Religions

Interreligious dialogue, it has been argued, places high demands on the participants: it is not to be conducted half-heartedly, with hidden motives or without a willingness to question one’s own preconceived ideas. In order for dialogue to achieve peace and reconciliation, as presumed in the Peace Appeal, both parties need to conceive of the relationship as an encounter between I and Thou, and be able to preserve their own convictions, while at the same time being open and humble towards the otherness of the other. One threat to dialogue, though it is refuted by the church leaders, might occur when the aims of dialogue become confused with those of missionary work. Another, perhaps more subtle, threat to dialogue is not granting the dialogue partner – or oneself – the autonomy and integrity of a Thou.

What position are the church leaders ready to grant their dialogue partners? S. Wesley Ariarajah (1999) discusses how this issue has been debated within the World Council of Churches over the years. The Council has taken a stand on the question of God in other religions on several occasions. Ariarajah believes the WCC is presently ready to affirm the notion of a sincere search for God within other religions. Lately, the support for the thought of God’s presence in other religions has grown, too. Finding God in other religions is still a controversial issue and no common understanding has emerged. Most members maintain that salvation is found only through Jesus Christ, while others argue that the ‘conviction that God as creator of all is present and active in the plurality of religions makes it inconceivable … that God’s saving activity could be confined to any one continent, cultural type, or group of peoples’ (Ariarajah 1999: 116). Inspired by this discussion, I posed the following three questions to the church leaders: Can we see a sincere search for God in other religions? Can we see the presence of God in other religions? Can God be found in other religions? The answers I received reveal interesting and, in my view, intentionally ambiguous positions.

The first question receives a unanimous answer in the affirmative from the church leaders. All of them stress that seeking God and religious truth are fundamental to all human life. God is the creator of the whole world, therefore, we find a longing for God in the souls and minds of all people. The question of God’s presence in other religions receives more varied responses. Archbishop Leo finds nothing controversial in the statement since God, in his view, is present in every person he has created. This is also the view of Mr Virtanen. Bishop Wróbel and Archbishop Paarma both
point out that God has the power to reach out to his creation in any way he chooses, and therefore we cannot exclude the possibility of him being present in other religions, in other peoples’ search for a better life. Yet, they stress, the complete solution to the quest for God’s presence is Jesus Christ.

Can God or a way to God, then, be found in other religions? This is, as Archbishop Paarma formulates it, a problematic issue. On the one hand, Christianity builds on the thought of one path leading to eternal life and a true connection to God – that of Jesus Christ. But is everyone else then excluded from salvation? Paarma says that we have no answer to these questions. In his view we must leave many questions open: ‘We only know that Jesus Christ is the way. But is there another way? We do not know of any other way.’

Mr Virtanen and Bishop Wróbel articulate more clearly their scepticism about the possibility of finding a full and true connection to God in other religions. God is not far away from any one of us, he calls us all and everyone has her own way to God, Virtanen maintains. But what kind of a God can be found along these different paths? Mr Virtanen, however, believes that the Christian perception of God is the ‘sweetest and nicest’, an opinion he bases on the Gospel and what it tells us about the love of God. Bishop Wróbel is certain that you can find God in other religions, but makes one important reservation: he doubts whether you can find the complete divine truth elsewhere.

Bishop Leo, for his part, affirms the ambiguity of the question as to whether it is possible to find God in other religions by answering: ‘Well, I will at least not deny it.’ During the interview he clarifies this statement by saying that he finds we definitely have all we need in the teachings of the Gospel, but that good teaching can be found elsewhere, too.

16 ‘Me tiedämme vain sen, että Jeesus Kristus on tie. Mutta onko joku muu? Ei meillä ole tietoa mistään muusta tietää.’ (If mgt 2005/10.)
17 ‘… voisi ajatella, että kristillinen jumalakäsitys on ehkä kaikkein suloin ja mukavin ajatellen sitä, mitä evankeliumit meille kertovat Jumalan rakkaudesta’ (If mgt 2005/8).
18 ‘Aber, ob man volle Wahrheit über Gott findet, das bezweifle ich’ (If mgt 2005/11).
19 ‘No, en minä ainakaan sitä mene kyelämään’ (If mgt 2005/9).
20 ‘… kyllä siinä evankeliumin opetuksessa on ihan kaikki tarpeellinen, siinähän on kaikkea sitä tarpeellista mitä on sitten monessa muussakin’ (If mgt 2005/9).
The complex answers to these questions are, in my view, highly relevant for interreligious dialogue and the balance between the similarities and differences, involved in such relationships. In analysing these answers, it is clear that the church leaders respect and value the endeavours of persons committed to other religions: a longing for God is seen as genuine in all religions. The questions of God’s presence and the possibility of finding God in other religions, nevertheless, reveal a wish to protect the exclusivity of one’s own faith, seeing it as different from the others. This, of course, is not surprising. If you embrace your religion whole-heartedly, it is inconceivable that it could be exchanged for any other tradition in the twinkling of an eye.

Regarding one’s own faith as the only right path for oneself must not include, however, self-righteous and hostile claims to superiority. With Buber, one could say that there are several doorways leading to the eternal Thou, because the path leading thereto is different for every person (Buber 1958: 98–9, 102). What we call this eternal Thou is thus of lesser interest: ‘For he who speaks the word God and really has Thou in mind (whatever the illusion by which he is held), addresses the true Thou of his life’ (Buber 1958: 77–8). Who the eternal Thou is, is thus left open: the main thing is not that you hold an opinion, but that you have a path with a goal, a real commitment.

This might be understood as a relativistic conclusion, but this is, I believe, neither the intention of the church leaders, nor is it my interpretation. Rather, it is a call for reflection and self-reflectivity. As mentioned, the aim of interreligious dialogue is not to abolish differences, but to acknowledge the value of all participants as unique in their own right. The dialogue requires that we see each other as legitimate perspectives on the world; as precious individuals to be taken seriously and to be treated in a responsible, respectful way (Winch 1987: 177–8; Gaita 1999: 281–2). Taking the other seriously means granting him the status of a fully capable moral agent. To accomplish this, we must acknowledge that the conceived other has feelings, hopes and thoughts that are as deep as, though not necessarily the same as, ours (Gaita 1991: 158). Even if I do not share another person’s views and values, I can still recognise her as a unique and legitimate perspective on the world (Phillips 2001: 6, 307).

Such an encounter with another person always places us in the situation of a moral decision; it requires our attention, reflection and responsibility – every time anew. This situation has to be addressed time and time again in a sincere, open and thorough process of reflection in relation to the specific situation and the specific person we stand before. Therefore, dia-
Dialogue should be based neither on an ethic of rules and regulations nor on a relativistic attitude of ‘anything goes’. The importance of knowing yourself and being confident about your own identity appear to be key issues in this discussion. We may also recall the comment by Archbishop Paarma: we know that our path leads to unity with God, and if there are other paths, they are not known to us. Such a stance is criticised by Ariarajah, though: ‘Our generation must move forward from neutrality to a more genuine appreciation of the religious lives of our neighbours, he believes; we cannot afford to continue saying: we do not know’ (Ariarajah 1999: 123). My conclusion however is that openness and humility are needed in interreligious dialogue. So, the answers given by the church leaders are perhaps the only possible ones for dialogue truly be a dialogue which defends mutual otherness. Dialogue should open my eyes to the uniqueness and uncompromised dignity of the other, creating ways for us to turn towards each other, calling each other Thou. But dialogue should also allow me to acknowledge my own identity in a positive way, offering a safe and inspiring ‘home’ to start the journey from.

Creating Peace Means Responsibility and Action

The analysis above has shown that the issues of interreligious dialogue and peace are apprehended and discussed with a good deal of unanimity among the church leaders interviewed. They all stress the value of difference, the importance of knowing yourself when entering into dialogue and they all allow for the presence of the divine in – at least some – other religions. As leaders of their churches, the interviewees discuss these topics mostly on a general level. When asked they, however, underline the importance of personal responsibility and involvement in order that the values expressed in the Peace Appeal may be put into action. Creating peace is up to every one of us, not just politicians and world leaders, Bishop Wróbel stresses: ‘Der Frieden muss in den Herzen des Menschen beginnen.’

At an initial level, it is important to learn about the ideals of peace and companionship in religions, Wróbel continues, but we must also take these principles to heart, make them our own and use them in all aspects of our lives. God gave us free will, Wróbel as well as Virtanen argue. It is therefore up to each of us to make the decision in our hearts about whether

21 IF mgt 2005/11.
to carry the responsibility for peace or not: ‘Der Mensch ist fähig diese, Gottes Stimme zu hören und zu akzeptieren. Man muss selbst wählen.’

Creating the impetus for peace is thus an individual responsibility, the church leaders claim. Love, peace and tolerance are key words in all religions, Mr Virtanen underlines, but nevertheless, violence and hatred seem to be the key actions. The fine ideals expressed in the Peace Appeal are not being put into practice. The church leaders therefore stress the importance of acting to bring about peace and reconciliation. Acting together unites people more than anything else, Archbishop Paarma stresses: ‘the common task, responding to the needs of others, unites us and tears down the images of enmity.’

One day, the Lord will ask: did you do enough, Mr Virtanen points out. It is therefore the responsibility of every Christian to act for peace and to care for others.

Activity and responsibility are central also in Buber’s philosophy. You cannot reach another person if you exclude God, but neither can you reach God if you exclude the people around you (Buber 1958: 108–9). Believing is thus affirming others as Thou and also affirming yourself. The path to the eternal Thou passes through the world and I–Thou-relationships, the ‘living reality’ (Buber 1958: 88). In encountering the eternal Thou we are commissioned to act in the world. This statement seems to be descriptive of the commitment called for in the Peace Appeal. As the church leaders point out, working for peace is closely connected to individual responsibility. Religions or cultures as such are not agents fighting poverty and suppression, rather it is individual persons who make decisions and interpretations in their daily lives. Interreligious dialogue is always an interpersonal dialogue, a fact which makes it a moral issue (Illman 2005).

Interreligious encounter places great responsibility on our shoulders. The world is entrusted to us, and we are to respond to this confidence by taking our responsibility (Buber 1947: 52). It is therefore up to me to try to encounter the other as a Thou, even though he might choose not to respond to me in the same way. Love means engagement in the world, it is the responsibility of an I for a Thou. Therefore, the opposite of love is not hatred but indifference (Gaita 1991: 179; Dilman 1987: 66). Love includes a willingness to be bound to other persons, but it still allows enough space for them to be themselves (Dilman 1987: 86, 88–9). The clearest response to

22 IF mgt 2005/11.
23 ‘… se yhteinen tehtävä, ihmisten hätä ja siihen vastaaminen yhdistää myöskin, ja purkaa näitä viholliskuvia’ (IF mgt 2005/10).
such theoretical claims is stated by Bishop Wróbel. As believers, we should accept responsibility for the world and not turn our backs on it, he argues. In the Bible, love has a practical aspect to it. Therefore, he is troubled when he hears Christians talk about God’s love and loving your neighbours but without giving their words any practical content. Love is more than a feeling, he claims: love is a demand for human rights, respect and peace. Archbishop Leo makes a similar point:

Indeed, a person can have good thoughts, but the thoughts are in his own head, they do not show. But words are already a little more, words can at least be heard and words can make someone else think. But still, words without deeds are somewhat light-weight.24

Concluding Remark

This article has touched upon interreligious dialogue and its significance for creating an impetus for peace in the world today. Through an analysis of the empirical material – the Peace Appeal signed by four Christian church leaders in Finland and interviews with them – the current topic has been illuminated from different angles. In my interpretation, three terms arise as especially significant in this discussion: love as respect and engagement, responsibility as an individual ethical demand, and otherness as an important acknowledgement of the autonomy of another person and of oneself.

Dialogue is a demanding task, the church leaders conclude. Interreligious co-operation is connected with fundamental questions that are not always easy to reach a consensus on, Mr Virtanen notes. Unfortunately, the easiest way to solve these matters is often not to get involved with the other at all, a situation in which everyone happily keeps themselves to themselves.25 Nevertheless, the church leaders agree that both ecumenical co-operation

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24 ‘Kyllähän ihmisellä voi olla hyviä ajatuksia itsessänsä, mutta se on vain, että ne ajatukset ovat sen toisen omassa päässä, niin ne eivät näy. Mutta sanatkin ovat jo vähän enemmän, sanat sentään kuuluvat ja sanat voi saada jonkun toisen ajattelemaan. Mutta sanatkin ilman tekoja niin kuitenkin ne ovat sitten vähän kevyttä.’ (IF mgt 2005/9.)

25 ‘... ja niitä [kysymyksiä] ei ole aina helppoa ratkaista yhteyden suuntaan. Se on paljon helpompia ratkaista niin, että me pysymme omillamme ja te omillanne, niin me olemme kaikki onnellisia!’ (IF mgt 2005/8.)
and interreligious dialogue are fruitful and constructive in Finland, attracting benevolent interest from the wider public. This is an interesting development calling for further analysis, especially against the background of the negative evaluation of traditional missionary work.

The church leaders are also united in their view that interreligious dialogue will become a crucial question in the future. We have no other choice than to engage in dialogue, Bishop Wróbel states. Mr Virtanen and Archbishop Leo share this view; the greatest challenges in interreligious relationships are still ahead, Archbishop Leo adds. Archbishop Paarma calls himself an optimist: the task of creating peace on earth might seem unrealistic, but we need visionaries who dare to work for and dream of the impossible. They can pave the way for a new world: ‘If the religions can be won for peace everywhere, then we have the hope of creating peace and a more just system in the world.’26 Here, too, further investigation is vital, bringing in the perspectives of the dialogue partners, in Finland and on the global scene.

What hopes do the church leaders attach to the signing of the Peace Appeal? Bishop Wróbel and Archbishop Paarma hope that it can inspire people to engage in peace work, and make them conscious of the fact that peace is a moral demand bestowed on all of us. Even though the Appeal has not reached a large audience yet, a network oriented towards peace has been created which, step by step, can work to realise the conditions for peace. By signing the Appeal, Mr Virtanen says, the churches give an important signal that they are ready to engage in dialogue and to interpret Christianity as a message of peace and love, forgiveness and reconciliation. Implementing these ideals will largely be an aspect of everyday life. Archbishop Leo agrees that this is a first small step on a long journey, but that it can make people conscious of the opinions of the churches and their leaders: ‘We talk about this hope, and we should be prepared to listen to what others say about their own hopes. Because it is all, however, the shared hope of humanity.’27

26 ‘Jos uskonnot saadaan kaikkialla rauhan puolelle, niin silloin meillä on jota-kin toivoa saada maailmaan rauhaa ja oikeudenmukainen systeemi’ (IF mgt 2005/10).
27 ‘Me kerromme tästä toivosta, ja pitää kuunnella, mitä muut kertovat omasta toivostansa. Koska se on kaikki kuitenkin ihmiskunnan yhteistä toivoa.’ (IF mgt 2005/11.)
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In this article I will discuss the role of ethics and religion in the context of the current political debate on assisted reproduction in Finland. There is reason to ask why the issues of family structures, gender roles and sexuality cause conflict situations in politics and society. How should we understand the nature of political conflicts concerning family, gender and sexuality? For a proper understanding of these conflicts, we need a nuanced analysis of the role of ethics and religion in political debates in a secular European culture. In this article I will focus on two examples drawn from Finnish discussions of assisted reproduction. The first example comes from recent parliamentary discussion of assisted reproduction, and the second example from how the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Finland has reflected on the same issue.

Assisted reproduction is a good example of how norms in society sometimes change within a short period. When assisted reproductive technologies were introduced a few decades ago, reactions were often negative. Many people considered the treatments for infertility to be unnatural and a manipulation of nature, as they separate procreation from sexuality and normal social relationships (Evans 1996: 3). Today they are routine treatments to which few people would react negatively. But there have also been other changes in the discourses on assisted reproduction. Infertility no longer seems to be considered only as a crisis for individuals or couples. It is also of concern to the whole of society. It has become an important legislative issue, which causes debates in society. The debates show that reproduction is not only of interest to society for medical reasons. I shall attempt to argue that there are tendencies which show a shift from a strictly medical or biological perspective towards an emphasis on the social, ideological and ethical aspects of assisted reproduction.

Medical aspects of assisted reproduction are of course relevant to the legislative process because of advances in medical technology. But lately most of the conflicts arising from the preparation of legislation on assisted
reproduction in Finland have been caused by differing views of the family. I understand this current debate mainly as a discussion on family structures and as a search for where the boundaries of the family lie. The main questions in the political debate on assisted reproduction in Finland are: Who should have the possibility of starting a family? Should all women, including single women and lesbian couples, have access to fertility care? And how should we understand the father’s role in the context of assisted reproduction? In the Finnish political debate on assisted reproduction, these seem to be the crucial questions which cause conflicts in parliament and debates in society. A leading Finnish journal on women’s studies commented on the current legislative proposal in an article entitled ‘Instituting a Queer Law?’ (Jämsä et al. 2005). The article makes the point that the Finnish government seems to have on its agenda the objective of securing the right of assisted reproduction not only for heterosexual couples, but also to both lesbians and single women. This is an interesting change of perspective in the preparation of a law on assisted reproduction in Finland.

Assisted Reproduction in the Nordic Countries

The Nordic legal systems exhibit a uniformity that arises from a common tradition and harmonization of legislation. However, laws and policies within the domain of assisted reproduction vary significantly across the Nordic countries. Finnish legislation on assisted reproduction has been in the process of preparation for the last twenty years. Contrary to the other Nordic countries, there is no separate law on assisted reproduction in Finland. This means that Finland has been the most permissive of the Nordic countries regarding assisted reproduction. Lesbian couples have access to assisted reproduction at private clinics, and there have also been some cases of surrogate motherhood, which is prohibited in other Nordic countries. However, the legislation on assisted reproduction is being re-evaluated in some other Nordic countries. For example, the Swedish parliament accepted a legislative proposal (Prop. 2004/05:137) on June 3rd 2005, giving lesbian couples access to assisted reproductive treatments. The law came into force on July 1st 2005.

The legislation in Denmark has gone in another direction. Denmark was before 1997 a country where many Nordic lesbian couples and single women went to obtain fertility care. But in 1997 Danish legislation on assisted reproduction was changed. Since 1997 Danish law forbids physi-
cians giving assisted reproductive treatments to women not living in a relationship with a man, but the legislation still leaves the possibility open for private clinics to provide treatments to all women. In 1989 Denmark was the first country in the world to pass a law legalizing registered partnerships between homosexual couples. In the context of Denmark’s liberal tradition, the change in the law on assisted reproduction in 1997 came as a surprise to many (Mustola 2001: 317).

From Medical Discourse towards New Perspectives

The question of who should have access to assisted reproductive technologies is at this point the most debated issue in discussions of assisted reproduction in Finland. In 2002 the government presented a legislative proposal (HE 76/2002) in which the right to assisted reproduction was also given to single women and to women living in registered partnerships. This meant a change of perspectives. In the earlier legislative proposals on assisted reproduction in Finland (1988, 1990 and 1997), single women and lesbian couples were denied the possibility of receiving treatments. The main reason for this was said to be that women should receive fertility care only on medical grounds. Medical and biological rhetoric was often used to define what is natural. The concept of artificial reproduction, which was used in the law proposals from 1988 and 1990, underlined the view that the heterosexual intercourse is a natural kind of procreation, while other kinds of procreation are unnatural (Mustola 1998: 71–2). The argument that a child has the right to a father has often been used in the debates. The welfare of the child was often defined as having two parents of different sexes. A fatherless child was expected to have different status in life from other children (Turunen 1998; Mustola 1998; Mustola 2000: 79–80).

The fatherless child was still a burning question in the parliamentary debates on the legislative proposal of 2002 (HE 76/2002). In the case of a child born to a single mother or a lesbian couple, the government wanted to give the child the right to know the identity of the sperm donor and the possibility to register the donor as its father. This might mean that the child would have right to inherit from its father and that the latter would be liable for the maintenance of the child. The right to a father was considered to be a basic right of the child. The child is guaranteed the possibility of a father, but the actual family situation with two mothers and a father is far from a traditional nuclear family. In the debates, the idea of a father seems to be the important thing rather than practical needs.
The legislative proposal was however withdrawn by the government in 2003, because of differing views in parliament. The reason for the withdrawal was that the legislative proposal no longer included single women and lesbian couples after discussions in the standing committee on laws (LaVM 29/2002). The committee explained its standpoint by saying that a child should always have the right to parents, a mother and a father. Another point was that the other Nordic countries had not given lesbian or single women access to assisted reproduction in 2002. In February 2006, the Finnish government presented a new legislative proposal on assisted reproduction (HE 3/2006). It again included the right to fertility care for single women and lesbian couples. The new legislative proposal has received much publicity in the Finnish media, for example through debates in newspapers. Even President Tarja Halonen expressed her opinion on the legislative proposal in the public debate when, in an interview, she claimed that lesbian women should have the right to assisted reproduction (Hufvudstadsbladet 2.10.05). It is obviously no longer only a debate about treatments for infertility. It is a debate about the family, gender roles and sexuality, which are some of the issues which tend to give rise to the keenest debates in society.

**Family Values in Concord and Conflict**

In June 2005 a Member of Parliament asked why the Finnish government was in such a rush to present a new legislative proposal on assisted reproduction in the following autumn. He asked if family values or what he called ‘biological truth’ was relevant to the government’s policy. The Minister of Justice, Johannes Koskinen, gave an interesting answer, in which he analysed the nature of the current conflict and explained the reasons behind the government’s agenda.

> The fact that the content of the requirements on the relationship has shown itself to be a problematic question, indicates that there have been changes in the family values in our society. There no longer seems to be any such family model, which generally can be seen as the only right one. (KK 551/2005, my translation.)

Koskinen here indicates that the pluralism of society, and the differing attitudes towards different family models create difficulties when it comes to passing laws on issues concerning family structures. He refers to family
values as something that used to be stable, but which are nowadays changing. Legislation on the family is slowly moving away from the situation in which it is possible to have only one right model of the family. But if there is no possibility of agreement in a pluralistic society, how would it be possible to create new legislation on issues concerning the family? Koskinen still thinks it is possible to continue developing legislation to take account of changing attitudes in society. He continues:

If you think about the effects of the law on assisted reproduction on values in society, you have to realize that changing the requirements for a [heterosexual] relationship does not mean that the present situation changes in any way (KK 551/2005, my translation).

Koskinen here points out that if the legislative proposal includes heterosexual couples, lesbian couples and single women, it would only reflect the present situation in society. In the absence of separate legislation on assisted reproduction, lesbian couples and single women have already had access to assisted reproductive technologies. Lesbian families are, as well as single parent families, already part of Finnish society (Kuosmanen 2000). Another reason for Koskinen saying this is probably that in 2001 the Finnish Parliament approved a legislative proposal legalizing registered partnerships between homosexual couples. Registered partnership is a new social institution in Finland, and other legislation is at this point catching up with the new situation in which homosexual couples are legally recognized.

It is obvious that in preparing this legislative proposal, the Ministry of Justice has chosen to focus on the social aspects of assisted reproduction, rather than the biological and medical aspects. Views about the family and gender roles are the issues that are considered to be the most problematic, but also the most important. One reason is, of course, that other aspects have already been dealt with during the past twenty years. But more importantly, I think this focus on the social and ethical aspects is something that can be recognized more widely in our society today.

**Children’s Rights**

The discourse on children’s rights is central to Finnish parliamentary debates on assisted reproduction. Children, of course, have a central position in the legislative proposal, since they will have to deal with many of the
practical consequences of the law. But children are at the same time part of the political rhetoric and of the discourses on what is sacred. Parents’ rights are often presented as being opposed to those of children. They seem to be two conflicting approaches to assisted reproductive technologies. The child-oriented approach is usually rather conservative, as it is often used to view access to assisted reproduction as being confined to the traditionally defined family. According to this approach, reproduction should be controlled and restricted. The parent-oriented approach is generally more liberal. Holders of this approach often defend people’s right to unrestricted procreative choices, for example, they disregard sexual orientation or family situation (Neri 1996: 145–6). On the other hand, discourses on children’s rights may also unite conflicting perspectives. Discourses on children’s rights seem to be a way of finding common ground, even though these rights may be understood in many different ways in political debates.

During the twentieth century, when the Nordic welfare states were set up, children’s rights gained a place in politics alongside parents’ rights. The perspective of children’s rights was given a central position when the UN’s Convention on the Right of the Child was agreed. Children have during the twentieth century become more autonomous citizens with recognized rights. Legislation has defined and redefined the meaning of childhood. The welfare state used to provide a guarantee of a good childhood through school, social security and the family. However, today there seems to be a change of direction. The state takes, in many respects, less responsibility for the details of children’s lives, and local influence and parental responsibility is much more emphasized. These changing relations between parents, institutions, the state and the market have led to a discussion on children’s rights. The welfare of the child has become a starting point both for social politics and for the different welfare institutions. The expression ‘the welfare of the child’ has been frequently used in Nordic political welfare debates – especially the political debates on family structures. But this does not necessarily mean that everyone would agree on what a child needs and what constitutes a good childhood (Sandin and Halldén 2003: 17–18).

‘The welfare of the child’ is in welfare politics mostly used to denote a perspective rather than a concept with a certain meaning. The meaning of ‘the welfare of the child’ has to be interpreted and used in a context. But at the same time, children’s rights are seen as absolute rights, which should not be compromised. A legal perspective is not the only motive behind discourses on children’s rights. The perspective of children’s right is often
mobilized to create a common ground and to make different perspectives converge (Sandin and Halldén 2003: 7–9, 17–18).

Reactions from the Church

The Finnish Lutheran Church has been heard several times during the twenty years of preparations of the legislative proposal on assisted reproduction. But during these twenty years, the opinion of the Church has changed. In 1985, artificial insemination was considered by the bishops of the Finnish Church to be unnatural and a threat to the family, because sperm from another man was introduced into the family. In 1985, adoption was considered by the bishops to be a preferable alternative to insemination (Piispainkokous 1985; Hytönen 2003: 85–91). But twenty years later, Archbishop Jukka Paarma talks about insemination as something that may strengthen the family.

At the opening session of the Church Synod on May 9th 2005, Archbishop Jukka Paarma gave a speech concerning fertility care. His main point was that children’s rights are the most important perspective in legislation on fertility care.

The statements made by the Church have varied to some extent, because the situation in society, as well as knowledge of these issues, has changed. The Church nowadays looks positively even upon artificial insemination, where sex cells from someone other than the family father are used. The focus has changed from biological to social fatherhood. (Paarma 2005, my translation.)

Archbishop Paarma notes that the opinion of the Church has changed during the last twenty years in the direction of an emphasis on social parenthood, but he still thinks that the main perspectives are the same as they were twenty years ago. Children’s rights and human dignity are the focus, and a child has the right to both a mother and a father. Having children is neither a subjective right, nor a human right. The ideal of the Church is a lifelong marriage between a man and a woman, and the Archbishop does not support the idea of giving fertility care to single women and lesbian couples. He claims that fertility care should be given only to heterosexual couples, who undertake to be parents to the child, which may possibly be born. The idea of surrogate motherhood is something that would imply so many problems, that he cannot accept it (Paarma 2005).
However, the Archbishop’s speech was not the Church’s last word on this issue. On August 17th 2005, the Church Council presented a statement on fertility care to the Ministry of Justice and the Ministry of Social Affairs and Health (Kirkkohallitus 2005). The Church claims that in the case of assisted reproduction only sex cells from spouses should be used, and if this is not the case, the couple should not receive fertility care at all. In this statement the Church Council placed a great deal of emphasis on biological parenthood. It claimed to share the view of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches, both of which believe that the use of donated sex cells will weaken the significance of marriage and is therefore not permissible. The change of direction in the discussions in the church came as a surprise, because it did not follow the line of the preparatory work for the statement. The new conservative standpoint was formulated during a plenary session of the Church Council and was voted for unanimously. The statement created strong reactions both in the media, in the Church and from other institutions and organizations. The statement has, for example, been described as a fundamentalist opinion, without any consideration of medical and theological standpoints (Kylätasku 2005).

The Lutheran theological tradition allows the Finnish Lutheran Church to formulate an independent view on ethical questions such as this. The emphasis on showing ecumenical unity with the Catholic and Orthodox Churches can be understood as a form of religious legitimation of conservative family values. The argument based on ecumenical unity is sometimes used in religious debates as an authoritative way of finding consensus, as it often is seen as superior to other critical arguments. The argument based on ecumenical unity has, for example, been frequently used in Lutheran debates on women priests. Another authoritative perspective used in the statement is children’s rights discourse. The statement presents a child’s right to a mother and a father as an obvious fact. Heterosexual marriage is said to provide the most secure family setting, especially from the child’s perspective.

Even though there have been differing views in the Finnish Church on different aspects of assisted reproduction, the discussion has still changed during the past twenty years towards an emphasis on social aspects of assisted reproduction. The biological naturalist view of the family represented in the statement of the Church Council in August 2005 has created strong reactions. This may be an example of how perspectives are changing from the medical and biological towards an emphasis on the social and ethical when legislating on the family.
The Role of Religion

The role of religion today is not necessarily only a matter of religious legitimation of conservative values (Berger 1967). Many of these values are reevaluated both in the Church and in politics. But even though values are changing, there is still a need for some kind of common ground. The political debate on assisted reproduction in Finland seems to be in the middle of such a search for common ground. Children’s rights discourse assumes the role of an absolute, which should not be compromised with. On the other hand, the expression ‘the welfare of the child’ is understood in different ways in political debates. In a kind of religious way the child seems to be uniting different political perspectives. Even though politicians mean different things, and have different goals, they share the same language when talking of the child. The child is a uniting symbol.

Religion does not seem to be visible on the surface of the parliamentary debates on assisted reproduction. Religious language, – for example, reference to the Bible – is not frequently used. Rather, the role of religion in this debate is to be found behind the debate itself, through religiously influenced worldviews and, in some cases, as a religious legitimation of conservative family values. It remains to be seen what kind of influence the Church Council’s statement will have on the parliamentary debates. But the role of religion does not necessarily have to be a matter of division and disruption. I have also argued that the role of religion may be found in the search for common ground and the use of uniting symbols. Some of the aspects of religion and ethics found in the Finnish political conflict over assisted reproduction seem to be characteristic of the Nordic societies in late modernity. Ethical conflicts are recognized in politics, but they are not necessarily solved only through religious legitimation of one model. There is no longer only one right family model. Legislation has to remain flexible in order to apply to individual life situations. In the family politics of late modernity, the pluralism of society is a starting point, but finding concord still has to be the aim of legislation.

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Religion, Values and Knowledge-power in Contemporary Secular Spaces

The Case of an English Medical Centre

The aim of this article is to examine the way in which knowledge-power is exercised in contemporary controversies in healthcare, and what this flexing of discursive muscles shows about the nature of secularity and its relationship to religion. The discussion is focused on two controversial issues at the heart of general medical practice in the UK: the doctor–patient relationship and complementary and alternative medicine. As will become clear, participation in these debates is not restricted to doctors alone, but increasingly to government departments, professional medical and scientific bodies, therapists beyond the medical mainstream, and patients themselves. What is interesting for scholars of religion is the way in which the debates (which are not confined only to discourse, but are also reflected in physical and social spaces) reveal deep-seated but dynamic values. The debates themselves, and many of the values and opinions expressed in association with them, are ostensibly ‘secular’, but, as we shall see, ‘religion’ has an interesting place within them. It variously enters the scene as a critical tool, the butt of jokes, the enemy or a potentially fruitful partner (particularly in its nascent guise as ‘spirituality’). I would suggest that there are two important outcomes of this examination: first, the opening up of a secular organisation and exposure of the heterogeneity of value and knowledge positions within it, and, secondly, the recognition that methodological tools from within the study of religions (in this case a spatial analysis for locating religion) can be put to use in such an examination, in pursuit of a fuller understanding of secularity.

Introduction: Context and Controversy

I shall begin with a controversy which illustrates the way in which deep-seated interests concerning the religious and the secular are roused by the
subject of contemporary medicine. Between May 2004 and April 2005, I directed a research project entitled ‘Locating religion in the fabric of the secular: an experiment in two public sector organisations’ (a high school and a medical centre). The research was funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council in the UK, and my co-worker was Dr Myfanwy Franks – she undertook the ethnographic work, and assisted in its analysis and writing up.1 The aims of the project were, first, to test the feasibility of the spatial approach described in my book, The Location of Religion: A Spatial Analysis (2005) for analysing data on religion and secularity collected in public sector organizations, and, secondly, to yield new insights on the relationship between the religious and the secular in domains associated primarily with a modernist secular agenda.

Although we aimed to investigate ‘the location of religion’ in secular organizations, we could not guarantee in advance that we would find it (except in so far as such organisations probably retained formal historical, legal or institutional links with particular Christian denominations). Our project proposal – for which we were given ‘Innovation funding’ for use in speculative research – allowed us to experiment. It presupposed that we would use an innovative methodology to attempt to break open ‘the secular’ (that body of discourse and values that has become second nature to us in modern Britain) and that, in doing so, we might fail to find any trace of ‘religion’ as such. Of course, as we know this depends on how one defines these terms and I will come on to that a little later.

Let me turn now to the controversy. During the later stages of the project the research fellow and I were interviewed by our university press office and an article was published in the University of Leeds newsletter, The Reporter, entitled ‘Looking for God in public places’ (21.3.05). The article was illustrated with a picture of the two of us standing in front of the motto of the University’s Old Medical School. The caption for the photo read:

Religion in evidence – Professor Kim Knott (left) and Myfanwy Franks in the entrance to the old medical school where a Latin inscription reads: “Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers; freely you have received, freely

1 I am grateful to the Arts and Humanities Research Board (now Council) for funding this project (B/IA/AN5276/APN17687), and to Myfanwy Franks for her contribution to the research for this article. Both of us extend our gratitude to those in the medical centre who gave their time and insights during the fieldwork and ensuing workshop.
give.” Absent from this edited passage from Matthew 10:8 is “raise the
dead and cast out evils” which, of course, are found today in emergency
resuscitation and psychiatry. (The Reporter 21.03.05.)

Following its publication, The Reporter received several letters pointing
out their typographical mistake: the missing passage from Matthew 10:8
should of course have read ‘Raise the dead and cast out devils.’ One of the
letters came from a Professor of Psychiatry. He was clearly upset, as he
said,

by the allusion to psychiatry in the caption. For only a short time in the
long history of medicine has mental disorder been attributed to dev-
ils, possession or inherent evil, and it certainly isn’t in modern medi-
cine. Your joke about psychiatry trades on a metaphor about troubled
people, but more strongly than that it plays to a certain sort of prejudice
about mental illness … (The Reporter 03.05.05.)

I need not go into the details of our reply to him, which was published
along with his letter in the May issue of the magazine, suffice it to say that
we denied it was a joke. What he perhaps did not realise was that his re-
sponse confirmed the very point that we had made in the original article,

Religion can also be found in opposition, or controversy, as Professor
Knott explains: “Where you have two world views in opposition you
begin to see strong moral positions revealing those things that people
hold [to be] sacred” (The Reporter 21.03.05).

His strong reaction against equating mental illness with demonic posses-
sion and against bringing supernatural explanations into modern medi-
cine exposed the nerve-endings surrounding the religious/secular bound-
ary. His reaction confirmed the closeness of the very things he wished to
keep apart. There is a genealogical relationship between religion and mod-
ern medicine (including the treatment of mental illness). It has been use-
fully discussed by Michel Foucault (1973), Talcott Parsons (1951, 1985) and
Bryan Turner (1992, 1996) among others. It is more than just a historical re-
lationship of succession, of medicine superseding religion; it is a past and
present relationship, both discursive and practical, which rotates around
conceptions of life, health, destiny, healing and what it is to be ‘normal’.
Who authorises, governs and participates in the debate and practice of
these issues is what is at stake here.
Our correspondent, the Professor of Psychiatry, would evidently like religion to be kept well out of what he sees to be secular territory. Its presence on the edge of that territory he finds disturbing and dangerous. From his perspective on religion – which would undoubtedly be contested by many religious people themselves – religious ideas and practices run counter to contemporary views about the nature of persons, health and ill-health, equality and difference. Such a contemporary perspective, despite being institutionalised and empowered by the medical mainstream, must still be argued for and defended when under attack from other positions, not least of all religion.

Returning now to the research project itself, what a spatial approach based on controversies enabled us to do was to look beneath the surface of secular public organisations, and to reflect in depth on differing ideological, professional and moral perspectives (such as those we have just seen). We identified two areas of anxiety or controversy in our examination of the medical centre, these being the doctor–patient relationship and complementary and alternative medicine or ‘CAM’. We interpreted these controversies as physical, social and mental sites, and considered the ways in which they were extended historically and co-existed simultaneously with other related spaces (Knott and Franks, in press). We looked at them as sites of struggle in which various knowledge-power positions were in contention, and reflected on how they were produced and reproduced.

Occasionally, aspects of conventional religion came to the fore in our observations and interviews, such as ideas about healing and vocation in the medical profession; the religious allegiance of patients and medical staff; the proximity of the medical centre to a Catholic church. However, even where no explicit religious concerns were evident, our approach allowed us to identify competing moral discourses which touched on vital matters. Furthermore, we could see that the ‘secular’ itself was constituted by a variety of positions and values, and it is these and their implications for issues of moral authority and knowledge-power on which I intend to focus here.

It is my aim then to consider discursive controversies in an English medical centre, an organisation at the frontline of national public health provision. As a starting point I take it for granted that such an organisation is ‘non-religious’ in our conventional use of that term, and suggest that it is a secular body, part of the public services provided by the state, ‘free at the point of delivery’, overseen by a government department and regulated by laws, government policy and National Health Service (NHS) directives. However, as Sophie Gilliat-Ray has suggested, ‘some of the richest insights
into contemporary religious life are to be found outside formal congregations, away from religious buildings and in perhaps the most “unlikely” secular institutions’ (2005, cf. Beckford 1999). What does a spatial approach to two controversies in a medical centre reveal about the ideological and moral struggles currently taking place in public health in the UK? What was the nature of the values exposed in such struggles? What were we able to learn about the nature of secular knowledge-power? And, how, if at all, did this relate to religion?

In what follows I shall first consider the following key terms – the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’, ‘controversy’ and ‘power’ – before going on to introduce the space of the medical centre, and then to examine the two controversies of the doctor–patient relationship and complementary and alternative medicine and what they reveal about the struggle for moral authority and knowledge-power in contemporary general medical practice.

**Definitions: Religion, Secularity and Knowledge-power**

In my recent book I rejected the idea of settling for either an existing definition of religion (or secularity) or of inventing one of my own, either before or after the research process. Instead I opted for a nominal definition of religion (Comstock 1984, Anttonen 2005a) in which the meaning or contents of ‘religion’ is not determined by any single property, substance or function, but where ‘the range of possible meanings … is derived from the discourse in which [the term “religion”] is used’ (Anttonen 2005a).

In *Social Theory and Religion*, James Beckford states that, ‘religion is … a particularly interesting ‘site’ where boundary disputes are endemic and where well-entrenched interest groups are prepared to defend their definition of religion against opponents’ (2003: 13). It is a similar perspective that underpins the approach I have taken. With Beckford, I assert that ‘definitions have a broadly political significance in the sense of relating to struggles for power’ (1999: 23) and look at contested spaces or ‘boundary disputes’ to see what they reveal about interests, but, unlike him, I do not depend upon ‘religion’ being the subject of contestation. Instead, I assume that in all knowledge-power struggles people do not just fight for the sake of it; rather they argue about things which are important to them and which arise from values they hold that are non-negotiable – or ‘sacred’ (Anttonen 1996, 2005b) – and beliefs about which they have conviction or that they want to test.

In my book, for the purpose of considering ‘the location of religion’, I
devised a field of religious/secular knowledge-power relations based on the following assumptions: First, that in the modern West the religious and the secular may be said to be ‘two sides of a single coin’ – what Grace Jantzen (1998: 8) has called ‘a binary constitutive of modernity’ – and, second, that, as Charles Taylor (1998, 2002) and Talal Asad (2003) have argued, European Christianity and secularity are historically enmeshed, and philosophically, legally and ethically intertwined despite often appearing to be radically dissimilar and in opposition. I suggest that such ideological distance and contestation can be explained historically and dialectically. This knowledge-power field – which of course is a scholarly construct for analysing contemporary struggles about beliefs and values – provides a frame for deliberating upon notions of the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ and on discourse about them. It does not provide hard and fast definitions of either. Neither does it resolve the difficulty of how to distinguish between them. This is with good reason, as there exists no static boundary between them (Beckford 2003: 21). The ‘secular’ and the ‘religious’ are within the same force-field, in a categorical relationship predicated upon a constantly negotiated boundary. What the field does do is provide a context for sorting the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ according to the way subjects use such notions; furthermore, it makes space for competing ‘religious’ notions, or competing ‘secular’ ones: it acknowledges the heterogeneity of discursive positions. It is precisely the heterogeneity of such positions within the field’s ‘secular’ camp that is of importance in this article, though I shall also consider how ‘religion’ is viewed and used to authorise and critique various secular value positions.

So, for the purposes of this article the ‘religious’ and the ‘secular’ – and a third post-secular position (which is often expressed in terms of ‘spirituality’ rather than ‘religion’ or ‘religiosity’) – form a field of knowledge-power relations (Foucault in Gordon 1980; Carrette 1999, 2000). In referring to such relationships in terms of knowledge-power I am following Foucault in drawing attention to the role of discursive formations in modern institutional struggles, though, like Foucault, I do not intend ‘to isolate discourse from the social practices that surround it’ (Rabinow 1991: 10). More generally, by ‘power’ I mean both social- and knowledge-power that may be used coercively or subversively, for discipline, survival or liberation, in struggles for empowerment, identity or mastery whether large or small scale. In stating that all ideas and groups need to acquire a morphology if they are to be successful and lasting, Henri Lefebvre (1991: 417) reminds us that, in focusing on a multi-dimensional space, in this case a medical centre, we need to be aware of the social and knowledge struggles
that have taken place to bring it about as well as those that contribute to its maintenance and future development.

The Space of an English Medical Centre

The medical centre in which our research was conducted was situated in a seaside town in the south of England, serving a largely white population with a high percentage of elderly people. It was not selected for reasons of representativeness – no single medical centre could provide that – but because of its clientele and its ease of access (through a personal connection). The fieldworker, Myfanwy Franks, and I had previous experience of research with people and organisations which were predominantly minority ethnic and minority religious in character (Franks 2001, Franks and Medforth 2005, Knott and Khokher 1993), and decided it was important for us to select an organisation in which religion and ethnicity were less prominent and secularity arguably more so. As our research project was small scale and experimental and we had no comparative ambitions, we selected only one medical centre (and one school – which I shall not discuss here). We know that we would probably have learnt other things and encountered other spaces if our choice of medical centre had differed.

The ethnographic process entailed Myfanwy spending time in the waiting room, observing the various physical and social spaces, taking field notes, and interviewing practitioners in their habitats. No patients were interviewed for ethical reasons. Attention was paid to the spatial nature of the medical centre, its history and context, and to its internal character (architecture and layout, open and closed spaces, boundaries and directions, doctor–patient spaces, sites of information, etc.), and these sometimes generated questions and discussion points in the interviews.

The medical centre, a new building on former church land owned by a Cambridge University college (though many miles from Cambridge), was situated in a greenfield site near to houses and opposite a Catholic church, the large cross of which could easily be seen from the waiting room. The historical power of Christianity in England, its symbolic pres-
ence in churches, and continued provision of pastoral and civic as well as religious services, is all too easy to overlook. In fact, in the planning stage of the medical centre, the Catholic priest had organised a public meeting to discuss the suitability and use of the site and the plans for its development. Of course, a few of the centre’s patients and staff attended his church and some frequented other places of worship, whilst others – including most of the doctors – deliberately eschewed religious belief and practice. Moving inside the medical centre, it was impossible not to be impressed by its large ‘waiting room’ with high ceiling and roof beams. As a time-space of waiting and dwelling on matters of health, healing and destiny, it resembled the interior of a church or cathedral, a point noted by one of the doctors.

There is much more that could be said about spatial methodology (Knott 2005), the nature of the space of the medical centre and what it revealed, but these are not my intentions here. The discussion that follows derives from the application of a spatial approach, one in which, following Henri Lefebvre (1991), I treat the medical centre as a physical, mental and social space; I use the properties of space – of configuration, extension, simultaneity and power, developed from concepts used by Foucault (1986) – to think about the place of the medical centre, its relationships and discourses. The geography of the body, and ideas about the production and reproduction of space are used to think about how moral and ideological struggles are enacted in this medical context. This approach is discussed and applied in Knott and Franks (in press).

In the remainder of the article I shall consider two controversies which illustrate the way in which knowledge-power is exercised and contested and secular values are expressed before returning to the subject of the relationship between religion and secularity in the space of a contemporary medical centre.

3 Interviews with staff, 18.05., 29.06. and 30.06.04.
4 Interview with GP1 (male), 30.06.04. Resemblance and metaphor may have no scientific or formal evidential status in a discussion about the relationship between two separate institutions, worldviews or discourses, but their significance in the process of representation makes them worthy of note. Architects draw on a variety of influences, memories and resources in designing buildings, and users have these in mind too in inhabiting them.
Controversies I: The Doctor–Patient Relationship

An interesting entry point for a discussion of the social and mental space of the doctor–patient relationship is the physical space of the shield, or crest, of the Royal College of Physicians, a flourishing organisation, first established in 1518, which aims to support doctors in improving healthcare for patients.\(^5\) A right hand descends vertically from a sunburst at the top of the shield and takes the pulse of another hand placed horizontally beneath it. The pomegranate, a traditional symbol of life and regeneration associated with the goddess Persephone, is below. The image suggests a confidential relationship between two parties that is also hierarchical and religious: the sunburst from which the healer’s hand emerges implies that (s)he is acting under divine inspiration and/or has some knowledge or power that is extramundane. The historical doctor–patient relationship, articulated in the physical space of this shield and in its many reproductions, suggests a top–down specialist/client, active/passive relationship. But to what extent is this traditional relationship borne out by other spatial clues revealed in our examination of the medical centre?

In its modern, spacious consulting rooms the arrangement of the seating is generally such that the desk does not come between doctor and patient. The presence of chairs of similar size and height for both parties suggests a professional awareness of both the way in which power relations may be reproduced in design and furniture, and the discourses of equality and co-agency that are particularly evident in contemporary health care and counselling.

Increasing pressures on what was once the confidential and hierarchical social space of the doctor–patient relationship mean that, although there may be only two people facing one another in the consulting room, the space of the relationship is now filled with power relations and gazes many of which originate outside the encounter, whether in law, public policy or popular culture. The ‘medical gaze’, a concept founded particularly upon Foucault’s conception of the historical development of the scope and

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\(^5\) The Arms of the Royal College of Physicians were granted in 1546, and a modern version of the shield which forms part of those arms can be viewed in the top left hand corner of the College website (http://www.rcplondon.ac.uk/college/). I am indebted to Myfanwy Franks for this account of the arms and for much of what follows in this and the next section. Though the methodology and final presentation are mine, the fieldwork and its analysis are hers.
status of medical knowledge and power (1973), is no longer monolithic but has been disrupted by the governmental gaze, and by the changing expectations of the role of the patient. For instance, as a result of the conviction in 2000 of the general practitioner (GP) Harold Shipman for the murder of fifteen patients and the subsequent inquiry, doctors have lost some autonomy and are now subjected to increased surveillance. Further, as part of their new contract, GPs are expected to achieve specific targets according to which they are paid. More than ever before, the patient is being invited, indeed expected, to participate actively in their health care, and this new approach goes hand in hand with a conception of ‘the informed patient’, irrespective of their ability or willingness to take on this role. This inevitably leads to conflicts between ‘lay and expert medical knowledges’ (Henwood et al. 2003: 598) and to the new consumerist patient making demands that cannot always be met within existing financial and clinical constraints. Information technology has also entered the social and physical space of the encounter giving increased power to both sides, with GPs routinely using computers during consultations and with many patients, as ‘online self helpers’ (Ferguson 1997), making use of the Internet in order to seek advice and become better informed (Shilling 2002).

The controversy between technological intervention, surveillance and quantification, on the one hand, and the qualitative role of carer and healer on the other is being played out within the limited time-space of the doctor–patient consultation. But, there are also historical assumptions about the nature of the doctor–patient relationship that are carried into a consul-

7 The number of Shipman’s victims is thought to be as high as 250. The Shipman Inquiry recommended changes in the licensing and revalidation of GPs. A new system and guidelines on ‘fitness to practise’ were introduced by the General Medical Council in April 2005. Its guidelines on Good Medical Practice were being revised (2006).
11 This was borne out in the interview with GP (female), 30.06.04.
tation: it is linked by chains of memory to previous confidential and hierarchical relationships such as those centred round a priest, confessor, analyst or counsellor. One GP at interview, referring to the traditional response of patients to the authority of the doctor, ironically used religious imagery, saying, ‘Here is the fount of all wisdom. And I’m going to the shrine and saying “Please help”.’ And, of course, there are also social power issues, associated with gender, class, ethnicity, etc, affecting this complex relationship.

Another area of contestation is the importance of science and an evidence-based approach to treatment. According to its exponents, ‘Evidence-based medicine is the conscientious, explicit and judicious use of current best evidence in making decisions about the care of individual patients’ (Sackett et al. 1996: 71). It focuses on the use of randomised controlled trials, as well as systematic reviews and meta-analysis. There is an emphasis on linking published research to clinical practice, with GPs then being alerted to findings so that they can engage their practice with the evidence. Here we see the shift of power from the individual doctor, authorised by his or her training, experience and membership of professional bodies, to the GP as front-line representative of a highly scientific and academic approach to medical treatment.

Of the GPs we interviewed, all of whom acknowledged the contribution of evidence-based medicine (EBM), one emphasised the importance of medicine as an art as well as a science. Another, more secularist in outlook, conceded that one could go too far. He said,

I think you can be the ‘Citadel’ doctor who only wants science ... You do have to take into consideration people’s psychological state, their social concerns and you’ve got to take in their belief systems to an extent. Sometimes I find that difficult – taking in other people’s belief systems.

A third recognised the importance of EBM but felt confined by it.

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12 Interview with GP2 (female), 29.06.04.
13 It is closely linked to the Cochrane Collaboration, a worldwide network of centres whose aim is to foster this approach (http://www.cochrane.org).
14 Interview with GP2, 29.06.04.
15 Interview with GP1, 29.06.04. The ‘Citadel’ is the term used for the medical establishment by the jaded and disillusioned doctor, Andrew Manson, in A. J. Cronin’s novel *The Citadel* (1937).
You’re not supposed to do anything unless there’s been some paper showing that it has been effective. But it doesn’t always work like that. There may be a study showing that 75 per cent of people in this study responded well to such and such but you can’t always extrapolate [from] that to real life … in real life people don’t just come in with one problem – a lot of them have co-existing disease … it’s quite difficult and sometimes you just get a hunch you would like to try doing something.\(^\text{16}\)

Although they recognised its importance, these doctors expressed concern that EBM fails to accommodate other sorts of evidence amenable through experience, that it restricts their autonomy and knowledge, and prioritises evidence over patients’ accounts, beliefs and co-existing problems.

The medical literature is even more robust on this matter. One commentator (Sinclair 2004) suggested that EBM functions as a ‘new ritual’ in medical teaching; several others referred to it satirically as a ‘new religion’ (including a group known humorously as CRAP, Clinicians for the Restoration of Autonomous Practice). Although science has traditionally been opposed to religion by secularists on the grounds of religion’s other-worldliness, so-called blind faith and lack of an evidence-base – as EBM, science is here mocked for the faith its own exponents place on evidence. To quote one critic,

EBM has become the new religion – the new authority, with priests, acolytes, followers and a rigid dogma. The practising doctor cannot interact with it, cannot judge for himself or herself and cannot make his or her own decisions … It has created its own system of belief to which we have to practise faith-based medicine. (Rosenfeld 2004: 155.)

In the article entitled ‘EBM: unmasking the ugly truth’ (a parody published in the *British Medical Journal*) the authors claim to provide ‘irrefutable proof that EBM is, indeed, a full-blown religious movement, complete with a priesthood, catechisms, a liturgy, religious symbols, and sacraments’ (CRAP 2002: 1496). This satirical perspective is interesting for what it tells us about secular views of religion. Secular medical exponents who favour a more democratic and less scientific approach to treatment see EBM – like religion – as a rigid, unquestioning and authoritarian system.

So, within a controversy about the best way to practise medicine and treat patients we see the old struggle of secularism vs. religion raising its

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16 Interview with GP3, 30.06.04.
head, albeit in metaphorical form. But moving from the metaphor to the real issues at the heart of this struggle, what we see is that, within the secular system of contemporary medical practice, there are things deemed to be worth fighting about. The secular value system is not homogeneous. Different values – of the importance of the scientific method and the evidence that it can provide, and of the autonomy and judgement of the medical practitioner – are vigorously contended within the social space of the doctor–patient relationship and the time-space of their consultation. Furthermore, within a heterogeneous secular medical context, religion may be used pejoratively by advocates of one or another position to devalue the views of their opponents.

**Controversies II: Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM)**

As this last case has shown, the names and labels given to things can be revealing for understanding how they are conceived and contested. We may note then that, before the opening of the medical centre, the name ‘Health Centre’ was rejected by the senior doctor because he feared that people would think it offered alternative as well as conventional treatments. That this was an area of controversy was reinforced when he said to the researcher that he hoped they would not fall out with one another over the issue of CAM.17

The reasons for the popularity of CAM have been summarised by D. B. Clarke, M. A. Doel and J. Segrott as ‘dissatisfaction with orthodox medicine, a desire for holistic treatments that value patient experience, the emergence of “smart consumers” seeking self-empowerment through active healthcare decision-making, or … symptomatic of an age of cultivated anxiety’ (Clarke et al. 2004: 329; see also Sharples et al. 2003).18 Defined by Nikki Bradford (1996) as including five types of therapies – Eastern, manipulative, natural, active, and therapies involving external power – CAM is a further example of an ideological struggle within contemporary healthcare. The very appellation of complementary and alternative therapies as ‘alternative’ marks them out as different to mainstream medicine, though it also implies that they fulfil similar functions or goals; the term

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17 Whether because he thought her interest in religion or her gender and age would incline her to be sympathetic to CAM is not known. Interview with GP1, 29.06.04.
18 Authors’ citations not included.
‘complementary’ suggests that they add a further dimension or perspective to allopathic medicine. The scholar of religion, Dominic Corrywright (2004), states that there is a continuum of views about CAM among orthodox medical practitioners ranging from acceptance to non-acceptance, with some specific therapeutic forms generally held to be anathema, particularly those involving spiritual healing, psychic medicine, reiki and crystal healing, incidentally all forms that do not involve physical contact between therapist and patient, that appear to be the least rational and evidence-based, and that imply external, extramundane powers. The more overtly spiritual or religious, the less well accepted by GPs, it would appear.

Staff at the centre were articulate about this controversy with the general attitude of doctors being summed up by one as ‘Prove it first and then we’ll use it!’ Another also related CAM to the issue of scientific evidence.

I have fairly strongly held views and other people have strongly held views in the opposite direction and they usually can produce loads of anecdotes about people who’ve been helped by homeopathy, copper bracelets, acupuncture and various other treatments and I think that the evidence base is not rigid enough for medicine. What I do accept is that there is a holistic element in medicine. And I think there are things which some people get a lot of benefit from. But they’re not necessarily curative. They are things that help people’s emotions and help people’s bodily tensions and [to some] extent that’s what people often need. When they come and see a GP people do not necessarily have a physical illness. But I find some of the claims made by some of the alternative therapists are exaggerated and there doesn’t seem to be a scientific basis for them and that worries me.

Despite his focus on scientific reason as normative for general medical practice, this doctor did acknowledge the concept at the heart of the alternative ideological agenda: holism. And with some regret another made the following point:

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19 The Department of Health in its 2001 report and Whitehouse Commission (2002) has laid the way for CAM to play a role in national health provision (Corrywright 2004). See also Saks (2003) on the developing relationship between orthodox and alternative healthcare.
20 GP2 in discussion, 29.06.04.
21 GP1 in discussion, 29.06.04.
Because doctors haven’t got time to treat the whole patient and to listen, then these other therapies are going to become much more popular. You go and see a homeopathic practitioner and they will give you an hour taking your history. Well, of course you’re going to feel better and cared for when you come out. Rather than ten minutes [and] ‘Right take that!’

This allusion to the treatment of the whole patient as a practice beyond the remit and time of the GP is interesting. It recognises the presence of simultaneous but different health systems with alternative geographies of the body. The presence of other systems with holistic views of the body (such as homeopathy and Chinese medicine) invites us to consider the geography of the body that operates within conventional medical discourse. In *The Birth of the Clinic* (1973) Foucault examined the way in which the person was constituted as an object of the scientific medical gaze, as a body in pieces. This spatial understanding of the body, its gender, parts and systems, is fundamental to conventional medical practice. Conceptions of disease and medical research concentrate on these arrangements. Modern hospitals reflect them in their organisation and architecture. But complementary and alternative therapies operate with different, often spiritual or theological conceptions of the body.

Discussion with staff at the medical centre brought other assumptions to the fore as well, particularly about who and what is best served by CAM. One nurse, who placed CAM in the context of health promotion rather than treatment, said: ‘You know a lot of ladies are looking toward these things now, acupuncture … aromatherapy. And you know all these things are very much in vogue and ladies are thinking “Well, I don’t know if I want to take that tablet anymore. I want to think about something else”’. One doctor, reflecting on the use of alternative therapies in her previous place of work, said,

"[In a hospice] they really do try looking at the whole thing. They are not just looking at the fact that you’re feeling sick or just the social … Yes, people died … but on the whole it was a lovely atmosphere not mournful, not depressing. You have people coming in to entertain you, have a reflexologist going round, you have a music therapist. It’s great and it’s a beautiful place where I used to work."
In these quotations it is women and the dying who are associated with the use of CAM. In describing a women’s health evening organised at the medical centre that had attracted some 200 women, the nurse mentioned that there had been a Pilates instructor and someone to talk about complementary therapies, particularly in relation to the menopause. Not only would men have been unlikely to attend such a health evening – unless it was held in a pub, she said – they would have been less likely than women to be interested in such therapies in the first place. Women were more ready to be ‘informed patients’ and active as partners in the health care process. This nurse, like the doctors from whom we have heard, linked the application of CAM to those conditions for which cures were felt to be inappropriate or ineffective. They also associated it with liminal states – such as the menopause and incurable illness leading to death – in which assistance in making a transition between the stages of life or life and death was required and where the role of evidence-based medicine might be limited or unnecessary. Furthermore, we see medical staff making space for CAM, sometimes reluctantly, alongside mainstream medicine by relating it to a different class of conditions, those requiring therapy not cure.

Secular Values, Knowledge-power and the Location of ‘Religion’

The aim here has been to investigate those discourses and values at work within an English medical centre. The focus has been on controversies surrounding the doctor–patient relationship and complementary and alternative medicine in order to examine religious/secular knowledge-power relations, particularly those occurring within contemporary secularity.

First I looked at the doctor–patient relationship as a multi-dimensional space that was principally social, but played out in and imprinted upon the physical space of the doctor’s surgery. As a mental space, it comprised a complex configuration of interwoven gazes, many of which have invaded the relationship as a result of recent government policy, contractual change, professional surveillance, scientific testing and technological innovation. For some staff maintaining the integrity of the social relationship depended chiefly on diagnosis and treatment based on scientific evidence; for others it depended on the recognition of the practice of medicine as an

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25 Interview with PN, 30.06.04. We note also that CAM made its appearance in the centre outside normal working hours, in the temporal, if not spatial margins.
art as well as a science, and of hearing from and responding to patients as whole people rather than body parts.

The doctors themselves raised the issue of CAM as a site of contention, both social and ideological. The place of the body was central to the debate, being the focus of different geographies as well as different curative and therapeutic procedures. I noted also the way in which a time-space was made for CAM in the medical centre by limiting its application to women, to particular life-stages, to therapy rather than cure, and, incidentally, to the work of some staff and not others. CAM provided an interesting case because its various therapies reflected simultaneous alternative health systems, which in the past were offered to clients in separate physical locations, but which now contend for space within the domain of state medical provision. Changing public conceptions of the informed and responsible patient and holistic healthcare in particular have made it hard for staff to exclude CAM entirely from the medical centre. Making appropriate time and space for some but not all CAM therapies, especially not those involving supernatural powers, has been a knowledge-power struggle between staff (and also with CAM practitioners outside the centre).

A key factor running through these controversies has been the Enlightenment-inspired secularist preoccupation with proof or evidence. None of the medical staff we spoke to denied its importance, but they variously tempered their acceptance of it with reference to other values, such as holism, personal well-being, professional judgement and autonomy, patient (or consumer) agency, and the art of medical practice. I suggest that some of these values conform more closely to a secular modernist perspective (the importance of evidence, autonomy and professional judgement) whilst others emerge as post-secular values (holism, well-being, patient-agency, the art of medicine) allied with late-modern ‘spiritual’ as opposed to either wholly secular or wholly religious concerns.26

To what extent has religion been unearthed in this study? Traces of it have been observed in the physical and social spaces of the medical centre, and its parallel geographical and ideological presence has been noted. We have seen it used metaphorically within a secular controversy to parody those who hold alternative – some might say systematic and rather fixed –

26 Such late-modern concerns have variously been associated with the ‘spiritual revolution’ (Heelas et al. 2004), neo-liberal capitalism (Carrette and King 2005) and post-secularity (Knott 2005), which are related trends with rather different conceptual and historical reference points.
opinions. After all, religious terms and ideas are chief among the resources in our linguistic armoury for mounting arguments about moral matters. Further, we have sensed rather than closely examined its location at the heart of some alternative therapies, and have noted that those that are more closely associated with the non-natural and the lack of an evidence base are unlikely to gain acceptance or space in the medical centre. However, it has not been religious beliefs and perspectives that have emerged as controversial but rather secular ones. The heterogeneity of positions within contemporary secularity has been revealed, positions which are distinguishable on the basis of their association with either modernist values or post-secular ‘spiritual’ ones related to the whole person, intuition and experience, art and agency.

Medical controversies throw up issues that are of importance; they reveal the values that are at stake when it comes to debating and negotiating the vocation of the doctor, the relationship with patients and the treatment of disease, ill-health and the management of the some of life’s liminal stages. In the examples we have examined, ‘religion’ has been projected and shaped as dangerous and disturbing, as the archetypal regime of blind faith and authoritarianism, and – through its relationship with the least acceptable of complementary and alternative therapies – as being out of place in a publicly funded medical centre where reason and evidence are the measures of good practice. The ‘secular’, however, has not been mentioned overtly – rather, it is formed by default; we get a sense of it through its contending positions and their relationship to one another, and the way in which they distance themselves from religion.

27 We might say that it is the ‘secular sacred’ rather than the ‘religious sacred’ that is at stake in debates about the doctor–patient relationship, CAM and – cutting across the two – evidence-based medicine. Describing secularity and its values in this way requires a fuller argument and more evidence than there is space for here. For a discussion of the ‘sacred’ as a secular as well as religious category boundary, see Knott (2005: 215–28).
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Religion can exercise such power against nonconformists that it results in most cruel forms of persecution. The quote in the title of this article, however, demonstrates that sometimes even brute force is not enough to quell a fervent movement. The quote was uttered by the burgrave of Alzey, who, by 1530, had killed over three hundred Anabaptists in the Palatinate.1

The Anabaptist movement was a ‘common man’s reform movement’ in Luther’s Europe. The Anabaptists wanted to reform the church according to New Testament guidelines more radically than either Luther or Zwingli were ready to do. For example, they baptised adults instead of infants, because they had observed that only adults were baptised in the Gospels, including the baptism of Jesus.2 In reformation Europe any adults baptised by these reformers would have already received baptism as infants. It was this practise of re-baptising members of the Catholic Church that gave them the name ‘Anabaptists’. ‘Re-baptism’ was a heresy deserving death, and to classify these radical reformers thus made them legally subject to execution.3

1 Quoted in Bender 1984: 8. Dietrich von Schönberg was the burgrave of Alzey 1520–32. He had the Anabaptists dragged from their homes and led to the place of execution; men were beheaded and women were drowned. Those who recanted had their fingers cut off or a cross branded on their foreheads with a red-hot iron. *The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. I, 1955: 84–5.

2 The issue of adult baptism was only one among many. The Anabaptists had begun their protest, under Zwingli’s leadership, against church tithes. They wanted the local congregation to be able to elect and support its own pastor. Other issues, where they wanted renewal according to their understanding of the New Testament, were the Mass, the priesthood of all believers, mutual aid and accountability, non-violence and the separation of church and state.

3 Anabaptism had been classified as a heresy in Justinian’s imperial law code of 529 (*The Mennonite Encyclopedia*, vol. I, 1955: 9).
In this article I will first explain what I mean by the ‘Anabaptist movement’. This includes an introduction to early Swiss Anabaptism and to the way in which it was speedily persecuted by the religious authorities. This persecution caused flight and that in turn caused the movement to spread. As the number of Anabaptists increased to thousands, so did the persecution by torture and death. I will recount the stories of some Anabaptist martyrs during the course of this article. I will also look at the various justifications for the burning of heretics, as well as at the corresponding theological understanding by those who were burned. Let us now ‘go back in time’ to the sixteenth century.

Anabaptism: Beginning and Persecution

Anabaptism was a heterogeneous movement. The variation is partly explained by the fact that Anabaptism started independently in different parts of Europe: (1) southern Germany and Austria, (2) Switzerland and (3) North Germany and the Netherlands. Scholars have agreed that the date of the beginning of Anabaptism is 21 January 1525, because that is when the first (re-)baptisms took place in Zurich among a group of young and enthusiastic followers of Zwingli. This makes the Swiss the earliest Anabaptists. They called themselves the ‘Swiss Brethren’ or ‘Schweitzerbruder’.

4 In more tolerant Moravia, in the latter part of the sixteenth century, there were colonies of Anabaptists numbering up to 30,000 people for a while, until persecution again drove them away (Dyck 1993: 78).
5 Scholarship has come to identify at least six different branches within it: (1) the Swiss Brethren, (2) the followers of Hut, (3) the Central German Anabaptists, (4) the Stäbler sects in Moravia, (5) the Marpeck circle and (6) the heterogeneous Melchiorite tradition. Stayer et al. 1975: 86.
6 Stayer et al. 1975: 86. More recently Arnold Snyder (1995: 6) has agreed that these are the three main “streams” of Anabaptism.
7 We have a first-hand account of the event in a letter written by one of the people baptised that evening. It was sent in 1530 from Switzerland to Cologne, as a response to an inquiry about the origins of the movement. The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren 1987: 443; Fast 1973: 599–600; Zwingli 1927: 37–42, No. 108. See also Dr Leland Harder’s research notes on the Kletgau letter (1985: 338–40).
8 The Mennonite Encyclopedia calls the Swiss Brethren ‘the oldest and most influential body of German-speaking Anabaptists’ (Bender 1959: 669).
9 The name first appears in print in the Hutterian Chronicle in recounting events in 1543: ‘In 1543 Hans Klöpfer of Feuerbach and four others united with us in the
Persecution Sets In

Persecution began very soon after these baptisms in Zurich. The first Anabaptists were arrested in February, 1525 (Dyck 1993: 46). They were threatened with torture and death if they persisted in their views. The next step was a Mandate on 7 March 1526, which stated that:

Henceforth in our city, territory and neighbourhood, no man, woman or maiden shall re-baptise another; whoever shall do so shall be arrested by authority and after proper judgement shall without appeal be put to death by drowning. (von Muralt and Schmid 1979: 78–9, No. 70.)

This Mandate was also put into practice; an Anabaptist leader by the name of Felix Mantz became the first Anabaptist martyr in Zurich in January of 1527. Mantz was drowned in the following manner: He was first trussed and taken by boat to the middle of the River Limmat, which runs through Zurich. A preacher at his side spoke kind words to him, encouraging him to recant. But then Mantz perceived his mother, Anna Mantz, with some other Anabaptists on the opposite bank, admonishing him to be steadfast in his faith. He did not recant, so he was heaved overboard. He sang with a loud voice: ‘In Manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum’ as the waters closed over his head. Zwingli thought drowning a very fitting way of executing an Anabaptist. Mantz was really fortunate though, because most Anabaptists were severely tortured first and then burned at the stake. Protestants beheaded or drowned Anabaptists, Catholics burned them alive. Ferdinand I of Austria issued a Mandate in April 1528, according to which anyone had the right to kill any person suspected of Anabaptism without a trial. Many thousands of these pacifist Anabaptists lost their lives. As the Anabaptists fled this persecution, the movement spread in Switzerland and in Germany and Austria. In Switzerland, for example, on Easter Sunday 1525, 200 people marched down the High Street of St Gall to a mass baptism at the river. (Kottelin-Longley 1997: 35.) On the same Sunday, 300 people were baptised in nearby Waldshut on the Swiss-Austrian border (Snyder 1995: 56). A Swiss Anabaptist by the name Lord with our brothers at Schakwitz. He was previously a servant of the Word among the Swiss Brethren and lived at Pollau, at the foot of the Mayberg [mountain in Moravia’]. The Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren 1987: 226.

of Eberli Bolt had preached so mightily in the Swiss canton of Appenzell, that 1,500 people were converted immediately. In a few years the whole canton was Anabaptist. As for Eberli Bolt, he became the first Anabaptist martyr burned at the stake on 29 May 1525.

Zurich, Basel, Augsburg and Strasbourg soon became centres of Anabaptism. Further North, the Reformation that first reached the Catholic-controlled Netherlands was in fact an Anabaptist reformation. Nowhere had Anabaptism been so widely accepted as in the Netherlands. And nowhere was the persecution as fierce: up to 2,500 people were martyred in the Netherlands (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. III, 1957: 199, 523). Most of the victims, including women, were burned at the stake.

The Martyrdom of Weynken, Daughter of Claes

Weynken was a Dutch woman, who was burned in The Hague on 20 November 1527. She had been kept in prison in the hope that she would recant her faith. An old court record narrates her story:

Weynken was arraigned before the governor and the full council of Holland. There a woman asked her:
“Have you well considered the things which my lords proposed to you?”
Ans. “I abide by what I have said.”
Ques. “If you do not speak differently, and turn from your error, you will be subjected to an intolerable death.”
Ans. “If power is given you from above I am ready to suffer.” John 19:11.
Ques. “Do you then, not fear death, which you have never tasted?”
Ans. “This is true; but I shall never taste death, for Christ says:’If a man keeps my saying, he shall never see death’” John 8:51. The rich man tasted death, and shall taste it forever.” Luke 16:23.
Ques. “What do you hold concerning the sacrament?”
Ans. “I hold your sacrament to be bread and flour, and if you hold it as God, I say that it is your devil.”
Ques. “What do you hold concerning the saints?”
Ans. “I know no other Mediator than Christ.” I John 2:19….
Ques. “What do you hold concerning the holy oil?”
Ans. “Oil is good for salad, or to oil your shoes with.” I Tim. 4:4….
Ques. “You must die if you abide by this.”
Ques. “If you are dead, how can you speak?”
Ans. “The Spirit lives in me; the Lord is in me, and I am in Him.”

Weynken was condemned to be burned at the stake because she refused to change her religious convictions. The old report has it: ‘She then went gladly, as though she were going to a marriage; and her face did not once betoken fear of fire’ (van Braght 1950: 423). This kind of severe persecution almost wiped out Dutch Anabaptism.

**How the Exercise of Power against the Anabaptists was Justified**

Both religious and secular authorities thought that it was their duty to defend the Christian faith from any perceived danger. Heretics had to be warded off and the faith kept pure at all costs (Frank 1995: 125). Where deviant practices were seen as disturbing the common good, the death penalty was felt to be a fitting response for religious and political reasons.

**Political Justification**

The Anabaptists were one of the most persecuted groups during the Reformation, as many as 5,000 lost their lives. One reason for torturing and killing them was their belief that warfare was contrary to the Gospel injunction. Their pacifism proscribed participation in the all-too-frequent military campaigns of the sixteenth century. They did not fulfil their civic duties as Heinrich Bullinger describes in 1561:

[The Anabaptists] believe that...Christians do not resist violence and do not take recourse to law. They do not use the law courts. Christians do not kill. The punishment used by them is not imprisonment or the sword, but only church discipline. They do not defend themselves,

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11 The question about oil was asked later by two Dominican friars.
12 Snyder 1995: 93. Other Christians than Anabaptists also faced persecution in the sixteenth Century. Nevertheless, because the movement was so widely condemned, it faced more systematic persecution and resulting martyrdom than other Christian groups.
therefore they do not go to war and are not obedient to the government on this point.13

They even refused to fight the arch-enemies of the Christian West, the Turks. This kind of behaviour by the Anabaptists was seen as benefiting the enemy. They were executed for treason and for being on the side of the Turks, rather than on the side of Christian Europe. An early Anabaptist leader, Michael Sattler, was accused of this very thing in 1527 at his trial in Rottenburg:

[H]e has said that if the Turks should invade the country, no resistance ought to be offered them; and if it were right to wage war, he would rather take the field against the Christians than against the Turks; and it is certainly a great matter, to set the greatest enemies of our holy faith against us.14

Sattler responded to this accusation in this way:

If the Turks should come, we ought not to resist them; for it is written: Thou shalt not kill. We must not defend ourselves against the Turks and others of our persecutors, but are to beseech God with earnest prayer to repel and resist them. But that I said, that if warring were right, I would rather take the field against the so-called Christians, who persecute, apprehend and kill pious Christians, than against the Turks, was for this reason: the Turk is a true Turk, knows nothing of the Christian faith; and is a Turk after the flesh; but you who would be Christians, and who make your boast of Christ, persecute the pious witnesses of Christ, and are Turks after the spirit. Ex. 20:13; Matt. 7:7; Tit. 1:16. (van Braght 1950: 417.)

An other political reason given for their annihilation was the accusation that the Anabaptists were ‘revolutionaries’. The Anabaptists were very egalitarian in their theology. Anyone could receive the power of the Holy Spirit and act for God. Even women could take up leading roles in the congregation of believers. These egalitarian ideas were, once again, based on the Gospels. The Anabaptists had inherited these ideas from the

13 Zwingli’s successor, Heinrich Bullinger, gave this testimony in his Der Wieder- toufferen Ursprung in 1561: Folio 16 (quoted in Bender 1956: 10).
14 Nine charges were read against Michael Sattler at his trial (van Braght 1950: 416).
Peasants’ Revolt of 1525.\(^{15}\) When this Revolt was crushed in 1525, any ‘left over’ revolutionaries, in the form of Anabaptists, were fugitives from the law. If caught, anyone had the right to execute them.

More formidable than political reasons were the religious ones which were given in order to justify torture and death.

A Brief History of Theological Justification

Early Church theology was irenical. The early Christians had opposed the burning of heretics, perhaps because they were the ones being burned as heretics for 200 years. Church Fathers such as Athanasius (c. 296–373) and John Chrysostom (347–407), said that Christianity should not be forced on anyone and that the burning of heretics was from the Devil (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. III, 1957: 41). Augustine (354–430) was the first theologian to advocate corporal punishment of heretics. He justified it by his rather curious biblical exegesis, for example, he took Jesus’s parable of the banquet as recorded in Luke’s Gospel. Several people had refused to come to the banquet, and there was still room for more guests. Luke continues the story: ‘Then the master told his servant, “Go out to the roads and country lanes and make them come in, so that my house will be full.”’\(^{16}\) Augustine concluded from this verse of Scripture that it was right to use physical force against heretics who were obviously outside ‘Mother Church’, and who needed to be ‘made to come in’.

Augustine advocated the use of force, but he did not call for the killing of heretics. It was another great theologian, Thomas Aquinas (1225–74), who used his exegesis of parts of the Bible to justify the execution of heretics. He took Jesus’s description of the shepherd and the flock of sheep from the Gospel of John, chapter 10. According to Jesus, there are ‘thieves’ and ‘robbers and wolves’, who unlike the good shepherd want to destroy the sheep:

All who ever came before me were thieves and robbers, but the sheep did not listen to them... The thief comes only to slay and kill and destroy...

\(^{15}\) The ‘peasants’ also had based their egalitarian demands on the Gospels. See Blickle 1987, especially section 1.2.2.: ‘Theologische Begründung und evangelische Logik der Remeindereformation’, pp. 59–67.

\(^{16}\) Luke 14:23; the whole story can be read in verses 15–24.
‘WHAT SHALL I DO?’

The hired hand is not the shepherd who owns the sheep, so when he sees the wolf coming, he abandons the sheep and runs away. Then the wolf attacks the flock and scatters it. (John 10:8, 10, 12; NIV.)

Jesus is talking, as was his custom, in symbolic language here: the ‘shepherd’ symbolises Himself, the ‘flock’ symbolises the church and the ‘thief and the wolf’ symbolise false teachers, who are attacking the church. Aquinas then reverts to a very literal interpretation of the text, and asks: ‘What is done with thieves and with wolves?’ He answers his own question: ‘Thieves you hang and wolves you club to death!’ So it is ‘Scriptural’ to beat and kill the heretics (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. III, 1957: 41).

It was a contemporary of Aquinas, Pope Gregory IX (1227–41), who established the Papal Inquisition. In the fifteenth century, Roman Law was assimilated into German Law, and this gave the Catholic Church exclusive authority to punish the crime of re-baptism with death (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. III, 1957: 129). In the sixteenth century, the course of the trials of Anabaptists began with arrest and imprisonment. Then the ‘heretic’ was cross-examined by the inquisitors asking questions about the sacraments and about details of his or her re-baptism. If the questions were not answered satisfactorily, which was usually the case, the victim was racked by the executioner in the torture chamber. This sometimes happened more than once. Then both men and women were condemned to be ‘executed with fire’, i.e. burned alive at the stake (The Mennonite Encyclopedia, vol. IV, 1959: 233–4).

A Theology of Martyrdom

Why did these Anabaptists submit to torture and execution? One simple answer is that they were simply overpowered by Imperial or Magisterial troops. They did not seek martyrdom, but rather tried to escape capture whenever possible. It was just that the religious and secular authorities combined forces to root out and utterly destroy the movement. This was the reason why so many of them ended up in the hands of the executioner. The Anabaptists tried to come to terms with the fierce opposition they faced by developing a kind of theology of martyrdom.

The Anabaptists saw themselves as belonging to the long line of martyrs of the Christian Church, starting with the crucifixion of Jesus and the stoning of Stephen. As we have seen, they were also especially interested in the words of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels. In the Sermon on the
Mount they read Jesus’s commandments about non-resistance:

But I say to you, Do not resist the one that is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic let him have your cloak as well. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles.

You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. (Matt. 5:38–41 and 43–45; NIV.)

The Anabaptists actually followed the words of Jesus literally. Jesus did not resist or strike back. Instead he submitted to being slowly tortured to death by crucifixion. The Anabaptists followed the example of Jesus and called it Nachfolge. They suffered and were non-resistant to the point of martyrdom.

The Martyrdom of Michael Sattler

We have already met Michael Sattler at his trial. At that same trial he was sentenced to be burned as a heretic. We can read about the sentence he received from the extant court records:

it has been found that Michael Sattler should be given to the hands of the hangman, who shall lead him to the square and cut off his tongue, then chain him to a wagon, there tear his body twice with red hot tongs, and again when he is brought before the gate, five more times. When this is done he should be burned to powder as a heretic. (Yoder 1973: 74 f.)

Sattler, like most Anabaptist martyrs, regarded his suffering and martyrdom as part of the tribulation preceding the second coming of Jesus (van Braght 1950: 420). The Anabaptists were convinced that, as the people of God, they were at the centre of God’s purposes, and that suffering and martyrdom were only temporary. The Last Day would soon come when they would be rewarded for their faithfulness, and their enemies would be condemned. They were certainly persecuted and taken like lambs to the slaughter, but they knew that that was not the end. As Jesus had risen from the dead, so they too would partake in His resurrection (Kottelin-Longley 1997: 112 f.).
Conclusion

Life was very precarious and cheap in the sixteenth century; especially in the hands of the Church. The Anabaptists were persecuted and taken like lambs to the slaughter, but they believed that it was not the end. As Jesus had risen from the dead, so they too would partake in His resurrection. The Last Day would soon come when they would be rewarded for their faithfulness. (Kottelin-Longley 1995: 112 f.)

These in the white robes, who are they and where did they come from?

These are they who have come out of the great tribulation: they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore,

they are before the throne of God and serve Him day and night in His temple; and He Who sits on the throne will spread His tent over them.

Never again will they hunger; never again will they thirst. The sun will not beat upon them, not any scorching heat. For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their Shepherd; He will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes. (Rev. 8: 13–17; NIV.)

To them, death was a door to a better world.

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Liberating the Temple Mount

Apocalyptic Tendencies among Jewish Temple Activists*

Introduction

Every now and then instances of violence are played out at the Temple Mount area in Jerusalem, also known as the Haram-esh-sharif. Some of the cases are referred to as results of the so-called ‘Jerusalem syndrome’, incidents when individuals’ manifestations of pre-existing psychopathology culminate in violent actions. Israeli psychiatrists and others have treated such incidents as examples of when peoples’ expectations of a heavenly Jerusalem collide with the very earthly reality in the city (Kalian and Witztum 1998: 316–30; Leppäkari 2006a: 153–80). For some people, such encounters may create anxiety that may threaten the victim’s very sanity. In such situations, an apocalyptic mission may become the only way for them to cope with the situation at hand. But the Temple Mount does not only attract lone-acting individuals, it also attracts organized groups who refer to the very spot as an important identity marker.

When presenting this paper on the 17th of August in 2005, I could not disregard the current political situation in Israel known as the Disengagement or Gaza pullout. And I could not resist recalling and comparing the events of that day with those of the Yamit pullout in 1982, the evacuation of the last settlement in Sinai in the wake of Israel’s peace accord with Egypt. Certainly, those who experienced and recall the Yamit demonstrations experienced a sense of déjà vu, but those of us who do not recall those events through memory flashbacks have to turn to studies and analyses. As I had visited Jerusalem the very same month, the orange ribbons declaring ‘disengagement; disaster to Jews’ were still fresh in my mind. Due to limitations of space, I will not go in to the political details of the withdrawal from Yamit, the Eastern part of the Sinai Peninsula, as a consequence of the

* Research to this article has been sponsored by the Academy of Finland, Project no. 202523.
peace accords with Egypt, or into the details of the current Gaza pullout. The rationale of the 2005 Gaza withdrawal is, however, briefly presented on the Official Website of the Israeli Defence Forces as ‘an assumption made by the political ranks that the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians has come to a stand still. To reignite the peace process, Israel must make a unilateral move’ and, that the goal of the Disengagement Plan is to ‘improve Israel’s security, political, economical and demographic status … reduce the current friction between Jewish residents and the Palestinian population’.1 In a Religioscope-interview with Gideon Aran, a Gush Emunim settler movement specialist at Hebrew University, the parallels between the two incidents are drawn. Aran points out that the political events of 1982 undoubtedly affected the ‘Jewish Underground’. The messianic redemption of the settler movement is closely tied to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, and therefore what happens in some remote areas of the Land of Israel is tied to the potential centre, which is the Temple Mount. In Aran’s words, ‘political events such as the ones mentioned above have a great influence on various levels and areas of Jewish radical religiosity with political, sometimes ultra political, sometimes even with violent implications’ (Flükiger 2005).

In this article, I draw on my field research material and interviews with Jewish Third Temple activists in Jerusalem collected on and off between 1998 and 2004. Here Yehuda Etzion’s, Gershon Salomon’s and Yoel Lerner’s theology and activities are studied in light of apocalyptic representations,2 and how these are expressed in relation to religious longing for the Third Temple in the light of the Gaza withdrawal. I want, however, to emphasize that not all those who are engaged in endtime scenarios act upon their visions. In Jerusalem, there have been, and still are, several religious-political groups that more or less ritually perambulate the Temple Mount area.

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2 ‘Apocalyptic’ here refers to future-oriented visions of forthcoming catastrophes that in one way or another involve humanity and life on earth. This idea of a disastrous end has an opposite pole, the longed-for paradise on earth. The term ‘apocalyptic representations’ here refers to views about Jerusalem as a complex endtime place and a vision of urgent and immanent future perfection. Such apocalyptic representations become integrated into individuals’ lives on both the social and personal levels. In apocalyptic settings, Jerusalem as the symbolic endtime city is given meaning and value by simultaneously referring to a physical place and a dream (Leppäkari 2002: 21, 207–8).
As a complex symbol, Jerusalem ‘disseminates’ multiple representations that are created in people’s minds, our physical environment and cultural heritage. Jerusalem, described in an apocalyptic discourse as ‘the city at the end of world’, plays a central role in the religious imagination and as a physical place of reference when apocalyptic representations are explained. Among the various groups and individuals that actively make preparations for the imminent end of the world, Jerusalem has become a significant place, both symbolically and physically. As the actual place where the endtime drama is expected to be acted out, ‘Jerusalem’ can in fact motivate and legitimise individuals and groups to act out religious convictions by becoming perceived as the actual stage of apocalyptic threat. Jerusalem thus becomes the place of an endtime drama which allows various individuals and groups to enter the stage and act out pre-existing mental images or roles of a redemptive character, such as ‘divine messengers’, messianic figures and biblical prophets.

Temple Activists in Retrospect

In his book *The End of Days* (2000), the Israeli reporter Gershom Gorenberg accounts for several incidents involving the Temple Mount area. In the 1940s, the Lehi (an acronym for Fighters for the Freedom of Israel, also known as the Stern Gang) published its eighteen principles of Jewish national renaissance in a newspaper ‘The Underground’. In the eighteenth principle, there is a reference to: ‘Building the Third temple, as symbol of the era of the Third Kingdom’, and later they added an emendation, ‘Building the Third temple as symbol of the era of total redemption’ (Gorenberg 2000: 92). Violent outbreaks in Palestine in the 1940s were common, when Jews, defying the Labour government’s pro-Arab policy, engaged in acts of terror. The Jewish underground army, the Haganah, had helped the British to catch Irgun terrorists, but in the mid-40s, it joined forces with Irgun and the Freedom Fighters in acts of anti-British sabotage which culminated in 1946 in the bombing of the British military headquarters at Jerusalem’s

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3 Briefly, a symbol is something that points beyond what is immediately perceived by a specific sign. It unites collectively constructed and maintained meanings drawing also on individual emotional interpretations. When referring to the meanings ascribed to the symbol and the associations that it in turn evokes, I will designate them as ‘representations’. (Cf. Illman and Leppäkari 2004: 276, 279–82; Sperber 1977: 86, 113.)
King David Hotel, killing ninety-two British, Arabs and Jews. These acts of sabotage and terror were political in that they were aimed at persuading the British to give up their mandate over Palestine (Indinopulos 1999: 229–30).

Years later, Major General Uzi Narkiss recalls in his memoirs the events during annexation of Jerusalem in 1967, and how Shlomo Goren, the army’s chief rabbi at time, ran uphill with a Torah scroll under his right arm, a ram’s horn in his other hand, his beard thrust forward. Soaked with sweat, the 50-year-old chaplain refused a ride, insisting he would reach the Mount on foot. From the top of the walls, Jordanian soldiers continued to fire, and Rabbi Goren roared out a song, as he was a passionate believer in the sanctity of the land and the state. He was a man carried away that day, Gorenberg writes, and arrived at the Mount moments after Narikss, bowed towards where the Holiest of Holies had stood (which is to say the Dome), and shouted biblical verses. According to Gorenberg, there was an incident on the Mount later that day that was omitted from Narkiss’ memoirs. Thirty years later, Narkiss told the story to an Israeli reporter, Nadav Shragai, on condition that he would publish it only after Narkiss’ death. The rabbi had walked up to the general, and said ‘Now’s the time to put one hundred kilos of explosives in the Dome of the Rock, and that’s it, once and for all we’ll be done with it.’ Narkiss answered, ‘Rabbi, stop.’ Goren said, ‘Uzi, you will go down in history for this.’ Narkiss answered, ‘I’ve already put my name in Jerusalem’s history.’ But Rabbi Goren kept going, ‘You don’t grasp the immense meaning of this. This is an opportunity that can be exploited now, this minute. Tomorrow it will be impossible.’ Narikss responded, ‘Rabbi, if you don’t stop now, I’m taking you from here to jail.’ According to Narkiss, Goren turned and left without another word. Some minutes later, the messianic rabbi Tzvi Yehudah Kook was brought to the Mount, but also Kook – to Goren’s disappointment – would join a rabbinic ruling against setting foot on the Temple Mount. (Gorenberg 2000: 92, 99–104.)

Since the growth and establishment of Jewish radicalism in Israel, various attempts have been made by the Third Temple sympathizers to destroy or diminish the Muslim presence in Jerusalem. Temple activists, like Yehuda Etzion and Yoel Lerner, have been arrested and jailed for personally taking redemption into their own hands. Gershon Salomon, has not been convicted but he is added to this description so as to illustrate the dynamics of the personalities engaged in the Temple Mount issue.

Within Israel’s Radical Right, the political scientist Ehud Sprinzak has distinguished a group of ‘cultural radicals’ consisting mostly of individ-
uals who rarely act as a homogeneous group, but who share the conviction that only a spiritual revolution among the people can save Israel as a nation (Sprinzak 1991: 251). What binds the cultural radicals together is the hope of bringing about this cultural revolution. Among the cultural radicals we find Yehuda Etzion with his theology of active redemption and Yoel Lerner, a former Kahane activist, who believes the redemption of mankind depends upon the actions of Jews preparing the conditions necessary for messianic salvation. Although the cultural radicals may not have a large following or organized political power, Sprinzak concludes that they do play an important role in the collective consciousness of the Israeli radical right (Sprinzak 1991: 7). It can be added that they also play an important role in some Christian groups’ religious consciousness.

The cultural radicals’ ideology and praxis have not been theoretically constructed as a coherent system of thought and action, and should, therefore, not be considered the product of a single authoritative school. As Sprinzak suggests, it is mostly the result of a reactionary mood that was created by the Camp David crisis, the struggle in Yamit, and escalating violence and terrorism. And yet, the intifadas and the assassination of Yizak Rabin, and now, perhaps, the Gaza withdrawal, have confirmed the cultural radicals in their religious convictions. The suggested common nominators for this group are, according to Sprinzak, ‘their impatience with Gush Emunim’s excessive fidelity to the Israeli government, their disenchantment with the style of Rabbi Kahane, and their rejection of conventional politics’ (Sprinzak 1991: 252). Additionally, within the cultural radicals, it is possible to distinguish three groups that interact and overlap: the veterans of the Jewish Underground, members of Tzfia, and former associates of Rabbi Meir Kahane (Sprinzak 1991: 252).

Sprinzak traces the origins of the ‘undergrounds’ to the theological crisis over the 1978 Camp David Accords and the messianic convictions that sprang from within Gush Emunim (Sprinzak 1999: 11). The tension of the Six Day War in 1967 can be said to have reached maturation, and the ‘extreme right’ in Israel has since had a strong impact on Israel’s political culture and institutions (Sprinzak 1999: 147), not to mention its religious milieu.

Contemporary Apocalyptic Tendencies

During recent years there has been an increasing focus of interest on the Temple Mount. We find a growing number of conferences held by Shocharey
HaMikdash (The Temple Lovers) and others, ‘Temple sympathisers’, who consider the destruction of the mosques on the Temple Mount a religious goal that all humans should realise. The activities of these Temple sympathisers have been somewhat loosely regarded as those of only minimally influential movements, with only a few dozen activists who may step forward as lone-actors. The problem for both the Temple Lovers and other Temple sympathisers is that the ‘Status Quo Agreement’ on the Temple Mount allows Muslims to pray at the Mount. Recently in 2005, however, the Disengagement or Gaza pullout actualized another aspect tied to Jerusalem’s role as a holy city. Here the role of religion in the current political situation in Israel is highlighted by the example of the Temple sympathisers. And central, for the rising tension in Jerusalem, is the religious importance attached to the Temple Mount.

Over the last year, Israeli security officials have repeatedly warned of the possibility of a ‘doomsday-scenario’ being played out in the city. According to a Jerusalem Post interview with Avi Dichter, former head of the Shin Bet security service, the threat of an attack by Jewish ‘extremists’ on the Temple Mount is together with the possibility of an assassination attempt on the life of Prime Minister, the main concern among security officials (Lefkovits 2005a). In connection with the Gaza pullout, a new security system is to be installed at the Temple Mount in an effort to prevent any possible attacks by Temple activists. To avoid such dramatic incidents, the Jerusalem police would install new security systems on the Mount. Some 700 officers, including regular police, paramilitary border troops and undercover forces are assigned on a regular basis to the Old City (Lefkovits 2005b, Weiss 2005). For example, in May 2005, nine Jewish activists were reported to have been taken into custody and questioned by the Jerusalem police for planning to fire a missile at the Dome of the Rock on the Temple Mount, in effort to torpedo the planned withdrawal from the Gaza Strip (Lefkovits 2005a). The three key suspects in the case were all described in the media as ‘far-right activists’. Charges against them were never filed, since no evidence of their plans for an attack was found (Weiss 2005).

In Jerusalem, there have been, and still are, several religious-political groups who consider the Temple Mount a key element in redemptive purposes.4 Jewish endtime activists in Jerusalem repeatedly refer to the re-

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4 The case of the Movement for the Establishment of The Temple represents a unique blend of organized ultra-Orthodox and Messianic theology, combined with a millenarian activist position. This movement was initiated by a former TMF member, Yosef Elboim. (Inbari 2003: 279–323.)
relationship between Jerusalem as a physical city and Jerusalem as a place in religious millenarian dreams. I have argued before, that it is the participants’ conviction of the truthfulness of apocalyptic representations that urges them to act according to what is viewed as the basis of redemption (Leppäkari 2006b). It is necessary to understand this condition, when we are trying to grasp the underlying motives for war, conflicts and threatening images. The focus of interest here is the strong dualistic tension which often follows from the conclusions drawn by individuals and groups emphasizing apocalyptic-millenarian reasoning. From my perspective, this approach can hopefully serve as a useful tool in attempts to decode underlying, religious, meaning-giving strategies in order to uncover the intense controversies of terror. Let me introduce Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon, and let us briefly consider their millenarian visions of Jerusalem.

Jewish Temple Activists

Among the cultural radicals we find Yehuda Etzion the leader of the Redemption movement with his theology of active redemption. Etzion has been involved in many violent actions, most notoriously as the mastermind behind the Temple Mount plot in the 1980s. This group led by Etzion resumed preparations for its assault on the Dome of the Rock. In addition to the plot to destroy the Dome of the Rock, other ‘underground’ attacks took place. An attack on Arab mayors in 1980, an assault on Hebron’s Muslim College in 1983, and the attempt to blow up five Arab buses full of passengers, can all be treated as examples of rising terrorism within the radical camp on the Jewish side of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict (Sprinzak 1999: 11). The events of the Dome of the Rock plot may be summarized on the basis of Ehud Sprinzak’s account as follows.

Menachem Livni, an expert in explosives had studied the layout of the Temple Mount and the construction of the Dome of the Rock in minute detail for a period of two years. After stealing a huge quantity of explosives from a military camp in the Golan Hights, they worked out a detailed plan of attack. Twenty-eight precision bombs were manufactured, with the intention of destroying the Dome without causing any damage to its surroundings. This group hoped to approach the place unnoticed, but they were ready to kill if necessary, and for this purpose they bought special Uzi silencers and gas canisters. In total, more than twenty people were involved in the operation. Their intention was to prevent the final evacuation
of Jewish settlements in Sinai which was to take place no later than 1982. The group (called the ‘The Underground’ by the media), however, suffered major setbacks. Most importantly, none of those involved in the plot was an authoritative rabbi, and the question of rabbinical authorization had already been discussed in 1980. Most of those involved, were not willing to proceed without a rabbi’s blessing. Menachem Livni, for example, was one who had insisted on rabbinic approval. When the final deadline arrived in 1982, the only two who were ready to proceed were the originators of the idea, Etzion and Ben-Shoshan; the grand plan was postponed. (Sprinzak 1991: 97–8 and 1999: 146–7.)

There are several social, economic, political and other factors that need to be taken into consideration when comparing the evacuation of Yamit in 1982 with the withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. According to Aran, there was actually no ‘real crisis’ within the settler community in 1982; people adjusted relatively peacefully to the new reality. There was no surge in violence, no evidence that they abandoned their firmly-held ideology or deserted their cause. ‘True believers neither quit, nor did they become more enthusiastic or more extreme. These are the two optional reactions that betray desperation.’ (Flükiger 2005.) According to Aran, Jewish orthodoxy proved on this occasion that it was flexible and able to cope with the new situation. Regarding Etzion’s plot to blow up the Dome of the Rock, Aran maintains that it is more important to bear in mind the fact that planning is one thing, its realisation is another matter. The decision to abort the attack was taken by the plotters themselves. To conclude, in 1982 there was no precedent for zealotry among Jewish radicals, but after the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin, the Israeli public was prepared and partly even expected zealot bloodshed during the Gaza withdrawal in 2005.5

According to the tradition of Jewish zealotry, the ‘doctrine of zealotry’ is a reminder of the first zealot, Pinchas Ben-Eleazar, who acted in awe of God when killing a man. The famous activists at the time of the Second Temple in 70 c.e. are also seen as part of this tradition. These followers of Shimon bar Kokhba not only acted against Romans, but also turned against Jews who wanted to compromise and make peace with the Romans. Determining who is a zealot is difficult. Different people interpret the doctrine in different ways. (Cf. Gorenberg 2000: 41–2.) The Israeli

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5 In this context, I use ‘zealotry’ to refer to passionate, severe, but unauthorized acts in which individuals become zealous for ‘the sake of God’, and ‘zealot’ to refer to an individual who commits such acts.
Liberating the Temple Mount

Menachem Friedman has addressed this issue and accounts for the social dynamics of zealotry by using a model of three concentric circles. The first circle, small groups who, e.g., attend demonstrations and participate in violence; the second, there are those who are ‘passive’ because they do not take part in riots, but fully support the means of action; and finally, the third, the leaders or rabbis who occasionally find themselves faced with a problem: giving their blessing to a planned violent act, or choosing to invoke the doctrine retroactively. (Friedman 1991: 89–91 as cited in Sprinzak 1999: 103). The problem with the doctrine is, according to Sprinzak, that ‘it provides legitimacy to act without rabbinical permission in a voluntary society that totally depends on the authority of these very rabbis’ (Sprinzak 1999: 102). Thus the doctrine of zealotry provides legitimacy for violence against the secular, denial of political peace talks and ultimately, it can legitimate murder ‘for the sake of God’.

When he was young, Etzion was inspired by the writings of the ultranationalist, Shabtai Ben Dov, who developed a grand theory of active redemption. Ben Dov’s thoughts together with those of the poet Uri Zvi Greenberg, brought to life ideas about the re-establishment of the biblical Kingdom of Israel and the rebuilding of the Third Temple. Etzion speaks, in prophetic terms of a futuristic vision, which consists of a Jewish Temple, the Sanhedrin, and the Palace of the Messiah. He envisions a political system governed by the Torah law, something resembling a Jewish theocracy with a messianic leader. Not only is the Jewish State centred on the Temple governed by the messianic leader, but also by the Council of the Sanhedrin (the council of the seventy wise men) which gains its power and divine guidance from its connection to that particular place on the Mount. This is when and where the ‘levels existence and destiny meet’, when it is all, according to Etzion, set in motion. In his millenarian vision of the futuristic kingdom on earth, all Israelis will inherit the land and care for it in a way that has already been prophesied in the Bible.6

Yoel Lerner, a former Kahane activist who believes that the redemption of mankind depends upon the actions of Jews preparing for the conditions necessary for messianic salvation. Lerner was born and educated in America. A graduate of MIT in mathematics, he emigrated to Israel in 1960, and studied Hebrew and linguistics at Hebrew University. Lerner found out about the Jewish Defense League (JDL) in 1972, and joined Meir Kahane’s organization (Sprinzak 1991: 275). He had been attracted by

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6 Author’s interview with Etzion 06.06.1999.
Kahane’s calling for young Jewish leaders who could start a fundamental reform in Israel. Lerner, who supported such ideas, participated in the JDL’s early violent opposition to several Christian missionary groups in Israel. Today, Lerner is devoted to research into ancient Semitic languages in general. This is easy to understand when one looks around in this cheerful, bearded man’s library. In his office, there are pictures on the wall of several Jewish extremist martyrs, his friends Meir Kahane and Baruch Goldstein. His passion is Jewish Law, the Mishpat Ivri. Lerner thinks that the Jewish people in contemporary Israel should adopt this juridical praxis and he has set out to develop a framework of a constitution for a Jewish state that would be based on Torah law.7

As one of the pictures on his wall shows an image of the Bet Mikdash, a tallit, and the flag of Israel, Lerner is asked whether he is an ‘orthodox Jew’ or maybe a ‘Zionist’. His answer can be regarded as theological positioning:

If, by ‘Zionist’ you mean – do I adhere to traditional Zionist philosophy as promulgated by Hertzl and Nordau and all the others down the line to Ben Gurion, the answer is a very qualified sometimes. If you mean by ‘Zionist’ – do I believe that the place of the Jewish people is in Eretz Israel and do I believe that we are in … the stage of divine process of the ingathering of the Exiles, which happened to use the Zionist movement as an implement in the physical world, the answer is yes. … The first stage is the ingathering of the Exiles. Everything else, the change in the heart and the refilling comes later.

In the accepted definition of the term, I think yes. I would probably be at the frontline of those orthodox Jews fighting against the Haredi philosophy, for example. … The aspect of Haredi philosophy that I reject is their very strong tendency not to worry about the spiritual situation of the rest of the Jewish people.8

Lerner has a long record of arrests. Many of his activities within the Kach Party were illegal. His relations with Kach cooled in 1974, but he still initiated operations on his own from within the Kach Party (Sprinzak 1991: 276). In 1974, for example, he was arrested for attacking several institutions associated with Christian missionary activities. Again in 1978, he

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8 Author’s interview with Lerner 29.09.2003.
was arrested for having established a subversive organisation named Gal (Geula Le-Israel, Redemption for Israel). This ‘fantasy organisation for teenagers’, as Sprinzak calls it, had produced arms in order to transform Israel into a Halakhic state and envisioned a cultural and political revolution that would transform Israel (Sprinzak 1991: 276). In 1982, he was arrested again, this time for trying to place a bomb at the al-Aqsa Mosque on the Temple Mount together with his students. He was imprisoned for two years and when he was released from prison in 1984, the climate in Israel had become more favourable to ultra-nationalism, according to Sprinzak (Sprinzak 1991: 277).

Gershon Salomon is the leader of the Temple Mount and Land of Israel Faithful Movement. Though Salomon’s group has not been directly involved in acts of violence, they still wish to terrify the Muslim population in Jerusalem. The Temple Mount Faithful (TMF) want the Temple Mount to become the moral and spiritual centre of Israel, the Jewish people and more widely the entire world. At the top of their agenda stands the wish to rebuild the Jewish Temple. The Temple is seen as a house of prayer for the people of Israel and all nations. The group rejects all political peace talks since they are perceived by the group as a breach of God’s covenant. Following this reasoning, Jerusalem is distinguished as a holy city, and it should, therefore, remain the undivided capital of Israel (Leppäkari 2006b).

While the TMF has never clashed with the police, their actions still raise concerns among the Muslim inhabitants of the Old City. Demonstrations arranged by the TMF often create extreme apprehension among the Muslims in Jerusalem. In 1990, for example, their march launched a call for an Arab rally in the defence of the Haram-esh-Sharif, to which thousands responded. During the rally, demonstrators threw rocks at Jews praying below at the Western Wall. A surprised police unit opened fire with live ammunition with catastrophic results. (Carmesund 1992: 61.) Every Sukkoth, the TMF lays a four and a half ton cornerstone for the Third Temple. A truck brings the stone close to the Temple Mount and some sympathisers dress up in priestly garments made by the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. This symbolic act of laying a cornerstone for the Third Temple continues every year to spark a sense of immediate threat (Leppäkari 2006b).

This group arranges rallies and demonstrates very vocally, insisting that its cause, the Third Temple, concerns all citizens. Whether symbolically or not, the TMF was involved in the search for, and identification of red heifers – ritual animals to be sacrificed before the rebuilding of the new Temple can start. The birth of such red heifers is regarded within or-
thodox Jewish communities as a miracle. As reported in the TMF newsletter of spring 1999, several red heifers were born in Israel, and also one on an American ranch belonging to a ‘Christian Zionist’ (Salomon 1999, Leppäkari 2006b). These heifers where, however, never considered to be authentic enough for this sacrificial purpose.

The movements that Etzion, Lerner and Salomon represent are generally held to be marginal within Israeli society. In public discourse, these leaders are often thought to have very distinctive characteristics, and are described more as curiosities than as representatives of mainstream orthodoxy. What draws attention to these individuals is that they have a clear messianic conception of present-day life on their apocalyptic-millenarian agenda. Here Zionism is considered as a divine sign indicating a step forward in the redemptive process. All three, Etzion, Lerner and Salomon, are preoccupied with the concept of redemption. While Etzion’s philosophy of the concept is linked to Jews alone, especially those living in the State of Israel, the perspective in Salomon’s interpretation is broader. It is not only the above-mentioned means of action that differentiates these leaders, but also the universal theology that Salomon emphasizes.

Some disagreement in their views of the future Kingdom of God can be distinguished. But it is important here to pay attention to the similarities in their visions of the endtimes which involve the following concepts: traditional Jewish messianic leadership, a longing for a Third Temple, a revival of both the ancient temple cult and the Sanhedrin to be placed on the Mount. These Jewish activists all wait for a cultural revolution that will change the rules of nature (Leppäkari 2005: 22–9). According to Etzion, ‘the government of Israel fails to do what God wishes to. … The removal of the Muslim mosques would spark a new light in the nation and trigger a major spiritual revolution.’9 This statement indicates that the role of the Temple Mount is crucial, and as long as the activists are denied access to the Mount, the disputes will remain.

According to Gershon Salomon, ‘God promised to Abraham and to his seed that the land and the borders of Israel are eternal, and cannot be divided and given to other people and nations.’10 This is the type of statement that can give rise to an increasing sense of threat, when political decisions like that of the Gaza withdrawal are taken. Though it rejects all peace talks with the Palestinians, the TMF has never clashed with the police, and

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9 Author’s interview with Etzion 06.06.1999.
10 Author’s interview with Salomon 14.05.1998.
their demonstrations – while they provoke anxiety – remain within the law restricted as they always have done. The TMF is described in many studies prescribed as having revolutionary characteristics, but every now and then scholars are blinded by the group’s apocalyptic character and disregard its emphasis on obeying the law.\footnote{Cf. Selengut 2003 where apocalyptic groups are defined as antinomian. In his otherwise well written book, Selengut categorises the TMF as a representative of what he refers to as ‘Catastrophic Apocalypticism’. From my perspective, the TMF can indeed be described as apocalyptic, but I would hesitate to call it ‘catastrophic’ because its leader’s religious imperatives have never led to clashes with the police.}

When Yoel Lerner maintains, ‘the state [of Israel] should be a Jewish state. Especially things that are fundamental to the existence of a state, like [the] legal system’, this can be interpreted as pointing towards a sense of increased rabbinic thinking. The pendulum, to use a metaphor, has shifted from active to passive, meaning that the sense of imminence and tension has perhaps, in Lerner’s case, been replaced by tradition and long-term change.

To a certain extent, Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon are inspired by mystical thinking, but it does not occupy a central position in their thought. The awaited Kingdom of God or revolution has a twofold meaning. On the one hand, redemption is thought to take place on a very concrete level, and thus it is a natural part of building the land. On the other hand, the anticipation of the endtime is intertwined with spiritual significance. Hence the motives for change acquire existential relevance. In Etzion’s case, this argumentation is presented in terms of ‘the laws of existence turning into the laws of destiny’. Gershon Salomon does not speak about different levels of existence, but refers instead to the revolution as ‘raising awareness’ to both Jews and the rest of the world.

Regarding teamwork between the three men, Lerner states that he collaborates with Etzion only in ‘a purely ideological fashion’, but at the same time admits that Etzion’s theological ideas correlate with those of his own. Considering the relationship between Lerner and Salomon, Lerner complains about Salomon’s disregard for the Halakha, and is frustrated when it comes to the TMF’s public demonstrations. Lerner states briefly: ‘we have been avoiding the TMF’. Lerner does not see public relations and propaganda, as well as flag waving, as promoting the cause of allowing Jewish prayer on the Temple Mount. When Salomon is asked about his relation to Etzion and Lerner, he describes their relationship as all playing their part
in the ‘Army of God’ by separately serving – metaphorically speaking – in different units and serving different purposes. Salomon likens the role of his own group, the TMF, to that of a paratrooper’s unit in the ‘Army of God’ (cf. Leppäkari 2005: 24). Even though the means of action and theological interpretations differ, Etzion, Lerner and Salomon all share a common goal; to liberate the Temple Mount in order for the Third Temple to be built.

‘Ex-terrorists’ and Apocalyptic Positions

There are many myths surrounding the concept of terrorism. But as Andrew Silke points out, one of the most widely held myths is that the persons involved in terrorist activities are ‘crazed fanatics’. Such one-sided accounts are dangerous, since they allow society to dismiss terrorist actors as ‘deranged fanatics’. Much of the psychological research on and analysis of terrorists of the past four decades has shown that the phenomenon is not that simple. Marginalisation, other social factors and biological factors have been offered as explanations for why people become terrorists. One of the most important keys to understanding the mechanisms at play is to understand the psychology of vengeance, the desire for revenge (Silke 2003: 39). It is difficult, according some definitions, to become a terrorist unless one can find a group that is willing to let one join and provide support. Lone-actors are a rarity. Psychologists maintain that a terrorist’s psychology is not significantly different from anyone else’s. However, studies show that social environment plays a crucial role in whether people become terrorists or not. Many times, violent confrontations with representatives of the authorities provides the impetus that leads individuals to approach and join terrorist groups (Silke 2003: 50–1). Under certain circumstances, such as when they feel mistreated, most people could support or participate in terrorism.

Terrorism is an old and persistent phenomenon. As terrorist violence is described as a symptom of fundamental problems, ‘it emerges again and again simply because human nature is what it is, and the circumstances that produce it continue to occur across time and geography’ (Silke 2003: 51). When religious symbols and the representations these generate become involved in millenarian endtime anticipation, rhetoric and action, they easily become translated into abhorrent condemnation. Many schol-

12 For a definition of terrorism, see Jonathan Peste’s article in this volume.
ars argue that apocalyptic anticipation of a millenarian promise, need not be translated into violent activity. Catherine Wessinger, for example, has in her study of conflict management in new religious movements, developed a framework for the study of millenarian groups. According to her, various mechanisms are at work when a group becomes violent. Wessinger makes a distinction between ‘catastrophic millenarism’ and ‘progressive millenarism’. ‘Catastrophic millenarism’ involves a pessimistic view of humanity and society. It possesses a dualistic worldview and the world is seen as battleground between good and evil; while ‘progressive millennialism’ involves an optimistic view of human nature that became prevalent in the nineteenth century. According to Wessinger, humans engaging in social work that is in harmony with the divine can effect changes that non-catastrophically and progressively create the awaited millennial kingdom. Yet simultaneously, catastrophic and progressive millennialism are not mutually exclusive. Wessinger further identifies three subcategories in relation to the dynamics of violence: fragile millennial groups, assaulted millennial groups, and revolutionary millennial movements (Wessinger 2000: 16, 24, 264–5). Such processes of transformation which turn millenarian anticipations into violent apocalyptic actions have mostly been accounted for in studies relating to new religious movements, but the study made by Motti Inbari of the group known as the Mishkan Ohalim (Tenth Encampment) in Israel, which has clashed with local authorities, can be treated as a recent example which accounts for the social mechanisms at work when messianic anticipation turns into outbreaks of violence (Inbari 2001: 74–87). When such incidents occur, it is of the utmost importance that scholars identify and distinguish the multiple mechanisms influencing the outcome. Since questions concerning the issues of how and why people become terrorists seem to dominate the current discussion on terrorist and religious activist behaviour, I would, however, maintain that the questions of how and why people leave terrorism are just as important.

According to Jonh Horgan, exceptionally little is known or understood about what happens to influence people when they give up terrorism. The factors behind the choice to give up violence are as multifaceted as those behind the choice to use violence. Therefore a straightforward answer as to why people give up terrorism ‘obscures the impressive complexity of the question and the possible assumptions that underpin it’ (Horgan 2003: 128). When, at some point, taxonomies for this behaviour are presented, as Hogan points out, it remains important to challenge scholars to include the dynamic processes influencing individual choices and behaviour (Horgan 2003: 128–9).
Helen Rose Fuchs Ebaugh has treated the experience of ‘becoming an ex’ as an experience most people in contemporary society are familiar with. In our surroundings, we find people who identify themselves as ‘exes’; there are ex-spouses, ex-convicts, ex-alcoholics, ex-doctors, ex-cops, ex-nuns, ex-prostitutes and so forth. Do not we have ‘ex-terrorists’ too? Role exit processes that involve a voluntary exit from a significant role may, according to Fuchs Ebaugh, be identified through stages of disillusionment, search for alternative roles, points that trigger final decisions, culminating in an identity as an ‘ex’. Role exit involves both adjustment and adaptation. As Fuchs Ebaugh expresses it, this concerns not only the individual making the changes, but also the part of significant others associated with the person (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 5). The social roles experienced by us (as we become socially identified as representatives of each category) can open up a new discussion on the relationship between religious role identification and action in relation to what is commonly conceived and identified as religiously motivated acts of terror.

To be an ‘ex’ is socially unique. As Fuchs Ebaugh writes, ‘[d]isengagement, disidentification, dealing with role residual, and being categorized as an ex-member of a group are a few of the elements that make role exit a unique social process’ (Fuchs Ebaugh 1988: 6). In this article, the subject of discussion is religious role identification and action; how religious symbols, representations and interpretations of these may affect a social process directed towards a concrete goal. When it comes to the Temple Mount, activists’ symbols do indeed matter. For Temple activists, the future Temple and the role that is prescribed for the ‘New Jerusalem’ are significant symbols. Here ‘Jerusalem imagined’ and ‘Jerusalem experienced’ meet, but what is imagined does not correspond to the actual reality. When the activists identify themselves as ‘agents of God’, they enter (or take on) roles with major consequences. Not only are these roles ‘symbolical’, pointing towards something that goes beyond what is immediately perceived (Holm 1997: 18). These roles are also much larger and dynamic since they are part of a long tradition of religious zealotry. When making a transition from ‘acting out God’s will’ to ‘interpreting God’s will’, significant changes have taken place. The process of transformation, from being engaged in violent endtime actions to becoming an ‘ex-terrorist’ does not necessarily need to be identified as a crisis. Those who tend to hold on to an apocalyptic worldview, tend also to emphasize polarized attitudes and black-and-white values. Within these settings, existential matters, such as questions of life and death, become constantly present and affect the outcome of the way humans perceive life in general. When the transmission
of apocalyptic symbols and representations becomes intense, they can be identified as sources of inspiration and motivate people to act, whether peacefully or violently for a cause (Leppäkari 2006b).

If we follow the reasoning of Wessinger, this would imply that in the above-mentioned cases, we find a fine line between catastrophic and progressive millenarism. Momentarily the distinctive lines seem to fluctuate and shift from one extreme to the other. This is not surprising, since religious life – as life does in general – changes. Religion is adaptive. If defined as a way of coping (Pargament 2000: 334–7), tradition sanctions the models of how to interpret, adapt and give meanings to events, ideas and explanations. Old and new ideas and ways of behaviour can always be decided upon, which leads us to the relevant question: Could individuals with ‘ex-terrorist’ backgrounds then engage in initiating attacks once again on the Temple Mount in order to hasten their own redemptive plans?

Though the above-mentioned activists are all displeased with the current situation on the Temple Mount, it is here suggested that none of them would personally engage in any attacks against the Muslim presence on the Temple Mount today. Yehuda Etzion and Yoel Lerner are ‘ex-terrorists’, who were active over twenty years ago. This implies that both have undergone a role transition from being an ‘active terrorist’ to becoming an ‘ex-terrorist’. Nowadays, they are inspirational figures, theologians working on philosophical and judicial matters. And no radicalization processes can be identified as taking place within the Temple Mount Faithful Movement. Yet, it remains the case that these matters should be explained in greater detail, and this is a challenge for multidisciplinary scholarship.

The Temple Mount issue is a serious issue for all three of these men, but rather than running out and waving guns, they inspire new generations and serve as role models for the younger generation to adapt. When it comes to the Gaza pullout, these men do perhaps call upon zealot principles: the land should not be divided, or given away. The Jew who commits such an act against the well-being of the nation and its people is regarded as doomed. Theologically, according to these three men, it is still considered legitimate to act against desecration of the Holy Land, and therefore, these men might inspire actions in order to ‘save the Temple Mount’. Yehuda Etzion, Yoel Lerner, and Gershon Salomon display a deep commitment

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13 It should be noted that neither Etzion nor Lerner identify themselves as ‘terrorists’. The concept of ‘terrorist’ is used here as a principle of categorisation when accounting for violent acts motivated by religious endtime beliefs.
and dedication to their cause. And even if they long for a Third Temple and anticipate messianic leadership, it does not automatically imply that the awaited ‘spiritual revolution’ requires a helping hand from them.

In the End

For Jewish endtime activists, the Temple Mount evokes strong feelings, and the various apocalyptic-millenarian representations that are attached to Jerusalem create the platform where actions are being performed with an eye to eternity. Such apocalyptic positions allow Temple activists to enter the stage and when they feel threatened, even to use violence. But in the situation of religious-political tension in Jerusalem, terror attacks or bombs are not required to create a sense of chaos or conflict. It takes much less than a bomb to cause anxiety in this city.

In this article, I have shown that in Jerusalem power can easily be legitimized and exercised by the use of apocalyptic rhetoric that has its source, in this case, in Jewish tradition. Conflicts easily arise when apocalyptic representations become used as arguments for an immediate and desperate need for change. Sometimes such representations cause a sense of insecurity, since it is hard to know when the rhetoric is applied metaphorically, or symbolically, and when it actually refers to a physical reality, a certain place or a specific group of people. Changes in apocalyptic tendencies need, however, not result in outbreaks of violence. Within this apocalyptic-millenarian frame of reference concord can indeed be achieved, but only if the apocalyptic positions that are here taken and maintained point towards and prioritize a millenarian future achieved through peaceful means.

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BRUCE LINCOLN

From Artaxerxes to Abu Ghraib
On Religion and the Pornography of Imperial Violence

I

In the wake of September 11, 2001, much has been written about religious groups commonly called ‘terrorist’, building on an older literature whose equally tendentious buzzwords were ‘cult’ and ‘fundamentalism’.¹ In general, the conclusions advanced within such works tilt sometimes in the direction of alarm (‘They’re dangerous and they’re everywhere!’), and sometimes in that of reassurance (‘These are quite marginal phenomena, and they’re not really religions’). Particularly skilled, also particularly confused analysts (George Bush comes to mind) sometimes manage to have it both ways, which is rather a nifty trick.

Tempting though it is, I would rather not contribute to the enterprise of this growing cottage industry.² This is not to say the topic doesn’t have its importance (surely it does), but the field is saturated. Besides, there is bigger, more interesting, and more important game. Simple utilitarian calculations suggest that the amount of academic attention devoted to a given threat ought reflect its seriousness, based on calculations of the likelihood that threat will be realized and the destruction it can unleash. By these standards, al Qaeda, Hamas, the Aryan Nations, Aum Shinrikyo, the Tamil Tigers, Gush Emunim, and all other non-state groups are relative pikers, whose capacity for violence is dwarfed by that of the larger states, who also use their formidable discursive capacities to normalize their own aggression, while stigmatizing that of all adversaries. State violence is, of course, held in check by numerous factors, including law, tradition, international institutions, political and economic costs, calculations of self-inter-

² For a sketch of my current thinking, see Lincoln 2005a: 12.
est, also — not least in importance — considerations of morality and religion. Should any of these militate in other directions, however, the likelihood of violence increases accordingly. Among the most dangerous of situations is that in which an extremely powerful state bent on conquest finds and deploys religious arguments that encourage its aggressive tendencies and imperial ambitions.

Without great difficulty, one can identify a contemporary case of this type, but its very proximity threatens to distort one’s perception.³ Believing that it may be useful to consider data sufficiently removed from the present to afford some critical distance, I have devoted much of my research in recent years to the role played by religion in Achaemenid Persia (550–330 BCE), the largest, wealthiest, most powerful empire of antiquity before the emergence of Rome.⁴ As a convenient summary of that research, I propose to discuss two Achaemenian data, each of which can assume emblematic status. Only after that exercise will I return to contemporary materials and issues.

II

Wherever the Achaemenian empire spread, servants of the Great King built walled gardens, inside which they made every effort to create an atmosphere of perfect tranquility and well-being.⁵ Toward that end, they built irrigation canals to carry cool water that kept the environment moist and made all life flourish. They planted dense collections of shade trees to moderate temperatures and provide relief from the scorching sun. They arranged plantings in complex geometric patterns to create a sense of perfect order and exquisite beauty. They gathered plants ‘of every species’ — as they never tired of repeating — from every province of the empire, transplanted them, cultivated them and, on occasion, launched military


⁴ Lincoln forthcoming a and forthcoming b.

⁵ These gardens are known chiefly from archaeological excavations at Pasargadae and from the reports of Greek historians. For thoughtful and thorough considerations of the evidence, see Fauth 1979; Stronach 1989 and 1990; Tuplin 1998; Bremmer 1999; Hultgård 2000; Briant 2003; Lincoln 2003b and forthcoming a.
campaigns to obtain exotic species unavailable inside their borders. They did the same with animals, including the most exotic species. Some of these served as game for royal hunts, while others were left to wander.

At their leisure, the king and his nobles frequented such sites, which they understood as exquisitely pleasant spaces for repose and recreation, microcosmic models of the empire at large, and a prefiguration or foretaste of the ideal state they wished to establish wherever they spread their power. To these symbolically charged grounds they gave the name ‘paradise’ (Old Persian pari.daida; cf. Median *pari.daiza, Avestan pairi.daēza), which most literally denotes a walled enclosure. Carrying much wider nuances, resonances, fantasies, desires, and connotations, this word spread widely from Persia. Particularly influential in this process of near-global diffusion was the Alexandrian translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, where the loanword paradeisos – and not the native Greek terminology – was used to describe the extraordinary features of Eden at Genesis 2.8–15, for which the Hebrew uses a much simpler term for ‘garden’ (gan, usually translated by Greek kēpos).

6 The drive to include plants ‘of all sorts’ or ‘of every species’ is mentioned by Xenophon, Anabasis 1.4.10 and 2.4.14, idem, Economicus 4.13–14, Arrian, Anabasis 6.29.4, idem, Indica 8.40.3–4, Diodorus Siculus 5.19.2 and 19.21.3, Longus 4.2.

Abundance of vegetation is signalled in more general terms by Xenophon, Hellenica 4.1.33, idem, Economicus 4.14, Diodorus Siculus 14.79.2, and Achilles Tatius 1.15. Botanical collecting emerges as a motive for imperial expansion in the advice Mardonius gave Xerxes. When the latter wavered in his determination to invade Greece, his uncle and chief adviser urged him on by saying ‘Europe was a very beautiful place and bore cultivated trees of every sort, a land high in excellence, and worthy to be possessed by the king alone among mortals.’ ἡ Ἐὐρώπη περικαλλὴς εἴη χώρη, καὶ δένδρεα παντοῖα ἔρει τὰ ἥμφερα, ἀρετήν τε ἄκρη, βασιλέως μούνῳ θνητῶν ἀξίη ἐκτῆσθαι. Herodotus 7.5.

7 As regards the desire to include animals ‘of every species, see Xenophon, Anabasis 1.2.7, idem, Cyropedia 1.3.14, idem, Hellenica 4.1.15–16 and 4.1.33, Arrian, Indica 8.40.3–4, Diodorus Siculus 19.21.3, Achilles Tatius 1.15, and Quintus Curtius, 8.1.11. On the royal hunt, see Fauth 1979; Briant 1991: 211–55; Briant 1996: 242–4 and 309–12.

8 For linguistic analysis of the term and its significance, see Brandenstein and Mayrhofer 1964: 137, and Lincoln 2003b.

9 Other loanwords from the Persian include Akkadian pardēsu, Elamite partētaš, Hebrew pardēs, Armenian partēz, and Arabic firdaus, and the European terminology – English paradise, French paradis, Italian paradiso, German paradies, etc. – that comes via Greek paradeisos and Latin paradisium.
This translator’s choice is significant, for Eden is not in any sense a royal garden, nor a playground for weary nobles. Rather, in the first instance, it is a space of perfection, created by God at the beginning of time; second, a space to which humans had access in a corresponding time of perfection, but from which they became estranged as the result of a primordial drama; third, a space – and a quality of being – that humans hope to recover in some eschatological future.

In Genesis chapter 3, the Biblical text shifts its attention from the garden as an image of primordial perfection to narrate the Fall, detailing how perfection was lost. The Achaemenian myth of creation – which was given first place in twenty-three of the surviving royal inscriptions, and was repeated by every king from Darius the Great (r. 522–486) through Artaxerxes III (359–38) – is more concise than the Genesis account, and treats the loss of primordial bliss only in allusive fashion.10 Still, there are some important similarities between the two cosmogonies. The Achaemenian text reads as follows.

A great god is the Wise Lord, who created this earth, who created that sky, who created mankind, who created happiness for mankind, who made Darius king: one king over many, one commander over many.11

Five separate acts of creation are mentioned in this brief passage. All are understood as unambiguously good, being products of a benevolent (but not omnipotent) Creator. The five creations are not equal in their age and status, however, since one is subtly set apart from the others. Thus, while

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10 The inscriptions have been edited by Roland G. Kent (1953). All subsequent authors have followed the convention established by Kent, through which each inscription is identified by a three-letter sigla that lists the king responsible for the inscription first, the site second, and the sequence in which the inscriptions were discovered third. Thus, for example, DPa = Darius’s first inscription at Persepolis. The cosmogonic myth appears as the first paragraph of DNa, DNb, DPg, DSe, DSf, DSt, DStb, DE, DZc, XPa, XPb, XPe, XPd, XPf, XPh, XPl, XE, XV, A’Pa, D’Ha, A’Hc, and A’Pa. Improved translations have appeared in recent years, including Schmitt 1991 and 2000, and Lecoq 1997.

11 DNa §1: baga vazrka Auranazdā, haya imām bāmīm adā, haya avam asmānam adā, haya martiyam adā, haya šiyātim adā martiyahyā, haya Dārayavahm xš yawīyaym akunauš, ašām parāhām xš yawīyaym, ašām parāhām frahatāram. This is the most common variant, which became the standard copied by later kings, who replaced Darius’s name with their own, but there are also other versions. The full set of variants has been studied most extensively by Clarisse Herrenschmidt (1977).
the first four creations came into being at some unspecified moment in primordial time, the Wise Lord made Darius king at a precise historic moment: 29 September 522, to be exact.12

The text further distinguishes between the four original creations and the fifth through a detail of vocabulary. Thus, for the Wise Lord’s initial creative acts, it uses the verb *dā-*, ‘to establish, set in place for the first time’, a solemn verb that never admits any grammatical subject save the Wise Lord. When it turns to the moment this deity ‘made Darius king’, however, it employs a much less elevated verb: *kar-*, which takes both humans and gods as its subject, and can denote any act of doing, making, or shaping, including the most menial.13

The point is clear. The Wise Lord’s first four acts form a set that includes inanimate and animate, natural and cultural components: heaven and earth on the one hand, mankind, and everything necessary for mankind’s happiness on the other. Of these, the culminating item is the most interesting and elusive. Detailed studies of the term used to denote ‘happiness’ (Old Persian *šiyāti*; cf. Avestan *šyāti*, Latin *quiēs*) show it is a state of blissful tranquility that involves – and depends on – the presence of Truth, peace, and abundant foods (especially those derived from fresh water, healthful plants, and beneficent animals).14

Once the original four-part creation was complete, there followed an interval of indeterminate length, about which the text is silent. During this period, the world was perfect and no further action needed. But something happened that roused the deity to one more effort as a response to some danger. Darius’s first and longest inscription helps resolve the question of what produced this situation.

Written shortly after the events it describes, the trilingual inscription at Bisitun describes how Darius seized the throne in September 522, suppressed nine rebellions, then embarked on a program of new conquests.15

12 The date is given according to the Old Persian and Babylonian calendars in Darius’s trilingual inscription at Bisitun (DB §13 and DB [Bab.] §12, respectively).
13 On the meaning of these verbs and the significance of their contrast, see Herrenschmidt 1984, Bianchi 1988, and Kellens 1989.
The early passages hold particular interest, where Darius represented his (otherwise dubious) accession as the result of divine election. These are the same events he later construed as the Wise Lord’s fifth act of creation. Mythic and historic discourse thus complement each other, providing different pieces of the same story. Bisitun omits the original creation – the prime focus of later inscriptions – but dwells on the crisis of 525–2 that brought happiness to an end, and all texts conclude when the Wise Lord responded to that crisis by making Darius king. The crucial passage at Bisitun reads as follows.

A man of our family named Cambyses, the son of Cyrus, was formerly king. His brother was named Bardiya and Cambyses slew him, but it did not become known that Bardiya was slain. Then Cambyses went off to conquer Egypt. While he was in Egypt, the people became vulnerable to deception and the Lie became great throughout the land. Afterwards, there was a Magus named Gaumata. He rose up in rebellion on March 11, 522. He lied to the people, saying: ‘I am Bardiya, son of Cyrus and brother of Cambyses.’ Then the people became rebellious. Persia and Media and other lands went over to Gaumata. On July 1, 522 he seized the kingship, and then Cambyses died. The kingship Gaumata took from Cambyses belonged to our family since long ago. No one was able to take the kingship back from Gaumata. The people feared him mightily. He killed many people who knew Bardiya, for fear they might recognize him. No one dared say anything about Gaumata, until I rose up. I prayed to the Wise Lord for assistance. The Wise Lord bore me aid. Along with a few men, on September 29, 522 I slew Gaumata the Magus and his foremost followers. I took the kingship from him. By the Wise Lord’s will, I became king.16

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16 DB §§10–13: Kambujiya nāma, Kuraš puça, amāxam taṃmāyā, haṣ paravam itā xšāyaθiya āha, avarhā Kambujiyaθyā brātā Br̥ diya namā āha, hamātā hamāpitā Kambujiyaθyāvā, pasāva Kambujiya avam Br̥ diya avāja, yatā Kambujiya Br̥ diya avāja, kār̥ ahānātā atā abava, taya Br̥ diya avajata, pasāva Kambujiya Mudrāyam aśiyavā, yatā Kambujiya Mudrāyam aśiyavā, pasāva kāra arika abava utā draug̥ ā ḫaθyaθvā vaθaj atava, utā Pār̥ avā utā Mādai utā aνi̊yāvā ḫayusuvā. ḫāti Dārayavauθ xšāyaθhya: pasāva aṭva maṛatiya magus āha, Gaumātiya nāma, haṣ udapataḥatā hācā Pājśiyāvādā, Arakadrīs nāma kāṇḍa, haṣ avadaθ. Viyusnaθyā māhā caθuθaθ rāucabīθ ḫakataā āha, yadi udapataθa, haṣ kāraθhya aθaθ adhuruiya: adam Br̥ diya ami, haṣa Kuraθ puça, Kambujiyaθyā brātā, pasāva kāra haruva hamiθiya abava hācā Kambujiya, atā avam aθiyavā, utā Pār̥ sa utā Mādai utā aνi̊yā ḫayusvā, xīaθam haṣ aγṛbāyatā, Garmaθaθyā māhā navā rāucabīθ ḫakataā āha, aθaθ xīaθam aγṛbāyatā, pasāva Kambujiya uvaṃsīyaθ amariyatā. ḫāti
Darius goes on to explain that once established on the throne, he set about rectifying all the wrongs Gaumata had committed. Toward that end, he restored the institution of kingship, temples and cults, also pastures, livestock, and the bases of the economy. Other sources suggest he raised taxes and enforced demands for military conscription that Gaumata had alleviated. Such steps were unpopular, and serious doubts also existed regarding Darius’s legitimacy. As a result, many revolts broke out, especially in provinces that wished to extricate themselves from Persian imperial domination. In general, these nationalist insurrections were led by men claiming to be rightful heirs of the old royal families the Achaemenians overthrew. Darius’s response to them was consistent, for he insisted they

17 DB §14: ‘The kingship that had been taken from our lineage, I put that in its place. I restored it in place. Just as they had been before, so I restored the cults that Gaumata the Magus destroyed. I restored the pastures and livestock and servants and houses of the people, of which Gaumata the Magus had deprived them. I set the people back in place, in Persia and Media and the other lands and peoples. Just as it was before, so I brought back that which had been taken.’

18 According to Herodotus 3.67, upon accession to the throne, Bardiya (whom he calls Smerdis) proclaimed a three-year suspension of demands for tribute and military service, which made him extremely popular in all provinces, save Persia.
were not who they claimed to be. Not kings, but liars, imposters, and would-be usurpers. Not national heroes, but instruments of ‘the Lie’.

All of this is consistent with the central principles of Achaemenian religion, which posits a historic struggle between the virtue of Truth, on which the order of the cosmos depends, and its antithetical adversary: ‘the Lie’. The original creation, as we have seen, was characterized by perfect happiness, in which state the Lie was absent. Primordial perfection ended and history proper thus began, with three events of 525–2 recounted in the text just quoted. (1) The king – normally understood as the embodiment of Truth and protector of happiness – killed his brother and concealed this fact, said concealment being an act of deception, not quite a lie, but hardly the truth: a misrepresentation designed to mask reality and delude the people. (2) As a result of this half-truth, the people became ‘vulnerable to deception’: not yet liars and villains themselves, but confused, anxious, malleable creatures who could trust neither their king, nor their own senses and reason, from which reality had been successfully occluded. (3) These were the preconditions for the manifestation of evil proper, in all its force. And so, in Darius’s words, ‘the Lie became great throughout the land’, after which there followed rebellion, war, scarcity; disorder, death, hunger; suffering, fear, doubt. In a word, unhappiness on a massive scale: the end of the perfect era.

Darius and his successors claimed they were chosen by God himself to set things right: that is, to restore creation to its pristine state by vanquishing the Lie in all its forms and all who were corrupted by it. That done, happiness could endure forever. Constituting themselves – and their armies – as champions of Truth and virtue, they offered other peoples the option of voluntarily becoming Achaemenian subjects, which obliged them to pay tribute, contribute soldiers, maintain roads, obey Persian laws, and accept moral leadership from the monarch who defined himself as ‘King of lands and peoples of all races, King over this great, far-reaching earth’. All of these steps were intended, not simply to enrich the Persian center, but to help advance its imperial expansion, which it construed as a divinely ordained, supremely benevolent project of world salvation. Those who rejected such diplomatic overtures were construed as misguided creatures

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whose judgment was warped by the Lie. Their conquest represented advance of the Truth by Persian arms, assisted by the Wise Lord. So did the suppression of rebels.\textsuperscript{20}

Military expansion was thus construed as a religious and moral project, designed to establish righteousness, peace, prosperity, abundance, harmony, the flourishing of life and all its pleasures. In a word, ‘happiness for mankind’. As a sign of what they intended – a sign directed both to themselves and others – the Achaemenians used a portion of their revenues to build the sumptuous gardens I described earlier, filled with exotic species of plants and animals imported from every corner of the globe, and designed to provide a foretaste of the absolute happiness waiting at history’s end under a Pax Persiana. Those gardens were among the most idealized models of empire that ever existed: a story the Achaemenians told themselves about themselves, through which they justified and motivated violent wars of aggression, internal suppression of dissent, ongoing processes of extraction, and ambitions of global domination. To these gardens, they gave the general name of ‘paradise’, but we also know the name given one of these gardens, which confirms our interpretation, for this paradise-garden was known as ‘All-happiness’.\textsuperscript{21}

III

The charming image of the paradise-garden stands in sharp contrast with another, the torture administered to a soldier named Mithridates by Artaxerxes II shortly after the battle of Cunaxa (3 September 401). Here, the king quashed a rebellion led by his brother, Cyrus the Younger and, as reported by Ctesias (Artaxerxes’s court physician),\textsuperscript{22} it was Mithridates

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\textsuperscript{20} The formal procedures through the offer of submission was made and negotiated, failing which war might be declared, have been discussed by Amélie Kuhrt (1988). On treatment of rebels, see Lincoln 2005b.

\textsuperscript{21} The paradise-garden named Vispa-šiyātiš (‘All-happiness’) appears in Cameron 1948: Nos. 49 and 59, pp. 160 and 172, respectively. The significance of this datum was first recognized by Émile Benveniste (1958). New evidence has been added in support of his views by Prods O. Skjærvø (1994).

\textsuperscript{22} Ctesias’s \textit{Persika} has not been preserved, except in fragments. Plutarch cites him as his source repeatedly, especially with reference to the death of Cyrus the Younger (\textit{Life of Artaxerxes} 11.1, 2, and 6) and the rewards distributed by Artaxerxes thereafter (\textit{ibid}. 14.1).
who first wounded Cyrus and was responsible for his death. For this, the king rewarded him handsomely, but in a way that obscured his contribution, since Artaxerxes wanted personal credit for having killed his brother. When a drunk and decidedly indiscreet Mithridates let the facts slip regarding his role in Cyrus’s death, Artaxerxes ordered him put to death in the following fashion.

Taking two troughs that were made to fit closely together, they laid the man being punished on his back inside one of them. Then they fit the other on top so the man’s head, hands, and feet stuck out, while it covered the rest of his body. They gave him food, pricking his eyes to force him when he resisted. They also poured milk mixed with honey into his mouth, and they poured it over his face. Then they turned his eyes constantly toward the sun and a multitude of flies settled down, covering his face. Meanwhile, inside, the man did what it is necessary for people to do when they have drunk and eaten. Worms and maggots boiled up from the decay and putrefaction of his excrement, and these ate away his body, boring into his interior. When he was dead and the top was removed, people saw his flesh all eaten away and swarms of such animals surrounded his vitals, eating them and leeching at them. Thus Mithridates was gradually destroyed over seventeen days, until he finally died.  

Ctesias, as cited by Plutarch, offered no interpretation for these procedures. Rather, both authors let the episode speak for itself as an example of Oriental despotism at its most sadistic and vile. Similarly, Achaemenian

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23 Plutarch, Life of Artaxerxes 16.2–4: σκάφας δύο πεποιημένας ἐφαρμόζειν ἀλλήλαις λαβόντες, εἰς τὴν ἑτέραν κατακλίνουσι τὸν κολαζόμενον ἔπιπον εἶτα τὴν ἑτέραν ἐπάγοντες καὶ οὐναρμόζοντες, ὅστε τὴν κεφαλὴν καὶ τὰς χεῖρας ἔξω καὶ τοὺς πόδας ἀπολαμβάνεσθαι, τὸ δὲ ἄλλο σῶμα πάν ἀποκαθαρεύθαι, διδόσαν ἐσθίειν τῷ ἄνθρωπῳ, κἂν μὴ θέλῃ, προσβιάζοντα κεντοῦντες τὰ ὄμματα· φαγόντι δὲ πεῖν μέλι καὶ γάλα συγκεκραμένον ἐγχέουσιν εἰς τὸ στόμα καὶ κατὰ τὸν πρόσωπον καταχέουσιν. εἶτα πρὸς τὸν ἤλιον ἀεὶ στρέφοντος ἐναντία τὰ ὄμματα, καὶ μιᾶς προσκαθαμβημένος πλήθος πάν ἀποχύπτεται τὸ πρόσωπον. ἐντὸς δὲ ποιοῦντος ὅσα ποιεῖν αναγκαῖον ἐστὶν ἐσθίοντας ἀνθρώπους καὶ πίνοντος, εὐλαῖα καὶ σκώλημας ύπο φθορᾶς καὶ σφεδόνος ἐκ τοῦ περιττοῦ τάσμου ἀναζέουσιν, ὡς ὃν ἀναλίσκεται τὸ σῶμα διὰφυσιμοῦν ἐστὶ τὰ ἐντὸς. ὅταν γὰρ ἢδη φανερὸς ἔνθροπος ὁ ἄνθρωπος, ἀφαιρεθείσης τῆς ἐπάνου σκάφης ὅροις τὴν μὲν σάρκα κατετηθειμένην, περὶ δὲ τὰ σαλέχησα τοιοῦτον θηρίον εὐμοῦς ἐσθίοντος καὶ προσπεφυκός, ὁ Μιθριδάτης ἐπακαίθεσα ἡμέρας φθειρόμενος μόλις ἀπέθανε.
texts offer little that would help us make sense of the punishment, save perhaps Darius’s injunction to future kings: ‘You who may be king hereafter, protect yourself boldly from the Lie! The man who is a liar, punish him so that he is well-punished if you would think thus: “Let my land and people be secure”.’

This, of course, raises the question what it would mean to be ‘well-punished’ (u-fraštam), and here Zoroastrian doctrines offer some help. This follows whether or not one accepts that the later Achaemenians had adopted Zoroastrianism, as most now believe. Even those who remain skeptical on this point will readily acknowledge that close comparison of the Achaemenian inscriptions and Zoroastrian texts reveals similarities so numerous and so strong that the two must be regarded as heirs to a common pan-Iranian linguistic, religious, and cultural tradition that each one developed in its own fashion.

Virtually every detail of Ctesias’s account finds clarifying analogues in Zoroastrian scriptures: the milk and honey; the flies, maggots, and worms; the excrement and its horrific stench, which the text tactfully leaves to one’s imagination. Even the enclosure formed by the two troughs reminds us of another enclosure described in a passage of the Videvdat (an Avestan text concerned with issues of law, purity and pollution) that bears the same

24 DB §55: tuvam kā, xšāyaθiya haya aparam āhi, hacā draugā dṝ šam patipayauvā, martya, haya draujana ahati, avam ufraštam pryā, yadi avathā, maniyahāj: dahyāgšmaj duruvā ahati. Cf. DB §64: ‘You who may be king hereafter: That man who is a liar or who is a deceit-doer, do not be a friend to them. Punish them with a good punishment.’

25 When scholars were inclined to date the earliest Zoroastrian texts in the 6th Century BCE, the majority felt there was not enough time for them to have diffused from eastern Iran to Achaemenid Persia in the west. As a date circa 1000 BCE has come to be widely accepted, that objection no longer holds and opinion has shifted accordingly. The evidence, however, is ambiguous and debate is likely to continue forever, without definitive resolution. For a convenient summary of discussions through 1980, see Herrenschmidt 1980. Since then, Mary Boyce (1982) has argued most forcefully, if not most convincingly for the Zoroastrian identity of the Achaemenians. More recently, Prods Oktor Skjærvø (1999) has offered important support for this position.

name as the Achaemenian ‘paradise’ (Avestan pairi.daēza; cf. Old Persian pari.daida).\textsuperscript{27} Whereas the latter is an ideal space of happiness, abundance, and the flourishing of life, that of the Videvdat is a space of death and bodily corruption. Inside its walls is the driest, most desolate terrain, devoid of plant, animal, and human life. There, corpse-bearers – i.e. those unfortunates most soiled by the filth of dead bodies – are imprisoned for the duration of their mortal existence so their threat of contaminating pollution may be safely contained.\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{27} I have discussed this enclosure more fully on two previous occasions, see Lincoln 1991: 110–11, and forthcoming a.

\textsuperscript{28} Videvdat 3.15–21: ‘“Righteous creator of bodily beings! Where should be the place of the man who has carried a corpse?” Then said the Wise Lord: “It should be the place on this earth that is most devoid of water, most devoid of plants, whose soil is most purified, driest, and where animals, small and large, traverse its paths in fewest numbers to the Wise Lord’s fire, to the righteous sacrificial strew that has been spread out, and toward a man who is righteous.”

“Righteous creator of bodily beings! How far [should he be] from the fire? How far [should he be] from the water? How far [should he be] from the strew that has been spread out? How far [should he be] from a righteous man?”

Then said the Wise Lord: “Thirty steps from the fire. Thirty steps from the water. Thirty steps from the strew that has been spread out. Three steps from a righteous man.”

There, the Mazda-worshippers enclose a “paradise” (pairi.daēzan pairi.daēzayan) out of this earth. There, those who are Mazda-worshippers establish him with food. There, those who are Mazda-worshippers establish him with clothes. In the very poorest and most run down places, he must eat these foods and he must wear these clothes, until he becomes old or decrepit or one whose bodily fluids are exhausted. Then, when he becomes old or decrepit or one whose bodily fluids are exhausted, on the most powerful, most bold, most knowledgeable mountain top, the Mazda-worshippers should flay his skull down to the bottom of his hair. His body should be consigned for the food of vultures, the body-devouring creatures of the Beneficent Spirit, saying thus: “May he renounce all evil thought, evil word, and evil deed.” And if there are other evil deeds committed by him, his punishment has been settled. And if there are no other evil deeds committed by him, things are settled for this man for ever and ever.’

dātara aēθānanygm astvaitinanynm aśāum. kva aētahe narś gātuṣ aŋhat yat irdō. kāšahe. āt nraot ahurō mazdā. yat aŋhat ainghā zomō vi.āpō.tomɔmc vi.urvarō.tomɔmc yaozdātō.ətomɔmcma huṣkō.tomɔmcma kabsitɔcmca aete paθā frayŋ pasvasca stupaca atrmɔcma ahurahē mazdā barɔzmɔcma ašava frastarɔtɔm naramɔcma yim ašavanam. dātara gaēθānanygm astvaitinanynm aśāum. cvat drājō haca aθrat cvat drājō haca apat cvat drājō haca barɔzmɔn frastarɔtā cvat drājō haca naro bm ašavamḥyā. āt nraot ahurō mazdā. ṭrisatā.gāim haca aθrat ṭrisatā.gāim haca apat ṭrisatā.gāim haca barɔzmɔn frastarɔtā ṭrigāim haca naro bm ašavamḥyā. aētada hē aēte mazdayasna ainghā zomō pari.daēzan
With the exception of the Videvdat, which is concerned with issues of purity, the older Zoroastrian scriptures (i.e., those written in Avestan) are mostly liturgical in nature. It is thus the younger, Pahlavi scriptures that provide the fullest testimony. Many of these contain lists of mortal sins (marg-arzân), i.e. actions so grievously wrong that those who commit them ought be put to death. While these lists vary somewhat, they always prominently feature the crime of which Mithridates was convicted: Untruth. In a multitude of forms – perjury, heresy, slander, breach of contract, et al. – untruth is always a capital offense. Those guilty of it can also expect postmortem torment, as is described in the Dadestan i Denig.

From all the demons, there comes to him heavy pain, trouble, devouring and many things, like stench and biting, tearing, cutting in pieces, all harm and misfortune. His own choice created these things for him in hell, and there will be evils for him until the cosmic renovation.

For such lists, see Denkard 5.9.10 (delivering a false legal decision [drō dādwarīh], teaching falsehood [drō-cāšnīh], perjury [zūr-gugāyīh]); Pahlavi Rivayat accompanying the Dadestan i Denig 41 (perjury [zūr-gugāyīh], false teaching [drō-cāš], repudiation of true statements [nakkīr], Menog i Xrad 36 (Manichaean forms of heresy [zandīkīh], 36.16; other forms of heresy [ahlomōgīh], 36.18; breach of contract [mihrōdrujīh], 36.21; slander [spazgīh], 36.25; speaking falsehood and untruth [kē drō ud anīst gōwēd], 36.29). That the opposition of truth and falsehood had similar salience in Achaemenian culture is suggested by the place of ‘the Lie’ (Old Persian Drauga; cf. Avestah drua, Pahlavi dru) in the royal inscriptions, also by the report of Herodotus 1.136 that Persian nobles received fifteen years of education in three subjects only: riding a horse, shooting a bow, and telling the truth.
The first point to observe is how closely these otherworldly afflictions resemble the death-torments inflicted on Mithridates, complete with biting, tearing, devouring, cutting in pieces and, of course, the stench. Two other details also merit attention. First the evildoer is made fully responsible for his suffering, it being asserted that his own choice (wurrōyišn) – i.e., the wrong moral decisions he made – created these woes for him.31 Second, those who inflict the pain on the victim’s body are hellish demons. This prompts us to observe that Mithridates’s sufferings came most directly from the attack of lowly creatures, while the humans who managed his torture did almost nothing violent. Indeed, the affair was organized such that they could – and no doubt did – construe their actions as beneficent, since they chiefly consisted of providing food and drink. Nor was this just any food and drink, for milk and honey were understood as the purest forms of nourishment, associated with goodness, light, innocence, and peace, since milk is the food of newborn babes, while these two foods – and no other, save water – are procured without harm to the life of any plant or animal.32

31 Cf. Dadestan i Denig 31.4–5, which describes the torments of the liar (druwand) as his soul is led to hell. The crucial passage states: ‘With him there are spiritual demons, which came into being from the evil he did in many forms and places. They resemble spoilers, harmers, killers, destroyers, scoundrels, evil-bodies, wrong-doers, those who are unseemly, most stingy, filthy, biting, and tearing vermin, stinking winds, dark, stinking, burning, thirsting, hungry, inexpiably sinful, and other most sin-causing and harm-causing demons, who become causes of pain for him in the material, as in the spiritual creation. They have strength and power given them by his sin, as much as it is great. And they ceaselessly cause him pain and suffering until the time of the Renovation.’  u-š abag bawēnd mēnōg dēw  1 ēhom was cihrag ud gāh mānōg 1 wināhēnāgān ud dād ān īta bē o frašgird zamān anāsānīhā dardēnēnd bēšišnēnd.

32 Milk is discussed at Dadestan i Denig 27.2 and 30.13, Denkard 3.374, Zad Spram 6.1, 10.11, 16.3, 30.58, 34.40, Greater Bundahišn 14.17–19 and 34.1, Pahlavi Rivayat accompanying the Dadestan i Denig 23.17. Honey is mentioned much less frequently, the chief source being Greater Bundahišn 22.29 [TD2 MS. 146.13–15], which makes it an excellent product derived from an odious source, by virtue of the Wise Lord’s power: ‘In his omniscience, the Wise Lord turns many of these vermin back to the advantage of his creatures, like the bee that makes honey and the worm that makes silk.’ ēn xrafstarān pad harwisp āgāhīh was abar ā sūd ā dāmān vardēndēd ciyōn magas kē angubēn kunēd, kirm kē abrēshom ud kunē.
Mithridates’s execution thus organized feeders and fed in a set of interlocking binary oppositions. The feeders were vertical, above, and free to move as they liked; the victim horizontal, below, deprived of mobility. They gave abundantly; he took, with reluctance. That which they gave served as a mark of their (putative) goodness and innocence, while that which he made of their gifts – the dark, foul, death-dealing excrement his body produced, the crawling vermin it spawned and the flying vermin his body attracted – revealed and punished his (putative) guilt. It is as if his body, or some interior, hidden quality thereof, transformed the stuff of life into the terrible instruments of death.

Throughout ancient Iran, maggots, worms, and insects were regarded as monstrous beings, and Herodotus describes Achaemenid priests as having waged ceaseless war against them. For its part, Zoroastrianism has quite an extensive theology of vermin, which draws on cosmological, demonological, and physiological discourses. All of these are grounded in a myth of creation that resembles the Achaemenian cosmogony. Like the latter, the Pahlavi texts describe the Wise Lord as having produced an original creation whose perfection was disrupted by the Assault (ēbgat) of an independent, utterly malignant force: ‘the Evil Spirit’ (Ahriman), also known as ‘the Adversary’ (hamēstār, petyārag) and closely identified with ‘the Lie’ (druz). Working in the infinite darkness that is his own, this spirit fashioned two kinds of being as an antithesis to the good creation: demons (dēwān) and vermin (xrafstarān). The latter category includes insects, reptiles, snakes, worms, and those creatures that swarm, crawl, and bite.

With these as his troops, the Evil Spirit attacked the Wise Lord’s creatures with a will-to-annihilation. His power being inadequate to that task, however, he could only damage and corrupt, but never destroy them. Accordingly, his Assault yielded a synthesis of good and evil, light and darkness, being and non-being, which the Pahlavi texts call ‘the mixed state’ (gumēzišn), in which all the originally pure creations – heaven, earth, water, plants, animals, humans, and fire – now contain flaws, ambiguities, and destructive potential as a consequence of the Assault.

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33 Herodotus 1.140: ‘The Magi ... wage this great struggle, killing in equal measure ants and serpents and other reptiles and insects.’ Μάγοι αὐτοχειρίῃ πάντα πλὴν κυνός καὶ ἄνθρωπου κτείνουσι, καὶ ἀγώνισμα μέγα τοῦτο ποιεῦνται, κτείνοντες ὕμνοις μύχηρας τε καὶ ὄφις καὶ τόλλα ἐρπητά καὶ πετεινά.

34 See Dadestan i Denīg 36.40; Greater Bundahišn 1.47, 4.15, and 22.1; Zad Spram 2.11. The Evil Spirit himself takes the form of vermin to mount his initial assault: a snake according to some sources (Zad Spram 2.5), a fly according to others (Greater Bundahišn 4.10).
With regard to the human body, for instance, original perfection was compromised to admit mortality, pain, disease, and sexual reproduction (which offers species-immortality in place of individual). Three further points hold particular interest in the present context. First, the body comes to have two material components that are radically different in nature: bone, which endures, and flesh, which is subject to putrefaction. Second, if left to decompose, dead flesh spawns vermin that reveal its innate corruption. Decaying bodies also produce a terrible stink, as do living bodies that have fallen into a state of moral and physical corruption. Third, the fleshly body must sustain its life by eating, itself a morally ambiguous practice. Some texts maintain that eating good foods in moderation produces health and well-being, while gluttony – characterized as the demonic form of eating – produces disease and stench. Others focus on the process of digestion, which, according to their analysis, converts the pure components of food into everything that supports life (breath, blood, thought, energy, etc.), while transforming its impure components into excrement, the chief form of filth, pollution, darkness, and stench that is present in every living body.

35 Dadestan i Denig 16.10: ‘The flesh that surrounds the bone ... reaches a state of foulness and stench when the soul departs, due to its loss of moisture, and vermin germinate in it.’

36 Ritual practices of corpse disposal are designed to control this tendency and the resultant dangers of pollution and contagion. Thus, for instance, Dadestan i Denig 17.2: ‘If the flesh of a corpse is not eaten by body-eating birds, it becomes foul, corrupt, and teeming with vermin.’

37 Denkard 3.361 (Madan 345.1–3): ‘When, as a result of inattention to their duty, people commit mortal sins, their bodies become as good as dead, given their uselessness, and their souls become hellish in their foulness.’

38 Denkard 3.235 (Madan MS. 260.12–15): ‘The body has its own perfume inside as a result of nature, and it has its own stench as a result of its appetite. The perfume that extends from outside to the innermost space of the body results from moderation in food – bread and meat – and from consumption of wine in legal amounts. The corresponding stench is poison, excrement, and it comes from voracious devouring.’
If pollution is a part of all life in the mixed state, it is not equally present in every life and body. As an important passage from the Denkart observes, ‘Filth is entirely demonic; it all comes from demons. The more one’s body is inhabited by demons, the more filth there is.’ The text goes on to discuss what happens at death.

When the body is dead, the death-making demon, the author of powerlessness, the defeater of the soul, comes to it triumphanty. He seizes it and he brings his brothers to the body, to inhabit its every place of life. These are the stench-makers, creators of foulness, and other demons who make the body useless and who drive off the opponents antithetical to themselves, like sweet fragrance, purity, good conduct, beauty and others that are necessary. Residing in the body, they increase, so there are more of them all together in the body, so that they breathe corpse-pollution and all illnesses. One can say, without dispute, that the residence of demons is in that filth.

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39 Greater Bundahišn 28.10 (TD² MS. 192.6–12): ‘In material existence, people commit sins and good deeds. When someone dies, they calculate his sins and good deeds. All those who are pure go to heaven. All those who are liars are thrown into hell. Homologous to this is people’s eating of food. All that is good goes to the brain, where it becomes pure blood. All that is mixed with poison goes from the stomach to the intestine and they throw it outside through the anus, which is just like hell.’

40 Denkart 5.24.19 (Madan ed. 463.6–7): ‘When someone dies, they calculate his sins and good deeds. All those who are pure go to heaven. All those who are liars are thrown into hell. Homologous to this is people’s eating of food. All that is good goes to the brain, where it becomes pure blood. All that is mixed with poison goes from the stomach to the intestine and they throw it outside through the anus, which is just like hell.’

41 Denkart 5.24.19a (Madan ed. 463.7–16): ‘When the body is dead, the death-making demon, the author of powerlessness, the defeater of the soul, comes to it triumphanty. He seizes it and he brings his brothers to the body, to inhabit its every place of life. These are the stench-makers, creators of foulness, and other demons who make the body useless and who drive off the opponents antithetical to themselves, like sweet fragrance, purity, good conduct, beauty and others that are necessary. Residing in the body, they increase, so there are more of them all together in the body, so that they breathe corpse-pollution and all illnesses. One can say, without dispute, that the residence of demons is in that filth.’
This passage from the Denkart treats death as the moment when the body, bereft of its vitality and of the soul that gives it moral guidance, can no longer defend itself against demonic assault. In life, the choices that the soul makes affect the body’s nature and welfare, rendering the flesh – its most vulnerable member – either more, or less able to resist the destructive forces ever-present in the mixed state. And here, it is relevant that things modern discourse treats as impersonal abstractions – things like appetite (Āz), anger (Xēšm), and falsehood (Druz, ‘the Lie’) – Zoroastrianism personified as demons.\textsuperscript{42} These are the forces against which moral people must defend themselves, and these are the forces that tear them apart when their defenses are weak. People who permit their bodies to harbor appetite, anger, falsehood, and the like find themselves corrupted by these demons, who turn their flesh foul and useless to good causes. Ultimately, they bring death, after which they make the stinking corpses that remain into an object lesson about the nature and power of evil.

The exquisite torture inflicted on Mithridates seems to have been a similar, if somewhat more pointed object lesson designed to reveal the man’s guilt by making spectacular display of his state of corruption. ‘Who and what caused his death?’, we are meant to ask. Surely not the king, a voice whispers in response, nor the men who fed him milk and honey. No, Mithridates was killed by the vermin who devoured his flesh. ‘And where did they come from?’ Clearly, from the stinking filth of his body. ‘And that filth, what caused that?’ His demons, my dear, the terrible demons who permeated his being as a result of his moral failings. ‘What sorts of demons, and what sorts of failings?’ Probably the Lie. Probably the Lie, the very worst of them all.

IV

From Artaxerxes’s perspective, the physical horror of Mithridates’s death was thus justified and mitigated by its discursive significance, since the victim’s mortal agonies effectively proclaimed his guilt, while confirming that the king was precisely what royal ideology asserted and demanded: the champion of truth and guardian of the moral order.\textsuperscript{43} For his part,
Ctesias inverted the signs of this story, thereby turning it bitterly ironic. In his version – designed to confirm the harshest Greek stereotypes of things Asiatic – the king is a coward and a liar, who tortured the brave Mithridates for having dared tell the truth.44

Having been raised to consider ourselves heirs of the Greeks, and having Ctesias’s text still available in all its persuasive power, we are probably inclined to accept his version of the events. But were we exposed to the spectacle of Mithridates’s execution at first hand, and were we sufficiently steeped in Persian culture to appreciate its nuances and values, we might well reach different conclusions. As it is, there is no way to know who really killed Cyrus the Younger and, as a result, we can make no secure judgments about the truth or falsity of the story, the guilt or innocence of the accused. Which is fine, since these are not the issues that ought concern us.

Of infinitely greater importance than adjudicating any of the particulars is to observe what happens when a powerful state develops the capacity to persuade itself, its citizens or subjects, and perhaps also others, that the world is divided between the forces of good and evil; further, that its leaders have been divinely ordained to lead the good in battle. As an occasional fantasy, this is bad enough. As a core belief, sustained in and by a well-wrought body of discourse, broadcast widely through all available media and genres, it becomes infinitely more dangerous. This is so, whether it is done cynically or if the propagators are themselves fervent believers. An important part of this process is the state’s ability (and its proclivity) to stage impressive spectacles that confirm – to its own satisfaction and benefit – its own delusions of grandeur.

Achaemenian religion involved three constructs that I have come to understand as ideally conducive to the aggressive pursuit of imperial ambition. These are: (1) A starkly dualistic ethics, in which the opposition good/evil is aligned with self/other; (2) A royal theology that grounds the ruler’s legitimacy in divine right, charisma, and election; (3) A sense of soteriological mission that recodes aggression as salvation (or liberation) and one’s victims as one’s beneficiaries. Moreover, the Achaemenids were past masters in the art of staging spectacles that reproduced, and seemingly validated these convictions. Their architecture and art, their banquets and festivals, their gardens and their tortures, all demonstrated to themselves – and to anyone who would listen – that they were good, their enemies

44 Regarding the biases Ctesias regularly introduced in his texts, see Momigliano 1969, Bigwood 1978, Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987, and Lenfant 1996.
evil, and that their king was committed to vanquishing the Lie, restoring human happiness, and rescuing all of creation. Some of the spectacles they staged were extraordinarily lovely in their aesthetics, as in the case of the paradise-gardens. Others were equally horrific. This notwithstanding, they all served the same ends by reconstituting (what passes for) reality to advance the project of imperial conquest.

The Persians, of course, were not alone in this enterprise, and successful empires almost inevitably engage in something similar. One might mention any number of recently staged spectacles like the April 9, 2003 toppling of Saddam Hussein’s statue in Baghdad’s Firdos Square (a name derived from Persian ‘paradise’, Figures 1, 2 and 3) or President Bush’s ‘Top Gun’ landing on the USS Abraham Lincoln just three weeks later to proclaim that he and the American military had accomplished their divinely ordained mission to liberate Iraq and to bring God’s gift of freedom to that nation’s benighted people (Figures 4 and 5).

Also relevant are the infamous photos taken by members of the 372nd Military Police Company shortly after they assumed control of Tier 1A at the Abu Ghraib prison on October 15, 2003. Over the next month, members of this unit staged and photographed various scenes that construed Iraqi captives as bestial and lowly (Figure 6), dark and demonic (Figure 7), sexually repressed, but secretly lascivious and perverse (Figure 8), filthy (Figure 9), weak and easily scared (Figure 10). In most instances, the Iraqis were naked and cowering; in all, they were – or were made to seem – humiliated, demoralized, craven, and thoroughly dominated by the superior power of America, as represented by its tall, strong, happy soldiers.

Unlike the earlier photos, those made at Abu Ghraib were not produced by professionals in the art of public relations, nor were they intended for general consumption. Rather, these are the low-budget, aesthetically de-

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45 Achaemenian art and architecture were spectacles of this sort, as were banquets and the ritual presentation of gifts and tribute, on which see Root 1979, Lewis 1987, Walser 1966, and Jamzadeh 1992. Briant 1996: 177–368 offers a splendid synthetic discussion.

46 An incident that occurred circa January 3, 2004, which was mentioned in testimony, but not photographed, is also worth citing: Soldier 17 witnessed an MP dog handler allowing his black dog to ‘go nuts’ on two juvenile detainees on Tier 1B, permitting the dog to get within about a foot of the two juveniles. The juveniles were screaming and the smaller one tried to hide behind the bigger one. Afterward, Soldier 17 heard the handler say he had a competition with another handler to see if they could scare detainees to the point that they would defecate. (US Army report 2004.)
graded – indeed, the obscene version of the story: the prurient record of titillating events that took place discreetly offstage. Here, bored soldiers made use of the bodies and means at their disposal to make some of the same points, employing some of the same codes as did their colleagues higher up in the chain of command.

Few explanations have been offered for these photographs, save Pfc. Lynndie England’s sworn testimony ‘it was just for fun’,\(^47\) and an Army investigator’s retort that the soldiers did these things ‘simply because they could’.\(^48\) Beneath these banalities, the photos show low-level GIs deploying the same binary oppositions that organized the other data we have considered: High/Low, Us/Them, Mobile/Immobile, Lordly/Bestial, Clean and pure / Filthy and polluted, Powerful/Powerless, God’s chosen / God’s forsaken, Champions of Truth and Freedom / Dupes and Slaves of ‘the Lie’. Read from the perspective of those who staged them, these vignettes did not degrade otherwise fully human subjects, any more than did the torture and execution of Mithridates. Rather, the impromptu mini-dramas at Abu Ghraib revealed that as ‘terrorists’, ‘fanatics’, ‘diehard ex-Baathists’, and so forth, the Iraqi prisoners were always already degraded, and therefore deserved the treatment they received.

Only when Seymour Hersh, our modern Ctesias, secured publication of these photos were the signs of hero and villain inverted, so that a broad audience could read the story as one of moral depravity. While I share that reaction at a visceral level, for analytical purposes I find it important to combine the initial intent of the photos with their subsequent reinscription to make a more complex point, with which I will conclude this essay. What we see here is the way moral depravity and moral confidence (or the simulacrum thereof) are dialectically related: how they produce and reproduce each other through a variety of discourses (spectacular, obscene, aestheticizing, parodic, solemn, carnivalesque, official, improvised, etc.), all of which help relieve the leaders and foot soldiers of empire from those inconvenient reservations and qualms that might otherwise inhibit their effective, relatively guilt-free exercise of the brutish and brutalizing power necessary for the conquest and maintenance of empire.


Figures 1, 2, and 3. Firdos Square, Baghdad, April 9, 2003.
Figures 4 and 5. Aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln, April 30, 2003.

Figure 6. Abu Ghraib Prison, October 24, 2003.

Figure 7. Abu Ghraib Prison, November 5, 2003.
Figure 8. Abu Ghraib Prison, November 8, 2003.

Figure 9. Abu Ghraib Prison, November 18, 2003.

Figure 10. Abu Ghraib Prison, December 12, 2003.
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Religion and Violence against Nature

A car’s bumper sticker reads, ‘Are you an environmentalist or do you work for a living?’ Well, I am an environmentalist and I do work for a living, but not in the way the bumper sticker suggests. I want to protect old growth forests but I rarely get sweaty while working in them. And if the bumper sticker makes me uneasy, writing this article also made me uneasy as I assessed the ‘work’ we do as scholars of religion and environmentalists. The stakes are high and demand our metaphorical and literal sweat.

The ongoing human war against non-human nature surpasses all other forms of violence in the early 21st century. An all too familiar litany of environmental woes includes: (1) Massive deforestation. Asia lost over a third of its tropical forests in the last several decades of the twentieth century and experts predict that in the next two decades the remaining tropical forests of Southeast Asia, South Asia, and Central America will disappear (Homer-Dixon 1999: 65–6). Much of my research takes place in El Salvador which has only one per cent of its original forests still standing. (2) Loss of biodiversity. We face a crisis of biodiversity; at current rates of extinction we will lose an additional 25 per cent of all plant and animal species within the next one hundred years. Thomas Homer-Dixon writes that ‘Such a loss would rival four of the five previous mass extinctions on earth. From both a moral and practical view, it could be the single greatest calamity human beings inflict on the planet.’ (Homer-Dixon 1999: 72.) (3) Global warming. The reduction in the ozone layer and the earth’s warming threaten crops, forests, amphibians, phytoplankton, animal and human health. (4) Threats to water. Eighty per cent of China’s major rivers are so polluted that they can no longer support fish. Nitrogen-based fertilizer runoff has created a dead zone in the Gulf of Mexico where no sea life exists. The United States has lost 50 per cent of its original wetlands, and in my state, California, the figure is 95 per cent. A golf course in Thailand uses the same amount of water as 60,000 rural villagers, telling us that within our species some of us wage the war against nature more vigorously than others.

Violence against nature is also the world’s greatest killer of people. Eighty-five per cent of the developing world’s deaths and diseases can be attributed to preventable water and airborne illnesses and the United
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Nations predicts that by 2025, two-thirds of the world’s population will not have potable drinking water.

Violence against the environment thus yields a harvest of death for humans. Ricardo Navarro writes from El Salvador that,

In many countries or regions in the south, the environmental destruction has reached such levels that what were once considered gifts from God, like air, water or food, are now the main sources of death. In El Salvador for example, the leading causes of death are infectious respiratory diseases, coming from air pollution and gastrointestinal diseases coming from water and food pollution. In other words, the most dangerous things that a human being can do in El Salvador are to breathe air, drink water, or eat food. (Navarro 2005: 1467.)

Most of us are well aware of the environmental crisis that I have briefly described here. Yet, scholars of religion or peace studies rarely consider environmental issues when theorizing about violence. A ‘more encompassing, inclusive sense of violence and non-violence’ (Peluso and Watts 2001: 29) recognizes that drinking, breathing and eating are dangerous activities for many of the world’s peoples.

Why think about religion when we ponder environmental degradation? Religion provides a framework by which we can understand a group’s relationship to non-human nature and to actions on behalf of the environment. Mary Evelyn Tucker and John Grim write that, ‘While in the past none of the religions of the world have had to face an environmental crisis such as we are now confronting, they remain key instruments in shaping attitudes toward nature’ (Tucker and Grim 2000: xvii). I realize that analyzing the beliefs and actions of religious actors is complicated terrain; religious traditions, identities, and institutions, are continually contested and re-shaped to fit historical, social, economic, and cultural conditions. However, as Bruce Lincoln has noted, although material means and will must first exist, there are styles of religious ideology that inhibit violence and others that encourage it.1 As is the case with human-to-human violence, religious ideology may also either encourage or discourage assaults on the environment. Taking religious traditions and actors into account, deepens our understanding of the contemporary environmental crisis and environmental struggles and movements.

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1 Comments made during presentation at the European Association for the Study of Religion conference at Turku, Finland, Thursday, August 18, 2005.
It is beyond the reach of this article to explore the incredibly diverse views concerning nature both among and within religious traditions. Instead, my slightly more modest (although still terribly immodest) goal will be to present Lynn White Jr’s claim that Christianity is especially culpable for the modern environmental crisis; explore the role of Roman Catholicism in environmental movements and struggles in Latin America; briefly analyze the ‘religion’ of environmentalism in the United States; detail the violent backlash against environmental groups both in Latin America and the United States; and suggest where we need further study and action. I will be taking broad strokes rather than the close case-study approach that is usually my style.

In his now famous, or infamous 1967 essay, ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis’, medieval historian Lynn White Jr initiated years of fierce debate among religion scholars and environmentalists when he claimed that the Judeo-Christian tradition, with its emphasis on ‘the transcendence of God above nature and the dominion of humans over nature led to a de-valuing of the natural world and a subsequent destruction of its resources for utilitarian ends’ (White 1967: 1205). White writes, ‘Especially in its Western form, Christianity is the most anthropocentric religion the world has seen’ (White 1967: 1205). Christians may now be ‘greening’ their religion, but White argued that for nearly two thousand years, the Christian tradition in its practice and theology justified the exploitation of nature. He concluded his essay by writing, ‘Since the roots of our environmental trouble are so largely religious, the remedy must also be essentially religious’ (White 1967: 1207).

White’s brief essay unleashed a flurry of debate that continues today; you would be hard pressed to find an article or presentation on Christianity and the environment that doesn’t begin with a mention of his essay; in that sense I am quite predictable. I will engage White by looking at the role of Roman Catholicism in Latin America both to affirm and contest his thesis.

Roman Catholicism remains the dominant religion in Latin America. Although campesinos (peasant farmers) may practice a ‘folk Catholicism’ that is tied to nature, the institutional Roman Catholic Church in Latin America itself does not, as Anna Peterson writes, ‘...have a long tradition of explicit theological and moral reflection about the natural world’ (Peterson 2005: 1048). Early Christian and medieval theologians such as Bonaventure, Francis of Assisi, and Hildegard of Bingen expressed appreciation of nature in their theologies and presumed that a harmonious order between humans and the natural world corresponded to God’s design. Their views however, did not reflect dominant theologies at the time of the
encounter and conquest. The post-Reformation Catholicism that reached the Americas presumed that the domination of nature and other peoples by Christians reflected God’s will. Extraction of resources, destruction of land, and colonizing of ‘savages’ thus posed few theological problems and these dominant Roman Catholic theologies and practices persisted in Latin America for nearly 500 years. The Roman Catholic Church tended to ally itself with local power elites, governments, and the wealthy for most of its history in Latin America.2

The emergence of liberation theology however, marked a sea change in the role of at least parts of the Roman Catholic Church in Latin America. Liberation theology grew in Latin America during the late 1960s as a response by activist priests and concerned laypeople to increased poverty, the failed promises of modernization, and the brutality of military dictatorships. It grew quickly over the next decades, spread from Latin America to other less affluent nations, and with the publication of A Theology of Liberation by Gustavo Gutierrez in 1971 was introduced to an even wider audience. Liberation theology did not address ecological concerns in its early years, focusing instead on the social, economic, and political dimensions of the oppression of the poor. Increasingly however, liberation theologians linked destruction of the earth and the oppression of the poor; the poor’s liberation was seen as impossible without a defense of the environment. Liberation theologians now frequently promote ecological understanding as a paradigm for interpreting social realities.

The Latin American Bishops Conference (CELAM) meetings in Medellin, Colombia in 1968 and in Puebla, Mexico in 1979 underscored the ‘preferential option for the poor’ as being at the heart of Christian theology. They claimed that the poor and oppressed are hermeneutically privileged; thus all social analysis must begin with their experience. This hermeneutical privilege holds true for environmental issues as well as for theology. Just as the poor of the land are central to theological discourse, they must also be central to ecological discourse according to contemporary Latin American ecotheologians.

Liberation theologians emphasize social sin and structural injustice over individual wrongdoing. They claim that environmental exploitation stems from structural injustices that affect both the poor and the non-human world; ecological problems cannot be resolved until structures of

2 See the history of the Roman Catholic Church’s relationship with Latin American governments in Bonino 1983.
exploitation and domination are transformed. Social sin is thus not just the poverty and exploitation of people, but also the contamination of their resources. Ricardo Navarro, director of the Centro Salvadoreño de Tecnología Apropiada (CESTA – the Salvadoran Center for Appropriate Technology) and a founding member of the Salvadoran Ecological Union, claims that polluting rivers through the excessive use of pesticides is a social sin equal to denying food to people through unjust economic and social structures; both cause death and are framed theologically as violent acts against the poor (Navarro 1990: 99).

The emphasis on structural injustice and economic, political, and social institutions led liberation theologians to propose social ecology as the philosophical movement within environmentalism that best expressed a liberation perspective. The United Nations first international conference on the environment held in Stockholm in 1972 had a great influence on theologians such as Carlos Herz and Eduardo Contreras of Peru and Eduardo Guaynas of Uruguay. Participants from less affluent countries called poverty an environmental problem; both social ecologists and liberation theologians agreed that no divide exists between social and environmental issues.

Sharp criticisms of more affluent countries emerged from an analysis based on social ecology and liberation theology, with relations between rich and poor countries characterized as neocolonial and exploitive. Tony Brun writes, ‘As opposed to the North, where the environmental crisis is felt in a context of material well being, in the South it is closely related to poverty. In Latin America, the dramatic situation of its natural ecosystems is related to the profound social problems.’ (Brun 1994: 82.) Liberation theologians uniformly denounce the neoliberal model of development and global capitalism for their ‘anti-ecological character’.

Religious ecofeminism belongs to what Costa Rican theologian Elsa Tamez and Brazilian Ivone Gébara term the third stage of feminist theology in Latin America. Women theologians in the first phase (1970–80) according to Tamez and Gebara, tended to see themselves as liberation theologians and enthusiastically participated in the growing Christian base community movement. An explicitly feminist consciousness grew during the second phase (1980–90) and the current third phase (1990 onward) is marked by ‘challenges to the patriarchal anthropology and cosmovision in liberation theology itself and by the construction of a Latin American ecofeminism’ (Lorentzen 2005: 689). Most Latin American ecofeminists came from Christian base communities (and may still be very active within them) and were influenced by liberation theology. Many still consider
themselves liberation theologians, or more appropriately ecofeminist liberation theologians. Ivone Gebara is the most widely known spokesperson for ecofeminist theology from a Latin American perspective. Gebara gained international attention in 1995 when the Vatican, under the auspices of the Congregation of the Doctrine and Faith, silenced her for two years. Gebara had claimed that liberation theology needed to be tolerant of women’s choice for abortion given the hardship of raising children in the context of desperate poverty. The Congregation instructed Gebara not to speak, teach, or write for two years and sent her to France for theological reeducation. She returned to Brazil in 1997 and again became active in writing ecofeminist theology and environmental activism.

Latin American ecofeminists contend that women and nature are linked ideologically and conceptually, but also that environmental destruction affects women differently from men. Women are more likely to provide family sustenance and thus depend on a healthy environment. They must provide clean water for their families; in the countryside they need trees for fuel, food, and fodder. They bear the brunt of childcare and care of the sick and elderly; thus polluted waters that give family members cholera or diarrhea (the largest cause of child death in poor countries) affect them directly.

Ecofeminist theologians share with liberation theology the idea of hermeneutic privilege. They contend however, that the poor women of Latin America are the oppressed within the oppressed. The methodology developed by Latin America’s ecofeminist theologians puts women’s corporeality (sexuality, sex, body, etc.) at its center and explores the relationship between the daily life of women and systemic forms of oppression, thus connecting women’s exploitation with environmental and economic exploitation.

Christian base communities became the ideal loci for the articulation and praxis of ecotheologies. Base communities addressed environmental issues such as air pollution, water contamination, inadequate sanitation services, soil erosion, mining, the use of chemical pesticides, logging, and other ecological issues that directly affected their communities’ health and well-being. Christian base communities in Brazil’s Amazon River basin have supported and organized rubber tappers and other poor landholders in struggles against ranchers. The Pastoral Land Commission of the Roman Catholic Church of Brazil was formed to work on environmental and other issues with landless peasants. Since its formation, it has worked

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3 For my criticism of some of ecofeminism’s claims, see Lorentzen 2003: 57–71.
to protect fishing habitat, to gain land for peasants, and to protect the Amazon jungle for rubber tappers and indigenous peoples. The Center for Appropriate Technology in El Salvador organizes eco-communities and promotes bicycle-powered flourmills and small-scale hydro-generators. The Conspirando collective of Chile is part of a network of active ecofeminist liberation theology movements through Latin America. Churches, base communities, and Catholic organizations participate with popular social and environmental movements throughout Latin America. Religious belief and practice are seen as inseparable from environmental struggle.

This brief look at the role of Roman Catholicism in Latin America both affirms and contests White’s thesis. Roman Catholicism provided an ideological underpinning for a massive assault on the land and indigenous peoples for most of Latin America’s history. Yet in the form of liberation theology it provided an ideological underpinning for some of the continent’s most vigorous environmental movements. Lynn White and many environmentalists claim that bio- or ecocentric worldviews are the most pure, and thus more likely to encourage positive environmental actions. Environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicott’s sweeping survey, for example, analyzed religious traditions around the world for their environmental friendliness (Callicott 1994). He did this by assessing whether a tradition’s teachings corresponded to the land ethic articulated by Aldo Leopold, who wrote that ‘A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise’ (Leopold 1949: 224). Obviously biocentric religious worldviews are privileged in Callicott’s assessment. Yet, Latin America’s liberation theology has a decidedly anthropocentric approach based on the survival of the poor. It has also led to some of the most sustained environmental struggles of the last three decades.

Certainly religious beliefs that tend to be less anthropocentric animate contemporary indigenous environmental activism in Latin America. I’ve written about some of these movements elsewhere and will not address them in depth here. Let me briefly say that while recognizing the great diversity of beliefs and practices and the aftermath of colonization, most scholars still claim that indigenous worldviews encourage concern for nature and, by extension, practices that are not environmentally exploitative. Leslie E. Sponsel writes of the Amazon jungle, for example, ‘indigenous environmental impact is usually negligible to moderate’ (Sponsel 2005: 38) and Edward Cleary and Timothy Steigenga write that contemporary indigenous ‘mobilization cannot be understood without a careful consideration of religious factors. While specific political openings and social
and economic processes facilitated the indigenous resurgence, religious institutions, beliefs and practices provided many of the resources, motivations, identities, and networks that nurtured the movement.’ (Cleary and Steingenga 2004: 17.)

Increasingly, environmentalists from more affluent nations have joined Latin American indigenous land struggles to bring international attention to their efforts to protest deforestation, resist mining, and protect intellectual property. These alliances have often proven successful. The danger exists, however, that non-native outsiders, with a superficial understanding of indigenous religions and lifeways, may objectify native religions and indigenous peoples in their search for the ‘pure’ environmentalist. John Grim writes that, ‘This romantic exploitation of indigenous religions typically accentuates a perceived native ecological wisdom as having been genetically transmitted’ (Grim 2001: xxxvi).

I’d like to further engage White by moving north for a while. Years ago I roamed California’s High Sierra mountain range with my friends, all of us wilderness guides and ecologically-oriented Christians. ‘Minimum impact’ was our motto. We aimed to live lightly on the land and the environmentalist John Muir, rather than the apostle Paul, was the writer of our sacred texts. Conjuring up images of well-fed churchgoers with a Bible in one hand and a chainsaw in the other, the mainstream Christianity from which we all came, was no friend to the wilderness we cared about passionately. Sadly we agreed with White that Christianity promoted a theology of domination over nature, which contributed to ecological crises.

Current theological and environmental statements from mainstream Christian denominations no longer resemble those I viewed as a young wilderness guide however; even theologically conservative churches now promote environmental theologies. As Sigurd Bergmann writes,

Since the 1970s, churches and theologians in Europe have addressed the ecological challenge in three ways. First, the environmental crisis has been regarded simply as a reason to reformulate conventional doctrines of faith. Second, elements from ecological science have eclectically mixed with selected elements from Christian tradition. A third way has sought for critical-constructive mediations of ecological insights and interpretations of God. In the latter, theology works as a part of a larger ecological discourse and asks for specific Christian reconstructions ... The understanding of God itself is challenged by the suffering of nature caused by men and women who are supposed to be images of God the Creator. (Bergmann 2005: 381.)
The good news is that Christian attitudes and theologies have changed significantly. However, this relatively new environmental consciousness comes at a time when environmental destruction occurs at an unprecedented rate. First World consumption, especially that of the United States, continues to increase. In a culture based on excessive consumption, even those who attempt to live lives of simplicity have a much greater environmental impact than a rural villager in India or Africa; for the average US citizen it is more likely to be 15 times the impact. Unfortunately no data suggest that Christians in the United States consume less, have fewer kids, or are more likely to be environmental activists than are non-Christians, in spite of greener theologies.

In fact, much discourse about the environment by well-intended nature-loving people in the US masks the way in which the non-human world is commodified and consumed. Although pro-environment attitudes have increased over the past few decades (all my students think they are environmentalists and polls in the United States regularly show people expressing positive environmental attitudes), too little of this support for an abstract environmentalism has translated into effective action in changing the way people live and how the economy is organized. The vitality of western capitalism has been based in part on the massive externalization of ecological costs of production. This context, in which ecological costs are exported, allows those of us in affluent countries to mask our own commodification of nature even as we celebrate ‘spiritual’ connections to nature.

Let me look at one concrete example of how nature is commodified while celebrated. In the United States there is a chain of stores called the Nature Company. Jennifer Price in her excellent article, ‘Looking for Nature at the Mall: a Field Guide to the Nature Company’ writes

... and if the Nature Company sells over 12,000 products, it is hawking a small handful of large ideas. What does nature mean? Why do so many people ask for Enya in a nature store? The meanings that Americans have traditionally invested in “nature” are keystones of modern middle class culture. The Nature Company is a market bazaar for the meanings of nature. Here you can buy pocket Waldens and John Muir field hats to enjoy nature as wilderness. Here nature is also a destination for “adventure.” What meanings of nature does it market and whose nature is on sale here? (Price 1995: 190.)
In a Nature Company store you find fountains, the sound of running water, mood tapes of sunrises and clouds, in short, products for stress relief. Nature, in the 1980s and 1990s United States, became a therapeutic resource, a place for stress relief, and emotional and spiritual healing. As Price notes, the stated mission of a Nature Company store is to connect us to nature, seemingly a good thing. Consumers can buy CDs like the Glacier Bay CD for relaxation and to generate amorphous spiritual feelings. But Price (1995: 195) wonders, ‘Why does the Alaska CD sound so much like the Costa Rican cloud forest CD. If I were fishing in a boat in the bay, would coastal Alaska be relaxing? Don’t they have a lot of mosquitoes up there? And is the whole natural world really full of flute music?’ Quite frankly; when I sweat my way up a mountain pass, I’m not humming Enya.

In short, the marketing is about responding to quasi-religious middle class meanings of nature. We approach the natural world as consumers but can put anti-consumer fears to rest. The products sustain ‘middle class ideas of nature that soften the harsh materialism and artificiality of modern capitalist society while they also sustain, through the creation of artifice, the capitalist over consumption of resources’ (Price 1995: 201). This is brilliant. I, in the United States, can simultaneously enjoy the material benefits of an expanding economy and the aesthetic and quasi-spiritual benefits of unspoiled nature as I drive my car to backpack in a pristine wilderness, while listening to my rainforest CD and feel virtuous in doing so, because, after all, I am an environmentalist.

If the religious attitudes expressed by Christians or nature-loving consumers rarely lead to concrete environmental action, what of more ‘radical environmentalists’? The philosophical movement called deep ecology agrees with Lynn White Jr and Aldo Leopold that moral consideration should be extended to the entire biotic community. The anthropocentric/biocentric distinction is accepted as axiomatic by deep ecologists and it structures their discourse. The start of deep ecology is usually traced to a 1972 lecture by the Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess at a Third World Futures conference and it has made its presence felt in a number of ways from the academic to popular environmental groups such as Earth First!. The philosopher George Santayana, the Stoics, Spinoza, St Francis of Assisi, the conservationist Aldo Leopold, Taoism, Buddhism, Native American traditions, and the science of ecology, are all credited with providing philosophical insights as well as inspiration for deep ecology. The moral imperative of deep ecology is that other species of plants and animals have an intrinsic right to exist, a biocentric egalitarianism. Particular goals include
the preservation of unspoiled areas, the restoration of degraded areas to their original conditions, and the reduction in human populations to allow species equal opportunities to flourish.

The radical environmentalist movement Earth First!’s underlying philosophy is deep ecology. Environmental lobbyists in the United States who believed that an environmental catastrophe could not be averted by a slow, systemic, reformist approach founded Earth First! in 1980. According to Earth First! society is creating an ecological catastrophe. They also contend that corporate power rules the United States, and democratic processes are flawed. Bron Taylor argues that this pillar is essential to Earth First! radicalism. If one says democratic procedures either never existed or have broken down, or that they camouflage domination, then illegal tactics become morally justifiable when coupled with a biocentric view and an apocalyptic eschatology of environmental collapse. (Taylor 1991: 258–66.) Thus, Earth First!’ers may engage in ecodfense such as blockading logging roads or perching in trees to protect them. Some, although increasingly fewer, engage in ecotage, which is seen as economic warfare in order to make wilderness destruction unprofitable. In the case of Earth First! then, strongly held quasi-religious biocentric beliefs lead to concrete actions on behalf of an earth seen as under continual assault.

The response of the state to environmental resistance is almost universally rapid and severe. In the United States, groups like Earth First! and others are considered dangers to national security; even groups that have never engaged in civil disobedience risk being branded ‘ecoterrorists’. The FBI has requested that I and other scholars who study environmental movements offer them seminars on ecoterrorism. It also has an environmental crimes task force and has mounted elaborate sting operations. When the late Earth First! activist Judi Bari was the victim of a car bomb in 1990, the FBI accused her of planting the bomb herself. In Latin America, the Pastoral Land Commission of Brazil claims that nearly 2,000 rural workers have been killed in the last three decades of struggle. In short, the state often vigorously asserts its right to use violence against those most committed to protesting environmental degradation. Activists in ecological resistance movements, including those stemming from religious commitment increasingly face reactionary violence.

Let’s return to White. Is Christianity the biggest culprit? Under particular material and historical conditions it has served as a religious ideology that has encouraged violence against nature. It has also, in the case of liberation theology, discouraged environmental assaults. Is biocentrism preferable as a religious stance to anthropocentrism? Human survival re-
mains central for many environmental resistance movements, although one might also make the case that more robust environmental resistance arises from biocentric groups like Earth First! in the North American context and indigenous movements in Latin America.

What can scholars of religion contribute? First we can study the link between environmental attitudes and action. A sustainable lifestyle may simply be due to lack of access to destructive technologies, rather than to particular religious beliefs. If scholars look primarily to religious beliefs to explain indigenous relations with the natural world, for example, we overlook a complex history from which indigenous peoples have been excluded from development due to racist policies rather than indigenous choice. Furthermore, localized religious practices don’t necessarily provide resources to deal with environmental issues such as global warming that reach beyond a particular sacred grove, mountain, or river. And, the poor everywhere are forced into anti-ecological practices in order to survive even when their religious practices evidence a reverence for nature. Rigorous case studies should be conducted to study the connection between religious teachings and practice and concrete environmental action. These case studies could include comparisons of anthropocentric and biocentric worldviews.

Scholars of religion can also speak in the public realm and challenge implicit theologies of domination. The media now direct public attention to terrorism as violence. Scholars of religion can point to the ordinary, unexamined, banal, day-to-day violence against the natural world. We can offer a public service by both problematizing and simplifying. We can problematize by challenging the overly simplistic constructions, rhetoric and policies concerning the environment in the United States. We can also simplify in the way indicated by linguist George Lakoff (2004) as a political strategy. Are there simple rhetorical constructions we can offer in the public realm to assist with the reframing of environmental issues?

As a scholar of religion and an environmentalist, I may indeed have to ‘work for a living’.

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Introduction

The wars that dissolved Yugoslavia – were they religious wars? One answer might be: What war isn’t? War, after all, is a time of existential crisis that confronts young people with their mortality on a massive scale. War involves ‘the ultimate sacrifice’ on behalf of one’s community, and requires legitimation of the highest order. Beyond these truisms, however, religious hatreds have been invoked specifically to explain the wars in the former Yugoslavia, and interfaith initiatives have sought to effect reconciliation. The region is a proving ground for theories about ‘the role of religion’ in armed conflict situations, a question that increasingly commands the attention of policy-makers and political scientists – a mixed blessing, to be sure.

Dagmar Hellmann-Rajanayagam (2005) has raised the pertinent question: not why is religious conflict on the rise, but why are conflicts increasingly coded as religious, rather than as, for example, social or ethnic? Part of the reason, surely, is that this is in somebody’s interest. The many possible interests concerned also include those of some religious actors, who are able to argue that if religion (or rather its ‘abuse’) is part of the problem, it must also be part of any solution. Religious studies scholars, too, should be aware of their possible bias towards casting conflicts as religious, and hence their own research as socially useful, and worthy of attention and funding.¹

¹ The author, for instance, has for the past two years worked for the Department of Culture Studies, University of Oslo project on ‘Religion and Nationalism in the Western Balkans’, which is funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In particular, I would like to acknowledge funding for a paper on religion and territorial claims. Considerations of space have precluded including part of that discussion in this article as originally intended. I also wish to thank students on the ‘Culture and Conflict’ course, on whom I have inflicted earlier parts of this article.
Theories about the Yugoslav wars are closely bound up with political interests in the blame game of contested historiography. Fifteen years on, it is still ‘hard to be dispassionate about ethnic cleansing and mass murder’ (Rieff 1995: 18), which is probably a good thing. Explanations must nonetheless be read with an awareness of the underlying agendas, the explicit or implicit distribution of blame, the accusations and apologetics.

One cannot describe the extent and nature of the religious dimensions of the conflict without at least implicitly defining ‘religion’ itself. While nationalism itself might fruitfully be examined as ersatz religion inspiring martyrdom and sacrifice, on another level this obscures the significant interplay of religion and ethnic nationalism in this case. The Bosnian conflict in particular has been correctly described as ‘ethnoreligious’; religious identities have been constitutive of ethnic ones, and they remain closely intertwined. Being a Croat is identified with Catholicism, a Serb with Orthodoxy, and a Bosniak with Islam.

Another question is what constitutes a ‘religious’ or ‘holy’ war. In Western Europe this is primarily associated with the struggles during the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. Clearly, the Yugoslav wars were fought not over theology, but rather over political hegemony and the territorial claims of aspiring nation states. If ‘wars of religion’ are only those that have theological differences, or differences over religious authority, as their *casus belli*, the Yugoslav wars may not be included among them. But these territorial claims were legitimated, in part perhaps even motivated, by a hard-to-distinguish mix of religious and nationalist arguments and symbols. Apparently ‘religious’ characteristics of the wars, aside from the fact that the warring parties belonged to different religions, include the following: political mobilisation through mass pilgrimages, mythical stories, and the manipulation of dead bodies; the framing of cer-

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2 The Yugoslav wars is a shorthand term and I will not deal equally or in detail with all the armed conflicts (Slovenia 1991, Croatia 1991–2 and 1995, Bosnia 1992–5, Kosovo 1998–9, Macedonia 2001). Religion was irrelevant to the Slovene case taken in isolation, but not to the broader context of the breakup of Yugoslavia.
4 See in particular the works of Paul Mojzes (1994, 1998a, 1998b).
5 James Turner Johnson (1997: 37–42) has distinguished ten different meanings of ‘holy war’ of which at least two – war against religion’s assumed enemies, and warfare by participants who are themselves made holy by ritual – have some relevance to the Yugoslav wars. Curiously, Johnson does not include the even more relevant category of wars for holy land.
tain fought-over territories as the holy land of the nation, and of the nation as divinely elect or on a holy mission; the belligerent rhetoric of religious leaders before, during, and after the war; the systematic destruction of religious sites, monuments, and records; the ritualised nature and occasional religious symbolism of atrocities; and the consecration of combatants by clergy (see e.g. Velikonja 2003a).

In the following, I am not actually going to answer the question posed at the outset. I will more modestly attempt an inventory of important categories and hypotheses generated in the relevant literature so far, with a few critical notes along the way. I will consider the role assigned to religion in structural, cultural, and actor-oriented explanations of the Yugoslav wars. This three-way distinction is a heuristic device I find useful in sorting out different approaches. Moreover, I believe that each approach has implications for the apportioning of blame that gives it an ideological dimension. In a more or less deterministic way, structural explanations interpret impersonal forces and arrangements as causes of human action, while cultural explanations appear to ascribe causality to symbols and traditional practices. Actor-oriented approaches, on the other hand, are intentional, not causal; here historical events turn on how individuals and political elites choose to define and pursue their interests. Structural and cultural explanations downplay the role of human agency and, hence, of moral responsibility; actor-oriented approaches focus on it.

**Structural Approaches**

There are purely structural approaches that ignore religion entirely, such as Susan Woodward’s *Balkan Tragedy* (1995), which focuses on the social and economic crisis of the 1980s. Decentralised and unwieldy, the state was weakened by a massive debt burden, and further weakened by Western demands for reform. People therefore sought the stability and security the state was unable to provide through a closing of ethnic ranks. Woodward argues that the Belgrade government should have been strengthened,

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6 For example, forced conversions; forced singing of religious songs; forced violations of dietary and other religious taboos; and branding with religious symbols.

7 Dejan Jović (2001) offers a more fine-grained distinction between seven kinds of argument used to explain the disintegration of Yugoslavia: economic, ancient ethnic hatred, nationalism, cultural, international politics, the role of personality, and the fall of empires.
the abolition of Kosovo’s autonomy recognised as an economic necessity forced on Yugoslavia by IMF demands, Croat and Slovene secession discouraged, and the Yugoslav People’s Army recognised as a neutral peacekeeping force (1995: 382–91). This apology for Milošević’s policies, in my view, flatly ignores political realities: Belgrade’s and the Army’s aggressive pursuit of a strong centralised Serb-led state was precisely what split Yugoslavia and turned an economic crisis into a military one. The economic crisis, and the crisis of political legitimacy that it engendered, is surely a necessary but not sufficient factor in explaining the rise of extreme nationalisms.

Another kind of structural explanation (touched on, for example, by Friedman 1996: 153–61, 182; Malcolm 1994: 202–3), attributes, in part, the various nationalisms to the very nationalities system that Tito set up to manage the problem and that seemed, for decades, to be remarkably successful: the establishment of home republics for each nation, the subsequent decentralisation of decision-making and rise of ‘national’ party leaderships in each republic, the zero-sum contest over central resources between the republics, and the use of an ‘ethnic key’ to distribute resources and positions. In the absence of democracy, all these measures contributed to the growing salience of ethnicity and the training of elite groups in making nationalist demands. These observations also have implications for religion, as they explain how the Communist state became an ethno-religious entrepreneur, encouraging the formation of a Macedonian Orthodox Church and recognising ‘Muslims’ as an ethnic nation.

Cultural Approaches

We turn now to two clusters of cultural explanations, which we might call the ‘civilisation-talk school’ and the ‘myth-to-genocide school’. The former involves an othering discourse of ‘civilisation’ that ascribes to some or all the warring parties deep-seated and abiding norms and values that are antithetical to our Western civilisation. These theories tend rather pointedly to serve specific foreign policy objectives. They differ over whether they see a clash of civilisations, a clash of civilisations and barbarians, or simply a clash of barbarians.

The first viewpoint is of course that of Samuel Huntington (1996), who sees Bosnia as reflecting a new paradigm of international relations in which conflicts are increasingly between ‘civilisations’ defined primarily by religious difference. Religion is here a largely undifferentiated, static, essential
category. In Huntington’s scheme, Croatia, by dint of its Catholic religion, has the good fortune to be on the side of the West against the rest. This resonates strongly with the Croatian historical myth of being the *antemuralis Christianitatis*, the outer defences of Christendom against the Turk, and of Western Christendom against the Byzantine Balkans (Žanić 2005). Croat nationalist leader Franjo Tudjman was a Huntington fan.

Less grand but roughly similar claims underlie the rampant negative stereotyping of Serbs in *Habits of the Balkan Heart* by the Croat-American sociologist Stjepan Meštrović and his co-authors (1993).8 Retrieving from kind obscurity the theses of the Croat social scientist Dinko Tomašić, they identify an authoritarian strain of Slavic culture called the ‘Dinaric’, which is connected with a mountain pastoralist population, whose passive-aggressive, power-seeking character is shaped by life in patriarchal extended family units.9 There are also other, peaceful strains of Slavic culture, but ‘Dinaric’ power-seeking authoritarianism predominates in Serbia and Montenegro, heir to the ways of the Byzantine and Turko-Mongol empires. While there is admittedly some uncertainty about Croatia, it is again essentially on the side of the West and democracy. This work has been cogently refuted on empirical grounds by Sergej Flere (2003).

A third form of cultural explanation for the war is the cliché about ‘ancient hatreds’ between feuding primitive tribes, acting according to irrational, pre-modern cultural patterns characteristic of the Balkans. Ethnic identities are assumed to have been distinct and relatively unchanging, and the history of multi-cultural societies is seen as overwhelmingly conflict-ridden. Examples include popular travelogues such as Robert Kaplan’s *Balkan Ghosts*, and more importantly, the rhetoric of numerous politicians and officials, in the US and elsewhere, who used this argument to defend non-intervention and ‘containment’ strategies (see Sells 1996: 124–8). Academic examples are rarer. One might cite a distinguished military historian who found that the Yugoslav atrocities defied conventional explanation to the ‘civilised mind’, and concluded they could only

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8 The title refers to the view that different and hard-to-change ‘social characters’ or ‘habits of the heart’ of different groups may be congenial to democracy or to authoritarianism and aggression. The intellectual pedigree of this approach can be traced to Alexis de Tocqueville, Thorsten Veblen, and Erich Fromm.

9 The notion of ‘Dinaric man’ as an anthropological category derives from the Serbian ethnographer and polymath Jovan Cvijić. Its influence can also be noted, e.g., in Anzulović 1999: 45 ff. (but cf. 141–2), and Cohen 1998: 64.
be understood by anthropologists studying ‘tribal and marginal peoples’ (Keegan 1993: xi).  

A useful antidote to such ‘othering’ discourses is provided by John Allcock in *Explaining Yugoslavia* (2000: 383–407). Allcock notes a tendency to highlight traits in Balkan societies that we prefer to ignore in our own (cf. Todorova 1997). Such descriptions miss the ‘structured character’ of violence in the Balkans, be it the blood feud or brigand-rebel bands, which may be ‘patterned, directed, significant, normal and constitutive of the social’, though it differs from violence in our societies, where the repressive organs of the state have relatively successfully claimed a monopoly on violence. He calls attention to the meanings symbolically communicated by the rhetoric of violence involved in apparently senseless atrocities. Finally, Balkan culture is not uniquely violent; the role model for young Balkan gunmen in the 1990s was often Rambo rather than a folk epic hero (Allcock 2000: 407; cf. Denitch 1994: 74). To this, I would add that atrocities usually served a chillingly rational military strategy of ethnic cleansing through terror against the civilian population. Cultural analysis is hardly needed to account for their occurrence, though it may account for the specific forms they took.

In the latter regard, Allcock develops some interesting ideas about the connections between ritualised violence and religion. Noting the notorious regional obsession with the *knife* (cf. Anzulović 1999: 131–9), Allcock believes the practice of throat-cutting aims to de-humanise the victim by likening murder to the butchering of cattle. Moreover, however, it may represent ‘atrocity raised to the level of sacrament’, mimicking the ritual killing of a sacrificial animal (Allcock 2000: 397–8), and that atrocity may provide a Durkheimian ‘symbolic focus for solidarity’ (pp. 400–2). This is an interesting idea worth exploring, though it needs to be supported by better evidence. Finally, he connects the idea of ‘atrocity as sacrament’...
to a central work in Serb literature, *The Mountain Wreath* (2000: 397). This leads on into the next group of studies we want to consider.

The myth-to-genocide school, represented by Branimir Anzulović’s *Heavenly Serbia* (1999) and Michael Sells’s *Bridge Betrayed* (1996), ultimately offers an actor-oriented explanation. I discuss them under the culturalist heading, however, because of strong claims they make for the power of myth and symbol to shape human action, at least when ritually enacted. Sells, for instance, believes a genocide against Bosnian Muslims was ‘motivated and justified in large part by religious nationalism … and grounded in religious symbols’ (1996: xiii). Anzulović is a Croat-American anthropologist, Sells is of Serb descent and an expert on Islamic mysticism. Both have focused on the nineteenth-century transformation of two Serbian myths, the Kosovo myth and the Montenegrin ‘extermination of the Turks’, into a Serbian national mythology, which they say has been manipulated into an ideology of genocide. Anzulović, concerned with the ‘pathology of ideas’ (1999: 4), goes further with a sweeping, if selective, review of Serbian history and literature that seems to suggest it is shot through with such pathologies, at least until one starts to consider what a similar reading strategy might turn up in other national cultures.

The Kosovo myth draws on folk epics about the battle of Kosovo in 1389, where a Serbian prince, Lazar, was killed by the Turks. In the nineteenth century, Lazar occupies a central position in literary treatments of folk epic, and is transformed into a Christ-like figure, who chooses the

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13 While I would hold that the pattern of atrocities against Muslim civilians in the Bosnian war constitutes ‘genocide’ in the sense of the 1948 Genocide Convention, this remains a legally contested issue. Politically, it is important to note the loose and inflammatory use of the term by all communities in the Balkans.

14 On the national historical myths in the Balkans more generally, see Velikonja 1998 and the major new contributions in Kolsto 2005.

15 Sells defines such ideology as ‘a set of symbols, rituals, stereotypes, and partially concealed assumptions that dehumanize a people as a whole, justify the use of military power to destroy them, and are in turn reinforced by the economic, political, and military beneficiaries of that destruction’ (Sells 1996: 27–8).

16 The traditional epic hero was not Lazar or (K)obilević as much as it was Marko Kraljević, a vassal to the Turks. Sells sees Marko as ‘a figure of mediation between the Serbian Orthodox and Ottoman worlds’ (1996: 37), while Anzulović dwells on the epic hero’s extreme brutality, particularly towards women (1999: 13–17). Most aptly, Ranke observed that Marko represents the vassalage of the Serbian nation (cited in Anzulović 1999: 41).
‘kingdom of heaven’ over an earthly kingdom and even enjoys a ‘last supper’ with his knights, one of whom, Vuk Branković, is a Judas who betrays him, while the falsely accused Miloš Obilić (or Kobilić) avenges him by killing the Sultan.

A key part in the reconstruction of the Kosovo myth was played by Petar II Petrović Njegoš (1813–51), poet and Bishop-Prince of Montenegro, through his verse drama *The Mountain Wreath* (1847). The drama portrays a legendary campaign at the beginning of the eighteenth century to kill the Montenegrin converts to Islam, carried out on Christmas Eve under the poet’s predecessor Danilo. A multifaceted literary work, it is analysed in these studies as a ‘hymn to genocide’ (Anzulović 1999: 54). By constantly referring to the Montenegrin Muslims as ‘Turks’ or ‘Turkifiers’ (poturice), Sells argues, the poem portrays them as having ‘joined the race of Turks who killed the Christ-Prince Lazar’ (1996: 41). Sells coins the term ‘Christoslavism’ for this idea that ‘Slavs are Christian by nature, and that any conversion from Christianity is a betrayal of the Slavic race’ out of cowardice or greed (Sells 1996: 36, cf. p. 51). He notes that ‘Turks’ was a misnomer constantly used by Serb nationalists and clerics in the 1990s for the Muslim Slavs in Bosnia (1996: 41) – the emblematic instance, of course, is general Mladić casting the Srebrenica genocide as ‘revenge on the Turks’. Whether it was a misnomer in Njegoš’s time, when ‘Turk’ was customarily used in a religious sense and an ethnic or racial sense had yet to be clearly differentiated, is a different matter.

The reinterpreted Kosovo myth assumed a central place in Serbian culture only in the late nineteenth century. To Anzulović, its association with Vid’s Day (28 July) represents an irruption of Slavic pagan myth into modern Serb culture that favours a warrior ethic over Christian ethics (1999: 80–5, cf. 13, 25–6, 60, 69–71). In Sells’s interpretation, to the contrary, the national mythology thus ‘portrays Slavic Muslims as Christ killers and race traitors’ (1996: 27), identifies them with the Turks who killed Lazar.

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17 The Kosovo myth rose in importance with the 500th anniversary of the battle (1889), perhaps because the ruling Serbian dynasty sought legitimation for monarchical rule in a glorious national past (Malcolm 1998: 79). The day of the battle, 28 June (15 June in the Julian calendar), had been referred to as Vid’s day since the 1860s; in 1892 it was dedicated to Prince Lazar in the national church calendar, and in 1913, after the Serb victory over the Turks in the Balkan wars, it was made a national holiday (Sells 1996: 44; Anzulović 1999: 80–5). Anzulović insists that the reference is to the Slavic god Vid (Svantovid, Svetovid), not to St Vitus, a martyr of the Catholic Church.
and unleashes on them the same violence that the blood libel called forth against Jews (p. xv). Sells likens the Serbian government’s use of nationalist propaganda and religious symbols around the commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the Kosovo battle (1989) to the medieval passion play, with its ability to collapse time and incite the audience to commit pogroms. He further interprets the *Mountain Wreath* as placing the killings ‘explicitly outside the category of the blood feud’, as the Muslim offer of a traditional ceremony of reconciliation is rejected by the Christians on the grounds that it requires baptism. Instead, the conflict becomes a ‘cosmic duality of good and evil’. Killing the ‘Turkifiers’ is explicitly referred to as a ‘baptism by blood’, and Sells argues, questionably, that the poem portrays this killing as ‘an act sacred in itself’ that is not sinful but cleansing (Sells 1996: 42–3) – here, we return to the notion of ‘atrocity as sacrament’. What matters is not whether this is a plausible reading of the 1847 poem, but whether similar readings informed behaviour in the 1990s, a question to be settled empirically.

In any case, this only accounts for the demonising of Muslim Bosniaks and Albanians, not for the Croat–Serb conflict. A far fresher wound than the Kosovo battle was reopened in official Serbian propaganda against Croats: The massacres of Serbs during World War II in the Fascist Ustaša’s ‘Independent State of Croatia’, particularly in the Jasenovac death camp. What has this to do with religion? Three things: First, this discourse was initiated by nationalist Serb clerics, who started very publicly exhuming the remains of Serb Ustaša victims from mass graves, and warned darkly of a new genocide being prepared by Croat fascists. Second, the

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19 Sells’s argument is that the Serb warriors, returning from the massacre, are granted communion without confession, though confession was mandatory after blood feud killings. However, there is contrary evidence in the following verse, where Abbot Stefan generously adds that he takes ‘all’ upon his own soul (a ja mičem sve na moju dušu). In my reading, this suggests the stain of sin is still there, though it is clearly not such a grave sin as to imperil the saintly Abbot’s soul.

20 Indeed, Sells has been criticised for ‘Occidentalising’ Serbs and Croats, ignoring Serb–Croat fighting and the official rhetoric Orientalising Serbs (Hayden 1997, 1996).

21 Verdery (1999: 95–127) has theorised on these exhumations in the broader context of political re-burials in Eastern Europe. She notes that burying the community’s sons in the soil consecrates the soil as belonging to the community, as articulated by Serb nationalist writer and politician Vuk Drašković: ‘Serbia is wherever there
Serbian Orthodox Church charged the Catholic clergy with supporting the Ustaša, demanded an apology from the Catholic Church for its role in genocide, and denounced the Croat rehabilitation of the wartime Archbishop Stepinac, whose ambiguous relationship with the Ustaša government remains a matter of heated controversy. And third, the Jasenovac death camp was incorporated into the Kosovo myth as the second Serbian Golgotha, in yet another twist to the Christ-killer theme.

This ‘nexus of myth and symbol’ however, only constituted ‘the cross-hairs of [the] rifle’; someone had to give the order to fire (Sells 1996: 70). Sells blames Serbian nationalists ‘protected by’ Milošević (1996: 72); the Church, together with academics and writers, ‘became a servant of religious nationalist militancy’ (p. 79, emphasis added). Anzulović, too, places blame on Serbian political leaders, though he thinks they could not have mobilised support had national myths not been influential with the masses (1999: 145–6). Here we find, in the end, an actor-oriented approach, as well as the suggestion that religion was instrumentalised by politics.

**Actor-oriented Approaches**

Structural and cultural explanations downplay the role of moral agency and hence the extent of individual culpability. Actor-oriented studies, on the other hand, focus on how interest-driven political elites manipulated nationalism for their own ends. The key issue here, for our purposes, is the extent to which religious elites were autonomous actors.

Actor-oriented studies tend to point to Slobodan Milošević and his clique as the chief instigators of Yugoslavia’s violent dissolution. Noel Malcolm’s *Bosnia: A Short History* (1994, rev. ed. 1996) and Branka Magaš’s *Destruction of Yugoslavia* (1993) come to mind. To Magaš, a Croat leftist in Britain, the Serbian party leadership and the Yugoslav People’s Army leadership combined in a ‘plot against Yugoslavia’, and upset the all-important ‘post-war settlement’ between national groups in an effort to assert Serb hegemony over Yugoslavia (Magaš 1993: 305, 318, 337–8). Magaš finds a key historical...
reason for this turn of events in the Party purges of 1971–2, which eliminated competent young reformers and left the Party in the hands of second-rate Serb apparatchiks (1993: 328–9).

Magaš’s compilation of journalistic reports, like Woodward’s compilation of statistics, ignores religion. Malcolm, on the other hand, clearly enjoys himself most when he can delve into the mysteries surrounding religious adherence in medieval Bosnia. His discussion of religious factors tends to dismiss claims that the conflict was driven by religious or other ‘ancient’ hatreds, documenting the long years of essentially peaceful coexistence between faiths.

Such studies lend weight to the view, pervasive in the region, that political elites ‘instrumentalised’ religion for their own ends, and that conflict was not independently generated by religion. The crucial question, of course, is whether religion was ‘instrumentalized or instrumentalizing’ (Velikonja 2003a: 27). Coupled with the thesis that chauvinism stemmed not from religion but from irreligion (an alleged ‘moral vacuum’ left by Communist atheism), the instrumentalisation thesis is often invoked to exculpate ‘genuine’ religion from shared responsibility for the Yugoslav war, in what has become a cross-faith apologetic.

R. Scott Appleby’s theoretically rich discussion of the Bosnian case in Ambivalence of the Sacred (2000: 57–80), a book on religion and conflict, sets out to go beyond such apologetics. Appleby notes that religion offers nationalist leaders a ‘powerful justification’ for violence against other ethnic groups, and describes the case of Bosnian Serbs, Croats, and Muslim as an ‘ethnoreligious’ one where religion and ethnicity intertwine so that their precise roles can hardly be disaggregated. Taking an actor-oriented tack, he emphasises how, in the late 1980s, Serb nationalists backed by the Yugoslav army argued for a Greater Serbia, and that religious leaders using religious symbols ‘inflamed homicidal passions’. He distances himself from those who ‘downplayed the religious dimension of the war’ and contended that ‘genuine’ religious leaders were ‘victims of manipulation by secular leaders’ but had little influence (Appleby 2000: 60–7).

Taking issue with Paul Mojzes’s view that the war was fought ‘by irreligious people who wear religion as a distinguishing badge but do not know what the badge stands for’ (1994: 27), Appleby notes that religion is not limited to its official expressions, and that the atrocities might well be taken as a sign of ‘intense’ religion. His key point is that the power of the sacred does not come with a ‘moral compass’ (Appleby 2000: 68–71). Rather, it is profoundly ambivalent and contains possibilities of both life and death; hence, it is a serious misunderstanding to gloss acts of sacred violence as
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non-religious. Crucially, however, within each religious tradition a ‘moral trajectory’ towards greater ‘compassion, forgiveness, and reconciliation’ can be discerned (Appleby 2000: 30–1). The problem, Appleby feels, lies with popular religious practice that is disconnected from the internal pluralism of the larger tradition and from its cross-generational moral and theological discourse (2000: 67). Such unrefined folk religion may draw instead on ‘superstition, racial prejudice, half-forgotten bits of sacred scripture, and local custom’ and is easily manipulated. Appleby introduces the notion of ‘religious illiteracy’, defined as ‘the low level or virtual absence of second-order moral reflection and basic theological knowledge among religious actors’, as an exacerbating factor in crisis situations. Religiously illiterate masses were easily manipulated by demagogues (Appleby 2000: 69), while the few competent religious actors who tried to challenge the nationalists lacked organization and training in conflict management (pp. 72–3). If one believes in moral progress through discursive tradition, the general argument should be taken seriously, and it has a certain plausibility in this case, given the parlous state of religious knowledge among the Yugoslav population, but one could surely cite contrary examples of religiously illiterate populations that get on peacefully and religious literati who do not.

Appleby goes on to define, in contrast, a desirable ‘strong’ religion with well-developed institutions and ‘literate’, practiced adherents, as against both the undesirable ‘strong’ religion of radical fundamentalisms, and the undesirable ‘weak’ religion of religious illiterates who kept their crucifixes on while raping Muslim women, a kind of behaviour Appleby thinks stems from ‘secularization … imposed from above’ by Tito. Appleby sees the 1997 establishment of an Inter-Religious Council in Bosnia as a promising move towards ‘strong’ religion, though he notes subsequent disappointments as its leaders squabbled (2000: 77–8). He acknowledges that ‘informed interpreters’ are also a problem when they turn to violence (Appleby 2000: 77), but stops short of suggesting that they were a driving force. Instead, the religious leaderships, preoccupied with gaining political influence in an extreme nationalist context, ‘led too little and followed too much’ (p. 74).

Some think they led quite enough, and consider the clergy also as independent political actors who stoked conflict for reasons of their own.

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22 Besides this main line of argument, Appleby also more or less as an afterthought develops a Girardian reading of the conflict (2000: 78–9).
prominent example is Vjekoslav Perica, author of *Balkan Idols* (2002), who has coined the term ‘ethnoclericalism’. Before the break-up of Yugoslavia, Perica dealt with religious leaders both as a journalist and as an official of one of the state commissions for relations with religious communities; he himself is a defender of Yugoslavia and its secular civil religion of ‘brotherhood and unity’. He has drawn on his stock of archival sources to produce a detailed critical history of religious contributions to the conflict.

Perica shows how, both in the *longue durée* and in recent decades, religious institutions contributed to nation-building (2002: 6). He places the roots of the hatreds and conflicts of the 1990s in the twentieth century where they belong, highlighting the concordate crisis of the 1930s and the Jasenovac issue. A major point that emerges from Perica’s study is the role played by religious and quasi-religious anniversaries, parades, processions, pilgrimages, and rallies in the mobilisation of ethnoreligious solidarity. He points out important parallels with the role of processions and pilgrimages in Indian religious nationalism studied by Peter van der Veer (1994).

Another major point is that the increasing nationalism of the self-styled ‘Church among the Croat people’ can be tied to a broader Vatican strategy of combating Communism through a greater stress on ethnic identity. Perica also ties the inflammatory rehabilitation and beatification of Bishop Stepinac (1998) to a Vatican strategy of casting itself as the stalwart opponent of all the ‘three great evils of the twentieth century’, Nazism, Fascism and Communism, in equal measure, which Perica considers a myth. A related point worthy of note is the focus on ‘national’ saints in both the Croat and Serb churches (cf. Anzulović 1999: 24).

At the nexus of these points lies the Medjugorje phenomenon. The apparitions of the Virgin in this small Hercegovinan town since 1980 have generated a global pilgrimage industry. Perica inscribes Medjugorje in the

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23 What immediately comes to mind is the use of mass rallies by the Milošević regime, particularly the 1989 commemoration of the 600th anniversary of the battle of Kosovo. This rally, with all its religious and mythical subtext, took place as Kosovo’s autonomy was being curtailed and Albanian institutions harshly repressed. Perica also shows, however, how a series of mass rallies and pilgrimages held by the Catholic Church in Croatia during its ‘Great Novena’ mobilised believers as a political force and served, *inter alia*, to launch the Church’s revisionist version of Croat national history. To complete the picture, Muslims in Bosnia revived the pre-war popular pilgrimage to Ajvatovica, which served in large part as a mass rally for the SDA party.
broader context of the ideological uses of Marian apparitions (most famously Fatima) in the Catholic anti-Communist struggle. At the same time, Medjugorje is at the intersection of the two fault lines running through the Catholic Church in Bosnia: that between the long-established Franciscans and the recently installed secular clergy; and that between the Franciscan province of Bosna Srebrena and the unruly Franciscans of Hercegovina. Our Lady of Medjugorje was quickly enrolled by the Hercegovinan friars in their power struggle with the local bishop. Later, she was easily exploited in the Serb nationalist anti-Croat propaganda effort, thanks to the proximity of Medjugorje to a site of Ustaša atrocities, and the close ties between the Ustaša and some friars in World War II. In the 1990s, the Hercegovinan friars again tended towards extreme nationalism, as against the Bosnian friars, who have been an important voice for peace and against nationalist politics. Though Perica’s discussion sheds some light on the problem, there seems to be much work left to do to reach an understanding of Medjugorje in relation to the conflict.  

Perica lays considerable blame for the conflict on ‘ethnoclericalism’, which he defines at length, but which might be briefly summarised as an ideology of a tight connection between the ethnic nation, the church, and the state, with the clerical hierarchy occupying the privileged position as guardian of the nation and providing the moral compass of politics. It is an anti-liberal, anti-secular, and right-wing ideology, in which a ‘national’ church seeks a strong religious influence on (ethnic-based) government, and it carries a foreign policy agenda that seeks Huntingtonian ‘civilizational alliances’. Ethnoclericalism is to be found in ‘ethnic churches’, a development encouraged, as in the Catholic Church ‘among the Croat people’, by a new Vatican emphasis on ethnicity since the 1960s (Perica 2002: 214–17). Ethnic churches are ‘authoritarian-minded and centralized organizations capable of organizing resistance against an outside threat and maintaining stability inside the community’, under the hegemonic control of ‘the upper section of clerical hierarchies’ (Perica 2002: 215). Whereas Anzulović considers the Serb Orthodox Church in particular to be corrupted by the tight bonds with state and nation implicit in its ideology of ‘Saint-Savaism’ (svetosavlje), Perica applies a similar perspective to all three main confessions.

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24 Bojan Aleksov (2004) has given a useful account of the shifting political uses of Medjugorje in the Yugoslav mass media. Zlatko Skrbiš (2005) has analysed its appropriation in Croatian nationalist discourse on national ‘chosenness’, but does not suggest this is connected to the armed conflict.
Perica articulates the views of many secularist academics from the region that the churches are seeking a return to ‘old privileges’ through unholy political alliances. The terminology uncomfortably recalls the Socialist labeling of dissidents as ‘cleronationalists’, and it may be that Perica gives too much credence to archival materials rehearsing accusations of political subversion, fundamentalism, terrorism, etc., churned out against the clergy by the Communist state. A Croat, he is at his best dealing with the matters closest at hand, the Catholic Church. The discourse and actions of the Orthodox Church are also well traced by Radmila Radić (1998) and deconstructed by Milorad Tomanić (2001). As for Islam, one should rather consult the detailed original research by Xavier Bougarel (2001), who takes a similarly critical perspective.

Concluding Discussion

A full historical account, I think, pays attention to political agency and choice, while taking into account how the range of available choices is defined by structural constraints and opportunities and by the available repertoire of socially constructed cultural models and legitimations. In a manifold crisis of legitimacy suffered by a political elite that lacked the charisma of Tito and failed to deliver the accustomed economic progress as Communism collapsed all over Europe, both an incumbent leader (Milošević) and the ascendant opposition (Tudjman, Izetbegović) turned to the available alternative legitimation of nationalism based on ethno-religious identity. Independently, all three main religious communities had already for some time given refuge to and developed a nationalist

25 With regard to Islam, discussion has focused on the rise of an Islamic political movement headed by Alija Izetbegović within his broad-based SDA party. The radicalism and influence of this movement should be assessed without either exaggerating or trivialising it. What matters more than that assessment, however, is how Serbs might reasonably perceive their prospects if governed by the author of the Islamic Declaration (Cohen 1998: 59), though the import of Bosnian Serb fears lay in facilitating the work of the Belgrade-run Greater Serbian propaganda, rather than causing the war per se. The founding and early growth of the SDA was much indebted to Islamic Community personnel (Bougarel 1996: 44–6). The Islamic Community played its part in fomenting Bosniak nationalism. It also took part in the escalating interethnic and interreligious war of words (Bougarel 1995), though I would suggest that this was chiefly a reaction to the barrage of anti-Islamic propaganda.
historical vision, and all initially assumed, despite later disenchantment, that their interests would be served by an alliance with nationalist political leaders. Apart from these similarities, they gave different degrees of support to different policies of different moral standing. The Serb Orthodox Church in particular had since the early 1980s championed the Serb cause in Kosovo, giving a strongly mythical cast to later secular and regime propaganda on this fundamentally political issue. The Serbian Church came not only to support the Milošević regime’s oppression of Kosovars and territorial conquests in Croatia and Bosnia, but also to excoriate Milošević for eventually seeking to get the Bosnian Serbs to make peace. In the nationalist enterprise, religious actors are better seen as minor and unequal partners (always excepting the dissident few) than as the unwitting pawns of politicians.

An intriguing underlying theme in many of the studies reviewed here, however, is the attempt to absolve ‘true’ religion from blame, whether true religion is seen as a shared core of all the faiths or as the exclusive possession of one faith, and whether the apologetic stems from conviction or from tactical concerns. One scholar who has done much to advance the study of the wars’ religious dimension, for instance, while portraying the fundamental causes of the war as ‘ethno-national’ with a religious ‘label’, added that ‘the\textit{ concrete historical embodiments} of religions in the Balkans did contribute religious traits to the present warfare’ (Mojzes 1994: 125–6, italics added). Perhaps abstract, eternal, and disembodied religion did not, but how do we study it? Even when dealing with ‘historical embodiments’, as we have seen, one ascribes their violent tendencies to ‘instrumentalisation’, or one seeks to restrict their violent tendencies to ‘weak’ and ‘illiterate’ popular forms (Appleby), or even to an admixture of paganism at odds with ‘true’ Christian ethics (Anzulović 1999, see also Zgodić in Velikonja 2003b). Tomanić (2001) indicts the Church for having strayed from what he considers to be the originally pacifist stance of Christianity. Even as critical a secularist as Perica (2002: 218–21) ends up locating ‘genuine’ (i.e., apolitical) religiosity among the small minority churches with multi-ethnic membership that stayed out of the conflict.

Parallels could be cited, e.g. from current governmental discourse on Islamist extremism versus ‘true’ Islam. Dogmatic commitments aside, there may be good strategic and deep psychological reasons for what, in effect, are either \textit{ad hoc} restrictions of the definition of religion, or appeals to an essentialist definition, or at best an acceptance of the claims of a moderate mainstream learned tradition to authoritatively represent religion as such. Without the understanding that true religion is for peace, the motivation
for religious peace-making efforts is lost. What needs to be questioned, however, is whether it aids the scholarly understanding of religious phenomena. Important policy decisions hinge (or ought to hinge) on such an understanding.

From Appleby’s championing of ‘strong religion’, one might logically conclude that upper religious hierarchies – those educated in their religious tradition and presumably part of its upward moral trajectory – should be engaged in peacemaking efforts, that scarce resources should be expended on training them and strengthening their capacities, that they should have ways to exercise their beneficial influence on society, and that they should have the status and legitimacy that flows from all this. The idea has its obvious attractions for religious leaderships. Perica’s argument, on the other hand, suggests that the problem lies with an ideology of ‘ethnoclericalism’ which is closely associated precisely with the upper-level religious hierarchies. If this is correct, the policies just listed would likely be ineffective or even counter-productive in a crisis situation. In the present post-crisis situation, they would serve mainly to strengthen the religious leaders’ influence vis-à-vis secular society.

One test case is the Inter-Religious Council, formed in 1997 by Bosnia’s top four religious leaders (Muslim, Catholic, Orthodox, and Jewish), on the initiative of an NGO called the World Conference on Religion and Peace. In joint appearances, they condemned violence and reiterated their shared view that the war was not religious. I would suggest that the IRC’s achievements with regard to inter-religious reconciliation and confidence-building have been modest, but that religious leaders have indeed co-operated to strengthen the religious communities’ position vis-à-vis competitors, secular society, and the state. They have promoted confessional religious instruction in schools, condemned criticism of clerics by journalists, and drafted a law on religious freedom and religious communities,26 which shows a touching solicitude for the established religious communities that drafted it. After this crowning achievement in 2004, the IRC showed strong signs of falling apart, though it has at least managed to meet several times since then.

Any show of inter-religious cooperation may be better than none, and no definite conclusions can be drawn about the relative rightness of ‘strong

religion’ versus ‘ethnoclericalism’ on the basis of this single case. On balance, though, this test case seems to favour Perica’s pessimism about such religious peacemaking, rather than Appleby’s cautious optimism.

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Radical Israeli Settlers
Ultimate Concerns, Political Goals and Violence

The focus of this article is the radical and activist parts of the wider Israeli settler community on the West Bank. This Radical Israeli Settler Movement should not be confused with the general settler community in the West Bank, even if the more radical groups often recruit their members from the general settler community. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement today includes groups such as Kach, The Committee for Safety on the Roads and The Jewish Legion. The purpose of this article is to analyse some instances of violence in the radical Israeli settler movement and to identify recurring features and processes in this violence. It will be argued that these features and processes are important factors in understanding why certain movements use violence. It will also be argued that future comparative studies are needed, which include other contexts where similar radical movements have become violent, in order to develop a general theory of ethno-religious movements using political violence.

There are certain theoretical issues in the study of religious movements turning to political violence which have not been approached in a satisfactory way. To date, scholars have often tried to identify dangerous elements in religious movements. Examples of such elements are dualism, absolute truth claims, apocalypticism, millennialism, holy war and totalism in the form of demands of blind obedience by followers (Kimball 2002: 41–185; Selengut 2003: 17–48, 95–181). Scholars have also pointed to dangerous situations such as alienation, humiliation, socioeconomic decline and occupation (Stern 2003: 9–62; Benjamin and Simon 2003: 408, 424; Pape 2005: 126). What needs further attention is an analysis of why similar movements in similar contexts sometimes become violent and sometimes not. The basic assumption is that these movements and situations may appear to resemble one another, but if there are different outcomes, there are also decisive differences to detect. The mainly quantitative studies by Jonathan Fox of ethno-religious conflicts should be complemented by attention to the different roles of religion in radical movements using political violence (Fox 2002 and 2004). The relationship between socio-political context, the
actions of radical movements and the role of ideology in these movements needs to be approached in order to enhance our ability to identify potentially violent movements.

The search for patterns of interaction between ideology and social context in the outcome of violence within different groups and movements is a complex issue, but it is less problematic than, for example, to claim that religious groups are more violent than secular groups (Juergensmeyer 2001: 146; Hoffman 1998: 88; Bloom 2005: 98). It is difficult to compare and establish levels of violence between different situations in different contexts. So far every argument for the extraordinary power of religion to motivate to violence has been unconvincing. Secular movements have proven able to copy every violent act of the religious movements, such as suicide attacks aiming to maximise casualties, in the same way that religious groups have often imitated the behaviour of secular groups (Pape 2005; Gambetta 2005; Bloom 2005). Secular groups use ideologies to legitimate violence for a higher purpose in the same way that religious groups do. Furthermore, secular groups can ritualise different behaviour.

From a methodological perspective religious and secular movements should be approached in the same way. There may be important differences between religious and non-religious movements and their connections to violence. Such differences should, however, be found as the result of empirical analysis and should not be the theoretical starting-point for an analysis of differences. Such a starting-point leads to a circular argument which tends to avoid the possibility of falsification. I propose to identify long-term ultimate concerns and short-term political goals in the ideology of movements such as the Radical Israeli Settler Movement.1 These two aspects of ideology are related but are distinguished for analytical reasons and both aspects can be found in secular as well as religious ideologies. Radical political movements have ultimate concerns that they perceive as not open to compromises, but these are concretised in short-term and often changing political goals by the movements and are interpreted in relation to the socio-political situation by the movements. In certain situations violence becomes the chosen option.

1 I am inspired by Catherine Wessinger’s use of the notion of ultimate concern in her study of millennial violence, although most of the groups she discussed do not have any central political agenda. See Wessinger 2000: 2–6.
Jewish Radicalism in Israel

The term radicalism refers to an activist struggle to implement an ideology in society. Radical movements often oppose the social and political order in power. Of main interest here will be groups that at least in theory consider it legitimate to initiate violence in order to protect their ultimate concerns. Often being unable to physically wipe out their opponents, they use violence as a form of communication and aim at producing fear. Even if we choose not to use the word terrorism for such violence, it has often been an attractive choice for groups that perceive themselves as threatened and unable to defend their interests by other means.

However, far from every radical group uses violence, and the activist attitude can take many forms such as demonstrations, public speeches and rallies, performing demonstrative religious rituals and ceremonies in public, missionary activity, forming civil guards, establishing settlements and civil disobedience. Another form of radicalism is to avoid the outer society in isolated communities, for example by concentrating the followers in certain neighbourhoods or by establishing separate child-care centres and schools. However, many radical groups combine a selective avoidance with conquering and revolutionary behaviour.

There are at least four major contemporary expressions of Jewish radicalism in Israel: first there are ultra-orthodox anti-Zionist groups which belong to the Haredi (‘those who tremble’) population in Israel. What unites many Haredi is their anti-Zionist and anti-Israeli stance, since in their opinion the Messiah must arrive before the creation of a Jewish state in the Holy Land. Nonetheless, many Haredi live in Israel simultaneously as they refer to their existence there as an ‘exile in exile’. We might say that the Haredi represent the most radical form of the passivist mode of messianism which is inherited from traditional rabbinical Judaism. In the social sphere, the Haredi isolate themselves from other parts of Israeli society, avoid secular education as far as possible, and do not do military service. One group, Neturei Karta, cooperates with the Palestinians and criticises the Israeli treatment of the Palestinians. Nevertheless, many Haredi are represented by political parties in the Israeli parliament and try to impose new religious laws in Israel. Another very important common opinion among the Haredi Jews is that it is strictly forbidden to enter the Temple Mount. The reason for this is that the holiest part of the temple, the Holy of Holies (chayil), is considered to be strictly off-limits. After the destruction of the temple in AD 70, knowledge of the exact location of the Holy of Holies was lost. For this reason the rabbis of the Talmud decided
that it was forbidden for Jews to enter the Temple Mount in order to avoid inadvertently desecrating the Holy of Holies. Those who disobey this prohibition were liable to the death penalty (karet). As implied before, there are some branches of Chassidism that try to overcome this restriction by a reinterpretation of religious sources, and actually pray on the Temple Mount. These branches often also have a positive attitude towards Israel in general and religious Zionists in particular (Ravitzky 1996: 40–78, 181–209; Inbari 2003).

A second form of Jewish radicalism is the secular right-wing Zionist movement, sometimes called revisionism. In the pre-Israeli years this right-wing movement was represented by Irgun and the Stern-Gang or Lehi (Shavit 1988). These movements initiated violence against Arabs on several occasions as revenge for Arab violence against Jews. When these organisations were dissolved, the political party Herut, which was led by Menachem Begin, became the main representative of right-wing Zionism. When Herut became part of the Likud coalition and was moderated from several perspectives, smaller, more radical parties emerged, such as Tzomet and the National Unity Party. The common assumption of these organisations is that there exists a Jewish nation which has a historical, cultural and religious link to a specific geographic area in the Middle East, and that the Jewish nation is legitimately entitled to claim political sovereignty over this area. Other political ideas of the secular right-wing movement are that Israel must have a strong army and secure its existence by holding as much territory as possible. Despite the mainly secular characteristics of this movement, religious elements can nevertheless be found in its ideology.2

A third example of Jewish radicalism is religious Zionism. Religious Zionism can be described as a religious orthodox movement that attempts to integrate activist Zionism into its ideology. An important aspect of religious Zionism is that it acknowledges an important role for secular Zionism. In addition, secular Jews, by creating the state of Israel, are fulfilling God’s plan, even if they do so without knowing it. Ultimately, according to religious Zionists, all Jews will acknowledge God, and Israel

2 The existence of scattered religious ideas in this movement leads us to reflect upon the problem of deciding which movements are religious and which are not. How much or how little religious element does there have to be in the ideology of a certain movement for us to be able to label it as religious? If we do not search for a deciding difference between religious and non-religious movements, the problem does not become especially important.
will be transformed into a theocratic and messianic kingdom. This does not mean that there have not been conflicts between secular and religious Zionists, only that religious Zionists are prohibited from using violence against other Jews (Aran 1991; Ravitzky 1996: 79–144).

A fourth example is Kahanism, which is a radical ideology created by Meir Kahane. Kahanism explicitly calls for violence against Arabs if it fulfills the purpose of self-defence. Kahanism is not the only movement that has had such an ideology in the short history of Israel, but it is perhaps the most important movement today, which has split into several groups and organisations. In Kahanism the secular state of Israel is seen as something negative, which is an important difference in comparison with religious Zionism. The purpose of Kahanism is to overthrow the secular government and replace it with a religious government. To date, this ideological goal has generally only been expressed verbally (Sprinzak 1999: 180–285).

Religious Zionism and Kahanism are the main forms of radicalism that will be discussed in the rest of this paper. The notions of religious Zionism and Kahanism can be seen as scholarly terms referring to modern religious traditions and movements, but they also roughly correspond to a self-understanding in these movements in relation to the wider Jewish context. However, there exist today specific movements and groups that mix ideological elements from both religious Zionism and Kahanism. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement consists of both Kahanist groups and religious Zionist groups that are more or less inspired by the radical and activist ideology of Kahanism.

Several political goals can be found among both religious Zionists and Kahanists (Sprinzak 1999: 145–285): (1) There is often a maximalist view of the Holy Land together with an activist attitude to settle this territory. Hebron is for example often viewed as the second most holy city in Israel. Jerusalem must remain the undivided capital city of the Jewish state, but the view regarding Israel’s biblical borders varies. The maximalist-activist position is realised by different means, from using the political system of Israel to different forms of activism, such as demonstrations and the establishment of settlements, terrorism and political assassinations. (2) Sometimes the establishment of the Third Temple on the Temple Mount is seen as a messianic necessity for the salvation of the Jewish people. The Jews are themselves responsible for achieving this. This goal is pursued by different means, from using Israel’s political system to different forms of activism, such as attempting to pray on the Temple Mount in more or less provocative ways. There have been several attempts to destroy the Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount. (3) Some religious Zionist and Kahanist groups
organise civil guards and defence organisations as protection against Arab violence and terrorism. Sometimes we find the rhetoric of terrorism against terrorism.

The first and the third political expressions are most prominent among radical Israeli settlers, while the second, the goal to establish the Third Temple, is only explicit in certain groups. The Radical Israeli Settler movement can sometimes cooperate with secular right-wing radicals and temple-activists. There are even examples of alliances with Chabad Chassids, who do not see any religious significance in the State of Israel, but feel that the state protects the Jewish people and that any retreat from occupied land is wrong (Sprinzak 1999: 145–285). The ultimate concern of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is the idea that it is necessary to preserve and establish a Greater Israel as interpreted in the light of the Bible and rabbinic sources. Depending on the changing situation in the Middle East from 1967, the Radical Israeli Settler Movement has articulated different concrete short-term political goals, which on some occasions have led to members initiating violent actions, both against Jews and non-Jews. Jerusalem is not the only important place for this movement, several other places, primarily on the West Bank, are accorded religious significance. The line between the radicalism of this movement and the wider settler community is not clear, and the lines between the various forms of Jewish radicalism are equally hazy. New groups and organisations evolve, existing groups change political and religious positions, new alliances are formed, and so on.

The Radical Israeli Settler Movement is an ethno-religious movement in the sense that it mixes ideas of both religion and ethnicity in its political ideology. Other names given to this kind of ideology are religious nationalism and world conquering fundamentalism (Juergensmeyer 1994: 1–8, 62–9; Almond et al. 2003: 160–3). The notion of an ethno-religious movement is not intended here to denote a typology that distinguishes between movements that are primarily or secondarily motivated by religion (Fox 2004: 122–5). In order to analyse the dynamic relation between ideology and social context in the outcome of violence there is need for a methodology that is sensitive to the complex interaction between different motivating elements, both on an individual level and on a group level. Individuals may join a radical movement, religious or otherwise, for a variety of reasons; these reasons vary between followers, and the motives for joining and staying can be different. The same dynamic is present on a group level where the goals and objectives can change over time and with the changing situation.
Religious Zionism

The founder of religious Zionism was Abraham Isaac Kook (1865–1935). He was the most important thinker to give activist Zionism a theology of world redemption. His son Zvi Yehuda Kook (1891–1982) became the ideological father of Gush Emunim, the Settler Movement, and he gave religious Zionism a more radical nationalist or ethno-religious character.3

Abraham Isaac Kook was born in Latvia and received a traditional Orthodox education. In 1904 he settled in Palestine and was appointed rabbi of Jaffa. Even though he was Orthodox he got on well with many secular Jews, often socialist in political orientation, many of whom arrived in Palestine at that time. He was stranded in Europe at the start of the First World War while at a conference in Switzerland. He lived in London at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, by which Britain recognised the right of the Jewish people to a homeland in Palestine. Kook was one of the few Orthodox rabbis who saw the declaration as positive. After the war he returned to Palestine and was appointed the first Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi of Palestine (1921–35). He soon came into conflict with other Orthodox Jews, for example, because he was in favour of secular education. The yeshiva he founded in Jerusalem, Mercaz Ha-Rav, taught secular as well as religious courses, and still does today. The purpose of the yeshiva was to educate individuals who would pursue both studies of the Torah and love of the Land of Israel. During his lifetime he wrote many books and other materials.

For Abraham Kook, the return of both secular and religious Jews to Israel had a historical significance of global proportions and was a step towards redemption. His religious nationalism was based on the belief that God leads both secular and religious Jews to return to the Holy Land. Kook relied on the Lurianic Kabbalah to give Zionist activism a theological meaning. In short, in the Lurianic Kabbalah the creation of the world involves the scattering of divine elements into creation, which is seen as a kind of accident. In the beginning divine light flows into ten vessels which cannot withstand the strength of the light and accordingly break. Divine elements are trapped in the broken pieces of the vessels, which become the material world. The process of redemption is given a world-historical dimension by requiring that the scattered divine elements must be recol-

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lected. Symbolically this recollection is paralleled in Kook’s thoughts by the return of Jews to the Holy Land.

The physical strength of secular Zionists who build the new state of Israel with their own hands is also given a symbolic meaning. The new vessels of light – that is the bodies of Jews – must be given strength so that they will not break again. According to Kook the national feelings of Jews are holy, even if some Jews are impure from the religious standpoint. Kook tried to give modernity, nationalism and secularism a sacred dimension. Kook did not deny the contemporary world, like many other orthodox Jews did at that time, but recognized it and even glorified it. Kook wanted to incorporate everything into religion, to apply the sacred to all existence. This was according to the Israeli scholar Gideon Aran an attempt to rescue religion from crisis and to return it to its previous supremacy, at a time when secular Zionism dominated in Palestine.

The son of Abraham Isaac Kook, Zvi Yehuda Kook, was a marginal figure for many years. He became the leader of his father’s yeshiva only after the terms of several other rabbis had ended. He did not write much and it is foremost as the guru of Gush Emunim that he became influential in Israel. Zvi Yehuda Kook’s interpretation of his father’s teachings was selective and the son used his association with his father effectively, exploiting every opportunity to mention his father. One could say that Zvi Yehuda’s charisma was inherited to a large extent from his father. Further, Zvi Yehuda claimed for himself a unique authority to interpret his father’s teachings. The son shifted the teachings from a universal conception of salvation to a narrow Jewish nationalism. Secular Zionists, beside the religious Zionists, are the only people who can be saved in the future in the messianic vision of Zvi Yehuda Kook. In his teachings we have a mix of Torah orthodoxy and strict Halaah observance, along with a kind of nationalist messianism. The mystical aspects of the father’s messianism are missing from the son’s interpretation; what is left is an activist and revolutionary messianism that depends solely on Jews. The concrete political line of Zvi Yehuda Kook after 1967 was opposition towards any withdrawal from the land of the Greater Israel, which at least included the East Bank, that is Jordan, besides the actual land that Israel controlled at that time.

According to Kook the Torah speaks of planting trees in the Holy Land, not establishing yeshivas. The Israeli flag, the Israeli army, the Israeli national anthem and the Day of Independence are holy according to Kook. One could say that he sacralised Zionism and Israel. A militarily strong Israel is seen as proof of the coming redemption and evidence that the state will embody the biblical kingdom. Everything about the Israeli army
is holy, even the weapons used by the army which are made by gentiles. The attitude of the son must be understood against the historical changes of his time. Zvi Yehuda formulated his teachings after the Holocaust and constant bloodshed and wars between Jews and Arabs. He had a much less positive world-view than his father did, and strongly negative feelings for non-Jews and non-Jewish culture.

Both father and son Kook created an ideological base for religious Zionism and the settler movement, Gush Emunim, and the Mercaz Ha-Rav Yeshiva supplied an important institutional base for spreading their ideology. Gush Emunim cannot, however, only be understood as the creation of two persons. These two leaders also responded to needs and trends in their surrounding environment and were dependent on support from other individuals. For example, a group of youths rebelled against contemporary religious Zionists in the early 1950s. They were frustrated with the humiliating position of religion in Israel. They named themselves Gahelet, which means ‘glowing ember’ and referred to their self-image as the preservers of Torah. Their goal was a national religious revolution. They tried to spread their mission through the religious Zionist youth movement Bnei Akiva, which led to tensions in the movement. Gahelet came even more into conflict with religious Zionist leaders when they converted their Nahal army service – a combination of frontline duty with life on a border kibbutz – into yeshiva studies. When they met Zvi Yehuda Kook there was a mutual bond, despite his sacralisation of the army and their abandonment of army service. The members of Gahelet soon became the dominant force in the Mercaz Ha-Rav Yeshiva.

It is difficult to determine a precise date for the beginning of Gush Emunim. It emerged in the mid-1970s under the slogan ‘The Whole Land of Israel’ as an activist movement for the annexation of the occupied territories. The name Gush Emunim was coined in February 1974 at kibbutz Kfar Etzion in the Occupied Territories and immediately used in the media. However, there are some even earlier events that were important to the origin of Gush Emunim. In the spring of 1968 Rabbi Levinger and about ten followers with their families celebrated Passover in a hotel in Hebron. That night they planned a strategy of settling the land and later became the spearhead of the settler movement. Although Gush Emunim is a relatively small group, they have had a decisive role in determining the agenda of public life in Israel.

One principal strategy of Gush Emunim is the ‘biblicisation’ of the West Bank. Places given biblical significance are Shechem (Nablus), Hebron, Anatot, Shiloh and Beit-El (Bethel), and other well-known sites mentioned
in the Holy Scriptures. Moshe Levinger, one of the leading activists and pioneers of Gush Emunim, once said the following:

Samaria and Judea belonged to the Jewish people even before 1967. We’ve known that they belong to us throughout all history… It’s God’s will. No Jew prayed three times a day that he’d come back to Tel Aviv or Haifa, but for centuries we did pray to come back to Jerusalem, Hebron and Nablus. The tombs of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are here. Hebron was David’s capital. And until the Arabs slaughtered the community of scholars in the 1920s, there were Jews in Hebron during all the years of the Diaspora. (Heilman 1997: 331.)

Support is mobilised by accentuating such places as religiously significant for the Jews. The Occupied Territories are called Judea and Samaria, which further accentuates the activism of Gush Emunim as having a religious significance. By settling and uniting these territories with the rest of Israel they are performing tikkun, the kabbalistic concept of repairing and transforming the whole universe. Rabbi Levinger once even stated that the Jewish settlements in the holy cities of the West Bank are for the good of Arabs themselves. By self-definition Gush Emunim is a religious movement of professed practicing believers of the Halakah. At the same time support is mobilised by using non-religious arguments such as pointing out that what they term Judea and Samaria are of vital importance to Israel from a military-strategic point of view. Slogans one might find in the history of Gush Emunim include ‘Withdrawal from the Holy Land – Over Our Dead Bodies’, or ‘Not an Inch’, or ‘Do or Die’, pointing out the activist feature. In terms of their religious legacy, Gush Emunim ascribe themselves the role of the Macabeans, who fought the Syrian Hellenistic occupation in the second century BC and the Zealots (kanaim) who fought the Roman occupation in the first century AD.

Gush Emunim do not officially embrace an ideology of violence. Instead they advocate peaceful coexistence with local Arabs. However, individuals such as Rabbi Levinger have a history of walking around in Palestinian cities and provoking the local people, and have at least in one case shot a Palestinian dead, for which the rabbi was indicted. Members of Gush Emunim have on some occasions radicalised and used revolutionary and millennial violence. The most important example is the Jewish Underground, which was a small group of perhaps ten members that during the early 1980s planned to blow up the Muslim holy buildings on the Temple Mount. The leaders of the Jewish Underground thought that God
was angry with the Jews for not building the Third Temple and that the Yom Kippur War was a punishment for this sin. Simultaneously they knew that such an attack would probably lead to a new war between Israel and its Arab neighbour states, in which they hoped that Israel would win more land. However, the Israeli security service stopped and imprisoned the members of the group before they could execute their plan.

The Jewish Underground was affiliated with a larger network called Terror Against Terror (TNT), which was behind several terror attacks against Palestinians between 1978 and 1994, for example the bombing of a soccer stadium which injured two children, and a drive-by attack with machine-guns and hand-grenades on Hebron University, which killed four students. TNT also had connections to Kahanism, to which we now turn our attention. Meir Kahane was, for example, arrested by the Israeli police for arranging a demonstration in support of TNT. This indicates that leaders and followers of different radical groups and organisations can cooperate, despite some disagreements on ideological and religious matters. There are, for example, several affinities between secular right-wing Zionism and religious Zionism, including their view of the centrality of religion in Jewish national culture (Shavit 1988: 158–60). Attempts and plans by the Jewish Underground to attack the Muslim buildings on the Temple Mount have been foiled by the Israeli security service on several occasions. In May 2005 a group of Jewish radicals were arrested for planning a missile and grenade attack against the Dome of the Rock and the Al Aksa Mosque. A suicide attack has also been prevented, which included an attempt to crash a manned air drone packed with explosives on the Temple Mount during mass Muslim worship on the Mount.\(^4\)

**Meir Kahane and Kahanism**

So-called Kahanism originates with Meir Kahane (1932–90).\(^5\) In his early years Meir Kahane worked as a rabbi in Brooklyn and served as an informer for the FBI. In 1967 he formed the Jewish Defense League (JDL) which was a low middle class response to black militancy in Brooklyn. The

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JDL was depicted in the media as a Jewish version of the Black Panthers. The JDL organised military training for young Jews in the Diaspora and on some few occasions bombs were set off at Soviet diplomatic buildings in retaliation for anti-Semitic incidents in the Soviet Union. In 1971 Kahane moved to Israel, he began to preach the idea that all Jews must migrate to Israel, and formed the Kach party in 1974. In 1984 Kach won one seat in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, but was banned in 1988 as a racist party by the Israeli state. Meir Kahane was killed by an Islamist in 1990 while visiting New York. Kach then split into two organisations, Kach and Kahane Chai, the latter led by Meir Kahane’s son Benjamin (1967–2000), who was killed in a Palestinian attack in December 2000. Political parties such as Moledet and Herut (from 2003) can be seen as Kahanist attempts to regain influence in the parliamentary process in Israel.

The goal of Kahanism is theocracy and at times the movement and its different representatives have proposed the deportation of all Arabs from Israeli-controlled territory as a goal. Kahanism also contains the idea of a biblical Greater Israel, although the exact geographical boarders of this future state vary depending on the specific group. Meir Kahane and some later Kahanists were also attracted by the idea of rebuilding the Third Temple. Kahanism has also embraced the doctrine of terror against terror and has been involved in lethal attacks against Palestinians. Kahanist groups find many members among radical religious Zionists on the West Bank. Kiryat Arba and Hebron in particular are inhabited by many radicals.

Both Kach and Kahane Chai have taken violent actions against Palestinians. For example, on the fifth of March 2002, a homemade time bomb exploded in the courtyard of a Palestinian school in the Sur Bahir neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, injuring 24 students and two teachers.\(^6\) New Kahanist splinter-groups have evolved, but some of them disappear after some time. The Committee for Safety on the Roads has specialised in attacking cars driven by Palestinians. It claimed responsibility for two attacks in 1998 and two shootings in 2001 resulting in three deaths and considered the attacks as revenge for attacks on Jewish settlers. The political goal of the Committee for Safety on the Roads is to defend the security of Jewish settlers. Kahane Chai has also attempted to export violence. In October 1995 the group searched for revenge for the bomb attacks against Jewish communities in Argentina by trying to assassinate the top Iranian

diplomat in Argentina. The bloodiest attack with connections to Kahanism is Baruch Goldstein's massacre of 29 praying Palestinians at the Tomb of the Patriarchs in February 1994. The political murder of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 also had a Kahanist background, because the killer, Yigal Amir, was a member of a small Kahanist group which called itself Eyal. This murder was far from the first example of political violence between Jews (Ben-Yehuda 2000). Politically influential Jews with other opinions than Kahanists may be seen as as a great threat as Arabs, or as Meir Kahane once said: ‘Every Jew who is killed has two killers, the Arab who killed him and the government that let it happen (Juergensmeyer 1994: 165). In connection with the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza in August 2005, Noam Federer, an activist suspected of being involved in a plot to plant a bomb in a Palestinian school for girls, said that there is a civil war going on in Israel between Jews.7

The most recent serious incident occurred in August 2005, when 19-year-old Eden Nathan-Zada boarded a bus between Haifa and Shfaram and shot four persons dead and wounded 13 before he himself was beaten to death by an Arab mob in Shfaram. Two weeks before the attack he left his post in the army, which explains how he got his weapon. He had moved shortly before that to Kfar Tapuah on the West Bank. He was inspired by Kahanist ideology and became friendly with Kahanists in Kfar Tapuah, who later attended his funeral. He was on the watch list of Shin Beth and his parents knew about his radicalisation and interest in Kahanism, which perhaps began through the Internet.8

The Logic of Settler Violence

The socio-political logic of the violence of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is the ethno-religious struggle for land. Religious differences may enhance this struggle (Pape 2005: 126), and Judaism contains religious traditions that can motivate radicalism. When religious traditions are interpreted as supporting political activism and violence we can speak of a

7 http://www.guardian.co.uk/israel/Story/0,2763,1432488,00.html (accessed 22 September 2005).
8 For violent attacks by Kahanist-groups, except the references generally on Kahanism, see http://www.tkb.org/MapModule.jsp?showGroups=on&FIPS=IS&regionID=1#cities (accessed 18 September 2005), and http://www.ict.org.il/ (accessed 18 September 2005).
new form of religiosity. The Radical Israeli Settler Movement has its own
social logic and it is a modern political movement whose ultimate con-
cerns have a spiritual significance for its members but depend on worldly
politics. The most successful leader of a radical movement is not the most
religiously learned, but the most skilful entrepreneur and populist who
can inspire and motivate people with both secular and religious argu-
ments, such as consideration of Israel’s military security. The background
of leaders and followers in the Radical Israeli Settler Movement varies, but
in the case of violence some patterns can be detected. The typical pattern
is a young frustrated man with ideologically motivated dreams about a
Jewish superpower of biblical dimensions and direct experiences of vio-
lence, through military service and/or a relative or close friend who has
died in a Palestinian attack.

There is also a strategic logic to the violence of the Radical Israeli Settler
Movement. Israeli radicalism tends to become violent in connection with
breakthroughs in peace processes between Israel and Arabs that involves
giving up land. The Jewish Underground can be seen as a reaction to the
Camp David Accomods of 1978 and the Israeli withdrawal from Sinai. Baruch
Goldstein’s shooting of praying Palestinians in 1994 and Yigal Amir’s polit-
cal assassination of Yitzhak Rabin in 1995 can be seen as a reaction to the
Oslo Agreements. Palestinian political violence follows the same logic;
violent attacks are an effective method to stop peace initiatives. From this
perspective Israeli and Palestinian radicals work in the same direction.
So far, there are three main types of violence originating from the radical
Israeli settlers: (1) hooliganism against and beatings of Palestinian civil-
ians and Jews, (2) lethal attacks against Palestinian civilians, by (a) bomb-
ing Palestinian civilians, (b) shooting Palestinian civilians, and (c) shoot-
ing in ‘no escape’ missions against Palestinian civilians (which should not
be confused with suicide attacks, because the success of the attack does
not depend on the attacker’s death), and finally (3) political assassinations
against Jews.

The trend after the Jewish Underground has been ideologically mo-
tivated individuals who belong to radical movements and execute vio-
lent attacks on their own, without sharing their plans with anyone else.
The context of these attacks is a democratic state that works seriously to
stop violence by radical groups. The Israeli security service monitors dif-
ferent Jewish radical groups, but is not allowed to arrest individuals for
their political opinions. Radicals know that it is easier to locate a group of
people planning an attack than an individual who either plans something
or implements an action spontaneously. Further, if a group of individuals
belonging to the same organisation executes an attack, it is easier to prosecute the whole organisation. There is a similar pattern among right-wing radicals in the USA who have developed the idea of leaderless resistance: if a violent course of action is taken it should be carried out without involving the wider organisation (Dobratz and Shanks-Meile 2000: 171–4). Another aspect of the context is that most Israelis do not support violence by Jewish radical groups against Palestinians. This probably has a restraining effect on radical Jewish groups, who are often concerned about public opinion in Israel.

From a theoretical perspective it is possible to conclude the following: violence can occur when members of the radical group experience a dissonance between their ultimate concerns, the political goal and the actual situation. Violence is chosen when it is seen as the most effective way to achieve a political goal that can be reconciled with the ultimate concern. The fewer the options that members of a radical movement can discern, the higher the likelihood that violence will be chosen. When violence is seen as ineffective, or even counter-productive, the political goals can be reinterpreted in the light of the ultimate concerns. What influences individual interpretations and what they see as effective means is determined by ideology and context. The ultimate concern in the Radical Israeli Settler Movement is a biblical Israel with all its possible connotations. The foremost political goals today consist of keeping the West Bank and Jerusalem. Everything threatening these goals can lead to violence. Palestinian violence today plays into the hands of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement because this is an alternative to settler violence, since both aim at stopping the peace process. Continuing violence seems to be a better option than unacceptable peace in the eyes of radicals on both sides. This is supported by a Jewish settler who told me in an interview (14 February 2005) that violence is the natural state of existence in the Middle East until the Messiah arrives.

Concluding Remarks on Future Comparisons

It is now time for the general theoretical issues presented at the beginning of this article to be addressed. The discussion of the Radical Israeli Settler Movement concerns one specific socio-cultural context and focuses on a few similar and, from a genealogical perspective, related groups and organisations. What general conclusions can be abstracted from this context and tested in other ethno-religious conflicts? First of all, this study is main-
ly relevant to radical political movements where religious ideology and ethnic identity are intertwined. The ultimate concern of such movements is unworldly politics and power, which are interpreted in religious terms.

Other relevant contexts to analyse in order to further understand so-called ethno-religious movements using political violence are Northern Ireland, Kurdistan, Sri Lanka, Punjab and Kashmir in India, and Chechnya. Future detailed studies of how ethno-religious movements in these contexts continuously reinterpret their ultimate concerns as concrete political goals as the social conditions change, can help in gathering comparative data on the origins of violence. In all these cases the struggle is about political control over land. In most of these contexts, radical groups have evolved on both sides of the conflict, considerably influencing each other. If social, political and economic grievances are unsolved, including the issue of land, and the ultimate concern is interpreted as impossible to realise, the conflict will continue as long as the stronger ethnic part restraints its violence or is unable or unwilling to destroy its enemy. Unsatisfactory peace processes can even be seen as especially threatening. Suicide attacks have – so far – only been used by radical groups that belong to the weaker side of the conflict. They are weaker by virtue of belonging to the militarily less powerful side, a side that often suffers from relative social and economic deprivation. However, which side should be seen as stronger or weaker depends on what perspective is chosen, and is also dependent on other actors in the region or globally. Extensive comparative studies must be made before we can understand how ethno-religious movements can de-radicalise and find within themselves the possibility of peaceful compromise.

In most cases there is a clear factor of religious difference in the conflict: there is often a case of belonging to different religions. However, significant religious difference can be found also inside religions. In the conflict in Northern Ireland both sides are Christian, but one is Catholic and the other Protestant. The Kurds also have their own form of Islam: the Alevi tradition. There are also conflicts within ethnic groups: between secular and religious individuals and movements, but also between different religious groups and institutions. New religious ideologies can be created or imported and come into conflict with older ones. The different choices that ethno-religious movements make depend not only on the perceived enemy, but also on the ability of these movements to mobilise support for their goals, both locally and globally. Some studies suggest that religion is not a cause of political violence, but that religious difference, religious grievances or religious repression can exacerbate the conflict and escalate violence (Fox
This is in many situations the most reasonable conclusion, but sometimes religious grievances and religious ideology can be a direct cause of violence, while other grievances can nurture and exacerbate the conflict. When American Jewish religious radicals arrive in Israel, for instance Meir Kahane, Baruch Goldstein and Alan Goodman, who came to Jerusalem in 1981 and shot two Muslims dead on the Temple Mount, religious ideology can be considered as a cause of ethno-religious violence. When international jihadists arrive in the USA, Kashmir or Chechnya and organise attacks, religious ideology should be considered as at least one of a selection of prime causes of ethno-religious violence.

When new forms of religion are created and imported, we must be aware that religious ideas may be a direct cause of violence, but this does not mean that religion is the only cause. This would be a fallacy, because religion is always imbedded in economic, political and socio-cultural contexts. When there is rapid change in the religious landscape of an ethnic group, for example, with the emergence of new movements, the existing political situation can suddenly be deemed unacceptable by such movements, which can initiate a campaign of violence. The introduction of new movements and ideologies may lead to violence within the ethnic group, which in turn may affect the conflict with an ethnic outsider. So far, the importance of religious diversity in ethnic groups has largely been overlooked by scholars. Many scholars seem to work within a ‘clash of civilizations’ paradigm, whether it is from the perspective of a conspiracy of European racism, American imperialism and Zionism or the essentialist discourse of Islamist fanatics as the eternal enemy of West. Paradoxically, while the differences within ethno-religious groups are somehow sources of volatility, they also offer opportunities for moderating conflicts, because if less radical actors are strengthened, more compromising political goals can gain momentum.

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CHRISTOPHER ROBERTS

Social Conflict and Sacrificial Rhetoric

Luther’s Discursive Intervention and the Religious Division of Labor

Introduction

‘Sacrifice’ is a religious term whose use extends far beyond the church door. People from all walks of life speak of ‘sacrifice’ when they want to evoke an irreducible conflict in the relations between self, family, and society. In America, hardly a speech goes by without political leaders insisting upon the necessity and virtue of sacrifice, but rarely will they clarify who is sacrificing what, and to whom. Indeed, this is not only an American phenomenon, as a number of recent texts examining ‘sacrifice’ as a term in various national discourses have shown.\(^1\) Such a political and economic deployment of a religious figure demands interpretation, for not only does the rhetoric of sacrifice span the globe,\(^2\) it constitutes a problem with a long genealogy. As a key moment in the Western segment of this genealogy, this article will examine the way that Luther’s exegetical work rhetoricalized sacrifice, and, in doing so, constructed a new discursive position, the pastor as anti-sophist, or parrhesiast, in the religious division of labor.

The overarching question for this inquiry is how did a particular religious ritual like sacrifice come to serve as such a widespread rhetorical figure? When faced with the immense historical distance between, first, the public destruction of wealth or butchering of an animal, and, last, a speech act describing non-ritual phenomena as a sacrifice, one measures the distance not only in years but also in religious and cultural transformation. For Christianity, and Luther, perhaps, in particular, few events in this

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\(^1\) For sacrificial rhetoric in France from the Ancient Regime to the twentieth century, see Strenski 2002; for America, see Mizruchi 1998; for Germany, see Evans 1996.

\(^2\) A brief survey of the reaction of developing nations to World Bank and International Monetary Fund austerity demands reveals a persistent recourse to sacrificial rhetoric, especially in Africa.
history have been as decisive as Paul’s interpretation of the relationship between the Hebrew ‘Law’ and Jesus’s crucifixion. In conjunction with his rejection of circumcision and other acts of ritual piety, or ‘works’, addressing Gentile audiences in his ‘Letter to the Romans’ and ‘Letter to the Galatians’ Paul shifts the emphasis from the Torah’s complementary conception of works and faith (pistis) to focus more decisively on the latter. In what was to become a pivotal moment in the history of Christian dogma, Paul argued that the death and resurrection of Jesus had ‘fulfilled’ the Law of Moses, and beseeched others to ‘present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship’ (Rom. 12:1). This formulation, which endorsed the incorporation of the public ritual of sacrifice into the worshiper’s body, led to an intensive focus on both physical and doctrinal purity. Hence, the rhetorical redefinition of ‘sacrifice’ informed the pursuit of individual holiness that grounded the transformed sacrificial practices of martyrdom and monastic asceticism.

This background constitutes the dual-channeled heritage of sacrificial transformation that Luther first encountered. As an Augustinian monk Luther soon adopted Paul’s emphasis on faith over works and became the most vociferous critic of monastic practices, dismissing them as ‘works’ of the ‘Law’. As befits Luther’s critique of works, in his 1516–7 (published in 1519) exegesis of Galatians there are few mentions of sacrifice, yet in his 1531 (published in 1535) version the text is suffused with sacrificial rhetoric. Although Paul’s ‘Letter to the Galatians’, which deals specifically with the status of Jewish law and ritual in the still forming Christian churches, provided fertile opportunity for Luther’s discussion of sacrifice,
because of this difference in the editions we cannot explain the emergence of sacrificial rhetoric as simply the consequence of his exegetical object. One can, however, hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, one of Luther’s rhetorical goals was to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice.

Rhetoric and Exegesis

In formulating Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric as an object of scrutiny, I am taking a different trajectory from much Luther scholarship. Indeed, because Luther came to reject what he saw as the abuse of allegory, a rhetorical treatment could seem an inappropriate approach to Luther’s text. Since my focus here will be on Luther’s ‘Lectures on Galatians’ this analysis will shift the rhetorical study of Luther from his sermons to his scriptural exegesis, where debate usually centers upon the theological cogency of his arguments. To insist on the rhetorical nature of Luther’s commentary already suggests a skeptical attitude towards any exegesis that attempts to ‘speak the truth’ of a given text. Nonetheless, in speaking of Luther’s exegetical text as a rhetorical performance, one does not necessarily negate the theological truth-claims, but one does inevitably shift the debate away from the terrain of theology. Indeed, my reading will highlight the degree to which Luther’s exegesis of Paul uses Scripture as a point of departure for addressing wider social tensions in early sixteenth-century Europe. That is, like any good rhetorician, with one eye on the received tradition and the other on his heterogeneous audience of readers, Luther sought social change through the primary work of reformulating the fundamental categories of existence.

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6 Because Luther was an Augustinian monk, and Augustine himself entered public life as a Quintillian-influenced professor of rhetoric, Luther’s rhetorical practices have gained some attention (to begin, see Oberman 1988, Vickers 1988, Matheson 1998), but most often in regards to his pastoral practice of employing epideictic discourse in his sermons.

7 According to F. Edward Cranz, ‘The firm tie between the literal sense of the Bible and its spiritual reality, threatened by humanism and nominalism, is reestablished by Luther as the literal and the anagogic senses coincide in faith’ (Cranz 1974: 102).

8 In epistolam S. Pauli ad galata Commentarius, in German translation, Vorlesung über den Galaterbrief. For quotations from this text, I will first cite the English translation, then the Weimar edition of Luther.
Finally, this move away from discussing the theological plausibility of Luther’s truth-claims will allow us to focus on the categorical infrastructure that forms the condition of possibility of the text’s truth-effects. In other words, through the lens of rhetoric we can examine how Luther attempts to persuade his audience regarding the truth of sacrifice. A rhetorical analysis provides a promising framework for this topic because, since Luther strove to empty most rituals of religious significance, I contend that ‘sacrifice’ itself thereby became solely a matter of rhetoric. That is, with Luther, sacrifice becomes a solely discursive effect, a consequence of the way that one talks about an act or event. I will further show how this led to Luther’s disenchantment of reason and the authorization of the pastor as a figure with new duties in the religious division of labor.

Sacrifice and the Critique of Works

Given the emergence of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric in the 1535 ‘Lectures on Galatians’, one could hypothesize that, as the Reformation took shape and proceeded, it became imperative to clarify the proper nature of Christian sacrifice. This concern with defining a proper sacrifice accords with the very nature of rhetoric, which purportedly traces its origins as a distinct practice of persuasion to the adjudication of competing property claims after the deposition of two Sicilian tyrants around 485 BC (Barthes 1988: 16). The transition from confusion and conflict to a resolution defined by the restoration of the proper and the just forms perhaps the fundamental motif of rhetorical practice. Just as, at its origin, rhetoric concerned itself with determining ‘proprietorship’ and the ‘proper’, we can see that Luther was bedeviled by the question: Of the competing factions in Christendom, which will become the proprietor of sacrifice?

To recapitulate, after Paul it was no longer necessary for a Christian to undergo circumcision, sacrifice at the Temple, or observe other ritual markers of Hebrew identity. What remained was an emphasis on holiness which, combined with the early exemplary martyrs, created a dual idiom of sacrifice: both an extreme form, to the point of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and a more ‘rational’ or mitigated form in the case of asceticism. It was in this context that Luther set forth key dichotomies, such as Law versus Gospel and active versus passive righteousness, that defined his critique of Works. Early in his 1535 ‘Lectures on Galatians’, Luther states that ‘Christian righteousness (Jusitiam christianam) … is heavenly and passive (coelestis et passiva). … We do not perform it; we ac-
cept it by faith, through which we ascend beyond all laws and works (ascendimus supra omnes leges et opera).’ (Luther 1963: 8 and 1911: 46.) Next, Luther presents a short conversion narrative wherein he personifies the devotee of active righteousness. After casting himself in the role of the sacrificial agent, Luther laments, ‘I crucified Christ daily in my monastic life (Ego in monachatu Christum quotidie crucifixi). … I observed chastity, poverty, and obedience. … Nevertheless, under the cover of this sanctity and confidence I was nursing incessant … blasphemy against God.’ (Luther 1963: 70 and 1911: 137.) As is typical of the genre of conversion narratives, Luther stages a dramatic inversion of values. As opposed to an Occamist reliance on the will, as would befit his education, to Luther the human will is completely corrupt as a result of the Fall,9 making the ritual observances that depend upon the agent’s contrite will worse than useless. Thus, a doctrine that accords a place for human agency in the work of salvation is not only misguided; by diverting hope from its rightful object, namely, God’s grace, it places one on the side of Satan.10 How, then, can sacrifice escape this critique and serve as the figure for the full actualization of Christian righteousness?

**Luther’s Polemical Context**

In addition to a choleric temperament that served him well in the theological disputes of his day, Luther’s deployment of the grammatical quantifier sola to isolate fides from leges in his translations of Paul entailed a remarkable combativeness towards any position that would combine his ‘solisms’11 with any other desiderata of righteousness. Among these, the positions of humanists and scholastic theologians particularly earned his scorn. Both camps looked to Greek and Hellenistic texts as resources for contemporary issues, with the scholastics incorporating Aristotelian developments

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9 Luther makes this abundantly clear in his debate with Erasmus (Erasmus 1969 and Luther 1969).
10 Soon thereafter one reads: ‘For Satan loves such saints and treats as his own beloved those who destroy their own bodies and souls, and who deprive themselves of all the blessings of the gifts of God. … [S]uch saints are the slaves of Satan. … But these men, far from acknowledging that their abominations, idolatries, and wicked acts of worship are sins, actually declare that they are a sacrifice pleasing to God (acceptissimum Deo sacrificium). (Luther 1963: 70 and 1911: 138.)
11 Rublack employed this term to describe Luther’s closed the set of authoritative resources: sola gratia, sola Christus, sola fides, sola scriptura (Rublack 1985: 31).
into the established neo-Platonic elements of Christianity, and humanists seeking to recover classical learning in a more holistic sense. Of course, there were many contentious issues separating Luther’s opponents. For example, in matters of scripture and practice the humanist rallying cry was ‘ad fontes!’ Because this return to the sources had the consequence of circumventing the continuity of Church tradition, the humanists thereby challenged scholastic, and especially Dominican, hegemony. Nonetheless, although there was much tension between humanists and scholastics, what they shared – and what damned them in Luther’s eyes – was an admiration for virtuous pagans and a central role for reason in the Christian life.

To Erasmus, for example, virtuous pagans like Aristotle and Cicero had, through the right use of reason, approximated many of the moral teachings of scripture. In his debate with Luther on the nature of the will, Erasmus asserted that even ‘in those who lack grace … reason was obscured but not extinguished’. Believing that the right use of reason can take one very far along the path towards righteousness, Erasmus could argue that, among the pagans,

... philosophers, without the light of faith, and without the assistance of Holy Scripture, drew from created things the knowledge of the everlasting power and divinity of God, and left many precepts concerning the good life, agreeing wholeheartedly with the teachings of the Gospels (Erasmus 1969: 49).

To Luther, such a statement did little more than insult the divinity of revelation by mingling it with the tepid moral admonitions and specious metaphysics of benighted pagans. However, this conflict concerning the status of pagan authors was itself but the effect of a more fundamental rift.

For both humanists and scholastics, humans were created by a benevolent creator, who endowed each person with the faculties necessary to attain some limited knowledge of the divine. As a result, revelation and reason enjoyed a complementary relation. According to Aquinas,

... it is clear that those things which are implanted in reason by nature, are most true, so much so that it is impossible to think them to be false. Nor is it lawful to deem false that which is held by faith, since it is so evidently confirmed by God. Seeing then that the false alone is opposed to the true, as evidently appears if we examine their definitions, it is impossible for the aforesaid truth or faith to be contrary to those principles which reason knows naturally. (Aquinas 1924: 14.)
Since it was ‘reason’ that authorized Erasmus’s admiration for Cicero and Aquinas’s admiration for Aristotle, Luther decried this extension of prestige beyond the Christian world. To Luther, by contrast, these pagan authors offer only a semblance of reason and morality that threatened to seduce the scholastic theologian and the humanist philologist away from scripture. Against his rivals, then, Luther wants to defend his solisms, and the way to do this is to topple reason from its place at the pinnacle of human faculties. Indeed, from this perspective Luther’s discourse here becomes the most explicitly rhetorical, for, taking Barthes’s definition of rhetoric as a ‘metalanguage … whose language-object [is] “discourse”’ (Barthes 1988: 12), Luther’s revalorization of reason challenges both the epistemological status of language itself and the social prestige which it commands.

Mediating Luther’s Dualisms

In arguing that faith alone constitutes Christian righteousness, like Paul before him, Luther has to undermine any collaborative or complementary relation between faith and reason. Actually, for a writer whose vision was dominated by such stark dualisms as those of the two kingdoms (the ‘Kingdom of Earth’ [regnum mundi] and the ‘Kingdom of Christ’ [regnum Christi]), as well as the oppositions between the Hebrew ‘Law’ and the Christian Gospel, dissolving this collaborative relationship between faith and reason constitutes but a single example of a more general strategy. Given Luther’s penchant for dichotomizing, then, instances where Luther mediates these dualisms have drawn much scrutiny. In this case, instead of a resolution or reconciliation, Luther’s mediation between the sacred and the profane underscores the costly violence of the operation. It is as if, by an exigency of Luther’s rhetoric, difference almost inevitably entails opposition, and opposition, ineradicable strife. With Luther, ‘sacrifice’ as a figure encapsulates this tendency.

12 Although aware of this danger, Luther did defend the pedagogical, as opposed to the spiritual, role of pagan literature. See Spitz 1996.
13 For a good example, see Heiko Oberman’s discussion of perhaps the most celebrated of these instances. In Luther’s Freedom of a Christian he describes the ‘third incomparable benefit of faith’ as ‘unit[ing] the soul with Christ, as a bride is united with her bridegroom. By this mystery, … Christ and the soul become one flesh.’ For a compelling discussion of this topic, see Oberman 1974: 23.
In his commentary on Paul’s assertion that Abraham’s faith was ‘reck-oned to him as righteousness’, Luther writes, ‘With these words Paul makes faith in God the supreme worship, the supreme allegiance, the supreme obedience, and the supreme sacrifice (Et Paulus hic ex fide in Deum summum cultum, summum obsequium, summan obedientiam et sacrificium facit ex fide in Deum)’ (Luther 1963: 226–7 and 1911: 360). The question immediately arises, how can faith, however understood, in any way resemble the ritual butchering of an animal or a public expenditure of some mitigated form of wealth? What is the cost, one might ask, of a ‘sacrifice of faith’? To dispense completely with the expenditure (one almost wants to say, ‘to negate the negation’) seems to nullify the very notion of ‘sacrifice’. Furthermore, how can the writer most trenchantly opposed to all works, the entire spectrum of mitigated sacrifices that had filtered into every aspect of medieval life, employ the very figure at the foundation of this edifice? Luther must empty sacrifice of its connotations of voluntarism, of a work that one undertakes, but how is one to divest an act of its agent, an action of its spontaneity?

The Problem of Praising Faith

As Ludwig Feuerbach argued in his reading of Luther, for the latter the operative distinction was not Creator versus the Created; rather it was God versus Man. Humans are defined not in relation to their own properties or faculties as created by God, but directly in relation to God – that is, as precisely not-God, and thus without any of God’s characteristics, such as true knowledge and benevolence. The emphasis thereby falls not on how a benevolent God equipped humans to know the divine, but on human limitation, ignorance and weakness. Theology therefore turns not on the available links between the human and the divine (the divine light of rea-
son, the sublimity and order of nature, etc.), but on the abyss that categorically divides them. In this way, Luther can construct an analogy so that faith and reason fall on either side of the fault line between salvation and damnation: as God is to man, and faith is to reason, so salvation is to damnation. Human reason now emerges both as the allegorical representative of agency and the author of all works. In short, the separation of sacrifice from agency and works has begun.

With human reason now singled out and abstracted from the complex of human faculties, Luther can move the primary locus of the agon between faith and reason into the soul of the aspiring believer. This move too is cast as a return to origins, but unlike the humanists, this *fontes* is not Greek but Jewish, for ‘[f]aith certainly had this struggle with reason (*Istam luctam profecto habuit fides cum ratione*) in Abraham’ (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362). With faith on God’s side, though, the struggle could seem unequal. Lest this psychic conflict lack pathos, Luther emphasizes repeatedly how especially onerous it is that a thing as low as reason challenges God, who should rightly be worshiped and esteemed by all. But there is more to this struggle than the challenge of an upstart faculty that does not know its place.

What is the nature of this antagonism between faith and reason? As we have seen, this enmity pivots upon Luther’s critique of works. Because works are nothing and grace is all, faith attributes all praise to God, but reason, having erroneously deduced the efficacy of works, can only praise itself. When Luther notes that ‘Paul makes such a boast of his calling that he despises all the others’, Luther shifts the value of this behavior in order to make a point about the proper attitude of worship and devotion: ‘this style of boasting is necessary. It has to do, not with the glory of Paul or with our glory but with the glory of God; and by it the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving is offered up to Him (*Ibi gloriatur deus, sacrificatur et sacrificavit*).

much more is man; the less man is, so much more is God. … The nullity of man is the presupposition of the reality of God. To affirm God is to negate man; to honor God is to scorn man; to praise God is to revile man. The glory of God rests only on the lowliness of man, divine blessedness only on human misery, divine wisdom only on human folly, divine power only on human weakness.’ (Feuerbach 1967: 33.)

17 In this passage, Luther speaks repeatedly of either the agent or faith slaughter- ing (*occidit*), slaying (*maclat, mactavit*, killing (*mortificant*), or sacrificing (*sacrificavit*) reason. In instances like this, the most charged religious term among the group lends its sacramental overtones to the other more quotidian terms.
ficium laudis et gratitudinis.’ (Luther 1963: 17 and 1911: 57.) The continuity between true theology and sacrificial offerings relies not upon the material efficacy of the rite in coercing a divine response, but wholly upon the interpretation of sacrifice as a sign (and only a sign) of a deferential and worshipful attitude. Here is the key to Luther’s construction of a sacrifice that surpasses the critique of works: by means of a sacrifice that is simultaneously the destruction of reason and the manifestation of faith, this operation consists entirely of a shift in perspective, a reconceptualization. Luther’s sense of the impiety of reason, as well as the sacrifice of faith, both hinge upon the rhetorical work of correctly defining one’s concept of ‘the praiseworthy’.

How, then, does Luther walk the tightrope between seizing proprietorship of ‘true Christian sacrifice’ and resurrecting it as just one more false work? This is an especially acute problem here, for the revalorization of received values courts the danger of starting a process that one cannot stop. How are his readers to avoid praising faith for its sacrifice of reason? Would sacrifice then become a valiant and praiseworthy ‘work’ of faith? Because sacrifice involves such a violent presentation of agency, how can this rhetoric avoid a too-literal reading that takes the act of faith’s sacrifice in the active sense? It might be that all metaphorical depictions of ‘faith’ materialize it too much. That is, once moving beyond a quasi-mystical adumbration of one’s relation to the divine, we always run the same risk of transforming faith defined as non-work and non-knowledge into a false reification. Does Luther’s conception of the ‘sacrifice of faith’ do this as well, but simply brings this problem more clearly to the surface?

Despite these dangers, the flexibility of Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric allows him to tread this fine line, primarily because of a key innovation: instead of depicting sacrifice as an act that one could actively pursue or passively undergo, Luther makes ‘reason’ the sacrificial object and thus splits the subject, making it simultaneously the sacrificial agent and object. By combining aspects of the martyr and the monk, the sacrificial idiom is no longer split between the passive sacrifice of martyrdom (passive because one should not actively seek martyrdom) and the active sacrifice of ascetic renunciation (active because construed as the willful sacrifice of the will). With the passive and the active aspects of sacrifice both resonating, Luther synthesizes the dual idioms of sacrifice – both an extreme form, to the point of self-annihilation in the case of martyrdom, and a more ‘rational’ or mitigated form in the case of asceticism. Thus, far from leaping out of the continuum of the Church, Luther rather closes the circle: through the detours of the Eucharist and ascetic substitutions like chastity, poverty,
and obedience, ‘sacrifice’ had become attenuated and individualized to the point that its two distinct idioms of violent self-annihilation and rational mitigation could meet in Luther’s rhetorical deployment, a culmination that was simultaneously invisible and absolute.

One consequence of this was to renounce any goal of a united or harmonious subject. Pitting one element of the psyche against another, Luther takes Abraham as his model and imports the spiritual battlefield into the subject. While also recognizable as a practice of monastic asceticism and a stage of conversion narratives, the difference here is that this conflict is not chronic or accidental, but essential and absolute. No longer do we see St Anthony or St Benedict tempted by the demonic passions and the bestial urges of the body; now, reason itself, that which was most human, that which distinguished us from the animal, becomes the (hitherto prized, henceforth despised) object of sacrifice. This is the consequence of the rhetorical work of redistributing phenomena into the categories of the ‘praiseworthy’ and the ‘contemptible’, the ‘sacrificeable’ and the ‘unsacrificeable’. Furthermore, because this rhetorical work is never finished, the sacrifice never ceases to take place, for as soon as faith emerges from its agon with reason and, flush with battle, makes the category error of praising its own triumph, one can know that this faith is only reason in disguise, and the battle must continue.

The Bestialization of Reason and the Monstrosity of Sophism

Though Luther depicts reason as a beast unworthy of praise and worthy of sacrifice, reason is not a merely natural beast, for to serve as the enemy of God it must appear unnatural, anti-natural, even monstrous. To achieve this, Luther attacks reason, not as a human faculty of overweening pride, but as a beast: ‘faith slaughters reason and kills the beast that the whole world and all the creatures cannot kill’ (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362). Going one step further and divesting reason completely of all its esteem, Luther insists that we must ‘exclude all works (exclusis omnibus operibus)’ in order to destroy ‘the heads of the beast called reason, which is the fountainhead of all evils (capitibus huius bestiae quae vocatur Ratio, quae est fons fontium omnium malorum)’ (Luther 1963: 230 and 1911: 365). By not only bestializing reason, but metaphorically ascribing to it characteristics of Hydra, the many-headed monster from Greek mythology, Luther thereby casts it into the category of ‘the sacrificeable’ and casts himself in the role of the hero Heracles. In this one figure, then, Luther traffics in anti-pagan
rhetoric to link, via reason, scholasticism, humanism and paganism along an axis of demonization. What is the nature, though, of the heroism that champions faith?

Between 1517 and 1531 there was a radical upsurge of ‘sacrifice’ in Luther’s text. Of course, one might expect two versions of scriptural exegesis so separated in time, with so many momentous events intervening, to differ in many ways, but one is justified in surmising that something clearly happened to Luther’s understanding of the status of ‘sacrifice’ in the Christian life. Perhaps the upsurge of martyrs in the course of the Reformation made it clear to Luther that this term had to be appropriated if his cause was to succeed.18 This and more could help to explain why there is a metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric in Luther’s text. For a rhetorical analysis, however, which must pay heed to the surface features of the text, in place of why the far more important question is how: how does this sacrificial rhetoric make its appearance?

To describe this appearance as a metastasis is already the beginning of an explanation, for ‘metastasis’ is both the rhetorical term for ‘rapid transition from one topic or figure to the next’, and the clinical term for the manifestation and spread of disease.19 This is appropriate here for this rhetoric appears throughout the text, almost as if, to counter the Hydra that grows evermore heads with each decapitation, sacrificial rhetoric spreads to combat the rebellion of reason as it appears. This life/death struggle takes place here because the process of exegesis closely resembles the rationalization of a text whose very spirit should take one beyond the limits of reason. Within the context of Luther’s theological presuppositions, the metastasis of sacrificial rhetoric emerges as an effect of the genre of scriptural exegesis.

18 According to Brad S. Gregory, ‘Luther and his contemporaries were living in remarkable times. Because Christ had told his followers to expect persecution for his sake (Matt. 24:9, Luke 21:12, John 15:18–20), and because this was the experience of Paul, Stephen, and other apostolic Christians, persecution and martyrdom confirmed Luther’s view that he had dared to proclaim the Gospel aright.’ (Gregory 1999: 149.)

Aside from the conditions of Luther’s textual production, if we take Luther’s rhetoric as first and foremost a social practice with social effects, as I propose, we can ask, if reason is one’s interior enemy, how does Luther typify reason’s worldly agents whom he saw springing up incessantly, like so many heretical heads of Hydra? In a passage where Luther decries the way that reason ‘regards [God’s] Word as heresy’, he condemns ‘the theology of all the sophists and of the sectarians, who measure the Word of God by reason (Theologia omnium Sophistarum et sectariorum qui metiuntur verbum Dei ratione)’ (Luther 1963: 228 and 1911: 362). How can one recognize these sophists and sectarians who so bedevil Luther’s project?

Just as sectarians sow dissension in the true church, sophists multiply truth-claims beyond the confines of the true. At least since Gorgias delivered his ‘Encomium of Helen’, which attempted to excuse her role in the Trojan War, the ‘sophist’ has been an orator who has questioned received ideas and communal values. Although Socrates provoked controversy as well, what distinguished the sophist in Plato’s eyes was that, instead of attempting to set conceptions aright, like Socrates, the sophist turns values upside down in order to make right appear wrong and the true appear false. Luther’s use of the term is no different. Faith and reason are not in contention because they are equally powerful, but because the individual erroneously understands reason to be superior. Reason itself is culpable for this misrecognition, but the sophist, as reason’s agent, also contributes to this false image of reason’s power. By alienating reason and then personifying it in the sophist, Luther makes it clear that, in the agon of faith and reason, it is the sophist who helps reason deceive us that it and its works are supreme and not God.

Against this rhetorical construction of the contemporary sophist, Luther presents a new and distinct function for faith’s agent, the pastor. Luther took as his model for this function Pauline parrhesia (traditionally translated as ‘free speech’ but cast by Foucault [2001] as ‘fearless speech’), which we have already encountered. Paul’s ‘Letter to the Galatians’ is known for the candid mode of discourse that eschews all pleasantries in pursuit of its dogmatic rectifications. Perhaps conscious of their social function, Luther is full of admiration for Paul’s opposition to the ‘boasting’ and ‘pharisaical pride and insolence’ of the ‘false apostles’. Luther applauds how

Paul boldly and with great parrhesia pits his apostolic authority, commends his calling, and defends his ministry. Although he does not do
this anywhere else, he refuses to yield to anyone, even to the apostles themselves, much less to any of their pupils. ... In addition, he pays no attention to the possible offense but says plainly in the text that he took it upon himself to reprove Peter himself, the prince of the apostles, who had seen Christ and had known Him intimately. (Luther 1963: 15 and 1911: 55–6.)

Modeled, then, on Paul’s author-function in his letter to the Galatians, Luther’s pastor is entrusted with specific rhetorical duties. Instead of the local representative of a distant institutional authority, the pastor replaces monk and friar to become a parrhesiast, a fearless speaker of truth. Empowered to espouse the Gospel freely and fearlessly, the pastor is entrusted with two duties: to shape his flock with epideictic flows of praise and blame, and to protect the feeble-minded from the sophists at the gate. Luther’s sacrificial rhetoric thus constructs a new configuration in the religious division of labor.

**Conclusion**

Luther’s deployment of sacrificial rhetoric was a discursive articulation with a long future, and not only among the clergy. Luther’s disenchanted view of reason still exerts great influence, for a reason devoted to earthly pursuits dovetailed well with broad changes in the constitution of the modern nation-state and the global consolidation of capitalist markets. In short, this disenchanted rationality, joined with a utilitarian notion of human nature, formed a hegemonic framework that today goes virtually uncontested.

Luther’s bestialization of reason ushers in the disenchantment of human rationality by divesting reason of its last divine remnant. With this achieved, *homo oeconomicus*, whose every faculty serves self-interest by definition, is near on the horizon. According to this model of human nature, we can only serve our passions, or, more neutrally, our self-interest, so that even apparent acts of altruism simply serve our desire for the social

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20 Though Max Weber’s authoritative voice casts the longest shadow in Religious Studies, the work of Nobel Prize winner Gary Becker has opened the way to an economic analysis of every non-economic form of behavior through his acolytes, such as Laurence R. Iannacone (1992). On this, see Becker’s Nobel-acceptance speech (1993) and the pivotal essay on time allocation (1964).
prestige or genetic success that such altruism brings. No longer a divine spark or the differentiating, criterial mark of humanity, reason becomes just one more instrument of the body. Luther thus articulates a position that would surface again in Hume’s critique of rationalism, Marx’s assault on bourgeois ideology, as well as the critiques of other hermeneuts of suspicion, such as Nietzsche and Freud.

Like these audacious skeptics, the sacrificial rhetorician utilizes the figure of ‘sacrifice’ as a means to intervene in the reproduction of received notions of self, society, worship and work. Luther’s transformation of the religious division of labor becomes evident in a culminating passage such as this:

Any Christian is a supreme pontiff, because, first, he offers and slaughters his reason and the mind of the flesh (offert et mactat suam rationem et sensum carnis), and, secondly, he attributes to God the glory of being righteous, truthful, patient, kind, and merciful. This is the continuous evening and morning sacrifice (sacrificium vespertinum et matutinum) in the New Testament. The evening sacrifice is to kill the reason, and the morning sacrifice is to glorify God (Vespertinum: mortificare rationem, Matutinum: glorificare Deum). Thus a Christian is involved, daily and perpetually, in this double sacrifice (duplici sacrificio) and in its practice. No one can adequately proclaim the value and the dignity of Christian sacrifice (sacrificii Christiani). (Luther 1963: 233 and 1911: 370.)

This passage well represents Luther’s intervention: first, define, then redefine the proper channels of a righteous economy of prestige. In one passage Luther brings the Pope to the level of Everyman, attacks the status of reason, and ends with an aporia, a rhetorical statement affirming the inadequacy of language in the face of divine dignity. Here, by means of a performative discursive act presented as a descriptive designation, Luther employs this rhetoric to make a strategic move in the development of the religious division of labor. Moving on from martyr, monk and friar, Luther constructs a new position in the field of discursive production, the pastor as parrhesiast. Luther thereby dedicates his discourse less to applying reason and employing logic than to stirring in his audience dynamic flows of affect, a response he conjures by framing his discourse as an ongoing battle with the irrepressible enemies of faith. By preserving the active role in the discourse for a ‘sacrificing faith’ and the passive role for a ‘sacrificed reason’, the two faculties, complementary in humanism and scholasticism, get redistributed into a hierarchy of values which both reflects and substantiates a new social order. Hence, Luther’s rhetoric works on the world,
producing effects in a society that will now have a place for a type of religious specialist who is neither monk nor friar but a fully embodied male whose worship does not consist of the physical asceticisms of monastic poverty or celibacy, but solely of faith’s sacrifice of reason.

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Proposals for a Historical Study of Reversal of Values in a Situation of Martial Conflict in Lanka

Generalities

The overall aim of this project is to focus on the general socio-economic and political conditions leading to martial conflict in relation to religious and secular values, value systems and ideologies in Īlam/Laṅkā, with special regard to their transformation. It deals with the extent of reversal and re-reversal in the course of the conflict and reconciliation respectively. These values are reversed through political decisions in a martial situation. It is true that martial conflicts arise over the distribution of resources and territory and not over theological issues. When, however, religion is placed in a martial context and related to the interests of one group, then even a sophisticated theology can take the form of an identity-bestowing ideology and adopt martial doctrines such as the concept of just war. Territorial and social definitions of citizenship are replaced by definitions relating to sacred boundaries. Christianity may turn into German Christianity or Serbian Christianity, Hinduism into Hindūtva and Buddhism into Siṅhalatva.¹ The overall martial context is finally symbolised in religion as an identity marker alongside sacralisation of language, history, and territory, etc. This martial context generates a religious surplus even within secular ideologies and leads both to a suspension and a reversal of values in established religions. The proponents are ideologues, including monks and priests, and politicians in the widest sense. They become warmongers in a martial situation, where they become ‘authentic’ and authoritative. In a non-war situation they are marginalised as extremists. During war, they

¹ Siṅhalatva is an emic term launched at the end of the 1990s by Nalin de Silva. It means ‘Sinhalaness’. It parallels, and is associated with, Hindūtva, ‘Hinduness’.
suspend fundamental human values, but they ‘suspend’ in the specifically German (Hegelian) sense of aufheben, meaning to elevate, to save and to call off. They do not annihilate these values, only to recall and retrieve them during truces and cease-fires, in situations of non-war, and diplomatic or ecumenical encounters, or during academic conferences.

In times of martial conflict, ideologues, as advocates of war, actualize ways of integrating violence into non-violent traditions. I refer to five ways of rationalizing violence, which have global parallels in martial societies. The first way is the well-known and popular reasoning about the holy ‘end’ that justifies the less holy ‘means’. It is so commonly found in martial politics that little attention is paid to it. This reasoning reverses, however crudely, both Gandhian and some Buddhist principles which require that the ‘means’ should be of the same quality as the ‘end’. From the perspectives of some idealistic Gandhians and some Buddhists it is not possible to achieve peace through war, but it is possible to achieve peace through non-violent means like satyagraha and / or satipaṭṭhāna. Siṅhalatva of the Lankans and the maṭṭavar and the martyr ideology of the Iḻavar, both being opposed to martial ideologies, preclude the possibility of achieving peace through war. They have had to suspend parts of their own culture.

The second line of reasoning points to an alleged connection between present and past ideal persons or events. An ideal past is invoked and connected with acts that in a situation of peace would be classified as immoral, such as the use of violence in political life. Both Iḻavar and Siṅhalatva followers are sophisticated in their use of this kind of justification of violence.

2 Satyagraha means ‘grasping for truth’ and refers to methods of civil disobedience.
3 Satipaṭṭhāna means ‘application of mindfulness’ and refers to a method of meditation within theravāda.
4 Lankans are those who promote a unitary or united state.
5 Maṭṭavar means ‘those who have maṭṭam (wrath), which is the same as ‘warrior’. The word is used by Veluppillai Pirāpākara.
6 Iḻavar are those who promote a separate or autonomous state of Tamil. Both Lankans and Iḻavar are emic concepts. Iḻavar (sing. Iḻavan) means ‘those from Iḻam’. Iḻam is Tamil and is one of the oldest toponyms for the island as a whole, older than laṅka. In the present context, however, Iḻam refers to Tamil-Iḻam.
The third way of rationalizing violence introduces a de-eschatologizing distinction between preliminary and final ‘ends’, which is different from the distinction between ‘means’ and ‘ends’ mentioned above. The distinction between preliminary and ultimate ‘ends’ implies that the final ‘end’, for example *nirvāṇa*, is suspended. This creates space and time for action.

A fourth way is to make a distinction between an elite and the common people; the latter are allegedly not capable of following the noble principles of the elite. They are ‘mundane’ and, therefore, the canonical literature allegedly recognizes that they engage in war. These preliminary ‘mundane’ aims may be political aims promoted during a period when the final aims are suspended for one social class. Political Buddhism, especially *Sīhala* meaning *Siylalatva*, precludes such reasoning which de-eschatologizes Buddhism as a soteriology and transforms Buddhist concepts into political stereotypes. These are used as tools in street fighting, in pogroms, and in political discourse in the Lankan Parliament.

A fifth and final method, which is rather unsophisticated, is historical revisionism. Its radical forms deny that violence has been used against ethnic minorities. Historical revisionism provides a *carte blanche* for the future use of violence. Recognition of these historical conflicts is, however, a necessary precondition for reconciliation.

**Specifics**

I propose three approaches to the study of the suspension of values and their reversals in a martial situation in Lanka.

1. I suggest a study of Buddhist militant political movements from the 1940s up to the Jātika Häla Urumaya (JHU), which are all based on an ethno-nationalist concept known as *Sīhala* developed by ideologues among both monks and laymen. The JHU established itself as a political party in the parliamentary elections of 2 April 2004 and gained 5.97 per cent of the votes and nine seats in Parliament under the name of *Jathika Hela Urumaya*, ‘National Sīhala Heritage’. The nine MPs are monks. It is a clear deviation from the *Vinaya* for a monk to take up a political post. *Sīhala* leaves no place for other groups to share power. A multi-ethnic society is rejected. Again, the strength of *Sīhala* lies in the fact that it has the support of the Constitution when defending the concept of a unitary state. I have elsewhere coined the expression *dharmacracy* to describe the concept of a totalitarian Buddhist state that *Sīhala* projects.
In the 1980s, I counted more than 100 organisations with Siyāhaltva as their ideology. It is possible to trace some of them back to the beginning of national independence in 1948. Some of them have changed their names, leaders have come and gone, their propaganda methods have changed from verbal abuse to physical violence, but the ultimate aim has remained the establishment of a unitary state, and the main method, to enlist Buddhist concepts to this end, has remained unchanged.

Siyāhaltva is a political ethno-nationalist ideology with a strong base also in the Sri Lanka Freedom Party, which includes a special identifiable section known as the siyāhaltva kavandaya, ‘the Siyāhaltva body’. However, Siyāhaltva is mostly spread anonymously among individuals and represented by Buddhist militants. Its strength is not evident merely from the number of public followers, but from the overt consent of members of other parties and, above all, from the silent consent of many anonymous persons in civil life.

The JHU reverses fundamental concepts of Buddhism, while developing other Buddhist concepts produced in the past. Buddhism is not a single entity. This statement is a truism to specialists in the history of religions, but not everyone is a specialist. In Lanka, the Pāli canon is not the only source of inspiration for thinking, speaking and acting in private and public life. The formation of the canon took about 800 years and it contains many different layers and opinions as a result. A second source of inspiration for Buddhists is the Vaśic, or Chronical tradition which developed in Lanka even into the colonial period. A third source is foreign traditions representing religions, political ideologies, evaluations of life and worldviews. Among these, we find racial and racist ideas which were applied to and internalised by Tamilś and Siyāhalas from the late nineteenth century onwards. The Vaśic sectarian Theravāda view, which was also anti-Mahāyāna, was reasserted by Siyāhaltva in the twentieth century, but combined with an additional new view, namely that Buddhism is a racial trait of Siyāhalas only. It merged sectarianism with racism and made it difficult for Tamilś to convert to Buddhism.

Siyāhaltva has two ideological pillars. One is the interpretation of dharmadīpa as an island of the dhamma for the Siyāhalas only. The concept of dharmadīpa, which originally referred to the dhamma of the Buddha as a lamp (dīpa), was re-interpreted as the island (dīpa) of the Siyāala Buddhist only (and the historical concept of eka chatta, ‘one umbrella’, anachronistically as a unitary state).

The other pillar is the formula ilam<śišāla, which is interpreted in an anti-Tamil way. It states that the old Tamil toponym ilam is not Tamil, but a
derivation through stem mutation from sīhḁ. Therefore, having no Tamil toponym, the Tamils have allegedly no founding tradition of early settlements, but are represented as latecomers to the island.

The basis for such a study of Si̥halatva and militant Buddhist societies already exists in a number of works, but an academic case study specifically of the JHU is still lacking. Let us call the project Si̥halatva: The Case of the Jātika Häla Urumaya (JHU).

The study should focus on the polemic of the JHU. Polemic is seen here not only as violence of language, but also as the language of and for polarisation and violence. This language is part of a martial context in historical dynastic/territorial conflicts or present ethnic/territorial conflicts in South Asia and elsewhere. A study of religious disputes per se is not envisaged. Polemic is not a simple dispute. Polemic is a symbolic expression of a demarcation of one’s territory, of a rejection of co-operation, of a wish to cleanse, but also of a wish to defend the rights of a dominated group against a dominating group. Religious polemic may focus on the adversary’s soteriology, theology, moral system or rituals, but implies something else, which is determined by the context. Hindūtva and Si̥halatva polemic not only pinpoint minorities’ ‘inimical’ doctrines and old injustices from the colonial period, but also, and mainly, religious pluralism or secularism.

2. I suggest a second study called For a Contested Past. Divided Memories among Lankans and Ijavar. In divided countries like the former West Germany and East Germany, North Korea and South Korea, Turkey and Kurdistan, Israel and Palestine, etc., intellectuals even construct and consciously uphold a divided memory of the past. They alternate between memory and history and even blend the two to finally present memory as history. The civil war has also affected historical writing on both the Ijavar and the Lankan side. The same events from the past are remembered in epigraphy, in social, political, economic, art and religious history in incompatible ways, and in accordance with the authors’ own stipulated and contradictory political aims.

Schoolbooks and academic studies of history are particularly good sources for analysing principles that guide the writing of normative presentations about the past. These guiding principles reflect Si̥hala and Tamil cultural interests. Archaeology, epigraphy, religious studies, and even linguistics are divided and thus produce antagonistic memories about the past. Romila Thapar’s contestation of history written by Hindūtva activists and Kumari Jayawardhana’s contestation of history written
by Sinhala-Buddhist ethno-nationalists were a good start, followed by R. A. L. H. Gunawardena’s attempts, but the Lankan analysists’ works were biased. Tamil ideological writings on history were considered only marginally. Moreover, much more contemporary material about the past has now been produced, not only schoolbooks, but also academic monographs, which can be used as sources for a study of a divided memory.

The väddō is a special group whose memory of the past is quite different from that of the Siṁhala and Tamil establishment. Another special group are the Muslims, whose memory differs from that of the establishment.

One approach would be to make a selection of key events and study how they appear in the writings of Tamil and Siṁhala intellectuals. The description of past events by scholars and autodidacts is explicitly or implicitly dominated by the fundamental question: who was first? One such retrieved event is the pre-colonial dynastic and territorial martial invasion in Lanka. It resulted in martial anti-Tamil interpretations by militant Buddhists. This event remains in the collective memory today.

Another outcome of a divided memory is the use of historical revisionism; it either denies or reinterprets embarrassing historical facts.

3. I finally suggest a study called The Concept of Tiyaḵam among Īlavar. Tiyaḵam is Tamilised Sanskrit and means ‘abandonment’, here ‘abandonment (of life)’. It refers to the concept of martyrdom of the LTTE that is supported by Īlavar. It reverses a fundamental view of life as ultimate value. As a principle the concept orders: ‘die to win (Taṁṭiḷḷam)’. Life is a weapon (uyir äßutam) to be used to slay the Sri Lankan Armed Forces (SLAF). A similar reversing principle is found globally in many martyrologies, in crusading Christianity, in Maccabean Judaism, in Jihadistic Islam, in martial Sikhism, in Hindu epic heroic traditions, in aggressive nationalist and secular ideologies, etc., but the extent of its implementation in the LTTE is surprising. The concept of tiyaḵam was adopted in the 1980s by the māvīrara paśumārai, the ‘office of the great heroes’, of the LTTE, and was developed by thinkers, not least by Catholic thinkers within the LTTE. A Martyrs’ or Heroes’ day (māvīrara naṇa) is celebrated annually on November 27 also among Īlavar in exile. The day reminds them of the sacrifices that have been and will have to be made for the attainment of Taṁṭiḷḷam. The sources for a study of the concept of tiyaḵam are mostly in Tamil and form a large and varied corpus; there are written texts, videos, CDs, and DVDs. LTTE martyrology is one of the counter-ideologies to Siṁhalaṭva. It is also influenced by other national and transnational ideologies and represents
a break with traditional Tamil values in several respects. The martial feminism of female fighters within the LTTE deserves special attention.

Strategies

How should one study the process of reversal and re-reversal of values by religionists and ideologues in the conflicts in Lanka?

1. Typological comparison. The project will analyse cases of reversals of values in martial conflicts in Europe, South Asia, and Southeast Asia. A typology of the conflicts themselves will also be included. The case of Lanka represents a territorial conflict with ethnic overtones. One important task will be to relate types of reversals of values to types of conflicts.

2. Historical comparison. The project includes historians who will study:

   - the transformation of a peaceful conflict into a violent one,
   - the material causes of the conflict, the development of concepts of identity and its dimensions,
   - long-term trends from secularism and modernisation to religion and (seemingly) traditional values,
   - the change in principal actors as part of increasing mobilisation and democratisation of a population, and
   - the effects of modernisation such as Westernisation and its failure.

The perspective should be extended by including historical and semantic analyses of essential and emic concepts and their interpretation in a religious, political, and socio-historical context. The application of a historical approach to present conflicts should be considered indispensable. This historical study precludes linguistic competence in Tamil and Sinhala.

3. Regional Comparison. The rise of both Hindūtva and Sinhala-tva take place in the same region of South Asia. It would be useful to also include other regions, such as Europe during the 1930–40s, where the reversal of values can be studied based on extensive materials.
Works by Peter Schalk Related to the Proposals Above

1. Śāhalatva


2002 The return of King Kanakacuriyan. In: Dagmar Hellman-Rajanayagam


### 2. Divided Memories in a Contest for the Past


### 3. The Concept of tiyākam


TITTI SCHMIDT

Conflicts and Violence as Structuring Metaphors of the Santo Daime, a Religious and Environmental Movement in the Brazilian Amazon

In this article I will show how conflicts and violence have influenced the development of Santo Daime, a religious and environmental movement in the Brazilian Amazon. By discussing three interrelated aspects (1) Violence and conflict in Santo Daime history; (2) Ideas about good and bad spirits; and (3) Santo Daime environmentalism, I will show the relatedness between the members’ experiences of conflicts and violence in their history as rubber tappers and conflicts and violence as structuring metaphors in their daily ritual practices.

Santo Daime was founded in the early 1930s in Rio Branco, the state capital of Acre (located in the southwestern corner of the Brazilian Amazon) by Irineu Serra, a black man originally from Northeastern Brazil who came down to the area to work as a rubber tapper during the years of the rubber boom between 1850 and 1920. While working in the Amazonian forests, Irineu Serra came into contact with ayahuasca, a psychoactive brew traditionally used by local Amerindian and caboclo1 shamans. Eventually his encounter with this brew resulted in the development of a new religion based on the psychoactive experiences that he had received when drinking the brew.

Present members claim that this brew, which they call daime, has the capacity to ‘open up’ people and make them receptive to the spiritual world. According to the members, this world is even more real than that of everyday life, which they refer to as ‘the world of illusion’ (o mundo da ilusão). Further, daime is said to have an extraordinary power to heal various kinds of illnesses, be they illnesses which are common in the region, like malaria, hepatitis, and asthma, or more deadly diseases like AIDS and cancer.

1 Caboclos are the descendants of a mixed population of Amerindians, Europeans and Africans, living along the waterways of the Amazon River.
Members drink the brew during highly structured, almost military style rituals in which they dance (or sit down quietly to concentrate) for up to 8 to 10 hours. During such events they also sing from a large body of Santo Daime hymns, which play a crucial role as the content of these hymns is said to direct participants during the peak moment of the ritual experience which is called the *miração*. *Miração* is a word derived from the Portuguese verb *mirar* (to see) and *ação* (action). Although it is possible to speak of this experience in terms of a kind of vision, members claim that the *miração* is far from any form of ‘static seeing’. Rather, it is said to be an interactive experience during which people interact with what they are seeing. As an old woman said: ‘We do not “see” things, we take part in what we see.’

What people experience during the *miração* is said to have a tremendous effect on their self-understanding. People often claim that the *miração* has brought about transformative insights, changing their lives and the way they relate to other human beings and to the world at large. Further, the *miração* is also said to contribute to an ‘environmental awakening’, that is, an enhanced interest in caring for nature.

Although unique, Santo Daime religion is often described as a syncretic religion. This is so because Santo Daime members creatively mix ideas and practices from Amerindian spiritual traditions with those of Catholicism, Brazilian Spiritism, and Afro-Brazilian traditions. In recent years, so-called New Age ideas and practices and those of the environmental movement have also had a major impact on Santo Daime religion.

The first Santo Daime members were caboclo, the majority of whom had worked in the rubber industry. In the 1970s young people (many of them part of the so-called ‘Hippie Movement’) from Brazilian and Latin American cities also began to join the movement. Later when some of these youths returned to their home towns they began to set up affiliated Santo Daime centres. The first urban centre was established in the early 1980s in Rio de Janeiro and has been followed by several more affiliated Santo Daime centres all over Brazil.2

In the mid 1980s a decision was taken to move the mother community from Rio Branco into the interior of the Amazonian rainforest. With the establishment of a new village along the Mapiá River (an affluent of the Purús River, which in its turn is a tributary to the Amazon River), a new phase of the movement’s development began. More people steadily joined the movement, so that from 150 members in the mid-1980s, the movement

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2 In 2000, the total number of national Santo Daime centres in Brazil was 46.
has today, only in Brazil, well over 10,000 members. Around 800 of these live in the present mother community called Céu do Mapiá (Heaven of Mapiá). Besides the permanent residents (consisting of 70% caboclos and 30% former urban dwellers), the village is also regularly visited by both members and non-members whose main purpose for visiting the community is that they believe that daime will be able to cure them from whatever kind of illness they are suffering from.

During the 1990s Santo Daime began to expand outside Brazil, and today there are centres all over Europe (in the Netherlands, Spain, Portugal, Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Italy, France, and Great Britain). Centres have also been set up in Japan, Argentina, and the United States, including Hawaii.

Hand in hand with this geographical expansion, there has also been an expansion into new ideological arenas. What was once a small local, religious movement has, during the last twenty years, turned into an environmental movement with global aspirations. An important step in this direction was the initiative taken by some of the urban members in forming a protected environmental area around Céu do Mapiá, a so-called National Forest. In 1988 the National Forest of Purús was created (256,000 hectares) and the following year, the National Forest of Mapiá-Inauini (311,000 hectares). In recent years, the members have worked hard to turn Céu do Mapiá into an ecovillage that could serve as a model community, showing both other local people and government representatives that it is possible to live a sustainable life within Amazonian rainforest without destroying the nature.

The focus on environmentalism, which has intensified further during the last years, has resulted in a variety of different eco-social projects within the village. In 2002, for example, there were more than 40 ongoing projects, aiming at forest preservation, environmental education, and the production of alternative forest medicine and food, including dried fruit processing. The majority of these projects are funded by non-religious agencies from all over the world, although the villagers have also benefited from donations from affiliated Santo Daime centres.

In order to understand the present development of the Santo Daime movement, I argue that we have to take a closer look at the kind of violence and conflict that has dominated the history of the caboclos, the majority of whom were rubber tappers in a society dominated by unequal and often brutal socioeconomic conditions. By exploring members’ perception of violence and conflict, I will show how these have been used as structuring metaphors in Santo Daime ritual. I will also show how these perceptions
have been crucial in shaping the way members talk about and deal with spirits and how they regard themselves as caboclo warriors (*caboclo guerreiros*) who are in the front line of a spiritual battle (*batalha*) against evil, which is today also formulated in terms of a struggle against the global destruction of the environment. I will also demonstrate how the threat of conflict and violence has contributed to the development of a particular kind of Santo Daime morality, which today lies at the heart of the members’ environmental commitment.

**Illness and Structural Violence**

Suffering, misery, and illness among the world’s poor have often been related to the prevalence of so called ‘structural violence’ (Farmer 2003, Scheper-Hughes 1992). The term ‘structural violence’ is however not that easily defined. When social scientists use it they seem to include everything from overt physical violence (such as wars, torture, and killings) to more ‘veiled’ forms of violence (as when asymmetrical power relations generate extreme poverty and social and economical conditions that threaten to devastate the lives of the poor).

Regardless of how we define the term, it is clear that the local Amazonian population (be they Amerindians or caboclos) have been victims of structural violence for a long time. Amazonia’s violent and cruel colonial past which resulted in the enslavement and extermination of millions of Amerindians, is well-known to the general public. However, even after the colonial period, local Amazonians have been brutally exploited, especially during the rubber boom and the years after it. It would be accurate to refer to these people as ‘victims’ (because many of them were really victims of larger and more powerful economical and political forces), but this is far from the whole picture. More than being merely passive victims, the local Amazonian people have also done their best to accommodate, respond, and oppose the forces causing affliction, suffering, and illness.

The emergence of a particular kind of healing tradition based on the use of ayahuasca in treating illnesses may be viewed as one such response. Peter Gow, writing about ayahuasca shamanism in the Amazon region, has even suggested that the use of ayahuasca in healing contexts is not such an ancient Amerindian tradition as social scientists normally think (Gow 1994). Instead, he claims that it probably has a much more recent origin and he locates the development of ayahuasca shamanism in the early missionary stations where he claims it evolved as a way to deal with the
epidemic illnesses that plagued the local population during the colonial period. When these missions later became the embryo of towns during the rubber era, the practice of ayahuasca shamanism became even more intensified. Later, the violent and exploitative rubber industry put an enormous stress on the local population, and this in turn seems to have led to a further increase in the use of ayahuasca in healing contexts. In this vein, Gow argues that ayahuasca shamanism is above all a tradition that developed in ‘urban’ contexts, and it was only later that it was exported from the towns to more isolated indigenous Amerindians (1994: 91). If his claim is accurate, this would explain why ayahuasca shamanism is absent among ‘those few indigenous peoples who were buffered from the processes of colonial transformation caused by the spread of the rubber industry in the region’ (Gow 1994: 91). If ayahuasca shamanism is related to the development of a caboclo culture and society, it explains some seemingly contradictory statements often made by local Amazonians. For example, the common claim among Amerindians that caboclo/mestizo shamans are more powerful than their own native shamans, as well as similar statements made by cabocos/mestizos, that ayahuasca shamanism was invented by rubber tappers (Gow 1994: 97; Luna 1986: 31; MacRae 1992).

Although Gow’s challenging interpretation is quite difficult to substantiate primarily due to a lack of historical evidence, nevertheless, it does contain the interesting implication that the development of ayahuasca shamanism may be located within the context of the formation of the caboclo culture and society. If ayahuasca shamanism is viewed as having evolved as a response to the lived experience of illness and psychological stress that accompanied the violent colonial transformation of the indigenous population of Amazonia, it opens up a more complex and dynamic understanding of the healing tradition, based on the use of ayahuasca, that appeared in a more organised ‘movement’ form in the early 1930s.

The years following the rubber boom were extremely hard on the rubber tappers because they were forced to seek new means of subsistence. When the price of Brazilian rubber fell drastically in the 1920s (it was undermined by higher yielding rubber plantations in Southeast Asia), the once flourishing Brazilian rubber industry soon collapsed.

Even though some of the rubber tappers managed to stay on in the forests, making a living on scarce resources, relying upon swidden cultivation, hunting, and fishing, many of them were more or less forced to emigrate to the cities. This was especially so with the many Northeasterners who had just recently arrived in the region to work as rubber tappers, escaping the starvation and the hardships that followed the two big droughts
in the Northeast in 1877 and 1889. Not well-equipped for surviving in the Amazon forest and without any means of generating an income, many of these Northeasters had no other option than to seek new means of survival in the cities. However, working opportunities in the town were far from abundant and many of them had to survive on subsistence farming in and around the towns.

This was also the fate of Irineu Serra, the first leader of the Santo Daime movement. However, unlike many of his compatriots, Irineu Serra soon got a job in the army and for three years he worked in the forests for the Federal Government, demarcating the borders of Acre which established the frontier between Brazil, Bolivia and Peru (Fróes 1986: 32).

While working in the forests close to the Peruvian boarder, Irineu Serra learned about ayahuasca. After passing through an initiation period, a female spirit appeared in one of his visions, convincing him that he had a special mission and that he was about to receive spiritual messages in the form of hymns. The spirit, whom he later identified as both the Queen of the Forest and Virgin Mary, also encouraged him to rename ayahuasca and call it daime, a name stemming from the Portuguese verb dar, to give, which refers to the spiritual invocations that should be used when drinking the brew, such as Dai-me Amor, Dai-me Luz, Dai-me Força (Give me Love, Give me Light, Give me Strength). The spirit also taught him that daime had a special healing power and that the brew contained a teaching spirit (um professor) which could reveal secrets about the spiritual world. In 1940 Mestre Irineu (as his members later began to call him) established his first Santo Daime centre in the town of Rio Branco, a centre that soon attracted the attention of the local people, many of whom were poor and unable to pay for pharmaceuticals and clinical treatments.

In the light of Mestre Irineu’s background in the military, it is perhaps not a coincidence that the rituals that he developed were highly ordered events, characterised by an almost military strictness. Apart from the drinking of daime, which plays a crucial role, the singing of hymns and the dancing in sex- and age-divided groups are also important characteristics of the Santo Daime rituals. As a sign of commitment the followers use the farda, a special kind of ritual dress. Even the very term farda is used in mili-

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3 During some rituals the members use the ‘blue dress’ (farda azul). For females (women and young girls), this involves navy blue skirts, white blouses, stockings, and shoes, and a navy blue tie. For males (men and young boys), navy blue pants, white shirts, stockings, navy blue or black shoes, and a black tie. The farda azul resembles the school uniform worn by children in Brazilian governmental schools.
tary contexts, denoting military dress. Due to the custom of using the *farda*, members often refer to themselves as *fardados* (i.e. dressed members).

Another characteristic of Santo Daime ritual is the use of the *caravaca* cross, placed on a star-formed table at the centre of the ritual room. This cross of two horizontal arms symbolises the second coming of Jesus Christ to earth, which according to the Santo Daime members has arrived for the second time in the body of Mestre Irineu.

Like Mestre Irineu, many of his first followers had experienced both the boom and the hard years following the decline of the rubber industry. The biography of the movement’s second main leader, Sebastião Mota de Melo, well represents this common trajectory of rubber tappers in southwestern Amazonia. Born in 1920, in the midst of the collapsing Brazilian rubber market, along a small tributary to the Juruá River (an affluent of the Amazon River, located to the west of the Purús River), Sebastião had early in life to learn how to make a living from scarce resources.

Unlike many others, Sebastião and his family did not abandon the forest when the rubber market collapsed in the 1920s. Instead, they stayed on and when Sebastião was in his twenties, the Brazilian rubber industry experienced a brief recovery as a result of the Second World War. Fearing that the war would cut off their access to the rubber markets in Southeast Asia, the United States and their allies turned to Brazil, and once again Brazilian rubber became a valuable export product. However, the local people were unable to meet this new demand and more manpower was needed. As had been the case during the previous boom, the Brazilian government solved the problem by recruiting thousands of people from the poor and drought stricken Northeast. This second wave of Northeastern immigrants has commonly been referred to as the ‘rubber soldiers’ (*soldados do borracha*), because many of them had to choose between either going to war or going to the Amazon.

When the Second World War ended, the Southeast Asian markets reopened and the Brazilian market collapsed once again. As a result the economic situation of the rural Amazonians worsened and people like Sebastião and his family, who had earlier managed to stay on in the for-

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During other rituals the members use the ‘white dress’ (*farda branca*). Females dress in white skirts, white blouses, white stockings, and white shoes. In addition, females dress may include small green skirts over the white skirts, green ribbons over the shoulders, and colourful bands hanging from the shoulder. Besides this they also wear small silver crowns on their heads. Males dress in white suits, white trousers, white stockings, white shoes, and a navy blue tie.
ests, now also abandoned their homes in the forests and migrated to urban areas. In 1958 Sebastião, his wife and their children, left Juruá for the first time in their lives and headed down to the town of Rio Branco in Acre.

Sebastião, who for some years had suffered from what he thought was an incurable liver disease, eventually found his way to Mestre Irineu, now a famous and well-respected healer in Rio Branco. After being cured by daime, Sebastião decided to become one of Mestre Irineu’s followers and after some years he began to receive his own hymns which encouraged him to start a Santo Daime centre of his own. With permission from Mestre Irineu, Sebastião made his centre at Colônia Cinco Mil, some kilometres outside Rio Branco, where he lived with his family. With the death of Mestre Irineu in 1974, the Santo Daime movement was left without leader. However, there were several candidates for the succession, all of whom claimed to have been divinely appointed, and among these was Sebastião. Subsequent internal disputes eventually resulted in Sebastião’s group breaking away from the original centre of Mestre Irineu.¹

The Colônia Cinco Mil, the Santo Daime centre of Padrinho Sebastião (as his followers now called him), was during this period a community organised on ‘relatively egalitarian terms, with a community warehouse run under a type of primitive Christianity’ (Polari de Alverga 1998). A special characteristic, which made this community strikingly different from the other ayahuasca-using centres, was Padrinho Sebastião’s openness towards non-local people. Instead of fearing the arrival of new people, and instead of condemning urban ‘hippie’ youths, Padrinho Sebastião welcomed them. He even initiated his own study of the drugs used by the youngsters, the marijuana plant and the mushroom, in order to see for himself if any of these plants could contribute to spiritual enlightenment. After some time, he concluded that marijuana was a beneficial plant, capable of smoothing the visionary experience received when drinking daime, while the mushrooms had too many negative side-effects.

¹ Later several more centres broke away from Mestre Irineu’s original centre. Besides these centres, that are, so to speak, the offspring of the original centre, there are also other ayahuasca-using groups in the area. The two most important are the Barquinha (the Little Boat), created by a former follower of Mestre Irineu in 1947, and the UDV, União do Vegetal, an autonomous movement started by a rubber tapper in the state of Rondônia in 1961. The Barquinha is today confined to the area in and around Rio Branco (nowadays consisting of various centres that have broken away from the original centre). The UDV has moved its headquarters to Brasília and is no more of an urban middle-class intellectual movement and has several branches in Brazil.
The attraction of new members to the Santo Daime movement can be seen as part of a more general trend occurring in Brazil during the 1970s. The growth of new religious movements in Brazil has often been explained in terms of being an outlet for young, politically and socially motivated Brazilians who were unable to protest in any other ways against the military government that ruled the country between 1964 and 1985 (Guha 2000). Even though such an explanation might help us to understand why young urban people wanted to join a communitarian and religious experiment such as the one led by Padrinho Sebastião, it does not explain the movement’s attraction to local caboclos.

In order to understand the caboclos’ reason for joining the movement, we have to consider the transformation of the region that started during the 1960s and became more profound in the years that followed. With the initiation of ambitious state-sponsored projects such as the Transamazon Highway and the huge colonising programmes for landless Brazilians, new actors poured into the region. These included new settlers, stockbreeders, national and foreign industrial firms, and gold prospectors, all of whom contributed to the rapid and often devastating transformation of the Amazon area. Uncontrolled felling of forests (in order to create huge grazing areas for cattle and monocultures) radically transformed large parts of the Amazonian landscape, leading to the destruction of forests and biodiversity.

This rapid and exploitative transformation had, however, not only severe ecological consequences but social costs as well. Suffering and misery among the local Amazonian population was further intensified with the many land conflicts between, on the one hand, the local population (Amerindians, caboclos, and rubber tappers) and, on the other hand, new immigrants (settlers, cattle ranchers, industrial companies). This was an unfair competition in which the strong and wealthier actors had the upper hand over the economically and politically weaker locals. During the 1970s and 1980s violence connected to land issues intensified, reaching its peak with the murder of Chico Mendes in 1988, the famous Amazonian ecologist and leader of the rubber tapper union.

I argue that it is only by taking this larger socio-political context into account (often the cause of a kind of structural violence against the caboclos)

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5 Paul E. Little (1997: 5) describes Amazonia as a perennial frontier and claims that the frontier process in Amazonia has never been characterised by a massive immigration restricted to one period. Instead it is a continual process, which has taken place in diverse parts of Amazonia.
that we can understand the caboclos’ reasons for joining a movement such as Santo Daime. Although many of them probably turned to the Padrinho Sebastião’s community because they hoped that daime would cure their illnesses, there were also those who stayed on and became permanent members. For some of them, a community such as that of Padrinho Sebastião, where people lived and cultivated the land together, must have appeared as a safe alternative in comparison with the option of living alone on small pieces of land that at any time could be invaded by wealthier and often armed land prospectors. Such an explanation also enables us to understand why those who joined the movement during the 1970s did not hesitate to contribute to the common good of the movement from their own resources, be these sums of money received from selling properties or other kinds of possessions.

The Coming of Tranca Rua

Up to the end of 1970s, the community of Padrinho Sebastião was a rather peaceful place with around 150 members who owned and worked the land together, trying their best to avoid confrontations with wealthier landowners. But the land was hard to cultivate and the members had to devote a lot of time to it. With the steadily increasing prices of food and goods they could not afford to buy tractors and other equipment needed to improve cultivation (Fróes 1986: 61).

Although situated some distance away from the main city, Colônia Cinco Mil was far from being secluded from the outside world. Sick people regularly visited the community, coming from Rio Branco and other places. The openness towards new groups of people (particularly the hippie youths mentioned above) also made the police attentive to the doings of the members and in 1981 the federal police entered Colônia Cinco Mil with the aim of destroying the members’ marijuana cultivation (MacRae 1992: 74).

It was at this time, in the midst of these events, that Sebastião started to receive spiritual messages urging him to leave the area and move the community further into the Amazonian rainforest. It is possible to interpret this move of the mother community as a way for members to avoid the kinds of conflicts they had had with the police and wealthier landowners.

6 The story of Tranca Rua is a story familiar to many Santo Daime members. In what follows, I try to remain close to the story as it has been recorded by another member, Alex Polari de Alverga (1992: 123–32).
However, if we take a closer look at a special event leading up to the move of the mother community, we will get a slightly different picture of what happened. Together with the spiritual messages that urged Padrinho Sebastião to leave the area, Padrinho also received messages that warned him about the coming of difficulties. In one *miração* (daime experience), he found himself walking along a road when he suddenly realised that a horseman dressed in black was following him. For every step Padrinho took, the horseman got closer and at the end of the road the two met. In another *miração*, he met a *saci*, a small one-legged black coloured spirit smoking a pipe. The spirit leaned against him with all his force and threatened Padrinho, saying that he would make him run away from the Santo Daime doctrine. In yet another *miração*, Padrinho encountered a huge black man who predicted that he would undergo a test and promised that if he managed to pass it, he would develop further in spiritual knowledge. In order to prepare for whatever was to come, Padrinho continued with more fervour than ever to perfect the rituals.

One day a stranger arrived in Colônia Cinco Mil. He was a black man who came originally from Ceará in Northeastern Brazil, and Padrinho immediately recognised the man as the horseman whom he had met on the road in the *miração*. He also sensed that this man was a medium skilled in sorcery. Later Padrinho explained to his followers that the man from Ceará had showed up in the community because he felt attracted to the light of daime, a light that he at the same time felt jealous of and wanted to put out.

The man from Ceará was a very talkative person and he explained that he had come in order to remove all the falsehood that he knew was present among Padrinho’s followers. Padrinho, who took pride in accepting all kinds of people, invited the man to join the rituals. Although accepting the invitation, the man had no intention of drinking daime because he said that his chief spirit (called Tranca Rua by members) did not allow him to do so.

Soon the man began to conduct his own rituals within the community, some lasting several days. Padrinho did not stop him because, upon the man’s arrival, he had received another spiritual message saying that he should let the man act freely within the community for five months. So Padrinho began to observe him without interfering, an act that Padrinho considered to be a form of charity towards both the man and the spirits.

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7 *Saci* or *saci-pererê* is a mischiveous figure in Brazilian folklore.
that the man was believed to have brought along with him. By allowing them all to stay, Padrinho hoped that they would finally become attracted to daime. More than anything else he hoped that Tranca Rua, the chief spirit, who obviously acted as a kind of guide to the man, was finally to submit and stop working on the side of evil.

After some months the man from Ceará said that some of his spirits wanted to drink daime, but that this request did not concern Tranca Rua, who still refused. After taking daime, the spirits began to reveal many unpleasant things that were going on in the community. This stirred up emotions among members. Even though the spirits actually were revealing the truth, as Padrinho later explained to his followers, the spirits also found pleasure in making people sad, frustrated, suspicious, and even afraid of one another.

The encounter between Padrinho and Tranca Rua was formulated in terms of a struggle between the good and the evil. When the five months had passed, the man from Ceará finally asked for daime to drink, something that was interpreted as a defeat by members. Twenty minutes after having taken daime, the man began to ‘see’ (mirar), revelations that Tranca Rua (being within the body of the man) was forced to attend as well. In the middle of a miração, the man suddenly announced that he had seen enough. He left and three days later he was found dead. Padrinho Sebastião’s son (and the present leader of the movement), Padrinho Alfredo, later said that these three days were what was required in order to hand over and indoctrinate all the man’s spirits. Upon the death of the man, Tranca Rua was left without a body. As the spirit was still in need of one, he entered the body of Padrinho Sébastião who now was obliged to continue the healing work of Tranca Rua.

Soon after this incident Padrinho shifted the mother community from Rio Branco to the interior of Amazonas. The period that followed was extremely hard for both Padrinho and his followers. Not only did they encounter various difficulties in clearing the virgin forest to establish a new village and new areas for cultivation, but in the midst of all this Padrinho also became severely sick. According to the members, this was the result of his battle with Tranca Rua, who manifested himself forcefully in the body of Padrinho, making him among other things cough up balls of blood. After some time Padrinho stopped coughing, but according to Tranca Rua, this symptom would return as soon as there was disharmony among Padrinho’s followers. He also accused Padrinho’s followers of being ‘touchy’ and said that this would eventually kill both him and Padrinho.

In order to appease the spirit, members continued with rituals and the
singing hymns. Then one day, after having nearly killed Padrinho Sebastião, Tranca Rua said to Padrinho Alfredo (the son of Padrinho Sebastião) that he was ready to give up. ‘If you accept me as a brother, I will protect this “house” [meaning the spiritual house of Padrinho Sebastião]. The proof of this will be that the old one [Padrinho Sebastião] will regain his health.’ Padrinho Alfredo immediately answered that ‘if you give value to our remedies and to the daime, we will accept you as a brother’ (Polari de Alverga 1992: 130–1, my translation). After this Padrinho Sebastião regained his health and it is said that from this moment Tranca Rua turned into a spirit working for good instead of evil. In fact he is now even said to be the chief protective spirit of the Santo Daime movement.

The spiritual work that had been done in order for Padrinho Sebastião recover his health (and to put Tranca Rua on the path of daime) resulted in the formation of a new kind of ritual, Trabalho da Estrela (Star Work), dedicated to the healing of suffering spirits. The aim of this ritual is to bring light to suffering spirits, something that members claim can only be done through loving even the worst kinds of negative and violent beings.

This event also made members realise that people, like the man from Ceará, who from the beginning might appear to be destructive, in fact have an important and instrumental role when it comes to disciplining members. According to a man called Mário,

> These aparelhos [speaking about the body of those who receive spirits] that seem to work against us are in fact our judges. We should not fail to recognise their role. They are the ones who come to charge us. They are the ones who demand the bill and ask, Well! But your life is holy? Then why are you afraid? (Polari de Alverga 1992: 132, my translation.)

A similar way of reasoning is also present today when people talk about the ‘spreading of bad news’ (correio da má notícia), that is, people who spread bad news about the movement and its members. According to members, by ‘spreading bad news’ people are in fact enhancing the power of troublesome and malevolent spirits, something that eventually will lead to mistrust, destruction, misery, madness, and sickness. By its prolongation, correio da má notícia will cause fear and doubt among people and also attract additional spirits of fear and doubt. Although correio da má notícia is commonly spoken about in negative terms, as something that people ought to avoid, Polari de Alverga claims that it sometimes also signals the coming of good news and the revelation of truth (1992: 52). The present leader, Padrinho Alfredo, has even suggested that correio da má notícia should be
treated as a divine spiritual being who appears in order to test the faith of members.8

Hence correio da má notícia has a double message. On the one hand, the spreading of bad news is something unwanted. But, on the other hand, it is also something that members are encouraged to look upon as a positive force, signalling either the coming of something good or the coming of a test. The story of Tranca Rua, which at first sight might seem to be about handling or controlling negative energies that threaten to cause confusion, uncertainty, and uneasiness, is in a similar vein, a story about the power of the negative. What is at stake here is not only the transformation of the negative into something positive, but also the acknowledgement of the negative as a positive power, capable of revealing and condemning the wrong doings of Santo Daime members. Here Tranca Rua even uses the symptoms of Padrinho Sebastião’s illness (represented by the coughing up of blood) as a means to control members’ behaviour.

It is true that the move of the mother community, which occurred at the same time as Padrinho Sebastião’s encounter with Tranca Rua, can be interpreted as a way to avoid conflict and violence. However, if we only interpret what happens as a withdrawal from violence, we would easily miss other aspects that point in the opposite direction. Actually, the encounter with Tranca Rua is also about the development of strategies aiming more consciously at dealing with conflicts and violence. One practical consequence of the meeting with Tranca Rua is, for example, the formation of a new kind of spiritual work called Trabalho da Estrela (Star Work), rituals that developed through the hard work of putting Tranca Rua on the path of daime. Today this healing work aims not so much at healing the suffering individual, but more to the healing of the suffering spirits (espíritos sofredores), spirits that according to members are the cause to all kinds of conflicts, misery, and illnesses in the world. The healing (and transformation) of such spirits has today even turned into a moral practice that members ought to engage in not only during the rituals but in everyday life as well.

In order to understand the importance given by members to this moral practice, we must first take a closer look at members’ perception of the self. According to Santo Daime members, human beings have a Higher Self. This is a self that exists above and beyond the ‘ordinary self’ of everyday life. By drinking daime people are said to be able to approach and

experience this Higher Self and also learn more about how this self is concealed in everyday life by the ordinary self. This latter self is not the true self. Instead, the self that people experience in everyday life is said to be a self more or less governed by different kinds of spiritual beings. Many of these spirits are so-called ‘suffering spirits’ that continuously manifest themselves through the thoughts and emotions of individuals.

The main aim of the ritual called Trabalho da Estrela is to work with suffering spirits by healing and transforming them into more benign beings. Daime plays a very important role here as it enables the members to see and experience the spirits during the ritual. It also helps the individual to understand that whenever a negative spiritual being manifests itself through an individual’s thoughts, that individual has the responsibility to transform negative thoughts into more positive ones, or in the language of members, to transform negative spirits into more positive ones. This act requires that members learn how to discipline the mind. Although it might be supposed that the purpose of all this is to enhance the well-being of the individual, this is not actually the case. The well-being of the individual is in fact only a side-effect. What really is at stake here is the well-being of the spirits. The encounter with Tranca Rua therefore represents a change in focus. From now on the well-being of the spirits is of equal importance to that of human individuals.

**Santo Daime Morality Turns into an Environmental Necessity**

It might look like a paradox, but it seems as if the extended solidarity with the well-being of the spirits is actually what has enabled Santo Daime to change from being a purely religious movement, with the aim of healing sick individuals, into an environmental movement. By broadening their ‘vocation’ (moving beyond the individual), members have in fact managed to develop a strategy that has a much more worldly moral implication.

Let me explain. Even though Santo Daime morality is still fostered and shaped through the drinking of daime in ritual contexts, non-ritual arenas have in recent years acquired an increasing importance when it comes to practising and perfecting this moral attitude towards life. Today, working and being actively involved in some of the village’s many ecological projects has actually turned into an important ‘sign of engagement’. To a great extent working with environmental issues has become synonymous with being spiritually evolved, with being a committed Santo Daime member.
The work done within the projects has many similarities with the work done during the rituals. The most obvious similarity is the stress on the necessity to discipline the mind while working (something that is said to be crucial for transforming negative spirits), which often involves the singing of Santo Daime hymns. However there is also a major difference between these two ‘working realms’ and this is the absence of daime while working within the projects. Hence one could argue that more worldly environmental work has become an extended form of spiritual work.

The kind of moral practice that once began as a way to deal with the threat of conflict and violence has today turned into an enduring strategy that permeates members’ undertakings in matters related to environmentalism. Not only has it been crucial in shaping a new lifestyle among members, centring as it does on environmental concerns, but it has also moved the Santo Daime movement closer to more ‘worldly’ actors concerned with the future of the natural world. Although by sharing a common cause with such interest groups, Santo Daime members have been able to do so without losing their distinct identity as members of a religious healing movement.

It is possible to argue that Santo Daime has reconnected the physical and, if one wants, the secular through their efforts to re-moralise and re-spiritualise the world. Eventually this has enabled its members to move beyond a purely anthropocentric and individualistic approach to salvation, by also including in their idea of salvation a sincere concern for the fate of the world.

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Within a period of three months in 1994, between 800,000 and 1,000,000 people were killed (men, women, children and elderly people) in the African country of Rwanda. Rwandan nationals were killed by Rwandan nationals. In many cases the machete, one of the most ordinary instruments of every household, was used as a weapon. Sometimes, people who had sought refuge in an overcrowded school or church were slaughtered by grenades thrown by militias. Most of the victims belonged to the Tutsi minority, who, it is estimated, represented 15 per cent of the population. The perpetrators were Hutu, the segment of the population that is estimated to have represented more than 80 per cent of the population. Among the very tiny minority of the Twa, there were both victims and perpetrators.

During the period of the genocide, four out of five members of the population were members of a Christian church. The role of religion in this brutal killing can be treated from different angles (van ’t Spijker 1997). In the years of political change and tensions preceding the genocide, many leaders of the most important churches had developed systematic and skilful initiatives for mediating between the different political parties and powers, in many cases not without success. Christian laymen have been very active in human rights organizations, challenging political leaders, and organizing marches for peace at the beginning of 1994 supported by thousands of participants in the most important cities (Gatwa 2005: 181–218). The Christian religion has been important in prompting many people to risk their lives by offering protection to Tutsis who were threatened, and several people have died as martyrs (Rutayisire 1996). Religion is of enormous importance to all the people who have had to come to terms with the loss of relatives in the violent political turmoil before, during and after

1 In 1994, 80 per cent of the population was Christian. Roman Catholics formed 60 per cent of the population, and Protestants 23 per cent, of whom the majority were Pentecostals, whereas the older churches were Presbyterians (established in 1907), Seventh-Day Adventists (1918), Episcopalian (Anglican) Church (1921), Baptists (1937), and Free Methodists (1942).
the genocide, with the result that churches and mosques are even more frequently visited than before the violent period in Rwanda’s history. After the genocide, many Christian initiatives were developed for the care of widows and orphans, out of pure compassion and with a view to reconciliation, initiatives in which the activities of individuals are more impressive than those of the official churches. Religion also plays a role when the perpetrators of genocide confess their guilt, although the question should be asked if the pressure on the part of the government is of more overriding importance than the persuasion used by religious ministers and others who preach the Gospel to the detainees (Molenaar 2005: 53–8).

Nevertheless, one of the most urgent questions – formulated as an accusation by the present political regime in Rwanda – is whether religion and the influence of the churches and church leaders have, in fact, fuelled the genocide, or even was Christian missionary activity the ultimate cause of the genocide?

Effectively, in the broader circles of the present regime that articulate public opinion, it is argued that the presence of Christianity, more precisely the activities of the Roman Catholic Church, has not only contributed to the possibility of the genocide, but has been at the root of the political constellation that led to the genocide, and that during the genocide, Church leaders were actively involved in it. In many documents, it is argued that the Rwandan genocide would never have taken place, if Christian missions, particularly those of the Roman Catholic Church, had not been established in Rwanda.

Related to this is the question of how the religious change after the genocide is to be interpreted, since in fact, after 1994, many new Christian communities have been founded, and a striking growth of Islam may be noticed.

In order to discuss this set of problems, we first have to highlight some of the most important data concerning the political developments that preceded the genocide. Therefore, we have to explore more extensively the way in which Christianity, and more precisely the Roman Catholic Church, was closely connected to the emergence of the Rwandan nation, and how the relations between Hutu and Tutsi have developed in the course of the history of Rwanda. More extensive analyses have been made by Filip Reyntjens (1994), Gérard Prunier (1995), Jean-Claude Willame (1995), and C. M. Overdulve (1997).
Some Facts about the Genocide

The event that triggered the beginning of the genocide was the shooting down of the aeroplane of Major-General Juvenal Habyarimana, the President of Rwanda since 1973, which caused his death on Wednesday April 6th 1994, at 20.23 hours.

Immediately after the death of the president, the prime minister, Agatha Uwilingiyimana, was killed, and a new government was formed which encouraged the killing of all Tutsi in the country.

Fierce fighting followed between the Rwandan Army and Tutsi rebels who had already invaded the country in 1990, and had since then occupied a part of the country. The new government and the army were finally driven into Congo (Zaire), and in July, when the Rwandese Patriotic Front (RPF) had gained control of the country, an RPF-dominated government was formed. In the period between April and July, more than 800,000 Tutsi, and an important number of ‘moderate Hutu’ were slaughtered.

The genocide was the culmination point of a war that had started in October 1990 with the invasion by the army of the Rwandese Patriotic Front, consisting mainly of second generation refugees who had fled the country in 1959 and 1973, and whose leaders had formed the core of the Ugandan Army that brought Yoweri Museveni to power as president in 1986.

During the war that followed the invasion of 1990, the rebel army, as it was called, occupied a considerable part of the country, and the territory it controlled continued to increase.

As the invasion of the RPF in 1990 did not result in an uprising of the Tutsi in the country, the term civil war would be misleading. But after 1990, the tensions between Hutu and Tutsi in the country grew considerably, and became even more acute when, in neighbouring Burundi in October 1993, the democratically chosen Hutu president, Melchior Ndadaye, was killed by the Tutsi-dominated army in that country.

Under international pressure, peace talks in Arusha led to an agreement that brought the RPF in a favourable position. Hutu extremists rejected the peace agreement and prevented its implementation. The attack on the presidential aircraft followed a possible breakthrough in the negotiations between the different parties that were promoted by Tanzania and other neighbouring countries.
Return of Rwandan Refugees Who Fled the Country in 1959 and 1973

The invaders from Uganda entered the country by force as a result of a sad history of relations between Hutu and Tutsi in the past. They were the children of a generation of Tutsi who had fled the country following the bloody riots in 1959 and 1973.

Especially in 1959, there had been a social uprising, or social revolution by Hutu against the ruling Tutsi who had acted as masters of the country during the colonial period.

Rwanda had been under colonial leadership from about 1898 to 1961.

During the period 1898–1916, Rwanda was ruled by the Germans. They did not establish a strong colonial regime, but imposed their rule on the existing political system, consisting of a king with absolute and divine power at the top of a complicated political hierarchy in which power was placed in the hands of chiefs and army officers who for the most part belonged to a particular Tutsi clan or who had good relations with it.

A much more decisive role was played by the Belgians, during their period of power, 1916–61, as the mandatary of the League of Nations.

The Belgians reorganised the political system, and gave all the authority to newly appointed chiefs, who had to belong to the Tutsi class. This brought many Tutsi into powerful positions, and for a long period, particularly Tutsi were given access to secondary school education, and thus access to public positions, whereas Hutu were denied these.

During Belgian rule, the influence of the Roman Catholic Church was important. In fact Roman Catholic missionaries were seen as experts in the field of the complicated social relations of the Rwandan population. Roman Catholic missionaries thus promoted Tutsi rule, since according to the leading clergy, Tutsi ‘were born to rule’, being excellent in political leadership.

After the Second World War, the Catholic Church adopted another attitude towards the division of power in the nation. A new generation of missionary priests, influenced by social democratic ideas, promoted the development and well-being of the Hutu, who formed the majority of the population, but were oppressed by Tutsi leadership who had been given that position by the colonial regime.

When the call for independence spread throughout Africa, the Roman Catholic Church assisted the Hutu in claiming their political rights by promoting their political and social organisation. This resulted in a general uprising in 1959, and ultimately in the political independence of Rwanda as a nation under Hutu rule in 1961.
In the years following independence, Rwanda was organised on the basis of proportional representation, which meant that Tutsi, representing 15 per cent of the population, were given only 15 per cent of the places in secondary and higher education and as civil servants. However they were denied important positions in the national army. This arrangement required a complicated system of civil administration in which the ‘racial adherence’ of each civilian was registered.

A bloodless military coup in 1973 gave power to Juvénal Habyarimana, who, in fact, considered Hutu and Tutsi to be different ethnic groups, without stressing their racial roots, since he considered Hutu and Tutsi in the first place to be Banyarwanda. He allowed Tutsi to share political power, but still excluded them from having any power in the army.

An important minority of the Tutsi started living as refugees, often in camps, in neighbouring countries. Several were given the opportunity to follow higher education. In Kenya as in Zaire many Tutsi were successful in business. In Uganda, Tutsi refugees, as was already mentioned, were finally accepted into the higher ranks of the military.

By the end of the nineties, many Rwandan refugees in Uganda were given important positions in the state, and President Museveni was willing to give them Ugandan citizenship on the basis of ten-years residence in the country. But at the end of the nineties, a crisis in Uganda led these rights being revoked, and as a consequence, the position of Rwandans in Uganda was questioned.

The Relations between Hutu and Tutsi in the Colonial Period

This roughly sketched historical background makes it clear that the relationship between Hutu and Tutsi is closely related to political developments in Rwanda in the past, especially in the twentieth century, the period of the colonization of Africa, in which particularly in Rwanda, Roman Catholic missionary activity played an important and decisive role.

There are in fact two main approaches to this colonial and missionary past that have to be mentioned, and by analysing these, we can see the ways in which Hutu and Tutsi identities have been defined.
Two Views on Rwandan History

The majority of Hutu claim that there has been a growing antagonism down the centuries between the Hutu peasant majority and the Tutsi noble minority who possessed cattle. In the nineteenth century, the Tutsi king, Kigeri IV Rwabugiri (1867–95), worked out a political system in which Hutu vassals were in the service of the Tutsi, and effectively had no political rights. The German colonial regime cooperated with the Tutsi powers and did not make any significant changes in the system. The Belgian regime initially strongly promoted Tutsi domination, but changed this policy after World War II, when, encouraged by the influential Roman Catholic Church, it began to support the political rights of the Hutu majority.

Until the genocide, this was in general the view of Rwandan history that was presented. This view is expressed, for instance, by Roger Heremans (1993) and C. M. Overduulve (1997).

The interpretation of history by the present Tutsi-dominated government is different. According to this interpretation, Tutsi and Hutu lived in peace and harmony in Rwanda until the arrival of the European colonial powers. The social division of the population was interpreted by Europeans as being based on racial differences between Hutu and Tutsi, thus introducing fundamental discord between the two that had never existed before. The Belgian regime emphasized the excellence of the so-called Tutsi race even more than their German predecessors, and took them into service in order to oppress the Hutu.

However, before leaving the scene in 1962, the Belgians gave all political power to the Hutu. This, in fact, gave the Belgians the means to continue to influence the politics of the country. The Hutu could only maintain their position by systematically killing those Tutsi who claimed their political rights, and by prohibiting the return of the Tutsi refugees who had left the country during the riots of 1959–62 and in 1973. In order to put an end to this injustice, the Tutsi refugees organised themselves into the Rwandese Patriotic Front, they raised an army and started a struggle for liberation. This struggle is seen as the last anti-colonial war in Africa because the Hutu regime that came to power after independence continued to construct a society based on the racial divisions that had been introduced by the colonial powers in the twentieth century.

The racist interpretation of Rwandan society is seen as the most fundamental cause of the genocide. It was the Roman Catholic Church that had promoted these ideas and, through its quasi-monopoly of the educational system, it had exposed the population to these ideas, which were then in-
ternalised during the course of the century. For this reason, the Catholic Church is ultimately responsible for the genocide. This view is held by Paul Kagame (2002).

The existence of these two opposing views of Rwanda’s past is part of the problem, and is related to the upsurge of genocide. Both war and the genocide have created sorrow, mistrust and hatred, which together have blocked any open public debate about this ambiguous nature of Rwandan history.

The Concept of Colonizers and Missionaries of Hutu and Tutsi Identity

The missionaries who have been active in Rwanda, the Roman Catholics from 1900 and the Protestants from 1907 onwards, have followed the concepts of race developed by Western social sciences in the course of the nineteenth century. With reference to a famous study by Edith Sanders, we may state that the word ‘race’ was a favourite term in the language of the Enlightenment (Sanders 1969). Immanuel Kant considered the word race to be ‘an important acquisition of human thinking’.

The presupposition was that the European race was to be considered superior to the rest of humankind. This may be illustrated by the way the scientists who accompanied Napoleon’s army during its conquest of Egypt, concluded that such a rich culture, which had existed before the development of European culture, could not have been the creation of Negroes, who were descendents of the accursed Ham. The discovery of a certain linguistic relationship between Arabic and certain expressions used by Ethiopians and Nubians led to the conclusion that these particular peoples could not be Negroes, but must have been colonisers who had their origin in the Middle East.

This led to a revision of the Hamitic theory: it was not Ham and his descendents who were cursed, but rather Canaan, his son. Now the name Hamites became a name of honour: anything of value found in Africa was considered to have been introduced by the Hamites, imported into Africa.

These theories have served as a frame of reference for those who explored Africa, and finally they have become the basis of a classification of the peoples encountered there, including those of Rwanda.

In general, ethnographers of the nineteenth century spoke of Hamitic pastoralists who in the course of time must have arrived in the heart of Africa. Through their natural, racial superiority, these pastoralists were considered to have conquered the sedentary Bantu peoples.
The explorers of Rwanda used the same ethnological framework, as may be demonstrated by a quotation from the book *Caput Nili*, in which the German anthropologist Richard Kandt, who spent a long time in Rwanda in the last years of the nineteenth century, gives an account of his experiences. In the same words as Count von Goetzen, who had paid a visit to the Rwandese court in 1898, he was delighted to discover a ‘densely populated country, an agreeable climate, and a well organised kingdom in which the Hutu are totally subordinate to the Tutsi minority’. Waiting in Nyanza for his first encounter with the Rwandan king, *Mwami* Yuhi V Musinga, on June 14th, 1898, he notes, thinking about the miraculous kingdom he has come to visit:

Graf Goetzen war es, der uns die erste sichere Kunde von diesem Lande brachte, dessen Grenze selbst die Araber auf ihren Sklavenjagden gescheut hatten. ... Er fand ein ungeheures Grasland, das von Ost nach West allmählich von 1500 bis 2500 Meteransteigt, reich an Gewässern und mit herrlichem Klima; er fand in ihm nicht, wie inden übrigen Teilen der Kolonie, eine spärliche, sondern eine nach Hunderttausenden zählende Bevölkerung von Bantunegern, die sich Wahutu nannten; er fand dies Volk in knechlicher Abhängigkeit von den Watussi, einer fremden semitischen oder hamitischen Adelskaste, deren Vorfahren aus den Gallaländern südlich Abessiniens kommend, das ganze Zwischenseengebiet sich unterworfen hatten; er fand das Land einge- teilt in Provinzen und Distrikte, die unter der aussaugenden Verwaltung der Watussi standen, deren riesige, bis über zwei Meter hohe Gestalten ihn an die Welt der Märchen und Sagen erinnerten, und an ihrer Spitze einen König, der im Lande ruhelos umherziehend, bald hier, bald dort seine Residenzen erbaute. (Kandt 1919: 1–2.)

On the basis of these observations, the missionaries, who first arrived in 1900, formed their ideas about the Rwandan population, developed their missionary strategy, and inspired the political colonial regime that created the administrative structures in the twentieth century. A quotation from the work of one of the missionaries, A. Pagès, a member of the White Fathers, is highly illustrative:

Monophysites à leur départ d’Abyssinie, les hamites ont peut-être peu à peu oublié, au cours de leur longue exode, la croyance chrétienne et adopté les pratiques et les superstitions des peuples au milieu desquels ils ont vécu’ (Pagès 1933: 8).
This relationship between the different segments of the Rwandan population, and its racial interpretation, have been the point of departure for the political regimes of the twentieth century when creating the social and political institutions of the nation.

This interpretation of Rwandan society by explorers and missionaries corresponds remarkably well to the popular local mythology found by missionaries, in which the Tutsi are pictured as excellent, clever, and brilliant, the Hutu as lazy and inattentive, and the Twa as the official jokers. In the myths and legends, the first divine king of Rwanda, Kigwa, is said to have three sons: Tutsi, Hutu and Twa. Kigwa tested their skills and conduct, and gave them, accordingly, their special places in society: Tutsi became the leader, Hutu the worker under the leadership of Tutsi, and Twa became the marginalized person with a clownish role at the royal court. Several missionaries such as the Roman Catholic, Father Loupias and the Lutheran, Ernst Johanssen, have recorded myths that circulated at the beginning of the twentieth century concerning the origin of the different segments of the population in Rwanda and their relationships (Loupias 1908: 1–13; Johanssen 1912: 70–5).

These myths should be seen as legitimising the oppressive rule and the stringent political organisation of two kings in the nineteenth century, Mutara II Rwogera (1845–67) and Kigeri IV Rwabugiru (1867–95). The American political scientist René Lemarchand observes that: ‘Hamitic theories showed an uncanny fit with the mythologies of traditional Rwanda; once incorporated into the work of historiographers it became increasingly difficult to tell them apart’ (Lemarchand 1999: 8).

In fact, this view has been the point of departure for successive political regimes during the twentieth century when they created the social and political institutions of the nation.

The Hutu majority were seen as native Rwandans, and the Tutsi minority were seen as non natives, and thus as intruders. This thinking has also been decisive in identifying Hutu and Tutsi over the course of time. In the 1950s, extremist political parties, both Hutu and Tutsi, have explicitly referred to this historical ‘origin’ of Rwandan society.  

2 The Hutu manifesto, a political statement by Hutu intellectuals, appealing to the self-confidence of the Hutu population on the eve of political independence, signed on March 24, 1957, without referring to the historical origin of Hutu and Tutsi, speaks of a full century of Tutsi domination, followed by 56 years of European dominance. A reply to this manifesto was given in a declaration signed on May 17, 1958, by a number of dignitaries of the Royal Court, the Bagaragu bakuru b’ibwami.
It should be mentioned that the racist interpretation of the identity and origin of Hutu and Tutsi has left some crucial phenomena in Rwandan society unexplained:

- In the popular and in the official memory of Rwanda no mention is made of a systematic migration of Tutsi into the country.
- All Rwandans belong to one of about eighteen clans. Almost all clans are constituted of Hutu and Tutsi (d’Hertefelt 1971: 9–21).
- Tutsi and Hutu have never lived as separate cultural communities. They speak the same language, they have long practised the same traditional religion, and live in the same territory.
- There are certain examples, albeit rare ones, of a change of identity: a Hutu, who had accumulated wealth in the form of cattle, could rise in the socio-economic hierarchy and become Tutsi, whereas in certain cases, Tutsi could lose their status and become Hutu.

Because the use of racial theories says more about the feeling of superiority of those who invented them than it does about the African peoples who have been classified, historians have long ago abandoned thinking in terms of race.3

Hutu and Tutsi as Political Identities

The question arises as to what other meaning should be given to the words Hutu and Tutsi if these are not racial terms. Here I would like to refer to the Ugandan sociologist Mahmood Mamdani, who proposes seeing the words Hutu and Tutsi as referring to political identities that have been subject to a change in meaning over the course of time.

After critically examining the different efforts made by several historians, he concludes that it is fruitless to search distant history for the origins of Hutu and Tutsi. ‘Hutu and Tutsi have changed as political identities

(who certainly represented only a minority of the Tutsi), stating that ‘the relationships between us (Batutsi) and them (Bahutu) have always been based on servitude; there is thus between us no foundation for fraternity whatsoever.’ For the complete text see, Overdulve 1997: 97–118.

The term Hutu only started to make sense when people were subordinated to a state ruled by Tutsi, who in the distant past may have represented an ethnic identity.

Tutsi may have existed as an ethnic identity before the establishment of the state of Rwanda. These Tutsi created a kind of state, whose origins, on the basis of oral history, may go back the fourteenth or fifteenth century, and in course of time they conquered people who were called Hutu, a word that means servant in several parts of Africa. These servants, may have belonged to different ethnic groups, but as people who were subjected to the emerging Rwandan state, they were called Hutu.

While we may be able to speak of Tutsi as an ethnic identity preceding the formation of the state of Rwanda, we certainly cannot speak of Hutu with the same historical depth. For as a political identity, Hutu was constructed as a consequence of the formation and expansion of the state of Rwanda. If subject populations only came to be defined as Hutu after being incorporated into Rwanda state structures, we cannot speak of these as Hutu before that incorporation. (Mamdani 2001: 73.)

With the formal mechanisms of the Rwandan state that allowed the rulers to absorb the most prosperous of their subjects into their own ranks through intermarriage, Tutsi too became an increasingly transethnic identity.

Further, Mahmood mentions that the predecessors of today’s Hutu and Tutsi indeed created a single cultural community, the community of Kinyarwanda speakers, through centuries of cohabitation, intermarriage, and cultural exchange. In the course of history, Hutu and Tutsi emerged as ‘state-enforced political identities’.

In this way, Mahmood discerns three phases in the development of the meaning of Hutu and Tutsi:

(a) In the distant past, Tutsi may have been an ethnic identity. Absorbing other groups into the Tutsi state, the others were identified as Hutu, a subject people, of trans-ethnic character.

(b) Tutsi accepted other elements into their dominant group. The term Tutsi is given a trans-ethnic character. Both Hutu and Tutsi emerged both as state-enforced political identities, and together they form a single cultural community.
In the colonial period, these political identities are considered as representing groups with different racial origins. Tutsi are seen as the intruders, ‘born to rule’, Hutu as the original population, destined to be subjected (Mamdani 2001: 73–5).

By the end of Rwabugiri’s rule, the Hutu/Tutsi distinction clearly began to appear as a political distinction that divided the subject population from those identified as having power.

If Hutu/Tutsi evoked the subject/power distinction in the pre-colonial Rwandan state, the colonial state added a dimension to it: by racialising Hutu and Tutsi as identities, it signified the distinction as one between indigenous and alien.

Following Mamdani, we may conclude that the pre-colonial past was not characterised by social harmony, but by an increasing tension, not between races or tribes, but between leaders of a centralized hierarchical kingdom and servants at several levels. This development was continued in the colonial era, but was aggravated by its racialisation.

The Conflict as a Regional Conflict within the Region of the Interlacustrine Area

It is important to mention also Mamdani’s explanation of the Rwanda conflict as a regional conflict in the interlacustrine area.

In Uganda by the end of the 1980s, President Museveni, re-examining the principle of ethnicity as a basis for Ugandan citizenship, was inclined to declare that ten years residency in the country could become a criterion for citizenship. It was thus to be made possible for Rwandan refugees, who were often in high positions, to become Ugandan citizens. At the end of the eighties, however, Museveni had to give in to strong opposition to these ideas. This made the Tutsi group, who were in a difficult position in Uganda, decide to use force to return to their home country, and to begin the Rwandan war in 1990 that culminated in the genocide in 1994.

A similar situation existed in Congo (Zaire). Several generations of former migrants from Rwanda had lived in a region near Mulenge, in the province of South-Kivu. Originally accepted as citizens of the State, by the end of the nineties, they were put in a difficult position as they were denied citizenship. Feeling stateless, they joined the Tutsi opposition (RPF) that had invaded Rwanda in 1990.

It is clear that this focus on the socio-political aspects of the Rwandan
conflict does not change the problem of mutual hatred based on racism. This critical analysis, however, may stimulate discussion on the roots of the genocide in which also the political development of the Hutu–Tutsi relations may be taken into account, as well as questions of ethnicity and citizenship in the neighbouring countries.

The Factor of Religion in the Political Conflict

Looking back at the question asked at the beginning about the role of religion in the Rwandan genocide, we may conclude that the labelling of the antagonism between Tutsi and Hutu in Rwanda in terms of race, has been an important and decisive factor in the conflict. It fuelled the conflict between Hutu and Tutsi, and made the political conflict between rulers and servants that had existed by the end of the nineteenth century into something inevitable, a kind of fatality that had to be accepted. It changed the character of the distinction between the groups, and as a consequence ultimately created a dividing line between innate (Hutu) and non-native (Tutsi) groups. In moments of political tension, politicians have used this racist thinking to destroy their opponents.

The missionary movement, in which the Roman Catholic Church had a dominant position, has been most instrumental in promoting this way of thinking. The history of the genocide has shown that once thinking in racial terms is introduced, the Christian doctrine of the unity of the human species is unable to see it as a human construct.

The Christian Church still has to answer the question as to why the idea of the unity of mankind, a dominant element in the teaching of the Church through the ages, has not been powerful enough to unmask the ideological aspects of the Hamitic theory, which finds its origin in the conviction the European ‘race’ is superior.

The social revolution of 1959, in which the Hutu majority took over the ruling position of the Tutsi minority, was a change of political power. Tutsi who lost their position accused the Roman Catholic Church of taking sides with the Hutu against them, and, when they regained their leading position in Rwanda after the genocide, they would repay the Church for this. The accusation against the Catholic Church of having introduced divisive racist thinking into Rwanda has, therefore, to be seen in this political context.

The political ideal of the present government is to establish peaceful relations between all citizens in the future. This ideal of a peaceful society
without racial distinctions is projected into the past. It is said, and believed, that in the glorious past of Rwanda the different social groups lived in peaceful harmony with each other. In doing so, full responsibility for the genocide is placed upon to the influence of the European colonisers who introduced divisions in order to rule, and underpinned their policy with racial theories.

The fact that this concept of Rwandan history is presented as the only legitimate view, gives it an ideological flavour. This ideological character of the interpretation of Rwandan history makes it impossible to speak freely about a growing antagonism between Hutu and Tutsi in the course of the nineteenth century. Those who blame the Europeans exclusively, in particular the Roman Catholic Church, for the genocide, are not prepared to take into account the divisions and antagonisms of the pre-colonial era.

This ideologically flavoured way of dealing with Rwandan’s past precludes open discussion with those who have built the institutions of the First Republic under President George Kayibanda and of the Second Republic under President Juvenal Habyarimana. This lack of openness is a barrier to a national reconciliation between those who suffered under the political regime before independence and those who suffered under the political change after independence.

**Religious Change after the Genocide**

The strong criticism of the extremely powerful position of the Catholic Church in Rwandan society in the twentieth century also has had consequences for the religious landscape of the country after the genocide. It inspired the government after 1994 to give support to the proliferation of new Protestant Christian communities.

In the aftermath of the return of tens of thousands of Rwandan exiles from exile in neighbouring countries such as Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya, Congo (Zaire) and Burundi, many new independent churches were created.

For one or two generations, many of these exiles had lived in an English-speaking cultural context, and this made it difficult for them to join the existing churches in Rwanda. Some of the churches were originally prayer groups consisting of returned refugees which developed into larger organizations. In several cases, however, one may speak of the conscious foundation of church organizations, whose creation may be seen as a manifestation of the dissatisfaction of many people with the existing churches
because of their assumed involvement in the genocide. The result is that for the first time in the history of the church in Rwanda, churches seem to be organised along ethnic lines.

One of the most outstanding communities in this category is the Restoration Church Association. It was founded by some pastors who returned from different countries and who had belonged to various denominations.

The church services started briefly after the genocide in the capital Kigali, in a purpose-built room which was offered by the local municipals. The denomination spread quickly throughout the country in urban centres where most of the newly arrived returnees had settled. According to the statement from its leaders, the main mission of the denomination is ‘to reconcile Rwandans’ or ‘in collaboration with the government, reconstruct the country, which was destroyed by immoral men’. The words gusana imitima, that is ‘to heal wounded hearts’, are found in its logo. The denomination’s services are mainly attended by those who work in shops, the offices of ministries, and banks, and by students.

Other churches have been introduced by returnees from different neighbouring countries. In 1994, David Ndahurutse, a former Rwandan refugee in Burundi, introduced the Eglise Vivante de Jésus Christ, which he had founded in 1992 in Burundi. Life Messengers in Mission (LMM), which has its origin in Kenya, was introduced in 1994 by returnees from Uganda. One of the fastest-growing churches is the Zion Temple, founded in the capital, shortly before 2000, by the self-styled Christian preacher Paul Gitwaza.4

In 1997, the number of these new Christian communities was estimated at about 150, whereas a few years later people spoke of more than 500 communities. This is even more noteworthy, if one takes into account the fact that African Independent Churches had never developed in Rwanda.5

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4 For an initial attempt to research these new communities, see the report of CORVT, the Ecumenical Centre for Theological Research and Education (van ’t Spijker 1998). CORVT is the abbreviation of the Centre oecuménique de recherche et de vulgarisation théologiques, the French name of the institute. The report gives an account of research into 22 different new Christian groups in Rwanda. See also, van ’t Spijker 1999.

5 David Barrett (1968) mentions only nine African states in which African independent churches were not to be found in 1967. Six of these states were predominantly Islamic. Rwanda was among the three others which had only churches founded by Western missionaries.
Created after the 1994 genocide, and partly as a consequence of it, most of these churches uncritically condemn the Roman Catholic Church because of its assumed culpability for the genocide.

Whereas the political situation in post-war Rwanda has certainly contributed to the mushrooming of new Christian communities, other factors have contributed to this new phenomenon. Most of these new movements represent a spirituality that is not often found in the older, established churches that were the result of earlier European missionary activities. They are characterised by what in Rwanda is generally known as ‘a Spirit of Pentecostalism’, which is expressed in ecstatic prayer, baptism by immersion, testimonies of dreams and visions, and sometimes the experience of miraculous healing and glossolalia. Among these new Christian communities there are also neo-Pentecostal churches where women and young people play a prominent role, and where some form of prosperity Gospel is preached. In this respect, many of these churches represent a new wave of charismatic Christianity that has emerged everywhere in Africa in the last few decades.

**Growing Islam**

In speaking about religious change after the genocide, mention should also be made of the rise of Islamic influence in the country.

Islam has been present since 1899, when Muslim craftsmen entered the country in the service of German military units. At the same time, foreign traders originating from Asia also settled in the country. For almost a century, these Muslims lived on the margin of society, and only towards the end of the presidency of Juvénal Habyarimana, did the situation of Muslims improve. With the help of the Arab world several students were accepted at the University of Medina, and the Libyan President Muammar Gadaffi, was given the opportunity of building an impressive cultural centre in the capital, which began producing Muslim literature and a bulletin in the vernacular.

Among the returned exiles in 1994 there were numerous well-educated Muslims who are currently giving a new impulse to the Muslim community. Since 1994, the government has always counted several Muslims among its ministers. In the cities, one hears the call to prayer early in the morning. The end of Ramadan, Id-al-Fitr, has been a national holiday since 1995, whereas Ascension Day and Good Friday are no longer public holidays.
Following a government statement, Muslims claim that there was no Muslim participation in the execution of the genocide. Christian leaders dispute this and there are also some Muslim leaders who admit that the claim is false. Nevertheless this argument is frequently used in public presentations.

This new position has given Muslims a new self-confidence. More people than ever wear Arab dress, not only in the cities, but also in rather remote areas. In some cases, the construction of mosques is strongly promoted by the local public or military authorities who themselves returned to the country after 1994.

Concluding Remarks

The unprecedented disaster of war and genocide in Rwanda has deeply influenced and changed the religious landscape of Rwanda. The influence of the Roman Catholic Church has diminished considerably, in the aftermath of the negative assessment of its past by the present political leadership. To a certain degree the political shadow cast over the Catholic Church also affects the mainstream Protestant churches.

The negative reputation of the established churches has contributed to the tremendous growth of numerous new Christian communities.

Islam has become an important factor, growing both in numbers and influence.

Rwanda’s past cannot be discussed openly in public, and the ambiguity towards it causes all aspects of the pattern to be open ended and reveals a feeling of uncertainty about the future.

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Hüseyin Nail Kubali and Durkheim’s  
*Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*

**Why and When Turkey?**

A swirl of puzzles surrounds a work of Émile Durkheim’s that Jonathan Z. Smith claims is the ‘single most provocative treatment of’ the idea of the sacred in the Durkheimian corpus – *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. (Durkheim 1957; Smith 2004: 103) Why, one asks, was Durkheim’s work first published in Turkey, especially when the lectures that gave rise to this volume had been delivered in France in the early years of the twentieth century? Of what particular importance was Durkheim for modern Turkish thinkers, and what kinds of thinkers might they be? And, what of this particular work of Durkheim’s? What special purpose, moreover, might have been served by publishing it in Turkey when it was – in 1950? Why was the volume edited by (and who was?) Hüseyin Nail Kubali? What were his motives – both of a scientific kind or of a wider social or political sort? These are the questions that I shall seek to address in the following pages. As readers will discover, in answering them, we will uncover a nest of hidden themes that few readers – even those who know the Durkheim corpus – will have anticipated. As we will learn, not only are Durkheimian interpretations of religion at issue, but also the particular bearing of Durkheimianism on modern Turkey. This link with modern Turkey, in turn, brings to the surface many of the controversial questions now vexing the European Union as it ponders the possibility of Turkish membership of the EU – questions of human rights, civil society, the rule of law, the relation of religion and state, to name just the most relevant to the content of this article.

**What the Durkheim of *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* Taught the Turks**

First to Durkheim’s book in question. The volume in question collects the latest versions of a series of lectures entitled *Leçons de sociologie physique des*
moeurs et du droit (Durkheim 1950), later to appear in English translation as Professional Ethics and Civic Morals. Durkheim had continually revised them since their first delivery in Bordeaux in 1896, then, later in Paris in 1904 and 1912, and finally in the years just prior to his death in 1917. One way we might begin trying to understand the nature and circumstances of their publication in French in Istanbul is by looking at the contents of the work.

Professional Ethics and Civic Morals is Durkheim’s final iteration of the views first articulated in The Division of Labor (1893) and then reiterated in its second edition (1902). This was nothing less than Durkheim’s outline of a future society organized around ‘corporations’ – labor unions, professional and occupational groups, and other units of social organization active particularly in the economic realm. Scholars agree that this work can also be seen as Durkheim’s blueprint for what political scientists these days call ‘civil society’ (Emirbayer 1996, Hawkins 1994). While always linked with economic activities, these corporations would also be englobing moral and legal entities, protecting both rights of association and individual civil rights, thus laying the bases for civil society governed by the rule of law.

Durkheim saw the dangers inherent in leaving a vacuum between the atomized and unorganized individual and the powerful modern state, referring to such a state of affairs as a ‘veritable sociological monstrosity’. Without any mediating institutions between the individual and the state, Durkheim feared that the individual would be left unprotected from possible predations of the state. Durkheim was wary of the power of the state to crush such intermediary grassroots organizations, and noted that in ancient Rome, the system of artisan and workers’ unions formed there was finally ruined by being subordinated to the state administration. (Durkheim 1902: xxxvii–xxxviii.)

His solution to this threat to the individual was to advocate that ‘between the state and individuals, a whole range of secondary groups (should be) interposed’ (Durkheim 1902: liv). Put otherwise, Durkheim held that the ‘state must have a relation to the nation without being absorbed in it … (it must) intercalate between the two some resistant bodies which will temper the action that has the greater force.’ (Durkheim 1957: 101.) Durkheim thus sought to lay out a conception of the ‘associational relations of civil life’ – what lies between the state, capitalist economy and the individual, ‘the intermediate domains of social life’, as sociologist Mustafa Emirbayer (1996: 112) argues. This, then, is to create political and moral space independent of the state – space in which individuals might be nurtured in default of weakening family ties in industrial society (Hawkins 1994: 474–6).
A signal benefit of such secondary groups was also their ability to corral the reckless ‘self-interest’ of extreme individualism. The subgroups forced the individual to take into account something beyond themselves, something of the general welfare of society. They gave individuals a ‘taste for altruism, for forgetfulness of self and sacrifice’ (Durkheim 1902: xxxiv). But this did not mean that Durkheim wished to resuscitate the medieval guilds that the French Revolution had abolished. Instead, Durkheim, saw the ‘professional group’ or ‘corporation’ as the basis for his new project of social construction (Durkheim 1902: xxxv). Durkheim, for example, asserts that in his own day, the best examples of solidarist corporatism were labor unions (Durkheim 1902: xxxvi). Yet, while affirming the value of corporations and collective life, the Durkheim of Professional Ethics and Civic Morals went to lengths to assign special value to the individual. Several chapters of the work are devoted, for example, to the relation of the individual to the state. There, for example, Durkheim rails against those who would try to revive the cult of the City State in a new guise’ (Durkheim 1957: 54), and assigns to the state the duty of fostering individualism, by providing the ‘milieu in which the individual moves, so that he may develop his faculties in freedom’. The part played by the state is ‘to ensure the most complete individuation that the state of society will allow’ (Durkheim 1957: 69).

This brief consideration of the role of the ‘secondary groups’ or ‘corporations’ shows then how fundamental Durkheim thought they were to the future health of modern industrial societies. They would not only form the bases of local ‘moral authority … but also (be) a source of life sui generis. From it there arises a warmth that quickens or gives fresh life to each individual, which makes him disposed to empathize, causing selfishness to melt away.’ (Durkheim 1902: lii.) In Durkheim’s view, society would then become a ‘vast system of national corporations’ (Durkheim 1902: liii). So devoted to this concept was Durkheim that he imagined that voters might elect representatives to a national parliament from their particular occupational group, rather than say from the geographic residential district in which they lived. Such corporations ‘should become the elemental division of the state, the basic political unit’ (Durkheim 1902: liii). Durkheim’s entire vision was laid out, sketchily though it might be, in the prefaces to The Division of Labor, but in its fullest form in Hüseyin Nail Kubali’s edition of Professional Ethics and Civic Morals. These constitute Durkheim’s best effort to articulate the social mechanisms necessary for the maintenance of what today is commonly called civil society.
Ziya Gökalp, Durkheimianism and Durkheim

Now, although I am not able to document the specific transmission of Durkheimian ideas of civil society expressed in *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* to Turkish thinkers before Hüseyin Nail Kubali, we can detect something of these notions in a Turkish thinker generally credited with first introducing Durkheimian thought into Turkey – Ziya Gökalp (1875–1924). Gökalp was doubtless exposed to the earlier statements of Durkheim’s corporatist theory of social reconstruction found in the first and second editions of *The Division of Labor in Society* in 1893 or 1902, respectively, later to be restated and revised in *Professional Ethics*. Historian Robert Devereaux has argued that Gökalp was one of the ‘most influential Turkish writers of the twentieth century’ and one to whom ‘more than any other one man, belongs the credit for reviving Turkish national pride’ (Devereux 1968: ix). Although hailing from the provincial Kurdish city of Diyarbakir, Gökalp eventually made his way to Istanbul in the late 1890s, where he made his first contacts with French social thought. There, he learned French, and was drawn to the writings of influential thinkers of the Third Republic, such as Gustav Le Bon, Gabriel Tarde, Alfred Fouillée, and finally Durkheim. (Findikoglu 1935: 19.) From the early years of the twentieth century, Gökalp believed that Durkheimian social theory could afford him the best theoretical basis for conceiving the future practical shape of Turkish national life, especially the condition of its social organization and collective national life.

This fixation upon nationalism and the prospects for the future structure of Turkish national life drew Gökalp into the swirl of Turkey’s political revolutions at the beginning of the twentieth century. He joined one of the secret political societies of the day organized by the radicalized medical students of Istanbul, and was imprisoned for his participation in their activities. In 1908, he played a major role in the Young Turk Revolution, largely as its main ideologist, and thanks to Durkheimian corporatist ideas, offered a coherent vision of what Turkey might be. In spirit, Gökalp and the Young Turks exhibited a heady mix of romantic Nietzschean moral revolution and scientistic, partially Durkheimian, French positivism. From this point forward, Gökalp was launched into a national political career. From that point as well, he put to full use his command of the vast learning he had acquired over the intervening years, especially of Durkheimian sociology. (Findikoglu 1935: 15.)

Foremost among Durkheimian notions attractive to Gökalp was that of the ‘conscience collective’, given its potential for instilling the hope of
national revival. Turkey was not destined to be the ‘sick man’ of Europe. Gökalp made a deliberate link between the reality of ‘nationhood’ and Durkheim’s view that all forms of ‘society’ required consciousness. Thus, Gökalp asserts that ‘a group is not a social group unless there is a conscious realization of that status in the common consciousness of its individual members’ (Gökalp 1968: 51). Pointedly against historical materialism, Gökalp affirms the stoutly Durkheimian position that ideas have consequences in social life: ‘Collective representations are not, as Marx believed, ineffective epiphenomena in social life. On the contrary, all aspects of our social lives are shaped by the effects of these representations.’ (Gökalp 1968: 52.)

During the years 1913–15, Gökalp also taught Durkheimian sociology in one of Istanbul’s Muslim seminaries (medrese). Finally, in 1915, Gökalp moved on to a new chair of sociology at the University of Istanbul that he had himself worked to create. He remained at the university until 1919, enjoying an extraordinarily fruitful period of work. He not only saw to the normal official duties of a university professor, but also founded academic journals, one of which was modeled expressly on L’Année sociologique. He likewise worked to see that Durkheimian texts were translated into Turkish. (Findikoglu 1935: 22.) In April of 1921, Gökalp returned from exile. When the 1923 nationalist revolution led by Mustafa Kemal – Atatürk – broke out, Gökalp supported it, but did not live long enough to see it come to fruition. He died in 1924, shortly after publishing his main work on Turkish nationalism, The Principles of Turkism (1923). (Gökalp 1968; Smith 1995: 48.) Thus, like the reform-minded Durkheim of Professional Ethics, it was practical social reconstruction that Gökalp had foremost in mind when he decided to bring Durkheimian sociology to Turkey (Findikoglu 1935: 21).

Recent scholarship has tended to paint a rightist picture of Gökalp. Far from the collectivist – perhaps even statist – that his nationalistic and ‘Turkist’ views would suggest, we find a more moderate Gökalp advocating the same Durkheimian principles of civil society that were identified in Durkheim’s thinking about corporations and secondary groups. Gökalp seems to have appropriated those elements of Durkheimian thought late to be fully articulated in the work Kubali edited, Professional Ethics. While I have no evidence that Gökalp had access to the lectures that were the basis for Professional Ethics, Gökalp writes as if he surely knew the prefaces to The Division of Labor. In his exposition of the meaning of Turkism, Gökalp advances the same view that Durkheim had put forward about the necessity for intermediary groups between the state and the rest of society:
The first goal of legal Turkism, then, is to create a modern state. The second goal is to free occupational guardianships from the interference of public guardianship by establishing occupational autonomies based on the authority of specialists. Achievement of this goal will require the enactment, on the basis of this principle, of civil, commercial, industrial and agricultural codes, as well as laws relating to the occupational autonomies of such professional organizations as the university, bar, medical society, teachers’ society, engineers’ society, etc. (Gökalp 1968: 118.)

And, again, like Durkheim, Gökalp did not seek a return to medievalism, but instead encouraged the formation of the kinds of modern professional secondary groups that Durkheim favored. These old ‘guild’-like bodies, says Gökalp, ‘must be abolished and replaced by national organizations having their centers in the national capital’ (Gökalp 1968: 106). Confirming this in an indirect way, Kubali prefaces his 1950 edition of Professional Ethics, by affirming the influence of Durkheim in Turkey as mediated by Gökalp.

The publication in Turkey of this posthumous work of Durkheim is not in any way a matter of chance but rather, we might say, the result of a kind of cultural determinism. For in Turkey, Durkheim’s is the only sociology, apart from that of Le Play, Gabriel Tarde, Espinas and others, to have become a standard work, especially since the books and teaching of Ziya Gökalp, the well-known Turkish sociologist. There are many like myself in Turkey who bear the stamp of Durkheim’s school of thought. (Durkheim 1957: xi.)

Kubali ought to be seen then as reaffirming Gökalp, or at the very least interpreting Gökalp’s Durkheimianism for the Turkey of his day.

Hüseyin Nail Kubali and the Publication of Professional Ethics

What then of Kubali? Why do we find him reaffirming the Durkheimian tradition established in Turkey by Gökalp? And, what of his relation to the publication in Turkey of Professional Ethics and Civic Morals?

Virtually nothing exists outside of Turkish language sources on the life and career of Kubali. What I have been able to gather together comes from scattered sources and the generous assistance of members of Dr Kubali’s family. Born in Istanbul in 1906, Hüseyin Nail Kubali was educated locally until he left Turkey for Paris in 1932 to pursue a doctorate in law at the Sorbonne, which he completed in 1936. Kubali’s doctoral thesis treated the Durkheimian idea of the relation of the individual to the state – L’Idée de
l’état chez les précurseurs de l’école sociologique français (Kubali 1936). In effect, Kubali was researching the possible relation of Durkheimian thought to statism or what one might call ‘fascist corporatism’ – part of the ruling ideology of the Kemalist administration in the Turkey of Kubali’s day (Parla and Davison 2004). Upon his return to Turkey, Kubali assumed a post at the University of Istanbul’s School of Law, and he eventually became its Dean. During his long professional career, he was a frequent contributor to international congresses in comparative law, human rights and international law. He contributed to professional journals in his field and authored at least thirteen books, all of which are listed in his Festschrift, Kubali Ya Armagan. (Anon. 1974.) Most interestingly of all, perhaps, Kubali played a major role in the development of Turkish democracy and civil society over the course of his decades in the School of Law at Istanbul University. As I shall now show, Kubali’s public role as a champion of civil society arose in some part from the same Durkheimianism that won Gökalp’s affections.

The deeper political and personal factors behind Kubali’s selection of a thesis topic that could be seen as an inquiry into the roots of statism in French social thought are not directly known. But, it is no secret that among Turkish republican reformers in the 1930s, ‘statism’ was an especially charged matter. It would make perfect sense for someone like Kubali to make the question of statism in Durkheim a subject for doctoral research. Where did Durkheimianism – already influential in Turkey – stand on the role of the state, and its relation to the individual? Kubali’s thesis sought to compare the theories of the state of those thinkers commonly cited as ‘predecessors’ of Durkheimian sociological thought with what the Durkheimians really said. Given what we now know of the specter of fascism haunting both Western Europe and Kemalist Turkey, the political atmosphere of the time was certainly charged. Would Kubali argue that Durkheim continued the broad polemic lines of classic ‘statist’ thinkers of the French ‘Right’, such as Frédéric Le Play and Joseph De Maistre, thus making Durkheim ideologically akin to the rightist tendencies among the Kemalists? Would Kubali, writing in 1936, be seeking, therefore, to flatter his potential patrons, the fascist corporatists among the Kemalists, who had been firmly ensconced in power since 1924, and in so doing further grant them intellectual legitimacy? Would Kubali have, in effect, aided the Kemalist incorporation of Durkheimian social thought into their ideological camp? Such are the questions to which we find answers in Kubali’s doctoral thesis.

Instead, in Kubali’s thesis we find the same man who, a generation later, as we will see, will stand up for the rule of law and for the independ-
ence of the social groups making up civil society, when such values were not altogether in favor with the regime. In short, we will find the Kubali who knew what Durkheim’s *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* taught about the dangers of the unfettered power of the state. In the Turkey of the mid-1930s, Kubali laments the way the governmental administration takes the ‘initiative’ and exercises ‘extensive use of … general power’ in political affairs, ‘where stability takes precedence over any other considerations’ (Kubali 1936: 304, 305). He also celebrates Montesquieu’s notion of what would become Durkheimian intermediating institutions – his ‘judicious conception of intermediary bodies – to which the Durkheimian School attaches such capital importance’ (Kubali 1936: 256). Citing a contemporary French sociologist independent of the Durkheimian camp, Georges Gurvitch, Kubali affirms the ‘particular value and importance for today’ of the St Simonian ideas of ‘juridical pluralism’ whereby ‘different juridical orders limit themselves reciprocally in their independent collaboration on the basis of equality in national life as well as internationally’ (Gurvitch 1931: 14; Kubali 1936: 262).

As for the role of the state itself, Kubali argued that the statisms of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries must be distinguished – both from each other, and from Durkheimian thought, however indebted the Durkheimians may be to any of the thinkers one might call ‘statist’. Kubali’s analysis has the effect of defending the statist thinkers of the eighteenth century. He concludes that the statism of the Enlightenment was ‘conceived to safeguard the individual’, much as were the interventionist actions of the US federal government in ending racial discrimination (Kubali 1936: 255). It was this kind of statism, Kubali asserts, that was ‘transmitted to the Durkheimian School’ (Kubali 1936: 256). Of the nineteenth century statists, Kubali paints a picture of irrationalism and mystagoguery. They were concerned with hierarchy and submission, seeking a return to a ‘static’ order reminiscent of the European Middle Ages (Kubali 1936: 259). In the end, Kubali concludes that, despite the debts Durkheimian thought had to the nineteenth century past, it ‘took an independent attitude’ toward politics. Seeking to disengage Durkheimian thought from politics completely, Kubali takes a kind of pragmatist view of it. Durkheimian sociology should not be used to support any ultimate ‘metaphysical’ or ideological ‘system’, but should be seen to be sociology and nothing but (Kubali 1936: 265).

We can presume that Kubali’s association with Durkheim came, at least remotely, from the influence of Gökalp. He had had a great influence upon Turkish intellectual life and even upon Turkish politics. But, this tells us nothing about how Kubali came into possession of the original lectures
from which *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* was constructed. The turning point came when Kubali made direct contact with at least one original member of the Durkheimian group – Marcel Mauss.

**Hüseyin Nail Kubali and the Acquisition of *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals***

Early in the process of writing his thesis – 1932 – Kubali tells us that he felt that he could not do justice to his treatment of statist precursors of the Durkheimians without exploring the most mature ideas of Durkheim on the ‘problem of the State’ (Kubali 1957: ix). Kubali’s first efforts at researching this topic, however, turned up little in Durkheim’s published work. Kubali thus turned to Durkheim’s nephew, Marcel Mauss, to inquire about other items by Durkheim that might be useful to him. Mauss was at the time engaged in the long process of preparing Durkheim’s unpublished works for the press, and was the official keeper of Durkheim’s papers and unpublished works. Mauss, a fervent devotee of republican democracy and Turkish endeavors in this regard, was eager to help Kubali, presumably because he saw in him an ally. Among these unpublished materials, Mauss identified a set of Durkheim’s lectures that eventually would become part of those that would later be assembled under the title, *Leçons de sociologie physique des moeurs et du droit*, or *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. Mauss entrusted a number of these lectures to Kubali. Some years later, Mauss succeeded in publishing three of these (on professional ethics) in 1937 in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale* as ‘Physique des moeurs et du droit’ – ‘The Nature of Morals and of Rights’ (Durkheim 1937; Kubali 1957: ix). The other lectures – six on civic morals – however remained unpublished, despite Mauss’s best intentions. Years later, after Kubali had returned to Turkey to assume a post at the University of Istanbul Law School, he undertook a Turkish translation of the six lectures on civic morals given to him by Mauss, and published them in 1947 in the *Revue de la faculté de la droit d’Istanbul* – the first time they had seen the official light of day. In 1950, and in Turkey as well, thanks to access granted Kubali by one of Durkheim’s daughters, Madame Jacqueline Halphen, Kubali acquired a total of fifteen lectures on civic morals to add to the three that had been published earlier by Mauss on professional ethics in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*. Kubali edited and published the entire set of eighteen lectures under the title of what we know today as the *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. 
The Significance of Kubali’s Durkheimianism

What I find significant in Kubali’s career is its consistent moral direction from these beginnings in the 1930s. His edition of *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* of 1950 thus occupies a place along a moral and ideological trajectory that can be traced up to recent times. In 1959, for example, Kubali surveyed the status of the rule of law in Turkey in an article, ‘The Concept of the Rule of Law in Turkey’. Here, Kubali showed a willingness to admit the shortcomings of Turkey in respect to international democratic legal standards. To a reading audience he knew would come substantially from the West, Kubali admitted that Turkey’s practice of adherence to the rule of law fell short of its own statutory guarantees. ‘Administrations and legislatures may overrule the law and, in effect, ignore constitutional considerations’ (Kubali 1959: 302–3). In particular, Kubali was troubled by restrictions to ‘freedom of association, public meetings and press’ (Kubali 1959: 302), enacted in 1953. Walter F. Weiker noted that ‘the universities interpreted as unacceptable invasions of academic freedom’ (Weiker 1963: 50). Kubali took their side, and denounced the ‘press regulations’ that had been ordered by the Menderes administration that ruled from 1950–61 (Douglas 2001: 125). In 1958, this led to his becoming victim of the statist power he had singled out for criticism. The Menderes government removed Kubali from his post at the Law School. Even though the university was in midterm recess when Kubali was arrested, ‘some 600 students defiantly rallied to give departing Professor Kubali an ovation, carried him on their shoulders to his car despite his urging that they disperse’ (Anon. 1958).

Once the Menderes regime was overthrown by the Revolution of 1960, the revolutionary government restored autonomy to the universities, and convened a constitutional committee to draft the Constitution of 1961 (Shaw and Shaw 1977: 414–5). Kubali served on this committee primarily for his mastery of the ‘elaborate legal framework for achieving both development and the preservation of basic political liberties’ (Weiker 1963: 68). Kubali’s influence was critical in establishing a Constitutional Court that sought to ensure judicial independence (Shaw and Shaw 1977: 410–14). Among its democratizing provisions, the new constitution strengthened the separation of powers among the various branches of government (Shaw and Shaw 1977: 418). Thus, the 1961 constitution defined more clearly voting rights in Turkey with its guarantee of universal and direct suffrage, provisions approaching the full right of habeas corpus, and workers rights to organize, and so on (Shaw and Shaw 1977: 421). Significantly, shortly after
the adoption of the new constitution, the European Economic Cooperation Organization – the predecessor to the European Union – admitted Turkey to ‘associate’ membership in 1964.

It was in these politically fluid years just after World War II, when the fate of human rights in Turkey hung in the balance, that in 1950, Kubali, then Dean of the Faculty of Law of the University of Istanbul, directed the publication of a set of lectures by Durkheim under the title, *Leçons de sociologie physique des moeurs et du droit* (Durkheim 1950), later to appear in English translation as *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals*. In this vein, Kubali’s publication of *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* can be read as an attempt to put Durkheimian corporatism in Turkey definitely on the side of the formation of just that sort of civil society. Investigating this matter demanded a thorough study of the alleged nineteenth century ‘precursors’ of Durkheimian sociology and this would be particularly germane to Turkey’s situation. As he explains it,

> The French School of Sociology has for us a double value: first of all, thanks to its strictly scientific method, it has contributed in an original way to an explanation of judicial problems. And, in view of the long standing influence of French culture in Turkey, it also holds out a growing interest for us. This School has earned, here as in France, the keys to the city.

> Given that fact, it is quite understandable that we would not have been able to resist wanting to know what their precursors thought about the state. Such is the essential motive for this present study. (Kubali 1936: 5.)

By publishing a work like *Professional Ethics and Civic Morals* that features Durkheim’s commitment to human rights, especially the sacredness of the individual, Kubali would have been asserting again, several generations later, Durkheim’s original intent. While, at this point, I can only hazard the hypothesis that Kubali does so in part to rehabilitate Gökalp by retrieving the democratic legacy of Durkheim from the right wing of the Kemalist movement who would use the prestige of both Durkheim and Gökalp for their own purposes, one might keep such a possibility in mind for future research.
An Afterword: Durkheim and Gökalp on Religion and Muslim Civil Society

Although I have not developed the particular place assigned to religion in Professional Ethics and Civic Morals or in the work of Gökalp and Kubali, as far as I know them, I would like to conclude by making a few remarks about the place of religion in the Durkheimian corporatist vision of the future society. For Durkheim, religion is regarded as capable of being one of those secondary social formations or ‘corporations’.

This may surprise readers of The Division of Labor and Professional Ethics, since they will recall how Durkheim insisted upon the primacy of the link of these intermediary groups with meaningful economic realities. ‘What past experience demonstrates above all is that the organizational framework of the professional group should always be related to that of economic life. It is because this condition was not fulfilled that the system of corporations disappeared.’ (Durkheim 1902: l–li.) But, as a result of this economic emphasis, we tend to overlook the fact that both Durkheim and Gökalp assign a place to morals and religion among these social sub-groupings. This fact accentuates the apparent evolution in Durkheim’s thought from one of his earlier writings – the preface to first edition (1893) of Durkheim’s The Division of Labor – to one toward the end of his life, the preface to the second edition (1902). This later preface is rightly singled out as one of the two places where Durkheim articulates his latter-day theory of the place of professional and occupational groups in the reconstruction that he imagined for a future society. The other locus classicus for such discussions is, of course, the work of Durkheim’s that Hüseyin Nail Kubali saw to publication, Professional Ethics. In his preface to the second edition of The Division of Labor, Durkheim brings out the place of religion in his conception of a future solidarist corporatist society. He does so by recalling the moral and religious character of the ancient Roman ‘corporation’. Emphasizing that these corporations had far more than the dominant economic character that later European guilds had, Durkheim notes that ‘Above all else, the [Roman] corporation was a collegiate religious body. Each one possessed its own particular god, who, when the means were available, was worshiped in a special temple’ (Durkheim 1902: xl).

It is notable as well that Gökalp made a point of including religious groups among those that might count as ‘occupational’ groups. One of Gökalp’s earlier biographers and critics, A. Ziyaeddin Fahri Findikoglu, notes that Gökalp’s view of occupational groups incorporates both their original economic and religious make up: ‘Turkish towns have an econom-
ic life that is fundamentally corporate. The solidarity of the professions takes its origin in conceptions that have really nothing to do with economics, since these guilds are only religious confraternities.’ (Findikoglu 1935: 41, my translation.) In his own words, Gökalp says that ‘religious, political, scientific, aesthetic and economic groups are the specialized and professional groups that have been created by a division of labor’ (Gökalp 1968: 51).

But Gökalp argued, as well, that religion should be autonomous of political structures, and further that it could only be useful to the nation to the extent it would ‘occupy its “own sphere.”’ Its elites must give up their claims to politics, just as politicians should ensure the autonomy of religious practices and institutions …’ (Davison 1995: 213). But, this does not mean that religion should not influence the ethos of the nation. In his 1915 article, ‘The Social Functions of Religion’, Gökalp argued, to an extent, like Durkheim, for the social value of religious groups in shaping individuals into social beings, but most notably to enrich the national ethos (Davison 1995: 211). Despite his personal Muslim piety, Gökalp, likewise, rejected both ‘theocracy’ and ‘clericalism’. True to Durkheim, Gökalp took the view that religion had ‘intrinsic value in human life and history’. It is one of the ‘pillars of organic solidarity’ and should ‘occupy a place in public life, (but) where public means something other than political.’ (Parla and Davison 2004: 217–8.) This is what Gökalp meant by referring to religion in Turkey as ‘semi-public’ – as a ‘corporate sub-unit of the national culture’ (Davison 1995: 213).

This willingness to grant religion rights in civil society has particularly important consequences for our contemporary international religious and political scene. Arguing generations before our present day, Gökalp adds to the data base of arguments made notably by Robert W. Hefner’s Civil Islam (2000) about the potential for religion to contribute to civil society in Muslim countries. It may well be true, as Hefner argues, that the character of democracies developed in Muslim countries may take on a distinctive color of their own. While they seem unlike ‘democracies’ from the viewpoint of what Charles Taylor has called ‘Atlantic’ societies, they may be new sorts of democracies themselves (Taylor 2004). Hefner, thus, reports that in Indonesia – as well as in other Muslim societies all too recognizable to Durkheim and Gökalp, respectively – religious social formations might serve as Durkheimian mediating institutions. In Hefner’s words,

Muslim democrats, like, those in Indonesia, tend to be more civil democratic or Tocquevillian than they are (Atlantic) liberal in spirit. They deny the need for an Islamic state. But they insist that society involves
more than autonomous individuals, and democracy more than markets and the state. Democracy requires a non-coercive culture that encourages citizens to respect the rights of others as well as to cherish their own. This public culture depends on mediating institutions in which citizens develop habits of free speech, participation, and toleration. In all this, they say, there is nothing undemocratic about Muslim voluntary associations (as well as those of other religions) playing a role in the public life of civil society as well as in personal ethics. (Hefner 2000: 13.)

At least in his formal publications, Gökalp saw Durkheimian corporatism conceiving Islam as having a role in the formation of civil society in Turkey. Every indication points to Hüseyin Nail Kubali coming to the very same conclusion. Taking its place among other secondary groupings within civil society, it would inform the relation between the individual and the state, and in doing so would play a constructive role in sustaining a modern democratic nation state.

I should like to thank İlhan Citak, Andrew Davison, Joseph Esposito, Michael Feener, Emelie Olson, and Glenn Yocum for their advice and for directing me to some of the current sources and literature on Turkey. Particular thanks go to Hüseyin Nail Kubali’s daughter, Mrs Segvi Gencer and her husband Mustafa, as well as Hüseyin Nail Kubali’s nephew, Ali N. Kubalý, for providing me with biographical information on his uncle, as well as encouragement for my project and source materials from Turkish publications.

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Defining Religion, Defying Tradition?
Concord and Conflict about the Role of Religion in a Costa Rican Indigenous Community

Introduction

When approaching the issue of power, some fundamental questions always arise: Who is in a position to define? When, where, for whom, and why? These are also underlying questions in the particular case that I shall discuss here: Discourses about the role of religion among Bribris in Talamanca, the indigenously dominated area in south-eastern Costa Rica.\(^1\)

I will look at how ‘religion’ is defined by different actors, and into how the same actors understand religion in relation to what they see as other aspects of society and culture – in particular what the Bribris refer to as siwá, a concept they often translate into Spanish as tradición. In doing so, I wish to highlight how different actors discuss and negotiate the role of ‘religion’ in a particular cultural and historical context. For analytical purposes, I propose that defining should be seen as a practice that delimits something and gives it a certain place or space in relation to something else. To define is then to exercise power. As a consequence, discourses about the definition and role of religion in Talamanca are seen as both practices of, and contests about power.

Before I set out, it should be stated that this must be seen as a first outline of the topic. To my knowledge, there has been no previous academic attempt to describe in detail the pluralistic character of the religious situation in Talamanca, nor do any scholarly analyses of the ongoing discourses about religion exist. In other words, there is still much research to be done. This preliminary attempt to sketch the situation is based on material gathered during two periods of fieldwork in 2000 and 2001, the

\(^1\) The area is culturally pluralistic, but the indigenous groups the Bribri and Kabékír are the most numerous. Here I shall only deal with Bribris and non-indigenous persons.
main purpose of which was to focus on one religious group, the Bahá’ís (see Tafjord 2004). To capture the broader picture was then first and foremost a task of contextualisation. Despite this limited scope, it is still worthwhile to make this initial effort to identify some of the unfolding processes, especially considering the positions and perspectives of the first group of actors that I wish to draw attention to.

**Foreign Academics**

Since the late 1960s, a significant number of sikua (foreigners) have done research in Talamanca. When commenting upon religion, these scholars all speak of the indigenous religion of the Bribris. Surprisingly, they have rarely mentioned that most Bribris are either Christians (Adventists, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals or of other denominations) or Bahá’ís, and that these are what most Bribris consider to be their ‘religions’. What the sikua academics describe as ‘indigenous religion’ is not considered to be ‘religion’ by a large majority of Bribris.

**Siwá**

Shortly after my arrival in the village of Mojoncito, the now late Don Rosendo Jackson, then a highly respected elder and a Bahá’í, told me about the past:

The Bribris did not have any religion before. Religion is something the sikua have brought to Talamanca. But the old Bribris knew Sibó. They knew the laws and rules that Sibó had given them, and they lived the way Sibó had decided and did as he had told. Since the old Bribris were

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2 *Sikuapa* (pl. *sikua, s.*) is used to refer to ‘foreigners’, meaning persons that (1) are not Bribri; or (2) are not considered indigenous; or (3) are considered to be of European ancestry. Here it is used in the last meaning listed.


4 The two books that do deal with foreign religions among the Bribris (Drüg 1995 and Quesada 2001) must both be seen as primary sources presenting parts of the history of the Catholic mission in Talamanca.
so respectful and lived as Sibö had obliged them to, they did not need any religion.5

During my stays, variations of this history, or argument, were told time after time, by elders as well as younger people, and by Bahá’ís, Christians and atheists alike. It refers to their story of the creation of the world we live in; a fascinating story that the limited space unfortunately prevents me retelling here.6 In short, it describes how Sibö – one of the most active persons in this creation process – contributed to the creation of the first Bribris who were the very first human beings. For a period after this beginning, Sibö stayed with them to teach them all they needed to know. Ever since, it is told, this knowledge has been transmitted and cultivated down the generations.

In what is considered its most pure form, this knowledge is found in a vast corpus of stories that, to Bribris, explains ‘where we come from’, ‘what the world is like [to us]’ and ‘what is right for us’. Alongside and intertwined with the stories is a sophisticated repertoire of more or less ritualized actions, linked, e.g., to weather conditions, agriculture, hunting, food consumption, travel, pregnancy, birth, illness and death. Taken together, these are often referred to as the most important and authentic representations of siwó.

As most Bribris see it, siwó represents the order of the world. They hold the ideas and practices of siwó to be fundamental to their way of life and to their relationship with the cosmos. They regard it as a core element of their culture; it is what they consider to be most indigenous or most Bribi; and it is what – in their own eyes – distinguishes them from others (who in turn are thought to have different representations of siwó). Its performance, the telling of the stories and interpreting them as well as the acting out of the rituals and defining general correct behaviour, are in many cases highly specialised activities, only carried out ‘in its right way’ by the right kind of specialists.7

5 ‘Los antiguos bribris no tenían alguna religión. La religión es algo que los sikuapa traían a Talamanca. Pero los Bribris de antes conocían a Sibó. Ellos conocían las leyes y reglas que Sibó les dio, y vivían como Sibó había decidido y hacían como él había dicho. Por que los antiguos Bribris fueron tan respetuosos y vivían como Sibó les había obligado, ellos no necesitaban alguna religión.’ See also Tafjord 2004: 97.


7 For a more detailed outline of siwó, see Tafjord 2004: 97–136.
Scholarship and Politics

Now, there is no doubt that selected parts of *siwá* could easily fall within an academic definition of ‘religion’, and it would, of course, be perfectly legitimate to isolate such parts and treat them as ‘religion’ for analytical and intellectual purposes, as my precursors have done. However, in doing so, the discourses about the role of religion in Talamanca are easily lost sight of, discourses in which foreign scholars also play a part.

*Siku* academics have contributed to the formation of a small but influential university educated group of young and middle-aged Bribri political leaders. In situations of the more formal kind where *sikuapa* are involved, many of these leaders present themselves as atheists. Nevertheless, when addressing other Bribris, or on more informal occasions, many of them are more than willing to speak of certain ritualized parts of *siwá* – much in accordance with *siku* academics – as their inherited indigenous ‘religion’.

Many of the young leaders, and most – if not all – of the academics that I have met, are sceptical about the roles that newly imported and adopted religions now play in Talamanca. According to them, foreign religions do not belong in Bribri society and culture, and should therefore not be given any place there. But although the indigenous reserves are autonomous in many respects, when it comes to the question of religious freedom, national law and international conventions have to be followed. The formal political leadership, mainly composed of these young leaders, is thus prevented from prohibiting representatives of different religions proselytizing in the area. Yet, labelling selected parts of *siwá* as ‘religion’ can in some contexts be understood as a strategy to face the challenge of the ‘religions’ that are brought into Talamanca from the outside, and to counter what is seen as cultural decay.

Together, the academics and the young political leaders – as ‘experts’ and policy makers – are the ones with the largest opportunity to present, and thereby define, the Talamancan religious situation to the rest of the world. A world with ever increasing communications also has an impact on the discourses about the role of religion that are taking place within Bribri society.

The Arrival of the Religious

Yet, the young politicians should be seen as the exception that confirms the rule. In most situations, the vast majority of Bribris do *not* consider
to have anything to do with ‘religion’. To them, ‘religion’ is something
have brought to Talamanca. Let me once again turn to history, but
first from an outsider’s perspective, that is, the perspective of those who
brought ‘religion’ there.

Even though the area was visited by Europeans as early as Columbus’s
fourth voyage, it very soon became a distant outpost in the Spanish em-
pire. The indigenous resistance, the climate, the topography and the struc-
ture and governing of the colonies, made the few attempts at settlement by
the Spanish short-lived. A united indigenous uprising in 1709 put an end
to sporadic missionary efforts; the area was left in the hands of its inhabit-
ants, and before long, practically forgotten (Blanco 1983, Fernández 1969,
Ibarra 1990 and 1999).

For the following 250 years, no foreign missionaries lived in Talamanca.
From the end of the nineteenth century onwards, some occasional excursions
were made to the area by a few ardent clergymen, but the duration,
the infrequency, and the lack of linguistic and cultural skills of the visi-
tors made the impact of these expeditions minimal. The indigenous cul-
tures, with their ways of life and worldviews, could continue to develop
relatively unaffected by the turbulent events going on in other parts of the
and 1999, Quesada 2001).

It was not until the 1960s, when new infrastructures made access to
the area less hazardous, that missionaries once again tried to settle in
Talamanca, and this time with more success (Drüg 1995, Lamb 1995). But
they were not only Catholics, representatives of other Christian denomina-
tions, as well as Bahá’ís, were now eager to save the souls of the lost tribes
of Talamanca. A missionary race started, one which is still continuing.

For several reasons, by the 1960s the national state authorities had be-
come more interested in gaining control over the area and in assimilating
its population into what was imagined to be a national culture. As a means
of achieving this, the state supported Catholic missionary activities. The
first public schools in the area were started in the mid-1960s and were run
by Catholic missionaries (Drüg 1995). Former pupils recount their experi-
ences in the classrooms where indigenous culture was treated as inferior
and the children were told that they were better off abandoning it. Speaking
Bribri was not allowed at school. Specialists dedicated to the performance
of the more ritualized parts of have depicted as practitioners of false
and even devilish cults. Of course, this was not looked upon as reasonable
by most Bribris.
The Adoption of ‘Religion’

When Bribris recount their history, they refer to the same events: the arrival of Columbus, their victories in the uprisings, and the periods of peace and autonomy. They proudly portray their ancestors’ political, military and cultural strength and their obedience to the laws of Sibö. They also talk about the difficulties that the arrival of the *sikuapa* caused them, and how foreign influence has come to threaten the foundations of their culture and society.

Even so, both the Bribris’ and the missionaries’ stories confirm that there was a widespread interest in the new narratives§ of the world and ritual practices that the *sikuapa* introduced as ‘religion’ (see Tafjord 2004). Within a short period of time, foreign ‘religions’ gained a significant number of followers in Talamanca. I have not yet met or heard of any person in Talamanca, who has not at some point been involved in one or more of the ‘religions’ brought in from outside. Even the young leaders, who lately present themselves as atheists, or what could be called traditionalists, all have a past with some kind of affiliation to a foreign religion.

In Bribri society, the privileged position of the elders give them every right to define what is right for their families. This was the case some 45 years ago and still is so today. The elders were the ones who had the last word, not only in relation to themselves, but also in relation to their entire families, when the opportunity to choose a ‘religion’ appeared.9

Why should they not adopt a ‘religion’? As long as they respected *siwá*, there was in principle nothing to prohibit them from taking up a ‘religion’. If the practice of ‘religion’ could help them to achieve benefits and cope effectively with the events of the world, then why not take advantage of it?

According to many who later describe the situation, the old Bribris had no need for ‘religion’, but the turmoil caused by the arrival of increasing numbers of *sikuapa* had a strong impact on Bribri society and culture. It accelerated changes in many institutions, ideas and ways of doing things. There is every reason to assume that talk about social corruption and cultural decline was extensive in the 1960s, as it is today. Nowadays, it is claimed that what Sibö has prescribed is no longer followed as before.

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8 The use of the term ‘narrative’ here follows that of Gavin Flood (1999).
9 Evidence of the strength of this relationship (which is first and foremost a matrilineal one) can be seen, e.g., from the fact that conversion from one religion to another usually takes place only after one’s mother, and often also her elder brothers, have passed away. See Tafjord 2004.
Many, especially among the elders, express their hopes in ‘religion’ and its moral codes as a means of countering this development, and even of contributing to the restoration of the original order that the elders were familiar with from their youth or had heard stories of from their ancestors. Not that it is thought that the old times can be brought back exactly as they were. New times call for new approaches, and a new way to re-establish the workings of Sibö’s rules is now seen to be through ‘religion’. In this way ‘religion’ has suddenly become a necessity, the argument goes.

Variations

New ideas and new ritual practices were, of course, not a novelty as such in Talamanca. Present Bribri culture and identity are linked with of hundreds – if not thousands – of years of cultural change resulting from creative invention, continuous adaptation and exchange with close neighbours as well as distant people. What is considered Bribri is contingent on the historical context.

Today Bahá’ís, Catholics, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Pentecostals and Seventh-day Adventists are strongly represented on the indigenous reserves, while representatives of other religions such as TM (Maharishi Mahesh Yogi), the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) and several other Christian denominations frequently visit the area with the purpose of propagating their faiths and attracting new members. Consequently, the discussions are not just about the role of ‘religion’, but also about the different roles of different ‘religions’.

As families have chosen different religions, new groups and alliances have been formed based on religious affiliation. To a certain extent these groups tend to coincide with long since established social networks based on kinship relations, but in many cases they also cross and challenge these bonds. Besides, these new groups form part of larger groups that extend to other parts of the country, and even other parts of the world, in which sikuapa are fellow adherents. Each of the religions has also introduced a new hierarchy, with persons on different levels authorised to define what is right for others.

This is the larger picture. Before I move on to comment upon other groups of actors in the discourses in question, some clarifying remarks are required. Among Bribris, as well as among sikuapa, there are obviously different positions. It goes without saying that I can only comment upon the roles and positions of some of the groups that, in somewhat different
ways, are involved in the discourses. The extent to which these groups here may seem to be homogenous is more likely to be a result of my categories than of their actual compositions and dynamics. One should also be aware that the act of defining, in praxis, is very much dependent upon the particular context or situation – and the roles different persons have in it – when it is performed. Evidently this paper simplifies a much more complex and dynamic picture. That said, it is time to take a closer look at how members of five of the once foreign religions approach the theme (in alphabetical order).

Bahá’ís

During my fieldwork I spent more time with Bahá’ís than with all the other groups taken together, and it is from them that I have most often heard the story of how the Bribris in the old days did not have and did not need any religion. Bribris who are Bahá’ís clearly state that their religion is something different from their own tradition. Siwá, they say, is what they are born with, while religion is what they have chosen to believe in. This, however, is not to say that they do not compare and relate the two.

When appropriate, they emphasize that particular teachings of the Bahá’í faith confirm what they have always known, adding that it is just that nowadays they need religion to reinforce some of it. The religion, they claim, has also helped them to reach a better understanding of their past. Bahá’í teaching has, for example, made them realize that Sibö – alongside among others Krishna, Jesus and Muhammed and, more lately, Baha’ú’lláh – was a messenger from God, not a god himself. Furthermore, this integration of Sibö into the Bahá’í genealogy of prophets, provides tradition with the opportunity to attest that the Bahá’í faith is, in don Rosendo’s words, ‘the right religion for Bribris today’. Obviously, they interpret their religion in light of siwá, and vice versa. In this sense, the new religion and siwá are used to legitimate each other. Even though there are differing views about the extent of the relations between the one and the other, there is a high degree of concordance in stating that such a relation exists and that it is the most important reason for choosing the Bahá’í religion over other religions.

Once sikuapa with contacts and/or positions higher up in the Bahá’í hierarchy enter the scene, tension rises. It goes without saying that the foreigners warmly approve of the Bribris’ dedication to important aspects of their common religion. They also agree with the Bribris that the religion
is strengthening Bribri culture. But what the foreigners also immediately observe – and what Bribris immediately see that the foreigners observe – is (1) that Bribris tend to focus on those practices and teachings of the Bahá’í faith that they somehow recognise as belonging to their indigenous tradition, and (2) that Bribris, when it comes to practice, more often than not, do not care about, or actively ignore, those parts of the Bahá’í faith that they understand contradict the ways of siwá. Moreover, the climate does not usually get any better when foreign Bahá’ís start talking about what Bribris consider to be central parts of siwá as ‘superstition’.

Catholics
The Catholic clergy working in Talamanca are without exception sikuapa. Two German priests, now in their 90s and 80s, have run the mission since the early 1960s. Their harsh attacks on ritualized practices related to siwá and on ways of behaviour different from European customs, have not been met with enthusiasm among the Bribris. Attempts to prohibit and even demonise what the Bribris consider ‘right for us’ has caused several conflicts.

The Bribri Catholics with whom I talked all asserted that their religion had nothing to do with the stories and practices that the indigenous ritual specialists linked with siwá, and that these are something else which are not to be confused with religion. During our brief conversations on the topic, they were reluctant to compare the two sets of practices and narratives about the world, except to say that it was all a matter of paying attention to the laws of Sibó.

In general, attendance at mass is very low indeed. Due to the lack of younger clergymen, the number of services are said to be significantly lower than a couple of decades ago, and visits to remote and/or inaccessible settlements have almost stopped entirely. It should be noted that most persons over the age of 40 are baptised as Catholics. However, many have

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10 For a period there was a young indigenous man who aspired to become a priest, but he gave this up a few years ago when he fell in love with a woman.
11 The maximum number of attendants I witnessed at a mass was four persons (all from one family), apart from the priest and the nuns. However, attendance at religious gatherings alone does not necessarily indicate the religious commitment among Bribris. Similar to how they relate to certain practices of siwá, many practices related to the different religions are left to the respective ritual specialists to perform.
later converted to one of the other religions now present in Talamanca, while others still identify themselves as Catholics, but do not participate in the religion’s public rituals. The practices performed in private by those belonging to this latter group have yet to be determined.

**Jehovah’s Witnesses**

Among the more active and numerous groups today are the Jehovah’s Witnesses. Because of the distance from Mojoncito, where I was based, to their residences, and because they are not closely related to the families with whom I stayed, my encounters with adherents of this group were quite limited. And those I did talk to were not too keen on discussing the subject. I was told that Jehovah’s Witnesses sometimes talk negatively about some ritualized parts of *siwá*, but that in practice, they too participate in them when they find it necessary. Naturally, no conclusions can be drawn without investigation.

**Pentecostals**

How do Pentecostals perceive the relation between *siwá* and their religion? The persons I have been in contact with belong to an autonomous church of the Asamblea de Dios branch, where all the members, including the pastor, are Bribris or have other indigenous identities. The church is located in the vicinity of where I lived. On different occasions, I therefore met one or another of its members almost daily. All of those whom I spoke with about the issue, firmly stated that their religion has nothing whatsoever to do with indigenous culture and their tradition; that these are two completely separate entities or domains: God’s almighty will, his universal laws, should not be compared to any cultural tradition. Culture and ethnicity, I was again told cannot be chosen, whereas salvation and the mercy of God, are up to oneself.

When talking to Pentecostals before, during or after their sermons, or in other church-related settings, they usually rejected the most ritualized parts of *siwá*, especially those practices performed by ritual specialists, as ‘the works of the Devil’ and so forth, whereas in other contexts, this was not the case. Most of them still use the services of traditional ritual specialists when particular situations require it. There have even been such ritual specialists among their members.
Sékían-dé Adventists
The Sékían-dé Adventists are located in a different part of the area from the one in which I spent most of my time, but coincidences and curiosity made me spend a Saturday with them in their church. During their service, they explicitly condemned the practices performed by the experts in siwá, claiming that those who think that is ‘religion’ are misguided and wrong, and labelling it as ‘satanic’. What they say and do on the other days of the week is to me still a matter of rumour.

A Matter of Position

It should be noted that in contexts other than those where the religions were at the centre, I never witnessed Bribris explicitly dismiss siwá. When among fellow believers, indigenous representatives from all the religious groups so far mentioned could openly declare that the practices and beliefs of other religions are false or at least not as favourable as their own. On other occasions, when there were members of different religions present, Bribris very seldom raised religion as a theme in discussions. To do so is seen as inappropriate. What emerged in the forefront of the discourses during such gatherings, were the common history and what is seen as indigenous traditions, as well as the present social and political situation, in other words, what unites them as a larger group. Only in situations of great confidence, were religion and attitudes towards various religious practices and beliefs carefully discussed across religious borders.

Sikuapa involved in different religions tended to be less apprehensive when proclaiming the superiority of their practices and beliefs. This has led to unease among locals, especially when it has happened at events where representatives from different religions have been present, but also during meetings of a specific religion when sikuapa have talked about parts of siwá in negative terms. That Bribris themselves, and particularly elders, may be critical of some contemporary practices and interpretations linked to siwá by different individuals, is seen as legitimate. They have the knowledge and understanding necessary to evaluate siwá – they are part in it. Conversely, sikuapa are not part of it and they are not seen as having the knowledge to understand it properly. Hence from an indigenous point of view, they are not in position to judge it, or its relation to the religions.
Selection of the Fittest

The first *sikuapa* missionaries were in the privileged position of being able to select which parts from what they saw as the entirety of their religions they were to present to Bribris. Since then many Bribris have actively sought information about different religions for themselves. All the same, for practical reasons and because of their positions in religious hierarchies, the privilege *sikuapa* have to introduce Bribris to what they consider to be important parts of their religions has continued. From these selections, Bribris have chosen what to emphasise in their own religious practices and what to build their religious understandings upon.

As already mentioned, when commenting upon the Bahá’ís, religious practices that more or less correspond to, or can be compared with, practices prescribed by *siwá* seem to be quite easily adopted. In this respect, recitation stands out as one of the practices that Bribris of different religious affiliations stress as important and practise frequently. The opposite is the case in relation to practices that somehow contradict the established way of doing things in Talamanca. Such practices are often understood as less important, or at least more difficult to perform. Marriage, for example, in the forms the various religions practise it, is almost absent in Talamanca, despite the efforts of *sikuapa* to convince their fellow believers of its importance. Confronted with this, Bribris usually answer that to make such a deep commitment before God would be too big a step to take at the present time, what if one were unable to keep it? When *sikuapa* have tried to encourage or even threaten them to fulfil more of what they see as their religions’ obligations, the Bribris’ commonplace reaction has been silence.

Sometimes *sikuapa* have continued to press the issue, despite Bribris’ assurances that they will look into the matter in time. This has annoyed many. Combined with insensitive attacks on what are seen as important practices of *siwá*, it has made significant numbers withdraw from communal religious activities. Nevertheless, the majority of such people still maintain their religious identity in private. They maintain that there is nothing wrong with the religion itself. Their problem lies in how *sikuapa* interpret it and try to impose their interpretations: *Sikuapa* have misunder-

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12 Many of the sources they have trusted upon are of course also produced by *sikuapa*.

13 Obviously, sexual relations have been and still are strictly regulated also in Talamanca. However, lifelong relationships have never been the rule.
stood the basic message of their respective religions when they try to tell Bribris what is right and what is wrong for them.

Independent of their attitudes towards and definitions of religion, in most situations Bribris share a high respect for siwad and the specialists in its interpretation and performance. It is well known in Talamanca that in cases of illness or other dangers, virtually every indigenous person will eventually seek the knowledge and the help of the ritual specialists who are committed to the various practices of siwad, no matter how pejoratively they may have spoken about them in previous religious settings.

**Complementary and/or Competing**

Time and space emerge as key categories once a more systematic, analytical approach is taken. Times and places are designated for different kinds of activities, in Talamanca as elsewhere, and different activities may demand different kinds of thinking, maybe even different narratives of the world (Flood 1999). One could argue that Bribris’ perceptions of the relation between their religions and siwad, and its enactment, are examples of what Tord Olsson (2000), Roy A. Rappaport (1999) and others have spoken of as ‘complementary ritual fields’. Each field calls upon specific narratives that do not necessarily correspond with the narratives of other fields, but taken together they can still be perceived as a balanced whole.

When defining siwad as ‘tradition’, or even as ‘culture’, rather than as ‘religion’, Bribris avoid getting into conflict with their ‘religions’’ demands of exclusivity when they do what they regard as appropriate or necessary to be in concord with the world as they know it. The practice of what is not ‘religion’ can perfectly well be combined with being a faithful member of the Bahá’í faith or one of the Christian churches.

Yet, if one is to take the actors’ own definitions into serious account, it becomes apparent that the ‘complementary ritual fields’ perspective fails to highlight at least one important aspect of these cases. Whenever a situation appears in which it is not clear which narrative and set of practices are appropriate to a given time and space, then what otherwise may be understood as complementary might become competitive. To follow Gavin Flood, it might become an example of competing narratives and practices. What is more intriguing is that in Talamanca, apparently whatever is at any time seen as siwad tends to be decisive in settling these power struggles.
Language

Language is another compelling element here. The ritualized practices and narratives of the ‘religions’ are almost exclusively performed in Spanish, and the same goes for much of the discussions about them, although Bribris may also debate them in Bribri. When it comes to siwá, the verbal parts of the most ritualized practices are performed by the specialists in a distinctive language reserved only for this purpose. The interpretations and discussions of siwá usually take place in Bribri, a language that no sikua missionary has ever learned well. Thus, in addition to time frames and space frames, there are also language frames distinguishing the different fields of discourse and admitting or preventing different actors from taking part in them.14

Facts, Beliefs and Assumptions

I would also like to point to a set of categories used by Morton Klass (1995) that I find very helpful when it comes to detecting what might be yet another aspect of the discourses about the relationships between siwá and religion in Talamanca. The categories are: ‘facts’, ‘beliefs’ and ‘assumptions’. ‘Facts’ meaning what is proven; ‘beliefs’ refers to all that one has actively chosen to accept; and ‘assumptions’ refers to everything that is taken for granted.

As I interpret it, most, if not all, of what Bribris consider to be part of siwá is either assumed to be beyond question (‘assumptions’), or seen as proven (‘facts’). On the one hand, siwá is what they are born with, it is the way the world is to them, and it effectively affects the very same world that they live in. On the other hand, their religions are what they have actively chosen to accept to believe in. One can choose one’s religion, but one cannot choose whether or not to be a Bribri, they argue. The conclusion is that siwá and religion seem to be regarded as operating on different levels.

This perspective may also shed light upon how siwá – as ‘assumptions’ and ‘facts’ – is present in most, if not all, situations in Talamanca, and how religions – as ‘beliefs’ – are formed upon and confined by the former. Religions are given limited times and places within a larger space that is

14 For more about the use of different languages in different contexts, see Cervantes 1990 and Tafjord 2004.
defined by *siwá*; times and places with limits that are continuously negotiated. That some specific practices related to *siwá* may be verbally discredited during religious services (where the same practices are absent), does not mean that other parts of *siwá* (that are present) are rejected, nor does it mean that the verbal dismissal will be put into practice after one has left the time, place and language of religion.

Conflicts arise when *sikuapa*, failing to acknowledge most Bribris’ differentiation, define their religion as the larger space and reduce *siwá* to mere ‘beliefs’. This insensitivity has led religious *sikuapa* to try to interfere with areas of social and political life that Bribris, religious or not, consider separate from the religions’ domains.

**A Case that Challenged the Limits of ‘Religion’**

In the period from June to August 2002 a series of events that further challenged the definitions of religion took place in Talamanca, when a group that introduced themselves as Páis Global de la Paz Mundial (Global Country of World Peace) appeared on the missionary scene. I was first made aware of what was going when I started to receive e-mails from Costa Rican anthropologists asking me to collaborate with them to put pressure on the national government to take action.\(^\text{15}\) A quick search revealed that the new intruders were part of the Transcendental Meditation (TM) movement of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi.

The events were soon given broad coverage in the national newspapers.\(^\text{16}\) It appeared that a group of Bribris were very interested in what these *sikuapa* had to offer, e.g., the establishment of a new ‘spiritual reign’ and a donation of several millions in a new ‘spiritual currency’, and were willing to become followers. Some *rites de passage* had already been performed.

This not only threatened the ideas of some *siku* academics, but also alarmed the local political leadership and leaders of already established religions. They all expressed their opinion in the press about how the *sikuapa* members of this ‘false sect’ or ‘false religion’ were trying to take advantage

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\(^{15}\) Thinking that everyone should be left to make their own choices, I did not of course interfere in any way.

\(^{16}\) See, e.g., *Diario Extra* (18.07.02), *La Nación* (18.07., 28.07., 30.07. and 04.08.02); *La Prensa Libre* (20.07.02).
of the Bribris. Very soon, the minister of national security and, a few days later, the president also commented on the case, giving their assurance that measures would be taken. And action was taken: The leaders of the group, being foreign citizens, were expelled from the country. Locally, the persons that had first shown interest in the new ideas were forced to express their regrets and give up their intentions. It was concluded that what they had faced was not ‘religion’, but some false ideology if not fraud.

To be Continued

The picture drawn in this article is based on very limited material. Before any conclusions can be drawn, much more research must be done. All the same, we are not dealing with a static situation, however, it can be summed provisionally up as follows:

When meeting or referring to the ‘other’, the common attitude among Bribris is that ‘what is right for us might not be right for others’ and ‘what is right for others might not be right for us.’ In Talamanca, it is the elders, and especially those who are specialists in certain parts of siwá, who are entrusted with the authority to define ‘what is right for us’. After all, they are the ones who know what the world is really like. Even so, their interpretations are constantly challenged in a variety of ways and from differing positions that also mutually challenge each other. Alliances change as contexts change, and what is conceived of as concord and as conflict varies according to participant or the observer. The discourses about the definition and role of religion – or the definitions and roles of religions – are only one important part of larger processes of constant cultural change.

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DEFFING RELIGION, DEFYING TRADITION?

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At first sight, both the role and the position of religion in the Czech Republic may appear to confirm the secularization thesis. The results of sociological surveys and census statistics show a clear decline in religious faith and practice. According to last national census of 2001 more than 59 per cent of Czech people declared themselves to be ‘non-believers’, while only 32 per cent of Czechs declared themselves to be ‘believers’.¹ And if we look at the statistics that concern the intensity of religious life, we can see a more ‘secularized picture’ of Czech society. For example, only 5 per cent of the Czech population attends religious services regularly, and only 20 per cent of population is willing to contribute 1,50 euro a month to a religious group or church.² But do these data present a true picture of secularization

¹ There were more than six million (59 % of population) people who declared themselves to be ‘non-believers’ according to the census statistics of 2001, compared with only 39,8 per cent in 1991. This means that in ten years, the group of ‘non-believers’ has increased by more than 15 per cent. This fact confirms a trend that is possible to observe since 1918, when the independent Czech (or Czechoslovak) state was established. The shifting of rate of religious affiliation, which appeared at the beginning of the 1990s, was probably caused by social, political and cultural changes started by the Velvet Revolution in 1989. It was a result of changes provoked by the need to gain a new identity. An important component of this new identity was, for a part of society, religion and affiliation to some religious tradition as well. This explains why so many people declared themselves to be affiliated to some religious group or tradition – the relationship with the religious group or religious tradition was an important confirmation of a newly gained identity. But it was also an expression of freedom, because under the Communist regime, religion and its manifestations were understood as a sign of ideological and political hostility.

² Also of interest are indicators relating to doctrine. Although more then 98 per cent of believers (31 % of the population) declare that they are Christians, only 23 per cent of them believe in God, 25 per cent of believers accept the existence of heaven, but 44 per cent of the population believe in life after death.
in Czech society? What exactly is the attitude of Czech society towards religion? I would like to answer these and other questions in my article.

The Character of Czech Secularization

The secularization of Czech society is said to be a consequence of forty years of Communist rule. This thesis, which is very popular, is rather inaccurate and is essentially mistaken.

The causes of this situation are much deeper and go back to the nineteenth century when the modern Czech nation was established. In this period, referred to the National Renaissance (Národní obrození), the ‘Free Thinkers’ movement emerged in Bohemia and, given a choice between Catholicism and Protestantism, its followers chose non-belief instead of either, doubtless because of their experiences of the Catholic Hapsburg monarchy (Greely 2003: 131).

The emergence of an independent Czech (Czechoslovak) state strengthened these attitudes. Catholicism was viewed as an embodiment of the ‘old regime’, and for this reason was regarded as problematic and hostile. During this period many left the Catholic Church and joined the newly established ‘national’ Czechoslovak Hussite Church or became ‘non-believers’.

We can assume that this was the true beginning of the contemporary situation. The Communist regime only intensified this tendency. The ground had already been prepared for atheistic propaganda in schools and in the media, and it is, therefore, an over-simplification to argue that the high level of secularization in contemporary Czech society is due mainly to Communist repression (Štampach 1999: 57).

However, it is necessary to realize that secularism or anti-religious attitudes in Czech society were not constitutive elements of modern Czech

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3 The Hussite (now the Czechoslovak Hussite) Church arose from modernists within the Catholic Church. The founders of the Hussite Church wanted to bring together Catholicism (especially some modernist ideas) and nationalism. In 1920 a group of Catholic priests led by Karel Fářský established the new Church, which was viewed as truly national and progressive. This Church tried to combine different spiritual traditions from Czech history, primarily Catholic and Hussite, with the idea of a modern nation. The Hussite Church was very popular during the so-called First Republic (1918–38), reaching its zenith shortly after World War II when it had almost one million members.
national and political identity. On the contrary, one of the most important conflicts of interests of the modern Czech nation was based on of the so-called ‘disagreement about the meaning of Czech history’. This meaning was perceived as having a clear religious connotation by the main sides involved. One side of this conflict emphasized Roman Catholic christianization of the Czech lands and their integration into Western Europe. The other side instead stressed the reform movement connected with Jan Hus, which is viewed as fundamental to modern Czech national and political identity. Yet the first Czechoslovak president, Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk, who is considered to be the main ideologist of modern Czech statehood, understood citizenship in the context of religion, primarily in the context of Christian morality. We can say briefly that Czech secularism is not ideo-

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4 Tomáš Garrigue Masaryk was the first president of the independent Czechoslovak Republic. Originally he was a professor of philosophy and sociology at Charles University. He engaged in the analysis of modern society, its transformation and the impact of this transformation on humanity. He is the author of many important books (e.g., Suicide [1904]; Russia and Europe [1921]; Questions of Humanity [1901]). The influence of Masaryk’s ideas is still very strong in Czech society, for example, Václav Havel considers himself to be Masaryk’s disciple.
logical in its essence. Its origin is, rather, institutional, and it arose from the mistrust felt towards religious institutions which were very often connected to a ‘political opponent’, for example, the Hapsburg monarchy or an oppressive social order.

This character of Czech secularization offers a clear explanation for why a general separation between the state and churches did not take place in Czech society. At this point, Czech society took over an older paradigm as well. According to this paradigm, it is very useful in order to gain the state to create mechanisms for effective control over religious life. We can say that Czech society has inherited more from Josephinian absolutism than from the French or the English Enlightenment in this respect. This absolutism can be seen in the context of religious legislation, as we will see later.

Another important attribute of Czech secularism is the large differences in religious affiliation in various regions of the Czech Republic. Relatively high rates of believers live in Moravia (the South Moravia, Zlín, and Olomouc regions) and in less industrial regions (the South Bohemia region, the Highlands, and the Pardubice region). The ratio of identification with a region and its tradition, regardless of the level of industrialization, is another
very important factor which influences the number of believers. The most atheistic regions are those of former Sudetenland (Sudety) – the Liberec region in Northern Bohemia, the Ústí nad Labem region in Northwestern Bohemia and the Karlovy Vary region in Western Bohemia. Before World War II, these were German regions with a specific culture and tradition. But the native German inhabitants were transferred to Germany after World War II and people from different parts of Czechoslovakia settled in Sudetenland. The new inhabitants did not identify with new environment. They were very often people from lower social strata in search of a new way of life and new opportunities. They were at the same time people with left-wing political opinions. The presence of Communist ideology (including aggressive atheism) was relatively strong among these people. It is significant that many new religious movements are particularly active in these parts of the Czech Republic, and also, that individual religiosity is rather widespread here.

We can also mention other attributes such as the discrepancy between young and old people, or the impact of education, but these are not important for our purposes.

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5 Before World War II more than three million Germans lived in Czechoslovakia.

6 These regions were mostly stigmatized by social, political and economical changes after the Velvet Revolution in 1989. They have the highest rate of unemployment, a high ratio of social frustration, a high frequency of social-pathological phenomena, and also there is a high-level of tension between ethnic and national groups in these regions. These circumstances simply intensified radical attitudes of people towards religion, and especially towards traditional religious institutions (churches).

7 Among young people (10–30 years) only about 20 per cent of believers identify themselves with traditional (Christian) churches. The large gap between the youngest age groups and people who are older than 60 is explained by the influence of Communist regime and also by the situation in the 1990s. We can also say that the younger generation is more sceptical towards traditional religious institutions such as the established churches. And conversely, young people are more open to other religious and spiritual traditions without any connection with religious institutions. It is possible to say that typically the religious life of the younger generation of Czechs is unambiguously a non-institutional and individual spirituality, which combines different sorts of religious traditions and trends.
Religion as a Source of Conflict: the Traditional Czech Stereotype

Mistrust felt towards religious institutions, such as churches or religious movements, is typical in Czech society.

Nearly 60 per cent of Czechs have no confidence in the churches, and 68 per cent believe that the churches should not interfere in government (see Greely 2003: 55–7). Churches are often perceived as problematic organizations with economic and political interests that do not correspond with the message of love, compassion and humility. There is also a large group of people who apply this ‘picture’ of the churches to religion in a general sense. This negative ‘picture’ of churches is, for these people, confirmation of their conception of religion as inhumane and false.

This attitude, although strengthened by forty years of Communism as the dominant ideology, has deeper roots like Czech secularization. Its beginning lies in the Czech Reformation of the fifteenth century, which stressed the improvement of the Catholic Church as an institution more than the subsequent Reformation of Luther and Calvin. In a simplified form, this opinion was reflected in the idea of the institution of the Church being the cause of evil. The subsequent close relation between the Hapsburg monarchy and the Catholic Church reinforced this opinion. Religious oppression connected with political and national oppression is one of the most widespread interpretations of Czech history.

This mistrust involved the Catholic Church and it originated amongst the intellectual elites who shaped the new identity of the modern Czech nation in the nineteenth century. This unflattering image of the Catholic Church was extended to other religious groups and denominations by Communist propaganda. Religion is identified in contemporary Czech society with a repressive power institution or as a pragmatic tool used for the enforcement of political, economic and cultural influence.

This deep-rooted idea of religion as a power institution seeking to enforce its influence and as a cause of many conflicts, emerged in the middle of the 1990s again. In this period the so-called restitution controversy reached its culmination. The majority of the Czech population did not view the restitution of property to religious groups as a form of redress for Communist injustice. It was considered rather as confirmation of the political and conflictual character of religious groups.

The genesis of this situation is similar to the development of laïcité in France where religious belief is regarded as intrinsically incompatible with reason and individual autonomy. French sociologist Danièle Hervieu-Léger remarks that this attitude of laïcité active is different from Anglo-American
secular humanism. For example, it is regarded as politically correct in France to pay at least lip service to laïcité, even if one does not agree with it entirely. In general elections in France, almost all candidates tend to reaffirm their commitment to laïcité, and it would be exceptional to hear them making any kind of religious statements or appeals to God or Christianity, which are typical of many politicians in the United States. This attitude has a philosophical justification in the distinction made between ‘freedom of belief’ and ‘freedom of religion’. Freedom of belief is construed as the freedom to reach autonomous individual conclusions about religion (or even atheism) devoid of any external constraints. Freedom of religion (religious liberty) is collective liberty for churches and movements. But according to the secretary of the French governmental Mission to Fight Cults, Denis Barthélémy, religious liberty in France may be limited for the sake of ‘freedom of belief’. It means that France will protect its citizens against any constraints on the formation of their individual belief. (Introvigne 2004: 212.) From this point of view, laïcité is not only part of the French national ethos, but it also became embodied in the French legal system.

The negative campaign focusing on new religious movements that emerged at the beginning of the 1990s shared this negative view of religious groups. New religious movements were portrayed in this campaign from the perspective of anti-cult movements as they were in other European countries (Lužný 1996: 17–19). The Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements, which was established in 1991, is the most important exponent of the Czech anti-cult movement. Prominent representatives of this society are chiefly members of traditional Christian denominations (the Catholic Church, the Czech Brethren, etc.). This fact shaped reservations about new religious movements that were formed by a mixture of theological and psychological ‘arguments’. A good example of this attitude is the typology of new religious movements advanced by Prokop Remeš who is one of the main representatives of the Society for the Study of Sects and New Religious Movements.

According to Remeš (1992: 15), it is possible to divide new religious movements into four main groups:

1. Sects arising from occultism and magic;
2. Sects arising from Eastern religious systems;
3. Sects arising from psychotherapeutic conceptions;
4. Sects arising from Christianity.
Remeš divides the last group into the following three sub-groups:

(a) Sects having a Christian background (Mormons, the Unification Church);
(b) Sects which are non-Christian but biblical (Jehovah’s Witnesses);
(c) Sects which are Christian (Maranatha, Charismatic and Pentecostal groups).

It is immediately apparent that this classification is not objective. It points to the heterodoxy of individual groups and thus claims that they are unacceptable. The selection of main perspectives and categories is very emotional, theologically tinged and poorly reasoned. Besides theological arguments, attacks based on exaggerating the psychological, malign and socially deviant behaviour of new religious movements are also very widespread. This image of new religious groups known from the context of other anti-cult movements, has a different impact in the Czech milieu. It supports the image of religious groups as institutions of conflict and sinister aims. As we have seen, this image is a consequence of Czech anticlericalism.

This image of new religious movements is also supported by some books, which focus on the phenomenon of new religious groups. Some of these books fuse new religious movements with such social phenomena as skinheads or anarchist movements. A very good example of this is the book called *Had leze z víry* (The Snake Creeps from a Hole, 1995) which was positively welcomed by representatives of the Ministry of the Interior and of the Ministry of Education. Another example of ideological polemic defined by the fusion of new religious movements with other religious phenomena is the book *Přicházejí* (They are Coming, 1994), which is used by some teachers in Czech high schools. Its author depicts some new religious movements (Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons, Moonies, Scientology) as very dangerous groups which cause many serious social conflicts. It is ironic that Jehovah’s Witnesses and Mormons are financially supported by the state because these groups are so called ‘Churches accredited by the State’.

The author, in an effort to show new religious movements as dangerous groups bringing conflict into the peaceful environment of Czech society, goes as far as to include Islam among dangerous new religions. Needless to add, such an unusual notion acquired a new meaning after the events of the 11th September 2001.
However, the activity of such anti-cult movements is not limited only to theological or psychological circles. It has influential supporters among journalists, members of the police and politicians. Anti-cult activists can shape public opinion and lobby for restrictive laws. The 2002 law on Religious Freedom and the Position of Churches and Religious Associations (No. 3/2002) is a good example.

Religions, Laws and State in the Czech Society

The main features of this law follow older laws and acts, many of them originating at end of the eighteenth century when the first laws concerning religious freedom were passed. The main intention of these laws was to strengthen the role of the state in the activities of churches and religious groups. Religious tolerance was often only illusory because the laws favoured traditional churches, frequently discriminating against alternative and new religious groups. For example, according to the law of 1991 (No. 308/1991), a religious group was recognized by state only if it had at least 10,000 members or had been recognized earlier by the Communist regime. So-called registration was refused to the Unification Church, because the registration petition was signed only by 9,967 people (see Lužný 2004: 95–103).

The new law (No. 3/2002) is more accommodating to new religious movements but it still includes the requirement that they ought to avoid ‘the activities of dangerous sects’. The problem is that the Czech legal system does not recognize the term ‘sect’. It is clear that this requirement was inserted in the law due to pressure from the media and thanks to the lobbying of anti-cult movements. These movements systematically call attention to the ‘pseudo-religious ideology’, ‘offensive propagation’ and ‘sectarian fanaticism’ of new religious movements.

This legislative situation may be seen as an example of ‘Type I’ documents on cults according to James Richardson and Massimo Introvigne (Richardson and Introvigne 2001). ‘Type I’ documents adopt a four-stage interpretative model, described as follows:

(1) Cults or sects are not religions; (2) Since religion is usually defined as an exercise of free will, it is argued that non-religion (cult or sect) can be joined only under some sort of coercion, which is quite often couched in brainwashing-like terms; (3) This coercive character of sects and cults is confirmed by ‘victims’, former members who have become active opponents of the group they left, and who develop ‘accounts’ of their in-
volvement that cast their former group in a negative light; (4) Anti-cult organizations are more reliable than academics because the former, unlike the latter, have ‘practical’ experience of actually working with the ‘victims’ (Introvigne 2004: 209).

This ‘anti-sectarian’ principle had already been used in several cases, and some religious groups were not registered because of their ‘potentially sectarian characteristics’, or their registration was questioned. Beside controversial groups, such as Scientology or the Unification Church (they have not been registered yet), the application for the registration of the Center of Muslim Communities was challenged. In this case also, anti-sectarian arguments based on the ‘necessity to protect health, morality, the law and freedom or to protect public safety and order’.

Another peculiarity of this law is that it divides religious groups in the Czech Republic into two categories. In the first group, there are churches or movements which are traditional to the Czech Republic, or which have 10,000 members (at least 0.1% of the population). These groups have a special position. They are financially supported by the state, they are entitled to minister in prisons, their priests can teach religion in state schools and their wedding ceremonies are recognized by the state. It is very difficult to get into this privileged group. For example, only six groups fulfil the requirement for 10,000 members; the rest are registered in this group on the basis of their traditional position in Czech society. The state funds such groups as the Unitarian Church (it has 800 members) but the claim of Czech Muslims is challenged.

The second group includes mainly small and alternative religious groups and movements. Four religious groups have been registered since 2002: the Church of Christian Societies, the Community of Christians in the Czech Republic, the International Society for Krishna Consciousness and the Czech Hindu Society. Two groups were not registered: the Ecumenical

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8 Twenty-one religious groups were registered in this group in 2003: the Apostolic Church, the Unity of the Brethren Baptists, the Church of the Seventh-day Adventists, the Brethren Church, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the Greek Catholic Church, the Roman Catholic Church, the Evangelical Church of Augsburg Confession, the Methodist Evangelical Church, the Federation of Jewish Communities, the Unitas Fratrum, the Christian Charges, the Lutheran Evangelical Church, the Unitarians, the New Apostolic Church, the Orthodox Church, the Old Catholic Church. But only the Roman Catholic Church, the Czech Brethren, the Evangelical Church, the Czechoslovak Hussite Church, the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Silesian Evangelical Church have more than 10,000 members.
Church of St John of Jerusalem and the Ukrainian Greek-Catholic Church. Two groups are still waiting for registration: the Center of Muslim Communities and the Jewish Center Chai. These religious groups have no special privileges, but unlike under the former law, they are recognized as religious groups, rather than as only non-governmental organizations.

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Charisma, Volatility and Violence

Assessing the Role of Crises of Charismatic Authority in Precipitating Incidents of Millenarian Violence

Introduction

In this article I intend to develop some of the points I have made elsewhere regarding the role of what may be termed ‘crises of charismatic authority’ in producing volatility or even violence within marginal apocalyptic religious groups (see Walliss 2004, 2005b and forthcoming). The last quarter of the twentieth century witnessed several incidents where such groups engaged in violent actions against themselves, others in the outside world, or typically both. On November 18, 1978, in Jonestown, Guyana, over nine hundred members of Peoples Temple, a Californian religious movement led by Jim Jones, died in an act of collective ‘revolutionary suicide’; almost a decade-and-a-half later, seventy-four members of the Branch Davidians, a Seventh-Day Adventist splinter group, met a fiery end at the conclusion of a 51-day standoff with US authorities at their home at Mount Carmel, Waco, Texas; between October 1994 and March 1997, around seventy-four members of the Order of the Solar Temple died in a series of ritualised murder-suicides in Switzerland, Quebec and France; in March 1995, members of Aum Shinrikyō, a Japanese group already implicated in at least twenty-three other murders, launched an abortive attack on the Tokyo underground using the nerve gas sarin, an attack that could easily have resulted in thousands of fatalities; two years later, thirty-nine members of a group calling itself Heaven’s Gate committed collective suicide in the apparent belief that the world was about to be ‘spaded under’, and that they could escape the destruction via a space ship hiding behind the then-passing Hale–Bopp comet; finally, in Uganda, in the spring of 2000, around 780 members of the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God (hereafter MRTCG) died in a series of murder-suicides, the details and exact reasons for which are still unclear.

In my analyses of these incidents I have argued against the ‘cultural opposition’ thesis, put forward most notably by John Hall and his associ-
ates and David Bromley, that these incidents were precipitated largely, if not exclusively, by external opposition; that the combination of apostates, hostile media coverage and the intervention of the state/law enforcement agencies led these groups to commit violence (Hall and Schuyler 1998, Hall et al. 2000, Bromley 2002). Although I accept that this model provides a good description of the broad scheme of events leading up to the confrontation at Mt Carmel (see Tabor and Gallagher 1995; Walliss 2004: Chapter 3), my own assessment of the other incidents has led me to argue that external opposition is neither necessary nor sufficient in itself to precipitate violence/volatility and that, consequently, the focus of attention should be shifted away from an exclusive concern with external factors. In particular, I have argued that Catherine Wessinger’s notion of ‘fragile millennial groups’ provides a much more useful model for understanding the ‘dramatic denouements’, as Bromley terms them, of Peoples Temple, the Order of the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyō (Wessinger 1997, 2000a and 2000b).

Like all religious groups, Wessinger (2000a: 15) argues, millennial/millenarian groups possess an ‘ultimate concern’ – ‘a concern which is more important than anything else for the person [or group] involved’. When this concern – or ‘millennial goal’ – is threatened in some way, she continues, a group may become volatile and in some cases may either try to preserve or fulfil their goal through acts of violence. So, for example, they may strike out at their real or perceived opponents in the outside world, or, through an act of collective suicide, effectively remove themselves from the situation. A ‘fragile millennial group’, according to Wessinger engages in violence because their ultimate concern/millennial goal is threatened in some way by a combination of external opposition and internal pressures; the former typically exacerbating the effects of the latter. This, to my mind, provides a more accurate description of these three incidents than that provided by the ‘cultural opposition’ thesis.

However, in my discussion of the Heaven’s Gate collective suicide and the mass homicide/suicide of the MRTCG, I have argued that the ‘fragility model’ needs modifying to account for these incidents. Although it is impossible to rule out the possibility that external opposition may have played some role in precipitating these incidents, the balance of evidence would suggest that they were the result of internal issues or pressures alone. So, for example, the MRTCGs dramatic denouement would appear to have been precipitated by ‘a crisis of charismatic authority’ coupled with defections and demands from former members that donations be refunded to them stemming from a series of failed prophecies throughout
the 1990s. Although patchy, the balance of evidence would seem to suggest that being either unwilling or unable to refund donations to their dissatisfied followers, the MRTCG leadership set about liquidating any opponents before engineering their own and their follower’s deaths, or, according to some accounts, fleeing Uganda with the money (Atuhaire 2003, Mayer 2001a, Ugandan Human Rights Commission [hereafter UHRC] 2002, Walliss 2005a).

This notion of ‘crises of charismatic authority’ has in many ways become a central, recurring theme in my analysis of these incidents. While accepting that such crises were typically not sufficient in themselves to have precipitated each of the dramatic denouements I have examined, I have come to the conclusion that they did play a major role in each. Indeed, I would argue that such crises played a much more significant role than that played by external opposition in almost all of the cases I examined (the case of the Branch Davidians being perhaps the exception that proves the rule). In this chapter, I intend to discuss what I mean by crises of charismatic authority (an important task in itself due to the diverse understandings of ‘charisma’ found within the literature) and to present a comparative analysis of some of the ways in which these crises can occur.

Charisma

All sociological discussions of charisma invariably have as their starting point the seminal work of Max Weber, who discussed ‘charismatic authority’, along with ‘traditional’ and ‘legal rational’ authority, in his work on ideal-type forms of legitimation/domination (see Weber 1947, 1978 and 1991). Although there is debate over some of the ambiguities in his treatment of the phenomenon, (particularly whether, or to what extent, Weber considered charisma to be a characteristic of individuals), the consensus among commentators is that for Weber charismatic authority was inherently relational. From this perspective, charisma is not something that individuals possess, but, rather, is the outcome of an interactive social process whereby a specific individual’s claim to charisma is recognised and accepted by others, typically potential followers (Wilson 1975, Wallis 1993, Dawson 1998 and 2002). As Bryan Wilson notes,

Charisma denotes not the quality of the individual, but of a relationship between believers (or followers) and the man in whom they believed. His claim, or theirs on his behalf, was that he had authority because of his super-
natural competences. Charisma is not a personality attribute, but a successful claim to power by virtue of supernatural ordination. (Wilson 1975: 7, emphasis added.)

One consequence of this, Weber and his successors have argued, is that charismatic authority must constantly be ‘proven’ or ‘demonstrated’: the prophet, for example, must perform miracles, the warlord must deliver great victories, the political leader must deliver political successes and so on (Weber 1947: 359 and 1991: 248–9). In this way, charismatic authority thus requires constant ‘impression management’ (Goffman 1974, Gardner and Avolio 1998) or ‘legitimation work’ (Dawson 2002), whereby the leader attempts to maintain their authority through a variety of charismatic displays of power or ‘signs of the miraculous’ (Wallis 1983: 8). When this does not occur – when such ‘signs’ or ‘proofs’ are lacking – their followers may come to believe that their master has been ‘forsaken by the gods’ or that ‘his magical or heroic powers have deserted him’ (Weber 1947: 360). In such cases, charismatic leaders may be said to have suffered a ‘loss of charisma’. Thus, Weber cites the example of the monarchs in ancient China, noting how

...the charismatic quality of the monarch, which was transmitted unchanged by heredity was upheld so rigidly that any misfortune whatever, not only defeats in war, but droughts, floods, or astronomical phenomena which was considered unlucky, forced him to do public penance and might even force his abdication. If such things occurred, it was a sign that he did not possess the requisite charismatic virtue, he was thus not a legitimate ‘Son of Heaven’. (Weber 1947: 360.)

‘Crises of charismatic authority’, then, are situations when charismatic leaders’ ‘legitimation work’/attempts at impression management break down and where consequently their claims of seemingly miraculous powers are called into question. As Dawson (2002: 98, 81, emphasis added) rightly points out, ‘charismatic authority is not intrinsically dangerous’. Rather, ‘the true danger stems ... from the mismanagement of certain endemic problems of charismatic authority that are rooted in the problematic legitimacy of charisma’. More specifically, he argues ‘the potential for violence in new religious movements stems, in part, from failing to cope with the more or less perpetual legitimation crises experienced by charismatic leaders’ (Dawson 2002: 85, emphasis added). Such crises may take innumerable forms, and, equally, there are innumerable ways in which they may be
resolved without bringing about volatility (see, for example, the literature on failed prophecy – Dawson 1999, Stone 2000). However, within the cases that I shall examine, three broad types may be highlighted as having been especially significant in precipitating each group’s violence: loss of reputation or real/perceived rebuffs; being exposed as having used trickery or deceit; and, finally, suffering from a loss of health. This is not to suggest of course that these crises were the sole factors. In most of the cases, while I would argue they played a significant role, these crises typically interacted with other factors, sometimes internal, sometimes external. Nor is it to suggest that crises such as these will automatically lead to volatility/violence in similar cases. Rather my aim is to show, firstly, how these crises were manifested in the particular cases and, secondly, to offer some thoughts about the role of such crises in precipitating incidents of volatility/violence within marginal apocalyptic religious groups.

Types of Crises

Loss of Reputation / Real or Perceived Rebuffs

One way in which a leader’s claims to charismatic authority may be undermined is through a loss of reputation or through real or perceived rebuffs. In the early 1990s, for example, Luc Jouret, one of the leaders of the Solar Temple was arrested in Canada following an attempt to illegally buy a gun with a silencer. Although Jouret and the others involved received minor sentences (a fine of $1,000 each and one year unsupervised probation), he would appear to have been personally devastated by the verdict. Prior to this incident, Jouret had for several decades been a popular lecturer on the international New Age circuit, lecturing on such topics as ‘Love and Biology’, ‘Christ, the Sphinx and the New Man’, and ‘Old Age: The Doorway to Eternal Youth’ (indeed, this was one of Solar Temple’s chief recruiting techniques and sources of income). However, following his conviction Jouret’s reputation was effectively ruined and he found more and more doors closed to him. Not only this but a number of Solar Temple members left the group, embarrassed by Jouret’s actions (Mayer 1998).

The loss of his reputation would appear to have affected Jouret very strongly and arguably played a key role in precipitating the 1994 ‘transit’. As one member later recalled, following the incident ‘his mind changed, he was a tired, tired, tired, disappointed, disillusioned person’ (quoted in Hall et al. 2000: 135). Similarly, police wiretaps of Jouret also, according to Jean-François Mayer (1999: 182), show that he ‘was in a depressed mood,
constantly complaining about feeling tired and expressing eagerness to leave the world’. Not only this, but the Solar Temple’s theodicy underwent a radical transformation. The notion of an ‘ecological apocalypse’ had always been a central theme in Jouret’s lectures and in the Solar Temple’s beliefs; Jouret claiming that the earth, as a living entity, had become sick as a consequence of pollution and human environmental mismanagement. However, like a number of new age authors, Jouret linked this pessimistic vision with a more optimistic one concerning the transition from the Age of Pisces to the Age of Aquarius. According to Mayer, the Solar Temple saw its mission as to gather an elect group (referred to in some Solar Temple documents as ‘Templars of the New Age’) who would survive the ecological apocalypse and inaugurate ‘the Kingdom of Aquarius’ (Mayer 2001b).

In 1986, for example, the Order published two books entitled *Survivre à l’An 2000* (Survival Beyond the Year 2000), the second volume of which dealt exclusively with ‘survivalist’ themes such as how to survive in the aftermath of atomic, bacteriological and chemical warfare attacks (Mayer 2001b, Introvigne 2000). Similarly, from the mid-1980s the Solar Temple began to found ‘survival farms’ in Canada, based on the belief that the area around Toronto in particular would experience fewer upheavals during the prophesied ecological meltdown because it was situated on a broad granite plate with a strong magnetic field. However, following Jouret’s conviction, the subsequent defection of members and international police investigation into its activities, the Solar Temple’s theodicy began to evolve from one of survivalism to one which emphasised the Gnostic escape from the shackles of the physical world to the world of the spirit prior to the prophesied apocalypse. This, as Mayer (1999) notes, had always been an aspect of the Solar Temple’s theodicy, however, in the period following Jouret’s conviction it came to gain more and more ascendancy until it seemingly eclipsed the belief in survivalism and provided the theological rationale for the October 1994 ‘Transits’.

Similarly, in the case of Aum Shinrikyō, a chain of events that began with its failure to achieve the international growth in membership predicted by its leader Asahara Shōkō, and the rejection of its application under the Religious Corporations Law in April 1989 served to undermine the image that Asahara was attempting to create for Aum. In its initial formulation, Aum saw its mission in similar terms to the Solar Temple. Like Luc Jouret, Asahara began in the mid-1980s to speak publicly about what he believed to be the very real possibility of a cataclysmic event in the near future that would herald the end of the world. In 1987, for example, he gave a number of talks in which he discussed the possibility of a nuclear war
breaking out around 1999, describing how growing political and economic tensions between Japan and the rest of the world would lead Japan to re-arm, and ultimately lead to an inevitable nuclear war some time between 1999 and 2003. Indeed, he claimed that his spirit had left his body and travelled forward in time to 2006, where it had discovered the aftermath of nuclear holocaust (see Shōkō 1988: 87–94).

Nevertheless, despite this pessimistic view, Asahara’s message was at its core more optimistic (Reader 2000b). According to Asahara, the mass destruction that he had prophesied was the result of the negative karmic repercussions of materialism and, as such, could be averted through positive spiritual action. For this to occur, however, he claimed that it was imperative for Aum to open at least one centre in every country and also train thirty thousand spiritually enlightened renunciates (*shukkesha*) by 1993. More broadly, Aum saw its mission – a mission that Asahara claimed to have had entrusted to him by Shiva – as the creation of the Buddhist paradise on earth, *Shambhala*, first in Japan and then extending throughout the world. To this end, beginning in 1988, Aum began to build self-sufficient communal ‘Lotus Villages’ where members could renounce their attachments to the outside world and devote themselves fully to their spiritual practice away from the negativity and temptations of the world (Reader 1997).

However, within a very brief period of time it became apparent that such plans were far too ambitious to be achieved. Although Aum had managed to persuade a number of individuals to renounce the world and become *shukkesha*, it had not attracted them in sufficient numbers to meet the targets for world salvation. Between 1986 and 1988, for example, the number of *shukkesha* increased from three to 113, while the number of lay members grew from 35 to around 4,000. Nevertheless, while such growth was indeed impressive it fell far short of the rate required to meet the pressing apocalyptic timetable. Indeed, by as late as 1990 Aum had recruited less than two per cent of the number of *shukkesha* required to avert the prophesied disaster, and also showed little sign of opening up the required number of centres worldwide (Reader 1997 and 2000b).

Shortly afterwards, in April 1989 Aum had its application for registration under the Japanese Religious Corporations Law rejected. Although such applications are on the whole usually fairly straightforward affairs, Aum’s application was met with fierce opposition by both disgruntled ex-members and the families of *shukkesha*, who complained that not only had their children severed all contacts with them when they joined Aum, but that any attempts to make contact with them had been blocked by Aum.
Aum was thus painted as an organisation that not only denied families access to its members but also sought to break families up. Consequently, its application was turned down. (Brackett 1996, Reader 2000a.) Although its application was accepted later that year, Aum then came under pressure from ‘cultural opposition’ in the form of the media and from a group of aggrieved former members and families of members, calling itself the ‘Aum Victims’ Society’.

Finally, perhaps most damningly, Aum’s attempts to achieve political power during the 1990 elections ended in a debacle. In July 1989, Asahara announced that in order to further its salvational activities, Aum would form a political party, the Shinritō (Supreme Truth Party), to campaign in the following February’s general election for the Lower House of the Japanese Diet. According to Asahara, such a move was necessary in order to both alert the Japanese public to the coming catastrophe, and advance Aum’s Shambhala project. Asahara went on to predict that the Shinritō would secure victory in the elections and that he himself would come top of the ballot. However, this was not to be. Rather, Aum’s whole election campaign quickly descended into what Daniel A. Metraux (2000: 43) refers to as ‘one embarrassing joke – a public display of twisted idolatry and mind control that revolted the public’. Although Aum did indeed have some campaign themes (such as ‘freedom, equality, and benevolence for every being, especially for every Japanese’), the majority of its campaigning took the form of Aum members gathering in front of subway stations wearing papier-mâché heads of Asahara and the Hindu deity Ganesh while singing the Shinritō campaign song:

Shōkō, Shōkō, Shōkō-Shōkō-Shōkō, Asahara Shōkō
Shōkō, Shōkō, Shōkō-Shōkō-Shōkō, Asahara Shōkō

Japan’s Shōkō, the world’s Shōkō, the earth’s Shōkō, Shōkō
He rises now, shining brilliantly
Let’s put ourselves in the hands of our youthful hero
To protect our Japan, we need his strength
Shōkō, Shōkō, Asahara Shōkō
(Quoted in Metraux 2000: 45.)

Perhaps not surprisingly, Aum’s campaign was widely ridiculed in the press and all the Shinritō candidates lost heavily as, indeed, did Asahara himself who managed to field only 1,783 votes in a district where around 500,000 ballots were cast. Not only this, but the media became even more
scathing of Aum, with ‘AUM-bashing’ becoming a veritable ‘national pastime’ and ‘media obsession’ (Young 1995: 232). In the aftermath of the elections and what he perceived to be the Japanese public’s scornful rejection of his offer of salvation, Asahara announced that Aum would cease in its efforts to save the world, and would henceforth focus instead on saving its members alone. It would also, although Asahara did not state this publicly, begin its preparations to defend itself against its perceived enemies by secretly developing various biological and chemical weapons (Reader 2000a and 2000b).

Exposure of Trickery or Fraud

Another form of crisis occurs when a leader is exposed as having practiced trickery or fraud. Charismatic authority, after all rests on the ability to produce ‘signs of the miraculous’ for one’s followers and, perhaps most importantly, convincing them that they are genuine and a sign of election. Consequently, if such signs are revealed to be deliberately faked, then the consequences for the leader’s perceived charismatic authority can be potentially disastrous – particularly, where (s)he cannot offer a convincing justification or explanation for what has transpired.

Joseph Di Mambro, for example, the co-leader along with Jouret of the Solar Temple, claimed to be in contact with a number of occult ‘ascended masters’, a claim that was seemingly supported by the appearance of said masters along with various other forms of supernatural phenomena (such as, for example, the Holy Grail and Excalibur) at the Order’s rituals. Thus, to give an example, during the ‘rite of conception’ at which the Di Mambro claimed his daughter, the ‘cosmic child’ Emmanuelle, was immaculately conceived, an eight-foot tall ascended master, Manatanus, appeared, and directed a laser-beam across the sanctuary with his sword, lighting up the throat of Di Mambro’s mistress, Dominique Bellaton with a flash (Palmer 1996). Similarly, one Canadian member quoted by the journalist Joseph Harriss described how ‘during rituals we would hear sounds from the star Sirius, followed by apparitions of chandeliers, swords and so on, leading up to the appearance of the [ascended] Masters’ (quoted in Harriss 1997: no pagination). Such phenomena, while they were no doubt impressive and seemingly convincing to those who beheld them were, nevertheless, somewhat less than miraculous in their origin; being the result of a combination of lighting and sound effects, slides, home-made props, and possibly unwittingly ingested hallucinogens. According to Harriss, who was shown some of the props at Sureté du Quebec headquarters in Montreal,
‘King Arthur’s Excalibur was a large, tinny broadsword crudely painted fluorescent green and red. In a dark room, black light made it appear suspended in midair, blood dripping from the tip.’ (Harriss 1997: no pagination.) Similarly, the sword wielded by Manatanus (actually Di Mambro’s wife, Jocelyne, in disguise) in the conception rite ‘had a small nine-volt battery taped to its hilt. Electrical wires, masked with black tape, led to a tiny light at the tip’ (Harriss 1997: no pagination). Bellaton, for her part, had a small flashlight in her mouth that made her throat appear like it was glowing (Palmer 1996).

In 1990, Di Mambro’s twenty-nine-year-old son, Elie, discovered the truth behind the staged rituals, having his suspicions confirmed by the lighting engineer behind them, a member called Antonio Dutoit. Dutoit subsequently left the Order (he and his family were, however, to be murdered as ‘traitors’ shortly before the ‘Transits’), while Elie began to speak openly about what he had discovered (Palmer 1996, Wessinger 2000a). Although some members explained away the fakery as ‘an unfortunate but necessary way to keep weaker souls within the fold’ (Introvigne 2000: 151), many others, already embarrassed by Jouret’s arrest and conviction, defected and demanded that the money that they had invested in the Order be refunded to them. As one member wrote to Di Mambro late in 1993:

Rumours about embezzlement and various [forms] of skulduggery are propagated by influential ex-members. Many members … have left or are leaving. They feel their ideals have been betrayed … It is even said that you have fallen because of money and women, and you’re no longer credible. This is very serious for the Order’s mission.

There are even more serious grumblings, and you know them. Here they are: everything we saw and heard in certain places has been a trick. I have known this for some time. Tony [Dutoit] has been talking about this for years already … I have always refused to pay attention to these rumours, but the evidence is growing, and questions are being asked. This calls into question many things I’ve seen, and messages. I would be really upset if I had to conclude that I’d sincerely prostrated myself in front of an illusion!!! (Quoted in Mayer 1999: 179.)

Similarly, from Aum’s inception, Asahara had claimed that not only did he possess various supernatural abilities (such as, for example, ESP, the ability to see the future, and the ability to levitate), but that such abilities – and ultimately, liberation from karma and human suffering – could
also be attained by those who joined Aum and followed the ascetic regime espoused by him. To this end, Aum developed a hierarchical series of initiations, many of which involved the utilisation (at a price) of various tonics, amulets or devices designed, it was claimed, to bring the user closer to the level of spiritual perfection attained by Asahara. For a ‘donation’ of ¥1,000,000 a month, for example, Aum members could rent Perfect Salvation Initiation (PSI) headsets, designed to deliver six-volt shocks to the wearer’s scalp so as to synchronise his/her brainwaves with Asahara’s (Reader 1997). For ¥22,000, they could drink ‘Miracle Pond’, a 200 millilitre vial of Asahara’s bath water so as to imbibe some of his spiritual power. Snippets of Asahara’s hair and beard trimmings were also brewed in boiling water and then drunk (Kaplan and Marshall 1997). However, the most prized initiation was the so called ‘Blood Initiation’ (cost: ¥1,000,000) where the initiate drank a vial of Asahara’s blood, again in the belief that in doing so (s)he would be able to imbibe some of his purportedly unique DNA and thereby become a more effective spiritual practitioner. As one Aum text declared;

The initiation of Blood comes from a secret Tantric rite wherein the blood of the guru is taken into one’s own body. The introduction of the guru’s internal tissue implies the introduction of the guru’s holy karma, and hastens progress in purifying one’s own karma, thus elevating one’s practice.

Several days after receiving the Initiation of the Blood I experienced bardō (the world between death and rebirth). I was transformed, and while sitting in the lotus position I fell into a pitch-black dome. Although people are usually frightened by the experience of bardō, because the Master’s bardō experience was input into my Causal world through the Initiation of the Blood I was not frightened at all. My psychological composure has also greatly increased. (Quoted in Shimazono 2001: 42.)

In 1989, however, a lawyer representing the Aum Victims’ Society, Sakamoto Tsutsumi, began investigating the Blood Initiation and found that all was not as it was claimed by Aum. Asahara had claimed that his blood had been tested by the medical laboratories at Kyoto University and found to contain a unique DNA structure, which, he claimed, could be passed on to those who drank it. Sakamoto, however, discovered that no such tests had ever taken place and threatened to go public with this and
file a case against Aum for fraud.¹ Knowing the threat that this could pose to both his own perceived charismatic authority, as well as the damage it could cause to Aum’s finances, reputation and mission, Asahara issued orders that Sakamoto should be murdered to silence him. Consequently, in November 1989, six Aum members broke into Sakamoto’s apartment, killing Sakamoto along with his wife and baby, before burying the bodies in separate prefectures so as to complicate any subsequent police inquiries (Brackett 1996, Reader 2000b).

Yet another (albeit relatively rare) way in which a leader may be potentially exposed as a fraud is through the phenomena of prophetic disconfirmation. As noted previously, the literature on failed prophecy shows that not only does prophecy never really ‘fail’ in the eyes of believers, but that even when it may appear to have done so, leaders and prophets invariably deploy a whole raft of techniques and strategies to convince their followers that this is not the case (see Dawson 1999 for a discussion). When, however, prophecy does fail and a leader is unable to provide their followers with a convincing interpretation for what has (not) transpired, their perceived charisma may be severely undermined.

Thus, as noted previously, in the case of the MRTCG it would appear that a string of failed prophecies played an instrumental role in precipitating the spring 2000 murder-suicides. The available evidence indicates that the MRTCG leadership had predicted the end of the world for the end of 1992, and then the end of 1995, before finally settling on 31 December 1999. When the final date came and passed without incident, dissent began to grow among members. The Movement’s prophet, Credonia Mwerinde, however, told them that the Virgin Mary had reappeared to her and the other leaders of the Movement, informing them that the date for the end of the world had been put back to 17 March 2000. Although this raised the spirits of some, a number of members were not convinced by this and discontent began to grow. Many, for example, began to demand that their donations be refunded, a situation that clearly threatened the Movement’s fi-

¹ Interestingly, Asahara had been exposed and convicted as a fraudster prior to forming Aum. In June 1982 he was jailed for 20 days and fined $2,000 for selling fake Chinese cures (such as, for example, ‘Almighty Medicine’ which was tangerine peel in an alcohol solution – Kaplan and Marshall 1997). This incident bankrupted his small herbal medicine business and would appear to have affected Asahara deeply. Following his conviction, according to D. W. Brackett (1996: 64), Asahara ‘was too embarrassed to face his neighbours. For some time after the trial and bankruptcy, he and his wife lived a hermit-like existence, only venturing outside at night to buy food and other essentials.’
nancial viability and continued existence (Atuhaire 2003). Likewise, others became openly disloyal and began to question the authority of Mwerinde and the other leaders. One member, for example, later recalled how on one occasion:

one of the followers wrote a 96-page exercise book full of complaints and passed it under Credonia’s office door. Later Credonia told other followers that someone had written an exercise book full of ‘satanic things’ which she had burnt. (UHRC 2002: 6.1.)

In an attempt to placate any dissenters, ‘Credonia promised that the Blessed Virgin Mary would refund the money from the sale of the members’ properties’. She also ‘asked her priests to record the names of those followers who were discontented’ (UHRC 2002: 6.1). Those who submitted complaints were, according to witnesses, called to a meeting with the MRTCG leaders and never seen again. Any who asked where these individuals had gone were informed that they had been transferred to another of the MRTCG’s properties or ‘that the Virgin had taken them to Heaven’ (Atuhaire 2003; Banura et al. 2000). Having thus ‘weeded out’ the dissenters, it would appear that the MRTCG leaders then began to plan for the collective suicide of the faithful that would transpire on March 17.

Loss of Health

Finally, a leader’s perceived charismatic authority can be undermined through real or perceived ill health. All but one of the leaders of the groups were in real or perceived ill health prior to their group’s respective denouements.2 Following Jim Jones’s move to Jonestown, for example, his health deteriorated seriously as a consequence of heavy drug use. Jonestown residents heard him speaking over the loudspeaker in slurred tones, saw him staggering around the community, urinating on occasions in public view, and all who came into contact with him witnessed signs of mental confusion and frequent, erratic changes in his mood. Jones had also put on weight and claimed to be seriously ill with several maladies, although this belief was contradicted by the subsequent autopsy on his body.

2 The sole exception to this state of affairs is Joseph Kibwetere, one of the leaders of the MRTCG, although there is some speculation that he may have been dying of AIDS. This was certainly the view expressed in several reports following the March 2000 conflagration (see, for example, UHRC 2002: 3.3).
(Maaga 1998). One member, for example, recalled that when she moved to Jonestown in December of that year, Jones, who she had not seen for several months, was a physical wreck;

He had gained a great deal of weight, and he complained constantly of such a number of serious ailments that it was a wonder he was still on his feet at all. He claimed to have cancer, a heart condition, a fungus in his lungs, and a recurring fever of 105 degrees. He dosed himself with painkillers, tranquilisers, and amphetamines, which only added to the incoherence of his speech. (Quoted in Maaga 1998: 92.)

Similarly, Ian Reader notes how ‘followers and former followers confirmed that [Asahara] frequently appeared to be ill in 1994 and that when he spoke his voice seemed to be husky’. Indeed, ‘when he was arrested in May 1995 Asahara was, by all accounts, overweight and in poor condition, and at that time there were many rumours that he was dying of liver failure or some such ailment’. (Reader 2000b: 170–1).

Health concerns also appear to have played a crucial role in both the development of the Heaven’s Gate theodicy and the group’s decision to commit collective suicide. From its inception in the early 1970s in Houston, Texas, the group’s leaders, Marshall Applewhite and Bonnie Lu Nettles (or Do and Ti as they were known within the group), had always claimed that those who joined them, and who were able to shed their worldly attachments, would be taken up via a spaceship to what they termed ‘the Next Level’. However, over time the exact details of this ‘technological rapture’ changed. Initially, Ti and Do had claimed that those who joined them would board the spaceship to the Next Level in their physical bodies. However, following Ti’s death from cancer in 1985, this idea was abandoned in favour of the view that the physical body was simply a ‘container’ or ‘vehicle’ for the soul which could be ‘jettisoned’ if necessary prior to entering the Next Level. (Lewis 2003.) Just as Ti had left her ‘vehicle’ in order to complete her ‘evolution’ to the Next Level, so too could her followers.

Indeed, going further, the group came to believe that rather than being human beings, they were in fact an ‘Away Team’ of members of the Next Level. Thousands of years ago, Do claimed, members of the Next Level ‘planted’ all the various life forms in various ‘gardens’ (planets). Some, but not all, of the ‘plants’ however, were prepared (‘prepped’) to make the transition from the human realm to the Next Level by being ‘tagged’ with Next Level souls. Representatives of the Next Level (or ‘Reps’) then peri-
odically descend to the human level, incarnate among humans and seek out the souls that have been tagged in order to offer them instruction in the knowledge and behaviour necessary to evolve to the Next Level. This, Do claimed, had happened twice in recorded human history; first two thousand years ago when a Next Level soul had incarnated into the ‘vehicle’ of Jesus, and now when two such souls had incarnated into the ‘vehicles’ of Applewhite and Nettles.

For members of Heaven’s Gate, the earth was thus a ‘classroom’ where they learned how to shed their attachment to ‘the human kingdom’ and ‘graduate’ back to the Next Level. During the early 1990s, however, they began to receive signals that this time was coming to an end. Primarily, Do’s health began to deteriorate and he began to delegate more and more responsibilities to his students and, indeed, began to speak of assuming the role of ‘professor emeritus’. He also became convinced that he was dying of cancer, a belief later shown to be unfounded by the autopsy conducted on his ‘vehicle’. (Hall et al. 2000, Balch and Taylor 2002.) However, the possibility that Do, like Ti, might die prior to leading his students on their return to the Next Level, presented the very real possibility that they could be ‘shut-off’ from the Next Level and essentially remain ‘trapped’ on earth. As Wessinger observes, the group’s theodicy ‘did not provide for the establishment of a lineage of leaders to succeed him. Do had stressed to his disciples that he was the only means by which they could enter the Kingdom of Heaven.’ (Wessinger 2000a: 244; see also Lewis 2003.) If he died, not only would the students be without their teacher, but they would also be without their only guide back to the Next Level. As one member stated in their ‘Earth Exit Statement’ under the title ‘Why I Want To Leave at This Time’:

I know my Older Member, Do, is going to his Older Member, Ti, at this time. Once He is gone, there is nothing left here on the face of the Earth for me, no reason to stay a moment longer. Furthermore, I know that my graft to Them would be jeopardized if I linger here once They have departed. I know my classmates/siblings feel the same as I do and will be choosing to go when Do goes. (‘Glnody’ 1997: no pagination.)

Where the maladies of the above leaders were to a great extent imagined, those endured by Joseph Di Mambro were, in contrast, very real. Whereas Asahara was rumoured to be dying of liver failure, Di Mambro was actually suffering from this ailment and, indeed, had to wear incontinence pads. Likewise, whereas Jones and Do believed themselves to be dying of cancer,
Di Mambro had been diagnosed as such. He had also contracted diabetes and had begun to experience diabetic fits (Wessinger 2000a).

**Concluding Thoughts**

In a recent discussion of the factors that may produce volatility within marginal religious movements, Thomas Robbins has offered several hypotheses for the apparent relationship between charismatic leadership and volatility. In the first instance, Robbins argues, because such leaders typically operate in a vacuum without any of the restraints or supports available to either traditional or legal-rational leaders, they are freer to ‘act on impulse’. Whereas the bureaucratic leader must ideally follow set rules, procedures and guidelines, and the traditional leader must at the very least pay lip-service to tradition or custom, the charismatic leader must, as noted previously, sustain their own leadership through their actions. Linked to this, Robbins notes how, from a psychodynamic perspective, volatility/violence within charismatically-led groups may stem from the narcissistic relationship that exists between leader and follower within such groups. From this perspective;

... charismatic leaders may incline towards violence because, as narcissists, they perceived their followers as extensions of themselves, which may make them more willing to sacrifice their followers in a climatic confrontation or suicidal drama. Yet the orientation of the devotees to a charismatic leader may also have an element of narcissism ... Followers may tend to project their motives and aspirations onto the charismatic leader. Consequently, they can misread the leader’s intentions and the direction in which he is taking the group. Volatility may thus be encouraged by both narcissistic leaders’ objectification of their followers and the projective quality of the latter’s identification with their prophet. (Robbins 2002: 73.)

Finally, stemming from both the above points, charismatic leaders may lack friends or associates who can offer him/her honest feedback on their ideas or actions, and may instead ‘come to depend for reinforcement and adulation from uncritical devotees’. In such cases, Robbins argues, not only may high-level defections ‘traumatise the leader and enhance group volatility’, but ‘the grandiose leader may become more extreme, unbalanced, and paranoid over time’ (Robbins 2002: 74).
While there are arguably elements of truth in Robbins’s account, one criticism that is often made of attempts to locate the causes of incidents such as those discussed above with charismatic leadership per se is that, just as there exist numerous groups that hold often violently apocalyptic beliefs but yet do not engage in violent activities, so do there exist innumerable ‘charismatic leaders’ who have as yet not displayed any propensity towards volatility or violence (Dawson 2002; Bromley 2002: 46–7). How, then, can we account for the fact that as Lorne L. Dawson (2002: 80) observes, ‘the impact of charismatic leadership is one of the constants of these incidents’? In this article, I have sought to expand on the ideas of Max Weber and more recently, Dawson to explore the links between the precariousness of charismatic authority and volatility in marginal apocalyptic groups. In each of the cases I have examined, the crises of charismatic authority experienced by the respective leaders served to undermine both their own perceived legitimacy, and by extension the group’s millennial goal. However, only in the cases of the MRTCG and the Heaven’s Gate group would these crises appear to have been sufficient in themselves to have precipitated their respective denouements. Rather, in the cases of Peoples Temple, the Order of the Solar Temple and Aum Shinrikyō, the various crises combined with other pressures, typically real or perceived external opposition, to make each groups ‘fragile’, to use Wessinger’s terminology.

In this way, while crises of charismatic authority would appear to play a major role in precipitating incidents of volatility or violence in marginal apocalyptic groups, such crises are rarely sufficient causes in themselves. Rather, the evidence would seem to suggest that they serve instead as catalysts to the internal crises that can, when coupled with real or perceived external opposition, make such groups ‘fragile’ and thereby more prone to volatility or violence. In the majority of cases, such crises will be successfully resolved and not cause any lasting damage to the group in question. Rebuffs from the world, for example, may be interpreted as signs that the outside world is truly corrupt and evil. Similarly, ‘failed’ prophecies may be reinterpreted as tests of loyalty/faith, events that have been delayed as a consequence of the actions/prayers of the Elect, or even as events that have occurred, albeit in a spiritual rather than literal sense. However, in a small number of cases, the crises will not be so successfully resolved (or, indeed, may be irresolvable) and the leader’s perceived charismatic authority, and by extension the group’s continued existence/millennial goal, may become fatally undermined. Where this is already under threat from real or perceived cultural opposition, the group in question may then become
volatile. They may also, more seriously, follow in the deadly footsteps of Peoples Temple, the Solar Temple, and Aum Shinrikyō and, in an attempt to either defend, salvage or fulfil their millennial goal, unleash violence on themselves and/or their perceived enemies in the outside world.

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