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Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflicts

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Acknowledgements

Foreword

George F. McLean

The issue of "Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict" can be taken up at a number of levels, each with its own concerns. The fact that ethnic conflicts have undermined the high hopes for peace which accompanied the end of the cold war suggests that our analysis of conflict in our times had been superficial. It appears to have ignored the deep human sensibilities and commitments involved in ethnic identity and their even deeper religious roots.

This is not surprising, for in modern secular culture all is directed toward ignoring these dimensions of life -- toward placing them on the other side of "a wall of separation" according to Jefferson's term, or behind a "veil of ignorance" as employed by Rawls in his *Political Liberalism*. Due to such exclusions it can be expected that even the best intentioned public efforts at overcoming ethnic conflict will be but palliatives which treat the symptoms while leaving the real causes to fester unattended and suppressing the real remedies. Indeed, only by pure and improbable chance could such efforts avoid exacerbating those causes while weakening the roots of human comity which they refuse to acknowledge.

This suggests, rather than ignoring cultural identities, the need to take the opposite route looking positively into the nature of ethnicity and its roots in religion in order better to understand the nature of both and their mutual relation. In so doing the goal is to see how they are ordered to creating harmony, how, like all that is human, this can devolve into conflict, and how such conflict can be avoided or overcome.

The approaches found in this work are then twofold. One looks to the political order in ways which separate ethnicity and religion from public policy, and searches for responses to ethnic conflict in terms of the isolation and/or reduction of ethnic and religious identities. The other looks for insight into the nature of ethnicity, particularly as this is rooted in scriptural faiths, and the possibilities these provide for understanding a cohesive diversity from within a deeper unity.

In this light some of the main themes of this study of "Abrahamic Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict" might be ordered along a trajectory moving from the level of political structures, to the pattern of civil society, to ethnic groups, to religion, and thence returning inversely to ethnicity and civil peace once again.

Political Structures: In the North Atlantic region a liberal, capitalist outlook has shaped public legislation and funding, the courts and the media. This focuses upon the human person as an individual subject of rights; all is related adversarially, especially in terms of the individual's acquisition of property. The social order is constituted of the compromises required in order to promote and protect this right of the multiple individuals, which is the chief task of the political order endowed with coercive power. The necessary compromises of personal freedom are considered tolerable if based upon full and equal assent, which, in turn, becomes the overriding sense of freedom and the center of proximate concern.

With regard to religion, on the supposition of one variant that this is a purely individual matter, and conceiving the different faith commitments also to be related adversarially, equal participation in society is seen to require that religion be carefully separated or "walled off" from the state. Conversely, the state is to be indifferent to religion and to assure that all and only secular concerns have recognized standing and are promoted in its domain. As society becomes more complex and the political dimension expands, in reality, as notes, Rabbi Jack Moline in Chapter XX below, religion comes to be relativized and marginalized. It is considered only as the servant of secular

concerns for equality in competitiveness, which presume to judge a God-centered approach in terms of whether it meets this test of liberal correctness.

Problems were noted with this more negative view:

1) its ethnocentric character: that it is constructed on the basis of the individualistic prejudices characteristic of the nominalist Anglo-Saxon culture, a dichotomy of public vs private, and a particular theology of religion as a purely private matter.

2) its ideology of aggressive secularism sedulously removing the consideration of God and religion from all that touches upon public life; and

3) given the present importance, on the one hand, of the state and international organizations in public life, and, on the other hand, of religion as the basis of culture, items (1) and (2) combine to generate a public policy which is consistently negative with regard to cultural distinctiveness: along with religion, ethnicity too must be relegated to the private sphere. In this individualist and adversarial ideology ethnicity can be understood only negatively as fundamentally aggressive, and hence, like all creative freedom, must be subjected to the political concerns of the Grand Inquisitor.

In contrast, David Walsh's analysis of Dostoevski's classic passage points to the forgotten but essential need of the liberal view for a positive religious context

The secularization of the Christian faith in the transcendent value of freedom cannot survive the loss of faith in the participation of transcendent reality. By itself the liberal faith in the unconditional worth of the person, their free donation of self in love, cannot be sustained. . . . Without a recognition of human openness to the reality that is beyond all reality, the political expression in the preservation of inalienable rights becomes a hollow shell. . . . Once faith in transcendent reality is firmly rejected, faith in the transcendence of human nature cannot survive.

This suggests that a more positive approach to the issue of religion, ethnicity and peace be explored.

Civil Society: The difficulties in the above arise from the supposition that the only reality is the individual human being, and that all social relations are purely contractual ones between conflicting individuals for utilitarian purposes. Hence, the first step of a response is to restore the sense of the inherently social nature of humankind.

This could begin in faith from the recognition that human beings as created by the one God are by nature social. But for those who can consider all, even faith, only in an adversarial perspective it is sufficient to recognize that persons can be born only of, and into, a social union, and that their own survival depends upon the concern of others, which must be mutual. This social sense implies a reconception of the public order. It must be seen no longer as exclusively for individual welfare, but for the common good of all, and as including not only individual persons, but the various inter-mediate solidarities they form between the individual and the state. Concretely and foundationally, these include the various ethnic and religious groupings. As we move beyond the conflict of cold war ideologies which destroyed personal and social life, it is in the reconstruction of this intermediate civil society that hope for progress on the issue of ethnicity and scriptural faiths must center.

Ethnic Groups: As each social group has its own self-understanding and identity, understanding and responding to ethnic groups becomes essential. Here the focus shifts from the individual as the subject of empirical observation and dissociative analysis, to a people's culture as a distinctive grasp of the meaning of life and a commitment to a distinctive mode of its realization. This implies a set of values as a preferential ordering between possible goods, and a set of virtues as developed capabilities for acting according to those values. As values and virtues develop from generation to generation they create a culture and, as this is handed on to sub-sequent generations, a tradition. This constitutes the self-understanding both of persons and of peoples, and indeed of ethnicities as local groups which share a culture.

Religion: This takes us, in turn, to religion as the depth dimension or well-spring of cultural and ethnic identity. Chronologically, from the beginning it constituted the unitive center of meaning as the basic integrating vision and commitment of the earliest peoples. Over the ages this evolved under the Providence of God; the various scriptural faiths are shaped continually by rereading and reinterpreting the written account of this Providence and its teaching. Through their genetic relation, Islam, Judaism and Christianity all share the model of Abraham and Sarah as a setting out from one's own people and hence opening to others, and in so doing continuing one's proper heritage in new ways.

The great Sacred Scriptures of Asia also are ways in which divine Providence has been present to humankind. It is not surprising then that the *Vedanta Sutras* I 1, 2 state that Brahma is "that from which, in which and into which all are." Philosophically, this is the model of participation of the many from, in and into the One which has been the center of Platonic thought through the ages.

Such a model allows for multiple and unique unfoldings of the meaning of the Absolute, and hence for diversity and pluralism. It escapes the danger of one's absolute commitment to the Absolute becoming exclusive of all others and provides instead a real basis for complementarity between faiths based upon the ability to depart and yet remain.

This can be considered on two levels. One is the hermeneutic awareness that faithfulness to one's own tradition can become static and repetitious unless kept alive by an active questioning and exploration of its meaning. For this, active engagement with different religious experiences is important. To look upon other faiths simply as alien or, worse, with indifference does not enable them to question us. If, however, they are seen as real modes of relating to God, and hence as at least potentially complementary, then the multiple religious traditions can enter into a dynamic and creative interaction and thereby unfolds new meaning for each generation.

Any relativity pertains not to the divine in itself which is infinite, eternal and transcendent, but to the various human points of awareness. This, however, may not tell the whole story, for if God is the God not of the dead but of the living, then the living faiths are vital modes of interaction between God and His peoples. This is the eternal living in time, the absolute in our world of change, endowing all our actions, great and small, with absolute meaning and inspiring self-sacrificing commitment.

Further, if religion is the basis of culture which, in turn, is the basis of ethnic identity, then the attitude of the Abrahamic faiths to their mutual differences and potential relatedness is of the most fundamental importance for the relation between various ethnic groups. To consider these as mutually unrelated, exclusive or even adversarial one to another leaves them available for manipulation and employment for political purposes. Today many consider such manipulation to be the basis of the various fundamentalisms. Nor do we need to reach far into the past to find the

classically godless propaganda machine of Hitler attempting to mobilize people to attack the East under the pretense of mounting a new crusade.

Religion, Ethnicity and Civil Peace: In contrast, it is possible now to appreciate the various major religions, in their progressively more self-aware cultural and ethnic forms, as rich and complementary unfoldings of divine life and Providence in our world. This lays the basis for mutual cooperation, rather than rejection; it implies not a reduction of ethnic and religious differences, but rather seeing these differences as the basis of complementarity between peoples.

This is founded in a deep conviction that the Spirit is present in all, guiding all peoples in the image of Isaiah on their pilgrimage to the Holy Mountain. It implies an attitude between ethnic groups not of conflict, but of mutual appreciation and admiration, of common hope and concern, and of willingness to help others on their path under the Providence of God by sharing what one has received in the Spirit.

This invites a true conversion on the part of the Abrahamic faiths to a deeper self-understanding, which at the same time opens new possibilities for greater union with God and with other peoples.

Structure of the Volume: In order to study this progressively and in a systematic manner a six part interchange was held between members of the three Abrahamic faith. These are the six parts of this volume, each with its own introduction to its proper argument. As a whole they unfold in the following sequence.

Part I introduces the issue of religion, ethnicity and conflict in the world today. To conflate the three would, of course, be prejudicial and in planning the study it was the explicit intent not to do so. For if religion is at the root of ethnic and cultural identities then it is essential to see how it can contribute also, though not solely, to the construction of peace rather than of conflict.

Part II presents a first response to conflict by turning to the Scriptural call to Abraham and Sarah to go forth, to enter into diversity and yet to retain their deep unifying religious roots. This calls for extended reflection which is the content of the following three parts.

Part III begins this reflection by a philosophical and anthropological examination of the nature and human significance of ethnicity and culture as primordial solidarities.

Part IV undertakes a primarily theological exploration of how the transcendence of God should exercise a corrective pull beyond any absolutizing tendencies on the part of monotheistic religions.

Part V reviews these themes in relation to attempts to form a political order adequate to the increasing pluralism of recent times, and surpassing the extremes of enlightenment rationalism with its abstract universalism, on the one hand, and a reactionary fundamentalist particularism, on the other.

Part VI reviews the three monotheistic Abrahamic faiths with a view to identifying what each can bring to the resolution of present conflicts.

In sum, this study is directed toward the creative sense of religion reemerging with the new sense of freedom which led to and followed the end of the cold war. It includes a redemptive religious response of reconciliation to the negative tensions -- the dark side of freedom -- which also have emerged between peoples at the present stage of the human pilgrimage. Beyond this it also lays the foundation for challenging task of constructing the religious grounds for new paths of global inclusion and harmony for the coming millennium.

Introduction

Conflicts and Aporias in Abrahamic Monotheism

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Yahweh said to Abram, 'Leave your country, your kindred and your father's house for a country which I shall show you; and I shall make you a great nation, I shall bless you and make your name famous; you are to be a blessing!

I shall bless those who bless you,
and shall curse those who curse you,
and all clans on earth
will bless themselves by you.'
Genesis 12:1-3 (New Jerusalem Bible)

The Call of Abraham, taken in its own terms, broke the silence of the universe. Thereby the Deity intervened in the previously-created cosmos, a cosmos already endowed with its own charter. And while, as became evident, the God who creates and later calls is seen as identical, creating and calling are humanly experienced as differing though related divine *modi operandi*. Hence the question: is this special Call to be understood as an intervention in the created order, either to remodel or complete or, to invoke a con-temporary metaphor, rather more as an in-flight correction of an errant species? Had the original creation been incomplete or defective, needing only one more component to make it work -- a temple, a cathedral, or a mosque -- or did the Call of Abraham move on a different plane?

According to the above text, this enigma was built into the initial Call. What appeared otherwise as primordial (order of creation), and hence inviolable, namely the bond to "country, kindred and father's house," was expressly sublated, hence relativized, in that Call. Thereby human existence became in some sense bifurcated. For the recipient of the call, the putative sacred unity of the cosmos was broken. To invoke another inadequate metaphor, "nature" (creation) and "grace" (the new Call) now form two foci within an ellipse -- one God, two sets of instructions. Tensions, anomalies, indeed aporias, resulted, which, as the story unfolds, are soluble only in a remote and experientially subjunctive eschaton.

Cosmic reconstitution or in-flight (human) correction? Much of the history of the three "Abrahamic" faith communities represented in this symposium arises as oscillation between the two poles within this ellipse. Indeed, one might speak of several elliptical forms. First, the Call ("grace") somehow transcends Creation or "nature" (" . . . father's house"). Second, while promising what might be seen as a new ". . . father's house," that is, a new *particularity*, this new "nation" embodies and constitutes a new *universality*, a particular blessing on behalf of all nations. From Abraham is to issue a qualitatively different peoplehood, yet without rescinding that which it surmounts. Thence forward, Abraham stands under a dual mandate: nature and grace, a particular universality. Despite, and at times seemingly because of this "in-flight correction," history continues on its turbulent way. As we all know, according to the story in which the Abrahamic Call is embedded, the harmony of the cosmos had first been disrupted by human rebellion. The Creation, pronounced good at the outset, indeed, with the appearance of the human, pronounced very good, had been placed in some indeterminate though limited manner and measure under

human tutelage. Within limits, thus, the unfolding of the Divine creative venture had by design been made hostage to human caprice.

According to the preceding story (Genesis 3-11), that project of world creation miscarried, provoking eventually a flood that would permit a new beginning, and when the second beginning misfired, a scattering of humans (Babel), effectively placing new limits on human action. Even that was not enough. So now, a third, and more positive, intervention, the Call to Abraham. This intervention can be described as a new enabling yet without prejudice to the original Creation. The telos of this intervention is restorative rather than disjunctive. Yet while a total repristination is placed in eventual prospect, the Abrahamic Call at the outset is particular and incipient, rather than universal or realized.

Whatever the goal or telos of the new enabling, thus, it is achieved only in stages. It begins inauspiciously with the wandering of a single household, itself not unusual in a nomadic era. First, both chronologically and generically, comes the formation of a special people drawn and set apart from all others. This new people can be described as metaphysically constituted.¹ A special new covenant is instituted within the covenant that is general to the creation. However the resulting horizon is conceived ontologically or theologically, within the contours of Abrahamic faith, the respondents, Abraham and those who follow in his train, thereafter stand under a dual mandate: the orders of creation and of grace, grace as a covenanting Call and empowerment, and ultimately as the last word. "Go from your . . . father's house."

Though still subject to the laws of Creation, Abraham and Sarah now march by other music. And as the story unfolds over succeeding generations, viewed externally, the Call as a new directive becomes an additional anomaly in a human enterprise already off balance. To invoke another crude simile, the growth of new tissue beneath the putrefaction of an old wound can be temporarily irritating.

This symposium addresses the paradox: the telos of the Abrahamic call is the *blessing* of all humans, but the implementation of that call seemingly has often meant, or been accompanied by, bane. Hence the questions confronting the writers in this symposium: to what extent, if any, is the Call inherently conflictual? To what extent is the conflict surrounding the Abrahamic enterprise random or accidental, rooted rather in the fallenness (and/or finitude?) of the human condition that occasioned the Call in the first place? Or could it be that disparity between the existing order and the dynamics triggered by the Call is intrinsically conflict engendering? Whatever the answer, if *shalom* is the true nature and destiny of the Call ("they shall sit every man under his vine . . . and none shall make them afraid" Micah 4:4), what can we learn, each from our own tradition's conflicted past -- learning that will enable us together to achieve healing and harmony in the future, the healing and harmony that appears to be the telos of the Call? Given the accelerating growth of global encounter in our era, these questions become increasingly urgent.

The Abrahamic Call as Conflicted Metaphor

Whatever the shape of the original Abrahamic event, the Call became an embryonic, yet ambiguous, metaphor in the ensuing march of history. On the one hand the Call appears as a fundamental challenge to nature-grounded human history. Country, kindred and father's house are human constructs, arising from the constraints and possibilities inherent in the determinisms of nature. As already intimated, the Call transcends and thus relativizes these natural, creation-grounded ties. Yet there is no suggestion that the creation-grounded familial order is being dissolved. Abraham maintains his own household, and his descendants are organized by family,

clan, and tribe as are the surrounding peoples. In any case, the Decalogue enshrines the inviolability of both the conjugal and the blood tie.

Perhaps, then, the Call to Abraham was a unique event, merely the beginning of a new blood-line? The recurrent and active intervention of God in the ensuing history surely rules out that option. It is instructive to note that a similar note is sounded when Jesus begins his public ministry (Mark 3:13-19; 31-35). Rather than displacement or dissolution of country, kindred and household, the Call signals their sublation in a transcendent vision. Yet how can that vision be implemented given the now innate dissonance within the cosmos?

We are thus left with the question: does the Call constitute eclipse, or does it merely make more explicit claims that were already implicit in the scheme of things? If the former, if in effect it represents a new set of instructions, differing from the original order, we can only conclude that the price of the Call is a corresponding degree of dissonance in human existence, say, faith community versus natural community. If the latter, rendering explicit what hitherto was only implicit, the Call merely underscores or reiterates the directives already given. In effect, little, if anything, has changed. History continues on its nature-based course of battle for country, kindred and family.

A People Set Apart

The original Call, however, launched a new and distinct people, a people with a mission to other peoples, indeed to all peoples. This was a people apart, but a people nonetheless. Precisely as special, as chosen, it was endowed with an indelibility, an inviolability, not shared by others. Here, too, there is ambiguity and paradox. The Call posits a universality of human destiny that relativizes all conflict-engendering particularity. This transformation is manifest paradigmatically by a covenantal formation that transcends and relativizes the ethnic fabric -- *Go from your country, kindred and father's house. . . .* Yet ironically this new ethnos becomes a configuration that absolutizes its own particularity. In the process it uproots and displaces other peoples to establish its own identity as a territorially-organized people. *Mutatis mutandis*, this paradox characterizes each of the three principal Abrahamic traditions.

Outwardly, the rise of the Abrahamic peoples seemingly perpetuates the inter-group struggle for supremacy that generally has characterized human history heretofore. The dynamics that permit the ascendancy of a regime or people over others vary endlessly. Any such ascent is readily ideologized by some form of cosmic appeal. In the instance of the Abrahamic peoples, the monotheistic and universal nature of the ideological claim tends by so much to reinforce the claim vis-a-vis others. It is hardly surprising that other peoples should resent this Abrahamic pretention.

Thus it will hardly do to attribute the conflict that has plagued the journeys through history of the Abrahamic peoples simply to the perversity of others beyond the pale of the Call. In any event the inherent ambiguity of the Abrahamic project is somehow acknowledged in the unfolding story. In the early stages, the conflict with the peoples who are displaced is liturgically defined -- God fights the Abrahamic battles. Defeat, or at times even the exigency of literal battle, results from Abrahamic disobedience. In the end, *Shalom* rather than conquest or subjugation is disclosed as the real telos of the Call.

Despite the outward similarity of the Abrahamic "nation" to peoples with their conflicts, the distinction between that nation and all others glimmers through the agony surrounding the establishment of monarchy (I Samuel 8). In principle, prior to that time, the Abrahamic nation was theocratically constituted and so (self) understood. But precisely how was such rule to operate empirically? That seemingly was not fully clear, and perhaps by the nature of the case, it could be

neither clear nor predictable. To the people the resulting vulnerability of this special nation to the conquest of others became intolerable (Joshua, Judges, I Samuel). By way of the dialogue initiated in the Call to Abraham, they demanded a king. Citing the irreducibility of the divine rule to the ethnic plane, Samuel, the prophetic steward of the Call, refused. Surprisingly, the LORD yielded, undercutting the prophet, while nonetheless coming to his support. Still, being sent himself to anoint Saul, the son of Kish, as king, he was forced to "eat crow."

To move to the Christian saga, though chronology and other particulars differ widely from the Israelite precedent, the parallels between the Israelite and Jewish monarchies and Christendom appear powerfully revealing. Referring to the fourth century (CE) adoption of Christianity by the Roman empire, George Mendenhall, an Old Testament scholar of our own era, has described King David as the "Old Testament Constantine" (while extending the canvass to include a similar mutation in the message of Zarathustra by the later Achaemenids [7th, 6th] centuries BCE). Mendenhall observes that "all three cases are entirely analogous, illustrating (to put it as provocatively as possible) *the dissolution of religion into politics*. At the same time, the basis of solidarity was no longer the covenant, but the myth of descent from a common ancestor."²

While I am far less familiar with the Islamic story, it is my impression that there too, as in ancient Israel and in Christendom, "the dissolution of religion into politics" has at times occurred. Despite a strong universalist impulse in the Islamic primordium, no more than in its Judaic and Christian antecedents, has that primordium been self-guaranteeing. Once a sufficient degree of religious monopoly prevails, the impulse to invoke the Abrahamic sanction for Creation-grounded order becomes all but irresistible. The Call that redefines popular cohesion from within, or "from below" (*shalom*), is turned into a rationale for external subjugation "from above" (*pax*-ification).

In effect, the Abrahamic "nation" has in all three instances reverted to the pre-Abrahamic plane. Today the ghost of Christendom hangs over the former Yugoslavia. Absent the religious markers -- Eastern vs. Western Christianity vs. Islam -- the respective "causes" of the warring parties might well collapse. In the jargon of the social sciences, while "religion" in this instance is hardly a *sufficient* "cause" for conflict, it is nonetheless a necessary component. The Call whose telos is the sublation of the ethnic impulse, the idolatry of "country, kindred and father's house," is subverted into the reinforcement of the very impulse it was designed to surmount.

History as Revelation?

The foregoing analysis is obviously a simplification. The attempt here to tease out the inner logic of the storied Call ignores the thicket of issues -- historical, linguistic, epistemological, theological, etc. -- that surround the Abrahamic story. Yet given the tumult of inquiries into that thicket, the inner logic of both the initial call, and its unfolding, tends to get trampled. Admittedly, toying with a paragraph in Genesis chapter 12 appears as terra firma compared to the tracing of the inner stream as it flows and gathers momentum down through the millennia.

The foregoing cogitation turns on the embryonic potential of the Call as originally recorded, with scattered glances at later stages in its progression. Given the embryonic character of the Call, tracing that progression is critical to its comprehension. Tracing that evolution is a task well beyond the small reach of this essay. A few broad brush strokes must suffice.

Above I noted the historical tension between the "already" and the "not yet" dimensions of the Call. Here, too, there is in-congruity. Our several eschatological readings (Jewish, Christian, Islamic) posit both linkage and discontinuity between these two dimensions. Fate in the hereafter, the "not yet," turns on disposition in the here and now, the "already." The story has a plot. It begins,

proceeds and ends. Yet the end, the hereafter, is qualitatively dis-continuous with the here and now, and thus can in no way be temporally achieved. The end emerges from both the beginning and the realization of the journey, and yet ultimately is not merely their product.

Prior to or apart from that end, this enigma is not solved. While in the end, as prophets announce, "the lion shall eat straw like the ox," his diet has been considerably more carnivorous over the centuries in the course of which whole peoples have been wiped out. For them it was of little comfort that the prophets were to announce a new historical era in which individual responsibility would succeed upon one of collective guilt. But no more shall the son "suffer for the iniquity of the father, nor the father suffer for the iniquity of the son," a prophet announces. "The soul that sins shall die" (Ezekiel 18:20).

That transformation slowly gathered momentum over the centuries, emerging first in the western world. The corresponding conception of individual dignity is now spreading world wide, especially by way of the universal campaign for "human rights." How-ever inadequate the formulation as yet -- the corresponding notions of duty, responsibility and solidarity are woefully lagging -- the advance appears to be, at least in some measure, irreversible.

Yet in two important respects this advance appears troubling. While doubtless attributable in part to the impact of the Abrahamic Call on the course of history, the Call itself was implemented by means of the evils it was to uproot, the displacement of peoples to make way for the people of the Call. Secondly, the status of the improvement beyond the pale of the Call is unclear if not confusing. Insofar as the Call is implemented, that is, "secularized," is it now obviated? Logically, does the Call pertain only to deficiency? Is the Call merely remedial? Does a fully just society still need "religion?" What is the ontological significance of human reform?

It has been suggested that the global transformations now breathtakingly under way surely possess eschatological significance, yet voices informed by the Call are scarcely audible in this regard. The separation of church and state, for example, though profoundly implicit in the Abrahamic story, is more strongly asserted by the exponents of Creation (state or society) than by exponents of the Call (church). Indeed the latter tend to seek recourse to the means of the former to promote the sway of the latter!

These problems are cited, not because they can be solved here, but they illustrate the importance of the "already -- not yet" epoch in the story of the Call. It is here that the importance of the distinction between the Diaspora and the triumphalist paradigms outlined below becomes pertinent. For the former disavows as chimeric the very goal that the latter pursues. The salvific seed is dispersed. For the sake of the faithful few, not the dominant many, a city, a world, is saved (Genesis 18).

Finally an astonishing aspect of the "already -- not yet" interim is adumbrated in the rise of the Hebrew monarchy noted above. The softening of the divine position at this point introduces a critically-important dimension of the Abrahamic story. That story proceeds by way of the proverbial *two steps forward, one step backward*. In recognition of the human predicament ("For he knows our frame; he remembers that we are but dust" Psalm 103:14), each episode or stage is framed by a lofty possibility, and a partially failed response. Thereupon the LORD picks up the pieces, as it *were*, and accepts the result as a staging venue for the next advance.

In the long run, we may well ask whether Samuel's misgivings were not justified. Monarchy and temple establishment apparently failed. The new step forward incorporates exile and Diaspora. Repristination becomes increasingly messianic and eschatological, hence in some measure, discontinuous with the most that history can achieve. In a sense, thus, the plot only thickens. The historical pace quickens, yet the likelihood of the achievement of hegemonic Abrahamic faith such

as erstwhile Hebrew monarchy or Christendom recedes. Short of messianic finality, Diaspora appears as "the name of the Game."

Some Concluding Observations

The Call to Abraham is God's overture to a humanity that continuously abuses its exalted destiny in the Creation. Humanly perceived, given that fiasco, God confronts a dilemma. Either God must scrap the project (as in the Flood with Noah) or somehow contain the damage. Opting for the latter, the Call is the divine solution. The Creation, and with it the human enterprise, continues on its allotted course. But in Abraham, God addresses the human spirit in a special communicative manner, without prejudice to the covenant of creation or even the material status of the human within creation. In short, the intervention remains strictly "metaphysical," engaging the human spirit, without infringing on the creation-grounded animality from which that spirit emerges. As theologians have noted, the Call constitutes a "special" revelation within or alongside the general revelation that is implicit in creation. This special gesture consists of both judgment and renewal. But while this intervention permits the project to go forward, full restoration will be realized only in a trans-historical cosmic climax.

Each of the three Abrahamic traditions has its particular eschatology, its particular conception of the beyond-time mystery. Nonetheless, for all three the grace proffered in the Call is in some manner a two-stage process, a down payment, as it were, to be followed by final settlement. The Call thus places believers in a field of tension between the "already" and the "not yet" moments of the new divine-human covenant. The Abrahamic peoples live in the unsettled period between the two eras.

Alas, both the timing and the shape of the final settlement are vaguely defined. Presumably the down payment is substantial enough to inspire confidence in the eventual settlement. Often, however, the logic is reversed. The prospect of future glory is invoked to shore up confidence in the down payment. At that point, folk wisdom asserts itself. A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. Catch as catch can. The sound of the Call is drowned in the din.

How then, after these three or four millennia, do we respond to the Call launched with Abraham? Can we discern any normative guidelines? Within the histories and traditions referenced above, one might discern three possible paradigms: the first may be described as *kaleidoscopic*, history taken as it comes, on a trial and error basis, without pattern or principle. The second may be described as *triumphalism*, the possibility that the Abrahamic covenant will carry the day, while the third views *Diaspora* as the "normal" posture of an Abrahamic people in the already/not yet field of tension that characterizes the post Abrahamic era.

Though at least on the surface these three tendencies, even paradigms, can be distinguished variously in the history of the three peoples, each has its own claim to validity. The kaleidoscopic paradigm accords with both the flux and the variability of history, on the one hand, and the ineffability of the Divine, on the other. It accords as well with the prophetic discovery that despite the importance of people and nations in the Abrahamic scheme, "the soul that sins shall die." No longer shall it be said, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."

With regard to the *triumphalist* paradigm, this is seemingly implicit in the promise of universal blessing that is built into the primordial call. What can surpass a Solomonic reign, a Europe as Christendom, or peoples under Islamic rule? Should we not strive for a public order whose institutions are Abrahamically grounded and guided? And today, should we not minimally

seek to uphold, or minimally to retain, whatever "establishment" residue of those eras that still remain? Yet almost inevitably, the more nearly history approximates the *triumphalist* paradigm, the higher the probability that the Abrahamic faith is taken captive by the "country, kindred and father's house" it is designed to transmute and transcend.

Alongside, or in the wake of these two paradigms, a third option has emerged, characterized as *Diaspora* (*dispersion*). Outwardly the *Diaspora* paradigm resembles the kaleidoscope insofar as it exists alongside other configurative modes. Historically, however, it appears as a third-stage emergent, appearing principally after the kaleidoscopic and triumphalist stages. *Diaspora* is a seminal concept, evoking the image of scattered seed, in this instance, the scattering of salvific potential, ready to spring up wherever it falls into receptive soil. Envisioned in a variety of images in Hebrew prophecy, this imagery resounds in the various logoi of Jesus and finds parallels as well in the Qur'anic texts.

The fact that historically, all three impulses or modalities have appeared, depending on context and setting, is instructive. That fact surely reflects the multidimensionality and complexity of the human condition. It also warns against too hasty an espousal of one paradigm versus another. In any case, the term "paradigm," as introduced here, serves as sensitizing concept, directing our attention to particular possibilities and tendencies rather than to objects, entities, or externally replicable patterns or programs.

Given the incipient nature of the Abrahamic vocation, however, the *Diaspora* motif appears more attuned to the *already/not* yet tentativeness of the Abrahamic saga as well as to the cultural pluralism that characterizes the global scene. Admittedly, this claim as presented here may reflect the very ethnocentrism that the Abrahamic Call seeks to challenge; that is, not only American religious and cultural diversity, but also the "radical Reformation"³ heritage in which my own spiritual roots lie.

This symposium can provide no definitive solution to the aporias of the Abrahamic saga. Nonetheless the responses of the some twenty writers from the three traditions to the questions here posed do provide a variety of insights that may well enrich the understanding of the thoughtful reader. We offer these deliberations as a contribution to the growing stream of interfaith conversation.

Notes

1. David Novak, *Jewish-Christian Dialogue: A Jewish Justification* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989). He draws the phrase, "the metaphysically constituted human society," with some qualification, from Joseph B. Soloveitchik from Tradition 6.2 (Spring-Summer, 1964).

2. George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation: The Origins of the Biblical Tradition* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1973), pp. 16f.

3. This term was coined by the Reformation historian George Hunston Williams to distinguish the dissenting "free church" (Anabaptist) movement that arose within the "magisterial" Reformation (Lutheran, Calvinist, Anglican) in the sixteenth century. Williams, *The Radical Reformation* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1957). See also Paul Peachey, "The 'Free Church?': A Time Whose Idea Has Not Come," in *Anabaptism Revisited*, edited by Walter Klaassen (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1992). When the break between the Papacy and the Reformers (Luther, etc.) became definitive, temporal rule was the only order-maintaining alternative to the historic succession embodied in the Papacy. When this brought temporal rule (the magistracy) into the domain of the "church," the "radicals" proceeded on the basis that Christ's

presence in the gathering of believers is self-authenticating, not tied to historical or sacramental mediation.

Part I
Ethnicity and Violence in the World Today:
An Overview of the Problem

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

The political salience of ethnicity as a factor in the global community. The nature and conditions of ethnically-inspired or exacerbated violence. Preliminary notes on the religious dimension of ethnicity and ethnic conflict; and of conflict avoidance and resolution. Some representative cases and issues. Preliminary conclusions.¹

Editorial Introduction

Ethnicity is a plastic, variegated, and originally ascriptive trait that, in certain historical and socioeconomic circumstances, is readily politicized. Such fertile circumstances abound in modern and transitional (modernizing) societies.

-Joseph Rothschild²

We begin with a glimpse at a few representative ethnically-entangled conflicts around the world today. Fortunately the symposium was able to draw on work in progress at the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) on "Religion, Nationalism and Intolerance," with a presentation by David Little, director of that Project. A response follows by an independent scholar from each of the three faiths: for Judaism, Sidney Schwarz; for Christianity, Alex F. C. Webster; and for Islam, Mustafa Malik. Finally, in this section, in a paper originally presented in another session of the symposium, David Walsh challenges the secular reading of the liberal paradigm offered as solution by Little by unpacking the "intimations of transcendence" implicit in that paradigm.

These writers readily agree that religion as such is not directly or inherently conflictual, that religion as such does not directly "cause" conflict. But this is true of ethnicity as well. Both are highly complex realities, fundamentally different from each other, yet overlapping. Thus while religious and ethnic claims may conflict with each other, more commonly they coalesce against competing ethnic and/or political (national) claims.

Appropriately enough, ethnicity has been described as kinship writ large, and nationalism in turn can be described as ethnicity writ large. Transition of the first two to the next higher level is situation-interactively determined. And just as kinship groups are far more numerous around the world than ethnic groupings, so the latter groupings are far more numerous than nations. Additionally, while statehood is linked to nationhood in the modern experience, not all nations have been permitted to achieve statehood in the modern context.

Beginning, as it were, at the hearth, religion in some form has been a formative energy among all peoples. As larger groupings transcended elementary family groupings, additional religious claims served their consolidation. As empires and federations were formed, embracing and transcending lesser groupings of kinship, ethnicity, and place (region), religious claims could well come into conflict. Eventually, in the Western experience, the solution to such conflict was sought in the disengagement of religion from the political compact.

The disengagement of religion from the political compact is a kind of double-edged sword. It means, on the one hand, that the compact itself must exclude any particular religious sanction, while the participants in that compact, are required, as it were, to park their religion at the door

when they enter the political arena. To widely varying degrees, most modern polities (states) are "pluralistic;" that is, they embrace both ethnic and religious diversity. Thus "tolerance" of such diversity is an essential feature of citizenship in modern states, and by extension, internationally and globally as well.

As David Little recounts at the outset, the United Nations in 1981 issued a *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion and Belief*. Correspondingly the USIP Intolerance project focuses on "the set of human rights norms that guarantee 'the freedom of religion or belief.'" Thus "religiously-related ethnic conflicts" in the half dozen countries in the USIP project are analyzed against the tolerance norms thus articulated. Effectively the UN Declaration seeks to universalize the disengagement of religion from the political compact that emerged in the Western experience.

Little nonetheless underscores the complexities and ambiguities that arise. In any event he identifies two rather distinct modes of nationalism, "liberal" and "illiberal," a distinction long noted in a variety of terms. In the former instance the conception of nation is based on citizenship, and thus effectively on individuals rather than on groups. The national "whole" is in that respect merely an incoherent aggregation of individual citizen equals. In the latter instance the nation, at least generically, precedes the state of which it becomes the vehicle. The state is idealized as the embodiment of the preexisting natural community. Insofar as religion and ethnicity are little differentiated or not at all, tolerance tends to be in short supply.

On one level ethnicity does for human aggregates what religion does cosmologically, namely provide coherence, meaning and order in the face of unpredictability and chaos. Indeed, human arrangements appear as mythically grounded in the cosmos. Though "natural" and "founded" religions differ importantly, once established, functionally the latter highly resemble the former. Intellectually, the Enlightenment, and constitutionally, the separation of church and state (the American paradigm), disengage any particular religion from the political compact. That disengagement, however, entails uneasiness for both religion and politics. States cannot survive without myth, and religion excluded from political destiny appears emasculated. Because of what sometimes has been called "American exceptionalism,"³ the USA often is effectively viewed as the paradigmatic "liberal" nation. At the end of Radojan Gandhi's 1995 *Cynthia Wedel Lecture* at The Church Center for Theology and Public Policy in Washington, DC, when asked what distinguishes the American system, Gandhi replied: "Nation without the blood line;" that is, "liberal" nationalism. While there may be reason to laud the achievements of the Founding Fathers of the American system, historical circumstance or accident may have been more decisive.

Even so, the pot of the American experiment in the separation of church and state continues to boil. And the responses from the three "Abrahamic faith" traditions indicate why that is the case. Beyond that, if one assumes that the separation of church and state is a precondition to societal and inter-societal peace, the journey to that destination has scarcely begun in many lands. The rapidly growing global interdependence obviously accelerates the flow of history. Hence predictions as to outcomes, whether pessimistic or optimistic, are essentially speculative. In any case, doubts appear throughout this volume as to the viability of the American solution, even if it were generalizable.

It is at this juncture that the introduction of David Walsh's paper, "Liberal Intimations of Transcendence," is of seminal importance. In a sense, this paper turns the liberal Enlightenment vision on its head. Effectively, Walsh maintains that the very transcendent claim that secular liberalism believes to have sur-mounted makes the liberal vision possible.

Walsh's thesis offers a striking parallel to Emile Durkheim's journey into his study of the "division of labor" in society.⁴ Distinguishing between traditional and modern societies

("mechanical" and "organic" solidarity in his terms), Durkheim proceeded initially on the assumption that the latter would supplant the former, only to discover enroute that in reality the latter was in fact dependent in some manner on the former. That is, modern "contract"-based organization presupposes some degree or modes of "pre-contractual" solidarity, perhaps what James S. Coleman more recently has called the "informal social capital"⁵ that contract-based social organization tends to dissolve.

Walsh, however, somewhat surprisingly citing Dostoevsky, turns in another direction. He links "faith in the transcendent value of freedom" to "faith in the participation in transcendent reality." Walsh presumably is not offering transcendence as an answer to what we might call Durkheim's problem, but rather calls attention to another poorly understood aspect of the transformation we call modernization. Ernst Troeltsch, writing a generation later than Dostoevsky, and in a different milieu and idiom, underscored the same point.

The Christian Ethos (here we might substitute "Abrahamic Faith) alone possesses, in virtue of its personalistic Theism, a conviction of personality and individuality, based on metaphysics, which no Naturalism and no Pessimism can disturb. That personality which, rising above the natural order of life, is only achieved through the union of will and the depths of being with God, alone transcends the finite, and alone can defy it. Without this support, however, every kind of individualism evaporates into thin air.⁶

Notes

1. Original assignment to Little, Schwarz, Webster and Malik.

2. Joseph Rothschild, *Ethnopolitics: A Conceptual Framework* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1981), p. 1.

3. The notion that America (the USA) is unique or somehow "chosen" arose early in the American experience. Seymour Martin Lipset recently subjected the concept to updated analysis in a book entitled *American Exceptionalism: A Double-Edged Sword* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1996).

4. *The Division of Labor in Society* (New York: The Free Press of Glencoe, 1964); original 1983, with subsequent revised editions.

5. James S. Coleman, "The Rational Reconstruction of Society," *American Sociological Review* 58.1 (February, 1993).

6. *The Social Teachings of the Christian Churches*, tr. Olive Wyon (New York: Harper Torchbook, 1960 [1911]), II, 1004-1005.

Chapter I
Belief, Ethnicity, and Nationalism*
David Little (United States Institute of Peace)

Introduction

It is frequently asserted that terms like "religious nationalism" or "religious-ethnic conflict," however much in vogue they may be, are quite misleading. They are so, it is said, because they mistakenly suggest something inseparable and essential about the connection between religion, ethnicity and nationalism, as though religious belief were the source of these things. But far from being the source, the argument runs, religion is in actuality usually a "tool" or "veil" for prior and ulterior ethnic or nationalist interests. According to Walker Connor, national and religious identity ought not be confused; in fact, in regard to what makes for intense and enduring social loyalty, "the well-springs of national identity are more profound than are those associated with religion. . ."¹

It is true the role of religion can be overstated and misunderstood. Ethnicity and nationalism are highly complicated and variable phenomena that resist simple diagnoses of any kind, including those involving religion. Moreover, on any reasonable accounting, religious belief and practice as it bears on ethnic and national identity is itself typically shaped and influenced in a powerful way by particular historical circumstances. Sensitivity to such complexity is urgently required in studying the subject.

Still, in face of exaggeration and superficiality, it is possible to overreact by oversimplifying in the opposite direction. However careful we must be in drawing conclusions about it, there is some-thing interesting and worth examining about the recurring correlation of religious belief with ethnicity and nationalism. If religion is all that incidental a factor, why does ethnic conflict and the struggle over national identity in so many places -- in Sudan, Sri Lanka, Tibet and China, Israel, India, Nigeria, Lebanon, Northern Ireland, etc. -- have such a conspicuous and enduring religious component? Even if religion is used or manipulated for ulterior purposes, why, exactly, is it religion that repeatedly gets used for ethnic and nationalist purposes?

To put it another way, why does the assertion of ethnic and national identity so frequently involve, as it obviously does, intolerance and discrimination in regard to religious and other forms of fundamental belief? Why, for example, are nationalists so readily inclined to favor a "repressive ideology demanding strict adherence to the authority of the official embodiments of national tradition,"² and thereby to try to compel and control not only behavior but also belief? In short, what, precisely, is the connection between belief, ethnicity, and nationalism?

The particular perspective from which these questions will be addressed is developed in a series of reports being published under the auspices of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP). When completed, the series will consist of studies of seven countries or regions -- Ukraine, Sri Lanka, Lebanon, Sudan, Nigeria, Tibet,³ and Israel, studies organized under the general title, "Religion, Nationalism, and Intolerance." These particular cases were selected out of many possible examples of religiously-related ethnic conflict because of the cultural, religious, political, and geographical diversity they represent. Reports on Ukraine, Sri Lanka and Tibet⁴ have already been published, and the study on Sudan⁵ is nearing completion.

The focus of the USIP study (Intolerance Project) is the set of human rights norms that guarantee "the freedom of religion or belief." They are of two sorts: There are the articles enshrined

in the international instruments that protect legitimate religious interests, such as freedom of belief and conscience, as well as the freedom to manifest belief in "teaching, practice, worship, and observance."⁶ In addition, there are the articles that prohibit discrimination based on religious belief or affiliation.⁷

The human rights to free exercise and to freedom from discrimination are elaborated in the first two articles of the of the UN *Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief*.⁸ The remaining six articles of that declaration further specify the protections and prohibitions that follow from these two fundamental rights.⁹ The Declaration against intolerance defines the rights of free exercise and freedom from discrimination as follows:

Article 1.

1. Everyone shall have the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. This right shall include freedom to have a religion or whatever belief of [one's] choice, and freedom, either individually or in community with others, and in public or private, to manifest [one's] religion or belief in worship, observance, practice, and teaching.

2. No one shall be subject to coercion which would impair [one's] freedom to have a religion or belief of [one's] choice.

3. Freedom to manifest one's religion or beliefs may be subject only to such limitations as are prescribed by law and are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals or the fundamental rights and freedoms of others.

Article 2.

1. No one shall be subject to discrimination by any State, institution, or group of persons or person on the grounds of religion or belief.

2. For the purposes of the present Declaration, the expression 'intolerance and discrimination based on religion or belief' means any distinction, exclusion, restriction or preference based on religion or belief and having as its purpose or as its effect nullification or impairment of the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis.

The general idea of the USIP Intolerance Project is to examine and elaborate upon, by means of case studies, the twin premises of the declaration: that "the disregard and infringement . . . of the right to freedom of thought, conscience, religion, or whatever belief, have brought, directly or indirectly, wars and great suffering to [human]kind," and, conversely, that respect for and encouragement of "freedom of religion and belief should . . . contribute to the attainment of the goals of world peace, social justice and friendship among peoples. . ."¹⁰

More precisely, the Intolerance Project has two basic and related objectives: One is to establish the degree to which forms of intolerance that violate existing human rights standards contribute to conflict, as well as how efforts to modify or eliminate those violations contribute to peace. The second is, to clarify the sources or causes of tolerance and intolerance, including, in particular, the role of religion and similar beliefs. In respect to the first objective, it is not difficult to establish that violations of the rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination intensify conflict in divided multi-ethnic societies, nor to project with reasonable confidence that the observance and implementation of those norms will serve to reduce conflict.

In the cases of Sudan and Tibet -- cases of severe civil conflict -- large numbers of religious believers have been systematically interfered with and frequently persecuted. In Sudan and Tibet, as well as in Sri Lanka -- another example of ongoing civil strife -- minority populations have been seriously discriminated against because of majority attitudes and beliefs that have tended, respectively, to dominate the governments of those places. At the same time, in all three of these cases, respectable proposals for resolving conflict prominently include references to respect for the rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination. In short, intolerance is quite obviously a significant part of the conflict in these (and many other) cases, and its elimination is widely and reasonably regarded as an important ingredient of peace.

None of this is particularly problematic. Things get more complicated, however, when it comes to considering the question of the sources or causes of intolerance (and tolerance), including the role of belief and its connection to religion.

Max Weber on Ethnicity and Nationalism

The first part of an answer to the sources or causes of intolerance follows from an examination of the meaning of the terms, "ethnicity" and "nationalism." Max Weber's discussion remains among the most penetrating we have.¹¹ For him, the definitions of "ethnic group" and "nation" are very close, though not quite equivalent. An ethnic group is, at bottom, a "people"¹² that holds "a subjective belief in their common descent." Their identity is "presumed," which means that it is "artificially" or "accidentally" associated with a set of characteristics such as physical appearance, customs, common memories, language, religion, etc.¹³ "Almost any kind of similarity or contrast of physical type and of habits," says Weber, "can induce the belief that affinity or disaffinity exists between groups that attract or repel each other."¹⁴ This way of putting it, underscores the fact that the discourse of ethnicity at once homogenizes and differentiates.¹⁵ The very artificially selected ethnic indicators that create "affinities" among insiders simultaneously create "disaffinities" with outsiders.

Likewise, the idea of "nation,"¹⁶ says Weber, "is apt to include the notions of common descent and of an essential, though frequently indefinite, homogeneity."¹⁷ The concept also "belongs in the sphere of values,"¹⁸ and is artificially constructed or invented, with the same consolidating and differentiating effects that ethnicity involves. Nations are self-defining¹⁹ "peoples" in the way ethnic groups are. In these respects, a nation is like an ethnic group.

Yet, Weber goes on, "the sentiment of ethnic solidarity does not by itself make a 'nation.'²⁰ There are two distinguishing features. Nations are culturally more self-conscious and assertive, more concerned with "cultural prestige" than ethnic groups. "The significance of a 'nation' is usually anchored in the superiority, or at least the irreplaceability, of the culture values that are to be preserved and developed only through the cultivation of the peculiarity of the group." It is in that sense that nations are typically associated with legends of a "providential mission,"²¹ and, no doubt, with an intensified image of themselves as a "chosen people."²² Second, nations are more self-conscious and assertive politically: They naturally want an "autonomous polity," thereby exercising what they regard as their legitimate right of self-rule.²³

Time and again we find that the concept 'nation' directs us to political power. Hence, the concept

seems to refer . . . to a specific kind of pathos which is linked to the idea of a powerful political community of people who share a common language, or

religion, or common customs, or political memories; such a state may already exist or it may be desired. The more power is emphasized, the closer appears to be the link between nation and state.²⁴ [Or,] a [modern] nation is a community which normally tends to produce a state of its own.²⁵

These last comments about the impulse to create a "nation-state" hint at Weber's understanding of nationalism. On Weber's view, nations in general are naturally disposed toward forming autonomous polities. However, under modern conditions, a nation fulfills its political aspirations by fashioning itself as a "modern state." A modern state, in turn, is to be understood as a political community that possesses a monopoly of the legitimate use of force over a given territory and its inhabitants,²⁶ and whose legitimacy rests on "legal-rational" or formal, universalistic norms, rather than on rules associated with "sacred tradition" or other forms of particularistic authority that tend to favor one racial, religious, or kin group over others.²⁷

The fact that nationalism is the impulse of a nation to form itself into a modern state explains why nationalism is necessarily a modern phenomenon.²⁸ The very conditions that made the modern state possible have affected the idea of national identity in a profound way. Those conditions include the capacity to consolidate and standardize a population into a mass society through new, expansive patterns of commerce, industry, transportation, communication, education, and the like that are associated with the rise of modern capitalism. These developments are themselves accompanied by a new idea of the individual as someone no longer defined primarily by local membership in family, clan, or town, but rather as an "equivalent member" of a potentially vast "imagined community," which is the modern nation.²⁹

This idea of equivalent membership, or what Anderson refers to as "a deep, horizontal comradeship"³⁰ in an extended national community, is, in Weber's mind, directly tied to the formal, impersonal legal and political system that characterizes the modern state. Thus, linked as it is with the modern state, nationalism must cope in one way or another with the universalistic demands of "mass democracy" and "the equal rights of the governed" that are implicit in a legal-rational political system.³¹ At this point, a crucial distinction suggested in Weber's writings and recently elaborated by contemporary scholars needs to be introduced.³² It is the distinction between "liberal" and "illiberal nationalism," alternatively typified as "civic" versus "ethnic nationalism,"³³ or as "non-aggressive versus aggressive nationalism."³⁴

Eric Hobsbawm characterizes the distinction this way: On the one hand, there is the version of nationalism expressed in the French or American revolutions that rested fundamentally on the ideals of citizenship, and involved a commitment to common "civic" participation in accord with constitutional norms. This type of nationalism inclines toward Weber's "legal-rational" or formal, universalistic norms and the associated ideas of mass democracy and "the equal rights of the governed" that he identifies with the modern state. What is more, these ideas are obviously compatible with the human rights norms identified earlier. Particularly in the American case, for example, the national ideal is in part a multiethnic and nondiscriminatory one, expressed inclusively in terms of a "people of peoples." We shall label this type, "liberal nationalism."

On the other hand, there is a different version of nationalism manifested, for example, in the German campaign, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, for political unification that rested its aspirations for a state upon a belief in "the prior existence of [a] community [that distinguished] itself from foreigners" according to its special history and culture.³⁶ While German nationalists took some account of the democratic and universalistic norms associated with the modern state, their emphasis upon the priority and preeminence of one particular racial and cultural community

over others, particularly during the fascist period, obviously pulled against the legal-rational norms and in the direction of an ethnically discriminatory and preferential political and legal system. This type we designate as "illiberal."

In a Weberian spirit, we stress that however useful these types may be, they are, nevertheless, artificial. They indicate "tendencies" and "options" available to nationalists under modern conditions. Numerous intermediate types are no doubt imaginable. We may assume that all cases of nationalism experience pressure in both directions, inclining toward one type of nationalism or the other depending on circumstances. Indeed, it is perhaps correct to suggest that nationalism is best understood as fundamentally ambivalent as between the liberal and the illiberal types, and that the individual "story" of each case of nationalism may best be described as a dynamic response to the countervailing tendencies represented by the two types.

For however committed to "civic," "universalistic," "liberal" norms a given form of nationalism may be, nationalism is at bottom, as Weber saw, both an homogenizing and a differentiating mode of discourse. Nationalist discourse -- even of the liberal sort -- drives toward cultural standardization within the nation, which makes it hard to sustain genuinely multiethnic and multinational expression. At the same time, a nation favors clear territorial boundaries that distinguish it from "foreigners" and "aliens." In fact, sovereignty over a sharply circumscribed community of inhabitants and a sharply circumscribed territory is one of the hallmarks of the modern "nation-state."

Moreover, the subjective belief in common descent that is characteristic of liberal nationalism is typically ambivalent with respect to how total its commitment to universalistic norms really is. In the American case, for example, there is a notorious ambiguity in the thought of the "founding fathers," from whom American citizens believe themselves, in a spiritual sense, to be descended.³⁷ On the one hand, there is a strong and frequently heralded commitment to the universalistic principles of equal rights for all, tolerance and nondiscrimination, and government by the consent of every citizen. On the other hand, there is the familiar and unmistakable evidence of racism and sexism in both the utterances and the laws of the founding period. This deep national schizophrenia -- appropriately called "the American dilemma" -- obviously underlies many of the major tensions and conflicts that have appeared throughout American history.

By the same token, however "illiberal" a given case of nationalism may be, however committed it may be to the political priority and preeminence of one racial, religious, or linguistic group over other groups in the same society, illiberal nationalism is still, as we saw, a "modern" phenomenon, and in its own way, as much a product of the universalizing tendencies of modern economic, political and cultural life, as is liberal nationalism. Even Hitler's Germany possessed a constitution, and sought legitimacy -- at least in the early 30s -- through democratic elections and parliamentary procedures.

It is of course true that the Nazi version of a subjective belief in common descent -- the myths about racial superiority and so on -- were relentlessly illiberal. But that only proves, in a negative way, how potent and inescapable a threat liberal beliefs are perceived to be by proponents of illiberal nationalism. Similarly, contemporary examples of illiberal nationalism in places like Sri Lanka and Sudan give strong evidence of a continuing struggle between the imperatives of constitutional democracy and the deep and abiding pressure for policies of cultural and ethnic preference and discrimination.

Illiberal forms of nationalism appear, then, to be parasitic upon modern legal-rational organization, and they are required to work out some kind of compromise with those organizational norms, however much their beliefs may contradict the ideals of modern liberalism. In that respect,

it can perhaps be said that the requirements of the modern state dictate the basic terms of nationalist discourse.

Accordingly, Weber's analysis suggests two connections between belief, ethnicity and nationalism. One is the obvious point that ethnic and nationalist identity rests, after all, upon nothing more than "subjective belief." If it is, as Weber says, finally belief and not "objective factors" that provides the foundations for group identity, then it is clear why the belief held in common would itself become the special, even "sacred," focus of group attention and consciousness, and why considerable effort would be expended in shoring up that belief and in protecting it against threats of pervasive doubt and disaffection. If, as a matter of fact, the feeling of solidarity, the feeling of belongingness, that undergirds ethnic and national identity, as well as the spirit of nationalism, expresses, at bottom, a deep emotional attachment,³⁸ then it is easy to understand why challenges to the fundamental beliefs associated with ethnicity and nationalism would be resisted in such an intense and passionate way.

Second, nationalism (and, incipiently, ethnicity) are related to belief insofar as nationalism constitutes a theory of political legitimacy. For Weber, political legitimacy, as an example of social authority, involves a "belief" in the existence of a valid or justified political order.³⁹ Presumably, the nationalist, in justifying a claim to state authority, would advance basic national beliefs as worthy of political expression and enforcement.

Now the implication of this for the study of intolerance is that insofar as all nationalists -- liberal and illiberal -- are loyal to particular cultural and territorial communities, they will have a certain problem complying consistently with universalistic norms, such as are expressed in international human rights documents.

At the same time, liberal nationalists will do relatively better than the illiberal nationalists in accommodating and respecting diverse beliefs, and thus promoting tolerance and peace. That is because liberal nationalism is, by definition, more committed to protecting the rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination than illiberal nationalism. A multiethnic political setting where prevailing nationalist beliefs exclude or demean minority populations and their beliefs is a setting liable for serious conflict, especially where the dominant beliefs are translated into law. In that sense, illiberal forms of ethnicity and nationalism constitute a special source or cause of intolerance.

Religion and Nationalism

While Weber's emphasis on the "artificial" and "accidental" character of beliefs about ethnic and nationalist identity is warranted and important, that emphasis must not be allowed to obscure some special affinities between religion and nationalism, affinities that are also relevant to other forms of fundamental belief.

The point by now should be obvious: If ethnonational groups are at bottom constituted by "a subjective belief in their common descent," a belief that naturally becomes "the special, even 'sacred' focus of group attention," then we have already begun to describe something very close to "religious belief." The connection between religion and myths of human origin is well-known. As the anthropologist, Malinowski, and others have shown, such myths encourage and support cultural and social self-consciousness by validating and affirming what are believed to be the primordial terms of human identity.

Add to that, the strong religious ring of ideas associated with ethnicity and nationalism: a "chosen people" with a "providential mission," a belief in "the superiority, or at least the

irreplaceability, of the [group's peculiar] culture values," and the right to form an autonomous polity in the name of advancing a holy mission. Hebrew Scripture, whether interpreted by Jews or Christians, the Qur'an, and some significant Buddhist doctrines and texts, for example, all provide the foundation and the inspiration for enlisting political and military power in the cause of defending and advancing certain sacred values and ways of life.

And these natural affinities make understandable why, as Benedict Anderson and others have argued,⁴⁰ the modern nation-state, even in its more liberal forms, readily takes on some sacral attributes and functions. Its memorials for fallen heroes, its ceremonies commemorating past glories and woes, its rhetoric of obligation and sacrifice 'for God and country,' all give meaning to the suffering and death of those defending the nation, and provide the nation a certain 'transcendent' continuity among its members, living, dead, and yet unborn.

Causal Complexities: Some Examples

These observations might lead us to conclude that since religion is so deeply interconnected with ethnic and nationalist identity, religion determines nationalism. But, of course, things are more complicated than that. Weber's general comment about causation in social life is highly pertinent:

If we set out the causal lines [of social behavior], we see them run one moment from the technical to the economic and the political, at the next moment from the political to the religious and then the economic, and so on. Nowhere is there any resting point.⁴¹

On the one hand, it is the tentative conclusion of the studies so far produced by the Intolerance Project that "fundamental belief," of either a religious or ideological sort, plays an important role in shaping the forms of nationalism that exist, for example, in Sri Lanka, Sudan, and Tibet.

The specific role of religion and related cultural factor in the Sri Lankan conflict is clearly significant.⁴² While nationalism is a relatively modern invention in Sri Lanka, it nevertheless draws on and puts to use traditional religious warrants. Sinhala Buddhist "revivalists" of the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries have artfully manipulated ancient legends concerning Buddha's alleged associations with Sri Lanka, as well as the patterns of cooperation and mutual support between king and monastery that are part of the island's history. These appeals have done much to mobilize support for Sinhala nationalism among the monks and laity, and to provide the movement with sacred authority. The appropriation by Tamil nationalists of religious and cultural appeals is also important, though the subject has not been as fully investigated as has the Sinhala side.

What is most menacing about the type of religious and ethnic nationalism that has appeared in Sri Lanka is precisely its more or less systematic incompatibility with the right of nondiscrimination. The eminent Sri Lankan historian, K.M. de Silva has pointed out that the Sinhala Buddhist revivalists had no time for such norms: "In the Sinhala language, the words for nation, race and people are practically synonymous, and a multiethnic or multicomunal nation or state is incomprehensible to the popular mind. The emphasis on Sri Lanka as the land of the Sinhala Buddhists carried an emotional popular appeal, compared with which the concept of a multiethnic polity was a meaningless abstraction."⁴³ The same could be said for the more radical forms of Tamil nationalism.

As in the Sri Lanka example, the internal strife that has divided Sudan since its independence in 1956 has deep religious roots. The ascension to power of the National Islamic Front in 1989

reflects both the influence of Islam on the political culture in Sudan and the ability of Islamic conservatives to shape the debate in Sudan, despite the deleterious effects on the country.

Islam has long played a key role in forming the northern Sudanese identity and in providing political legitimacy to opposition parties and governments alike. The Mahdist revolution in the late nineteenth century solidified the link between religion and politics, and defined an identity in northern Sudan that transcended traditional loyalties. The post-independence era saw a continuation of these trends. The withdrawal of British colonial rule after 1956 provided an opportunity for the Muslim majority in the north to establish some form of Islamic rule.⁴⁴ Fearing domination by the northerners, the southern Sudanese opposed Islamic rule.

Southern fears are aroused by the prospect of discriminatory treatment imposed on minorities under strict Islamic rule. "The attempt by the north not only to define the identity [of Sudan] as Arab and Islamic, but to structure and stratify the life and role of citizens along those lines [has been an underlying cause of the civil war]."⁴⁵ While northerners see themselves as Muslims, southerners -- though divided along tribal lines -- share a common identity of being non-Muslims. The south's introduction to Islam was associated with an extensive slave trade during the nineteenth century, an era characterized by economic exploitation and military domination. Appeals by northern politicians for an Islamic constitution at the time of independence evoked fears among southerners of a return to this earlier stage of relations.

The actions of the north since independence have done little to alleviate these fears. Some northerners sincerely feel that Sudan can only be united through religious and cultural uniformity, and have therefore supported efforts to Islamize the south. The military offensives conducted by Major General Ibrahim Abboud in the late fifties and early sixties,⁴⁶ and the implementation of the shari'a-based "September laws" under the regime of Colonel Ja'far Muhammad Numairi (which led to a resumption of the civil war after a brief reprieve based upon the Addis Ababa Agreement of 1972) are examples of the recurring attempts to unify Sudan through enforced Islamization. Far from achieving the desired unity, however, the result has been continued civil war.

Religious revivalism, whether in Sri Lanka or Sudan, then, has provided the resources for mobilizing a strong form of illiberal nationalism that has from time to time inspired intolerance and discrimination "based on religion or belief."

The relation between religious belief and ethnonationalism in the case of Tibet is somewhat different. The Tibetan people have for a long time identified strongly with their religious tradition. Buddhism permeated Tibetan culture and society to such an extent that "the history of Tibet . . . is almost the same as the history of the importation of Buddhism into Tibet."⁴⁷ The centrality of Tibetan Buddhist identity remained strong in the face of the initial Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1949-50. An aggressive campaign to eradicate Buddhist culture was undertaken largely because "the Chinese authorities viewed religion as the principal obstacle to their control of Tibet."⁴⁸ Over 6000 monasteries were destroyed, approximately 1.2 million Tibetans were killed, many others were forced into exile (including the Dalai Lama), and an influx of Chinese soldiers, administrators and settlers transformed the region.

The Chinese campaign was inspired by a combination of Maoist ideology and Han Chinese nationalism. Convinced of its mission as the agent of progress and of the liberation of "backward" Tibetans, the Chinese government considered itself justified in controlling and reconstructing Tibetan society. Resistance was based on the Tibetans' "desire to protect their religious and cultural traditions,"⁴⁹ and religion came to represent for the Tibetans the principal expression of nationalist sentiment.⁵⁰

In reaction to Chinese nationalism, which is distinctly illiberal, Tibetan nationalism has, for the most part, taken a nonviolent form, and has expressed itself in liberal terms. Tibet's noted leader and principal spokesperson, the Dalai Lama, has repeatedly called for a liberated Tibet dedicated to parliamentary democracy and to the principles of human rights, including the rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination. Indeed, the Dalai Lama has gone so far as to advocate the separation of church and state. Such a system, he says, is duly respectful of the rights of religious and other minorities in a way that has not occurred under Chinese rule, nor, for that matter, under the traditional pattern of Tibetan government.⁵¹

But if religion plays an important role in such cases, questions still remain. Why, exactly, has religion taken the shape it has in modern Sri Lanka or Sudan or Tibet, and yet has not taken the same shape elsewhere? Why does religious or ideological belief go together with such a hostile form of nationalism in Sri Lanka or Sudan or among the Han Chinese leadership, and not everywhere? More precisely, why does Buddhism take the shape it does in Sri Lanka or Tibet, and Islam take the shape it does in Sudan? To raise the questions is to suggest that the causal connections are not all in one direction.

In the case of Sri Lanka, the chauvinistic character of Buddhist revivalism itself demands explanation. The basic tenets and doctrines of Buddhism would not seem to affirm ethnic favoritism. Such attitudes apparently resulted from a combination of historical pressures on the Theravada sangha around the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. and certain colonial and other experiences, especially in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These were attitudes of racism and anti-Buddhist intolerance fostered by Christian missionaries and British colonial authorities, a sense of threat among the Sinhala represented by the combined strength of the Tamil communities in Sri Lanka and south India, and the imperatives of modern nationalism, including the intensification of ethnic identity because of political and economic developments.

So far as Sudan goes, it has been difficult for northern political -- and military -- leaders to move away from the appeal to Islam as the basis for political support, although that emphasis has so alienated the south. Efforts by northern leaders to deal constructively with southern grievances by supporting more moderate and nondiscriminatory policies have produced strong counter-reactions among other parts of the Sudanese political elite, frequently stimulating a reversion to religious militancy. In that way a process of "religious-one-upsmanship" characterized political life in the north during successive post-independence governments. This process, coupled with bitter sectarian political divisions, led to the failure of Sudan's experiments in parliamentary rule, further discrediting moderate policies. The instability created by sectarian divisions and by alternating military regimes did little to provide the kind of environment necessary for the peaceful and enduring resolution of north-south differences. The result has been an environment conducive to an interpretation of Islam that is deeply intolerant of diversity.

As for Tibet, we have already mentioned how the Chinese campaign for domination had the effect of intensifying Tibetan allegiance to Buddhism, and strengthening the role of religion in rallying the people to the nationalist cause. While much of the explanation for the nonviolent emphasis of Tibetan nationalism undoubtedly rests with the character of the Tibetan Buddhist tradition and, more especially, with the direction and style of leadership provided by the Dalai Lama, it is possible that a realization of the futility of violence against overwhelming Chinese military advantage has also contributed to the commitment to nonviolence. Finally, there can be little doubt that the experience of intolerance and discrimination at the hands of Chinese authorities has importantly influenced the conviction that a future Tibet, once liberated, must be a Tibet reformed in keeping with liberal norms.

Conclusion

The perspective on questions involving the connections among belief, ethnicity and nationalism adopted in this paper derives from the USIP project on Religion, Nationalism, and Intolerance. As befits the work of an institution dedicated to the study of peace, the project traces the connections between tolerance and peace, or, putting it negatively, between intolerance and conflict. The study concludes, tentatively, that the connection is important: Intolerance, defined, essentially, as the violation of the human rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination, undermines peace, while respect for those rights undergirds and promotes peace.

When it comes to the more theoretical questions of the sources or causes of intolerance, the project gives special attention to the role of ethnicity and nationalism. Those forms of nationalism, such as are manifest in the policies of the Chinese government toward Tibetans, or in the treatment by the Sudanese government of citizens not in sympathy with its sectarian objectives, or in Sri Lankan policies, now thankfully in retreat, favoring the Sinhala majority over the Tamil minority, are essentially illiberal in character.

Under illiberal forms of nationalism, the requirements of non-discrimination are systematically disregarded: Civil identity, or citizenship, is deeply conditioned by ethnic, linguistic, religious, ideological, and other indicators. It would be difficult to conclude that this kind of "ethnonationalism" does not directly contribute to antagonism, hostility, and instability, especially in multiethnic, multireligious societies.

We acknowledged that not all nationalism is of the illiberal variety. Though never entirely free of countervailing tendencies, liberal nationalism inclines to support and institutionalize universalistic norms of nondiscrimination and free exercise. It is more in accord with human rights imperatives. The implication is that, on balance, liberal nationalism contributes to the conditions of peace by cultivating ethnic and religious respect and harmony.

One urgent question emerging from the Intolerance Project concerns why nationalism takes one form rather than another. Our tentative answer is complicated. One part suggests that "fundamental belief" plays a distinctive role because, by its nature, nationalism attracts and thrives on "subjective belief" of the most fervent and primary sort. The affiliation between nationalism and religious "revivalism" of a Sudanese or Sri Lankan kind, or between nationalism and an ideology of cultural superiority of the Han Chinese variety, is, accordingly, not surprising.

We speculate, based on the evidence produced so far by the Intolerance Project, that the relevant religious or cultural beliefs place their own peculiar stamp on the form and shape of nationalism. There are, one would assume, certain dispositions in Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity, or in the Han Chinese cultural tradition that, under conducive circumstances, can be readily appropriated in the service of an illiberal kind of nationalism.

By the same token, of course, one may just as well speculate that there are contrary dispositions in these and other religious and cultural traditions that, under conducive circumstance, favor liberal nationalism. The example of the influence of Buddhism in the Tibetan case springs to mind. One thing about the Tibetan nationalist movement that is, so far, significantly different from com-parable movements in Sudan and Sri Lanka is the reliance, in general, upon nonviolent means. This emphasis upon nonviolence has given special authenticity to another theme of equal importance to the Tibetan cause: the urgency of observing human rights norms as a basis for just and peaceful relations between the Tibetans and the Chinese.

In the same vein, one could also point to certain mani-festations within the Ukrainian Christian churches, especially among the Ukrainian Catholics, but also among certain elements within the

Russian and Ukrainian Orthodox, of strong support for the rights of free exercise and nondiscrimination.⁵² That support is accompanied by a desire to reverse the dominant tradition in Ukraine which, effectively, effaces the distinction between public and private when it comes to religion, and invests direct religious control in hands of public authorities.

So, religion is a significant factor in the emergence and expression of nationalism. It can, it would seem, be a force for tolerance or intolerance, and needs to be so analysed. At the same time, there is more to the answer than that. The causal factors do not, as Weber said, run all in one direction. We must be as attentive to the conditioning effects of politics, economics, historical accidents, etc. on religion and culture, as we are to the contribution religion and culture make to the formation of nationalism, and thence to the incidence of tolerance and intolerance.

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Notes

1. Walter Connor, *Ethnonationalism: the Quest for Understanding* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), p. 107. Cf. Ted Gurr et al., *Minorities at Risk* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1993), p. 317. "Our comparative evidence and cases suggest that religious cleavages are at best a contributing factor in [ethnic] conflict and seldom the root cause."

2. Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Civil Society: Democracy, Diversity and Self-Determination," *International Sociology* 8, 4 (December 1993), p. 405.

3. Tibet is at present regarded by the Chinese government, and by the large majority of the international community, as an "autonomous region," rather than as an independent state or country.

4. David Little, *Ukraine: The Legacy of Intolerance* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1991); David Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1994); David Little and Scott W. Hibbard, *Sino-Tibetan Co-Existence: Creating Space for Tibetan Self-Direction* (Washington, DC: USIP Press, 1994).

5. David Little and Scott W. Hibbard, "Sudan: Plural Society in Distress" (in preparation). Two other studies in the series, one on Lebanon to be written by John Kelsay and one on Nigeria, to be written by Rosalind Hackett, are in the early stages of preparation. A study of Israel is contemplated, and, finally, there will be a summary volume reviewing the general findings of the case studies.

6. Article 18 of both the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*.

7. Article 2 of the *Universal Declaration* and the *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* are the general provisions against discrimination, and Article 7 of the *Universal Declaration* and

Article 26 of the *Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* guarantee equal protection of the law. (There are similar articles in all other major international human rights instruments).

8. Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly on November 25, 1981 on the *Report of the Third Committee*(A/36/684)] 36/54).

9. The remaining articles deal, among other things, with the obligations of states to enforce religious human rights, as well as with rights to religious education, and they enumerate some of the types of protected religious activity.

10. Preamble to the *Declaration against Intolerance*.

11. Weber's seminal discussion of "ethnic groups," "nationality," and "the nation" is to be found in *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology* (New York: Bed-minster Press, 1968), vol. 1, pp. 385-398 and vol. 2, pp. 921-926. Weber's approach to the terms has been kept alive by Walker Connor (see *Ethnonationalism*, e.g., pp. 102-104), and fits closely with the dominant emphasis these days among social scientists and historians concerning the partially artificial or "invented" character of ethnic and nationalist identity. (See also, Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992], for an illuminating approach explicitly indebted to Weber.)

12. The Greek word, "ethnos," rather open-endedly means "people," "race," or "tribe."

13. *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 387, 389; emphasis added.

14. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 388.

15. Katherine Verdery, "Whither 'Nation' and 'Nationalism'?" *Daedalus* 122, 3 (Summer, 1993), p. 38. I am assuming that Verdery's terms, which she applies here to 'nationalism,' also apply in a similar way to 'ethnicity,' even though these ideas, while related, are not the same thing for her.

16. "The word *nation* comes from the Latin and, when first coined, clearly conveyed the idea of common blood ties. It was derived from the past participle of the verb *nasci*, meaning to be born. And hence the Latin noun, *nationem*, connoting *breed or race*." Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. 94.

17. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 923.

18. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 922.

19. Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. 104.

20. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 923: "Undoubtedly, even the White Russians in the face of the Great Russians have always had a sentiment of ethnic solidarity, yet even at the present time they would hardly claim to qualify as a separate 'nation.' The Poles of Upper Silesia, until recently, had hardly any feeling of solidarity with the 'Polish Nation.' They felt themselves to be a separate ethnic group in the face of the Germans, but for the rest they were Prussian subjects and nothing else."

21. *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 925.

22. Weber links the notion of "chosen people" to ethnic groups rather than nations (*ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 391). By speaking of nations as having "an intensified image of themselves as a 'chosen people,'" I am simply extrapolating from Weber's suggestion that nations are ethnic groups that are more self-conscious and assertive.

23. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 395.

24. *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 397.

25. H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills (eds.), *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1958), p. 176.

26. *Ibid.*, p. 78. For Weber, this definition distinguishes the modern state from premodern forms of political organization, which were typically much less preoccupied with precise territorial borders, and much less capable of achieving a monopoly of legitimate force.

27. *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, pp. 33-38; vol 2, pp. 901-4; vol 3, pp. 956-1005.

28. "[T]he word nationalism is itself of very recent creation. G. de Bertier de Sauvigny believes it first appeared in literature in 1798 and did not reappear until 1830. Moreover, its absence from lexographies until the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries suggests that its use was not extensive until much more recently. Furthermore, all of the examples of its early use convey the idea of identification not with the state, but with the nation as properly understood [as a 'people']. While unable to pinpoint nationalism's subsequent association with the state, it indubitably followed and flowed from the tendency to equate state and nation. It also unquestionably received strong impetus from the great body of literature occasioned by the growth of militant nationalism in Germany and Japan during the 1930s and early 1940s." Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, p. 98. See Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983) for similar conclusions.

29. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 6-7. Cf. Craig Calhoun, "Nationalism and Ethnicity," *Annual Sociological Review* 19 (1993), 229-233.

30. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 7.

31. See, for example, "The Levelling of Social Differences," *Economy and Society*, vol. 3, pp. 983-987.

32. E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992); Isaiah Berlin, "Two Concepts of Nationalism," *The New York Review* (November 21, 1991). Cf. Yael Tamir, *Liberal Nationalism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993).

33. Greenfeld, *Nationalism*.

35. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 22, 34. Berlin, "Two Concepts of Nationalism," p. 19.

36. *Ibid.*, p. 22.

37. "From my own primary school education, a century or so ago, I recall how we students -- many, probably most, of whom were first-, second-, or third-generation Americans from highly diverse national backgrounds -- were told we shared a common ancestry. We were programmed to consider Washington, Jefferson, et al. as our common 'founding fathers.' We memorialized Lincoln's reminder in the Gettysburg Address that four score and seven years earlier, it was 'our Fathers [who had] brought forth upon this continent a new nation.' We repetitively sang that very short song -- 'America' -- one of whose seven lines read 'land where my fathers died.'" Connor, *Ethnonationalism*, pp. 207-208.

38. Though Connor never quite uses the term, "emotional apriori" to describe the need for a feeling of solidarity that appears to underlie ethnic and national identity, he comes close. The term captures his emphasis, clearly in line with Weber's, on the fundamentally affectional or nonrational character of ethnic and national identity. See *Ethnonationalism*, p. 94.

39. "All ruling powers, profane and religious, political and apolitical, may be considered as variations of, or approximations to, certain pure types [legal-rational, charismatic and traditional]. These types are constructed by searching for the basis of *legitimacy*, which the ruling power claims." Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber*, p. 294. Cf. *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p. 31: "Action, especially social action which involves a social relationship, may be guided by the belief

[*Vorstellung*] in the existence of a legitimate order." It should be noted, that even though Weber's "affectional"- "charismatic" and his "traditional" types of legitimacy are considered by him to be nonrational, he does, nevertheless employ "belief" in regard to both; see *From Max Weber*, p. 295 and *Economy and Society*, vol. 1, p.

40. Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, pp. 17-25.

41. Cited in Beetham, *Max Weber and the Theory of Modern Politics*, p. 254.

42. See Little, *Sri Lanka: The Invention of Enmity*.

43. K.M. de Silva, *Religion, Nationalism, and the State*. USF Monographs in Religion and Public Policy, no. 1 (Tampa, Fla.: University of South Florida, 1986), p. 31.

44. At independence, all but one political party supported some form of Islamic rule. The inspiration for such rule is rooted in the revivalist movements of the 19th and 20th centuries. Reacting to the experience of colonial domination, Islamic reformers have consistently sought to establish a society based on the Qur'an, the traditions of the prophet and *shari'a*. Recognizing Muslim society to be in a state of decline -- economic, political, and social -- and attributing that decline directly to the deviation of the community from the "straight path" of Islam, the logical "cure" is a return to Islam. This entails a reshaping of society in accord with Islamic principles, eliminating any distinction between politics and religion, and, most importantly, the implementation of Islamic law (*shari'a*).

45. Francis Deng, *Mediterranean Quarterly* (Winter 1994) 47.

46. "Abdoud believed that the way to unify the Sudan was to homogenize its people, which, in his view, meant transforming the south into an Islamic society." Ann Mosley Lesch, "The Republic of Sudan," Ta'eq and Jacqueline S. Ismael (eds.), *Politics and Government in the Middle East and North Africa* (Miami, FL: International University Press, 1991), p. 365.

47. Robert Thurman, "Religious Intolerance/Tolerance in the Future of Tibet and China," unpublished paper, p. 1.

48. International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), *Forbidden Freedoms: Beijing's Control of Religion in Tibet* (Washington: ICT, 1990), p. 7.

49. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

50. It needs to be noted that efforts by the Chinese authorities to eradicate Buddhist practice greatly diminished traditional Buddhist influence on the subsequent generations who grew up in Communist Tibet with little or no religious teaching. However, in recent years, there has been a revival of Buddhist practice in no small part because it represents for many Tibetans an effective form of dissent.

51. Lodi G. Gyari, "Religion and the Future of Tibet," presented at the USIP conference, "Tibet: Religion, Conflict, and Cooperation" (September 28, 1993), p. 3: "The most recent formal proclamation by His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, was the "Guidelines for Future Tibet's Policy and the Basic Features of its Constitution" in which His Holiness restates *his decision not to play any role in the future government of Tibet*. For religion, this is a significant development as it clears the way for the head of state to be a secular leader. . . . Whereas the Guidelines say that the `Tibetan polity should be founded on spiritual values," nowhere does it refer to a "Buddhist nation". . . or say that government would have the duty to safeguard and develop religion. . . ."

"On the contrary, the Guidelines provide explanatory language on many areas, but not on religion, envisioning *a full separation of church and state*. . . . The only mention of religion is found in the section, 'Fundamental Rights,' which simply says *all Tibetan citizens shall be equal before the law without discrimination on the grounds of religion and other classifications*" (emphasis added).

52. See Little, *Ukraine: The Legacy of Intolerance*, pp. 25-27, 67-74.

Chapter II

Belief, Ethnicity and Nationalism: The Case of Judaism

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David Little has provided a very useful framework within which we can better understand the issue of faith, nationalism and ethnic conflict. Several of the concepts that he uses, emerging from Max Weber's work, strike very important chords within the context of Jewish faith and Jewish history. The first concept is that of providential mission; the second is the issue of transcendent continuity; and the third point speaks to different manifestations of nationalism in the 20th century. I would like to use each of these ideas as a way to better understand the place of Judaism and the Jewish people within the larger context of ethnic conflict and nationalism.

The Jewish version of providential mission is the concept of the chosen people. Given the very central place which "chosen-ness" plays in the Jewish religion, it is interesting to note that it rests on a very thin scriptural reed. In fact, it is only in the post-Biblical period that chosenness becomes a major form of self-identification for the Jewish people.

There are two major references in the Bible that are used as a basis for the Jewish concept of chosenness. Deuteronomy 7:7 states: "Not because you were the greatest of people, that God set upon you and chose you; you were the smallest of people." The other classic reference is Amos 3:2, "You only have I known from all the nations of the earth; therefore will I punish you for all your wrongdoing." In neither of these citations for chosenness does there exist the notion of chauvinism that the concept takes on in later history.

There are two ideas presented in these citations. The Deuteronomic passage sees Israel as a small, select people, bringing God's word into the world. Amos suggests that Israel will be judged by God by a higher, double standard. Jews are supposed to fulfill all 613 of God's commandments in order to merit a place in the world to come. Gentiles, on the other hand, can achieve the same reward by fulfilling the seven universal laws of Noah.

It is clear that early on there is a self-perception of the Jewish people as a distinct unique people. It is more classically framed in the Hebrew term *goy kadosh*, a "holy people." The Hebrew term "holy" carries the notion of separateness. In the same way that the priests were separate from the rest of Israel in the desert, and later in the days of the Temple, so too Israel would be to the nations of the world, some kind of a spiritual vanguard representing God's truth.

This clearly is part of Jewish self-perception from the earliest point on. Ironically, it is not only conservative or fundamentalist approaches to religion that emphasize this chauvinist element of the Jewish tradition. In the 19th century, the founders of Reform Judaism believed that Jews possessed traits that made them ethically superior to other peoples. According to this view, this explains how Jews not only brought the concept of ethical monotheism into the world, but how they were destined to teach this concept in the future as a "light unto the nations." This came to be known as "the mission of Israel" concept and it is a central tenet of Reform Jewish theology to this very day. Not all forms of liberal Judaism accentuate the providential mission theme. Mordecai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionist Judaism, totally rejected the notion of religious-ethnic chauvinism and he did so on several grounds. First, he thought that the choosing of the people Israel at Sinai was unsupported by theology. Kaplan did not accept the belief that a personal supernatural God appeared to Israel at Sinai. Kaplan posited that God was a transnatural entity which was an extension of the collective consciousness of the Jewish people.

Second, Kaplan understood better than most thinkers in the twentieth century that a large part of the Jewish self-perception of being chosen was an expression of folk religion and not of elite religion. That is to say that the Jewish folk went much further in expanding the concept of chosenness than Scripture ever intended. The end result was that Jews came to see themselves as superior to other people even though the real intention was to convey the sense of greater obligation.

Third and finally, Kaplan would not make the claim that any religion, Jewish or other, could or should make the claim of exclusive truth. He thought that religion was meant to be a source of greater harmony among people, and greater wholeness in the world, symbolized by the word Hebrew word shalom. It would be unseemly to have the religions of the world staking competing claims to possession of absolute truth. As perhaps the oldest faith tradition that makes the claim of providential mission, Kaplan urged the Jews to forego that particular pretension. In one of his books, Kaplan envisioned a world parliament of religions in which all would gather together, and Jews would be the first to stand up and repudiate the notion of chosenness. Presumably, other religions would then get up and eschew the same claim thereby ushering in some messianic age in which religions would live in harmony with one another.

It says a lot about the power of the idea of providential mission that Kaplan's recasting of the idea of chosenness was almost totally rejected by contemporary Jews in the twentieth century. While much of Kaplan's thinking has been embraced in Reform and Conservative Jewish circles and has made its way into the larger stream of Jewish life in contemporary America, his rejection of chosenness is mostly ignored.

Arnold Eisen in his, *The Chosen People in America*, makes the point that while almost all other concepts of Judaism have moved from the particular to the universal in the twentieth century, the concept of chosenness has not been similarly transformed. In large measure we might attribute the Jewish tenacious hold on the concept of the chosen people to the Jewish historical experience.

The loss of one third of the Jewish people during the Holocaust was not only one of the great tragedies in human history but it has forever scarred the Jewish psyche. In a peculiar way, the idea of providential mission came to have two sides in the Jewish experience. On the one hand it suggested that the Jewish people were specially loved by God. On the other hand, the experience of Jewish persecution throughout history became an attendant phenomenon of chosenness. Both the Christian Church and the Islamic world adopted a level of animus towards Jews as a result of the Jews rejecting their respective doctrines. While the treatment of Jews varied based on time, place and the ruling power, the overall experience resulted in the Jews seeing themselves as perpetual pariahs, a status memorialized in Hannah Arendt's book, *The Jew as Pariah*.

It is interesting that in contemporary America, many people see Jews as a privileged group. Certainly all the evidence of education, income, positions of influence and power would suggest that Jews have done as well, if not better, than any ethnic sub-group in America. Yet there is a serious disconnect between this recent history of achievement and Jewish self-perception. Jews continue to think of themselves as outsiders.

Several years ago there was a study done among Jews which asked the question, "In your view, how many gentiles do you suppose would automatically oppose a Jewish candidate for president?" Some 75% of Jews said that gentiles would dismiss out of hand a Jewish candidate for president from their own party because they were Jewish. When the same question was asked from a random sample of gentiles, only 21% said that they would reject a Jewish candidate out of hand. That difference, between what Jews think people think of them and what in fact people think of Jews tells us something about the tremendous sense of victimization that Jews still feel.

This phenomenon is also evident in Jewish political behavior. It is a general rule in politics that as ethnic groups move up the socioeconomic ladder, they become more politically conservative. Essentially, as one acquires more wealth, there is a vested interest in keeping that wealth as opposed to redistributing that wealth to those who have less. Jews have defied this pattern all along. It is unusual that a group that has achieved as much success as have American Jews continue to vote in decidedly liberal ways similar to other marginal ethnic groups.

When one looks at the history of the last 30 years of the Jewish-Black alliance, it reveals once again the Jewish sense of victimization which perpetuates the notion of chosenness. Jews have eagerly pursued alliances and relationships with the Black community and in recent times it has taken the Black community by surprise. To Blacks, the Jews look like white males, in fact, like rich white males. But to the Jewish community, Blacks look like kindred spirits. In other words Jews see Blacks as fellow travelers on a road of discrimination and persecution. This ongoing sense of victimization has had a profound impact on Jews and explains why they preserve their particular sense of providential mission.

The second category that sheds some light on the Jewish relationship to issues of belief and ethnicity is that of transcendent continuity. Above David Little has made the point, quite convincingly, that to realize a policy of nondiscrimination in the nation state, there is a need to create a public sphere that is, presumably, religiously impartial. This is a reasonable assumption, though I think it reflects an American bias towards the importance of the separation of church and state. I suggest that we need to take a closer look at countries like England, Sweden and Denmark to see if a symbolic entitlement in certain states that elevates one religious group over the rest in fact leads to discriminatory policies. I don't think it is necessarily true.

At the same time, it is clear that the entanglement of religion and state in Israel is problematic and it is evident in facets of the contemporary Jewish condition that fall under the rubric of transcendent continuity. When the State of Israel was created, there were numerous connections to the history of the Jews in the diaspora.

Essentially, when the Jews were banished from Israel in the year 70 of the Common Era, the rabbinic leadership of that community understood the need to have a national identity take on a religious guise. Supposedly, this transformation would make Jewish survival easier as guests in a variety of countries through the centuries. The return to Israel in the 20th century reframed Jewish identity in nationalist terms but there were conscious attempts made to keep numerous symbolic linkages with the pre-nationalist phases of Jewish life, not to mention the communities of Jews around the world which would continue to exist as religious communities alongside the emerging Zionist state.

Because religion specializes in symbolic language it is there that one finds some linkages. There is a prayer that says: "May our eyes see the return to Zion. . . ." This prayer, said every day by Jews for centuries, reflects the ongoing urge of Jews to return to Zion. At the seder on the holiday of the Passover, there is a key line in which the participants articulate the desire that next year we may be in Jerusalem. This too suggests the very special place that Zion, now Israel, has in the Jewish spirit. Judah Halevi, the medieval Jewish poet, framed a line that is often quoted and appears in many, many places in contemporary Hebrew literature and poetry: "My heart is in the east, though my body is in the west." A contemporary prayer, written by the chief rabbinate of Israel which the Jews now say with their grace after meals, talks about Israel as the "first bud, of the flower of redemption". We understand from this that Israel represents the beginning of the messianic era and that Israel represents the first bud appearing after the harshness of winter, winter representing the exile of the Jewish people in the Diaspora.

I offer some of these liturgical examples of transcendent continuity to suggest the power of the Zionist movement to Jews, not only historically, but even until today. This powerful sense of connection exists whether or not a particular Jew plans to move to Israel or not. Even the word *aliyah*, the term used by Jews to denote emigration from the diaspora to Israel, means "going up," movement from a lower spiritual state to a higher spiritual state. I'm not sure that there's any precedent in the twentieth century for a Diaspora community to feel so totally linked to a nation state which embodies a several thousand year old religious heritage.

There are other symbolic connections between Jews in the diaspora and the state of Israel. The most powerful symbols of the state of Israel are Jewish in content. The seven-branched Jewish candelabra, the Star of David on the flag, religious objects on postage stamps, biblical verses used by political leaders. Some years ago Jack Cohen, rabbi of the Hillel at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, made a proposal that if Israel were to become a true democratic and liberal state, it would need to eschew all those forms that tied the state to Jewish forms. He was so bold as to suggest that certain lines come out of the *Hatikvah*, the Israeli national anthem. That particular line says that for thousands of years Jews have yearned to go back to Israel. Cohen claimed that only by dropping such a line could Jews and non-Jews live side by side as equal citizen. In the 1930's Martin Buber showed similar sensitivity to non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine when he created a group called *B'rith Shalom*, whose platform was a bi-national state in Palestine. There was as little sympathy for that idea then as there is today in eliminating the Jewish elements of the democratic state of Israel. All of which points to the large investment that Jews have in those aspects of Israeli society that do connect with Jewish history and the rest of the contemporary Jewish world.

While Jewish religious entitlements in the state of Israel are not without problems, it is hard to know how to pull these strands apart. It is precisely in the areas of overlap that Israel is most compelling -- at least for Jews -- as a homeland for the Jewish people. Transcendent continuity makes for a strong civic fabric. It is just such a civic fabric which is so lacking in America. Nor is it hard to extend the observation to say that what we miss here in America is precisely that kind of civic fabric. Part of what is happening in America with its tribalization is that we no longer find ourselves to have the kind of strong civic fabric that makes for a cohesive society.

The third and final point that I want to respond to is the observation about liberal and illiberal nationalism and how it applies in the case of the Jewish people and, more specifically, Israel. Israel is a good example of a country that combines elements of both liberal and illiberal nationalism. Its political and judicial institutions are rigorously democratic, and *de jure*, you have a hard case to make to suggest that there are overt forms of discrimination in Israel. This is not to say that non-Jews do not experience the feeling of being second class citizens in Israel. But if one looks at the cases that have come before the Israeli Supreme Court, it is remarkable how often some act of state sponsored discrimination will get overturned by the Israeli Supreme Court.

It is unfortunately true that, in many quarters, Israel has come to be characterized as an oppressor nation, owing to its long-term occupation of lands captured in the Six-Day War. Military occupation of any territory produces antagonisms and brings out the worst in both occupier and occupied, and the case of Israel is no exception. The irony is that Israel has long perceived itself as a besieged nation, a survivor nation of a people decimated by the Holocaust. And it is this siege mentality, I submit, that has both driven the country to build its defenses, as well as served as the justification for using its not insignificant might to protect its perceived security needs.

Because Jews perceive themselves as a marginal people in the Diaspora and have felt themselves to be a besieged nation in Israel, the labelling of Israel as a human rights violator or as an oppressor nation has been jarring. A very large part of Jewish ethical behavior is driven by the

Biblical injunction to "protect the stranger." Jews tend to identify with the downtrodden and underprivileged in every society because they have so often found themselves in the same circumstances.

The transition from powerlessness to power is not an easy one. The history of 20th century politics is replete with examples of oppressed minorities coming to power through revolution only to become more authoritarian and intolerant than the regime they toppled. In the spectrum of such examples, Israel's case is not so extreme. Nevertheless the juxtaposition of Israel's circumstances over the past several decades with a country that Jews envisioned as a "light unto the nations" has taken its toll. Many Jews who once looked at Israel with pride found ways to distance themselves from the Jewish state both in terms of financial support as well as in terms of their emotional attachments. Other Jews tried to make the distinction between being lovers of Israel while not supporting specific policies of the government of Israel. Even within Israel, many voices were raised which pointed out the great price Israel was paying in terms of its ethical character by ruling over one and a half million Arabs. In large measure, while Israel might have been able to maintain its control over the West Bank and the Gaza Strip indefinitely, it was the psychic costs that propelled the Rabin government towards an agreement to transfer these territories to the PLO.

The interweaving of Judaism, in its religious formulation and the evolving nature of the state of Israel, a political manifestation of the Jewish people, is most complex. While the success of the Zionist movement in providing Jews with a refuge from persecution is unquestioned, it also has provided an unprecedented context within which the values of Judaism have come to be tested. It could be argued that it was easy for Judaism to be a liberal tradition during the period when Jews were powerless to victimize anyone else. With the acquisition of power in Israel, the Jewish people will have their greatest test. Can a people continue to affirm their unique role in history and in the world while recognizing the legitimacy of competing claims for truth or territory.

I would like to close with a quote from Rabbi David Hartman, an orthodox rabbi who moved from Canada to Israel. He is one of the most important thinkers on the Israeli political scene today trying to fuse Jewish and Biblical values with the contemporary realities of the State of Israel. He writes as follows:

The turn towards independent political existence affords us the opportunity, as the earliest bearers of Biblical faith, of becoming the first religion to acknowledge that revelation never exhausts the plentitude of creation. The dream of history should not be the victory of one community over others, but that each should walk before God in the way that He taught it. No community can claim to exhaust the will of the universal God of creation . . . (*Conflicting Visions: Spiritual Possibilities of Modern Israel* [New York: Schocken, 1990]).

Chapter III

Peoples and Nations of God: Response to David Little

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In the wake of the terrible religio-ethnic violence that has engulfed the former Yugoslavia in the Balkans, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the Caucasus, Sudan in Africa, Israel and Palestine in the Middle East, and Sri Lanka and Tibet in Asia -- to cite only a few particularly egregious cases -- nationalism and ethnicity have become increasingly problematic for the intellectual elites in the West. Any association of religion with either nationalism or ethnicity is routinely criticized as a potentially volatile mix to be minimized, circumscribed, or even avoided at all costs.

David Little joined this chorus of critics of religio-ethnicity when he launched his "Religion, Nationalism, and Intolerance" project at the United States Institute of Peace in 1990. As an active participant in the original "working group" of scholar-consultants for this project, I offered a formal response at the first conference on the Ukraine. But I withdrew from the project soon thereafter, when I concluded that it was grounded in what I deemed a fundamentally flawed set of principles concerning religious liberty and human rights.

In this response to Dr. Little's essay entitled, "Belief, Ethnicity, and Nationalism," I shall attempt to paint a more nuanced and even-handed picture of the positive, as well as negative, dimensions of the interplay of the scriptural faiths and ethnicity than Dr. Little seems prepared to allow. I shall also offer a respectful, but firm, rebuttal to Dr. Little's Western liberal conceptions of human rights, religious intolerance, and ethnic conflict. My perspective is clearly Christian, and Orthodox in particular, but I hope my observations -- drawn mostly from the New Testament and Eastern Orthodox historical experience -- will resonate also with Jewish and Muslim readers.

People and Nations

A dozen years ago, taking a cue from the classic sociological typologies of Max Weber and Ernst Troeltsch, and relying on the distinctive taxonomy of religion and nationalism proffered more recently by Professor Daniel Elazar of Dartmouth, I proposed a three-part typology for analyzing the range of normative relations between the Christian Church (particularly in the Eastern Orthodox historical experience) and cultural groupings such as nations and ethnic communities.¹ Each of these three "ideal-types" is rooted firmly in the Bible and may be discerned in a trajectory through the subsequent history of the Church.

To narrow the focus of this essay, I shall discard the "public-type," which ignores both the transcendent claims of religion and the ideology of national or ethnic identity in favor of whatever civil society happens to be found within the territorial limits of a given state. I suspect, ironically, that Dr. Little might prefer this model, which does seem, after all, to characterize the prevailing secularistic vision of the United States, the Soviet Union (before, that is, its very timely demise in 1991), and other contemporary "multi-cultural" states. But the "public-type" is the least attested in scripture (for example, St. Paul's reliance on his Roman citizenship in Acts 22:25-29) and the least attractive to people of strong religious faith.

That leaves the "people-type" and "ethnos-type" trajectories for more serious consideration. The first of these is usually held in high esteem by Christians of all stripes, and so I shall bow to it only briefly. The other type, however, requires more careful unpacking, since it may prove more

controversial -- among some Christians, if not those Jewish and Muslim readers whose experience with religion and ethnicity more closely parallels that of Orthodox Christianity in eastern Europe.

The People of God: The People Type

The New Testament is replete with familiar images of the universal, transcendent, meta-ethnic quality of the Church. For St. Peter, Christians constitute, in the aggregate, "a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people" (1 Peter 2:9f, RSV). For St. Paul, accidents of birth have no enduring value for those who are baptized, as he states so eloquently to the Galatians: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28). The Apostle to the Gentiles also assures them that Christ has destroyed "the dividing wall of enmity" between Jews and Gentiles, brought the Gentiles fully into the covenant community, and created in Himself "one new man in place of the two" (Ephesians 2:12-16).

The "people-type" trajectory begins chronologically with the Great Commission. According to the Gospel of St. Matthew, the risen Jesus commissions His disciples to take the good news of His resurrection to all the nations on earth (Matthew 28:19). The next decisive event is the birth of the Church on Pentecost Sunday. St. Luke's account in Acts 2:4-41 credits the descent of the Holy Spirit on the disciples with a virtual reversal of the adverse consequences for human unity in the Tower of Babel mythos (Genesis 11). In the well-chosen words of a recent ecumenical conference on ethnicity and nationalism in Colombo, Sri Lanka, Pentecost was not a reversion to cultural and linguistic uniformity, but rather "an advance towards the harmony of cultural diversity . . . in which each ethnic group remains faithful to its dynamic and changing identity and yet is enriched by and enriches others." In the "one multi-cultural community of faith" Christians are redeemed by the blood of the Lamb that was slain: "The 'blood' that binds them as brothers and sisters is more precious than the 'blood,' the language, the customs, the political allegiances or economic interests that may separate them."² The "people-type" trajectory achieves its natural end in the eschatological vision of St. John of Patmos. In Revelation 7:9-12, the seer beholds "a great multitude which no man could number, from every nation, from all tribes, and peoples and tongues, standing before the Lamb." The "people of God" from beginning to end, therefore, knows no ethnic bounds.

In the two millennia of Christian experience east and west, the meta-ethnic or trans-national character of the Church as the people of God has proved irresistible in theory, if not necessarily in practice. For Roman Catholics, the institution of the papacy -- especially since the 450-year Italian hold on it was broken in 1978 -- has a universalizing effect on the vision of the Church. For Protestants in the historic denominations of the Reformation and in contemporary fundamentalist or evangelical communities, an unrelenting individualism serves the same purpose -- especially as a countervailing tendency to the de facto linkage between church and nation in Germany, Scandinavia, and northwest Europe. Even the Eastern Orthodox, so often identified in the modern world with the nation-states of eastern Europe, may stake a strong claim to this type of religious-cultural relation.

For example, the contemporary Greek theologian, Fr. Ioannes Karmiris, cites the historic Orthodox principle of ecclesiastical organization as both a reflection and a cause of Orthodox universalism. The local church, whatever its familiar name, is based on geography, not ethnicity or nationality per se, so there ought not to be any elect, chosen, or superior nations among the many that, historically and in terms of a popular majority, have claimed Orthodoxy for their faith.

The proper relation of Church to nation and state is, for Karmiris, "akin to that of the soul toward the body" -- a familiar simile from the unique Byzantine experiment that lasted a thousand years from A.D. 330 to 1453, but dating back to the anonymous *Epistle to Diognetus* in the second century. From this inclusivist perspective, the Church "pursues as its policy one that guides all people, nations, states toward God, and unites, transfigures, and transforms them all into one `people of God.'"³

Nations of God: The Ethnos Type

The spiritual and moral dangers of nationalism and ethnicity are obvious to anyone who reads the newspapers today. Their more virulent expressions have, in large part, motivated the unprecedented carnage of this century. One need only remember the attempted genocide of Armenians in 1915, the atrocities of Nazi Germany, and the "ethnic cleansing" that has come to be associated with Yugoslavia during the Second World War and, again, since 1991.

In the last century or so, Eastern Orthodox leaders have not shied away from denouncing such racial or ethnic hatred and its attendant violence. An excessive preoccupation with one's own ethnic group, which contrasts sharply with the ecumenical trans-national vision that prevailed in the medieval Byzantine common-wealth, was condemned as "phyletism" (from the Greek *phyletismos* -- "blood union") by the Synod of Constantinople in 1872 and as "ethnoracism" by Patriarch Joachim of Constantinople in 1904. Bishop Kallistos Ware of Oxford University lamented recently, "Nationalism has been the bane of Orthodoxy for the last ten centuries."⁴ Perhaps the most encouraging sign of supra-nationalistic Orthodox consciousness was an extraordinary inter-religious conference hosted by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Istanbul (Constantinople for the Orthodox) in February 1994. Inspired by the Appeal of Conscience Foundation headed by Rabbi Arthur Schneier in New York, the event gathered prominent international Jewish, Muslim, and Christian leaders, including Orthodox representatives from Russia, Romania, Georgia, Bulgaria, and the United States. They produced the "Bosporus Declaration," which proclaimed without equivocation: "We reject any attempt to corrupt the basic tenet of faith by means of false interpretation and false nationalism."⁵

The key word in the Bosporus Declaration, for our purposes, is "false." Not all forms of nationalism or ethnicity undermine scriptural faith. Dr. Little concedes as much, although his rigid neo-Weberian distinction between "liberal" and "illiberal" forms hardly allows for the rich variety that obtains in Christian experience, as well as that, I surmise, of the Jewish and Muslim communities.

We may, all of us, however, agree on the basic definitions of ethnicity and nationalism. Dr. Little's use of Weber here is instructive. If an "ethnic group" is a "people" who hold "a subjective belief in their common descent," whether construed in terms of accidental characteristics such as a race, territory, or language, a "nation" is an ethnic group writ large, as it were: more self-conscious of its inherent cultural superiority and more politically assertive to the point of seeking to establish its own independent state.⁶

At either echelon, the concept of a distinct people with a shared cultural identity, apart from other peoples with other cultural identities, may actually enhance, much less distort, the Christian understanding of the universal gospel of Christ. What I have dubbed the "ethnos-type" trajectory through Christian history lends itself variously to abuse or good use.

The Greek noun that supplies the name of this ideal-type, to *ethnos*, means literally "a `mass' or `host' or `multitude' bound by the same manners, customs or other distinctive features," or,

more properly, a "people."⁷ It is, as Dr. Little observes in his notes, a rather "porous" or open-ended term. But that vagueness also manifests its genius. For ethnicity is not necessarily tied to bloodlines, nor does it lead inexorably to phyletism. A shared ethnic consciousness is not automatically grounded in a shared territory, although a sense of a common or ancestral homeland seems indispensable. Nor does a positive ethnic identity require a common spoken language; otherwise the children of immigrants, who are not conversant in the mother tongue, would have to forfeit all claims to their family's ethnic heritage. Ethnicity may, therefore, be difficult to pin down, but that same indeterminate character lends a mystical quality to the enterprise, especially where religion is involved.

Sometimes this ethnic mysticism pushes the envelope of moral propriety. Romantic nineteenth century notions of the "Rumanian soul" and Russia's messianic mission degenerated in the twentieth century into xenophobic fascism and Soviet imperialism, respectively. But these, and similar perversions in Western Europe and North America (one need only recall the religio-ethnic American notion of a "manifest destiny" that pushed aside the indigenous tribes of the Old West), do not invalidate the essential worth of the "ethnos-type" trajectory through all of Church history.

The struggle of the early Church over the "ethnic question," if you will, is well-attested and has preoccupied theologians in virtually every era. How integral was Jewishness to the gospel of Jesus Christ -- and hence a prerequisite for membership in the Church that He founded -- and to what extent, if any, could other nations (Greek: *ta ethne*) become part of the eschatological Kingdom of God foreshadowed by that same Church? In some sayings of Christ, the priority of Israel as the "chosen people" of the covenant is presumed -- sometimes in an exclusive sense, as in the "lost sheep" passage (Matthew 10:5-7). The same St. Paul, who in Ephesians 3:6 refers to the Gentiles as "fellow heirs," stresses in a highly problematic section of his most theological epistle the special relation that still obtains between the "chosen" Jewish nation and God; he indicates further that the Gentiles (or "nations") enjoy only a somewhat secondary status in the divine plan of salvation (Romans 11). In Acts 6, the ethnic controversy between Hebrew and Greek-speaking Jewish believers threatens to rend the spiritual unity of the original believers in Jerusalem until the appointment of the first deacons solves the problem temporarily.

When the mother Church finally determines the conditions for the admission of Gentiles into the community (Acts 15), the die is cast for an inclusive, universal evangelistic mission with the nations on a more or less equal basis. But the condescending tone of St. James' pronouncement at the Council of Jerusalem, however much an ethical breakthrough the act itself represented, still betrays a sense of ethnic superiority that often informs the "ethnos-type" trajectory. Along that historical trajectory, ironically, the relative positions of the two groups have been reversed. The Orthodox (and Roman Catholic and Protestant) Churches have tended to regard various Gentile nationalities as normatively Christian and the Jews beyond the pale (often literally, especially in eastern Europe), deserving of condescension at most and perhaps even ethnically inferior. This development also paralleled a metamorphosis of *ta ethne* in the first two centuries after Christ. The Greek term gradually resumed its original meaning as the equivalent to the Hebrew term for "foreigners." Since the Church saw herself as "Israel," the "nations" were the unrighteous (*Vision of Hermas* 1, 4, 2), pagans to be converted to the gospel (*Second Epistle of Clement* 13, 3) or lawless heathen (*Martyrdom of Polycarp* 9, 2).⁸

The most compelling biblical ground of the "ethnos-type" trajectory consists of two passages, the relevant details of which are often glossed over by Christians with a single-minded preference for the "people-type" ecclesiology.⁹ The first text is the very familiar parable of the great judgement in Matthew 25:31-46. Popular presumptions notwithstanding, it is not individual

persons who are gathered before the "glorious throne" of the Son of man when He "come in his glory," but rather *panta ta ethne*: "all the nations." Whether ethne refers here only to Gentiles or, as is more likely, every nation in the world including the Jewish people as one nation among many,¹⁰ the collective identity of the subject cannot be denied. It is the "nations" whom the Son of man will separate "one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats." Does that mean, therefore, that entire nations will be consigned to heaven or hell in accordance with their collective treatment of the "least" of the brethren? Probably not. But this dominical saying in the Gospel of St. Matthew points to some kind of permanent role of nations in the divine economy of salvation -- one that warrants further reflection.

The other New Testament passage I have in mind also merits attention from those who would quickly dismiss ethnicity and nationalism as enduring spiritual and moral categories. In his address to the sophisticated Greeks on the areopagus of Athens, St. Paul declares that the "God who made the world and everything in it . . . made from one every nation of men to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their habitation, that they should seek God" (Acts 17: 24, 26f). At the very least, God is at work among the nations, guiding them, indwelling them, causing them to rise and fall. Beyond that, one may only speculate. Perhaps the Rumanian nationalist historian, Nicolae Iorga (1871-1940), was right, after all, when he insisted that nations are living organisms no less mysterious or spiritual than human persons, or at least entities greater than the sum of their parts.¹¹

Viewed in the most positive Christian light, nations and ethnic groups are fully capable of incarnating the gospel. If what I term the "people-type" approach to religion and culture seeks an essential, "Platonic" trans-nationalism or meta-ethnicity, the "ethnos-type" reflects an "Aristotelian" recognition of the particular and concrete in human society: that is to say, one may no more transcend his ethnicity (or nation) than exchange his parents or change his sex. To borrow political humorist P.J. O'Rourke's comparison of the Democrats as the non-existent Santa Claus to the Republicans as the sterner but very real Old Testament Yahweh,¹² one may say that the "people-type" ideal is far more ethically appealing than its often misbegotten alternative, but the problem is that the former is hard to find in the lived experience of the Church!

Not A 'Little' Bias Against Ethnicity

Although it may seem counter-intuitive to argue against someone who argues against discrimination, I take up this cause willingly, confidently, and with all due respect for my colleague, Dr. David Little. In two sentences of his essay, Dr. Little suggests, first, that "all nationalists -- liberal and illiberal" have "a certain problem complying consistently with universalistic norms" and, second, that so-called liberal nationalists are more likely to promote "tolerance and peace" than so-called illiberal nationalists. Contained in this couplet is the key to what I regretfully must describe as Dr. Little's bias against any kind of vital ethnicity and his rather narrow secular Western conception of religious and ethnic intolerance.

For Dr. Little, who readily wears the mantle of Max Weber and Isaiah Berlin before him, the only good nationalist (and, *mutatis mutandis*, ethnic) is a "liberal" or "non-aggressive" one. This is the kind of nationalism that evolved from the French or American revolutions; it stresses "the ideals of citizenship," which include, above all, a commitment to "a multiethnic and nondiscriminatory" state. Since Dr. Little also worries a bit about tendencies toward "cultural standardization" -- presumably a common language, historical memory, and, heaven forbid, religion -- we obviously face in his liberal nationalism a Potemkin village: the only thing genuinely

ethnic or nationalistic in this variety is the name. Anyone who takes reasonable pride in his ethnic identity or perceives a strong link between a particular religion and an ethnic group or nation, in Little's view, has already begun a slide down the slippery slope to intolerance and armed conflict. Compare this animus against religion and ethnicity to the more positive views adduced above that are expressed in the New Testament by St. James, St. Paul, and, according to the Gospel of St. Matthew, Jesus Christ Himself!

The Achilles' heel of Dr. Little's argument is his presumption that the prevailing Western liberal opposition to "discrimination" participates in a Platonic universal. He simply cites the articles in the *United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of All Forms of Intolerance and Discrimination Based on Religion or Belief* as if these are self-evidently true for all times and places. However, discrimination -- including any "preference based on religion or belief," as well as hostile, restrictive, or oppressive measures against someone -- is not necessarily linked causally to intolerance. Nor in this case is the contra-positive necessarily true: "respect for freedom of conscience and diverse belief" does not require application of "the principle of nondiscrimination." Tolerance and nondiscrimination are not balanced in a zero-sum relation. I can envision many scenarios, both historical and theoretical, in which positive discrimination toward a majority religio-ethnic community does not equate to negative discrimination against minority religio-ethnic groups in the same state.

If Dr. Little and the United Nations Organization were able to implement their view of religious tolerance, Israel would have to rescind its "law of return," the state-churches in Scandinavia and the United Kingdom (and any revived arrangements of this sort in eastern Europe and the Caucasus) would have to forego their special status, and every Islamic state would have to forfeit its religious identity or be subject to charges of violating fundamental "human rights." Most ominously for people of faith in the United States, the public square in this country would, in Fr. Richard John Neuhaus' now classic image, have to remain permanently "naked." Dr. Little apparently would relegate religion to a "private" sphere of behavior, although not necessarily without influence on the public sphere.

Precisely what this entails I can not fathom, but it sounds like an enforced secularization of the polity and the national culture -- in other words, more or less what the U.S. Supreme Court has wrought in the last half century.

The real issue, in short, is not religio-ethnic discrimination, but rather the use of power -- especially state power -- for or against certain religious or ethnic groups. I would argue that positive political action on behalf of a religio-ethnic majority (say, for example, Jews in Israel, Muslims in Saudi Arabia, Roman Catholics in Poland, Lutherans in Sweden, or Orthodox Christians in Romania) may be morally licit, while any negative political action (such as restrictions on free speech or access to buildings) directed against a religio-ethnic minority is intrinsically evil.

Whether this half loaf of "human rights" will satisfy Dr. Little or other Christians, Jews, or Muslims enamored of Western liberalism remains an open question. From my Orthodox Christian perspective, this is one instance where "less" is clearly better than "more."

Notes

1. Alexander F. C. Webster, "Antinomical Typologies for an Orthodox Christian Social Ethic for the World, State, and Nation," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, XXVIII, No. 3 (Fall, 1983), 246-53.

2. "Ethnicity and Nationalism: A Challenge to the Churches," *The Ecumenical Review*, XLVII, No. 2 (Spring, 1995), 228, 229. Sponsored jointly by the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, Lutheran World Federation, and World Council of Churches, this consultation gathered 36 persons from 21 countries in November 1994.
3. Ioannes Karmiris, "Nationalism in the Orthodox Church," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, XXVI, No. 3 (Fall, 1981), 175-77.
4. (Kallistos) Timothy Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (Balti-more: Penguin Books, 1964), p. 86.
5. Quoted in Alan Cowel, "World Religious Leaders Meet on Ethnic Strife," *New York Times*, February 10, 1994, p. A15.
6. Little acknowledges his indebtedness to Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*(New York: Bedminster Press, 1968), Vol. I, 385-98, and Vol. II, 921-26.
7. Gerhard Kittel (ed.), *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. & ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1964), II, 369.
8. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich (eds.), *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 217.
9. I must confess that only in the last several years have I noticed these details, leading me to revise accordingly the harsher assessment of the "ethnos-type" trajectory in my earlier works.
10. The latter is also the interpretation of Karl Ludwig Schmidt in Kittel, *loc. cit.*
11. See, for example, the excellent secondary study: William O. Oldson, *The Historical and Nationalistic Thought of Nicolae Iorga* ("East European Monographs"; New York: Columbia University Press, 1973), p. 45. Iorga's nationalism also had a dark, obverse side; like many of his contemporaries a fervent anti-Semite, he was assassinated by right-wingers more extreme than himself.
12. P. J. O'Rourke, *Parliament of Whores: A Lone Humorist Attempts to Explain the Entire U.S. Government* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1991), p. xx.

Chapter IV

Ethnicity and Islamic Modernization

Mustafa Malik (The Strategy Group)

I begin this paper with the argument that many of today's human conflicts stem from a stampede among ethnic communities for the panoply of statehood. Secondly, I argue that many Muslim communities are slowly moving toward modernization and secularization, which could further intensify ethnic conflicts and aggravate political instability. Finally, I recommend the use of creative new political models, including confederations and "state-plus-nation" approaches, to accommodate ethnic and nationalist aspirations without upsetting the present nation-state-based international order.

Let me start on a personal note. In my application for permanent residency in the United States, I had stated as follows: I was born in what is now India but grew up mostly in what is now Bangladesh. However, I came to America from what is now Pakis-tan with a Pakistan passport and on a diplomatic assignment from the Pakistan government.

All this was very confusing to Vernon Dutton, an examiner at the Immigration and Naturalization Service office at Baltimore. "Which is your native country, anyway?" Mr. Dutton asked. I said I didn't know. He asked a colleague to try to figure out my national origin, but to no avail. I asked Mr. Dutton why it was so important to determine my national origin. "Man!" he yelled, apparently exasperated by his inability trace my juridical roots, "we need to know where to dump you if you create trouble here."

Years later I ran into Mr. Dutton in a Baltimore convenience store. I told him that I had become a U.S. citizen, and he congratulated me. Then I reminded him of the difficulty he was having deciding where to deport me in case of a problem. He laughed. "I am glad you have solved that problem by becoming an American citizen," he said. "Now we will be happy to hang you here if you cause any troubles."

It took me a little more than three decades to become the citizen of four states -- India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and the United States. Each of these states considers itself a nation. Last year I was reminded that I had a fifth "nationality" which I had all but for-gotten.

I belong to a joint family. My brother's son bought a piece of land in Bangladesh in my name and my brother's. He later sent me a copy of the deed registered at a Bangladesh government registration office. That deed, written in my native Bengali language, identifies me as "Mustafa Malik, son of so and so, of such and such village, by nationality Muslim. . . ."

Deed recording has been going on in the Asian subcontinent since long before the French Revolution heralded the Age of Nationalism. For centuries, people of the subcontinent have identified their "nationality" with their religious community. Our Bangladesh scribe -- and I suppose his colleagues in parts of Pakistan and India -- continues that practice even though politicians have rechristened our nationalities as Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi. Alternately, people in some regions of the subcontinent identify their nationality with their ethnicity: Kashmiri, Sikh, Naga, Mizo, Tamil, and so on.

South Asian independence movements, like independence movements in much of the rest of the Third World, were launched at a high-water mark of the Age of Nationalism. It was a time when Woodrow Wilson's call for the right of self-determination of nationalities was resonating in the hearts and minds of statesmen in our subcontinent as in the rest of the colonized world. Their

watchword is echoed in a pungent simile of Ernest Gellner: "[E]very girl ought to have a husband, preferably her own; and every high culture now wants a state, preferably its own."¹

The stampede among Third World elites to gain statehood via nationhood was provoked by the astonishing accomplishments of early nation-states and the goods they had brought their citizens. Most early nation-states, though small in size, had defeated expansive empires -- Ottoman, Mughal, Chinese -- built empires of their own and ushered in eras of unprecedented prosperity for their citizens. So leaders of their exploited colonies aspired to have nation-states of their own hoping to get a piece of the action.

These statesmen included British Indian leaders Mahatma Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru, Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Liaqat Ali Khan -- all British-educated barristers. They knew the British constitutional and legal systems inside out and used that knowledge masterfully in their argumentation with the British colonial power to gain the independence of the subcontinent. Yet it appears -- and here lies our tragedy -- that they had not mastered so well the political history of Britain or Europe. In their impatient drive to attain the pomp and power of nation-states, they ignored the process through which early European nation-states had evolved.

West European nation-states were not based on their shared faiths or historical experience, which is what our leaders mostly talked about. Those nation-states have been products of modernization -- industrialization, secularization and division of labor. They brewed over centuries when growth of business and industry brought people from different cultures together into melting pots. In those melting pots, the demands of modernization imparted in them modern education and skills, blended them into new forms of social organization based on mobility and crosscultural communication. In this process was born national cultures, which were different from the former ethnic and religious cultures of the nationals.

These industrial nations, nurtured by the Enlightenment, were powerful not because of their racial superiority or religious virtues. They were powerful because of their knowledge of the sciences and technology that gave them modern weapons and ammunition and superior social organization, which translated into more effective military and bureaucratic organizations.

South Asian and most other Third World statesmen sought to short-circuit this long, arduous process. They simply declared their peoples nations on the grounds of their shared geographical habitat, ethnicity or faith. Secondly, colonial powers, in their efforts to retain political and economic stranglehold over the Third World, created a host of other new states in a capricious fashion. Thus the French, British and Italians split the Middle East and much of Africa into states, often cutting across ethnic communities and herding disparate ethnic and national collectivities into new states.

Many of the human conflicts that concern us today stem from this miscreation of many postcolonial states. India, for example, comprises hundreds of ethnic and dozens of national collectivities who practice all the major and many minor faiths, and who speak 16 major languages and about 1600 dialects. But Indian statesmen declared this medley of heterogenous population groups a nation and assumed that it could be governed smoothly with a constitutional arrangement they had seen working at Westminster during their student years in Britain.

The Muslim leadership of British India had their Muslim-majority Pakistan arguing that Muslim elements in this medley constituted a nation. Pakistan, too, adopted a political system, in fact a series of ephemeral systems, under which that multi-ethnic state was ruled under a unitary central government mostly run by military or military-backed dictators.

In fact, neither India nor Pakistan has yet been a nation as a student of nationalism would understand it. Both are agglomerations of ethnic groups, tribes and nationalities. The straitjacket

of a virtually unitary state into which Indian leaders have herded the country's myriad religious, linguistic and tribal communities has been the source of perennial nationalist, ethnic and religious convulsions. India's colossal military juggernaut has, however, succeeded in suppressing the half-dozen secession movements that have stalked the country from time to time while interfaith, inter-ethnic mayhem continues.

Pakistan's military failed to avert the secession of its former eastern province. Bengali Muslims of what used to be East Pakistan and Punjabi Muslims of the western region bickered for years over the official language, budget priorities, and share of political power at the center. Finally, after a bloody civil war in which Bengali Muslims joined hands with Indian Hindus to fight Pakistani Muslim forces, East Pakistan emerged as independent Bangladesh. Now, in what remains of Pakistan, a separatist movement festers among the Sindhi-speaking natives of the Sindh province. Simultaneously the Urdu-speaking *Mohajirs*, or immigrants from India, have engaged the Sindhis in a bloody struggle over cultural, economic and political issues.

The arbitrary division and subdivision of the subcontinent has spelled some of the ghastliest human tragedies in human history. The Hindu-Muslim bloodletting over the creation of Pakistan cost 800,000 lives and uprooted fourteen million people. My family abandoned our Indian home and property and resettled in what was then East Pakistan.

We Muslims of the subcontinent have learned a twofold lesson from the dismemberment of the old Pakistan, the only state ever created in the name of Islam, and from the endemic ethnic strife ravaging what is left of it. It is that Islam, which is an ennobling faith and dynamic social system, does not have the glue for modern nationhood. Jinnah was one of the brightest statesmen the Muslim world has ever had. But he was wrong when he said we Muslims of the subcontinent are a nation.

Secondly, and this follows from my first point, at crucial historical moments our ethnic pulls can outweigh our Islamic solidarity. I wanted to say this rather bluntly because I believe that our failure to understand or admit this reality has, over the centuries, driven us into many frustrating, and sometimes bloody, quagmires.

Pakistan is not the only example of such frustration. On a visit to Baghdad after the Gulf War, I noticed a big banner overhanging the city's central square dwarfing a life size portrait of Saddam Hussein under it. The banner flashed the Qur'anic verse:

And hold fast
All together, by the Rope
Which God (stretches out
For you) and be not divided.²

Two days later I was driven to the city of Kerbala. Hundreds of Shiite rebels had been slaughtered in Kerbala by the troops of Saddam's Sunni-dominated government. There I saw the same Qur'anic verse displayed on another banner over a street. The banner was mocked by the ruins of dozens of nearby houses razed during the anti-Shiite assault. It was mocked, too, by the headlines of several magazine articles I was carrying on the Kurdish Muslim rebellion in northern Iraq. Saddam was not the first Iraqi ruler to remind Iraqi Muslims of their common Islamic faith. Yet the intensity of ethnic and sectarian strife has made Iraq perhaps the most problematic state in the Middle East.

Many other multi-ethnic Muslim states have been stalked by interethnic feuds. Examples include the strife between Pashtuns and Tajiks in Afghanistan, Moors and blacks in Mauritania,

blacks and whites in Senegal, Tuaregs and blacks in Mali, Arabs and Barbers in Algeria. We Muslims should strive to build strong, prosperous polities to preserve our dynamic religious principles and foster the best of our cultural heritage. Our difficulty in doing so in multiethnic states calls for rethinking the political structures of those polities. It is a problem, I would argue, common to all multi-ethnic states run under unitary, autocratic political systems.

Many factors combine to create an ethnic collectivity, although each has a dominant factor. It is monarchy that largely molded the French ethnic character. Kurdish, Ukrainian and Slovak ethnicity has been cemented by language. In the United States today, skin color is about the only ingredient that makes African Americans an ethnic community, the overwhelming majority of which share the same faith and language with the Protestant mainstream.

Religion has played a dominant role in the creation of ethnic entities. Non-Muslim ethnic and national collectivities cemented largely by religion include the Irish, Israelis, Poles, Serbs, Croats, Sikhs, Christians in India's Nagaland, Tamils and Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, Maronites and Druze in Lebanon. Ancient examples include Sumer, Assyria, Egypt, Persia, China, India.

Similarly, religion has been the bedrock of most Muslim ethnic and national collectivities: the Somalis, Mauritians, Algerians, Egyptians, Turks, Chechens, Azerbaijanis, Tadjiks, Pashtuns, Baluchis, Sindhis, Bangladeshis, Malaysians, and Indonesians. Yet the culture of each Muslim ethnic group, though steeped in Islamic ethos, is different. For, as we have noted, apart from religion, culture has a host of other ingredients which vary from place to place. They include language, historical memories, customs, the arts, music, poetry, modes of earning a living, environmental conditions, and so on. As ecology and social environment differs from region to region, so do human cultures, and Muslim cultures at that. The Indonesian Islamic culture is different from that of Pakistan, which is different from that of Somalia, which is different from that of Egypt, which is different from that of Turkey, which is different from that of Morocco. Each brand is zealously preserved and fostered by its members regardless of whether they personally practice the faith part of that Islamic culture.

Jinnah, who founded Pakistan to preserve an Islamic culture, seldom prayed. Today, the most vicious struggle for Muslim identity is being fought by one of the most secular Muslim collectivities, the Bosnians. Their secularism is portrayed in another of Gellner's telling epigrams:

Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes once observed that to be a gentleman one does not need to know Latin and Greek, but one must have forgotten them. Nowadays, to be a Bosnian Muslim you need not believe that there is no God but God and that Mohammed is his Prophet, but you do need to have lost that faith.³

The Muslim identity the Bosnians are fighting for is an ethnic rather than purely religious identity, even though religion played a pivotal role in shaping it. I cite these cases to suggest that ethnicity, rather than religion, has been the principal factor in most of today's human conflicts.

From time to time, religions have tried to supersede other elements of ethnic cultures. They did so during the Inquisition in Europe, the Wahhabi movement in Arabia and in the current Islamist revolutionary Iran. But almost invariably, as Anthony Smith has noted, "after an enthusiastic phase" all religious movements yield to broader ethnic pulls.⁴ Multiethnic collectivities held together by religious bonds often dissolve along ethnic lines. Examples include the Holy Roman Empire, the early Islamic Caliphate, the Ottoman Empire and, lately, the old Pakistan. In many cases, though, ethnic and nationalist collectivities cemented with large doses of religious glue remain intact but are secularized for example, Ireland, Turkey, Israel and Poland.

It appears that the current "enthusiastic phase" of Islamist revivalism has peaked or is about to peak. We no longer hear the strident anti-American tirade coming out of Iran. The ruling Islamic

Refah (Welfare) government in Turkey, despite its campaign rhetoric, has kept its relationship with the U.S., Europe and Israel intact and reiterated its commitment to the pluralist democratic political system of Turkey.

Forget that Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini's Shiite Islamist polity has always been an Iranian phenomenon. His Shiite-Iranian revolution did not appeal very much even to Shiite communities in neighboring Arab Iraq, Bahrain or Saudi Arabia, let alone to the rest of the Muslim world.

In fact, during the Iran-Iraq war the so-called theocratic Saudi government supported the secular, Arab regime of Iraq against the theocratic Iranian one. And Arab Shiites of Iraq, despite the repression of the Sunni Saddam regime, bore the brunt of the fighting against Shiite Iranians. Iraqi Shiites paid little heed to Iranian Shiite leader Khomeini's calls for an uprising against Saddam. Instead, a decade later they rose, unsuccessfully, against Saddam at the call of Protestant George Bush!

Pakistanis appear to have been done with Islam in the Zia al-Haq era. In the last parliamentary elections, the freest ever held in Pakistan, all Islamist parties together polled 2.5 percent of the votes cast, which have translated into three seats in the National Assembly of 217 members. The Wahhabist Saudi Arabia, once an epitome of early-Islamic piety and puritanism, has degenerated into a hedonist, repressive and racially segregationist dynasty. Even the best known of today's Islamist movements, e.g. Algeria's Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), Lebanon's *Hizbollah* (Party of God) or Hamas in the Israeli-occupied Territories essentially are ethnic movements using Islamic symbols for political causes.

During a visit to Jerusalem, I had a brief conversation with a Palestinian schoolteacher who identified himself as a supporter of Hamas, the inveterate Palestinian Islamist group. Radwan Abu Salameh complained that the Arab and Muslim world was doing little for the Palestinian cause. I reiterated my sympathies for the Palestinian cause and at the end of our conversation asked Abu Salameh casually what Palestinians thought about the Kashmir movement. I heard Kashmiris complain, I said, that Arabs and other Muslims have abandoned them. He said Palestinians, more than any other Arab groups, understand and support the Kashmiri struggle, but added:

As you can see, we are busy fighting the enemy occupying our own country. It is our first duty. It's an Islamic duty. You know, Allah has said he has created us as nations and wants us to defend our homelands.

He is right. What we call the Islamic umma, or community, has been a picturesque quilt of a bewildering variety of ethnic and national patches. Sadly, the many colors of this quilt seem to remain in a large blind spot of many in the American academes and media. Islam, Islamism and terrorism are often used interchangeably. *The New York Times* alarms Americans about "The Islamic Wave," and quotes American officials as designating "militant Islam as the new enemy, to be 'contained' much the way Communism was during the cold war."⁵ *The New Republic* blames the bombing of the World Trade Center on a "culture in Brooklyn and Jersey City and Detroit off which the criminals feed and which gets a grim thrill from them."⁶ A professor at the American University likens Islamic movements to "Bolshevik, Fascist and Nazi movements of the past" which should not be allowed to come to power even through the democratic process.⁷

This kind of negative portrayal of Islam and Muslims has had its inevitable effect on the American public mind. Early this year a project to build an Islamic school in Montgomery County, Maryland, triggered a paranoid reaction among a group of Americans. Among their fears, the school would "bring us close to danger" from Muslim terrorism. One irate American, James Watkins of Poolesville, Md., was worried that terrorists who would be studying at the proposed Islamic school might "shoot at low-flying aircraft" approaching the Dulles airport.⁸

The notion of a monolithic Islam is shared, too, by many Muslims including traditionalists and Islamists. They try to discount the God-given richness of our diversity in race, language, customs, dress, food habits, social organization, political experience and outlook. Many view any discussion of Muslims cultural diversity as un-Islamic, if not anti-Islamic.

These traditionalists and Islamists seem to forget that our ethnic diversity is part of a providential design. God created Adam "from clay,"⁹ the Qur'an says, and sent him down to Earth because he wanted man to be his "viceregent on earth." God did so even though angels pointed out to him that man:

[W]ill make
Mischief therein and shed blood -- 10
The first thing that God taught his viceregent on earth was not prayer.
And He taught Adam the nature
Of all things -- 11

It is man's knowledge of "the nature of all things" in this diverse universe, and not his piety, that qualifies him to represent God on Earth and makes him superior to angels. To make this point, God ordered the angels: "Bow down to Adam!" and they bowed down.¹²

Thus our Creator assigned us to inhabit and rule the deserts, the greeneries, the prairies, the mountains and the snowfields. It is the requirement of his assignment that makes us speak different languages, dress differently, eat different foods and follow different social customs. Our Maker tells us that he wants us this way:

And [We] made you into
Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other
(Not that ye may despise
(Each other)).¹³

It is this providential arrangement that Abu Salameh was referring to when he said that struggling for the Palestinian national cause is his "Islamic duty." This providential design is reflected in the all-Levantine Palestinian rallies held in Washington. It was reflected in a Kashmir symposium that attracted only Pakistanis and Kashmiris; in the fact that the cause of the Sudanese government is promoted here by a group of African American Muslims; and in events arranged to honor the late African American Sunni Muslim Malcolm X that are attended by more African American Christians than by Sunni immigrant Muslims.

I focus this discussion mainly on ethnicity rather than nationalism because the distinction between the two, as Daniel Patrick Moynihan puts it, is a matter of "degrees," the nation being "the highest form of the ethnic group."¹⁴ An ethnic community be-comes a nation, "when it mobilizes for political action and becomes politically significant."¹⁵ Ethnic groups are thus more basic and durable collectivities than nations. They are the cockroaches among human collectivities. They have been around since the be-ginning of man's social living and likely will remain if and when nations and nationalism, which are only a few hundred years old, should become obsolete.

Conflicts do occur among nations. It is nations and so-called nations which fought the Gulf War, the Iran-Iraq war, the wars over Afghanistan and those between India and Pakistan, the First and Second World Wars, and so on. Yet, as conflicts among nations be-come costlier both in

human and economic terms, they decrease. "Nation states," to quote Moynihan again, "no longer seem inclined to go to war with one another, but ethnic groups fight all the time."¹⁶ Developed nations, in particular, have refocused their competition "from war to commerce."¹⁷

In the developing world, though, more and more ethnic communities, many of them Muslim, are claiming national status. One reason is that most of those communities are undergoing a transition from agrarian to industrial culture. Industrialism, as noted earlier, pulls man away from his primordial social and cultural roots, and nationalism offers him an alternative refuge for collective living. Besides, because anti-colonial movements generally were fought in the garb of nationalism, nationalism remains "a progressive cause" for many Third World communities.¹⁸ Most important, nationhood is viewed as a qualification for statehood which promises its members economic development, mobility, modern education, and citizenship, a seemingly more prestigious individual identity than membership of an ethnic group.

Even though the concept of Islamic brotherhood is often viewed as antithetical to territorial nationalism, Islam has fueled many an ethnic group's drive for nationhood. It has done so in Muslim communities surrounded by non-Muslims (Malayans), dominated by non-Muslim minorities (Algerians), haunted by memories of conflict with non-Muslim majorities (Pakistanis, Bangladeshis), and so on.

In the past two centuries, the colonial stranglehold largely suppressed political aspirations of most Muslim, and many non-Muslim, ethnic communities. In recent decades, most of these communities have had the freedom to strive to acquire education, engage in business and industry and develop political institutions. The ethnic communities that find their progress suppressed by others have waged nationalist movements. Usually nationalist movements are most stimulated by a feeling of exploitation and it gains momentum with modernization.¹⁹ As the developing world population explodes and competition for resources gets stiffer among new, modernizing generations, ethnic and nationalist unrest could increase proportionately, too.²⁰

Among Muslim societies, one consequence of modernization is expected to be an increasing trend toward secularization. In the stagnant agrarian life, man's allegiance to his traditional culture is total. In the melting pot of modern life he develops a web of new affiliations -- to his employer and coworkers, professional guild, recreational club. As a result, his identity is, to use Ali Mazrui's expression, "partialized." Eventually, these "partially eroded group personalities coalesce to form a new national entity."²¹ The new national culture replaces the culture of the clerics or ideologues. The price that people pay for his transition from the agrarian-ethnic to industrial-nationalist culture, Gellner points out, is that "they become secularized."²²

I know I am stepping on a mine with this statement. I will be reminded that in many societies including, especially Muslim societies, modernization has accompanied religious revivalism instead of secularization. True, today's Islamist movements in several parts of the world, the Hindu revivalist movement in India, Buddhist revivalism in Sri Lanka, Jewish fundamentalist movement in Israel and Christian fundamentalist movement in the United States are all modern phenomena. And a great deal has been written about the effects of modernization on these movements.²³

The focus of this paper does not permit adequate treatment of the issue. I would argue, though, that religious revivalism, like the just fading communism, is a transient phase in man's quest for more enduring political values and structures. So far as Islam is concerned, it generally is attracting youth who have been turned off by their corrupt politicians; by Western government policies and elite attitudes perceived as insensitive to Muslims and Islam; by social ills of today's Western societies, and by the social and economic ills of Muslim societies, defying Western political and economic recipes.

Eventually, however, as the Islamist resurgence peaks, these bright, idealist youth will realize that secular political models are most conducive for the dissemination of Islam's uplifting values and ideals. Humanity, wary of the frenzied, brutal stampede for material goods, is hungering for such Islamic principles as justice, welfare of the indigent, equality, brotherhood and social responsibility. Our new generations of educated youth imbued with Islamic spirit need a secular world environment to cultivate and foster these great ideals. They cannot go around defending Muslim women's head covering in France and North America and also the suppression of religious minorities in Pakistan, Iran or Sudan.

Secularization of Muslim societies, not a clash of civilization, is, I believe, going to highlight the next phase of human history. Even though Islam has been the latest and, in some ways, the most progressive of the three Abrahamic faiths, we Muslims have been behind the other two in modernization and secularization. The main reason: We sat out the industrial revolution and the Enlightenment. Both these phenomena, of course, took place in Christian Europe. But then Ashkenazi Jews eventually caught up with them and modernized and secularized their society with great success.

Anthony Smith attributes the rapid modernization of Jewish society to Jewry's "traditional high regard for learning."²⁴ The Jews' zest for learning is admirable. They have proved it in many branches of knowledge. Yet Smith's argument does not explain why Sepherdic Jews' "regard for learning" has not generally been as high as Ashkenazis'. Neither does he say why German Jews have done significantly better in their pursuit of education and modernization than have, for example, Polish Jews.

Two factors seem to have helped Ashkenazi Jews modernize faster than their Asian and African coreligionists. One, and Lewis has alluded to it, is their proximity to the theaters of the Reformation and Enlightenment. The commercial policies of Prussia, especially under Frederick William II, also helped Jewish enterprise and education a great deal. The other factor is the sheer need for survival of a persecuted minority, which means getting a good education, working hard at your lab, store or music studio. (The drive for survival in adversity probably explains, more than anything else, why the Palestinians of today are among the best educated and most modern segments of Arab society.)

What has become of Muslims? Muslim societies were physically far removed from the intellectual and industrial ferment of Enlightenment Europe. In the 18th century when Western and Central Europe pulsated with that ferment, life in the partly nomadic partly agrarian Muslim world flowed steadily along its old, traditional social and cultural grooves. Then, as European armies, merchants and preachers swarmed to Muslim (and non-Muslim) lands of Asia and Africa, Muslim societies reacted defensively, clutching fast on to their traditional religious and social values and institutions. Muslim religious leaders blamed the colonization of their countries and other adversities on Muslims' deflection from traditional Islam. A number of Islamic revivalist movements swept the Muslim world. They further shielded their societies from the winds of secular education and modernization, which they associated with the hated colonizers.

In many Muslim societies, public aversion to Western education lingered past the colonial age and has been one of the main causes of the backwardness of subcontinent Muslims. In the 1950s my father, an Islamic scholar in what used to be East Pakistan, was bitterly criticized by his friends for my going to a secular school. Our county (*pargana*) had three Islamic schools, all teeming with Muslim students, but no school for secular education above the fourth grade.

I had to leave home at age 11 to enroll in a dilapidated "middle English school" in another county. Our one-room school, divided into three class "rooms" by two movable straw partitions,

had a total of fewer than 30 students attending grades three through six. The three-member faculty was headed by a third-year college dropout, the highest educated person in two counties who was suspected to be crazy because he seldom prayed. The two other teachers were high school dropouts. Our principal was provided free room and board in lieu of tutoring his host's children and had a monthly pay of about \$4, supplemented by another \$1.50 as government allowance. His two colleagues used to get about half that amount each. Yet we and our school were the objects of scorn and innuendoes at Islamic gatherings.

The Hindus of the subcontinent were taking advantage of Western education that British colonialists had introduced there. Hence they have been much ahead of us in education and modernization. The secular schools were patronized by the colonial government, which had conquered most of India from Muslim rulers. Hence resentment of the British and everything they stood for was stronger among Muslims than among Hindus (until the onset of the independence movement, which was led by Hindu elites). Until recent decades, Muslim backwardness in education had been worldwide, but in the subcontinent Muslims' campaign to shun secular schools also was part of their broader non-cooperation with the alien rulers.

It has been just a few decades that most of the Muslim world has thrown off colonial tutelage and set about modernization. In many cases, the process has been rather slow. It will take us a while, as it did West Europeans, to undergo the "intellectual, technological and social revolution" sparked by modernization.²⁵ Secularization of Muslim societies will not, in all probability, make them copies of Euro-American democracies. For the immediate future, democracy in most Muslim countries likely will have a strong Islamic tinge. I don't expect to see writings of Salman Rushdie or Taslima Nasreen in Pakistani or Egyptian bookstores anytime soon regardless of the political systems these countries may have. Neither can I see a Muslim parliament enacting laws in the near future to allow women the same inheritance rights as men (Islam allows the son to inherit two-thirds of his father's property leaving one-third for the daughter).

No two Western democracies are alike. Indian democracy is strikingly different from all of them. Under the Indian version of secularism, many religious institutions receive government patronage, and the government participates in the management of some. The practice strikes at the core of the American principle of secularism: church-state separation. Because of the preponderance of religious values in Muslim cultures, democracies in Muslim countries will have a stronger religious flavor than in most others. Yet as Muslim societies continue to modernize and the current "enthusiastic period" of Islamic revivalism levels off, their secular ethos will strengthen.

Modernization, of which nationalism and secularism are corollaries, is never painless. It hits different segments of a community and different parts of a country at different times. And of course some countries modernize more rapidly than others. Hence the early phase of modernization usually accompanies interethnic and interstate unrest. For as the tidal wave of modernization sweeps the world, it makes sure that almost everyone, at some time or other, has cause to feel unjustly treated.²⁶ As a result, the coming decades likely will witness continued ethnic and nationalist feuds in the Muslim and Third worlds.

During this period of economic and political scramble, many Muslim and Third world societies may find it difficult to guarantee the full range of human rights that David Little and many of the rest of us in the West are concerned about. Rights to free speech and association, and equal enjoyment of those rights by all citizens, are basic to the quality of life that we live in America and the West. I personally do not want to live in a society that does not or cannot guarantee them.

Many less privileged societies are, however, more concerned with more basic requisites of life: food, shelter, medicine, basic education. They place greater priority on equity in the enjoyment of resources than on political and juridical equality of citizenship, e.g. equal right to vote, equal protection of the law, right to trial in a civilian court and right to counsel of one's own choice during the trial.

The rights to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom from discrimination, etc., to which Little also has referred, are essentials of secular, democratic societies. I believe that as the pace of modernization accelerates in the Muslim and Third World societies, indigenous forces in those societies will inevitably push for the realization of these rights.

Meanwhile, societies that are ahead in the march toward freedom and liberty, owe it to themselves and the rest of mankind to strive to promote those ennobling values among others. Pushing these ideals will, I hope, help speed the process of their realization. They should not, however, be daunted by the possibility that rewards for their efforts may not be immediate, especially among the premodern and modernizing societies that have never known freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and the rest. I said that heightening ethnic and nationalist aspirations and competition for finite resources can continue to spawn interethnic, inter-national violence. Creative constitutional models and statesmanship, however, can avert such conflicts and facilitate relatively peaceful coexistence and coalescence among different ethnic and nationalist communities.

Many ethnonationalist conflicts center on collectivities' aspirations for sovereign statehood. The sovereignty of the territorial nation-state is assumed to be sacrosanct. The Kashmiris, for example, are dying by the thousands for the panoply of a sovereign state to preserve their ethnonational rights. The Indians, on the other hand, have been committing hair-raising barbarity to people they call their countrymen to make sure that Kashmir remains, as Indian officials often assert, "an integral part" of the sovereign Indian state. Thus most nationalist movements today mean dis-section of territory, disruption of means of living, the domination of the religious and cultural affairs of one community by another.

The early nation-states followed the reverse course. The French nation, for example, evolved over centuries in the frame-work of a state. The issues of economic and cultural rights resolved themselves as local ethnic cultures transformed gradually into the French national culture. And there was no question of territorial division. Even though discrete cultural enclaves persisted in the Gaelic highlands, in Languedoc and Brittany, peaceful trade and social interaction across cultural contours barred them from unleashing the kind of murderous passion that we witness today in the Balkans, Kashmir and Palestine.

In Britain, civil society evolved over centuries while the three national collectivities -- the English, Welsh and Scots -- retained their national identities. As these nationalities together passed through the "triple revolutions" of industrialization, bureaucratization and communication and as the blood of their youth mixed in the battlefields of World War I, they gradually emerged as a new nation-state. Most other West and North European nation-states passed from statehood to nationhood this way.

The problem with many East European and Third World collectivities is that they are struggling to transform first into nation-hood in order to acquire statehood. This often leads to such painful consequences as "ethnic cleansing," dissection of territories and communities, domination of one community by another rather than their gradual assimilation or coalescence. So Kashmiris must either have a sovereign state of their own or none of their national rights. The Indians must

either have Kashmir as an "integral part" of India or let it secede. The concept of sacrosanctity of state sovereignty does not allow for relationships in between.

This dilemma could be resolved through alternative political arrangements that might require modifying the concept of sovereignty. "Confederalism" is one option. Many feuds between secessionist national collectivities and integrationist multinational states could be amenable to confederal solutions. The nationalist movement would have its flag and most state powers but cede a few subjects such as defense, foreign affairs and currency to the state it wants to secede from. The recipe of "federal and confederal state," as Anthony Smith points out, "would make it possible to de-link ethnic and national aspirations from statehood and sovereignty."²⁷ We in the Indian subcontinent could have been spared much bloodshed and suffering had our leaders accepted a confederal arrangement that the withdrawing British colonial power had proposed in 1946. Later the secession of Bangladesh after a bloody civil war followed Islamabad's refusal to accept a confederation between Bangladesh and Pakistan.

Another approach, once propagated by Austrian Social Democrats Otto Bauer and Karl Renner to preserve the unity of Austria-Hungary, could be the basis of a range of other frameworks. Bauer and Renner proposed that national groups, whether they are concentrated in one territory or scattered around the world, have their cultural affairs handled by their national institutions leaving political and security issues to be tackled by a "supra-national government."²⁸

The American Foreign Policy Association put out a study that offers a similar formula for the accommodation of nationalist aspirations without bloody convulsions.²⁹ Under his so-called "states-plus-nations" approach, Gidon Gottlieb suggests a series of concepts that would help resolve nation-state conflicts outside of territorial-sovereignty configuration.

Gottlieb suggests that the international make room for nations that do not have the panoply of full-fledged states. Secondly, in multinational states, he argues for a redistribution of the attributes of state sovereignty among competing nationalities. He also suggests that in special cases "national rights" may be conferred on natives of a state who are citizens of another country. The problems of irredentism and contested state boundaries can be alleviated, according to Gottlieb, by drawing different boundaries for different purposes, e.g. one for security, another for customs and immigration, a third for cultural and vocational interaction.

There can be other approaches. The basic point I wish to make is that the postcolonial, post-Cold War world calls for a second look at the international juridical and political systems based on the Hobbesian concept of nationhood and sovereignty. Fixation with those concepts has been a major cause of festering conflicts in many places.

In fact, the Age of Nationalism appears to have peaked in the region of its birth. The oldest nation-states today find the armor of the Leviathan an impediment to their progress and are increasingly ceding attributes of national sovereignty to the European Union. A less noticeable step has been taken by North American states through the North American Free Trade Association. The states in the Pacific envisage a similar free trade zone which will lower economic and commercial fences. Obviously, the sovereign state, which was created by modernizing nations, is becoming a burden for high-tech nations.

Let not less developed ethnic and national collectivities spill blood for the armor of sovereignty that they may need to throw away later. Today's German, British and French youth mock their grandparents who fought World War II. We can be spared being ridiculed by our grandchildren if we heed the Qur'anic caveat:

And [We] made you into

Nations and tribes, that
Ye may know each other
(Not that ye may despise
(Each other).

Notes

1. Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1983), p. 51.
2. *Qur'an*, III:103.
3. *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 72.
4. Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (New York: Basil Blackwell, Ltd., 1987), p. 32.
5. Judith Miller, "The Islamic Wave," *The New York Times Magazine*, May 31, 1992.
6. Richard Cohen, "An Arab Headdress," *The Washington Post*, Aug. 27, 1993.
7. Amos Perlmutter, "Wishful Thinking About Islamic Fundamentalism," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 1, 1991.
8. "Battle Lines in Poolesville Over Site for Saudi School," *The Washington Post*, Jan. 22, 1995.
9. *Qur'an.*, IV: 2.
10. *Ibid.*, II: 30.
11. *Ibid.*, II: 31.
12. *Ibid.*, II: 34.
13. *Ibid.*, XLIX:13
14. Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Pandaemonium: Ethnicity in International Politics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 4.
15. Paul R. Brass, *Language, Religion and Politics in Northern India* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1974), p. 8.
16. *Pandaemonium*, 5.
17. William Pfaff, *The Wrath of Nations* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993), p. 31.
18. *Ibid.*, 33.
19. Hah and Jeffrey Martin Chong-do, "Toward a Synthesis of Conflict and Integration Theories of Nationalism," *World Politics*, Vol. XXVII, No. 3 (April 1975), 372-75.
20. *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, pp. 225-26.
21. Ali A. Mazrui, "Pluralism and National Integration," in Leo Kuper and M.G. Smith eds., *Pluralism in Africa* (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 334-35.
22. *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 78.
23. Dankwart Rustow, *A World of Nations: Problems of Political Modernization* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1967), p. 3.
24. Anthony D. Smith, "Nationalism and Religion: The Role of Religious Reform in the Genesis of Arab and Jewish Nationalism." *Archives de Sciences Sociales des Religions*, 35 (January-June 1973), 31.
25. *A World of Nations*, p. 3.
26. *Nations and Nationalism*, p. 112.
27. *Ethnic Origins of Nations*, p. 225.
28. *Eli Kedourie, Nationalism and Politics* (New York: Hutchinson & Co., 1960), p. 116.

29. *Gidon Gottlieb, Nation Against State* (New York: Council on Foreign Relations, 1993), pp. 1-5.

Chapter V
Liberal Intimations of Transcendence*
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The Christian inspiration of the liberal order has not generally been elucidated with the philosophic depth that it receives in Kant or a Hegel, but powerful intimations of the relationship are evidenced in the confrontation with the crises of the past two centuries. They are centuries of more self-conscious liberalism precisely because of the challenges that threatened to undermine liberty. The crises that periodically seem to sweep over the liberal tradition in the period up to the present derive in part from those challenges, but also from the uncertainty of a modern liberal tradition bereft of profound philosophical foundations. We have seen the results in the profusion of attempts at finding such a foundation, but there is also the less noticeable deepening of the convictions themselves. Even in the absence of a coherent un-folding, the confrontation with the destructive abyss before it has always caused a deepening of the liberal resolve and a return to the spiritual traditions that have historically sustained it. When liberalism is pinned to the wall, Nietzsche observed, it will reveal its true foundation as Christianity. The movement toward sources is exemplified by the reflections of Alexis De Tocqueville in *Democracy in America* (2 vols.; Vintage, 1956 and 1958).

Despite the claims of the revolutions through which he lived, Tocqueville declared "I do not clearly perceive that they are liberal" (II 333). The nineteenth century, for all its liberal reputation, was really the age in which liberalism began to comprehend the gathering storm that would politically overwhelm it in the twentieth century. Few identified the structure of that impending catastrophe with more acuity than Tocqueville. He understood it as a perversion of the very principles of liberal freedom itself in its contest with the correlative impulse toward equality. His writings call us again and again to the distinction between these intermingled but rival principles. The liberal revolution, which had begun with the demand for freedom, was in danger of selling its birthright for a mess of equality purchased at the cost of that same freedom. "They had sought to be free in order to make themselves equal; but in proportion as equality was more established by the aid of freedom, freedom itself was thereby rendered more difficult of attainment" (333). The specter of this new more dreadful, because more pervasive despotism, is powerfully depicted in Tocqueville's re-reflections on the tyranny of universal equality.

Nothing was more desultory to his mind than the prospect of the egalitarian society because "when men are all alike they are all weak, and the supreme power of the state is naturally much stronger among democratic nations than elsewhere" (299). Equality was only possible through that shrinking of men to the status of interchangeable atoms, no one exercising any more power, influence or prestige than any other. But that also meant that they were equally poor in the resources for taking care of themselves. They might be equally powerful but they were also equally powerless.

Unable therefore to find the means of satisfying their needs in themselves or in others they were left with no other protection than that provided by the state. The latter loomed larger in the lives of individuals who conversely had less independence over against it. It was "a new species of oppression" that menaced democratic nations, for which the old words tyranny and despotism were no longer appropriate because "it would be more extensive and more mild; it would degrade men without tormenting them" (335).

That was the core of the problem foreseen by the most prescient of the nineteenth century thinkers and acknowledged as the commonplace reality of our own century. At stake was the very humanity of these men who, in their egalitarian powerlessness, were ready to turn over the care of their lives to an all-powerful Pater Politicus. The portrait he paints is arrestingly close to the comprehensive security embrace of our own welfare state. Its force of penetration make it worth quoting in full.

Above this race of men stands an immense and tutelary power, which takes upon itself alone to secure their gratifications and to watch over their fate. That power is absolute, minute, regular, provident, and mild. It would be like the authority of a parent if, like that authority, its object was to prepare men for manhood; but it seeks, on the contrary, to keep them in perpetual childhood: it is well content that the people should rejoice, provided they think of nothing but rejoicing. For their happiness such a government willingly labors, but it chooses to be the sole agent and the only arbiter of that happiness; it provides for their security, foresees and supplies their necessities, facilitates their pleasures, manages their principal concerns, directs their industry, regulates the descent of property, and subdivides their inheritances: what remains, but to spare them all the care of thinking and all the trouble of living? (336)

Tocqueville well understood the insidious dimension of equality which has "predisposed men to endure [these things] and often to look on them as benefits" (337).

They deceive themselves with the illusion that they are still governing themselves, merely because they have preserved the "outward forms of freedom." Their divergent passions are that "they want to be led, and that they wish to remain free." Instead of confronting the impossibility of their aspirations and learning to overcome them, they give way to the conceit that they are not being controlled because they have elected their controllers. Tocqueville recognized the cruel reality of this illusion because it robbed them of their most precious possession, not simply their freedom, but the growth of their humanity which only the exercise of free self-responsibility makes possible. Like the aristocrats of French society under the ancient regime, democratic man had become victim to the comforting illusion that it was possible to maintain all of the privileges of their station without shouldering any of the obligations. "Every man allows himself to be put in leading-strings, because he sees that it is not a person or a class of persons, but the people at large who hold the end of his chain" (337).

The answer, however, is not to be found in turning away from equality by attempting a restoration of some form of aristocratic privilege. Tocqueville, despite his sympathy and deep appreciation of the role of an aristocracy as a bulwark against despotism, was "persuaded that all who attempt in the ages upon which we are entering, to base freedom upon aristocratic privilege will fail" (340). His own stature as a thinker is demonstrated in this steadfast refusal to take the easy way out by indulging in respectable, but ineffectual, evocations of a vanished past. Only those who have weathered the storm can claim the victory over it. Rather than turn his back in condemnation of the spirit of the age, Tocqueville endured it, contemplated its depth and found his way through to a transformation that pointed beyond it. He is one of the great hers of the liberal canon because he suffered through its crisis to a reconciliation of its most radical disjunction between liberty and equality.

Tocqueville's most profound insight was that liberty and equality could not be separated. At root they came from the same source, the equal right that each human being possesses to decide how they are going to live subject to no other restraints than the law that applies to all. Once the logic of this understanding of a common human nature, highlighted by the teaching of Jesus Christ "that all members of the human race are by nature equal and alike" (17), has taken hold then it is

not plausible to expect that it will be reversed. A direction has been set that renders a return to the hierarchical order of aristocracy virtually impossible. "Nothing can be imagined more contrary to nature and the secret instincts of the human heart" than this assignation of permanent authority of one group of men over the rest. "Aristocratic institutions cannot exist without laying down the inequality of men as a fundamental principle, legalizing it beforehand and introducing it into the family as well as into society; but these are things so repugnant to natural equity that they can only be extorted from men by force" (438).

There was no alternative but to confront the abyss of egalitarian powerlessness and find within it the forces of resistance capable of surmounting it. Deeper than the desire for equality is the desire for liberty. It was the urge to live freely that had driven the movement for the abolition of all illegitimate privilege and authority; the same impulse can be the means of resisting the descent to nothingness without liberty. We must not, Tocqueville warns, "con-found the principle of equality itself with the revolution which finally establishes that principle in the social condition and the laws of a nation" (II, 332). His whole work might be seen as one long contemplation of the nightmare of egalitarian despotism as a way of resuscitating the contrary force of liberty that is alone capable of opposing it. In that project Tocqueville was moderately successful as a warning within liberalism, but most significant for his therapeutic expansion of the resources of the liberal order itself. He identified the existential depths from which the liberal inspiration springs through an enlargement of the soul beyond the liberal boundaries.

The prospect of imminent self-destruction is what awakens in Tocqueville one of the most powerful evocations of liberty in the modern world. Reflecting on the drift he witnessed toward socialism, which he traced back to the political economists of the eighteenth century in their preference for governmental solutions, he speculates on what it is that makes men accept so lowly a condition of existence as to live under the tutelage of others. The contrast with others who cannot endure the idea of not being their own masters is striking. They have lost that transcendent spark that moves men to set aside all considerations of practicality and efficiency, even life itself, as secondary compared to the freedom to "speak, live, and breathe freely, owing obedience to no authority save God and the laws of the land" (A. Tocqueville, *The Old Regime and the French Revolution* [New York: Doubleday 1955], 169). It is difficult to pinpoint the exact nature of that impulse, but we can know that it is that condition without which no other benefits are worth having. "It is easy to see," Tocqueville observes about those nations who have chosen a comfortable slavery, "that what is lacking in such nations is a genuine love of freedom, that lofty aspiration which (I confess) defies analysis. For it is something one must feel and logic has no part in it. It is a privilege of noble minds which God has fitted to receive it, and it inspires them with a generous fervor. But to meaner souls, untouched by the sacred flame, it may well seem incomprehensible" (169).

The challenge was to fan the "sacred flame" to light in those souls left relatively untouched by it. A means must be found of stirring to life what a liberal order depended on but could not directly produce. The key was to be found, Tocqueville was convinced, in the very condition of equality that threatened to overwhelm liberty. In the equality of their social condition modern men and women lacked any ready-made hierarchy of responsibility. Instead of throwing off their problems onto the government or their social superiors, they must be persuaded to undertake the initiatives themselves. Their individual powerlessness must become the occasion for prompting the exercise of liberty in schemes of voluntary cooperation. Individually they can do nothing so that they are compelled to act together, but the only means of concerting their actions is through persuasion that draws them into a free convergence of their efforts. It is the very circumstance of

their equal isolation and impotence that calls forth the necessity of a free conjunction of wills. This was the genius of the American arrangement, as Tocqueville understood it and made it the centerpiece of his own political theory. The circumstances in which they were placed and the political tradition they brought with them conspired to develop highly the "art of association," of winning the free cooperation of all in accomplishing the public good. "Thus it is by the enjoyment of a dangerous freedom that the Americans learn the art of rendering the dangers of freedom less formidable" (*Democracy in America*, II, 127).

Such voluntary associations are not the most elegant or efficient. They lack the rationality of a centralized administration but they are a hundred times more powerful and beneficial for a society. Compared to the European experience of oscillating wildly between servitude and license, Tocqueville found in the American polity a stability that was more reliable for all its untidiness. Ultimately there is no real political power except through the voluntary union of wills, a coercive structure renders only the appearance of power that dissolves once the constraint is relaxed. Even in the case of absolute governments it is always patriotism or religion that are the source of their power, not the apparatus of compulsion (I, 97). Democratic regimes, lacking even the elementary means of coercion, are from the start thrown into the need for such sentiments of cohesion. If they wish to avoid the despotic recourse then they must turn in some way to the American example of encouraging the elaboration of liberty.

The result, Tocqueville observed, is not only a more reliable means of addressing public problems but the more invisible, although more crucial, avenue of the inner growth of the citizens in self-responsibility. "Feelings and opinions are recruited, the heart is enlarged, and the human mind is developed only by the reciprocal influence of men upon one another" (II, 117). Through exercising the art of association they acquire a taste for cooperation and develop the virtues indispensable to the maintenance of the order in which they live. This explained why in America, composed of such a diversity of human types and backgrounds, with so little of a common world to bind them together, he nevertheless found a level of patriotism and commitment to the common good that was higher than any in Europe. The Americans had hit on the way of linking the individual to the community that had little to do with the satisfaction of interest. Or rather by letting the satisfaction of their interests depend on their own efforts, the American scheme encouraged the emergence of those virtues which as the highest expression of freedom direct men beyond the calculation of interest. It exemplified Tocqueville's observation that, in the contemporary democratic setting, "the only means we still possess of interesting men in the welfare of their country is to make them partakers in the government" (I, 252).

The self-government of the townships of New England was so natural that it "seems to come directly from the hand of God" (I, 62). But everywhere he went in America Tocqueville was struck by the self-reliant dignity of a people taking care of itself, spontaneously forming into groups or associations in order to take care of public problems that elsewhere the government might be expected to resolve. The value of permitting and encouraging people to take the initiative themselves, for all of its untidiness, was incalculable. More than any of the practical benefits that accrued, was the growth of the soul that occurred in the discovery of the value of freedom itself. The exercise of that free self-direction itself was recognized as the transcendent end of the whole order, outweighing the value of any of the particular goods obtained through the structure of cooperation. It accords perfectly with the recommendation Tocqueville gave, not to put as much store on doing great things as on making men great, "to set less value on the work and more upon the workman" (II, 347).

He was not overly sanguine that this counsel would be followed for the concluding pages of *Democracy in America* are as heavy with foreboding as anything written in the past two hundred years. But he knew that the movement of liberty was inexorable. The impulse that had devolved into the demand for equality had its roots in the aspiration for liberty. For that reason it could not be reversed without endangering liberty itself. Only the transcendent force of liberty contained an antidote strong enough to counteract the poisonous effects of the resentment behind egalitarianism. By learning through experience to know the pull of the noble cord of freedom, of the gift of self in the service of others, men could discover a force within themselves stronger than envy and self-gratification. They would make the discovery that lies at the core of Tocqueville's world-view, "that nothing but the love and the habit of freedom can maintain an advantageous contest with the love and the habit of physical well-being" (II, 301). Just as the movement toward equality seemed irresistible to human modification, so only the transcendent force of freedom within it seemed capable of effecting its transformation.

Tocqueville was deeply impressed with the sense of the providential forces at work within history. Man was not simply at the mercy of his own resources. The contemplation of the vast social and political movement toward equality, the irresistible movement toward universal participation in government, the democratic revolutions, put him in mind of the inscrutable divine providence that governs the whole process. In the Introduction he recounts how the whole book "has been written under the influence of a kind of religious awe" at the prospect of the unfolding movement of history. For centuries it has been moving inexorably in the constant direction of an expansion of the liberty that guarantees equal participation in government. The progressive movement toward ever broader social quality has "the sacred character of a divine decree," any attempt to check or oppose which would be like trying "to resist the will of God" (7). Such remarks should not be dismissed as rhetorical window dressing, his French readers on his own admission were as likely to be atheists, because they represent a spirit of reverence that pervades the work as defining the ultimate horizon of understanding. They represent the faith on which his conviction of the nobility of liberty rested and the source of his confidence in the vindication of its rightness. Even in the face of the real dangers it invited, Tocqueville had a faith that made it impossible to turn aside from liberty.

From de Tocqueville to John Stuart Mill

A similar sense of the transcendent force of liberty is discernible behind the writings of Tocqueville's greatest nineteenth century reader, John Stuart Mill. Often it is buried beneath the surface of appeals to the utilitarian value of individual inventiveness, but it cannot be completely concealed. Only a transcendent valuation of liberty accounts for the intensity of the convictions expressed. Mill never considers that liberty might be weighed within the utilitarian calculus. Rather, it is what constitutes the measure of utility. This becomes evident in the occasional outbursts where he throws utility overboard and steps forward to declare the indefeasibility of a transcendent order of right. In searching for an explanation of what it is that makes human beings so incapable of settling for anything less than the attainment of their full moral stature, he could find no better name for it than that "sense of dignity . . . which is so essential a part of the happiness of those in whom it is that nothing which conflicts with it could be, otherwise than momentarily, an object of desire to them" (*Utilitarianism* in *On Liberty and Other Essays*, ed. John Gray [Oxford 1991], 140). The reflections on *The Subjection of Women* provoked a particularly strong affirmation of freedom as "the first and strongest want of human nature" (576). He conceives it as

a force with such ennobling power that he regards it as the only effectual means of quelling the contrary impulse of domination in human nature. "The desire of power over others can only cease to be a depraving agency among mankind, when each of them individually is able to do without it; which can only be where respect for liberty in the personal concerns of each is an established principle" (578).

As so often in the history of the liberal tradition, the scale of the threat confronting it galvanized some of the most powerful declarations of the indispensability of freedom that have ever been made. If the nineteenth century was the time when liberalism first came under the characteristically modern pressures, it was also the time of its most enduring self-affirmations. But it was not within liberal circles that its deepest confirmation was to be found. Tocqueville and, to a lesser extent, Mill had reestablished the transcendent dimension of liberty within a social setting where liberalism was in danger of becoming the victim of its own success. As liberal principles had led to a dramatic expansion of the franchise, the prospect of democratic despotism reared its ugly head. There was no guarantee that the newly enfranchised masses would use their freedom responsibly. They might just as readily turn it over to populist demagogues or pervert it into a means of forcing their prejudices on more independent-minded minorities. How was it possible to ensure that freedom would not be abused and, if it was not possible to guide it, how could liberty be asserted as the highest value?

These are the questions that disturbed the nineteenth century liberals and all their successors. Its presence in the back-ground casts a pall over the confident expectations of historical progress, because it suggests that the "experiment" in self government might ultimately prove stillborn and that men cannot be entrusted with their own liberty. The problem, as they conceived it in large measure, was to develop the institutional structures to absorb the enfranchised masses without jeopardizing the order of the liberal state. Mill's, *Considerations on Representative Government*, is a classic of this type of reflection on the reforms that might be introduced to preserve a liberal order when it becomes a mass democracy. His proposals were directed at moderating the two principal dangers of the poor quality of elected representatives and their propensity to engage in "class legislation" (ch. 7). The American founders were even more prescient concerning these problems and developed an impressive array of constitutional devices to moderate the majoritarian tendencies of a popularly elected government. The subsequent experience of liberal democracies has largely been one of muddling through the dangers, pragmatically adjusting reforms in light of trial and error experiences to arrive at moderately stable constitutions. But the fundamental question has not been confronted and that failure contributes more today than ever to the confusion afflicting the liberal tradition. Is liberty worth the risk?

Fyodor Dostoevsky

To find an appropriately weighty response it is necessary to look beyond the usual liberal range to a thinker who is not generally included within it, but whose spiritual depth enabled him to reach a level of insight indispensable to, yet not easily accessible from, the liberal perspective. Fyodor Dostoevsky provided the most profound defense of liberty of the century in large measure because he was not tied to the boundaries of the liberal vocabulary. He was willing to acknowledge that the value of liberty needed to be defended, and not simply treated as the mute premise of all further discussion. In an age when liberty was about to come under attack he recognized that its indispensability would have to be established, however difficult that might prove to be. If that required a meditation on the value of liberty beyond the parameters of an immanentist analysis

then Dostoevsky was prepared to follow it through. In this way the Russian novelist became the one to articulate the connection with transcendence that was inchoately present, but nowhere fully explicated, within the liberal tradition itself. Dostoevsky uncovers the Christian depth of the liberal impulse.

The most celebrated locus for this reflection is, of course, "The Legend of the Grand Inquisitor" in *The Brothers Karamazov*. It is the point where Dostoevsky fully confronts the question of whether the value of human liberty outweighs all the evil and misery that appears to be its unavoidable consequence. In what does its pricelessness consist that it outweighs all of the destructiveness it makes possible? The great merit of Dostoevsky's analysis is that he poses the question with a depth and intensity that explore its outermost limits. He does not attempt to soften its impact, because he wants to test the case for liberty in juxtaposition with the strongest case that can be made against it. The result, he knew, would be the attainment of a strength of conviction that could withstand the assault of the worst attacks that could be mounted against it. Dostoevsky, while not generally counted a liberal thinker, has earned his place in the liberal canon because at this one crucial point he contemplated and surmounted the most devastating assault on liberty.

The Legend recounts the unannounced return of Christ to earth in sixteenth century Seville. It is the height of the Spanish Inquisition and against the background of the practice of *auto-d fé*, Christ reappears to disturb the peace. The old cardinal, the Grand Inquisitor, has "solved" the problem of order by keeping his charges in a state of unthinking subservience. They have turned over the direction of their lives to him who alone carries the burden of the responsibility for decision; relieved of the need to think for themselves they can live out their days in endless carefree contentment. Proud of his achievement in establishing this perfect order, the Inquisitor pronounces their inability to obtain the means of subsistence without his tutelage. "No science will give them bread so long as they remain free. In the end they will lay their freedom at our feet, and say to us, 'Make us your slaves, but feed us'" (*Brothers Karamazov* [New York: Modern Library] 300).

The greatest challenge to this somnolent utopia is the humble presence of Christ walking among the people. All can sense who he is, the Inquisitor most of all, and he orders his arrest and detention. The greatest part of the story is taken up with the conversation that takes place between them in the darkened dungeon to which the old cardinal has descended for this most intimate of meetings. He knows that Christ is the one before whom he must be judged, for it is only Christ who is the measure of the love that must govern human life. The claim to be acting in the name of humanity, to have placed the service of human beings above all other considerations, must stand in the light of Christ's transcending love. For this reason the Inquisitor is drawn to the interrogation to test the strength of his own resolve. Only if it can stand before the divine gaze can he be assured of its indomitable self-sufficiency, of his own unqualified rightness.

The challenge for Dostoevsky is to find a plausible means of presenting this transcendent encounter. How is it possible to represent Christ without softening or reducing his awful divine presence? It is a well-known problem of religious art, but especially in an age when the divine no longer elicits the response of awe and reactions can verge on the blase. Dostoevsky solved it in an utterly convincing manner by presenting Christ as the silent interlocutor, yet the most powerful presence in the dialogue. It remains a dialogue and we obtain a profound sense of the reality of Christ, by virtue of the depth and intensity of responses he evokes in the old cardinal. The conversation never becomes a monologue because the Inquisitor, who has come down to conduct the interrogation, is the one who feels compellingly under interrogation. It is the Inquisitor's response to the divine judgment so implacably, yet unaccusingly, embodied in Christ.

The Inquisitor is, moreover, up to the occasion. It is as if he has been preparing for the contest all his life. He has an answer to the judgment that he has failed humanity by asking men to settle for less than their full human stature. He knows that in convincing them to abandon their freedom that he has colluded in their descent into the subhuman. But he is confident that his motives can withstand the examination. His trump card is the condition in which the divine accession to human freedom has left us. The Inquisitor is quite prepared to countenance the immodesty of the assertion that he has "joined the ranks of those *who have corrected Thy work*" (308). They have rendered Christ superfluous and now resent the prospect of his return which can only work to disturb the work they have undertaken in His name. But it is no longer Christ's work, for that was ineradicably flawed through the affliction of human freedom. He is prepared to defend the superiority of his judgment.

The gift of freedom, he asserts, is only of value to those who are capable of using it wisely. What of the many for whom it is an unutterable burden, who can find no other use for it but to destroy themselves and one another? What is the value of caring for and saving only the elect? Even the elect have begun to raise their banner of freedom against God. "But with us all will be happy and will no more rebel, nor destroy one another as under Thy freedom." Of course the Inquisitor will continue to persuade them that in surrendering their freedom they are exercising and preserving it. "And shall we be right," he asks with unflappable slyness, "or shall we by lying?" It is a performance of matchless subtlety from a man who knows exactly what he is doing and has been completely in charge of every situation in his life.

They will be convinced that we are right, for they will remember the horrors of slavery and confusion to which Thy freedom brought them. Freedom, free thought and science, will lead them into such straits and will bring them face to face with such marvels and insoluble mysteries that some of them, the fierce and rebellious, will destroy themselves; others, rebellious but weak, will destroy one another, while the rest, weak and unhappy, will crawl fawning to our feet and whine to us: 'Yes, you were right, you alone possess His mystery, and we come back to you, save us from ourselves' (306-307).

There is even a touch of nobility about the role of the Inquisitor and his assistants who have sacrificed their own souls for the sake of the contented millions. "There will be thousands of millions of happy babes, and a hundred thousand sufferers who have taken upon themselves the curse of the knowledge of good and evil" (308). The unthinking masses will live out their subhuman lives and "beyond the grave they will find nothing but death." Only the suffering elite will face the prospect of judgment, but these nobly guilty few will surely be able to hold their heads up high on that day. They will be able to "stand up and point out to Thee the thousand millions of happy children who have known no sin. And we who have taken their sins upon us for their happiness will stand up before Thee and say: 'Judge us if Thou canst and darest'" (308). The Inquisitor is among those who had been prepared to follow Christ into the desert, "I too prized the freedom with which Thou hast blessed men, and I too was striving to stand among Thy elect." But then he turned away and "would not serve madness." He could not accept that "billions of God's creatures had been created as a mockery" to the freedom they will never be able to use (310). "I left the proud and went back to the humble, for the happiness of the humble" (308).

The sincerity of his intentions is belied only by the disturbing consideration of the alternative to the divine gift of freedom. He is perfectly correct that many, perhaps most, human beings are destined to make a cruel misuse of their freedom. But what is the alternative? Is it the embrace of the beastlike imbecility of the Inquisitor's happy masses? Is there not something even worse about their slobbering dumbness precisely because it has been adopted so self-consciously? They seem

to have sunk to a level of degradation which has removed all that makes them human. In their brute ignorance they seem to have lost all that made them worth serving in the first place. Even the Inquisitor can barely conceal the contempt he harbors for the very beings for whom he has sacrificed his soul. Having failed miserably in their efforts to rule themselves they slouch toward the one who can control them, "the beast will crawl to us and lick our feet and spatter them with tears of blood" (306). Is the solution to the self-destructiveness of human freedom the abandonment of their humanity?

There can be no denying the depth of the quandary in which we find ourselves. We cannot reject our freedom without losing our humanity, nor can we avoid the admission of the untold misery it has brought upon us. The flaw of the Inquisitor was his insistence that the tension must be resolved. It is the state of mind that insists that the uncertainties of the human condition be removed, that we shift from the state of struggling fidelity to our deepest intimations to the perfection in which all things have been settled. He represents the type of the dark utopian who is prepared to accept a world less than it might be, if he cannot attain the ideal that cannot be realized. What he cannot tolerate is the ambivalence of the human situation characterized by a freedom that can neither be perfected nor annihilated. It is an ambivalence that pervades the liberal perspective which might be identified as a fidelity to all of its tensional components. The crucial question it provokes is, what can sustain that fidelity in the face of the temptations to abandon it?

The question is posed by the way in which Dostoevsky unfolds the self-disclosure of the Inquisitor. He articulates the concern that had troubled all the great nineteenth century liberals with a clarity that remains unsurpassed. If men are to enjoy an ever expanding domain of freedom how can we be sure they will exercise it responsibly? What is it about human beings that makes them worthy of the risk of the horrible abuse of freedom? The Inquisitor's reflections bring that question to the point of transparency. He shows, but he does not say, that the tensional demands of the human condition can only be accepted if they are underpinned by an acceptance of the mystery of its pulls which are experienced but never fully comprehended. The relationship of its dimensions cannot be definitively penetrated from the human side.

The assurance of their order can only be provided by the revelation of the transcendent goodness from which they have been derived. We can sense but we cannot get beyond the good in which we participate. Only the attempt to escape the condition of the pulls and counter pulls to stand in judgment over it, the impulse to dominate or resolve the whole, can ruin our attraction toward the good.

What provokes this realization is the silent unaccusing presence of Christ. He says nothing throughout the exchange but we know him through the ever more shrill assertions of the Inquisitor who cannot be at peace so long as the unconditional acceptance of Christ is there before him. The inner contradiction of the Inquisitor's position becomes inescapable. He has rendered men less than human out of love for them but in the process has deprived them of all that makes them lovable. The contempt in which he holds mankind is no longer disguised. Standing over against it is the inexpressible depth of divine love incarnate in Christ. The implication could not be clearer that it is that transcendent love that redeems the mystery of the relationship of human freedom and human evil. Only Christ can sustain the tension without straining against it because he alone has plumbed the depths that lie beyond the limits of our experience. His infinitely forgiving presence could not be more perfectly conveyed as the foundation of freedom than in the gaze he turns on the Inquisitor of love too deep for words.

The turning point in the story is the outburst of Alyosha who interrupts Ivan, the rebellious author of the account, with the exclamation, "But . . . that's absurd! Your poem is in praise of

Jesus, not in blame of Him -- as you meant it to be" (309). Ivan who had recounted the story with the ostensible purpose of demonstrating the force of the Inquisitor's critique of Christ, cannot follow his character all the way. He is not yet ready to embrace Christ but he cannot avoid admitting the spiritual truth of his presence. The elaborateness of the Inquisitor's reinterpretation of the three temptations of Christ, as three lost opportunities to bring contentment and peace to an admittedly truncated mankind, serves only to underline the mendacity of his position. Love of human beings, a love that reaches as far as the full acceptance of their freedom, is not possible without Christ.

He is the one who has shown the indispensability of the freedom that makes it possible for men to grow toward their full human stature, reaching even into their participation in divine being itself. Christ can sustain the tension between freedom and failure because he has suffered through it to the limit. The acceptance of his passion and death at the hands of men is the love that loves men even in their sin, that triumphs over all the evil they can inflict because it has overcome evil itself. Christ's redemptive sacrifice on Calvary is the affirmation of freedom at its deepest level.

Without God the mystery of the interrelationship of freedom and irresponsibility becomes insupportable. There is no grounding for the transcendent valuation of freedom nor any assurance of the durability of goodness in the conflict with evil. The liberal elevation of the inviolable self-direction of the person is based on a faith in its value and its vindication. It is a faith that can be intuited but not fully validated because it reaches into regions beyond our human ken. The inability of the liberal tradition and, correspondingly, of our contemporary expositors to give an account of their own convictions is derived from this fundamental human limitation. We are participants within reality, not spectators above it. What we know can be gained only from the intimations available to us from within the participatory experience. It entails the meditative unfolding of the intuitions we already possess even before we begin the process of extrapolation toward and beyond the limits of our perspective.

At its core the movement is sustained by faith, a sense of the goal that is inchoately present in our inquiry as the assurance of that which is sought. The Inquisitor cannot sustain that opening of the soul in tension toward what is not yet there because, as Alyosha blurts out, "he does not believe in God, that's his secret!" At last, Ivan admits, "you have guessed it" (310). Without the love of God there is no infinite dimension to sustain the love of man. They are just contemptible finite creatures, never more than the sum of their attributes.

The liberal faith is at its root the Christian faith that the value of a human being cannot be quantified, that by any measure that is applied the infinity of the person escapes the posited determinations. Freedom is that dimension of limitless openness integrally connected with what makes it possible for a human being to transcend all finitude. It is what makes possible the movement toward the transcendent and for that reason must be preserved despite the tangible costs that on any finite scale of reckoning tend to outweigh it. That recognition is what has sustained liberal order from its inception. It is the animating conviction that does not need to be fully articulated in order to make possible the unquestioning acceptance of the primacy of human self-direction despite the evident social and political risks. While when such acceptance has become opaque, its necessity no longer self-evident, then the need for explication is thrust upon us. A considerable part of the liberal tradition has historically been occupied with just such an effort of re-evocation.

The faith remains Christian but the Christian sources are no longer dispositive. As a consequence much of the effort of rearticulation has been directed toward the development of a consensus that implicitly evokes the Christian residue that remains when revelation is no longer

publicly authoritative. That vibrant and creative series of re-evocations runs, we have seen, a wide gamut of formulations. Some, as in the case of Hegel, strain the limits of orthodoxy, others, as with Tocqueville, are content to stay close to the traditional religious forms. The great merit of Dostoevsky's analysis is the clear demarcation of the breaking point. The secularization of the Christian faith in the transcendent value of freedom cannot survive the loss of faith in the participation in transcendent reality. By itself the liberal faith in the unconditional worth of the person, their free donation of self in love, cannot be sustained. It depends on the recognition that the person is always something more than we see before us. That which is not present must be allowed to govern that which is. Without a recognition of the human openness to the reality that is beyond all reality, the political expression in the preservation of inalienable rights becomes a hollow shell. It is a quaint historical relic to be swept aside as soon as Inquisitors with the necessary bluff and brusqueness come on the scene.

Dostoevsky's meditation establishes a limit beyond which the secularization of liberal politics cannot go. It is incompatible with dogmatic atheism. Once faith in transcendent reality is firmly rejected, faith in the transcendence of human nature cannot survive. But beyond that there is a wide amplitude for liberal openness that stops short of pushing presuppositions to the limits.

A means must be found of evoking that intermediate consensus on the dignity of the person which is yet surrounded by a penumbra of depths that are acknowledged but not precisely delimited. The meditations we have followed in this chapter, culminating in Dostoevsky, remind us of the historic and philosophic nature of the liberal construction. It has always been anchored in transcendent appeal that by its very nature transcends any effort at its immanent determination. The problem of the incommensurable foundations of liberalism is not therefore a discovery of contemporary deconstructionists. It is integral to its moral constitution from the start. The secret of the success of liberalism has always been its capacity to preserve that sense of connection with the depths that lie beyond articulation, by rendering their authority with sufficiently evocative force that the need for further explication was largely moot. Liberalism has always been a consensual symbolism that relies on unspoken recognition of a depth beyond the public definitions. All that has been possible here is to suggest some sense both of what those depths are and why they are in principle resistant to any definitive articulation.

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Part II

The Call of Abraham

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Leave your country, your kindred, and your father's house . . .

From the particular to the universal. God (Yahweh, Allah, etc.) and the gods. Creation (immanence, world affirmation) and grace (world transcendence/ transformation). Covenant, covenants, and community. The "people of God," "chosen." The properly religious message of God and of neighbor; the transforming force of grace, symbol, and liturgy. The place of the ethnoi (peoples): in history, in the "eschaton." In sum, a scriptural/theological profiling (Jewish, Christian, Islamic, respectively) of the odysseys begun in the story of the call of Abram.¹

Editorial Introduction

(W)hy, then, do Christian and Moslim, who divide the inhabited world between them, fight with one another, each of them serving God with pure intention . . . ?

Al-Khazari, quoted by Judah Halevi, 12th century CE

The irony is oft noted -- the great world religions offer visions of peace yet especially in the Abrahamic traditions have often times been embroiled in war. After a quick survey of a few contemporary ethnic-religious conflicts, a scholar from each of the three traditions was asked to comment respectively on the anomalies in the tradition that make its adherents conflict-susceptible. The above quotation from Judah Halevi refers to an imaginary eighth century conversation between a Rabbi and a Khazar king (a presumably Turkic people in the Caucasus region who converted to Judaism in the early 9th century). The king was baffled by the gap between intention and act, between "talking the talk" and "walking the walk," to use the contemporary lingo. Worshipping the same God meant that they each had a right *intention*, but being at war with each other, their acts did not correspond.

But why are we vulnerable to that disjunction? The incongruity is particularly glaring in the Christian instance. Having them-selves sprung from Judaism, Christians were unprepared, on the other hand, for the Islamic claim to supersede both Judaism and Christianity. Similarly, as Theodore Pulcini points out below, whereas the logic of the Christian appeal to Abraham can be viewed as inclusive with reference to Jewry, that appeal becomes exclusive in use, insofar as it rejects what to Jews is their defining characteristic.

These few observations serve here to illustrate the aporetic potential of the vocation of Abraham, though we cannot, within the scope of this symposium, presume to resolve the resulting pro-LORD our God is one Lord (Deut. 6:4) -- intelligible. As it stands, that is an inclusive claim. Yet because many other gods appear in the cosmic arena, inclusion turns into exclusion.

But there is more; the Deity thus proclaimed remains in-effable. The theophany that confronts Abraham recurs, and indeed is experienced on occasion by his descendants. Hence the formula, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob (e.g., Exodus 3:6; Acts 3:13), or more simply the "God of our fathers" (Deut 6:23). And while in a more general sense "the heavens declare the glory of God" (Psalms 19:1) and only the fool has said in his heart "there is no God" (Psalms 14:1), God

remains hidden in a cloud of mystery, as at Sinai. Theophanies are rare, and those that are genuine acquire normative status.

Enter the scriptures. The Abrahamic peoples become known as the "people of the Book." To the three traditions, the call of Abraham, and of his subsequent pilgrimage, become primordial. The story gets told and retold. The experiences of those who follow in his "train" works its way into the story and expands on it. Only over time, with various accretions, does it become scripture. It is the theophany thus sedimented in narrative that becomes the primordium around which a people is shaped.

This primordium, however, needs interpretation and application in changing circumstances and time. Eventually these elaborations vastly exceed the original texts in scope and volume. New theophanies, claiming descent from the original Abrahamic experience, give rise nonetheless to distinctly new revelation, and thus to new faith communities, namely Christianity and Islam. These, too, become inscripturated, though in progressively shorter time. In the former instance, an Incarnational claim is somehow at odds with the aniconic Abrahamic vocation. In the third, the Islamic instance, the inscribing process is tightly compressed, being completed in less than two decades after the Prophet's death. Further, while the archetype of the Qur'an remains with God, it has been sent down in earthly form. Therefore it possesses a literal exactitude and power that differs from the other two scriptures. "The Qur'an is for Muslims what Christ the Logos is for Christians," according to Mahmoud M. Ayoub (*The Qur'an and Its Interpreters* [Albany: State University Press, 1984]). But like the Hebrew Bible and the Christian "New Testament," bodies of weighty and even authoritative commentary, but also controversy, have evolved.

Interpreting the primordial texts accordingly becomes increasingly difficult over succeeding generations and centuries, because the primordium is refracted through growing layers of tradition. These layers unfold and extend the latencies within the primordium. They thus may possess richness of detail scarcely perceptible in the primordium.

Meanwhile, however, because of the weight of tradition and of increasing remoteness of the primal theophany, contemporary practitioners may have little direct engagement with the seminal primordium. Tradition, and its institutional configuration, tends rather to overshadow the primordium than to be animated by it. Yet these dilemmas appear endemic. Moses on one occasion sighs, "Would that all God's people were prophets . . ." (Numbers 11:29). Indeed, why not? Why not, a direct Abrahamic theophany to each?

Yet the larger problem lies in the opposite direction, the unfolding process and apocalypse. Religious obscurancy has not a little abetted an a-theistic rendition of evolution and progress in and since the Enlightenment. Are there clues in Michael Kogan's rendering of the prologue to Abraham? Are the advancing globalization, pluralization, individualization (De Lorenzo) and yes, the achievement of global civilization without eschatological or apocalyptic significance? While these questions cannot be pursued here, they surely beckon on the horizon. Meanwhile three commentaries on the call to Abram to go out from country, kindred, and father's house follow and speak for themselves.

Note

1. Original assignment to Kogan, Pulcini, and De Lorenzo.

Chapter VI
Abrahamic Faith:
Calling and Response in Jewish Narrative Theology

Michael S. Kogan (Montclair State University)

Finding Oneself in the Story

Human beings and their narratives exist in a thoroughly dialectical relationship: people shape the stories and then the stories shape them. Even the early storytellers of our tradition were born into a world in which stories were already being told and it was in the light of these tales that they produced their own. For the first storyteller, perhaps, experience preceded the creation of the narrative -- or was simultaneous with it. But for everyone since, experience has been shaped by narratives already circulating in the community, "in the air." Learning the existing story, its language and its logic, enables individuals to "experience on their own" in the terms of that story or to use it as a foundation for new and expanded experience. In this way, learning the story is like learning a language. Only by doing so is one empowered either to speak in that language or to master others.

Religious traditions are like languages. They are made up of stories which one must learn if one is to function within their parameters.¹ This narrative view of religion is popular today, but it is no new discovery. In its tradition of midrash, and in the Bible itself, Judaism has produced and preserved a treasury of stories arranged to form a continuous narrative through which the Jewish people has come to understand itself and its role in the world. That these stories, differently interpreted (as they are in Christianity), or differently told (as they are in Islam), have become part of the core narrative of two related faiths attests to their profundity and their power. But to be a member of the people Israel is to find oneself in the story as originally told and as interpreted by Jewish tradition. That tradition is, in fact, an extended gloss on the narrative, a gloss which has, with time, come to be considered essential to the story itself. In Wallace Stevens' words, ". . . what we said of it became a part of what it is."²

In this paper I will be discussing core elements of Jewish self-understanding as they emerge from the story of Abraham, father of the faith. His story will first be located in the context of earlier events, for it is presented as the beginning of a solution to a human dilemma as old as our species itself. It is a beginning because it is only the first chapter of an Israelite narrative still being told in the lived experience of a living people. That experience, even today, is wholly shaped and directed according to patterns established long ago in the scriptural record of present-day Israel's ancient forebears.

The Past Is Prologue

Something has gone wrong. All biblical religions agree to that. In fact, something has gone *drastically* wrong and all of those religions have been put in motion to attempt to set things right. We open the pages of the Bible and step into a narrative of human error and divine correction elevated to the level of cosmic drama. A good and beautiful world, created by a holy God, is corrupted by the misuse of human free will. Unwilling to abide by the single prohibition given to them, Adam and Eve tear themselves away from their true source and attempt to establish themselves as the ultimate authority in their own lives. Their hubris and folly bring about their

downfall and exile into a place of "thorns and thistles" - our world. But all is not lost. God is still present. God continues to speak to them and attempts to guide them. What has been lost is the intimacy with God which Adam and Eve enjoyed in the garden. Before their transgression the divine will and the human will were as one.³ Now they are distinct and often opposed.

Following the expulsion from the garden, human beings continue their moral and spiritual descent into murder in the next generation,⁴ rejoicing over murder several generations later,⁵ and finally the universal corruption of Noah's day.⁶ Seeing that the earth was "filled with violence," the Lord repented having made humanity and acted to correct the error. Not in anger but in sorrow God blotted out all save Noah and those few who were with him in the ark.⁷ Noah was spared because he was a person "righteous in his generation." Not perfect, but righteous compared with his fellows of that time. The sin in Eden, then, did not destroy the possibility of at least partial human righteousness. Each human being must still make the decision whether to attempt to realize that possibility.

The deluge described in the narrative was no ordinary flood. The text tells us that the waters above the earth and "the waters of the great deep" (primal chaos - *tahom*) came together, crushing humanity and un-creating the world.⁸ The force of human evil is seen as being so great that it can undo creation itself. God will now begin anew by creating a new world and a new humanity through Noah and his family.

Following the flood the ark comes to rest and Noah under-takes the first and only action he performs which is not in direct obedience to a divine command. He offers a sacrifice, "a sweet savor to the Lord" entirely on his own initiative.⁹ The innately religious nature of humanity is pointed to here, a nature which can be distorted or evaded but never wholly effaced. The Lord, we are told, is pleased with the offering and pledges "in His heart:"

I will not again curse the ground anymore for man's sake, for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth. . . . (Gen. 8:21)

This is an extraordinary passage with a profound logic all its own which must give every careful reader pause. One might expect God to say that the spontaneous offering has led to a divine re-consideration of the earlier negative evaluation of the human race. Here Noah is demonstrating his piety with an open and generous heart. Perhaps humanity is not so bad after all. Or perhaps, since it is Noah who performs this deed -- one who has been singled out from a corrupt humanity as righteous -- what he does can in no way influence God's attitude toward other humans. But the quote tells us something quite different. Because of Noah's offering God will adopt an entirely new approach to child-rearing. The sweet savor softens God's resolve, modifies God's policy toward human beings. No longer will God, either through anger or sorrow, exile or banish or act to destroy these human creatures. This alteration in God's approach does not result from any divine realization that people are better than God had thought them to be, but rather from its opposite. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Apparently humans can do nothing on their own to change that. Therefore God will have to change, will have to adopt a new way with erring humanity.

How different this concept is from later notions of divine stasis ("I am the Lord; I change not")¹⁰ and human mutability. Here humans are frozen into a pattern of sin which they seem unable or unwilling to alter. It is God who exercises the freedom to start anew, to deal with humanity according to revised rules. It will take God two chapters to begin to formulate this fresh approach.

At this point in our story it should be noted that all the characters in the narrative so far are pre-Israelite. They are the ancestors of all humanity. While Israelite authors are writing the tale, they are commenting on the universal condition of all people. Adam and Eve and their wayward progeny represent all of us. Given divinely ordained norms of behavior, they choose their own will and set human history on the path of self-destruction. There are, of course, many ways to evaluate the human story. The Bible's authors chose a standard of obedience to God which is most often expressed in ethical terms. The spiritual and the moral are like two sides of a single coin ("Noah was a righteous man. . . . Noah walked with God").¹¹ For biblical religion, God-consciousness which does not issue in moral sensitivity is, in most cases, seen as a false consciousness, an inauthentic religiosity. This is true for all peoples, not only Israelites.

And so it is that Jewish tradition draws lessons both from the flood and from the flood's aftermath which are true for all nations. Following the deluge God enters into a covenant with Noah and his sons. The theme is the sanctity of life. God pledges to preserve life on earth and never again to send a flood; human beings are forbidden to shed human blood or to ingest animal blood -- blood being the symbol of life. From these commands later commentators derived seven statutes: six prohibitions and a requirement which apply to all humanity. The covenant between God and Noah and his sons (all of us) forbids homicide, robbery, incest, idolatry, blasphemy and the cutting of a limb (for food) from a living animal. It requires all people to live only in societies with functioning legal systems.¹²

Thus the first covenant mentioned in the Bible is a universal one. Israel's scriptures consider all people as being in the same moral dilemma. All are equally in need of ethical-legal structures within which to live lives acceptable to God. The initial biblical frame of reference is neither tribal nor national, but human. It is only when universal solutions prove inadequate that the people Israel emerges. Even then the particularistic and local are always seen as existing for the sake of the universal. But until chapter twelve of Genesis, we are dealing not with Israelites but with the forebears of all humanity.

The divine evaluation of human character expressed after the flood is borne out in the next episodes of the narrative as even the righteous Noah falls prey to the temptations of the grape. This presents his son Ham with the opportunity to commit a crime so heinous that the text can only refer to it as looking upon "his father's nakedness."¹³ What possible incestuous goings on are hinted at here the reader can only guess. Suffice it to say that with this act serious moral disorder once again appears in human affairs. The Tower of Babel story which follows reinforces our view of humanity as plagued by hubris and narcissism, this time accompanied by cowardice.¹⁴ But we ought not to be surprised that the progeny of those who in Eden sought to be "like God" would attempt to take heaven by storm and "make a name" for themselves little less than divine.¹⁵

And so the stage is set for another new beginning for the human race. If in some sense Noah was a second Adam called on to rebuild a newly re-created world, Abraham is the third Adam summoned to open a wholly new future for humanity. By chapter twelve of Genesis, God has decided on the plan that began to emerge in the flood's aftermath. If people cannot change, then God will. Instead of merely reminding humans of the right and of their free will to choose it, as with Adam and Eve and Cain after them, and then allowing them to proceed unsupervised, God will now play a more consistently attentive role in history. God will choose one man. From him and his wife God will -- miraculously -- create a family; from that family, twelve tribes -- a people of God to receive divine instruction and witness to God in the world.

The Call of Abraham

The Lord said to Abram: Get you out of your country, and from your kindred, and from your father's house, to a land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you . . . and in you shall all the families of the earth be blessed (Gen. 12:1-3)

"Get you out" -- from all that has been, from old ways and inherited patterns of disobedience and self-indulgence. Get you out from human assumptions into a new and divine perspective. Get you out; learn to live beyond yourself, in and toward your ultimate possibilities. Go from where you are to where you can be. Break old habits and be free. Move out of stasis and share the divine life of eternal becoming. In the call to Abraham is recorded the birth of the Hebrew people. It is crucial to understand from the beginning that this call combines both particularistic and universal elements. No authentic understanding of Jewish existence can ignore either of them.

First of all, the call is to self-transcendence. Move beyond where and what you are into your potential, your future. But immediately the stress shifts to the particular; "go to a land that I will show you." Here the language is of a particular place, a destination for their journey. The place is unnamed. This deliberate omission points to the central requirement of faith. Abraham trusts God. This is not faith in a much later sense -- belief in what one has not experienced.¹⁶ -- but, rather, faith in the sense of taking seriously what one *has* experienced, in this case, the call of God. Abraham does not "believe in" God. The divine reality is hardly a matter of dispute. He "believes" God. He accepts the promise and the commission on trust.

Nevertheless, "the land that I will show you" is a concrete, earthly destination -- a home in which to develop the society God calls Abraham's progeny to build. This land represents all the particulars of Jewish life: peoplehood, culture, distinct religious practices and unique self-consciousness. And, of course, it points to Zion itself at the center of the Jewish hope and the Jewish reality from the first moment of our existence while our nation was as yet hidden in Abraham's loins. The theme of particularism joins with that of universalism in the next verse. "I will make of you a great nation." Israel is to be a distinct people with distinct ways, "a people not numbered among the nations,"¹⁷ with a unique heritage and a unique destiny. This people will not be "great" in numbers, but in the greatness of its calling and its mission: to keep God's Law, to witness to God's reality and authority in the world, to build God's Kingdom on earth. This understanding of Israel's greatness leads us to the next verse which focuses exclusively on the universal. Again self-transcendence is the theme, but not as it was in the opening command, transcendence from old to new self. "In you shall all the families of the earth be blessed." Here the transcendence is from self to other. Abraham's descendants are not chosen for their own sake alone. This people exists to be a blessing to all the world. Its calling is ultimately to the service of humanity. It has always been understood by Jews that the particular treasures of our religious life are knowledge of the one, true God and of the divine moral law. If we are called as witnesses it is to these truths that we must testify. That testimony is to all nations and it is accompanied by an appeal to all to adopt the universal moral code. Israel's God is the God of all humankind.

It has become a commonplace to observe that Judaism is not a missionary faith. This is a half-truth at best. And half-truths are often the most dangerous of lies. True, Jews do not seek to convert those of other faiths to Judaism. But Jews do witness to and labor for a moral law to which all must eventually come. Israel's God may not require that all worship in Jewish fashion, but God does command all to live ethical lives in preparation for the Peaceable Kingdom of the future. Thus

Judaism does have a spiritual and ethical mission to the peoples of the world which is an essential element of the call of Abraham, father of our faith but of others as well.

It must be remembered that Abraham is called in response to a problem. In fact his call is the opening act to that problem's solution.¹⁸ And while the call is to a particular individual out of whom will emerge a specific people, that people's mission is to cultivate its own life of holiness so as to bring a message to the world at large. The problem pointed to in the pre-Abrahamic history is everyone's problem and so the solution must be for everyone. God has chosen to create the Hebrew nation as bearer of God's word to a world which has lost its moral moorings and, all unknowingly, drifts in desperate need of redemption. God will train Israel by means of a series of sacred-historical events to be God's redemptive agent in the world. It is the concrete, "corporeal election"¹⁹ and ongoing existence of this collective individual, this first-born son of God²⁰ that makes God real in the world. Abraham's seed will turn its father's leap of faith into a walk through history as finite bearer of the infinite life of God. All three elements of this conception combine to make a whole. Together they constitute the Jewish faith: God, Israel, world, a continuum of creation, election and redemption.

The last of these three elements implies a somewhat paradoxical view of the world. Judaism considers the world in both positive and negative terms. Clearly the world, in its present state, has gone astray -- that is, *human beings* have gone astray. But if redemption is Judaism's project, then the original state of the world is seen as positive as is the future state to which we seek to bring it. Both the former condition and the ultimate possibility of this earth are good. Our task is the realization of this possibility, the fulfillment of the world's original promise as Kingdom of God. The source of sin is not the world as such but is the "evil inclination" in each human being which leads to the misuse of his or her free will.²¹ It is that inclination which must be overcome by the "good inclination." This will be accomplished by the day-to-day moral training of Abraham and his seed. By means of a series of historical encounters with God they will learn of the spiritual and ethical nature of the "blessing" they are to bring to the world's peoples.²²

The call of Abraham takes place once but it inaugurates the history of a divine-human relationship which is still unfolding. Abraham could have had little comprehension of the nature of his call or of his destiny at the beginning. Even if God had handed him a bill of particulars spelling out the terms, he could hardly have comprehended it. The covenant outlined by God contains both commission and promise, both command and ultimate assurance. But its specific terms will be revealed gradually as God and Abraham interact on many levels and in varying circumstances.

In response to God's command, the patriarch leaves his home and journeys to the land of promise. There the Lord appears to him and he builds an altar consecrating this place to God. He sojourns in Egypt, separates from his cousin Lot and wanders the length and breadth of the land.²³ God gives him several promises regarding the land, that God will give it to Abraham and his seed forever.²⁴ These promises make clear both the centrality of the land in Hebrew thought and the need for descendants to people it.

The Dark Side of the Covenant

Up to this point the covenant has been presented in exclusively positive terms. God will make Abraham a great nation, a possessor of a goodly land, a blessing to all peoples and a father of myriad descendants. This last promise is specifically reiterated in Gen. 15:5. But just seven verses after this most comforting of promises, we see for the first time what must be called the dark side

of the covenant. Abraham is put into a trance, "a deep, dark dread" overwhelms him and God speaks: "know of a surety that your descendants . . . will be slaves in a land not their own. They will be . . . oppressed for four-hundred years."²⁵ A terrible price must be paid for being covenanted with God. Those whom God elects God also afflicts. In fact such affliction is "of a surety." If God's people represent a striving for righteousness in the world, then they will be the first to suffer at the hands of the enemies of righteousness.²⁶ Has there ever been a tyrant in a land where Jews have sojourned who did not persecute Abraham's seed? As if to affirm Israel's claim to be God's witness people, the opponents of God have singled out Jews for oppression and, in our own day, annihilation. "For it was not one enemy alone who rose up against us to destroy us; in every generation there are those who rise up against us and seek our destruction. But the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hands."²⁷

And so He does. The divine promises are not to the individual Israelite. Abraham receives assurances as the exemplar of a people to come. It is Israel, the collective individual, who is the redemptive agent chosen by God to build God's Kingdom on earth. And it is to Israel as a whole that the promises are made. A thousand of Abraham's descendants may suffer and die -- or ten thousand -- or six million. But the people is eternal. The "salvation" offered to each Jew, the chance not to avoid but to transcend suffering and death, is through his or her identity with the people of God and with the Holy One who is its creator, sustainer and redeemer. This identity does not offer an escape from suffering. In fact it makes suffering more likely, either for oneself or one's progeny. But it offers assurance that what Israel suffers for is worth the suffering and will issue in ultimate redemption for the people and the world when the Kingdom of God shines forth undimmed. Abraham is given a prophetic vision of a tragic and glorious history. Four thousand years later it has become plain that the periodic persecution of Jews will end only when and if the world achieves some higher measure of moral health or when and if Israel abandons its witness and its mission.

But even in the face of this terrible prophecy Abraham decides to go on -- and that means fathering a nation, having a son. In fact he will father two sons who will give rise to "a multitude of nations."²⁸ The universal stress is clear. God is not concerned with one people only, but with many. However, the spiritual promises to which Judaism is heir are passed from Abraham to the son born to his wife Sarah. Isaac is the son by promise and the second patriarch of the Hebrew people. In chapter eighteen of Genesis, God appears to Abraham in human form accompanied by two divine messengers. God promises Abraham a son through Sarah. It will be a miracle birth since both Abraham and Sarah are old and past child-bearing age. The covenant will be carried on through Isaac. Here the stress is on Israel as a distinct nation.

The Conscience of God

Immediately following the promise of Isaac's birth, the Lord confides to Abraham that God is about to judge the wicked city of Sodom.²⁹ Amazingly, and apparently to God's surprise, Abraham challenges the Lord's right to destroy the city. In a passage which must stand as the loftiest in the Torah, the human person actually becomes the conscience of God. "Will you indeed destroy the righteous with the wicked?" The patriarch will not accept a result in which righteous and wicked fare alike. Moral distinctions must be made. "Shall not the Judge of all the world Himself do justice?" Has there ever been a more exalted image of humanity? Here Abraham risks everything -- his people's future, his relationship with God, his very life -- to defend strangers. His one brief interaction with Sodom's king revealed the distaste in which he held him.³⁰

Nevertheless, he takes his stand for justice in God's world. Abraham remembers that God is just, even if God has forgotten. In this unforgettable passage a new aspect of Israelite witness is revealed. Certainly Jews are to stand before the world and proclaim the presence of a righteous God who demands that human beings practice justice on the earth.³¹ But here the Jew is seen as turning about and facing God, demanding divine justice on behalf of humanity.

This tradition of challenging God in the name of the principles that same God has taught us may well be unique to Judaism. A human being can rise no higher. This is not blasphemy but the ultimate demonstration that we have absorbed the lessons we were born to learn. In the name of divine justice to shake one's fist in the face of divine power -- to protest the suffering of the innocent with every fiber of one's being is to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength."³²

Here is the source of the passionate social conscience so often manifest in Jewish political conduct. "Justice, justice shall you seek!"³³ It is this imperative which has led Jewish communities throughout the world to act as ethical catalysts in their societies. It may well be the reason God has scattered this people abroad on the earth. For every place of human habitation needs moral witnesses to protest before powers human and divine in defense of the right. It is certainly why defenders of the status quo so often find Jews to be social irritants, never content to "leave well enough alone." For Abraham's heirs, what is will never be "well enough" until society lets "justice roll down like waters and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."³⁴ The result of Abraham's challenge to God is a stunning victory for the patriarch's position. At the end of a negotiation over numbers that is one of the most dramatic exchanges in world literature, God agrees that if even ten righteous are to be found in Sodom the city will be spared. One has to imagine the Holy One exasperated but profoundly pleased. The human child has confounded the divine parent.

It is no minor element of this story that Sodom's population is obviously not Hebrew. Lot, Abraham's cousin, is the only resident even remotely connected to the patriarch. The message is clear; the descendants of Abraham are to emulate their forefather in assuming moral responsibility toward all people. Any interpretation of Judaism which rejects the principle of kinship with humanity is a misinterpretation. From time to time isolationist or chauvinist views are heard among the Jewish people, usually as a response to antisemitic prejudice or a result of soul-damaging persecution. Such reactions are understandable but must be rejected as inauthentic and unacceptable. Without the element of self-transcendence, self-affirmation becomes stunted, bigoted and narcissistic. This is as true for peoples and faiths as it is for individuals. In developing concern and responsibility for others we move from a smaller to a larger sense of self, we begin to become what God would have us be.

The Ultimate Test

In due time, the son promised to Abraham is born. And all of God's assurances of land and posterity, which Abraham had doubted on several occasions in the past, seem en route to realization. But then, suddenly, the narrative takes an unexpected turn and all is thrown into uncertainty once again. As abruptly as the Lord called Abraham in the beginning, God calls him again and in words of the same cadence. But where once the Holy One summoned Abraham to new life, now God demands a death.

Take your son, your only son, Isaac whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering. (Gen. 22:2)

Abraham is speechless. He who waxed eloquent in defense of strangers has no words with which to plead for the one he loves more than his own life. Why? Is Abraham so traumatized by the ghastly demand that he is struck dumb? Is Isaac less innocent than the hypothetical "righteous" of Sodom? Surely not. Why then the silence? Is it because he understands that self-sacrifice will, in the final extremity, be one expression of Israel's witness to the world? This is a terrifying thought. Even to entertain it today, after the Holocaust, seems totally unacceptable. We flee from it; the ground trembles beneath our feet. And yet Israel's history is filled with accounts of the suffering and death of God's people "for the sanctification of the Name."

Abraham already knows that his descendants will suffer in slavery. Now this theme is immeasurably intensified by God's dread command. The dark side of the covenant is suddenly all Abraham can see of it. He stands before the ultimate requirement, the final test of fidelity to God's *mysterium tremendum*. The awe-some power that gives life deals out death as well. There is no greater truth than this. And there is none more terrible. God's bloody demand is heard in the first generation of an often bloody history. If the God of Israel is more than a hypothesis, if Judaism is more than a theory, it is because living, breathing, flesh and blood people who loved life and its gratifications were willing to cast it all away to endure torture and death rather than abandon the post to which God had assigned them. Jews have purchased their share in the covenant at a fearful price. "We have met the test of Isaac's binding"³⁵ not to justify or to mystify suffering and death but to proclaim to all peoples that fidelity to the Holy One has no limits, and that there are some things worth dying for.

We may also consider that in demanding this of Abraham, God was, as it were, inviting humans to enter into and share the divine life itself. The prophets write of God's suffering along with God's people.³⁶ Perhaps by asking Abraham to do what God must do with each of us, the Lord is revealing that suffering is an element of the divine inner life. If the giver of life and the lover of life is also the taker of life, then the Holy One must suffer at the need to deal out death to God's children. That God must do this to make room for the next generation can hardly lessen that suffering. But perhaps *sharing* it can. If we are here to know God, we must know this about God too.

But whatever else we may make of the high drama Judaism knows simply as the akedah (the binding [of Isaac]), scripture itself tells us that it was a test.³⁷ Ultimately Isaac is spared, but only after Abraham lives through three days of agony, believing that he is to be his own son's executioner. There is great ambiguity in all of this. Is Isaac's life as an individual Israelite demanded, but his life as progenitor of Israel, the collective individual, spared? Given the covenant already sworn to, God cannot require the life of the people itself. If Isaac dies without issue there is no people and God becomes a liar. Jewish history reveals that, while individuals are struck down, the people endures. Here Isaac plays a double role and so the story is filled with uncertainty. But one thing is certain and that is Abraham's readiness -- despite his horror and despair -- to obey his master's command.

This lesson in fidelity unto death is one that Israel must never forget, nor must Israel's God. And so the ram's horn is sounded at the season of penitence in every synagogue on earth. The ram which, at God's command, Abraham sacrificed instead of Isaac, reminds both Israel and God of what occurred. We sound the ram's horn to call the people to repentance, to remind them of their supreme duty to their God as represented by Abraham's obedience. But we also do it to call God to remembrance of Abraham's willing-ness to sacrifice that which to him was dearer than life, and to accept the penitential prayers of the patriarch's descendants. We pray that our God will pardon

us, not for our sake, but for the sake of our father Abraham and of Isaac in whose stead the ram was slain.

Abraham's faithfulness, his willingness to give up everything for God, to hold nothing back, raises the divine-human covenant to another intensity. God must respond.

By myself I have sworn, says the Lord, because you have done this, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that in blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is on the sea-shore . . . and in your seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed (Gen. 22:16-18).

The words can hardly contain the divine emotion. The blessings come pouring forth in a linguistic profusion new to the narrative. In these promises God holds nothing back, even as Abraham had not. All doubt, all uncertainty between the parties to the covenant have vanished. Now God knows how much Abraham loves God; Abraham knows how much God loves him. And they are united in the infinite love they share for Isaac and his seed to come. This is the high plateau of Abraham's life. Here he stands side by side with his God atop the mount of vision³⁸ and sees through the future millennia of his people's story as they strive to bring blessing to all the nations of the earth.

Conclusion

The story has begun well. The initial problem has been met with at least the beginnings of a solution. The people born of Abraham will come to see history as an extended course of instruction, filled with lessons and tests by which God seeks to educate them for their redemptive work. In this narrative Jews find the meaning and purpose of their lives. They seek not so much to lift earthlings up to heaven, as to bring heaven down to earth, to transfigure the world through the knowledge of God and of God's universal moral law. This is task enough for any people and the nation chosen for it is privileged indeed.

But the text tells us that Abraham is the father of many peoples, not just one.³⁹ The original reference of this passage is to the other Middle-Eastern peoples, Abraham's offspring through Ishmael, his first-born. But today, in an age of interfaith rapprochement, we can find a larger meaning in this text. Abraham's fathering of many may be seen in spiritual as well as ethnic terms. In Christianity and in Islam we see the expansion of the covenant between God and Abraham's seed beyond the limits of the people Israel. In these two faiths God has broken open the terms of the original covenant to include the Gentile nations.⁴⁰ Today three Abrahamic faiths strive to bring humanity to sanctification. God's plan of redemption is a comprehensive one. It requires the labors not only of those who were the first to receive the divine call, but of those who have heard it since. God is one; God's servants are many. The task is great and there is work enough for all.

Notes

1. George A. Lindbeck, *The Nature of Doctrine: Religion and Theology in a Postliberal Age* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1984), p. 35.

2. Wallace Stevens, *The Collected Poems of Wallace Stevens* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), p. 159.

3. Philo, *On The Creation*, L: 154 in Philo, Volume I (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), p. 115. "[Adam] endeavored to please the Father and King . . . to be fully conformed to God. . . ."
4. Gen. 4:8.
5. Gen. 4:23.
6. Gen. 6:5.
7. Gen. 6:6-8.
8. Gen 7:11.
9. Gen. 8:20-21.
10. Mal. 3:6.
11. Gen. 6:9.
12. The so-called Noahide laws first appear in the *Tosefta*, a Jewish commentary of the second century C.E.
13. Gen. 9:20-22.
14. God had commanded them to "fill the earth" after the flood. Instead they huddled together, apparently in fear (of another flood, perhaps?)
15. Gen. 11:1-9.
16. John 20:29.
17. Nu. 23:9.
18. *Genesis Rabbah* (fourth century Jewish midrashic commentary on Genesis) 19:17. ". . . God's presence leapt upward from the earth on account of the events in the garden. . . . But, as a counterpart, there were seven righteous men who rose up: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Levi, Kahath, Amram, and Moses. They brought the Presence of God [by stages] down to earth." Here the history of Israel is seen as the solution to the problem of Eden.
19. Michael Wyschogrod, *The Body of Faith: Judaism as Corporeal Election* (Minneapolis: The Seabury Press, 1983), pp. 175-177.
20. Ex. 4:22.
21. See *Genesis Rabbah* 9:7 and Tractate Berachot 61 d. for discussion of the good and evil inclinations (impulses).
22. Moses Maimonides, *Mishneh Torah: Book One: Knowledge: Laws Concerning Idolatry and the Heathens*, Chapter 1:2. "[Abraham] began to proclaim to the whole world . . . that the entire universe had but one Creator and that Him it was right to worship."
23. Gen. 12:4-13:18.
24. Gen 13:15.
25. Gen 15:13.
26. Frans Josef van Beeck, S. J., *Loving the Torah More Than God?* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1989), pp. 17-18.
27. Nathan Goldberg, *Passover Haggadah* (Hoboken: Ktav Publishing House, Inc., 1993), p. 12.
28. Gen. 17:4.
29. Gen. 18:16-33.
30. Gen. 14:2-24.
31. *Op. cit.*, van Beeck, p. 21.
32. Deut. 6:5.
33. Deut. 16:20.
34. Amos. 5:24.

35. Emil Fackenheim, *God's Presence In History* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), pp. 67-104. Fackenheim may be correct in his view that the Holocaust has altered forever the terms of Jewish witness through suffering. For the paradox inherent in that witness is that only a Jewish people which is present in and to the world can witness for God either through triumph or affliction. The aim of the ghastly and diabolical Nazi program was to remove from the earth every Jewish man, woman and child, and thus render moot forever the vexing conundrum of Jewish suffering. Since it is meaning which adds the crucial redemptive dimension to suffering, the Nazis sought to rob both Jewish life and death of all meaning by hunting down and murdering every Jew, religious and nonreligious, believer and atheist alike. By shifting the terms of the definition from confessional to 'racial,' the murderers sought to kill Israel's essential tie to its God, to destroy the soul before dispatching the body. But, this loathsome project was ultimately doomed to failure. For every Jew is a Jew for religious reasons, whether or not he or she acknowledges this truth. Every Jew, pious or secular from his or her human point of view, is from God's point of view a Jew because the Holy One called him when He called his ancestors at Sinai. In suffering and death, as in life, every Jew witnesses, willingly or unwillingly, to that call with every breath and every step he or she takes. No Nazi scheme could undo the eternal cords which bind God's people to their source, their ground, their destiny. Those cords, not made with hands, are woven of a substance more enduring than the worldly mind can comprehend.

But if the Nazis attempted what was and is impossible 'for as long as the heavens remain over the earth,' still the attempt was made to sweep from the world the witness people of God, to silence the divine voice as it had been heard in human history for four millennia, and thus to eliminate from the earth the moral conscious which renders life human. Did this change in a fundamental fashion the call of Israel, a call which has in the past included the summons to redemptive suffering? It may be. If the aim of the Nazis was total genocide, then today it is Jewish life, not Jewish death which witnesses to the divine presence in the world. We must not cooperate with Nazi aims by yielding up additional Jewish lives. God's purposes calls for the survival of the remnant of God's witness people, their fecundity, their flourishing in Israel and around the world. A holy calling either to an individual or to a people to proclaim the divine presence can be a summons to life as well as to suffering and death. That is our call today as the behavior and the very existence of the reborn Israelite State proclaims. Masada will not fall again, Auschwitz is over and done and God's Kingdom will be established in a future built by God's people redeemed from the ashes for the great work of life to which the Holy One has called us.

36. *Mahzor for Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur*, ed. Jules Harlow (New York, the Rabbinical Assembly, 1972), p. 561.

37. Jer. 4:19, Hosea 6:4-10, 9:10, 11:1-4, 11:8-9, 14:1-8.

38. Gen. 22:1.

39. Gen 22:14.

40. Gen. 17:5.

41. Michael S. Kogan, "Toward a Jewish Theology of Christianity, *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*, vol. 32, no. 1 (Winter, 1995), 89-106.

Chapter VII

Of Flesh and Faith: Abraham as a Principle of Inclusion and Exclusion in Christian Thought

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From its earliest days, the Christian movement affirmed its universal mission. The primitive community proclaimed a Christ who desired to "draw all people to myself" (Jn. 12:32)¹ and who commissioned his followers to "make disciples of all nations (*panta ta ethne*)" (Mt. 28:19). Yet this universalistic impulse existed in tension with a pronounced particularism: Christianity developed within Judaism; it was a Jewish sect. At its Jewish "epicenter" Christianity had to justify its intention to broaden the scope of God's election, to justify how not only Jews, but also Gentiles could be reckoned God's people. Ironically, certain Christian apologists used what they considered to be the very centerpiece of Jewish particularism, viz., the figure of Abraham, to justify the new inclusivist agenda.

This paper will examine how Christianity re-interpreted the figure of Abraham to accommodate its needs. Such re-interpretation, we shall see, was not always consistent or true to its original purpose. Its "plasticity" allowed Christians to make claims they wished to advance not only in favor of their own cause, but also in opposition to that of the Jews. A number of "Abrahamic interpretive models" arose in Christian thought, with certain of these over-shadowing others in the service of specific apologetical or polemical aims.

The Pauline Perspective

Pauline thought was to shape definitively the subsequent Christian use of Abrahamic imagery as a basis of both inclusion and exclusion.² Paul was concerned primarily to justify the extension of divine calling to the Gentiles; the Jewish ethnic particularism with which he had been imbued gave way to a universal perspective. However, Paul's line of thought, despite its initial intention, was to provide the basis for a new sort of exclusivism, one which excluded the Jews no less than Jewish particularism had excluded the Gentiles. Let us examine this line of thought under the following three points:

(1) Paul saw two covenants in tension: the Mosaic and the Abrahamic. The former was the basis for Jewish particularism and the Jewish sense of superiority. Because it defined standing before God in terms of adherence to the Law given at Sinai, it effectively excluded the Gentiles, who were not part of the ethnos that practiced the "traditions of the ancestors" (cf. Gal. 1:14), especially circumcision.

(2) Paul therefore argued for the priority of the Abrahamic covenant, seeing its foundation as the faith Abraham manifested in response to God, especially by "hoping against hope" (Rom. 4:18) in God's promise that he would have progeny, despite his advanced age. Gentiles, no less than Jews, were capable of such faith and thus, no less than Jews, could be drawn into the arena of divine salvation (cf. Rom. 9:24-26, Gal. 3:6-9).

Those children of Abraham who lived according to the Law were described by Paul as the enslaved children of Hagar, who represented "Mount Sinai in Arabia," where the Law was given. On the other hand, those children of Abraham who lived according to faith in God's promise were no less than the free children of Sarah. They, like Isaac (rather than Ishmael), were "children of

the promise" (Rom. 4:21-31). The message was clear: for Paul, faith, not compliance with the Mosaic Law, was the *sine qua non* of inclusion in the ranks of God's elect. By his faith (even before his circumcision) Abraham became the father of all -- circumcised and uncircumcised, Jew and Gentile alike (Rom. 4:11-12). The Mosaic covenant, which appeared four hundred thirty years afterward only as a deterrent to rampant transgression, did not annul the terms of this inclusive Abrahamic, faith-based, promise-centered covenant (cf. Gal. 3:17-19, Rom. 4:13-14).

In short, Paul argued for the inclusive, rather than the exclusive, shape of God's plan, for the priority of faith in God (of which all, both Jews and Gentiles, were capable), over performance of the works of the Law (of which only the Jews, the sole possessors of the Mosaic tradition, were capable).

(3) But Paul then made a move which introduced an exclusivistic tendency in his rationale for inclusivity: he re-defined faith. No longer was the faith necessary for God's favor the *faith in God* exhibited by Abraham; it was now defined specifically as *faith in Christ* (Rom. 10:9-13, cf. Gal. 2:15-16; Gal. 2:15-16). Thus the vast majority of the Jews, once the sole possessors of special status in the divine plan, were now excluded. Only a remnant of Israel remained in the ranks of the elect of God (Rom. 11:5-10); the rest were like branches lopped off a tree, which could be re-grafted only by coming to faith in Christ (Rom. 11:17ff.). Thus, the appeal to faith, originally a justification for inclusion, became the basis of a new exclusion. The old form of particularism -- that of the Jewish "racial *ethnos*" -- gave way to a new form of particularism -- that of a Christian "faith *ethnos*."

It is ironic that, even in advancing this new teaching of inclusive salvation, Paul actually depended on the very foundation of Jewish exclusivism, viz., the racial-ethnic understanding of descent from Abraham. But, one many object, did not Paul replace biological lineage with faith as the criterion for Abrahamic descent? Yes and no. What faith won for the believer was *incorporation into Christ*, whom Paul saw as the *sperma* ("seed," i.e., offspring) of Abraham to whom the promises made to Abraham applied (Gal. 3:16; cf. Gen. 22:17-18). That is, through baptism, both Jew and Greek could become descendants of Abraham by being in Christ, whose Abrahamic pedigree was incontrovertible. Thus, in a sense, Gentiles were to be made "adopted Jews" in Christ!

Then, by an exegetical sleight of hand, Paul contended that one could be a descendant of Abraham *only* by incorporation into Christ. He saw the term "offspring" mentioned in Genesis 22:17-18 as referring to *Christ alone*, since it is in the singular (Gal. 3:16), even though the noun clearly has a collective sense. But, one may ask, if being an offspring of Abraham was the necessary condition for becoming an heir to the promises made to him (as Paul seemed to assume) then why were the Jews, *already* the descendants of Abraham, excluded? Why was Christ now the only descendant to whom the promises applied? Again, in defending inclusion (of the Gentiles baptized into Christ), Paul introduced grounds for exclusion of those biological descendants of Abraham who did not have faith in Christ and who were not baptized into him.

The Perspective of the Author of Hebrews

Paul affirmed the *priority of Abraham over Moses*. The author of the letter to the Hebrews, however, went further; he declared the *preeminence of Jesus over both Moses and Abraham*. As a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek (cf. Heb. 5:5, 6:20), Christ was superior to Abraham in that Melchizedek received a tithe of spoils from Abraham and blessed him (Heb. 7:6);

now, "it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior" (Heb. 7:7). Christ was of the superior priesthood of Melchizedek, which outranked the Levitical priesthood descended from Abraham (Heb. 7:9ff.). The latter was only a pale reflection of the true priesthood of Christ, exercised in the true, heavenly sanctuary (Heb. 8). Thus Christ became the mediator of a new and superior covenant, which superseded the old (Heb. 9-10).

In short, if Paul wanted to free believers from responsibility for fulfilling the stipulations of the Mosaic covenant, the author of Hebrews wanted to present the new covenant mediated by Jesus as superior to both the Mosaic and the Abrahamic.

Even though the author of Hebrews did not once specifically mention the Gentiles -- his purpose seemed to be to bolster the faltering faith of Jewish Christians (cf. Heb. 2:1ff., 6:4-6) -- his argumentation nevertheless served to open Christianity to all, Gentile as well as Jew, since the inferior, specifically Jewish, covenantal form was no longer in force. All that was now necessary was faith like that of the luminaries of the old covenant (Heb. 11), only now this faith was to be focused on "Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Such an affirmation of faith could be made by both Jews and Gentiles, thus making the divine covenant accessible to all. However, it denigrated the standing of those who continue to adhere to the old, "inferior" Mosaic covenant. Thus, once again, a line of thought that justified inclusion also provided the basis for a new sort of exclusion.

The Gospels' Response to Jewish Claims Regarding Abraham

The Matthean, Lukan, and Johannine communities were engaged in adversarial relationships with their Jewish counterparts. These gospels, therefore, include repudiations of the Jews' claim to superiority by virtue of their descent from Abraham. John the Baptist in both the gospels of Matthew and Luke (the *logion* is apparently drawn by both from Q) tells the quintessential Jews, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, not to "presume to say to your-selves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor'; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham" (Mt. 3:9; cf. Lk. 3:8). In an even blunter denunciation of Jewish claims to special status, Matthew and Luke, again drawing from Q, portray Jesus as asserting that Gentiles will displace Jews in the kingdom of heaven. Amazed by the Roman centurion's faith, Jesus says that "in no one in Israel have I found such faith" (Mt. 8:10, Lk. 7:9) and that "many will come from east and west and will eat with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, while the heirs of the kingdom will be thrown into the outer darkness" (Mt. 8:11-12; cf. Lk. 13:28-29).³

Similarly, in John 8, Jesus contests the Jews' right to call themselves children of Abraham: They answered him, "Abraham is our father." Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would be doing what Abraham did, but now you are trying to kill me . . . this is not what Abraham did" (Jn. 8:39-40).

Perhaps even more significantly, the Johannine Jesus dismisses the argument from Abrahamic descent on another count: by claiming his own pre-eminence over Abraham: "Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he was to see my day. . . . Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am!" (Jn. 8:56, 58).

In these texts, one discerns three principles of the early church's response to the Jewish claims to superiority by virtue of Abrahamic descent: first, that God can -- and indeed will -- raise up

other children to Abraham (i.e., the Gentiles), who will displace the Jews; second, faith, rather than biological lineage, establishes one in divine favor; and third, Jesus supersedes Abraham as the touchstone of special standing before God. The motivation behind such principles is evident: to broaden the restrictive covenantal understanding of Second Temple Judaism (at least as understood by the New Testament authors). Ethnic particularism was repudiated; universal ethnic accessibility to covenanted status was espoused.

Patristic Elaborations

The foregoing discussion indicates that the various New Testament authors found the figure of Abraham useful for the purpose of broadening the scope of the divine economy. All re-cognized the need for reinterpreting this fundamental figure in Jewish self-understanding to make him "belong" to Gentiles as well. But we have detected a tendency among the New Testament authors to move from using Abrahamic imagery to justify inclusion of the Gentiles to using it to justify exclusion of the Jews. This tendency became more and more pronounced in the literature generated by Christians after the New Testament period. Gradually, Abraham was re-defined; he was no longer to be seen as the primordial Jew but as the primordial Christian.⁴ In other words, Abraham was gradually "taken away" from the Jews and given exclusively to the Christians.

Consider, for example, how Abraham is depicted in the writings of Justin Martyr (d. 165), Irenaeus (d. ca. 200), Eusebius (d. ca. 340), and John Chrysostom (d. ca. 407).⁵ In his *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, Justin claims Abraham for the Christians by asserting that Abraham was called by none other than the voice of Christ; it was to Christ that the great patriarch responded. Christians, Justin says, respond to the same voice and thus will be privileged to "inherit the Holy Land together with Abraham, receiving our inheritance for all eternity, because by our similar faith we have become children of Abraham." Therefore, Christians -- not the faithless Jews, he tells Trypho -- are the nation promised to Abraham (ch. 119). The Jews have effectively been "disinherited":

The effect of so radically divorcing Judaism from the promises and from the Christ is that the heritage of the Jews, seeming to promise so rich a harvest, becomes in Justin's hands mere chaff. Apart from the promises, the Jews have no roots in the past, no grounding. Apart from the Christ, the Jews have no hope in the future, no deliverance. Without the promises and the Christ, the Jews have no part in God, as Justin in fact claims.⁶

In a similar vein, Irenaeus, in his *Against Heresies*, argues that Christianity is not to be seen as a new religion but rather as the ancient faith that brought Abraham to righteousness: for just as Abraham followed the word of God and left "his earthly kindred . . . , walking as a pilgrim with the Word, that he might [afterwards] have his abode with the Word," so the apostles, in following Christ, followed the very Word of God, thus making them participants in the same righteousness as Abraham. We also, by following Christ the Word, possess the same faith as Abraham (iv.6.3-4). Furthermore, because Abraham was a prophet, he foresaw the coming of Christ: "the Lord, therefore, was not unknown to Abraham, whose day he desired to see" (*Against Heresies* iv.6.5; cf. Jn. 8:56). It is through Christ the Word, who appeared to him in bodily form (cf. Gen. 18), that Abraham came to know the Father (iv.7.1). By not receiving Christ as God's Word, "but imagining that they could know the Father without the Word, that is, without the Son," the Jews "departed from God" (iv.7.4). In essence, then, Irenaeus argues that the Abrahamic faith was Christian, not Jewish! [See also iv.21.1, iv.25.1.]

The same line of argument is developed by Eusebius in his *Church History*. He asserts that Christianity is not something new, but rather the restoration of the ancient religion of righteousness. "All those who have enjoyed the testimony of righteousness," he claims, "from Abraham himself back to the first man, were Christians in fact if not in name" (i.4.6). They knew the "very Christ of God," who appeared to Abraham, imparted revelations to Isaac, and conversed with Jacob, Moses, and the prophets (i.4.8). The Mosaic stipulations (circumcision, observance of the Sabbath, dietary restrictions), at the core of Jewish religious identity, were irrelevant to this righteousness. Thus the Mosaic covenant was simply an intrusion in the process of salvation, an obfuscation of the original Abrahamic faith. Christianity, on the other hand, is its restoration:

So that it is clearly necessary to consider that religion, which has lately been preached to all nations through the teaching of Christ, the first and most ancient of all religions, and the one discovered by those divinely favored men in the age of Abraham. . . . But that very religion of Abraham has reappeared at the present time, practiced in deeds, more efficacious than words, by Christians throughout the world. What then should prevent the confession that we who are of Christ practice one and the same mode of life and have one and the same religion as those divinely favored men of old? (i.4.10, 14-15).

Again, the faith of Abraham is equated with the faith of Christians, and Judaism is derogated as expressive not of the Abrahamic but of the Mosaic covenant.

Thus the figure of Abraham, initially adduced to justify the inclusion of Gentiles in the economy of salvation along with the Jews, was now being invoked to explain the exclusion of the Jews from that economy. The Jews, by means of the figure of Abraham, were now being disinherited, dispossessed of their patrimony.

This "disinheritance" is clearly taught by John Chrysostom (d. 407). In commenting on John 8:42-44, he states plainly, that Christ "drove them out" of their relationship to Abraham, telling them that "they not only are not Abraham's children, but that they are even children of the devil." He thus inflicts a wound on the Jews, "which might counterbalance their shamelessness."⁷

Ritualizing Inclusion and Exclusion: Baptism and the Eucharist

The dynamic of inclusion and exclusion discussed above found expression in the liturgical tradition of Christianity, most notably in baptismal and eucharistic rites. As we have seen, Paul's thought established baptism as the means by which all, Gentile no less than Jew, could become one of the progeny of Abraham. Baptism "incorporated" one into Christ, the "seed" of Abraham, to whom the ancient promises applied. But if baptism opened Abrahamic patrimony to all, it also served as a primary means of defining "the other," i.e., the non-Christian who was not baptized.

Similarly, the emphasis on the new and superior covenant mediated by Christ led to the increased importance of the ritual meal by which that covenant was re-presented and re-sealed among believers, i.e., the eucharist. To be sure, the "breaking of the bread" had been central to Christian practice from the earliest days of the movement (Acts 2:42; cf. Lk. 24:35), but its mystical significance as an affirmation of the covenant through participation in the sacrificed body and shed blood of Christ increased its significance in Christian practice. Again, this rite served to draw together those from every nation who professed faith in Christ, thus serving as an effective sign of Christianity's inclusivity, but it also drew a clear boundary between those who were in the

community and those who were outside. Exclusion from the sacramental table ritually expressed exclusion from the community itself.

Furthermore, it was not only in these sacramental rites that Christian liturgy expressed its new inclusivity and exclusivity. Numerous texts gave expression to the universal claim of Christianity to the Gentiles, as well as its definitive exclusion of the Jews. One text used during the Lenten services of the Orthodox Church gives powerful expression to both sentiments:

Israel has clothed itself with fine linen and purple,
shining with sacred, royal garments,
rejoicing in the services of the Law,
rich in the Law and the prophets!
But it has crucified thee outside its gates,
rejecting thy life after the death on the cross,
O Thou who art ever in the bosom of the Father.
Now Israel thirsts for just a drop of grace,
like the merciless rich man who left poor Lazarus
and went in purple and fine linen
into the unending flames!
Israel is sick as it beholds the Gentiles,
who before possessed not even a bit of truth,
but who now warm themselves in the bosom
of the faith of Abraham! . . .
(Apostichon of Matins, Wednesday of Palm Week)

Such themes recur throughout Great (Holy) Week texts in the Orthodox service books, with the exclusivistic, anti-Judaic element reaching its peak on Great Thursday and Great Friday. The inclusivistic theme emerges with greatest strength on the Feast of Pentecost (on the fiftieth day after Pasch), on which the opening of the gospel to all nations is commemorated (cf. Acts 2).

Needless to say, the power of liturgical texts and actions, not only in Orthodoxy but in other Christian traditions as well, has done much to imprint the inclusive-exclusive dialectic on the minds of worshippers. This doubtlessly is part of the reason that the Roman Catholic Church has taken constructive steps to eliminate some of its more inflammatory texts giving expression to the exclusivistic perspective, tempering them to affirm the continuing inclusion of the Jews in the divine plan. Consider, for example, the following three texts, each giving the content of the Prayer for the Jews found in the Good Friday Liturgy of the Roman Church. The first is from the Tridentine missal, the second from the 1966 revised missal, and the third from the post-Vatican II missal now in use:

(1) Let us also pray for the faithless Jews (*pro perfidis Judaeis*): that our God and Lord would withdraw the veil from their hearts: that they also may acknowledge our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Almighty and eternal God, who drivest not away from Thy mercy even the faithless Jews, hear our prayer, which we offer for the blindness of that people: that acknowledging the light of Thy truth, which is Christ, they may be delivered from their darkness. . . .8

(2) Let us also pray that our God and Lord will look kindly on the Jews, so that they too may acknowledge the Redeemer of all, Jesus Christ our Lord. . . . Almighty and eternal God, you made the promises to Abraham and his descendants. In your goodness hear the prayers of your Church

so that the people whom from of old you made your own may come to the fullness of redemption. . . .9

(3) Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the word of God, that they may continue to grow in the love of his name and in faithfulness to his covenant. . . . Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Listen to your Church as we pray that the people you first made your own may arrive at the fullness of redemption. . . .10

The differing views of inclusion and exclusion inherent in these prayers are immediately evident. The progression in them indicates a willingness to re-think Christian claims of exclusivity, at least as they pertain to Jewish participation in the Abrahamic pro-mises.¹¹ Prayers (2) and (3) establish that Abraham and his promises belong not only to the Christian but to the Jew as well.¹² In other words, these changes in liturgical prayers symbolize a re-emphasis of Abraham as a principle of inclusion rather than of exclusion, a reaffirmation of a universal rather than a particularist Christian vision.

Exclusion Without Vilification, Inclusion Without Indifference

We have seen how, from its inception, the Christian movement defined itself within a dialectic of inclusion and exclusion, between universalism and particularism. The nascent Church moved to justify the opening of the Gospel to the Gentiles; it there-fore needed to broaden the definition of Israel, the elect of God, from the definition then obtaining among the Jews. This meant that the Church had to look beyond the Mosaic Law, which belonged only to the Jews, for the criterion of election. We have seen that Paul blazed the trail in this development, highlighting not the figure of Moses but the figure of Abraham, by whom "all the families of earth shall bless themselves" (Gen. 12:3). Paul affirmed that faith like Abraham's, not legal observance, was the necessary condition of divine favor. Gentiles, no less than Jews, were capable of such faith. Moreover, by baptism into Christ, the "seed of Abraham," Gentiles became his adopted progeny -- adopted Israelites, so to speak -- and therefore heirs to the promises made to him. Paul's aim was clear: to include the Gentiles, not to exclude the Jews. He denied that God has rejected the Jews (cf. Rom. 11:1). His view was not triumphalistic.¹³

But the use of Abraham as a principle of inclusion gradually gave way to his use as a principle of exclusion. This tendency is already evident in the gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John. It emerges in full force in Christian texts after the New Testament period, as early as the second century. Abraham is no longer depicted as the patriarch of the Jews but of the Christians. He himself was a Christian, and his faith was in Christ. Thus the Jews were disinherited and dispossessed. The thought of the author of He-brews helped further to denigrate the religion of the Jews by asserting that the new covenant mediated by Jesus was superior to those of both Abraham and Moses; to be a Jew was to be party to an inferior relationship with God.

In developing a theology that justified universalism, Christianity also began to develop a strong sense of its own particularity. Its boundaries, expressed in liturgical rites and texts, became more and more defined. Judaism, the root from which Christianity grew, was now seen as "the other," outside the arena of divine grace. Thus the flip-side of Christianity's inclusivity was its exclusivity. The initial impulse to include was mitigated by a tendency to exclude.

Did things have to develop this way? Perhaps. It is quite natural that boundaries be drawn between different groups and that one group use the other as a "foil" against which to define itself. Human beings seem to have a need to be *distinct*, to stand apart from others, in order to have an

identity. Because it is difficult to form an identity positively, i.e., to articulate and internalize what it is that makes them or their collectivity unique, many opt for the "apophatic" path to identity-formation, i.e., for developing a sense of who and what they are by making explicit who and what they *are not*. The bolder and sharper the lines of demarcation the better.

In part, this explains what happened in Christianity: Christians defined themselves over and against their parent religion, Judaism. To be sure, as the centuries went on, Christians took great pains to define who they *were*; but alongside this "positive" or "cataphatic" identity formation was always the tendency to affirm an identity in opposition to Judaism.

It is interesting to speculate how Christianity would have developed differently if it had not followed this path, if it had not fallen prey to the urge to define itself exclusivistically or against Judaism, if it had avoided vilifying and excluding the Jews, if it had included Judaism alongside itself as a fellow beneficiary of divine favor. Would such inclusiveness in any way have harmed Christianity? Would it in any way have diminished its fresh perspective? I think not. Despite a continuing affirmation of the legitimacy of the Judaic covenantal relationship with God, Christianity would have flourished as an alternative which would certainly have been better suited to most non-Jews (and not a few Jews as well) who wanted to be drawn into relationship with the God of Israel without having to embrace all the stipulations of the Mosaic Law. At first, it is true, Jews anathematized Christians as heretics (*minim*), but would they have come to see Christianity as a sort of Judaism for Gentiles if Christians had not so enthusiastically reciprocated their anathemas? Of course, we will never know the answers to such questions, but it is intriguing to speculate.

These questions, however, do suggest a means of re-orientation for contemporary Christianity. Could Christians today not affirm an "Abrahamic dynamic" in which, rather than displacing the Jews, they would stand alongside them in the divine economy? It seems that undergirding the revised prayers noted above is this sort of reorientation. Without betraying its universal scope or its commitment to pan-ethnic mission, Christianity could still affirm the validity of Jewish particularity as being in conformity with the divine purpose. In so doing, it would reclaim the perspective that Paul himself seemed to affirm in Romans 11: the resistance of the Jews to the Christian message, no matter how vexing to Christians, is somehow in accord with the riches, wisdom, knowledge, and inscrutable will of God (cf. 11:32). Contemporary Christianity could thus introduce into Christian thought a corrective to the development in nascent Christianity by which the imperative to include the Gentiles was coupled with a hostile exclusion of the Jews.

Concluding Observations

Christianity certainly cannot betray its universal impulse. Christians affirm that the gospel overcomes ethnic particularity and racial exclusivism. Christianity discerns in history a process by which God invites all nations into covenantal relationship with God and with each other.¹⁴ National and ethnic antagonism fades. Religious "tribalism" is overcome. Division gives way to community.

The figure of Abraham was the principle by which such a universal vision was justified in the context of Second Temple Judaism. But does this vision require that his children "according to faith" displace and dispossess his children "according to the flesh"? Abraham has been used as both a principle of inclusion and a principle of exclusion in Christian thought. For centuries his role as the latter has been at the fore. Perhaps it is time to re-emphasize his role as the former.

Notes

1. All scriptural citations are from the NRSV (Division of Christian Education of the NCC, 1989).

2. Paul's use of Abrahamic imagery has been the focus of a number of studies yet unpublished, among which are: F. D. Layman, "Paul's Use of Abraham: An Approach to Paul's Understanding of History" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Iowa, 1972); M. T. Irvin, "Paul's Use of the Abraham Image in Romans and Galatians" (Ph.D. dissertation, The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1985); G. E. Robertson, "Paul and the Abrahamic Tradition: The Background of Abraham and the Law in Galatians 3-4 and Romans 4" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1988); R. A. Harrisville, "In the Footsteps of Abraham: The Figure of Abraham in the Epistles of Saint Paul" (Ph.D. dissertation, Union Theological Seminary, 1990).

3. The Gospel of Luke makes other references, less adversarial in tone, to Abrahamic descent as the distinctive Jewish claim. See 1:55, 1:73, 13:16, 16:23-31, 19:9; also Acts 3:25, 7:2, 13:26.

4. Note that this claim closely parallels the early Islamic assertion that Islam was not a new religion but rather the restoration of the ancient religion practiced by Abraham. An interesting study on this topic is: R. D. Parks, "Abraham, the 'First Christian' and the 'First Muslim': Hermeneutics of a Religious Symbol in Western Christianity and Sunni Islam" (Ph.D. dissertation, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, 1987).

5. Patristic quotations are from the Eerdmans series translation, *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* and *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*.

6. J. S. Siker, *Disinheriting the Jews: Abraham in Early Christian Controversy* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), p. 184.

7. *Homilies in St. John*, Homily 54.

8. *St. Andrew Daily Missal* (St. Paul, MN: E. M. Lohmann, 1940), pp. 566-567.

9. *English-Latin Roman Missal for the United States of America* (New York: Benziger, 1966), p. 317.

10. *The Liturgy of the Holy Week* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1980), p. 88. *The Lutheran Book of Worship* (1978, p. 140) contains essentially the same prayer in its Good Friday Liturgy: "Let us pray for the Jewish people, the first to hear the Word of God, that they may receive the fulfillment of the covenant's promises. . . . Almighty and eternal God, long ago you gave your promise to Abraham and his posterity. Hear the prayers of your Church that the people you first made your own may arrive with us at the fullness of redemption. . . ."

11. Such rethinking of the place of Jews in Christian self-understanding, both Catholic and Protestant, has been an ongoing process, much too extensive to recapitulate here. A few of the more recent resources for understanding the issues and dynamics of this process are the following: WCC, *The Theology of the Churches and the Jewish People* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1988); W. Harrelson and R. M. Falk, *Jews and Christians: A Troubled Family* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1990); H. H. Ditmanson, ed., *Stepping-Stones to further Jewish-Lutheran Relationships* (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1990); J. Rousmaniere, *A Bridge to Dialogue: the Story of Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Paulist Press/Stimulus, 1991); M. Shermis and A. E. Zannoni, eds., *Introduction to Jewish-Christian Relations* (New York: Paulist Press, 1991); H. Ucko, *Common Roots, New Horizons* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 1994).

12. This notion is expressed in the Vatican II declaration regarding non-Christians, *Nostra Aetate*, which states: "As the holy Scripture testifies, Jerusalem did not recognize the time of her visitation (cf. Lk. 19:44), nor did the Jews in large number accept the gospel; indeed, not a few

opposed the spreading of it (cf. Rom. 11:28). Nevertheless, according to the Apostle, the Jews still remain most dear to God because of their fathers, for He does not repent of the gifts He makes nor of the calls He issues (cf. Rom. 11:28-29)." W. M. Abbott, ed. *The Documents of Vatican II* (New York: Guild Press, 1966), pp. 664-665.

13. K. Stendahl contends that "one of the most striking elements of Paul's anti-triumphalism lies exactly in the fact that in Romans Paul does not fight Judaism but reaches a point where he warns the Gentile Christians against feelings of superiority toward Judaism and the Jews (Rom. 9-11, esp. 11:11-35 which climaxes in a non-christological doxology). When it dawns on Paul that the Jesus movement is to be a Gentile movement -- God being allowed to establish Israel in his own time and way -- then we have no triumphalist doctrine, but a line of thought which Paul uses in order to break the religious imperialism of Christianity." *Paul Among Jews and Gentiles* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1976), p. 132.

14. This universal perspective undergirds vision of the *eschaton*, when history will reach its culmination, as presented in the book of Revelation. The eschatological Messianic rule will be over "all the nations" (Rev. 12:5; cf. 15:4). The New Jerusalem will be for all peoples (cf. Rev. 21:24, 21:26, 22:2).

Chapter VIII

Ibrahim: A Family Portrait

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In this paper, I hope to communicate, through a study of Qur'anic texts, a number of perspectives on the Prophet Abraham, to whom we Muslims refer as Ibrahim, and after whose name we add the prayer, *alayhi al salam* or "peace be upon him." We add this supplication to the name of any and all of God's prophets . . . in the long chain of prophets that began with Adam and ended with Muhammad, upon all of them be peace.

An Open Community

Before going on to consider Islamic perspectives on the prophet Ibrahim, upon him be peace, in the light of our scripture, allow me to preface that study with a few observations on the religious community in North America. In 1955, a book was published in which a Jewish intellectual, Will Herberg, wrote that America had become a "triple melting pot," so that, "not to be . . . either a Protestant, Catholic, or a Jew," was "somehow not to be an American." A hundred years earlier, Herberg's observation certainly would not have raised more than a few eyebrows. In fact, as late as 1892, the Supreme Court of this land had stated, the Constitution and the Bill of Rights notwithstanding, that "this is a Christian nation."¹ Jonathan Sarna, author of an article entitled, "The American Jewish Experience and the Emergence of the Muslim Community in America," points out that even as Herberg wrote, back in 1955, "the triple melting pot by itself was scarcely an adequate depiction of American religion in the 1950s, and was even less adequate thereafter." In any case, from a Muslim point of view, the dominant religious tradition in this land is one with which we, as Muslims, are very familiar, as it is one that is referred to in the Qur'an over and over again. This tradition, to use the *Qur'anic* terminology for it, is one that refers to Jews and Christians as "People of the Book," and is one that is inclusive of Muslims, as recipients of the final revelation, or *Book*, as well. If the "Judeo-Christian tradition" has become inadequate as a way of describing the dominant faith grouping in contemporary North America, then perhaps we may begin to speak in terms of the People of the Book, and of the followers of the Abrahamic faiths. Certainly the spiritual, doctrinal, and scriptural affinities which link us far outweigh our differences on points of detail. This is not to suggest in any way that those differences account for nothing. On the contrary, those differences make us who we are. But it is important for us to understand that we share in, and are joined together by, not only our common humanity, but our faith in the One True God as the ultimate and transcendental reality. To take this a step or two further, in addition to our sharing a heritage of belief, we share systems of values, absolute values, which stem from outside of us, outside of our experience, and outside of our particular and limited spheres of interest.

My motivation in mentioning these things is not a desire to find a place for the Muslim community in Herberg's triple melting pot by making it a quadruple pot. Everyone knows that the Muslims are a believing community; and history ensures that we are taken seriously. But the reminder here comes as an invitation, indeed, a declaration that we are prepared to make common cause. For, ultimately, what our communities share in today's society is a position at odds with the dominant, or secular, paradigm. This is not to say that Muslims are opposed to the foundational separation of church and state; that is not what modern secularism is about. Secularism is much

more insidious than the mere separation of church and state. Even so, to the extent that secularism has become the undeclared "religion" of this society, the separation of "ecclesiastical" and governmental authority is our salvation. Otherwise, our churches, synagogues, and mosques would all have been put to more profitable use. In the secular paradigm, interpreted in terms of modern American economic doctrine, their "bottom line" value as real estate is their only value.

The common cause of which I speak has to do with our partnership in maintaining and promoting the links between faith and morality, and between values and knowledge. To paraphrase an observation in Alan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind*, our society has relegated religion to the realm of opinion.² If our secular society suffers from a plague of crime and immorality, it is because it has lost touch with the transcendent, so that nothing is sacred, and nothing is absolute.³ Accordingly, ours is a society of "anything goes," of "do your own thing," where everything is relative, and nothing is assumed to be "wrong" until it is judged, by a jury of its peers, to be "not what's happening," at least, "not for now." In the secular and materialist society we inhabit, a contemporary Descartes might reason, "I am a 'have not.' Therefore, I am not." The tragedy of this reasoning is that it takes place daily, and not only on the level of the individual. Rather, whole societies have fallen victim to it. During the 80's people were afraid that Iran would succeed in "exporting" its revolution. But let us reflect here for a moment. What have we succeeded in exporting? Not only hi-tech gadgetry and the icons of its culture, jeans and Coca-Cola. No. Our greatest third world export is despair. The message beamed to them through the cyberspace of MTV is simple, "You are a have-not. Therefore, you are not."

Of course, the message from God to humankind is one of hope; and the people of revelation, the People of the Book, the spiritual sons and daughters of Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, are people who have hope. In the Qur'anic narrative, Ibrahim, upon him be peace, says:

And who, other than those who have utterly lost their way, could ever abandon hope of the Lord's mercy? (15:56)⁴

By working together, there is much that we can contribute to our own communities, to like-minded faith communities, to our sick society, and to an increasingly despondent humanity at large.

A Community of Faith

Before looking to the Qur'anic verses in which Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, is mentioned, it may be helpful to note that while there is a chapter in the *Qur'an* called Ibrahim, it is not the way of the Qur'an to deal with subjects in chronological order, or even in a single narrative. Rather, readers will find that subjects are often dealt with thematically, with the result that different parts of a single narrative might be called up, or recalled, throughout the Qur'an. In terms of the stories of the prophets, there are a few exceptions to this rule; in particular the story of Yusuf, upon him be peace, which makes up an entire chapter bearing his name. Otherwise, the chapter entitled Ibrahim begins with a part of the story of Moses, *alayhi al salam*. And in the chapter that follows, a part of the story of Adam, *alayhi al salam*, is told. The reason for all of this is quite simply that the Qur'an is a book for the soul and heart of the faithful, and is concerned with historical events only as they impact on the human heart or, in other words, for the *'ibrah*, or the wisdom and spiritual verities they convey.

A second point to note about the Qur'anic narrative is that it often resembles portraiture, in the sense that its verses will sometimes surprise the reader, in much the same way that a road sign will appear to a motorist, by throwing up elaborate pictures of moments that act, with artistic precision, to draw the reader in and to involve him, almost as a witness. In the study that follows, we will encounter more than one example of what might be termed the Qur'an's "narrative depiction."

Join me now, as I turn to the Qur'an's first mention of Ibrahim, upon him be peace, in chapter two, or *Surah al Baqarah*:

(124) And [remember this:] when his Lord tried Ibrahim by [His } commandments and Ibrahim fulfilled them. Allah said: "Behold, I shall make you a leader of men."

Abraham asked: "And [will you make leaders] of my offspring as well?" Allah replied: "My covenant does not include the evildoers."

The Qur'an gives no details concerning when, how, or why this exchange took place. But its intent seems clear, particularly when it is read in the context of the two verses which precede it.

(122) O Children of Israel! Remember those blessings of Mine with which I graced you, and how I favored you above all other people; (123) and remain conscious of [the coming of] a day when no human being shall in the least avail another, nor shall ransom be accepted from any one of them, nor shall intercession be of any use to them, and none shall be succoured.

Thus, Ibrahim, upon him be peace, is tried and found worthy of the Lord's favor. We have no idea, though the Qur'anic commentaries are rife with speculation, of the details of the trial which occasioned this revelation. The important thing is that Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, found favor with the Lord. Then, when the Lord informed him of that favor, he did something very human, something very much in keeping with his life and times; he asked if that favor extended to his family as well. God's answer was clear. Favor with God, the good life or the life of peace, *salam*, through commitment to God, is something that must be earned. The principle repeated time and again in the Qur'an and in the scriptures which preceded it is simple and fundamental to an understanding of the nature of man's relationship to God:

God does not burden any human being with more than he is well able to bear: in his favor shall be whatever good he does, and against him whatever evil he does (2:286).

And whatever [wrong] any human commits rests upon himself alone; and no bearer of burdens shall be made to bear another's burden (6:164).

Thus, when Ibrahim, upon him be peace, asked if the favor he had found would extend to his offspring, he was reminded that each person is responsible for his or her own doings. And therefore, for those of his offspring who are faithful and good there will be favor. But, that favor will never include those who stray from the truth and do evil.

Let us return to our text, or rather, to its context. For the mention of how Ibrahim, upon him be peace, found favor with His Lord was preceded not only by a reminder to the Children of Israel, many of whom had forgotten the important principle regarding God's favor, but by mention of another point of spiritual importance:

(120) For, never will the Jews be pleased with you [O Muhammad!] nor yet the Christians, unless you follow their own creeds. Say: "Behold, God's guidance is the only true guidance. . . ."

This verse is followed by another:

(121) Those unto whom We have vouchsafed the Book [and who] follow it as it ought to be followed - it is they who truly believe in it.

In building up to the mention of Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, and the spiritual favor he found with the Lord, the Qur'an tells Muhammad, upon him be peace, to forget the creeds of this group or that; for God's guidance is the only true guidance. Now, the significance of this message, coming as it does before the mention of Ibrahim, upon him be peace, is that the Qur'an, throughout, holds up Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, as the representative of the true faith. At the same time, it faults Christians and Jews for their having forgotten the essential message of that faith in terms of man's relationship of direct responsibility and accountability to God. Moreover, the importance of the Qur'an's pointing out this fault is to caution the faithful from falling into the same trap. Indeed, the Prophet Muhammad, upon him be peace, said to his companions: "You will follow the ways of those who went before you (i.e. the People of the Book), foot by foot, and inch by inch . . . even to the point where if one of them crawls into the hole of a lizard, you will follow."⁵

A Universal Community

The point in all of this is that God's true religion is for all of humankind. It is not a matter of favor won by an individual and passed on to others, so that a favored family develops and then extends itself into a tribe, a community, a nation, a race, and so on. From the very outset, beginning with Ibrahim, upon him be peace, this notion was put to rest. But the mistake is a very seductive one, and that is why the Qur'an warned against it, and why the Prophet Muhammad, *alayhi al salam*, did too. In fact, his prophecy has come true. A great many Muslims have lulled themselves into the notion that because they confess the historical and geographical faith of their fathers, they will enjoy God's favor. Or else they suppose that those who have not confessed the historical and geographical faith of their fathers to be in manifest error!

But true guidance is God's guidance, and it is to be found in all the scriptures He revealed to humankind for their moral and spiritual edification. Thus, those who follow the scriptures as they ought to be followed, it is they who truly believe. Forget the labels! Forget the pedigrees!

In order to come to an understanding of these essential truths, the word Muslim, in the Qur'an, must be read in its generic sense.

Ibrahim was neither a "Jew" nor a "Christian", but was a hanif (or one who turned away from all that is false) and a "Muslim" (one who finds peace, salam, through commitment to God); and he was not of those who ascribe divinity to aught beside Him (3:67).

Thus, Ibrahim was a "Muslim" in the sense that he, upon him be peace, surrendered or committed himself to Allah, that is, he established a true relationship with his Lord and Creator. This is a relationship of trust and faith and of seeking His divine pleasure, of seeking the "good" life through deeds that brought him closer to his Lord. In the same sense, Moses, Jesus, Muhammad, and all the prophets, upon them be peace, were "Muslims." The Qur'an teaches:

In matters of faith, He (Allah) has ordained for you that which He had ordained upon Noah - and into which We gave you [O Muhammad] insight through revelation - as well as that which We had enjoined on Ibrahim, and Moses, and Jesus. Then, steadfastly uphold the true faith, and do not break up your unity therein (42:13).

Here, then, is mention of the essential unity of faith; the continuity of its message, and the oneness of its community. This is the natural order ordained by God for all of humankind; that through our relationship to Him, we become united. Through our mutual quest for the good life, for what is higher and beyond our immediate experience, through our quest to cultivate a relationship with the Creator and draw close to Him in ways that defy definition, we draw closer to one another, even if we are as different as black and white, as tall and short, as male and female, as Baptist and Episcopalian, as you and I.

I see a road sign coming up. We are in the desert, in the unrelenting heat of the place that, centuries, even millenia, later would come to be known as Makkah. And in the midst of the arid valley and the barren rock thrust up from its lonely expanses, two men are laboring.

(2:127) And when Ibrahim and Isma'il were raising the foundations of the "House" (for God's worship), [they prayed] "O our Lord! Accept this from us; for verily, You alone are all-hearing, all-knowing. (128) O our Lord! Make us commit ourselves to You, and make out of our offspring a community that will commit itself to You, and show us the ways of our worship, and accept our repentance: for, verily, You alone are the Acceptor of Repentance, the Dispenser of Grace!

See the hope there. See the faith. In a place where nothing and no one lives, Ibrahim and his son, upon them be peace, endure the elements to erect a place of worship. In your mind's eye you can almost see them lifting the bricks into place. And now hear their prayer. Ibrahim, *alayhi al salam*, had had his answer about his offspring. Here he is praying, asking God to make of his offspring a Muslim community, again in the generic sense, one that will commit itself to God, and live the "good" life through seeking God's pleasure and maintaining the community of faith. The Qur'anic narrative says,

And this very thing did Ibrahim bequeath unto his children, and so did Ya'qub (Jacob) (2:132).

And here comes the family portrait. Jacob is on his death bed, a lifetime of service to God and humanity approaches its natural end, in the company of all those near and dear. The Qur'an paints the following family portrait:

Nay, but (each of) you bear witness (in the religious traditions to which you adhere) that when death was approaching Ya'qub he said unto his sons: "Whom will you worship after I am gone?" They answered "We will worship your God, the God of your forefathers, Ibrahim and Isma'il and Ishaq, the One God: and unto Him will we commit ourselves." Now, those people have passed away; unto them shall be accounted what they have earned, and unto you, what you have earned; and you will not be judged on the strength of what they did (2:133-134).

Think of this portrait. Think of why this moment should have been preserved in such a way. Think of the legacy of Ibrahim, upon him be peace, the one he left to his family and to all those with the wisdom to recognize its sublime and abiding truth.

No two brothers are alike, not even twin brothers, and no two sisters. All of us are different. As history unfolded itself and hu-mankind passed from generation to generation, our differences manifested themselves in many different ways, not all of which were positive, or things of which we can be proud today. But those of us who share the faith of Ibrahim, upon him be peace, would do well to ponder our family portrait from time to time, and to remember the message of hope and faith which he brought to us from the wilderness all those centuries ago.

And peace be upon all of you!

Notes

1. Jonathan D. Sarna, "The American Jewish Experience and the Emergence of the Muslim Community in America," *The American Journal of Islamic Social Sciences*, vol. 9, no. 3 (Fall, 1992), 370-374.

2. Alan David Bloom, *The Closing of the American Mind* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), p. 12.

3. Abel Wahhab Elmesseri, "Towards a More Comprehensive and Explanatory Paradigm of Secularism," Working paper, April 1995.

4. All translations of the Qur'an are my own. The numbering of chapters and verses is based on the work of Fu'ad 'Abd al Baqi, *Al Mu'jam al Mufahris li Alfaz al Qur'an al Karim* (Beirut: Dar al Marifah, 1991).

5. This a sound hadith related by Ibn 'Abbas in the collections of Ahmad ibn Hanbal, *al Musnad* (vol. 5, pp. 218 and 340) and al Hakim, *al Mustadrak* (vol. 4, p. 455).

Part III

The Social Anthropology of Ethnicity and Primordial Solidarity

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Elements comprising ethnicities. Ethnicity as pre-modern, as modern, and as post-modern (hence varied) tribal, territorial, linguistic, cultural, and religion-based social configuration. Ethnic revival in response to state formation. Ethnic groups as "mediating structures" in civil society. Ethnicity and the communal deficit of modernity.¹

Editorial Introduction

. . . (R)eligious practice has been shaped by tribal and political loyalty. The ancient religions of the Near East were all functions of civilizations. Only the God of Israel created a people.

-Franklin H. Littell²

Ethnicity, as noted above, is kinship writ large. Though emerging from, and continuously sustained by kinship, it draws on other emergents as well. Kinship, though humanly constructed, is a "natural" (from *L. natus* -- birth) phenomenon. Religion, on the other hand, has to do with the "supernatural," with the mystery that transcends natural boundaries. Yet though analytically distinguishable, as historical phenomena ethnicity and religion tend to be intertwined and frequently inseparable.

The study of ethnicity and religion both draw heavily on the various social sciences. Among the social sciences, anthropology has dealt particularly with "primitive," archaic, pre-modern and, technically-speaking, pre-"societal" peoples. After the initial glances at ethnicity and the particularity of the "Abrahamic faiths" in the preceding chapters, it is appropriate to turn next to the perspectives supplied by this discipline. More complex, larger scale societies, which are the domain of sociology, will be invoked in a later section in this collection.

In the early stages of our species' historical development, kinship and its extensions into clan and tribe effectively substitute for the deliberative role-based configurations that result in "society" at later developmental stages. What we now describe as "society," nonetheless can be seen as inchoate from the outset. Accordingly, while investigation of kinship and its derivatives is important in its own right, it is essential as well in evolutionary or developmental frames of reference.

Investigations of primitive manifestations of religion often begin with totemism, with the manner in which an object or animal serves as emblem of a clan, a phenomenon at once communal and religious. Totemism is akin to myth, a wider, more inclusive concept. Myths are the stories that serve to weave the visible and in-visible "worlds" inhabited by early peoples into coherent cosmologies, including questions of origin, destiny, and supernatural being.

The reader of these pages will be familiar with the fate of the totemic, mythical and the like as social complexity emerges and advances. Myths are discredited, yielding to more rational and abstract concepts, eventually to theology and later to philosophy. But given the nature of the universe, and the precarious suspension of human existence within it, contrary to some jubilant appraisals, myth is not readily disposed of. Indeed, the secularity to which the modern experience leads, turns out itself to entail new myths, for any cosmic judgement or world-view we can

conceive defies empirical verification. To be human is inescapably to be myth-dependent and hence "religious."

Initially and/or outwardly, the transformations of human existence during the past two centuries, which we call *modernization*, seemingly promised to deliver us from myth-dependency. Un-covering and controlling the mechanisms of natural determinism would enable us to gain control of our own human destiny. But the skills of modernity cannot fully account for the consequences of the indeterminacy inserted into *the constitution of Homo sapiens*, who meanwhile remains embedded in the determinate world of nature notwithstanding.

Enter the hermeneutical chapter in intellectual history, which meanwhile, as in a major work cited by McLean, that of Clifford Geertz, begins to take into account the human construction of social reality. Though humans can in some measure transcend the determinism of nature, nonetheless as creatures in time and space, they must create their own patterns of predictability if they are to coexist. Without hermeneutical adaptation, the positive sciences cannot penetrate those creative processes.

But the reverse question must also be acknowledged. To what extent can the transcendent apperceptions be infused and embodied into natural order or into "natural" processes? Ontologically, hence ideally, in the best of all worlds, nature and super-nature are subsumed in a cosmology. But as Michael Kogan observes in a previous chapter, "something has gone wrong" in the human enterprise. As he briefly outlines, the call to Abraham appears as God's response to that aberration. Abraham is asked to leave his "country, kindred, and . . . father's house," and to begin anew.

But precisely what does all this entail? Does that formula merely mean that he needs to leave home and seek his destiny elsewhere, or is something deeper being communicated thereby? On the surface, the former appears to be the case. A long story unfolds. Abraham leaves and begins a new *ethnos*, ultimately to become a new people in a new, as yet indefinite, land. The resulting peoplehood, as illustrated variously in the Jewish contributions to this volume, becomes the heart of Jewish identity.

Yet the subsequent history emerges enigmatically. The falling away, the exile, the Diaspora; then the rise of Christianity and still later of Islam, repeating some of the same themes; and eventually in our own era, the precarious creation of the modern Israeli state in an increasingly pluralist world. Where does all this leave us?

Throughout these pages we sense the profound pull of a world in which the archaic blending of *ethnos* and *religio* is consummated on a larger scale. Nor is that beckoning vision mere fantasy. Here and there in each of the three Abrahamic stories there are pages on which that possibility glimmers. But there also very dark pages, some being written just now, so dark that disbelief or apocalypse can appear as the only options. Yet meanwhile, as social differentiation continues apace, both *ethnos* and *religio* appear increasingly as specialized sub-sets or configurations. Peace becomes possible when church and state become separated, when "religion" is kept out of the political compact. And for this, too, there are intimations in our stories.

But meanwhile, back to the task at hand -- some anthropological perspectives, philosophically refracted, on our enigma, with a response out of each of our three stories -- rich material, all, as readers grope for their own solutions.

Notes

1. Original assignment to Yaker, Donders, and Bourouh.

2. *The Church and the Body Politic* (New York: Seabury Press, 1969), p. x.

Chapter IX
Ethnicity, Culture and "Primordial" Solidarities
George F. McLean (The Catholic University of America)

Anthropology and the Study of Culture

In our consideration of the general theme of this Symposium, "Scriptural Faith, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict" reflection upon ethnicity seems especially important, and this for at least two reasons. The first is the particular bias of our own individualist culture from which vantage point we see readily the human dignity and rights of the individual person, but only secondarily what pertains to the community or people. We easily follow a contractarian interpretation of the polis, which conceives the social as a decidedly secondary artifact. We hardly can imagine Socrates preferring the hemlock to being ostracized or his sense that the latter is the equivalent of simply being dehumanized. Thus, though "the people of God" rather than the individual is the central theme of the Scripture, it is necessary for us here in America to reflect seriously in order to be able to take any real account of the meaning and importance of belonging to a people.

Secondly, the term "ethnic" has always carried a notably pejorative connotation; indeed this seems to have been its primary meaning. For the Greeks and Romans it meant those beyond the borders, the uncivilized, the barbarians (e.g., for the Greeks this was used especially for those across the northern border in what now, not incidentally, is called Bulgaria); for the Jews the ethnics were the pagans; for anthropologists (or ethnographers) their concern was first with primitive peoples, past or present. As this country was settled by West Europeans those who came later from Eastern Europe and were less assimilated, were called "ethnics". Thus, the term "ethnic conflict" tends to reflect more disdain than human concern. The more ordinary response is to divorce ethnicity from any religious significance and to seek its suppression by any means.

But if treating things dismissively is always dangerous, because blind to reality, to do so to persons, the greatest of creatures, tends to be downright disastrous. For this reason rather than assuming the stance of the self-enclosed, self-satisfied and unreflective citizens of the Greek *polis*, it is important to look rather to the making of a people.

This was reflected in the terms "civilization" and "culture". The former referred especially to the citizen or *civis* of the city and to the social modes characteristic thereof. The latter has rather the connotation of the need to cultivate the soul in order that human life might flourish. The way that this is done by a group is the key to an understanding of an ethnic group. Thus, when the *Micropedia* cites Ashley Montagu's notion of an ethnic group as a local race, it adds that it means also a group of people sharing a common cultural heritage. And when the United Nations condemned genocide as the physical extirpation of a race, it followed immediately with a condemnation of cultural genocide as a radical undermining of a people's humanity.

How then can a people be studied in terms of its culture, indeed what can culture mean? With the development of the physical sciences in modern times, observation and induction came to be considered the sure paths to scientific knowledge. The sub-sequent development of the human sciences, in their concern to assure the recognition of their conclusions, followed this lead of the physical sciences. The examination of the externally visible and the reduction or utilitarian relation of all thereto came to be considered the appropriate methodology. Hence, the search was for patterns of action from which might be abstracted increasingly universal principles, which were taken to be the keys to human life. Read in this light, Levi-Strauss's *Totemism* unfolds a tale of the

development of anthropology in this century as progressively it took account of additional analytic levels of reality. Every twenty years a new dimension of significance was added, from the empirical approach of Elkins, to the utilitarian added by Malinowski, to the psychological by Durkheim, to the structural by Levi-Strauss him-self.

All of this reflected the search for objective knowledge from which the attention to the subject needed to be sedulously excluded. For a study of humans, however, it was precisely the subjectivity which was most defintory. This suggested the need for attention to human intentionality. This was developed in a scientific manner by Edmund Husserl and the phenomenological tradition and in terms of signs by the burgeoning science of semiology. Clifford Geertz makes note of Susan Langer's work, *Philosophy in a New Key*,¹ pointing to a shift of attention in anthropology and other human sciences from an objective science of artifacts and behavior to the hermeneutic science of meaning. Thus, ethnology as a scientific understanding of people moved beyond the treatment of all aspects of human life as mere assemblage as earlier reflected in E. B. Tylor's and C. Kluckhohn's description of culture as consisting respectively of:

that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, customs and any other capabilities and habits required by man as a member of society,² (or) "patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behavior acquired and transmitted by symbols, constituting the distinctive achievement of human groups, including their embodiments in artifacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e., historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached values; culture systems may, on the one hand, be considered as products of action, on the other as conditioning elements of further action."³

In contrast, Clifford Geertz came to focus on the meaning of all this for a people and on how a people's intentional action went about shaping its world. Thus he contrasts the analysis of culture to an experimental science in search of law, seeing it rather as an interpretative science in search of meaning.⁴ What is sought is the import of artifacts and actions, that is, whether "it is, ridicule or challenge, irony or anger, snobbery or pride, that, in their occurrence and through their agency, is getting said."⁵ For this, one must be aware "of the imaginative universe within which their acts are signs."⁶ In this light, Geertz defines culture rather as "an historically transmitted pattern of meanings embodied in symbols, a system of intended conceptions expressed in symbolic forms by means of which men communicate, perpetuate and develop their knowledge about and attitudes toward life."⁷

Nevertheless, one might ask whether this approach in terms of meaning is not itself subject to the accented intellectualism characteristic of modern times. Hence, we are just now beginning to reassemble the person: the physical that is subject to objective observation, the intellectual which searches for meaning, the will which searches for the good, and a yet more deeply human dimension at which we integrate all of these in terms of beauty and the aesthetic.

If this be the case, then in order to appreciate the nature and significance of ethnicity and groups sharing a cultural tradition this paper will take a number of steps. First, it will study human life at its core, that is in its most proper exercise of freedom. Then, it will examine in this light the nature of a culture tradition as the cumulative work of freedom over time by persons as members of communities and by peoples. Next, it will study the adaptation of their tradition to changing circumstances, and their relation to other cultural traditions. Finally it will consider more

particularly the nature of religion as a dimension of culture with a view to understanding its role in the generation and resolution of ethnic conflict.

Levels of Freedom: Levels of Human Meaning

We shall attempt to arrive at the appropriate level for attending to ethnicity as a cultural phenomenon by considering the three levels of freedom identified by Mortimer Adler through a survey of the body of Western philosophy by his *Institute for Philosophical Research*: the freedoms first to choose what I want; second to choose as I ought; and third to make myself the person I want to be.⁸

Circumstantial Freedom of Self-Realization

John Locke, in order to assure the universal availability of the basis of decision making, restricted knowledge to sense experience and reflection. David Hume concluded that all objects of knowledge must be mere matters of fact, i.e., neither the existence or actuality of a thing nor its essence, but simply the determination of one from a pair of sensible contraries. For Rudolf Carnap this came down to empirical "sets of facts", excluding speech about wholes or God and all but the immediate content of sense experience.

In brief, all that concerns the culture and commitments of a people or nation is outside the range of this first level of knowledge, and hence can be only matters of blind and arbitrary will. This restriction of knowledge constitutes an extremely limiting and intolerant ideology, no matter how hard its practitioners strive within these limits to achieve openness and pluralism. For their condition for such a pluralism inevitably becomes pervasive elimination from public discourse of all such notions of wholes as nations, peoples, or cultures and all such grounds of meaning as spirit, self, community or God. Though proposed as the condition for tolerance, this relegates commitment, meaning and values to the private domain; public life then must be a battle of self-interests in which self-ambition will have to be depended upon to check self-ambition, for nothing else can be allowed public standing. Freedom will be nothing but the right to be a wolf to the rest of humankind in the cause of self-protection and all is sacrificed to protect this "right".

It is amazing that this is proposed as the desirable pattern for social and political life, for in such terms it is not possible to speak of appropriate or inappropriate goals or even to evaluate choices in relation to self-fulfillment, much less to social well-being. The only concern is which objects among the sets of contraries I will choose by brute, changeable and even arbitrary will power, and whether circumstances will allow me to carry out that choice. Such choices, of course, may not only differ from, but even contradict the immediate and long range objectives of other persons. This will require one to compromise his or her freedom in the sense of Hobbes; John Rawls will even work out a formal set of such compromises.⁹ Throughout it all, however, the basic concern remains the ability to do as one pleases.

This includes two factors. The first is execution by which my will is translated into action. Thus John Locke sees freedom as "being able to act or not act, according as we shall choose or will;"¹⁰ while Bertrand Russell sees it as "the absence of external obstacles to the realization of our desires."¹¹ The second factor is individual self-realization understood simply as the accomplishment of one's own good as one perceives it in the empirical, and hence material, terms of the senses.

In these terms one's goal can be only that which appeals to one's senses, with no necessary relation to real goods or to duties which one ought to perform.¹² "Liberty consists in doing what one desires,"¹³ and the freedom of a society is measured by the latitude it provides for the cultivation of individual patterns of life.¹⁴ If there is any ethical theory in this it can be only utilitarian, hopefully with enough breadth to recognize other people and their good as well as one's own. In practice, over time this comes to constitute a black hole of self-centered consumption of physical goods in which both nature and the person are consumed; it is the essence of consumerism.

This first level of freedom is reflected in the contemporary sense of "choice" in North America. As a theory this is underwritten by a pervasive series of legal precedents following Justice Holmes' and Brandeis' notion of privacy, which recently has come to be recognized as a constitutional right. In the American legal system the meaning of freedom has been reduced to this. It should be noted that this derived from Locke's politically motivated decision (itself an exercise of freedom) not merely to focus upon empirical meaning, but to eliminate from public discourse any other know-ledge. Its progressively rigorous implementation, which we have but sampled in the references to Hume and Carnap, constitute an ideology in the sense of a selected and restrictive vision which controls minds and reduces freedom to willfulness. In this perspective liberalism is grossly misnamed, and itself calls for a process of liberation and enrichment.

In sum, in the context of the Enlightenment and in order to make possible universal participation in social life, Locke limited the range of meaning to what was empirically available. This assured one sense of freedom, but limited it to choices between contrary qualities. The effort was well-intentioned, but he would seem to have tried too hard and compromised too much in a single-minded pursuit of freedom of choice. As a result, the very notion of freedom has not been able to sustain itself, but over time has turned gradually into a consumerist black hole.

Acquired Freedom of Self Perfection

The second sense of freedom, namely, acquired freedom of self-perfection, was introduced above where we saw how Kant in his second Critique opened a new and much needed dimension of reason, namely, practical reason. Here freedom is founded in law precisely as I assert for myself (autonomous) a law which is fit for all men (universal). One is "able through acquired virtue or wisdom, to will or live as one ought in conformity to the moral law or an ideal befitting human nature."

Freedom here is then the ability to do, not as I want, but as I ought according to formal principles. An extensive branch of enlightenment theory now is based upon working out in theory what is dictated by this "ought"¹⁵ and how much of this can and should be formally agreed to in international conventions in order to be converted into a set of internationally recognized human rights. Certainly one would want no less and the considerable strength of the position lies in fear that this minimum not be strongly protected.

But this is exactly what happens when this second meaning of freedom is placed at the service of the first for then it is turned into a set of individual human rights which protect the right to choose. At the same time to promote this same right of private acquisition and initiative all intermediate communities and identities are rejected and the state is enlisted in the task of defending and enforcing these individual rights. Minorities and the weaker peoples of this world beware!

Existential Freedom: Natural Freedom of Self-determination as the Life of Democracy

The aesthetic sense of Kant dramatically enriches the pursuit of freedom. It integrates body and spirit, opens all to high ideals and locates in one's free and creative response to the beauty and harmony of the whole the norm of creative human engagement in reality. This greatly enriches the Enlightenment effort at constructing freedom by raising its goals and locating the exercise of human freedom, not only in terms of the abstract essences of autonomous individuals, but within our aesthetic response to a sense of beauty and harmony which transcends all, inspires awe and delight in the good, revulsion at what is evil and ugly, and the energy to transform one's personal and social life.

If structured in terms of an appreciation or feeling of harmony, freedom itself at the height of its sensibility serves as a lens presenting the richness of reality in varied and intensified ways: freedom thus understood is both spectroscopy and kaleidoscope of being. Freely, purposively and creatively, imagination weaves through reality, focusing now upon certain dimensions, now reversing its flow, now making new connections and interrelations. In the process reality manifests not only universal scientific structures and their potential interrelations, but its power to evoke our free response of love and admiration, of hate and disgust, of love and commitment.

In this manner freedom becomes at once the creative source, the manifestation, the evaluator and the arbiter of all that we can imaginatively propose. It is goal, namely to realize life as meaningful and free in this world; it is creative source, for with the imagination it unfolds the endless possibilities for human expression; it is manifestation because it presents these to our consciousness in ways appropriate to our capabilities for knowledge of multiple and limited realities and relates these to the circumstances of our life; it is criterion because its response manifests the ability of things to be variously desirable or not in terms of a total personal response of pleasure or displeasure, enjoyment or revulsion; and it is arbiter because it provides the basis upon which our freedom chooses to affirm or reject, realize or avoid various ways of self-realization.

This is progress indeed, but in his own philosophy Kant both pointed out in theory and illustrated in practice the potential this opens for a serious undermining of the sense of freedom. For if the required context for freedom is based upon proceeding hypothetically, 'as if' all is teleological then its very reality is compromised. If its exercise is restricted to the confines of the human imagination then freedom becomes, not only self-determining, but self-constituting. Again one has tried too hard and become trapped within what he or she can make or do.

One needs instead to go beyond issues of nature or essence. Freedom is not only the articulation of a law -- however autonomous and universal this might be in the pattern of Kant's second *Critique*, or at whatever stage of universalization of the sense of justice in the pattern of Kohlberg's stages of moral reasoning. Freedom is not merely a nature reflected in moral judgements, it is human life and action. It is to *be* humanly and to *live* fully, pertaining not to the order of essence, but to that of existence.

Progress in being human corresponds to one's development of a sense of being. Its deepening from forms and structures, essences and laws in Plato, to act in Aristotle and especially to existence in Christian philosophy definitively deepened the sense of human life with its triumphs and tragedies. This is the drama we are living in our days as we are called insistently to humanize the application of our technological abilities and indeed our realization of life itself. This cannot be done simply in terms of essence, that is, of a moral law or an ideal befitting human nature; rather it must be in terms of existence, that is, of deciding for oneself in virtue of the power inherent in

human nature to change one's own character creatively and to determine what one shall be and become. This is the most radical freedom, namely, our natural freedom of self-determination.

It takes us far beyond freedom as external choice between objects in our world and beyond the internal selection of universal principles for the direction of our action. It is rather self-affirmation in terms of our orientation or teleology to perfection or full realization. This implies seeking when that perfection is absent and enjoying or celebrating it when attained. In this sense, it is that stability in one's orientation to the good which constitutes a broad culture and people and which in classical instances has been termed holiness. One might say that this is life as practiced by the saints, but it would be more correct to say that it is because they lived the life of their culture to perfection that they are called "holy". It would be radically insufficient to think in these terms of a human person in isolation from others, as merely self-centered and self-concerned, for then life would be limited to the vision or hopes of only one person or a set of persons taken serially. Indeed, such person would have closed off the realization of being which should rather be open to all of nature and especially to other persons. One's concern for perfection should extend to other persons beyond what I could determine as my participation in being, and even beyond what I determine for them as their participation in being, for such an exercise of freedom on my part would return to me and remain limited within the confines of my being. Instead, by opening to others as free, that is, as they uniquely determine them-selves, my engagement in being extends definitively beyond myself to their lives and self-realization of all both singly and in community their community, all humankind and indeed all creation.

But persons are still limited, whereas their minds and hearts are open to being without end. Situated in an existential context the pointer of Kant's third Critique toward an infinite telos takes on further meaning. For it directs us toward that infinite, self-sufficient and properly creative source of our being. Corresponding to that act of infinite freedom by which we live, and breathe, and have our being, we unite with the act of being by which we are made, the act of love by which we have first been loved. Human growth in freedom is the process of self-correction and self-perfection to the point at which we are fully opened to that infinite act of freedom from which we come and to which we tend. The achievement of this openness is the state of Hindu and Buddhist Enlightenment and of Christian and Islamic Mystical Union in the divine in which God loves himself in me: "I live now not I," says St. Paul, "but Christ liveth in me." Kant himself would only say that to be authentically human, life had to be lived "as if" all is teleological. But then its exercise would be restricted by the limitations of the human imagination and freedom, more than self-determining, would be self-constituting and thus self-limited. In contrast, if the deepest striving of the human spirit is what is most real in this world, then the transcendent principle it requires must be the most real in heaven and earth; if freedom presents us with a limitless range of possibilities, then its principle must be the Infinite and Eternal, Source and Goal of all possibility. The Transcendent is the key to real liberation. It frees the human spirit from limitation to the restricted field of one's own slow, halting and even partial creative activity. It gives absolute grounding to one's reality. It certifies one's right to be respected; and it evokes the creative powers of one's heart. This is the reason why religion is the heart of culture.

Hence, to treat all this as a divisive force to be excluded from civil life and identity, as something to be rendered bloodless till it disappears, is fundamentally subversive of public life in the name of openness to abstract rather than concrete persons; it would destroy multiple concrete peoples in favor of an ideologized pluralism. Rather, the religious sense of transcendence makes much needed contributions to modern life. To the liberal sense of freedom as arbitrary choice, awareness of the transcendent Creator adds that life is not only a matter of selecting between which

physical realities we will consume, but of *being*, with its characteristics of self-identity, communication and sharing, justice and love.

To the aesthetic awareness of Kant as described above, awareness of the transcendent as the context of human life grounds the intuition of human meaning, dignity and rights.

To the enlightenment egalitarian search for universal participation in social decision making, this aesthetic sense tempers the aggressive excesses of self-centered personal identity with that broad sense of harmony both with man and with nature needed in our ever more complex and crowded world.

This indeed is freedom writ large. Beyond issues of procedure or balances of interests, it is the reason why such a divine Person provides a dynamic center for free and constructive human efforts; it gives dramatic impulse to the very essence of democracy as personal participation in social life; it is the transforming presence in the heart of everyone who suffers injustice; it is the source of new life for person and society. This is the real key to the liberation of a people, indeed it is the issue of the foundation and extent of reality and hence of human life itself. As with family and smaller community, to exclude this from nation building or to attempt to erase religion from the identity of a people is to condemn them to subservience to the state and its predominant political power.

Culture

In the light of this third constructive sense of freedom one can begin from within to follow the components of the study of a culture: hermeneutics, values, historicity, tradition, application and interpretation.

Hermeneutics

The circumstances of the Greek messenger make manifest the basic dilemma of hermeneutics (from Hermes, the ancient Greek messenger from the gods) and interpretation, which has come to be called the hermeneutic circle. This consists in the fact that any understanding of the parts requires an understanding of the whole, while the grasp of the whole depends upon some awareness of its parts. This appears in four ways. First, the herald had not merely to pass on a written text, but to speak or proclaim it. This could be done only by reading through all the parts of the message in sequence. But grasping these as parts requires some understanding of the whole message from the very beginning. How can a whole of meaning depend upon parts, which for their very meaning depend upon the whole? Secondly, the message had to be conveyed in a particular historical time and place, and with specific intonation and inflection. But this would convey only one particular sense from the many potentialities of the words. Thirdly, the messenger had not only to express, but also to explain the message and its ramifications or meaning. This required a certain awareness of the broader context of the issue and of the language as the repository of the culture within which the message was composed. In sum, in order to interpret, convey, or receive a message, some sense of the whole is required for assembling and interpreting its parts; but how can one know the whole before knowing its parts?

This appears also from the task of the messenger in translating or bearing the meaning of the text from the source, in its own context, to others in their distinctive set of circumstances and with their projects and preoccupations. The etymology of the term underlines this task. 'Interpret' combines *praesto*: to show, manifest or exhibit, with the prefix *inter* to indicate the distinction of

the one from whom and the one to whom the message is passed.¹⁶ This difference could be between past and present, as when an ancient text is being reread today; between one culture and another, as when a text in another language than one's own is being interpreted; or indeed, between persons, even in the same culture and time, provided full attention be paid to the uniqueness of each person. But given this difference, how is communication and its implied 'community' between the two contexts possible, for were it not to be possible we would be left with never-ending violent clashes between persons, classes and values.

Values and Virtues

The term 'value' was derived from the economic sphere where it meant the amount of a commodity required in order to bring a certain price. This is reflected also in the term 'axiology,' the root of which means "weighing as much" or "worth as much." This has objective content, for the good must really "weigh in" -- it must make a real difference.¹⁷

The term 'value' expresses this good especially as related to persons who actually acknowledge it as a good and respond to it as desirable. Thus, different individuals or groups, or possibly the same but at different periods, may have distinct sets of values as they become sensitive to, and prize, distinct sets of goods. More generally, over time a subtle shift takes place in the distinctive ranking of the degree to which they prize various goods. By so doing they delineate among objective moral goods a certain pattern of values which in a more stable fashion mirrors their corporate free choices. This constitutes the basic topology of a culture; as repeatedly reaffirmed through time, it builds a tradition or heritage.

By giving shape to the culture, values constitute the prime pattern and gradation of goods experienced from their earliest years by persons born into that heritage. In these terms they interpret and shape the development of their relations with other persons and groups. Young persons, as it were, peer out at the world through cultural lenses which were formed by their family and ancestors and which reflect the pattern of choices made by their community through its long history -- often in its most trying circumstances. Like a pair of glasses, values do not create the object, but reveal and focus attention upon certain goods and patterns of goods rather than upon others.

Thus values become the basic orienting factor for one's affective and emotional life. Over time, they encourage certain patterns of action -- and even of physical growth -- which, in turn, reinforce the pattern of values. Through this process we constitute our universe of moral concern in terms of which we struggle to achieve, mourn our failures, and celebrate our successes.¹⁸ This is our world of hopes and fears, in terms of which, as Plato wrote in the *Laches*, our lives have moral meaning and we can properly begin to speak of virtues.

The reference to the god, Hermes, in the term 'hermeneutics' suggests something of the depth of the meaning which is sought and the implication of this for the world of values. For the message borne by Hermes is not merely an abstract mathematical formula or a methodological prescription devoid of human meaning and value. Rather, it is the limitless wisdom regarding the source and hence the reality, the priorities and hence the value of all. Hesiod had appealed for this in the introduction to his *Theogony*: "Hail, children of Zeus! Grant lovely song and celebrate the holy race of the deathless gods who are forever. . . . Tell how at the first gods and earth came to be."¹⁹

Aristotle indicated this concern for values in describing his science of wisdom as "knowing to what end each thing must be done . . . ; and this end is the good of that thing, and in general the supreme good in the whole of nature." Such a science will be most divine, for: "(1) God is thought

to be among the causes of all things and to be a first principle, and (2) such a science either God alone can have, or God above all others. All the sciences, indeed, are more necessary than this, but none is better."²⁰ Hence, rather than considering things in a perspective that is only temporal and totally changing -- with an implied total relativization of all -- hermeneutics or interpretation is essentially open to a vision of what is most real in itself and most lasting through time, that is, to the perennial in the realm of being and values.

Historicity

In undertaking his search for unchanging and permanent guides for human action Socrates had directed the attention of the Western mind away from the temporal and changing. In redirecting attention back to this changing universe, the modern mind still echoed Socrates by searching for the permanent structures of complex entities and the stable laws of change. Nevertheless, its attention to the essentially temporal character of mankind and hence to the uniqueness of each decision, individual and corporate, opened important new horizons.

In the term hermeneutics, the element of translation or interpretation stresses the presentation to the one who receives the message. In this their historical situation, and hence the historical character of human life, becomes essential. This brings into consideration not merely the pursuit of general truth, but those to whom truth is expressed, namely, persons in the concrete circumstances of their cultures as these have developed through the history of human interaction with nature, with other human beings and with God.

This human history sets the circumstances in which one perceives the values presented in the tradition and then mobilizes his or her own project toward the future. Given the admixture of good and evil in human action the process of realizing the good in human history always has been compromised with evil. Consequently, the past as well as the present must always be deciphered or interpreted in order to identify both its value content and the contradictions of that content; and projections towards the realization of values in the future must provide also for encountering and overcoming evil.

Tradition

In the light of the above it is necessary now to follow out culture in time and it forms a tradition as the normative locus and summation of the ambiguous human experience of values; to analyze the application and adaptation of the tradition in the concrete circumstances of history; and to consider hermeneutics as a method for making positive use of the distinctiveness of one's own point in history in order more broadly to appreciate this content of the human experience of other cultural groups.

To situate and emphasize the relation of meaning to tradition John Caputo, in *Act and Agent: Foundations for Moral Education and Character Development*,²¹ notes that from its very beginnings, even before birth, one's experience is lived in and with the bio-logical rhythms of one's mother. Upon birth there follows a progressively broader sharing in the life of parents and siblings; this is the context in which one is fully at peace, and hence most open to personal growth and social development. In a word, from its be-ginning one's life has been historical: it has been lived in time and with other persons. In the family one's life and learning is realized in relation to the prior life and learning of family members upon which it depends for development and

orientation. This is the universal condition of each person, and consequently of the development of human awareness and knowledge.

In terms of this phenomenological understanding interpersonal dependence is not unnatural - quite the contrary. We depend for our being upon our creator, we are conceived in dependence upon our parents, and we are nurtured by them with care and concern. Through the years we depend continually upon our family and peers, school and community. Beyond our personal and social group we turn eagerly to other persons whom we recognize as superior, not basically in terms of their will, but in terms of their insight and judgment precisely in those matters where truth, reason and balanced judgment are required. The preeminence or authority of wise persons in the community is not something they usurp or with which they are arbitrarily endowed, but is based upon their capabilities and acknowledged in our free and reasoned response. Thus, the burden of Plato's *Republic* is precisely the education of the future leader to be able to exercise authority, for while the leader who is wise but indecisive may be ineffective, the one who is decisive but foolish is bound upon destruction.

From this notion of authority it is possible to construct that of tradition by adding to present interchange additional generations with their accumulation of human insight predicated upon the wealth of their human experience through time. As a process of trial and error, of continual correction and addition, history constitutes a type of learning and testing laboratory in which the strengths of various insights can be identified and reinforced, while their deficiencies are corrected and complemented. The cumulative results of the extended process of learning and testing constitute tradition. The historical and prophetic books of the Bible constitute just such an extended concrete account of one's people's process of discovery carried out in interaction with the divine.

The content of a tradition serves as a model and exemplar, not because of personal inertia, but because of the corporate character of the learning by which it was built out of experience and the free and wise acts of succeeding generations in reevaluating, reaffirming, preserving and passing on what has been learned. The content of a long tradition has passed the test of countless generations. Standing, as it were, on the shoulders of our forebears, we are able to discover and evaluate situations with the help of their vision because of the sensitivity they developed and communicated to us. Without this we could not even choose topics to be investigated or awaken within ourselves the desire to study those problems.²²

Tradition, then, is not simply everything that ever happened, but only what appears significant in the light of those who have appreciated and described it. Indeed, this presentation by different voices draws out its many aspects. Thus tradition is not an object in itself, but a rich source from which multiple themes can be drawn according to the motivation and interest of the inquirer. It needs to be accepted and embraced, affirmed and cultivated. Here the emphasis is neither upon the past or the present, but upon mankind living through time.

But neither is tradition a passive storehouse of materials to be drawn upon and shaped at the arbitrary will of the present inquirer; rather, it presents insight and wisdom that is normative for life in the present and future. Just as prudence (*phronesis*) without law (*nomos*) would be as relativistic and ineffectual as muscular action without a skeletal substructure, so law built simply upon transcendental or abstract vision, without taking account of historicity, would be irrelevant idealism. Hence, there is need to look into historicity to see if human action in time can engender a vision which sufficiently transcends its own time to be normative for the present and directive for the future.

This would consist of a set of values and goals which each person should seek to realize. Its harmony of measure and fullness would suggest a way for the mature and perfect formation of persons and of mankind.²³ Such a vision would be both historical and normative: historical because arising in time and presenting an appropriate way to preserve and promote human life through time; normative because presenting a basis upon which to judge past ages, present actions and options for the future. The fact of human striving manifests that every humanism, far from being indifferent, is committed to the realization of some such classical and perduring model of perfection.

It would be erroneous, however, to consider this merely a matter of knowledge, for then it would engage, not entire peoples, but only a few whom it would divide into opposing schools. The project of a tradition is much broader and can be described only in terms of the more inclusive existential and phenomenological horizon as described Samay and Caputo in *Act and Agent*,²⁴ namely, as including both body and spirit, knowledge and love. It is, in fact, the whole human dynamism of reaching out to others in striving toward ever more complete personal and social fulfillment through the realization of understanding and love, and thereby of justice and peace.

Finally, the classical model is not drawn forward artificially by overcoming chronological distance; rather, it acts as inspiration of, and judgment upon, man's best efforts. Through time it is the timeless mode of history. We do not construct it, but belong to it, just as it belongs to us -- for it is the ultimate community of human striving. Hence, historical and cultural self-criticism is not simply an individual act of subjectivity, but our situatedness in a tradition as this fuses in us past, present and future.²⁵

As mentioned in the introduction, the sense of the good or of value which constitutes tradition is required also in order to appreciate the real impact of the achievements and deformations of the present. Without tradition, present events become simply facts of the moment, succeeded by counter-facts in ever succeeding waves of contradiction. This would constitute a history written in terms of violence in which human despair would turn to a Utopian abstraction of merely human origin -- a kind of *1984* designed according to the reductive limitations of a modern rationalism.

This stands in brutal contrast to the cumulative richness of vision acquired by peoples through the ages and embodied in the figure of a Bolivar or Lincoln, a Gandhi or Mother Theresa, or a Martin Luther King. Not mere matters of fact, but eminently free and unique as concrete universals they exemplified the above-mentioned harmony of measure and fullness which is at once classical and historical, ideal and personal, normative and free. Living in their own times, they emerge out of history to judge and inspire peoples of all times and places.

Application: The Adaptation of a Cultural Tradition to Changing Circumstances

In considering application we turn, as it were, from the whole to its parts, from tradition to its particular meaning for each new time, to ordering the present and constructing the future. This is a matter, first of all, of taking time seriously, that is, of recognizing that reality includes authentic novelty. This contrasts to the perspective of Plato for whom the real is the ideal, the forms or ideas transcending matter and time, of which physical things and temporal events are but shadows. It also goes beyond rationalism's search for clear and distinct knowledge of eternal and simple natures and their relations. A fortiori, it goes beyond method alone without content.

In contrast to all these, H.-G. Gadamer's notion of application²⁶ means that tradition, with its inherent authority or normative force, achieves its perfection in the temporal unfolding of

reality. Secondly, it shows human persons, not as detached intellects, but as inextricably enabled by, and formative of, their changing physical and social universe. Thirdly, in the area of moral values and human action it expresses directly the striving of persons to realize their lives, the orientation of this striving and its development into a fixed attitude (*hexis*). Hence, as distinct from the physical order *ethos* is a situation neither of law or of lawlessness, but of human and therefore developing institutions and attitudes which regulate, but do not determine.²⁷

There are certain broad guidelines for the area of ethical knowledge which can serve in the application of tradition as a guide for historical practice. The concrete and unique reality of human freedom when lived with others through time constitutes a distinctive and ever-changing process. This is historicity and means that our responses to the good are made always in concrete and ever-changing circumstances. Hence, the general principles of ethics as a philosophic science of action must not be purely theoretical knowledge or a simple accounting from the past. Instead, they must help people exercise their conscious freedom in concrete historical circumstances which as ever changing are ever new

Here an important distinction must be made between *techné* and ethics. In *techné* action is governed by an idea as an exemplary cause which is fully determined and known by objective theoretical knowledge (*epistémé*). Skill consists in knowing how to act according to that idea or plan; and when it cannot be carried out perfectly some parts of it are simply omitted in the execution.

In ethics the situation, though similar in the possession of a practical guide and its application to a particular task, differs in important ways. First, in action as moral the subject constitutes oneself, as much as one makes the object, for agents are differentiated by their action. Hence, moral knowledge as an understanding of the appropriateness of human action cannot be fully determined independently of the subjects in their situation.

Secondly, adaptation by moral agents in their application of the law does not diminish, but rather corrects and perfects the law. In a world which is only partially and generally ordered, the law cannot contain in any explicit manner the concrete possibilities which arise in history. It is precisely here that the freedom and creativity of the person is located. This does not consist in an arbitrary response, for Kant is right in saying that without law freedom has no meaning. Nor does it consist simply in an automatic response determined by the historical situation, for then determinism and relativism would compete for the crown in undermining human freedom. Human freedom consists rather in shaping the present according to a sense of what is just and good, and in a way which manifests and indeed creates for the first time more of what justice and goodness mean.

Hence, the law is perfected by its application in the circumstances. *Epoché* and equity do not diminish, but perfect the law. Without them the law would be simply a mechanical replication doing the work not of justice, but of injustice. Ethics is not only knowledge of what is right in general, but the search for what is right in the situation and the choice of the right means for this situation. Knowledge regarding the means is not then a matter of mere expediency; it is the essence of the search for a more perfect application of the law in the given situation. This is the fulfillment of moral knowledge.²⁸

It will be important to note here that the rule of the concrete (of what the situation is asking of us) is known not by sense knowledge which simply registers a set of concrete facts. In order to know what is morally required, the situation must be understood in the light of what is right, that is, in the light of what has been discovered about appropriate human action through the tradition

with its normative character. Only in this light can moral consciousness as the work of intellect, (*nous*) rather than of sensation, go about its job of choosing the right means.

Hence, to proceed simply in reaction to concrete injustices as present negations of the good, rather than in the light of one's tradition, is ultimately destructive. It inverts the order just mentioned and results in manipulation of our hopes for the good. Destructive or repressive structures would lead us to the use of correspondingly evil means, truly suited only to producing evil results. The true response to evil can be worked out only in terms of the good as discovered by our people, passed on in tradition and applied by us in our times.

The importance of application manifests the central role played by the virtue of prudence (*phronesis*) or thoughtful reflection which enables one to discover the appropriate means for the circumstances. This must include also the virtue of sagacity (*sunesis*), that is, of understanding or concern for the other. For what is required as a guide for the agent is not only technical knowledge of an abstract ideal, but knowledge that takes account of the agent in relation to other persons. One can assess the situation adequately only inasmuch as one, in a sense, undergoes the situation with the affected parties. Thus, Aristotle rightly describes as "terrible" the one who can make the most of the situation, but without orientation towards moral ends, that is, without concern for the good of others in their situations.

In sum, application is not a subsequent or accidental part of understanding, but co-determines this understanding from the beginning. Moral consciousness must seek to understand the good, not as an ideal to be known and then applied, but rather through discerning the good for concrete persons in their relations with others.

This can contribute to sorting out the human dilemma between an absolutism insensitive to persons in their concrete circumstances and a relativism which leaves the person subject to expediency in public and private life. Indeed, the very statement of the dilemma reflects the deleterious aspect of the Platonic view of ideas. He was right to ground changing and historical being in the unchanging and eternal. This had been Parmenides' first insight in metaphysics and was richly developed in relation to human action through the medieval notion of an eternal law in the divine mind. But it seems inappropriate to speak directly in these terms regarding human life. In all things individual human persons and humankind as a whole are subject to time, growth and development. As we become increasingly conscious of this the human character of even our abstract ideals becomes manifest and their adapted application in time can be seen, not as their rejection, but as their perfection. In this, justice loses none of its force as an absolute requirement of human action. Rather, the concrete modes of its application in particular circumstances add to what can be articulated in merely abstract and universal terms. A hermeneutic approach directs attention precisely to these unfoldings of the meaning of abstract principles through time. This is not an abandonment of absolutes, but a recognition of the human condition and of the way in which this enriches our knowledge of the principles of human life.

What then should we conclude regarding this sense of the good which mankind has discovered, in which we have been raised, which gives us dominion over our actions, and which enables us to be free and creative? Does it come from God or from man, from eternity or from history? Chakravarti Rajagopalachari of Madras answered:

Whether the epics and songs of a nation spring from the faith and ideas of the common folk, or whether a nation's faith and ideas are produced by its literature is a question which one is free to answer as one likes. . . . Did clouds rise from the sea

or was the sea filled by waters from the sky? All such inquiries take us to the feet of God transcending speech and thought.²⁹

Interpretation as Interaction Between Cultural Traditions

Thus far we have treated the character and importance of tradition. This bears the long experience of persons interacting with this world, with other persons and with God. It is made up not only of chronological facts, but of insights regarding human perfection which have been forged by human efforts in concrete circumstances, e.g., the Greek notion of democracy and the enlightenment notions of equality and freedom. By their internal value these stand as normative of the aspirations of a people.

Secondly, we have seen the implications of historicity for novelty in the context of tradition, the continually unfolding circumstances of historical development, and the way in which these not merely extend or repeat what went before but constitute an emerging manifestation of the dynamic character of the vision articulated by the art, religion, literature and political structures of a cultural tradition. But the question arises, how can earlier sources which express the great achievements of human awareness be understood in a way that is relevant, indicative, and directive of our life in present circumstances? In a word, how can we draw out the significance of tradition for present action?

First it is necessary to note that only a unity of meaning, that is, an identity, is intelligible.³⁰ Just as it is not possible to understand a number three if we include but two units rather than three, no act of understanding is possible unless it is directed to an identity or whole of meaning. This brings us to the classic issue, described above as the hermeneutic circle, in which knowledge of the whole depends upon knowledge of the parts, and vice versa. How can we make this work for, rather than against us?

The experience of reading a text might help. As we read we construe the meaning of a sentence before grasping all its individual parts. What we construe is dependent upon our expectation of the meaning of the sentence which we derived from its first words, the prior context, or more likely a combination of the two. In turn, our expectation or construal of the meaning of the text is adjusted according to the requirements of its various parts as we proceed to read through the parts of the sentence, the paragraph, etc., continually reassessing the whole in terms of the parts and the parts in terms of the whole. This basically circular movement continues until all appears to fit and to be clear.

Similarly, as we begin to look into our tradition we develop a prior conception of its content. This anticipation of meaning is not simply of the tradition as an objective or fixed content to which we come; it is rather what we produce as we participate in the evolution of the tradition, and thereby further determine ourselves. This is a creative stance reflecting the content, not only of the past, but of the time in which I stand and of the life project in which I am engaged. It is a creative unveiling of the content of the tradition as this comes progressively and historically into the present and, through the present, passes into the future.

In this light, time is not a barrier, a separation or an abyss, but rather a bridge and opportunity for the process of understanding, a fertile ground filled with experience, custom and tradition. The importance of the historical distance it provides is not that this enables the subjective reality of persons to disappear so that the objectivity of the situation can emerge. On the contrary, it makes possible a more complete meaning of the tradition, less by re-moving falsifying factors, than by

opening new sources of self-understanding which reveal in the tradition unsuspected implications and even new dimensions of meaning.³¹

Of course, not all our acts of understanding are correct, whether they be about the meaning of a text from another culture, a dimension of a shared tradition, a set of goals or a plan for future action. Hence, it becomes particularly important that they not be adhered to fixedly, but be put at risk in dialogue with others.

In this the basic elements of meaning remains the sub-stances which Aristotle described in terms of autonomy and, by implication, of identity. Hermeneutics would expand this to reflect as well the historical and hermeneutic situation of each person in the dialogue, that is, their horizon or particular possibility for understanding: an horizon is all that can be seen from one's vantage point(s). In reading a text or in a dialoguing with others it is necessary to be aware of our horizon as well as of that of others. It is precisely when our initial projection of the meaning of a text (another's words or the content of a tradition) will not bear up under the progressive dialogue that we are required to adjust our projection of their meaning.

This enables us to adjust not only our prior understanding of the horizon of the other with whom we are in dialogue, but especially our own horizon. Hence, one need not fear being trapped in one's horizons. They are vantage points of a mind which in principle is open and mobile, capable of being aware of its own horizon and of transcending it through acknowledging the horizons of others. The flow of history implies that we are not bound by our horizons, but move in and out of them. It is in making us aware of our horizons that hermeneutic consciousness accomplishes our liberation.³²

In this process it is important that we retain a questioning attitude. We must not simply follow through with our previous ideas until a change is forced upon us, but be sensitive to new meanings in true openness. This is neither neutrality as regards the meaning of the tradition, nor an extinction of passionate concern for actions towards the future. Rather, being aware of our own biases or prejudices and adjusting them in dialogue with others implies rejecting what impedes our understanding of others, of texts or of traditions. Our attitude in approaching dialogue must be one of willingness continually to revise our initial projection or expectation of meaning.

There is then a way out of the hermeneutic cycle. It is not by ignoring or denying our horizons and prejudices, but by recognizing them as inevitable and making them work for us. To do so we must direct our attention to the objective meaning of the text in order to draw out, not its meaning for the author, but its application for the present. Through this process of application we serve as midwife for the historicity of a text, tradition or culture and enable it to give birth to the future.³³

Method of Question and Answer

The effort to draw upon a text or a tradition and in dialogue to discover its meaning for the present supposes authentic openness. The logical structure of this openness is to be found in the exchange of question and answer. The question is required in order to determine just what issue we are engaging in order to direct our attention. Without this no meaningful answer can be given or received. As a question, however, it requires that the answer not be settled or determined. In sum, progress or discovery requires an openness which is not simply indeterminacy, but a question which gives specific direction to our attention and enables us to consider significant evidence. (Note that we can proceed not only by means of positive evidence for one of two possible responses, but also through dissolving counter arguments).

If discovery depends upon the question, then the art of discovery is the art of questioning. Consequently, whether working alone or in conjunction with others, our effort to find the answer should be directed less towards suppressing, than toward reinforcing and unfolding the question. To the degree that its probabilities are built up and intensified it can serve as a searchlight. This is the opposite of both opinion which tends to suppress questions, and of arguing which searches out the weakness in the other's argument. Instead, in conversation as dialogue one enters upon a mutual search to maximize the possibilities of the question, even by speaking at cross purposes. By mutually eliminating errors and working out a common meaning we discover truth.³⁴

Further, it should not be presupposed that the text holds the answer to but one question or horizon which must be identified by the reader. On the contrary, the full horizon of the author is never available to the reader, nor can it be expected that there is but one question to which the text or tradition holds an answer. The sense of the text reaches beyond what the author intended; because of the dynamic character of being as it emerges in time, the horizon is never fixed but continually opens. This constitutes the effective historical element in understanding a text or a tradition. At each step new dimensions of its potentialities open to understanding; the meaning of a text or tradition lives with the consciousness and hence the horizons -- not of its author -- but of persons in history. It is the broadening of their horizons, resulting from their fusion with the horizon of a text or a partner in dialogue, that makes it possible to receive answers which are ever new.³⁵

In this one's personal attitudes and interests are, once again, most important. If our interest in developing new horizons is simply the promotion of our own understanding then we could be interested solely in achieving knowledge, and thereby domination over others. This would lock one into an absoluteness of one's prejudices, for being fixed or closed in the past they would disallow new life in the present. In this manner powerful new insights can become with time deadening pre-judgments which suppress freedom.

In contrast, an attitude of authentic openness appreciates the nature of one's own finiteness. On this basis it both respects the past and is open to discerning the future. Such openness is a matter, not merely of new information, but of recognizing the historical nature of man. It enables us to escape from what had deceived us and held us captive, and enables us to learn from new experiences. For example, recognition of the limitations of our finite planning enables us to see that the future is still open.³⁶

This suggests that openness consists not so much in surveying others objectively or obeying them in a slavish and un-questioning manner, but is directed primarily to ourselves. It is an extension of our ability to listen to others, and to assimilate the implications of their answers for changes in our own positions. In other words, it is an acknowledgment that the cultural heritage has something new to say to us. The characteristic hermeneutic attitude of effective historical consciousness is then not methodological sureness, but readiness for experience.³⁷ Seen in these terms our heritage is not closed, but the basis for a life that is ever new, more inclusive, and more rich.

From this what emerges is that a culture is the creation of a people's freedom through time. It is the condition for their living humanely as the exercise freedom in time and building thereby a life worthy of themselves with others. This then is not a matter for suppression, indeed its suppression would unleash upon the world a dehumanized horde.

Religion as a Cultural Phenomenon

It remains now to look at the character and role of religion from the perspective of an anthropology as a hermeneutic science. Geertz defines religion as

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of actuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.³⁸

In this formulation Geertz builds progressively to identify the level of insight, to identify the characteristic moods and motivations, to ground these in a religion's sense of reality and then to align all three in an act which is simultaneously one of insight conviction, and commitment. Following Geertz, let us look in greater detail at the elements of his definition.

(1) *Religion is a set of symbols.* Symbols are concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes etc. They are *models for* function by providing sources of information in terms of which other non-symbolic processes can be patterned. Thus, they serve as templates for producing reality. But especially cultural patterns are *models of* the non-symbolic processes which they represent, express and render intelligible in a different medium. In this sense doctrines and rites "give meaning or objective conceptual form, to social and psychological reality both by shaping themselves to it and by shaping it to themselves."³⁹ Geertz sees the essence of human thought as the perception of the congruence between these two sets of processes one serving as a program or symbol of the other as programmed.

(2) *Religion establishes pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men.* Motivations are directional in character and hence have their meaning in terms of the ends towards which they point. Moods, lead nowhere but pervade all; their meaning reflects the conditions from which they arise. Thus charity is religious motivation when it is enclosed in a conception of God's purposes; hope is a religious mood when grounded in a conception of the divine nature.⁴⁰

(3) *Religion does this by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence.* The emerging appreciation of the importance of meaning enables us to see, in turn, the importance of symbols and cultural patterns. Without these we would be functionally in-complete, "a formless monster with neither sense of direction nor power of self-control, a chaos of spasmodic impulses and vague emotions."⁴¹ This threat appears especially in three forms: meaninglessness, suffering and evil.

First, we are deeply disquieted by questions regarding the ability of received cultural patterns or myths, no matter how improbable if taken literally rather than symbolically, to enable us to understand our world. These set ordinary experience in a broader metaphysical context lest we "be adrift in an absurd world." This disquiet reflects our mega-concern, namely, regarding what it is to be human and whether our existence, and indeed existence itself, is intelligible, makes sense and has meaning.

A second point of central concern is suffering and evil. This is the affective correlate of the above problem of meaning. Here religion faces not the question of how suffering can be dismissed, but rather of how it can be faced and endured. This is done ritually by placing the suffering in a context in which it can be expressed, hence understood, and thus endured by ordering our emotions.⁴²

Thirdly, the problem of evil raises a challenge not only to our emotions, but more deeply to the adequacy of our culture and its symbolic structure to provide the ethical criteria needed to rule our action. How is one to bridge the gap between things as they are and as they ought to be?

In all these three dimensions of the understanding, emotional response and moral action the role of religion is not to deny that something are unexplained, painful and unjust, but to deny that life as such is inexplicable, unendurable or unjust.⁴³ Religious symbolism enables both this affirmation of ignorance, pain and injustice which denying that such are the supreme characteristics of reality as a whole.

(4) *Religion clothes these conceptions in an aura of special actuality.* The existence of the above-noted bafflement before the unexplained, suffering and injustice drives one toward belief in gods, totems and the like, but is not the basis for their beliefs. One must believe in order to understand ("crede ut intelligas", Augustine). What then is the religious perspective and how is it adopted?

Geertz contrasts the religious to the common sense and the scientific perspectives. In the former things appear as givens to be accepted and acted upon pragmatically. These realities need to be situated in the wider perspective accepted in faith. The scientific perspective is marked by systematic doubt and inquiry, whereas the religious perspective is characterized by non-hypothetical truths, by commitment rather than detachment, and by encounter rather than analysis.⁴⁴ Thus Geertz sees the essence of religious actions as imbuing with persuasive authority a complex of symbols along with the metaphysics they formulate and the style of life they recommend.

It is in ritual as consecrated behavior that the conviction in the soundness of religious conceptions and directives is generated. The ceremonial brings together the moods and motivations induced by sacred symbols with general conceptions of the order of existence; "the world as lived and the world as imagined (are) fused under the agency of a single set of symbolic forms (and) turn out to be the same world."⁴⁵ This fusion of dispositional ethos and conceptual worldview is had especially in "the more elaborate ceremonies. For the outside observer these are only presentations of a particular religious perspective, subject to scientific analysis and aesthetic appreciation, but for participants they are also its enactment, materialization and realization. Such ceremonies are not only *models of* but *models for* in which "men attain their faith as they portray it."⁴⁶ By inducing a set of moods and motivations -- an ethos -- and defining an image of cosmic order -- a world view -- by means of a single set of symbols, the performance of the ceremony or ritual readers religious belief as *model for* and *model of* true trans-positions one of the other.

(5) *Religion thus renders the moods and motivations uniquely realistic.* Because our life is lived in the everyday world of common sense and practical acts, the impact of religious rituals have their greatest human impact in reflecting back and coloring the individual's conception of the ordinary world. The sociological interest in this is not as a description of the social order, but -- along with political power, personal affection, etc. -- as shaping that order.

Geertz would stress the movement back and forth between the religious perspective experienced especially in rituals, which engulf the total person transporting him or her into another mode of existence, and the common sense perspective lived in the midst of everyday life. This is recognized by religions in setting special times for prayer, through the year, at the beginning and of each day, the noon "Angelus" or the five prayer times of Islamic practice. Without recognition of this transition back and forth life comes to be read reductivistically either as simply spiritual or simply material, neither of which is self-sufficient.

This passing back and forth does not mean, however, that the life is alternately purely religious or purely secular. The common sense world when seen in the context of the wider reality is changed, completed and corrected. Placing ordinary acts in ultimate context alters radically one's outlook on life in its entirety so that religiously induced moods and motivations come to be considered supremely practical, and indeed the only sensible ones in view of the religious understanding of how things really are. It can be said that what men believe is what they are, and vice versa, and if this is a radically personal act, then the impact of religion upon personal and social systems is infinitely varied. This excludes general conclusions regarding the value of religion in moral or functional terms.

The significance of religion in terms of anthropology or ethnology lies in its capacity to serve individuals or groups, on the one hand, as a *model of* general yet distinctive concepts of the world, the self and the relations between the two, and, on the other hand, as a *model for* rooted "mental" dispositions, from which cultural functions flow other social and psychological ones.⁴⁷ Beyond or, more correctly, through their direct metaphysical context religious concepts provide a general framework which lends meaningful form to our intellectual, moral, emotional and moral experiences. This is not only a matter of interpreting social and psychological processes. Even more, it is a matter of shaping these by setting them in a sense of what is "really real". The derivative dispositions then color one's sense of what is reasonable, practical, human and moral. Anthropology thus has two tasks with regard to religion: first, analyzing "the systems of meaning embodied in the symbols which make up the religions, and, second, relating these systems to socio-cultural and psychological processes."⁴⁸

For the issue of scriptural faith and ethic conflict, the above would appear to open a number of distinct roads for analysis and hence for response. Anthropological analysis identifies four issues at play: (a) the nature of the "really real" and hence of all derivative reality (b) the pervasive mood set by religion, (c) its motivational power, and (d) the relation of all these to the concrete circumstances of everyday life.

(a) If the religious view consists in seeing all in terms of an ultimate "really real", the scriptural faith agree that this is an absolute and good creator and goal of all. Frithjof Shoun senses a certain difference in emphasis in appreciating the absolute: an Islamic stress upon unity, a Jewish stress upon truth, and a Christian stress upon love. The three are mutually complementary -- indeed technically convertible such that the true is the good and vice versa -- in such wise that the three scriptural faith experiences should be complementary and mutually enriching. The metaphysics of this relation of the transcendental properties of being is important for overcoming conflict which arises from less adequate conceptions that might allow them to appear conflictual rather than complementary.

(b) If mood is generated by the conditions in which it arises then it is important that these conditions be religious, that is, predicated upon a sense of reality as ultimately and hence radically unified, just and good. This requires that the sense of religion be lively. It requires further that its implications be universal or ex-tended to include all humankind and indeed physical nature as well. This sense can -- indeed must -- come from within in ethnic culture but must reach out beyond it to include the "other".

(c) Given the motivating power of a culture, Geertz does not see violent clashes between ethnic or cultural groups as being due to a lessening of cultural identity for that would result rather in confusion and passivity. Violent ethnic conflict would appear to be due rather to the sense of cultural identity being situated in circumstance where its motivational and mood generating power are misdirected. "Social conflict is not something that happens when, out of weakness,

indefiniteness, obsolescence, or neglect, cultural forms cease to operate, but rather something that happens when . . . such forms are pressed by unusual situations or unusual intentions to operate in unusual ways."⁴⁹

This suggests the importance of (d), namely, the relation of the religious to the circumstances of daily life. It was noted that one does not live entirely or simply in one or the other dimension, but moves back and forth carrying messages from one to the other. As the order of reality bespeaks the primacy of the absolute or creator over the creature, it is for the latter to be modeled on the former as one, just and loving, rather than vice versa, that is, rather than modelling the divine on the multiple and hence potentially conflictual created world.

The above analysis of tradition and hermeneutic interpretation suggested that the relation between cultural groups and scriptural faiths is not a matter of compromise or of attenuation of one's religion or of the culture that reflects it. Rather, it is the real opportunity to deepen that religious commitment, unfold its meaning, and live it afresh in our days.

But these are new insights, their realization does not follow automatically. If the situations and intentions are unusual that press the religious culture to operate in unusual ways, then the challenge to be faithful to the religious roots of one's cultural identity requires acute analysis of the situation and creative appreciation of one's religious tradition. Only thus will it be possible to fashion an appropriate response to present challenges and to realize the spiritual growth needed to respond to religious motivation and set the mood required for cooperation. In this in the words of President Kennedy remain true: "in this world God's work is truly man's own."

Notes

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23. H.G. Gadamer, *Truth and Method* (New York: Crossroads, 1975), pp. 240, 246-247, 305-310.
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31. *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264.
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33. *Ibid.*, pp. 225-332.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 336-340.
35. *Ibid.*, pp. 327-334.
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37. *Ibid.*, p. 90.
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39. *Ibid.*, p. 99.
40. *Ibid.*
41. *Ibid.*, 105
42. *Ibid.*, p. 108.
43. *Ibid.*, pp. 111-112.
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46. *Ibid.*, p. 123.
47. *Ibid.*, p. 125.
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Chapter X
A Biblical Reflection on Ethnicity and Culture:
Response to George McLean and Reply

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I have read Dr. McLean's paper with care and interest. I am not an anthropologist but a scriptural person, and my response must be oriented along these lines. I find much in this paper that I agree with. Oftentimes I agree with the conclusions but not in the steps by which Dr. McLean gets there, and conversely often agree with the line of thought but not the conclusions. It is to these issues that I wish to respond today.

Let me initially restate what I have learned from his paper. Dr. McLean approaches the problem of ethnic conflict through anthropological insights of some of the classic studies of Levi Strauss, Durkheim, Kluckhohn, and more recently Geertz. At the outset, and as a recurring theme, he separates ethnic conflict from religious issues, a position which I question later. He maintains that religious underpinnings will eliminate ethnic conflict. Having stated his thesis, he proceeds to an analysis of culture, hoping to separate the cultural forms from the religious enterprise.

At the onset there is a rejection of British Associationism as developed in the Locke-Berkeley-Hume triad, as denying cultural freedom. In spite of the fact that Locke has some influence on American constitutional jurisprudence, I seriously doubt that any-one ever took Locke, Berkeley, and Hume to be definitive of cultural systems except among logical positivists who reject all axiological systems. It was primarily an epistemology for natural scientific knowledge. I think the issue is a "straw man." In a like manner he rejects Kant's "categorical imperative." Although Immanuel Kant is widely read in undergraduate philosophy, I doubt seriously if his *Second Critique* is of major importance today.

Finally McLean turns to an hermeneutic method, the method of interpreting the meaning for the present time from the liturgy, myth, legend, and tradition of a people. I like this method because my generation some 40 years ago was reading Rudolph Bultmann¹ and Karl Barth² and doing precisely that to Scriptures. The hermeneutic analysis in Scripture follows the same procedure: recognition of the role of the *Nabi*, or prophet, the story or *maggid*, the use of the *Sitzim-Leben* of the historic scene, and the proclamation of authority, the *kerygma* or message. In modern times, the sociologist Peter Berger has extended this method to the institutionalization of religion as a whole beyond the Scriptural application in his well-known *Sacred Canopy*³ and *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies*.⁴ In all cases is the emergence of value in the solidification of tradition. With the tradition, authority to pass the tradition becomes paramount. Every rabbinical ordination contains the formula "*yore yoreah*" -- "let him teach" (presumably the tradition). Rightly, McLean derives the semantic meaning of "value." In Hebrew, value is translated from *kabodh* meaning heavy and therefore worthy. It has the obvious equivalent meaning of honor.

Professor McLean now applies these insights, well known in Scriptural circles, to differentiate between technical knowledge and skill (*techne*) from an organic subject-object creativity, the kind that Alfred Whitehead⁵ developed. Here is the relationship of agnosticism or perhaps *episteme*. It is from this relationship that the norms of society emerge, the *nomos* which Antigone proclaimed as higher than the *physikos* and the *nomos* which became in the New Testament a mistranslation for *torah* which means literally *didaskalos* or teaching. Through the norms a "situation ethics" derives existentially applicable to different concrete situations but always developing the ideal in the concrete. It is at this juncture that McLean makes a statement which I believe needs to be

challenged, namely that "current injustices are divorced from the traditions that produced them." Indeed we cannot show the development of Nazi Germany was a function of Luther's conflict with Jews. But in Biblical circles there was always the term "higher anti-Semitism" or "theological anti-Semitism," perhaps the kind found in such an eminent Biblical scholar as Rudolph Kittel. Some fifty years ago Joshua Trachtenberg⁶ tried to trace anti-Semitism as derivative from the first century's view on demonology. Trachtenberg may not be entirely correct, but his method still raises questions that such a separation as proposed by Dr. McLean is artificial and naive.

At any rate McLean proceeds to hold that Scriptural studies are a key to the reduction of ethnic conflict. His definition of religion following Geertz is quite correct, but it does not seem to be isolated from cultural tradition as a whole. McLean identifies the tautological character of Scriptures by showing that Islam emphasizes unity, the Old Testament emphasizes truth and the New Testament emphasizes love. Everyone agrees that this is true, but does extensive knowledge of this fact in changing *Sitzim-Leben* lead to a meaningful dialogue which is open? No one denies with him the need to expand one's personal "horizon of meaning." Dialogue, if at all possible, requires this as a minimum. But does knowledge lead to dialogue? In fact, much modern dialogue has been mutual "back scratching" for common denominators that do not exist nor are important. There are fundamental differences between apocalyptic adventists and, say, the contemporary and growing movement known as the "Jesus Seminar."⁷ It is important to know the differences between these two movements, but can and does this produce dialogue?

In summation, I am not persuaded by this paper that the conclusions follow analysis which is more or less correct. Linking Scriptural study to an hermeneutic study of culture may produce scholarship and insight. But does it necessarily produce more? How is "openness" achieved?

From my own point of view, divesting religious values from ethnic considerations may be impossible. Alfred North Whitehead defined religion as "symbolic thinking" quite appropriately. But equally well, ethnic traditions are symbolic and both are subsumed together. Religion and tradition both articulate the unconscious. This unconscious is tied to the cosmological world-view and the people and the language in an organic way in which the subject-object cannot be "bifurcated." Some years ago I attempted to demonstrate in publication the view that the linear historical approach of Judaeo-Islam-Christian thought derives from the language of the Bible.⁸ In Hebrew the language is syncategorematic, tying every-thing in action-oriented activity. There is no well-defined tense structure. God always speaks in an imperfect tense, implying activity in which past, present, and future are united. Passage through time is both as religious activity and human history.

One must contrast this with the elaborate voices and declinations of the Greek Indo-European language which takes on spatial and a temporal if not eternal patterns. The Greek world is physical, but the Hebrew world is temporal. This cosmology develops a Scripture and a Tradition which are interwoven. One of the major claims of Orthodox Christianity is that Scripture and Tradition are one and the same. For them the New Testament was an Apostolic witness to its Lord, and Tradition was a hermeneutic response to the Apostolic witness. Christianity and Judaism differ by way of eschatology but not by structure of a God who acts in history or by the Divine-human encounter. Significantly enough, Islamic tradition maintains that the Qur'an was dictated to Mo-hammed by Gabriel and not by the Divine utterance. Again we see the human encounter.

Given this development, liturgy, tradition, and Scripture all become an articulation of an unconscious *Weltanschauung* or World-view in a set time of history or *Sitzim-Leben*. Hermeneutics asks what is the meaning for this hour of passage. Peter Berger in modern times has demonstrated how the institutionalization of the tradition produces a religious sanctification of the

establishment, a "*sacred canopy*" over the secular society. Calvinism may be a canopy for the capitalist endeavor. Some years ago Will Herberg pointed out that identification of a person's denomination frequently described his/her lifestyle including his/her clubs and social associations.⁹ The word ethnic is from the Greek *ethos* or "nation" translated into Hebrew as *God* or *goyim* and represents the dividing line between "we" and "they" of the nations. The daily liturgy of the Jewish prayer book of the fourth century BC specifically says "who has not made us like the other nations of the earth." To the extent that the horizons are blurred by similar world-views, dialogue becomes easier. I find Jewish-Christian dialogue enjoyable (including Islamic thought). I find myself at a loss with, say, Mahayana Buddhists whose view of time, history, and meaning are so different from mine.

I think that I am suggesting that Scriptural scholarship may not produce meaningful dialogue in reducing ethnic conflict, and our horizons of the other. I think all would agree that Islamic terrorists do not characterize Islam; neither did the Dukhaborers of Canada mirror Christianity when they blew up the Canadian National Railroad; nor does the *neturai karma* of Jerusalem, who reject Israel because the messiah did not come on a white horse, represent mainstream Judaism. But knowing all this does not reduce the conflict. Allport once suggested in his monumental *The Nature of Prejudice*¹⁰ that association alone may increase the prejudice rather than weaken it. So while a reduction of conflict is possible, there is also the possibility of intensifying it.

Moreover, Scriptural study has different meanings. The Fundamentalists maintain that Barth and Bultmann used the right vocabulary with entirely different meanings. Hermeneutics may disclose these differences in semantic meaning, but only if the term "resurrection" has a spectrum of religious meanings. Study may only show how these meanings are culturally defined to begin with. In recent times considerable attention has been given to the "Jesus Seminar," a scholarly group studying the historical Jesus in the light of recent linguistic and archaeological scholarship on the *Qumran Dead Sea Scrolls*. Although many rely on a questionable documentary source, namely *The Gospel of Thomas*, what has emerged is a picture of Jesus as a "marginal Jew" to use the term given by your own Catholic University scholar John Mayer.¹¹ Thus Jesus must be understood as a Jew within the midrashic/rabbinic times, a Jew who marched to a different drummer in opposing the conventional wisdom of the age. Indeed this comes as relief in vindicating the bitter attacks on the Pharisees made by the Gospels. It portrays Jesus as within the Pharisaic Separatist tradition. The larger question looms: what does this say about anti-Semitism? I submit it is fascinating titillation for the *Society of Biblical Literature*, but the SBL never has had ethnic conflict from its beginning. Perhaps we are intellectually stroking ourselves into believing that scholarship is the key. Or are we in the throes of the Republic of Plato looking for philosopher-kings?

It would seem that the problem lies far beyond the religious dimension although the good will or religious leadership must be a given. Ethnic conflict is tied to the traditions of a culture which include religion, its liturgical style, its mythology, its prophets, and its teachers. We live in a world of vast information sharing and the implosion of too much information may be the current malaise of our civilization, producing the anomie, alienation, and anxiety of our times, ethnically and universally. Be that as it may, Harvey Cox was more right than wrong in his *Secular City* in pointing out the bland sameness of the world and the same Coca-Cola in Bombay and the same death rated by suicide world-wide.¹² Cox repudiated his book later, but I am convinced that he was more correct than not. This has led to a mass cross-cultural diffusion. When I was a child in the city of Boston, a bagel was something only a Jewish person ate and was regarded otherwise as mysterious forbidden food. Today supermarkets all over the world sell bagels, and I had one in

Sao Paulo, Brazil in 1968, never a remarkably Jewish city. I am not suggesting that culinary traditions are important but that cross cultural diffusion is slowly transforming ethnic identities.

I do not propose that cross cultural diffusion including religious traditions will solve ethnic conflict. Somehow I feel that the singing of Jewish songs in Christian services or the appearance of "soul music" is not a solution to anything but may reflect the slow cross cultivation of diverse cultures and ethnicities. But as a Biblical person rather than as an anthropologist, I am not sure that I share the solution presented in Dr. McLean's paper. Is the problem of Bosnia-Herzegovina an ethnic one, a religious war of Muslim *versus* Christian, or a political struggle? Or are they all different modes of a particular world-view? I am reminded of the story Karl Jung told of the two boys talking. One said to the other: "Do you believe in Santa Claus?" "No," he replied: "It is like the devil. It turns out to be your father."

Notes

1. Rudolf Bultmann, *The Theology of the New Testament*, Vols. I-II (New York, 1951-1953).
2. Karl Barth, *Dogmatics in Outline* (New York, 1959).
3. Peter Berger, *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (London, 1969).
4. *The Noise of Solemn Assemblies* (New York, 1961).
5. *Process and Reality* (New York, 1959).
6. *The Devil and the Jews* (New Haven, 1944).
7. Cf., for example, Marcus J. Borg, *The New Vision of Jesus* (San Francisco, 1957).
8. Henri M. Yaker, Humphrey Osmond, Frances Cheek, *The Future of Time* (New York, 1971).
9. Will Herberg, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (New York, 1955).
10. Gordon W. Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Cambridge, MA, 1934).
11. John Mayer, *Jesus the Marginal Jew*, vol. I & II (New York, 1993-94).
12. Harvey Cox, *The Secular City* (New York, 1965).

A Brief Response

George F. McLean

Professor Yaker in bringing to these considerations the rich in-sights of his experience in biblical scholarship, helps to clarify the contribution which hermeneutics can make in facing the challenge of ethnic self-awareness and the conflicts which can follow.

The intent of my chapter, however, was not to separate ethnicity from religion or traditions from their consequences, but quite the contrary, namely, to see religion as the basis for cultural and ethnic identity and the latter in turn as the specifier of our actions and interactions. That intent is the key to interpreting the meaning of the chapter and linking its premisses with its conclusions. H.G. Gadamer would call these our pre-judgements and hermeneutics the process of bringing these into alignment with the text in order to be able to interpret its meaning. (My computer does not find the contrary quote cited by Professor Yaker, namely, that "current injustices are divorced from the traditions that produced them.")

In truth, it would be naive to hope that religion or anything else could eliminate ethnic conflict. Human evil is the unfortunate Siamese twin of human freedom; to eliminate the first would in principle kill the second. But this does not preclude a search for the basis of peace and harmony, tracing this to the principles and sources of unity. Such a search leads to the one God, as creator and goal, and to the relation of all thereto, which is to say precisely: to religion.

Indeed, the root problem of our times as cultures reemerge into prominence after a long period of suppression, is our atrophied ability to appreciate their force and to apply them to the holy purpose of the Creator. The limitation of the range of human interests, curtailed to the pragmatic since the "enlightenment" has rendered us insensitive to the level of human freedom at which we shape and are shaped by our culture. The problem of our times is not a denial of cultural freedom and creativity, but blindness thereto.

In this we lose touch with, or even depreciate the power of the philosophies which have shaped our outlook. But, in matters regarding our cultural traditions, to forget what has formed them is to slip from being their creator, as means for implementing our life with grace and meaning, to being enslaved thereby. It may be true that relatively few people recognize the name of John Locke, but the Founding Fathers who wrote the basic documents of our modern democratic life -- The Declaration of Independence and The Constitution -- did know his writings and used his ideas as a guiding star in setting the course of our democratic institutions. To forget this or to ignore it in discussions of public policy is to lose sight of where we are headed, why and how.

This I believe to be a central problem for the role of religion in public life in our day. When reason is considered corrupted rather than merely weakened it is treated as separated and even opposed to biblical faith in human resurrection.

This engenders two parallel problems: on the one hand, such reason employed in the work of social reconstruction sees itself as secular and set against religion, while, on the other hand, religion in attempting to protect itself from fallen reason slips out of touch with reason's social inventions for democratic life. As a result, the two cannot engage each other in creative dialogue, but constitute alternate power blocks: the defeat of either of which would be a human disaster. Their unreconciled coexistence is a formula for the mutual impoverishment of all.

Both faith and reason are essential for our time; we cannot succeed by asserting one at the expense of the other. It is essential to explore how reason has been weakened but not corrupted, how faith can be a key to its redemption and reconstitution, and how such a restored humankind

with its diversity of peoples can take up the important challenges of reconciliation, peace and cooperation for the coming millennium.

Chapter XI
**Radical Freedom and the Primordial Story of Abraham and Sarai:
Response to George McLean**

Joseph G. Donders (Washington Theological Union)

Asked to respond to McLean's paper from within my Christian conviction, I will address mainly the part that intrigues me most in his paper, viz. the third part: Primordial Solidarities.

In his interpretation of freedom McLean tells us that the most radical freedom is the freedom of self-determination, i.e. unfolding "the endless possibilities for human expression" -- a self-affirmation in terms of our full self-realization, in a "holy" way by those who live the life of their culture to perfection, and who are called saints.

Let us put this statement in the context of the primordial story the three traditions in question have in common, namely the story of the call, vocation, or mission of Abram and Sarai. They heard in their Chaldean environment a divine voice telling them to leave their ethnic group, to become a new beginning. A move that would not only be a blessing for them, but for the whole of humanity. They were asked in their particular case to take into account a call that would have a universal significance for them, for the others, and for them and the others together. The call itself -- either heard from within or from without -- is reported as coming from the one we call in English "God," a word we all can use because it is really no name, but an acclamation, the acknowledgment of "something" that transcends us.¹

In the story of Abram and Sarai we touch upon the mystery of the way we not only "are," but "exist." Though created and consequently limited, we are relating to the Transcendent, and according to the Bible story about our origin, charged with the divine breath. We find here our primordial solidarity. But we find it as a treasure that has still to be unearthed, as fish in the water that has still to be caught, as a yeast that has still make itself felt all through the dough, as a seed that has still to unfold, as a bud that has still to open, but also as the bread that should be broken and the wine that is to be shared.

A number of hermeneutic issues pose themselves in this context, such as how we can know the whole before knowing its parts, the parts before we know the whole, or the question of how to find the value of all. A factor that should not be overlooked is the material side of our existence. Sartre once noted that any philosophy or theology that does not take into account the scarcity of words is no help.

Another issue in a story like the one of Abram and Sarai is whether those who feel and know themselves called in this way should consider themselves as the part that is loved more, or even exclusively, by the one who is calling them and at the same time loves all. It is the temptation of considering oneself a "privileged group," the temptation of "fascism." The now apparently overhauled official South African state ideology rested on the fascist idea of a God who preferred some to others. This is an idea, or perhaps better said, a temptation that is understandable and may even be unavoidable, but one that is not faithful to the truth. It is a lie, while can also be expressed in a "social order" that makes profit for some at the cost of others.

A lie is the denial of something that one knows to be the truth. Do we know that we are all one? In one of his last prayers Jesus prayed, "That they all may be one" (John 17:21). Isaiah spoke about what Abram and Sarai began to experience as a mountain of the Lord's temple to which all nations would stream (Isa. 2:2). This experience of our primordial "oneness" is not strange to the con-temporary scene.

The thing that strikes one about the psychology of religion is not the differences in dogma (over which so much blood has been spilled pointlessly) but the commonality of insight; namely, simply that all men and women are brothers and sisters and that we should treat others as we treat ourselves. Thus Christianity: "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so unto them" (Matthew 7:12); Judaism: "What is hurtful to yourself do not do to your fellow man" (*Talmud*); Hinduism: "Do nought to others which if done to thee would cause thee pain" (*Mahabharata* 5.15.17); Buddhism: "Hurt not others with that which pains yourself" (*Udadavarga* 5.18) The unity of insight encoded in these sayings is all the more remarkable because they seem, for the most part, to have evolved independently, in different parts of the world under the influence of different cultural traditions at different times during history. The feeling that each of us is capable of loving the worlds is a common human intuition. Most of us, when supremely happy, are able to affirm, "I'm in love with all mankind." However, to let the matter rest there is to miss the message. What these sayings tell us is not merely that we should use a common code of conduct in our dealings with our fellow creatures, but rather that, at the tap-root level, we are our fellow humans, that the distinctions which divide us are functions of ego and of differing phases of growth.

I am too young to have any memories of the Second World War, but I have a vividly etched memory of a photo I saw of the campaign in the Western desert, where my father fought. It showed a soldier naked from the waist up, hung over the edge of a gutted tank. He looked so pathetically young and beautiful that it was hard to realize that what I was looking at was death. I mention that image because it always brings to mind the saying of the Greek philosopher Sophocles: "Who is the slayer and who the victim? Speak.", and over two centuries later, the words of the German soldier poet Heinrich Lersch: "My eyes deceive me but my heart cannot: each corpse has my brother's face." What these lines tell us is that, in those moments of compassion that reach beyond tears, the boundary between self and other breaks down. We are our victims; each act of degradation perpetrated on the body or mind of another is an act of violence against ourselves. Bertrand Russell captured another element of the same intuition when he said he who watches a crime in silence commits it.²

There are many examples of this "unfolding" or our original "oneness" from within what McLean calls "the nature of one's own finiteness." Examples would be Thomas Merton (and his universalized "Wisdom" experience), Etty Hillesum, Simone Weil, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, to mention only some that come immediately to mind.

It is in our "finiteness" that we meet the personal, ethnic, cultural and "historic" context of this "enlightenment." Thomas Merton described this continuous call for self actualization in the "exclusive language of his time:

the full discovery of who he himself is . . . the fulfillment of his own God-given powers . . . (And) the discovery that he himself cannot find himself in himself alone, but that he must find himself in and through others.³

This condition is true of every human being, and consequently at the same time of every human community, whether defined in ethnic, national, or religious terms. As Edward Schillebeeckx discovered:

For even Jesus not only reveals God but also conceals him, since he appeared among us in non-godlike, creaturely humanity. As man he is a historical, contingent

being who in no way can represent the full riches of God . . . unless one denies the reality of his real humanity (and than runs contrary to the consensus of the church). So the gospel itself forbids us to speak of a Christian imperialism and exclusivism. Isaiah's prophetic complaint also applies to Jesus: 'Truly, you are a God who hides yourself' (Is 45: 15), and the gospels make him say this on the cross. On the other hand, anyone who does not take into account the specific and distinctive religious relationship of Jesus to his hidden God seeks to understand Jesus either on the basis of preexisting metaphysical concepts or within preexisting social and political framework of interpretation, both of which are alien to the gospel. In both cases the contingent, historical figure of Jesus is distorted.⁴

Strangers become unexpected messengers who can embody or mirror what is as yet un-
enfolded in USA. They are consequently welcome as they lead us to self-discovery, and at the same time a kind of "scandal" as they reveal our own finiteness. The "questioning" mentioned by McLean is often far from easy. We frequently are envious of our own relations and answers, and jealous of those of others. Jesus welcomes the religious insights and attitudes in the "strangers" around him (e.g. in his meetings with the Roman Centurion, the SyroPhoenician and Samaritan women, his own followers and even children). He himself has frequently proved to be far from welcome in the lives of others.⁵

It is only recently that we began to "meet" each other in our different religious approaches -- I would count modern secularism as one of those others! It is interesting to gauge, as derived from Geertz's description of religion -- quoted by McLean, -- the difficulties we will meet:

(1) A system of (set) symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of actuality that (5) moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.⁶

Those different 'approaches' are experienced by each of us as ex-pressing 'reality' itself!

To conclude this response I would like to point at the development of the dialogue in the community I myself belong to. The "Guidelines and Suggestions for Implementing the Conciliar Declaration, *Nostra Aetate*, No. 4" published by the *Vatican Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews* (Rome 1975), states:

that the history of Judaism did not end with the destruction of Jerusalem, but rather went on to develop a religious tradition. In 1982, Pope John Paul II drew the following conclusion: Our common spiritual heritage is considerable. Help in better understanding certain aspects of the Church's life can be gained by taking an inventory of that heritage, but also by taking into account the faith and religious life of the Jewish people as professed and lived now as well.⁷

Introducing the text of the 1985 document of the "*Committee for Religious Relations with the Jews*. Notes on the Correct Way to Present Jews and Judaism in Preaching and Catechesis in the Roman Catholic Church," the Committee Secretary, Msgr. Jorge Mejia, stated:

There is the affirmation about Christ and his saving event as central to the economy of salvation . . . this does not mean that the Jews as a people cannot and should not draw salvific gifts from their own traditions. Of course they can and should do so.⁸

Notwithstanding the sometimes rather awkward formulations these seem to be interesting pointers to what might happen in the future.

Coming back to Jesus' prayer, that "they all may be one," I would like to add what follows those words. In John's text he adds "May they all be one, as you, Father, are in me, and I in you" (John 17:21). This saying seems to indicate that our oneness, our primordial solidarity, is an existing reality to be discovered and unfolded in relationships, as we have been doing in this dialogue.

Notes

1. Cf. *The Compact English Dictionary* (Second Edition; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), pp. 639-642; John Ayto, *Dictionary of Word Origins* (New York: Arcade Publishing, 1991), p. 258.
2. Darryl Reaney, *The Death of Forever* (Melbourne: Long-man Cheshire, 1991), pp. 240-241.
3. *No Man is an Island* (New York: Harcourt Brace and Jovanovich, 1955), p. xv.
4. *Jesus in Our Western Culture, Mysticism, Ethics and Politics* (London: SCM Press, 1987), pp. 2-3.
5. Cf. Anthony J. Gittins, *Gifts and Strangers* (Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 1989).
6. George McLean, above; Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p. 90.
7. Cf. Eugene Fisher, "Interpreting *Nostra Aetate* Through Post-conciliar Teaching," *International Bulletin of Mission Research*, vol. 9, No.4 (Oct. 1985), 162.
8. *Ibid.*

Chapter XII

Ethnicity and Community in Islam

Chaoura Bourough

The subject of ethnic conflict is increasingly becoming central in the discourse of social sciences. "Nation-States," which were the symbol of power and unity, regardless of their ideology and level of economic development, disintegrated, leading to the emergence of smaller ethnic states. Nation-states seem to be losing their *raison d'être* because they fail to "nationalize" the identity of the various ethnic groups that constituted them.

Some countries were split peacefully and democratically, others violently. And in some others, ethnic violence turned into a long war resulting in massive destruction and death.¹ Hatred and revenge sometimes fueled ethnic violence and perpetuated it to the extent of acquiring "a life of its own."² Muslim countries, secular and non-secular, have their share of ethnic conflict and violence despite the fact that the Qur'an and Hadith (the sayings of the Prophet Mohammed) spoke clearly against it.

This paper examines the concepts of ethnicity and community in Islam as a monotheistic religion and as a school of thought. The aim is to show that the nature of Islam as a religion and state supersedes ethnic divisions and that ethnic conflict is, in fact, a response to attempts of secularization of society by the nation-state.

Ethnic Groups, Culture and Religion

In the past, social anthropologists were interested merely in the study of traditional ethnic groups. They focused on the "tribe" as a closed community whose members had common blood ties, belonged to the same race, and shared a common culture. The tribe, as R. Naroll stated, is "that group of people whose shared, learned way of life constitutes a whole 'culture' rather than a mere 'subculture'."³ But with the evolution of human society and the political and economic changes that accompanied it, there emerged new types of ethnic groups and communities which constituted a subculture within the larger society rather than a whole 'culture'. In this respect, Theodorson defines ethnic group as

a group with a common cultural tradition and a sense of identity which exists as a subgroup of a larger society. The members of an ethnic group differ with regard to certain cultural characteristics from the other members of their society.⁴

The concept of community in general refers to a form of social existence and social organization in small human aggregations such as a village or a town, or in large aggregates such as a city. This concept is sometimes used to denote whole aggregations such as "Muslim community" or "world community." The concept of community is, thus, a much more general concept than ethnic group. Ethnic groups are communities but communities are not necessarily based on ethnicity.

We can distinguish between two important approaches in ethnic social studies:

1. The primordial or traditional approach, represented by Fredrick Barth and Clifford Geertz, argues that "ethnicity is something ascribed at birth, deriving from the kin-and clan-formation

need of human beings, and hence something more or less fixed and permanent."⁵ This is what Clive Christie calls "rooted identity" or intrinsic aspects of identity such as birth, family, and the land.⁶

2. The situational approach, represented by Daniel Bell and Michael Banton, views ethnic membership as relevant only in some situations. The individual belongs to an ethnic group by his free will. Therefore, his ethnic membership is circumstantial not permanent.⁷ This approach is concerned with what Christie termed "created identities." There are other approaches but these are not relevant here. This definition views culture as a complex human-made "web" or network. The role of the anthropologist is to look for the meaning of the different symbols within that culture. The point I want to make here is that whether the focus of social anthropologists (and sociologists) is on "rooted identities" or on "created identities," their logic maintains that human society is divided by factors that can be either inherited or chosen by individuals. Human groups are studied to show diversity rather than unity. This error is due to the neglect or ignorance of the role of religion as a uniting force. Social anthropologists saw religion only as part of the culture of an ethnic group. Sir Edward Tylor, for example, defined culture as that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom and other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.⁸

Religion, in this definition, is seen as a component of the whole culture acquired or "created" by humans. Geertz offers a more explicit definition of culture:

the concept of culture is essentially a semiotic one. Believing with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance, he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law but an interpretive one in search of meaning.⁹

From this perception of culture, Geertz, in his studies, looked for the meaning of symbols and relationships by focusing on certain aspects of culture. He studied, for example, traditional market (suq) transactions in Morocco in order to understand society as a whole.¹⁰

The place of religion in social anthropological approach is secondary. It is, as other aspects of culture, a creation of man. This conviction led Geertz to say: "our problem, and it grows worse by the day, is not to define religion but to find it."¹¹ And he adds: "religion may be a stone thrown in the world, but it must be a palpable stone and someone must throw it."¹² The Geertzian definition of religion stems directly from his perception of society and culture. He followed the footsteps of Durkheim and Weber. Durkheim, who saw societies worshipping themselves through religion, defines the latter as

a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden -- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a church, all those who adhere to them.¹³

Geertz's definition of religion identified what Durkheim called a "system of beliefs" as a system of "symbols" created by men to develop a certain conception of life. Religion, Geertz wrote is

(1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men by (3) formulating conceptions of a general

order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of actuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic.¹⁴

The point in citing these definitions of religion is not to prove that Islam, as a religion, is not "a system of symbols" created by men. This is a question of belief and faith. What I want to emphasize here is that the principles of Islam, as will be explained later, are universal and can not be seen through cultural practices of certain societies. When Geertz studied the practices of Islam in Morocco and Indonesia, he saw Islam as "a characteristic conception of what life was all about."¹⁵ This is a very narrow conception of Islam which reduces it to mere cultural traits and practices.

This judgment of Islam follows from the assumption of those anthropological studies which view tribes as backward, or as uncivilized ethnic groups. In these studies tribes are considered simply "as inferior social categories, lying beyond or buried under the civilized, organized world."¹⁶ Al-Faruqi, a prominent Muslim scholar sees anthropology as the field that is most biased

Its objects -- the "primitive" societies of the non-Western world -- were silent data, incapable of raising a critical finger at their masters. Theory after theory was erected to force the data into a mould, the categories of which were part and parcel of the Western world-view.¹⁷

This prejudice led some Muslim scholars to advocate their own approach called "Islamic Anthropology." The most prominent of those is Akbar S. Ahmed who wrote extensively on Islam in tribal societies (which he calls "simpler societies") and Islam in the modern world.¹⁸ Ahmed defines Islamic Anthropology as the study of Muslim groups by scholars committed to the universalistic principles of Islam - humanity, knowledge, tolerance -- relating micro village tribal studies in particular to the large historical and ideological frames of Islam.

Ahmed, astonishingly, warns that "Islam is here understood not as theology but sociology. The definition thus does not preclude non-Muslims."¹⁹ One cannot but ask the burning question: how can a non-Muslim be an Islamic anthropologist? Certainly Islam is a universal religion and thought, but faith is its essential component.²⁰

Ethnic Identity in Islam

The Qur'an and Hadith spoke clearly against ethnic identity. In Islam, piety is the criterion for being a noble Muslim not the sense of belonging to an ethnic group or community. The Qur'an says

Men, We have created you from a male and a female, and made you into nations and tribes, that you might get to know one another. The noblest of you in God's sight is he who is most righteous (49:13)

The Qur'an, therefore, recognizes differences among human communities but those differences are seen as formal. Allah judges Muslims, not by their social origins, but by their piety and their righteousness. These are the noblest identity factors.

The prophet Mohammed emphasized the supremacy of belonging to the Muslim Umma over ethnic identity:

He is not of us who calls for party-spirit, and he is not of us who fights for party spirit, and he is not of us who dies for party spirit.²¹

The Prophet said that there is no distinction between human beings on the basis of race or physical qualities:

You are in no way better than the red one or the black one except that you surpass him on account of piety.²²

In another Hadith the Prophet warned those who were still showing pride in their ancestral origin. The Prophet stressed that all men are equal. They were all the descendants of Adam:

Surely Allah removed from you the evils of the days of ignorance and its boast of ancestors. . . . Men everyone of them, are children of Adam and Adam was from dust.²³

From the point of view of Islam, it is required that a Muslim abandon his/her "rooted identity" and his/her "created identity" in favor of a sacred identity, that is, the sense of belonging to the Umma whose master is not a human being, but Allah.²⁴ But giving up these identities does not mean abolishing them altogether because Allah created human beings as "nations" and "tribes." Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, the advocate of pan-Islamism, explains this point:

many who are seeking for truth have come to the conclusion that a strong feeling of ethnic identity must be counted as integral to human nature. However, if necessity has created this sort of individualistic racial solidarity, there is no doubt that such solidarity can disappear just as it can arise. When men recognize the existence of the supreme judge . . . [they] no longer . . . have any need for an ethnic sentiment which has lost its purpose and whose memory has been erased from their souls; judgement belongs to Allah, the Sublime, the Magnificent.²⁵

Ethnic identity, as studied and defined by social anthropologists, is not compatible with Islam. In the Islamic state both ruler and ruled are the servants of Allah. The more the state is committed to the application of the Sharia (Islamic law), the more justice there will be. And so there will be no need for ethnic identity. The Umma identity replaces ethnic identity.

Umma Versus Nation-State

The concept of Umma is the key to understanding Islam as a faith and as a state. There is no exact translation of this concept in English. The closest translation is perhaps "the Muslim universal community." The Umma is not a tribe nor an ethnic group nor a community nor even a society or nation. These latter concepts embody in them a sense of difference, particularity, and hence dis-unity, whereas Umma emphasizes universalism and unity. The members of the Umma, i.e., the Muslims, are all equal vis-a-vis the Sharia. Unlike secular laws, which are made and changed according to human will and interest, the sharia is a given, and what the Muslim has to do is to apply it. The best Muslim ruler is, therefore, one who strives to apply it. If the ruler fails to fulfill his role, tensions and divisions arise and ethnic divisions become a logical response.

The amount of power given to Muslim rulers is a product of their observance of Divine regulations, of the way in which they follow the good directions which these prescribe, and of the absence of all personal ambition in them. Each time a ruler tries to distinguish himself by

surpassing all others in luxury or the magnificence of his mode of life, or each time that he tries to assume a greater dignity than his people, then the people return to their tribal loyalties, differences arise and the ruler's power declines.²⁶

It is, then, the duty of the Muslim, whether ruler or ruled, to strive within the Umma to realize the will of Allah. And for that purpose he must regard every member of the Umma, regardless of race or color or ancestral origin, as a brother or sister. The prophet Mohammed described this particular solidarity when he said:

You will see the believers in their mutual kindness, love and sympathy just like one body. When a limb complains, the whole body responds to it with wakefulness and fervor. ²⁷

According to the Qur'an, the Umma that responded to the Divine will is blessed by Allah:

You are the best Umma given to mankind. You prescribe the good and prohibit evil, and you believe in Allah (3:110)

The Umma as defined above was short-lived. It lasted only forty years -- under the Prophet Mohammed and the four Khalifas who succeeded him. The system of Khalifa (succession) that started with the Umayyad in 662 CE and ended with the Ottoman Khilafa in 1923, witnessed the rise and fall of the regional powers, which challenged the central authority of the central state, and so the true meaning of Umma, as described by the Qur'an and Hadith, was never achieved. In the end, Muslim societies, which were subjected to colonial domination, followed the footsteps of their colonizers and established secular nation-states in the name of development and modernization.

This brief background is necessary because during the twentieth century, especially during the current quarter, Muslim scholars and leaders of some Islamic political movements are calling for the return to the spirit of Umma. They call on Muslims to refuse secular states that neglected the very essence of Umma which is the unity of Muslims. Abul ala Mawdudi, a strong advocate of "world-state" has said in this respect:

those who accept the principles of Islam are not divided by any distinction of nationality or race or class or country. The ultimate goal of Islam is a world-state in which the chains of racial and national prejudices would be dismantled and all mankind incorporated in a cultural and political system, with equal rights and equal opportunities for all.²⁸

Some scholars see no contradiction between nationalism and the universal character of Islam. Arab nationalism and Islam, says al Bazzaz, are misunderstood. They are not contradictory because they have the same "political aims".²⁹ Other scholars maintained that there could be no Muslim unity without first achieving Arab unity.³⁰

In the light of what has been said above about the concept of Umma, especially in the Qur'an and Hadith, the views expressed by al-Bazzaz and al-Husri do not seem convincing. The very concept of "Arab unity" entails the establishment of a state on the ethnic factor. Other non-Arab ethnic groups might claim their own separate states. Arab countries have experienced this

phenomenon and should learn from the lessons of history that the Arabs and non-Arabs were united by Islam.

"Nation-state," as one scholar put it, "is alien to Muslim political culture . . . the present generation of Muslim nation-states have not solved, and are unlikely to solve, any of the problems that now confront the Umma."³¹

The State of the Umma : Muslims as Majorities and as Minorities

The number of Muslims in the world today is over one billion. Three hundred and fifty million of them live as minorities in different countries of the world. The rest live as majorities in Muslim states. Islamically speaking, the Umma is composed of the majorities and minorities. But since Muslims have always lived with non-Muslim communities, particularly Christians and Jews, how does Islam view this interfaith coexistence?

The followers of Scriptures believe in the same God as Muslims. Thus, they hold a special place within Muslim majorities. They are called "Ahl- Dhimma," which means that they are tolerated minorities under the protection of the Muslim state. The Qur'an tells the Muslims:

Be courteous when you argue with the People of the Book, except with those among them who do evil. Say "we believe in that which is revealed to us and which was revealed to you. Our God and your God is one. To him we surrender ourselves" (29:46).

This means that the People of the Book will be respected as believers and that they will not be pressured to give up their religion. The Qur'an states that "there should be no compulsion in

religion." (2:256) The prophet Mohammed himself respected Jews and Christians in the first Islamic state he established. And the Khalifa Omar, in a message sent to the governor of Egypt (then part of the Islamic State) emphasized tolerance and respect for the Copts and other minorities.³²

These examples attest to the peaceful and tolerant nature of Islam vis-a-vis other faiths. In reality, however, the world is witnessing violent clashes and wars between Muslims and the People of the Book -- Muslims and Jews in Palestine, Muslims and Christians in Bosnia, and Muslims and Christians in Sudan, to name a few. These conflicts attest to the fact that nation-states have failed to unite the people and to achieve meaningful development. The quest for power alienated the people and so they had to turn to other forms of solidarities.

The Muslims who live as minorities in non-Muslim states are spiritually part of the Umma and politically part of the states in which they live. In 1988, a conference organized by Al-Azhar (the Islamic University of Cairo, Egypt), dealt with the state of Muslim minorities in the world.³³ These minorities were divided into two categories: Muslims living in states, which had been, in the past, part of the Islamic state and Muslims who migrated, of their own will, to non-Muslim countries around the world, mainly for economic reasons.³⁴

There are about twelve million Muslims in Europe, about fifty millions in the ex-Soviet Union (17% of total population), about one hundred millions in India (12%), five millions in the Philippine (8%), about forty five millions in Nigeria (46%), and about two millions in the United

States. In some countries, as in France, Islam has become the second religion after Christianity. Muslims also constitute a substantial part of the population in many other countries.³⁵

The Al-Azhar conference concluded that the state of Muslim minorities in the non-Muslim world differs according to the specific conditions in the respective countries. On the whole some are better off economically than others. However, the urgent need is to ameliorate their religious conditions, that is, to help them enhance their sense of belonging spiritually to the Umma.³⁶

The recent rapid wave of political changes in the world, particularly in Europe, culminated in the return to ethnic solidarities based on language, culture and on "religious distinctiveness." The implications for Muslim minorities might be the strengthening of "religious distinctiveness" at the expense of ethnic identities. Europe, as Christie predicts, is likely to develop into "a 'multi-religious' continent."

Although one should not underestimate the consequent dangers of religious conflict, such a development would at least offer a chance that a future interfaith dialogue at the highest level could be based on religious principle rather than ethnic interest. Only on such a basis can religious principles in general offer an effective response to the secular challenge of the modern world.³⁷

Prospects for Interfaith Dialogue

Islam is a universal religion and Mohammed was the seal (the last) of the Prophets sent by Allah to all mankind. The Qur'an says

We have sent you forth to all mankind, so that you may give them news and forewarn them (34:28)

There is now a widespread call for the return to the fundamental teachings and principles of Islam. This call is manifested in the efforts to islamize knowledge, to reconcile modern life to the requirements of Islam, to the "Daawa" (effort to teach or to convert people to Islam), and to political Islamic movements which culminated in some cases in the establishment of an "Islamic" state.

These efforts, despite their peaceful and non-compulsory character, have alarmed some, causing them to attack Islam and accuse it of being authoritarian and anti-diversity in character.³⁸ Some even predicted an eventual religious and cultural "clash of civilizations" between Islam and the West.³⁹ The reasons for these attacks and such pessimism are due, in my opinion, to ignorance or to misunderstanding of Islam as a faith which, as was shown, is intrinsically tolerant. This misconception of Islam also extends to some Muslim individuals or organizations who overlook the true meaning of Islam as a religion of peace, tolerance, and progress. While there is "Daawa" there is also respect for those who believe in other Scriptures. The Qur'an says in this respect:

Say: "We believe in God and that which is revealed to us; in what was revealed to Abraham, Ismael, Isaac, Jacob, and the tribes; to Moses and Jesus and the other prophets by their Lord. We make no distinction among any of them, and to God we have surrendered ourselves. (2:136)

The believers of Scriptures are all the sons of Abraham and Abraham committed himself to the will of God for the benefit of all mankind:

Abraham was neither Jew nor Christian. He was an upright man, one who surrendered himself to God. (3:67)

Muslims, Jews and Christians share a common heritage. Accordingly, they must overcome the dominance of secular and political movements because what their respective prophets did was to fulfill the call of Abraham to worship the same God.

Muslim thinkers and leaders are increasingly aware of the imperative of mutual understanding and cooperation between the three monotheistic faiths. Hasan al-Banna, the founder of the "Muslim Brotherhood" movement in 1928, stated that Islam is a religion of peace and love not of "hatred and fanaticism", and that "Error is committed by the misguided, thinking on the legitimacy of the Holy War."⁴⁰ And Hassan at-Tourabi, the actual spiritual leader of Sudan, spoke of the necessity of cooperation between faiths to combat secularism. At-Tourabi stated that in fact "the three mono-theistic religions are not different. . . . It is the same God . . . and the values of this unique God are exactly the same."⁴¹ He added:

I proposed a common front to the Pope. And I also propose it to the Jews. The three monotheistic faiths must mobilize themselves to render the power to God and to render people to God.⁴²

There is no question that an interfaith dialogue is a must. Since secular politics failed to achieve unity and peace for man-kind, it is the duty of all believers - Jews, Christians, and Muslims - to work for that unity and peace to fulfill the call of Abraham and the will of God.

Notes

1. For a current account of ethnic conflicts in the world see *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict, Current Controversies Series* (San Diego: Green Haven Press, 1994).

2. *Ibid.*, 15.

3. Quoted from Wsevolod W. Isajiw, "Definitions of Ethnicity," *Ethnicity* I, no. 2 (July 1974), 114.

4. Quoted from Isajiw (1974), 113.

5. W. Wsevolod Isajiw, "Definitions of Ethnicity: New Approaches," *Ethnic Forum* 13/14 (nos. 2&1, 1993-94), 10.

6. Clive Christie, "Unity and Diversity: a Critique of Religion and Ethnicity in Europe," *The Ecumenical Review* 47, (no. 1, January, 1995), 12-20.

7. See Daniel Bell, "Ethnicity and Social Change," in *Ethnicity*, ed. Nathan Glazer and Daniel P. Moynihan (Cambridge: MA: Harvard University Press, 1983); and Michael Banton, *Racial and Ethnic Competition* (Cambridge, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

8. Quoted from Akbar S. Ahmed, *Toward Islamic Anthropology* (Herndon, VA: International Institute of Islamic Thought, 1986), p. 20.

9. Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), p. 5.

10. Clifford Geertz, *Islam Observed: Religious Development in Morocco and Indonesia* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 1.

11. *Ibid.*, 3.

12. *Ibid.*

13. Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (New York: The Free Press, 1965 [1912]), 14. Geertz (1973), p. 90.
14. Geertz (1973), p. 90.
15. Geertz (1968), pp. 16-17.
16. Christie, *op. cit.*, p. 12.
17. Isma'il Ragi Al-Faruqi, "Islamizing the Social Sciences," in *Social and Natural Sciences: the Islamic Perspective*, ed. by Isma'il R. Al-Faruqi and Abdullah O. Nasseef (Jeddah: King Abdulaziz University, 1981), pp. 12-13.
18. See *Pakistan: The Social Sciences' Perspective*, ed. by Akbar S. Ahmed (New York: Oxford University Press, 1990); and *Islam, Globalization and Postmodernity*, ed. by Akbar S. Ahmed (New York: Routledge, 1994).
19. Ahmed (1986), 56.
20. *Ibid.*
21. See Al-Faruqi (1981), pp. 8-20.
22. *Al Hadis*, Ed. by Muhammad Al-Khatib al-Tibrizi and Al Haj Maulana F. K. (Dacca, F.K.: Islam Mission Trust, 3rd edition, 1969), vol. 1, 488.
23. *Ibid.*, 491.
24. *Ibid.*, pp. 486-7.
25. Sayyid Jamal Al-Din Al-Afghani, "Islamic Solidarity," in *Islam in Transition: Muslim Perspectives*, ed. by John J. Donohue and John L. Esposito (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), p. 20.
26. *Ibid.*, 22.
27. *Al Hadith*, vol I, 291.
28. Abul-Ala Mawdudi, "Nationalism and Islam." *Islam in Transition, op. cit.*, 94.
29. Al-Bazzaz, Abd Al-Rahman, "Islam and Arab Nationalism," in *Islam in Transition, op. cit.*, pp. 84-90.
30. Sati Al-Husri, "Muslim Unity and Arab unity," in *Islam in Transition*, p. 66.
31. Kalim Siddiqui, "Beyond the Muslim Nation-States," in *Social and Natural Sciences, op. cit.*, p. 95.
32. Ibrahim Kattan, "The Concept of Minorities in Islam." *Houda Al-Islam*, 26., no. 1 (1982), 18 (in Arabic).
33. See Christie, *op. cit.*
34. Raja Ibrahim Salim, "Muslim Minorities in non-Muslim Societies," *Al-hiwar* 19 (1990), 102-3 (in Arabic).
35. *Ibid.*
36. *Ibid.*
37. Christie, *op. cit.*, p. 17.
38. Bernard Lewis, "The Roots of Muslim Rage," *Atlantic Monthly* (September 1990), pp. 47-60.
39. Samuel Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations." *Foreign Affairs* (Summer, 1993), pp. 21-49.
40. Hasan Al-Banna, "The New Renaissance," in *Islam in Transition*, p. 82.
41. Hassan At-Tourabi, Interview in *Le Figaro* (Paris), April 15-16, 1995.
42. *Ibid.*

Part IV

The Transcendence of God Versus Human Absolutizing

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Ascribing to human groups -- families, tribes, ethnoi, states -- the transcendence that belongs only to God. Divine transcendence and ethnic or national religions. Scriptural faith, ethnocentrism, and ethnic conflict. Shalom and *sadiq* in the scriptural stories; the healing and reconciling import and energies of the scriptural faiths; their nurture and activation. Some examples, both of perversion and of healing initiatives.¹

Editorial Introduction

Syncretistic religions are more likely to foster tolerance than universalist faiths based on dogma.

-Ian Buruma²

Our human condition gives us the capacity, but also the need, to transcend in our imagination the immediacies of time and space within which we find ourselves. Consequently we are compelled in the final analysis to act intuitively on the best evidence as refracted by our ruling paradigms, rather than on the basis of clear cause-effect determinisms. Such is our relation to what we call the cosmos, the world or universe as an orderly though mysterious system. From the earliest times, humans in their imagination have personified the mysteries they thus perceive as spiritual beings, who, while resembling themselves, are thought to possess powers which they do not. These imaginings are represented not only verbally, but more powerfully in ritual and imagery.

From the earliest times these proclivities were in evidence in the formation of families, households, clans, tribes, and confederacies. Each human group, it would appear, possessed its corresponding deity. In effect, gods were created as needed. And on the surface, as it appeared to the surrounding peoples and to the Israelites themselves, the God of the Israelites was simply another tribal deity.

At a certain level, that interpretation was justifiable. For whether the gods are humanly invented, that is, whether "religion" arises from the human search for God, or, as in the Abrahamic instance, in response to God's search for the human, the response is humanly constructed. The social scientist or the visiting journalist, acting in their respective capacities, cannot distinguish between these two modes of religious expression. Both can only be regarded as human constructions, to be judged alike on their respective merits.

The claim that Abrahamic faith rests on God's search for man rather than the reverse is itself a "religious," not a scientific, claim. To act in faith as Abraham did, according to the story, did not automatically suspend the human propensity to tribalize the deity. Again as history demonstrates, the worship of hand-made idols is far more readily overcome than recourse to the "God and Country" idiom. While on the one hand, with advancing modernization, it is increasingly possible to exclude organized religion from the political compact, "God" continues to be linked to the national cause.

As the three papers here indicate, the matter is by no means resolved. God is One, transcendent and ineffable. Theologically all three argue for the equality of all humans, though they work at the matter in different ways. However, practical ambiguities persist, and these have to be engaged

existentially, historically. Given the exalted vision of deity, how is the gulf to the human to be bridged? This problem remains a theological conundrum. Perhaps inevitably, the very modes of human response -- beliefs, dogma, ritual -- partake of the sacred. And when these become linked to ethnic or national interest, the mixture becomes explosive, as recent and current history in Bosnia demonstrates.

In the Jewish instance, given the peculiarity of the Jewish vocation, a distinction between response to the ineffable and peoplehood may not be directly feasible, despite it being implicit in the original Call, as we have just seen. Jack Luxemburg, appropriately enough, underscores the openness of "the blessing of covenantal living" to "every people, every person and every group." But we, "the heirs of Abraham . . . too often appear(ed) to be spiritually troubled descendants of Babel, lacking an adequately inspired means of expressing our religious heritage in terms that can be grasped and appreciated by another." As suggested elsewhere, calamities that again and again have befallen the original Abrahamic people, make of their "ethnic" survival a particular case. In any event, the symposium did not address that particularity, nor was it competent to do so.

The most vexing problem arises at the "interface" between the two covenantal modalities, creation and salvation (salvific intervention). Here Miroslav Volf, a native of former Yugoslavia, is well placed to wrestle with the resulting tension. Writing from within a "free church" stance, but situated within a Christendom framework, he draws on the "leaving" and "distancing" idioms in the primal Abrahamic Call. The problem is treated somewhat from the other side by Vigen Guroian (next section), but within another Christendom tradition, trying to create distance on the basis of that tradition's own presuppositions rather than in terms of a "free church" alternative, as does Volf.

Sulayman Nyang spells out the trans-ethnic vitality, in the messages of the Prophet, the texts of the Qur'an, and across important periods of Islamic history. Islam undoubtedly has been more accommodating to Jewish (minority) communities in its midst than was Christendom. At the other end of the Islamic continuum, as Nyang documents, Islam, like the other Abrahamic movements, has again and again been misused for political or military gain. As observed from the outside, perhaps the greatest vulnerability in the Islamic conception lies in its vision of the Umma as a universal historical community. This conception has been all too readily politicized where Muslims appeared in real or imagined majorities in political jurisdictions.

It is not a matter here of comparing the several traditions as though the one or the other offered a final solution. Instead each of the historic developments illuminates particular dimensions and potentialities of Abrahamic story. We shall return to these issues in the final chapter below.

Notes

1. Original assignment to Luxemburg, Volf and Nyang.
2. "Japan: In the Spirit World." *New York Review of Books* XLIII, (June 6, 1996), p. 33.

Chapter XIII
Mipne Darche Shalom:
Transcending Boundaries in Pursuit of Peace

Rabbi Jack A. Luxemburg (Temple Beth AMI)

It is a sorry circumstance, often thrown back in the face of religious persons, that "religion does more to divide people than to unite them." The history of inter and intra religious wars down through the ages; the patterns of social, political and economic discrimination too often legislated in, or buttressed by, the name of God; the demonizing and the disparaging of peoples and their beliefs by other "peoples of faith;" the headlines of our daily papers underscoring the religious difference between battling factions in Bosnia, or Rwanda, or North Ireland, or the Middle East: all lend credence to this painful accusation. It would seem that rather than being the heirs of Abraham (peace be upon him) and sharing a common legacy of covenant, revealed scripture, and sacred mission, we often have too appeared to be spiritually troubled descendants of Babel, lacking an adequately inspired means of ex-pressing our common religious heritage in terms that can be grasped and appreciated by another.

It is with purpose that I refer to the Babel story. The Bible depicts the people of Babel gathering on the planes of Shinar, calling to others to gather in a great concentration of humanity. "Come, let us build us a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, to make a name for ourselves, else we shall be scattered all over the world" (Gen. 11:4). The rabbinic exegesis and textual exploration known as midrash wondered what these human beings wished to do with this tower upon which they intended to enter heaven (as based on the Hebrew idiom which connotes "a tower into the heavens" as opposed to "a tower reaching towards the heavens"). One of three possibilities they conclude: to ascend into the heavens and war against God; to take their man-made deities and set them up in the heavens to be worshiped; or to ascend into the heavens and ruin them with bows and spears. And from this they felt they would gain a name, an identity which would be a bulwark against the frightening notion of a humanity dispersed across the face of the earth.

I would like to suggest that this image is an apt metaphor for one aspect of our discussion. Each perspective suggested by the midrash results in the denial of the one and only God. Human beings are to displace God or supplant God with deities created by human beings in their own image, or simply destroy the heavenly abode -- and thereby obliterate the possibility of the divine. Each scenario represents the vainglorious notion that human beings, in their finitude, can supplant, replace, or irradiate the infinite transcendence which is God, Adonai, Allah. For us the story can stand as a warning: beware of the tendency of human beings to create absolutes. If the builders of *Babel* were ready to assault the very gates of heaven, how would they have felt about assaulting the gates of the city or shrine over there where people worship a different God, in a different way, in a different language. Makers of absolutes cannot tolerate alternatives.

To stay with this a moment longer, consider the delicious irony of their punishment. Might we not suggest that with the multi-plication of tongues, the variety of languages, comes variation in perceptions of the world about us, variation in frames of reference and modes of abstraction. The divine response to the making of absolutes is to confirm the reality of diversity and alternatives in human experience, and to affirm that there is only one source of transcendence through which this human diversity can experience the unity which is divine.

It is against this backdrop that Abraham (peace be upon him) emerges. The three traditions we represent embrace him and his descendants, each in our own way, and with our own under-

standings. This is precisely because it is through Abraham (peace be upon him) that human beings are taught that there is a path to transcendence which does not distort, but dignifies; does not lead to fallacy, but to the fulfillment of our humanity, and that humanity can live in covenant with Divinity. I believe that this can be one way to understand the assertion that "all the peoples of the earth shall bless themselves by you." Every people, every person and every group can enter into the blessing of covenantal living which enables human beings to reflect the image of God through the fulfillment of their humanity, even participating in divine transcendence by linking temporal human effort with infinite divine purpose.

The problem arises when a group or even a single individual of great charisma makes an absolute of their covenantal relationship. While such a relationship is by nature an absolute in the life of the adherents, we must question whether it can justifiably be imposed upon others, or whether that absoluteness may be held up as the justification for claims of the superiority -- spiritual, political, or social -- of the particular adherents; or as justification for diminishing the status and rights, temporal or theological, of non-adherents. Even if we are of a mind that there is, today, no justification for such tendencies, we must acknowledge that not one of our traditions has been immune in the past.

In the ancient world, ethnicity and religious identity were more congruent than today. Then, it was not unusual for each people to have its own gods, its own festive days, its own sacred places and devotions. What distinguished the Jew in ancient days was that he or she was part of a folk that worshipped a single, unique, universal deity who entered into covenant with human beings, and thereby was made manifest in history, the realm of human experience on the temporal plane - the transcendent entering the world of the finite. This is a mystery which each of our (three) faiths explains and celebrates in its own fashion. That ancient Jew was part of an identifiable folk with a land, a language, a mode of daily living based on revealed scripture; he or she was an identifiable ethnic.

It is instructive for our deliberations to examine briefly the perceptions of what would seem to be an ethnocentric Jewish community. How did it understand the phenomenon of human diversity or the import of its covenant relative to the other peoples? It may be surprising to note that to the rabbinic mind, the first chapters of torah, the creation narrative, contain a teaching which runs strongly counter to any notion of racial, ethnic or social superiority. Noting that God created a single human being rather than humanity in all its diversity (as was done with other living things, all created in their various species), the sages of Judaism deduced that this was to teach the common ancestry of humanity. Such common lineage, insist the rabbis, precludes claims of hereditary superiority, whether racial, moral, or spiritual. It also denies any assertion that one's actions are beyond question because of a sterling "moral" lineage, or that one can nor be held accountable for misdeeds because of a blemished moral legacy. All humanity shares a common lineage and equal claim to the dignity accorded to human beings.

That humanity, despite its common ancestry, is obviously greatly diversified in appearance did not trouble the rabbis. Indeed, they viewed this variety as a reflection of God's own limitlessness. They taught this lesson through a comparison: the earthly king stamps coins from a single mold, and all the coins look alike. The heavenly king, God, creates all human beings in the divine image, yet no two are alike. From this perspective, human ethnic and racial diversity is viewed as a marvelous reflection of a divine attribute.

Convinced of the truth of a single universal God, the sages of Judaism could only conclude that any revelation emanating from that God must also be universal; that is, have I meaning and accessibility to any and all. Therefore rabbinic lore is full of midrash and commentary that

emphasizes not Judaism -- the religious experience of the Jewish people -- as an absolute, but the absolute and eternal relevance of the revelation, the teaching, the *torah* for all humankind. Consider: the rabbis taught that the *torah* was given in a wilderness, a no man's land, and consequently an "everyone's" land, precisely to underscore universal access to its teaching, so that no one could say: "It was given in the land of the Jews, therefore it is only for the Jews." A parallel teaching is that at Sinai, when God revealed *torah* to Israel, God spoke in the seventy languages of humanity; that is, in all tongues for all *to hear* and for all to embrace.

The implication is clear. If, as suggested above in the discussion of the tower of Babel, differences in languages represent real differences in modes of both perception and expression, then we can go on to find a basis for suggesting that the religious traditions that flow from the individual, Abraham (peace be upon him), through the folk, Israel, and into a formulation of their own, represent the response of those who have heard the voice of Sinai echoing through time and consciousness. Their response, different from that of the Jew, is also genuine. Their covenant is also valid, containing, as it does, the seeds of human redemption.

Two additional teachings, one early and one late, illustrate the durability of this perspective in Judaism. One is the notion of the Noahide covenant. The earliest *torah* teachings impress upon the Jew that God entered into a covenant with all of human kind through Noah, establishing standards of human decency and righteousness independent of a particular religious creed. This is reflected in a later teaching found in both the midrash to the Book of Psalms and in talmudic literature: "The righteous of every nation have a place in the world to come".

This is a validation of God's readiness to be in covenantal relationship with every and all people -- an equal opportunity deity, if you will. But it requires us to drop our tendency to absolutes in order to realize that equal does not have to mean identical. The God of monotheistic faith is not bound by our desire for spiritual and salvific monopoly. It is precisely when we make God over in our own image, as intolerant and discomforted by diversity, that we give false sanctity to the boundaries that divide people, whether by faith, locution, skin color, facial characteristics, language . . . or whatever. We become convinced that God's infinite capacity to love the world and all in it is finite -- infinite for us, nonexistent for them -- whoever they are. The tragedy which we all wish to avoid is to make religious life and covenantal relationships zero sum enterprises, either/or experiences. If I am, then they are not; either me or them. We must move to a theology and shared understanding of self and other that can say, "me and them, too."

There is in the 16th century code of Jewish teachings, the *Shulchan Aruch*, a passage that contains a line of thinking that I believe is worthy of our consideration. In speaking about how Jews are to respond to the needs of non-Jews it says: "Help their poor, visit their sick, bury their dead, deliver a funeral oration, comfort their mourners . . . *Mipne lathe shalom*. All this and more, says the *Shulchan Aruch*, in order to pursue the paths of peace, maintaining peaceable relations.

This passage, and the examples it cites, require that we see each other as human beings and respond to each other as human beings, not in terms of ethnic or religious categories, but as children of the one God. We should understand *darche shalom* as meaning the "path of shalom" in the fundamental sense of the word, namely wholeness and completeness. One possible answer to the strife and chaos which result from the age old tendency to make absolute human differences is to seek the path that leads to wholeness. No human life is completely whole without a relationship with God, a covenant which requires us to be the very image of the divine in our caring, consideration, respect, acceptance and love for one another. That is "*shalom*." That, I believe, is what each of our covenants calls us to do, not because one or the other is the more godly, but because God calls all of us to be more humane.

Chapter XIV
Distance and Belonging
Miroslav Volf (Fuller Theological Seminary)

Complicity

In the Introduction to *Culture and Imperialism* Edward W. Said writes that in the process of working on the book he came to a profoundly disturbing insight, namely "how very few of the British or French artists whom I admire took issue with the notion of 'subject' or 'inferior' races so prevalent among officials who practiced those ideas as a matter of course in ruling India or Algeria" (Said 1993, xiv). "Estimable and admirable works of art and learning," he continues, were "manifestly and unconcealedly" implicated in the imperial process (xiv). Writers who should have been a conscience of the culture were but a sophisticated echo of its base prejudices, their noble humanist ideals notwithstanding.

It may well be that we should be surprised not at the writers, but at Said's surprise. Ought he not to have suspected at the outset that the veneer of artists' eloquent humanistic self--presentation might cover over a much coarser reality?1 As Friedrich Nietzsche noted over a century ago in *The Genealogy of Morals*, artists have all too often been "smooth sycophants either of vested interests or of forces newly come to power" (Nietzsche 1956, 236). In any case, whether we are disappointed or cynical about artists' complicity in the imperial process, as Christians we should be slow to point the accusing finger. We have had our share of complicity in the imperial process. Though Frantz Fanon is not the most reliable guide on the matter, he is not entirely wrong when in *The Wretched of the Earth* he chides the church in the colonies for being "the foreigner's Church" and implanting "foreign influences in the core of the colonized people" (Fanon 1963, 43). "She does not call the native to God's ways," he writes, "but to the ways of the white man, of the master, of the oppressor" (42). Of course, this is not all we must say about the impact of missionary endeavor on native populations, not even the most important thing. Lamin Sanneh has rightly pointed to the paradox that by insisting on translation of the Gospel into the vernacular foreign missionaries established "the indigenous process by which foreign domination was questioned" (Sanneh 1987, 332). He suggested that Christian missions are "better seen as a translation movement, with consequences for vernacular revitalization, religious change and social transformation, than as a vehicle for Western cultural domination" (334). Yet, such subversions of the foreign domination notwithstanding, the complicity -- witting or unwitting -- of Christian churches with the imperial process remains an undeniable fact.

In one sense even more disquieting than the complicity itself is the pattern of behavior in which it is embedded. Our coziness with the surrounding culture has made us so blind to many of its evils that, instead of calling them into question, we offer our own versions of them -- in God's name and with a good conscience. Those who refuse to be party to our mimicry we brand sectarians. Consider the following stinging indictment H. Richard Niebuhr makes in *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1929) on the issue of race:

The color line has been drawn so incisively by the church itself that its proclamation of the gospel of the brotherhood of Jew and Greek, of bond and free, of white and black has sometimes the sad sound of irony, and sometimes falls upon the ear as

unconscious hypocrisy—but sometimes there is in it the bitter cry of repentance.
(Niebuhr 1954, 263)

Still today, many black Baptists or Methodists feel closer to black Muslims than to their white fellow Christians (cf. Berger 1996, 213f.). Or think of the big schism in the church, finalized in 1054 and today gaping wide as ever. It simply redoubled and reinforced religiously the boundary line that ran between Greek and Latin culture, between East and West. Slaves to their cultures, the churches were foolish enough to think of themselves as masters.²

The overriding commitment to their culture serves churches worst in situations of conflict. Churches, the presumed agents of reconciliation, are at best impotent and at worst accomplices in the strife. The empirical research conducted by Ralph Premdas in a number of countries has shown "that the inter-communal antipathies present in the society at large are reflected in the attitudes of churches and their adherents" (Premdas 1994, 55). Though the clergy are often invited to adjudicate, "the reconciling thrust quickly evaporates after the initial effort" (55f.). The most important reasons for failure are the "inter-locking relations of church and cultural section which spill into partisan politics marked by the mobilization of collective hate and cultivated bigotry" (56). Along with their parishioners the clergy are often "trapped within the claims of their own ethnic or cultural community" and thus serve as "legitimizers of ethnic conflict" (56), their genuine desire to take seriously the Gospel call to the ministry of reconciliation notwithstanding.

At times even a genuine desire for reconciliation is absent. Cultural identity insinuates itself with religious force; Christian and cultural commitments merge (Assmann 1992, 157ff.). Such sacralization of cultural identity is invaluable for the parties in conflict because it can transmute what is in fact a murder into an act of piety. Blind to the betrayal of Christian faith that both such sacralization of cultural identity and the atrocities it legitimizes represent, the "holy" murderers can even see themselves as the Christian faith's valiant defenders (as Serbian fighters have in their recent war against Muslims in the former Yugoslavia). Christian communities, which should be "the salt" of the culture, are too often as insipid as everything around them.

"If the salt has lost its saltiness, how can you season it?" asked Jesus rhetorically (Mark 9:50). The feel of doom hangs over the question. Since you cannot season it, tasteless salt "is no longer good for anything, but is thrown out and trampled under foot" (Matthew 5:13). Yet the very warning about being thrown out calls for "the bitter cry of repentance," as Niebuhr put it, and invites a turnabout. What we should turn away *from* seems clear: it is captivity to our own culture, coupled so often with blind self-righteousness. But what should we turn *to*? How should we live as Christian communities today faced with the "new tribalism" that is fracturing our societies, separating peoples and cultural groups, and fomenting vicious conflicts? What should be the relation of the churches to the cultures they inhabit? The answer lies, I propose, in cultivating the proper relation between distance from the culture and belonging to it.

Yet what does distance mean? What does belonging mean? Distance in the name of what? Belonging to what extent? Many profound theological issues are involved in answering these questions. I will explore them by examining what kind of relation between religious and cultural identity is implied, first, in the original call of Abraham and, second, in its Christian appropriation. In the final section I will then discuss what kinds of stances toward "others" a Christian construction of cultural identity implies and what kind of community the church needs to be if it is to support these stances.

Departing . . .

At the very foundation of Christian faith stands the towering figure of Abraham (see Kuschel 1995). He is "the ancestor of all who believe" (Romans 4:11). What made Abraham deserve this title? "Faith" is the answer the Apostle Paul gave. Abraham was looking into the abyss of nonbeing as he contemplated his own body, "already as good as dead," and the "barrenness of Sarah's womb." There was nothing his hope could latch onto. Yet, "in the presence of God . . . life to the dead and calls into existence the things which do not exist" (Romans 4:17, 19) Abraham "believed in the Lord" (Genesis 15:6) that he would have an heir—and became "the father of us all" (Romans 4:16).

Before we read that Abraham "believed" (Genesis 15:6), however, Genesis records that he "went forth" (12:4). God said to Abraham:

Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed. (12:1–3)

Sarah being barren (Genesis 11:30), the command to "go forth" placed before Abraham a difficult choice: he would either belong to his country, his culture, and his family and remain comfortably in-consequential or, risking everything, he would depart and become great -- a blessing to "all the families of the earth" (Brueggemann 1977, 15ff.). If he is to be a blessing he cannot stay; he must depart, cutting the ties that so profoundly defined him. The only guarantee that the venture will not make him wither away like an uprooted plant was the word of God, the naked promise of the divine "I" that inserted itself into his life so relentlessly and uncomfortably. If he left, he would have to set out "not knowing where he was going" (Hebrews 11:8); only if the divine promise comes true will the land of his ancestors that he left emerge as the land of expulsion, a land to which Adam, Eve, Cain, and the builders of the tower of Babel have been expelled from the presence of God. Abraham chose to leave. The courage to break his cultural and familial ties and abandon the gods of his ancestors (Joshua 24:2) out of allegiance to a God of all families and all cultures was the original Abrahamic revolution. Departure from his native soil, no less than the trust that God will give him an heir, made Abraham the ancestor of us all (see Hebrews 11:8).

The narrative of Abraham's call underlines that stepping out of enmeshment in the network of inherited cultural relations is a correlate of faith in the one God. As Jacob Neusner points out,

the great monotheist traditions insist upon the triviality of culture and ethnicity, forming trans-national, or trans-ethnic transcendental communities . . . Judaism, Christianity, and Islam mean to overcome diversity in the name of a single, commanding God, who bears a single message for a humanity that is one in Heaven's sight. (Neusner 1997)

As I will argue later, from my perspective the talk about the "triviality of culture" and about "overcoming diversity" is too strong when taken at its face value (and there are reasons to believe that Neusner does not mean what he says in a strong sense). His main point, however, is well taken: the ultimate allegiance of those whose father is Abraham can be only to the God of "all families

of the earth," not to any particular country, culture, or family with their local deities. The oneness of God implies God's universality, and universality entails transcendence with respect to any given culture. Abraham is a progenitor of a people which, as Franz Rosenzweig puts it, "even when it has a home . . . is not allowed full possession of that home. It is only 'a stranger and a sojourner.'" God tells it: 'The land is mine'" (Rosenzweig 1971, 300).³

To be a child of Abraham and Sarah and to respond to the call of their God means to make an exodus, to start a voyage, become a stranger (Genesis 23:4; 24:1–9). It is a mistake, I believe, to complain too much about Christianity being "alien" in a given culture, as Choan-Seng Song has done, for instance, in the Introduction to his *Third-Eye Theology* about the place of Christianity "in the world of Asia" (Song 1991, 9). There are, of course, wrong ways of being a stranger, such as when an alien culture (say one of the Western cultures) is idolatrously proclaimed as the gospel in another culture (say one of the Asian cultures). But the solution for being a stranger in a wrong way is not full naturalization, but being a stranger in the *right* way. Much like Jews and Muslims, Christians can never be first of all Asians or Americans, Croatians, Russians, or Tutsis, and then Christians. At the very core of Christian identity lies an all-encompassing change of loyalty, from a given culture with its gods to the God of all cultures. A response to a call from that God entails rearrangement of a whole network of allegiances. As the call of Jesus' first disciples illustrates, "the nets" (economy) and "the father" (family) must be left behind (Mark 1:16–20). Departure is part and parcel of Christian identity. Since Abraham is our ancestor, our faith is "at odds with place," as Richard Sennett puts it in *The Conscience of the Eye* (Sennett 1993, 6).

In today's cultural climate Abraham's kind of departure might receive censure from two opposite (though in some important respects unified) fronts. On the one hand it might be challenged as too goal oriented, too linear, not radical enough; on the other, it might be dismissed as too detached, too aloof, in some sense too radical. The first challenge comes from postmodern thinkers, such as Gilles Deleuze. One way to describe his thought is to say that he made "departing" into a philosophical program; "nomadic" functions for him as a central philosophical category. "Nomads are always in the middle," writes Claire Parnet explicating Deleuze (Deleuze and Parnet 1980, 37). They have no fixed location, but roam from place to place, always departing and always arriving. "There is no starting point just as there is no goal to reach," underlines Deleuze (10); every place of arrival is a point of departure.⁴ Indeed, there is even no stable subject, either divine or human, who could give direction to the departures. One is always departing pure and simple, flowing like a stream, to use one of Deleuze's favorite images, merging with other streams and changing in the process, de-territorializing them as one is de-territorialized by them (57).

Contrast the "nomadic" life of Abraham. Refusing to go with the flow, Abraham decided to *go forth* in response to a *call of God*. Both the call and the decision to obey it presuppose an acting agent, a stable subject. Moreover, Abraham's departure had a starting point -- his country, his kindred, and his father's house; and it had a definite goal -- creation of a people ("a great nation") and possession of a territory ("the land that I will show you"). Departure is here a temporary state, not an end in itself; a departure from a particular place, not from all sites (*pace* Robbins 1991, 107). And this is the way it must be if the talk about departures is to be intelligible. Departures without some sense of an origin and a goal are not departures; they are instead but incessant roaming, just as streams that flow in all directions at one and the same time are not streams but, in the end, a swamp in which all movement has come to a deadly rest. Of course, social intercourse happens not to follow the prescriptions of Deleuze's theory, at least not yet. Though Deleuze has difficulty thinking of the concept of human agency, people do act as agents; they have goals, *make* things happen, and often enough these are evil things. What can those who wish to

depart without wanting to arrive do to resist the evildoer? Without subjectivity, intentionality, and goal-orientedness, they will be carried by the stream of life, "blissfully" taking in whatever ride life has in store for them, always saying and accepting everything, including every misdeed that those who have goals choose to commit (Frank 1984, 404, 431). Against his intention (Deleuze 1991, 195ff.), Deleuze would have to say "yes" without being able to say "no," much like the Nietzschean "all-contented" ass who always says "yea" (Nietzsche 1969, 212). No, father Abraham, better to stay with your family and in your country than to follow *Deleuze's* call to go forth.

"Stay within the network of your relations"—this is what the critics from the other side would advise Abraham. Such advice might come from those feminists who, unlike Simone de Beauvoir in *The Second Sex*, consider separation and independence ills to overcome rather than goods to strive for (de Beauvoir 1952). To them, Abraham could appear as a paradigmatic male, eager to separate himself ("go forth"), to secure his independence and glory ("great nation"), crush those who resist him ("curse"), be benevolent to those who praise him ("blessing"), and finally extend his power to the ends of the earth ("all the families"). Abraham is all transcendence and no immanence, the transcendence of a separated and conquering male "I" underwritten by the imposing transcendence of the divine "I." Such a transcendent self is "phallic" and destructive, the argument would go. Must not every son of Abraham count with the possibility that his father will be called to take him "to the land of Moriah and offer him there as a burnt offering" (Genesis 22:2), with no guarantees that God will provide a lamb as a substitute? (Lyotard and Gruber 1995, 22). An "anti-phallic" revolution must bring down the detached and violent self, situate it in the web of relationships, and help it recover its immanence. "Immanence," writes Catherine Keller in *From a Broken Web*, "is the way relations are part of who I am" (Keller 1986, 18). The new, she suggests, comes not through the heroic history of separating selves that respond to a transcendent call ("restless masculine roving"), but is created "with and within the field of relations" (18).

Should Abraham have stayed "within the field of relations"?⁵ Notice, first, that Abraham's departure does not stand for denial of relationality. He is not a lonely modern self, restlessly roving about. Modernity seeks "emancipation with no binding to the other" (Lyotard and Gruber 1995, 20); Abraham is most radically *bound to God*. In marked contrast to the builders of the tower of Babel who wanted to make themselves great (Genesis 11:4), Abraham will be made great by God whose call he has obeyed (12:2) (Brueggemann 1977, 18). Related to God, Abraham is, moreover, not "a divinely winged animal that soars above life but does not alight on it," as Nietzsche writes of philosophers' ascetic ideal (Nietzsche 1956, 243). Rather, he is *surrounded by a wandering community*. Unlike Penelope of Homer's *The Odyssey*, Sarah is not at home waiting and weaving while Abraham is voyaging and fighting. Since Abraham left his native country "forever" without an intention of returning to "the point of departure" (Lévinas 1986, 348), Sarah accompanied him, and his relationship to her, even if she was subordinate to him, helped define Abraham. Sarah is not simply the immanent other of Abraham's wandering transcendence; if she stands for immanence at all, then this is an immanence of *their common* transcendence. Finally, Abraham and Sarah must remove themselves from "within the field of their ancestral relations" if they are to stand *at the beginning of a history* of a pilgrim people, the body of Jewish people. Without a departure, no such *new* beginnings would have been possible. Novelty, resistance, and history all demand transcendence.

Even if we admit that the Abrahamic departure was necessary and salutary, we are still left with the question of how the people who trace their origin to Abraham's departure should relate to surrounding peoples and cultures. Since I will address this question as a Christian (rather than

simply as a fellow sharer in the Abrahamic faith), I will turn from the towering figure Abraham, the common ancestor of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, to the Apostle Paul and his reflection on the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham in Jesus Christ (Galatians 3:16). The shift in interest from Abraham's story to its early Christian appropriation means that I will explore the relation of the Christian children of Abraham to culture by examining the transformation of the original Abrahamic departure.

... Without Leaving

In contrast to Abraham, the Apostle Paul was *not* "accompanied by a believing wife" (1 Corinthians 9:4), he was *not* a progenitor of a people, much less a people with a land. Instead, he insisted on the religious irrelevance of genealogical ties and on the sole sufficiency of faith. His horizon was the whole world, and he him-self was a traveling missionary, proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ -- the seed of Abraham who fulfilled God's promise that through Abraham "all the nations will be blessed" (Galatians 3:8) -- and laying the foundations for a multi-ethnic community.

Why the move away from the bodiliness of genealogy to the pure spirituality of faith, from the particularity of "peoplehood" to the universality of multiculturalism,⁶ from the locality of a land to the globality of the world? Here is how Jewish scholar Daniel Boyarin in *A Radical Jew* describes Paul's original predicament, one which was resolved through conversion:

An enthusiastic first-century Greek-speaking Jew, one Saul of Tarsus, is walking down a road, with a very troubled mind. The Torah, in which he so firmly believes, claims to be the text of the One True God of all the world, who created heaven and earth and all humanity, and yet its primary content is the history of one particular People -- almost one family -- and the practices that it prescribes are many of them practices which mark off the particularity of that tribe, his tribe (Boyarin 1994, 39).

Leaving aside the question of whether this is an adequate fictive narrative of Paul's conversion, Boyarin's description of a problem that Paul's own venerable religious tradition bequeathed to him, a bi-cultural citizen of a multicultural world, is correct. The belief in one God entails a belief in the unity of the human race as recipient of the blessings of this God, yet in order to enjoy the full blessings of this God a person had to be a member of a particular "tribe" (Wright 1992, 170).

One way out of the dilemma not available to a child of Abraham and Sarah was to regard the different religions as only manifestations of the one deity, as was current among learned men and women in the Hellenistic period (Hengel 1974, 261). Particularity, then, would not need to be a scandal; each culture could find both the one God and the ground of a deeper unity with other cultures by plunging into the depths of its own cultural resources; the deeper it went, the closer to God and to one another it would get -- a view not unlike the one proposed by John Hick in *Interpreting Religion* (Hick 1989). As the example of Hick shows, however, if the solution is to work it must operate with an unknowable God, always behind each and every concrete cultural and religious manifestation (246-49). The trouble is that an unknowable god is an idle god, exalted so high on her throne (or hidden so deep in the foundations of being) that she must have the tribal deities do all the work that every self-respecting god must do. Believing in a god behind all concrete manifestations amounts therefore to not believing in one: each culture ends up worshipping its own tribal deities, which is to say that each ends up, as Paul puts it, "enslaved to beings that are by nature not gods" (Galatians 4:8).

The solution to the tension created by God's universality and the cultural particularity of God's revelation had to be sought, therefore, in a God who is both *one* and who is *not hidden* behind concrete religions. The only god that Paul, the Jew, could consider was the God of Abraham and Sarah. And yet it was precisely the belief in this one and true God that created the original problem -- this God was tied to the particularities of a concrete social entity, the Jews. At its core this concrete social entity is formed "by appeal to common origin with Abraham and Sarah" and entrusted with Torah as the revelation of God's will (Neusner 1995, xii).

As he worked it out in Galatians 3:1-4:11, Paul's solution to the problem that touched the very core of his religious belief contains three simple, yet nonetheless momentous interrelated moves (which I have extrapolated from N. T. Wright's analysis in *The Climax of the Covenant*). First, *in the name of the one God Paul relativizes Torah*: Torah, which is unable to produce a single united human family demanded by the belief in the one God,⁷ cannot "be the final and permanent expression of the will of the One God" (Wright 1992, 170). Though still important, Torah is not necessary for membership in the covenant. Second, *for the sake of equality Paul discards genealogy*: the promise "had to be by faith, so that it could be according to grace: otherwise there would be some who would inherit not by grace but as of right, by race" (168). Third, *for the sake of all the families of the earth Paul embraces Christ*: the crucified and resurrected Christ is the "seed" of Abraham in whom "there is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female" (Galatians 3:28). In Christ all the families of the earth are blessed on equal terms by being brought into "the promised single family of Abraham" (166).

Paul's solution to the tension between universality and particularity is ingenious. Its logic is simple: the oneness of God requires God's universality; God's universality entails human equality; human equality implies equal access by all to the blessings of the one God; equal access is incompatible with ascription of religious significance to genealogy; Christ, the seed of Abraham, is both the fulfillment of the genealogical promise to Abraham and the end of genealogy as a privileged locus of access to God;⁸ faith in Christ replaces birth into a people. As a consequence, all peoples can have access to the one God of Abraham and Sarah on equal terms, none by right and all by grace. Put abstractly, the religious irrelevance of genealogical ties and the necessity of faith in the "seed of Abraham" are correlates of the belief in the one God of all the families of the earth, who called Abraham to depart.

Paul's solution might be ingenious, but what is the price of ingenuity? Does he not leave us with an abstract transcendence of a (masculine?) subject, detached much more than the father Abraham ever was from all communal and bodily ties and attached only to the one transcendent God? Does Paul not squander difference and particularity in order to gain equality and universality, thereby making equality empty and universality abstract? This is what Boyarin charges Paul of doing (though Boyarin recognizes at the same time the *necessity* of the kind of move Paul made). Instead of simply objecting that Paul did not push the egalitarian project to its end,⁹ Boyarin, aware of the significance of communal identities, censures Paul for affirming equality at the expense of difference.¹⁰ Paul's solution, Boyarin argues, was predicated on "dualism of the flesh and the spirit, such that while the body is particular, marked through practice as Jew or Greek, and through anatomy as male or female, the spirit is universal" (Boyarin 1994, 7). Commenting on Galatians 3:26-28, the magna carta of Pauline egalitarianism and universalism, Boyarin writes, "In the process of baptism in the spirit the marks of ethnos, gender, and class are all erased in the ascension to a univocity and universality of human essence which is beyond and outside the body" (24). Never mind that Paul occasionally does affirm cultural particularities; the grounds on which he affirms them -- the universality of the disembodied spirit -- will ultimately lead to erasure of

particularities, for these are all grounded in bodiliness. Although the Pauline solution offered a "possibility of breaking out of the tribal allegiances . . . it also contained the seeds of an imperialist and colonizing" practice (234); Paul's "universalism even at its most liberal and benevolent has been a powerful force for coercive discourses of sameness, denying . . . the rights of Jews, women, and others to retain their difference" (233).

Boyarin, however, overplays the parallels between Paul and some platonic cultural themes, notably the belief that "the commitment to 'the One' implied a disdain for the body, and disdain for the body entailed an erasure of 'difference'" (231). The "One" in whom Paul seeks to locate the unity of all humanity is *not dis-incarnate transcendence, but the crucified and resurrected Jesus Christ*. The "principle" of unity has a *name*, and the name designates a person with a *body that has suffered on the cross*. In subsequent centuries Christian theologians have arguably made the particularity of Christ's body the foundation of the reinterpretation of platonic tradition. As Augustine puts it, he dis-covered in the Neoplatonists that "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God," but did *not* find there that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (*Confessions* VII, 9). The grounding of unity and universality in the scandalous *particularity of the suffering body* of God's Messiah is what makes Paul's thought structurally so profoundly different from the kinds of beliefs in the all-importance of the undifferentiated universal spirit that would make one "ashamed of being in the body" and unable to "bear to talk about his race or his parents or his native country" (Boyarin 1994, 229).

Consider, first, the foundation of Christian community, the cross. Christ unites different "bodies" into one body, not simply in virtue of the singleness of his person ("one leader -- one people") or of his vision ("one principle or law -- one community"), but above all through his *suffering*. It is profoundly significant that, as Ellen Charry writes, "Jews and gentiles are made one body of God's children without regard to ethnicity, nationality, gender, race, or class" precisely in "the cross of Christ" (Charry 1995, 190). True, the Apostle Paul writes: "Because there is one bread we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread" (1 Corinthians 10:17). On the surface, the singleness of the bread seems to ground the unity of the body. And yet the one bread stands for the *crucified* body of Jesus Christ, the body that has refused to remain a self-enclosed singularity, but has opened itself up so that others can freely partake of it. The single personal will and the single impersonal principle or law -- two variations of the transcendent "One" -- enforce unity by suppressing and subsuming the difference; the crucified Messiah creates unity by giving his own self. Far from being the assertion of the one against many, the cross is the *self-giving of the one for many*. Unity here is not the result of "sacred violence" which obliterates the particularity of "bodies," but a fruit of Christ's self-sacrifice, which breaks down the enmity between them. From a Pauline perspective, the wall that divides is not so much "the difference" as enmity (cf. Ephesians 2:14). Hence the solution cannot be "the One." Neither the imposition of a single will nor the rule of a single law removes *enmity*. Hostility can be "put to death" only through self-giving. Peace is achieved "through the cross" and "by the blood" (2:13–17).

Consider, second, a central designation for the community created by the self-giving of Christ: "the *body* of Christ." "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in the one Spirit we were all baptized into one body -- Jews or Greeks, slaves or free -- and were made to drink of one Spirit" (1 Corinthians 12:13). The resurrected Christ, in whom Jews and Greeks are united through baptism, is not a spiritual refuge from pluralizing corporeality, a pure spiritual space into which only the undifferentiated sameness of a universal human essence is admitted. Rather, baptism into Christ creates a people as the differentiated body of Christ. Bodily inscribed differences are brought

together, not re-moved. The body of Christ lives as a complex interplay of differentiated bodies - Jewish and gentile, female and male, slave and free -- of those who have partaken of Christ's self-sacrifice. The Pauline move is not from the particularity of the body to the universality of the spirit, but from separated bodies to the community of interrelated bodies -- the one *body in the Spirit* with many *discrete members*.

The Spirit does not erase bodily inscribed differences, but allows access into the one body of Christ to the people with such differences on the same terms. What the Spirit does erase (or at least loosen) is a stable and socially constructed correlation between differences and social roles. The gifts of the Spirit are given irrespective of such differences. Against the cultural expectation that women be silent and submit to men, in Pauline communities they speak and lead because the Spirit gives them gifts to speak and lead. The Spirit creates equality by disregarding differences when baptizing people into the body of Christ or imparting spiritual gifts. Differentiating the body matters, but not for access to salvation and agency in the community. Correspondingly, unlike Plotinus Paul is not ashamed of his genealogy (see Romans 9:3); he is just unwilling to ascribe it religious significance.

The consequences of the Pauline move away from (differentiating but internally undifferentiated) bodies to the (unifying but internally differentiated) body of Christ for understanding of identities are immense. As I explore these consequences briefly here, I will take the discussion out of the specific context of Jewish-Christian relations (Hays 1996). In Christian theology Judaism and the Jewish people have a unique place -- gentile Christians are but "wild olive shoots" engrafted to "share the rich root of the [Jewish] olive tree" (Romans 11:17) -- and can therefore not be treated under the general rubric of the relation between Christian faith and group identities, which is my specific interest here.

What are the implications of the Pauline kind of universalism? Each culture can retain its own cultural specificity; Christians need not "loose their cultural identity as Jew or Gentile and become one new humanity which is neither" (Campbell 1991, vi). At the same time, no culture can retain its own tribal deities; religion must be de-ethnicized so that ethnicity can be de-sacralized. Paul deprived each culture of ultimacy in order to give them all legitimacy in the wider family of cultures. Through faith one must "depart" from one's culture because the ultimate allegiance is given to God and God's Messiah who transcend every culture. And yet precisely because of the ultimate allegiance to God of *all* cultures and to Christ who offers his "body" as a home for all people, Christian children of Abraham can "depart" from their culture without having to leave it (in contrast to Abraham himself who had to leave his "country" and "kindred"). Departure is no longer a spatial category; it can take place *within the cultural space one inhabits*. And it involves neither a typically modern attempt to build a new heaven out of the worldly hell nor a typically postmodern restless movement that fears to arrive home. Never simply distance, a genuinely Christian departure is always also presence; never simply work and struggle, it is always already rest and joy (*pace* Lyotard and Gruber 1995, 16).

Is the result of this kind of departure some "third race," as the early Christian apologist, Aristides, suggested when he divided humanity into Gentiles, Jews, and now Christians? But then, as Justo L. González points out in *Out of Every Tribe and Nation*, we would be faced with "the paradoxical notion that, in the midst of a world divided by racism, God has created still another race" (González 1992, 110). No, the internality of departure *excludes* a cosmopolitan third race, equally close to and equally distant from every culture. The proper distance from a culture does not take Christians out of that culture. Christians are not the insiders who have taken flight to a new "Christian culture" and become outsiders to their own culture; rather when they have

responded to the call of the Gospel they have stepped, as it were, with one foot outside their own culture while with the other remaining firmly planted in it. They are distant, and yet they belong. *Their difference is internal to the culture* (Volf 1994, 18f.). Because of their internality -- their immanence, their belonging -- the particularities, inscribed in the body, are not erased; because of their difference -- their transcendence, their distance -- the universality can be affirmed.

Both distance and belonging are essential. Belonging without distance destroys: I affirm my exclusive identity as Croatian and want either to shape everyone in my own image or eliminate them from my world. But distance without belonging isolates: I deny my identity as a Croatian and draw back from my own culture. But more often than not, I become trapped in the snares of counter-dependence. I deny my Croatian identity only to affirm even more forcefully my identity as a member of this or that anti-Croatian sect. And so an isolationist "distance without belonging" slips into a destructive "belonging without distance." Distance from a culture must never degenerate into flight from that culture but must be a way of living in a culture.

This, then, was Paul's creative re-appropriation of the original Abrahamic revolution. In the name of the one God of Abraham Paul opened up a particular people to become the one universal multi-cultural family of peoples. An eloquent witness to this radical re-interpretation of the relationship between religion and cultural identity is Paul's seemingly insignificant replacement of a single word in a text from Genesis: the promise that Abraham will inherit the *land* (12:1) becomes in Paul the promise that he will inherit the *world* (Romans 4:13) (Wright 1992, 174). A new universe of meaning entailed in the switch from "land" to "world" made it possible, in Boyarin's words, "for Judaism to become a world religion" (Boyarin 1994, 230). The original Abrahamic call to depart from his country, kindred, and father's house remained; what Paul made possible was to depart without leaving. Hence whereas Abraham's original departure is lived out in the one body of Jewish people, Christian departure is lived out in the many bodies of different peoples situated in the one body of Christ.

Culture, Catholicity, and Ecumenicity

Let us assume that Christians can depart without leaving, that their distance always involves belonging and that their kind of belonging takes the form of distance. What positive services does distance provide? In response, let us consider the reasons for which Christians should distance themselves from their own culture. The answer suggested by the stories of Abraham and his seed, Jesus Christ, is this: in the name of God and God's promised new world. There is a reality that is more important than the culture to which we belong. It is God and the new world that God is creating, a world in which people from every nation and every tribe, with their cultural goods, will gather around the triune God, a world in which every tear will be wiped away and "pain will be no more" (Revelation 21:3). Christians take a distance from their own culture because they give the ultimate allegiance to God and God's promised future.

The distance born out of allegiance to God and God's future -- a distance which must appropriately be lived out as internal difference -- does two important services. First, it *creates space in us to receive the other*. Consider what happens when a person becomes a Christian. Paul writes, "So if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation" (2 Corinthians 5:17). When God comes, God brings a whole new world. The Spirit of God breaks through the self-enclosed worlds we inhabit; the Spirit re-creates us and sets us on the road toward becoming what I like to call a "catholic personality," a personal microcosm of the eschatological new creation (Volf 1992a). A catholic personality is a personality enriched by other-ness, a personality which is what it is only

because multiple others have been reflected in it in a particular way. The distance from my own culture that results from being born by the Spirit creates a fissure in me through which others can come in. The Spirit un-latches the doors of my heart saying: "You are not only you; others belong to you too."

A catholic personality requires a *catholic community*. As the Gospel has been preached to many nations, the church has taken root in many cultures, changing them as well as being profoundly shaped by them. Yet the many churches in diverse cultures are one, just as the triune God is one. No church in a given culture may isolate itself from other churches in other cultures declaring itself sufficient to itself and to its own culture. Every church must be open to all other churches. We often think of a local church as a part of the universal church. We would do well also to invert the claim. Every local church is a catholic community because, in a profound sense, all other churches are a part of that church, all of them shape its identity. As all churches together form a world-wide ecumenical community, so each church in a given culture is a catholic community. Each church must therefore say, "I am not only I; all other churches, rooted in diverse cultures, belong to me too." Each needs all to be properly itself.

Both catholic personality and the catholic community in which it is embedded suggest *catholic cultural identity*. One way to conceive cultural identity is to postulate a stable cultural "we" as opposed to an equally stable "them," both complete in and of themselves; they would interact with one another, but only as self-enclosed wholes, their mutual relations being external to the identity of each. Such an essentialist understanding of cultural identity, however, is not only oppressive -- force must be used to keep everything foreign at bay -- but is also untenable. As Edward Said points out, all cultures are "hybrid . . . and encumbered, or entangled and overlapping with what used to be regarded as extraneous elements" (Said 1993, 317). The distance from our own culture which is born of the Spirit of the new creation should loosen the grip of our culture on us and enable us to live with its fluidity and affirm its hybridity. Other cultures are not a threat to the pristine purity of our cultural identity, but a potential source of its enrichment. Inhabited by people who are courageous enough not simply to belong, intersecting and overlapping cultures can mutually contribute to the dynamic vitality of each.

The second function of the distance forged by the Spirit of new creation is no less important: it *entails a judgment against evil in every culture*. A catholic personality, I said, is a personality enriched by the multiple others. But should a catholic personality integrate all otherness? Can one feel at home with everything in every culture? With murder, rape, and destruction? With nationalistic idolatry and "ethnic cleansing"? Any notion of catholic personality which was capable only of integrating, but not of dis-criminating, would be grotesque. There are incommensurable perspectives that stubbornly refuse to be dissolved in a peaceful synthesis (Mouw 1987, 114f.); there are evil deeds that cannot be tolerated. The practice of "judgment" cannot be given up (see Chapter II). There can be no new creation without judgment, with-out the expulsion of the devil and the beast and the false prophet (Revelation 20:10), without the swallowing up of the night by the light and of death by life (Revelation 21:4; 22:5) (Volf 1991, 120f.).

The judgment must begin, however, "with the household of God" (1 Peter 4:17) -- with the self and its own culture. In the course of his discussion of the ascetic ideal, Nietzsche pointed out that those who wish to make a new departure have "first of all to subdue tradition and the gods in themselves" (Nietzsche 1956, 251). Similarly, those who seek to overcome evil must fight it first of all in their own selves. Distance created by the Spirit opens the eyes to self-deception, injustice, and the destructiveness of the self. It also makes us aware that, as Richard Sennett pointed out, group identities "do not and cannot make for coherent and complete selves; they arise from fissures

in the larger social fabric; they contain its contradictions and its injustices" (Sennett 1994). A truly catholic personality must be an *evangelical personality* -- a personality brought to repentance and shaped by the Gospel and engaged in the transformation of the world.

The struggle against falsehood, injustice, and violence both in the self and the other is impossible without distance. "How can one avoid sinking into the mire of common sense, if not by becoming a stranger to one's own country, language, sex and identity?" asks Julia Kristeva rhetorically (Kristeva 1986, 298). Of course, being a stranger pure and simple is a rather pathetic posture, verging on insanity. If I cut all the ties that bind me to any moral and linguistic tradition I become an indeterminate "self," open to any arbitrary content. As a consequence, I simply float, unable to resist anything because I do not stand anywhere.¹¹ The children of Abraham are not strangers pure and simple, however. Their "strangeness" results not from the negative act of cutting all ties, but from the positive act of giving allegiance to God and God's promised future. Stepping out of their culture, they do not float in some indeterminate space, looking at the world from everywhere and anywhere. Rather with one foot planted in their own culture and the other in God's future -- internal difference -- they have a vantage point from which to perceive and judge the self and the other not simply on their own terms but in the light of God's new world -- a world in which a great multitude "from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages" is gathered "before the throne and before the Lamb" (Revelation 7:9; 5:9).

In the battle against evil, especially against the evil in one's own culture, evangelical personality needs *ecumenical community*. In the struggle against the Nazi regime, the Barmen Declaration called the churches to reject all "other lords" -- the racist state and its ideology -- and give allegiance to Jesus Christ alone "who is the one Word of God which we have to hear and which we have to trust and obey in life and death." The call is as important today as it was then. Yet it is too abstract. It underestimates our ability to twist the "one Word of God" to serve our own communal ideologies and national strategies. The images of communal survival and flourishing our culture feeds us all too easily blur our vision of God's new creation -- America is a Christian nation, we then think for instance, and democracy the only truly Christian political arrangement. Unaware that our culture has subverted our faith, we lose a place from which to judge our own culture. In order to keep our allegiance to Jesus Christ pure, we need to nurture commitment to the multi-cultural community of Christian churches. We need to see our-selves and our own understanding of God's future with the eyes of Christians from other cultures, listen to voices of Christians from other cultures so as to make sure that the voice of our culture has not drowned out the voice of Jesus Christ, "the one Word of God." Barmen's commitment to the Lordship of Christ must be supplemented with the commitment to the ecumenical community of Christ. The two are not the same, but both are necessary.

Let me suggest a confession -- like text that expresses the need for ecumenical community in the struggle against "new tribalism." I will follow the format of the Barmen Declaration:

You were slaughtered and by your blood you ransomed for God saints from every tribe and language and people and nation" (Revelation 5:9). "There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus (Galatians 3:28).

All the churches of Jesus Christ, scattered in diverse cultures, have been redeemed for God by the blood of the Lamb to form one multicultural community of faith. The "blood" that binds them

as brothers and sisters is more precious than the "blood," the language, the customs, political allegiances, or economic interests that may separate them.

We reject the false doctrine, as though a church should place allegiance to the culture it inhabits and the nation to which it belongs above the commitment to brothers and sisters from other cultures and nations, servants of the one Jesus Christ, their common Lord, and members of God's new community.

In situations of conflict Christians often find themselves accomplices in war, rather than agents of peace. We find it difficult to distance ourselves from our selves and our own culture and so we echo its reigning opinions and mimic its practices. As we keep the vision of God's future alive, we need to reach out across the firing lines and join hands with our brothers and sisters on the other side. We need to let them pull us out of the enclosure of our own culture and its own peculiar set of prejudices so that we can read afresh the "one Word of God." In this way we might become once again the salt to the world ridden by strife.

The two positive functions of distance from one's own culture that I have highlighted invite two objections. The first concerns the notion of "hybrid identity." Do we not reach a point at which we must close the doors not simply to what is evil but also to what is foreign because if we keep the doors open our home will soon no longer be our own and we will no longer be able to distinguish home from a street? Put more abstractly, does not identity -- even hybrid identity -- presuppose boundary maintenance? A second objection goes in the opposite direction and concerns the struggle against evil: just as I am too loose with cultural identity, so I seem too rigid with moral responsibility. What right do I have to insist that one can distinguish between darkness and light, and that one must struggle against darkness in the name of light? If we operate with such stark distinctions are we not in danger of demonizing and destroying what-ever we happen not to like? I would not dispute the claim behind the first objection and would argue against the second that it is both impossible and undesirable not to distinguish between darkness and light. In the following Chapter I will elaborate on these claims.

Notes

1. As one can read in his *Representations of the Intellectuals*, Said is aware of the tendency of artists and intellectuals to echo regnant opinions (Said 1994). His point is that we should be justified in our expectations that the good ones will do better than that.

2. The slide into complicity with what is evil in our culture would not be nearly as easy if the cultures did not so profoundly shape us. In a significant sense we are our cultures and we find it therefore difficult to distance ourselves from the culture we inhabit in order to evaluate its various elements. The difficulty, however, makes the distancing from our own culture in the name of God of all cultures so much more urgent. The judgments we pass need not be always negative, of course. As I have argued elsewhere, there is no single correct way to relate to a given culture as a whole; there are only various ways of accepting, transforming, rejecting, or re-placing various aspects of a given culture from within (Volf 1995, 371ff.; Volf 1996, 101).

3. I owe the reference to Rosenzweig to the Jewish scholar Michael S. Kogan. Referring to the Rosenzweig quote he wrote in a letter to me: "It makes the Jewish reader feel quite strange -- at home nowhere but in the Divine embrace."

4. The images of "vagabond" or "stroller" would probably express better the idea Deleuze wants to convey; the course nomads take is much more charted and predictable than Deleuze suggests. In *Life in Fragments* Zygmunt Bauman has used images of "vagabond" and "stroller,"

alongside those of "tourist" and "player" to analyze the character of postmodern culture (Bauman 1995, 94ff.).

5. In *From a Broken Web* Catherine Keller does not comment on the story of Abraham, and I have no way of knowing what she would have said had she chosen to comment on it. What follows is not a defense of Abraham against Keller. Her own proposal, rooted as it is in process thought, is not to deny transcendence but to challenge "the epic polarization of our creative spontaneities into sedentary feminine spinning (immanence without transcendence) and restless masculine roving (transcendence without immanence)" (Keller 1986, 45).

6. In *Children of the Flesh, Children of the Promise* Jacob Neusner has argued that, properly understood, Israel is a transcendental, supernatural entity and no more "a circumscribed and ethnic religion than is Christianity"; it is "formed by God's command and act, and whether its members have joined by birth or by choice, it is uniform and one" (Neusner 1995, xii). In the language of Judaism, he argues, *Israel* refers to "an entity of precisely the same type as *church* or *mystical body of Christ* in the language of Christianity" (5). The argument seems plausible, yet questions re-main. Does the fact that a rabbi will say "we are Israel by reason of (bodily) birth into Israel" (41) whereas a Christian theologian could never say "we are Christians by reason of (bodily) birth into a Christian family" not indicate an important difference between Israel and the church that makes the church so much more unlike an "ethnic group" than is Israel? Neusner has offered no explanation as to how membership by birth, even if accompanied by membership by choice, will not result in a community that is in significant ways "ethnic" even though it may speak many languages and diverge in customs.

7. For my purposes here it is not essential to go into the debate on precisely why, in Paul's view, Torah is unable to produce a single human family. In the chapter "The Seed and the Mediator" of *The Climax of the Covenant* Wright has argued that this is because the Mosaic Torah was "given to Jews and Jews only" (Wright 1992, 173). Contrary to this view, Neusner has rightly underlined that Torah is "God's revealed will for humanity" (Neusner 1995, 6). Correspondingly, from Jewish perspective "it is not God's people -- which we comprise -- that forms an exclusive channel of divine grace. It is God who takes up a presence where God's word lives. Israel is not elect because God chose Israel. Israel is elect because the Torah defines Israel, and the Torah is the medium of God's grace to humanity. Israel is Adam's counterpart, just as Christ, for Christianity, is Adam's counterpart" (62). Elsewhere in *The Climax of the Covenant* Wright has argued that Torah cannot be "the means through which she [Israel] either retains her membership in the covenant of blessing or becomes . . . the means of blessing the world in accordance with the promise of Abraham" because "Israel as a whole has failed to keep the perfect Torah" (Wright 1992, 146). Following the lead of a more traditional school of interpretation, Hans-Joachim Eckstein has argued that, in Paul's view, neither Israel nor the Gentiles could fulfill Torah, indeed that Torah was not given originally as a way of salvation at all (Eckstein 1996). For either interpretation, Torah had to be relativized if the blessing of Abraham was to come to all nations.

8. For Paul this does not imply that there is now no distinction whatsoever between Israel and the Gentiles. In Romans Paul argues both that "the grace of God is extended to Gentiles" and "that God has not broken covenant with Israel" (Hays 1996, 582f.).

9. The standard objection leveled against Paul in recent decades is that he is still too particularistic, that even at his best -- in Galatians 3:28 -- his egalitarianism stops at the boundary of Christian faith. He is unduly privileging the Christian way of salvation and thereby denying radical equality. The trouble with this objection is that so far no persuasive alternative to overcome particularism has been proposed. No one has shown how one can intelligently hold to a

nonparticularist universalism. And this for a good reason. As it happens, every claim to universality must be made from a particular perspective. Hence it is understandable why for Christians as well as for the Jews "the implementation of the universal *agape* of God necessarily entails particularity. Particularity is always a 'scandal,' but it is also the only way of getting to the universal," as Douglas J. Hall has rightly stressed in polemic with Rosemary Radford Ruether (Hall and Ruether 1995, 107).

10. Boyarin's critique of Paul should be located not so much within the American liberation movements of the 1960s, which were about equity as, within the "politics of identity" concerns of the 1990s, which are about respect for discrete cultures (Menand 1994). The subtitle of his book is telling: "Paul and the Politics of Identity."

11. Tzvetan Todorov has rightly pointed out that being an exile is fruitful only "if one belongs to both cultures at once, without identifying oneself with either." If "a whole society consists of exiles, the dialogue of cultures ceases: it is replaced by eclecticism and comparatism, by the capacity to love everything a little, of flaccidly sympathizing with each option without ever embracing any. Heterology," he concludes, "which makes the difference of voices heard, is necessary; polylogy is insipid" (Todorov 1984, 251).

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Chapter XV
Scriptural Faith and Ethnicity:
Some Lessons from the Islamic Experience

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As we move towards the end of this decade in the last century of this millennium we are being forced by the trend of global events to address a number of issues which sometime in the distant past did not occupy the attention of our ancestors. Because of the growing power of these events and owing to the complexities they create for the average human being, it is now imperative that some attention be given to them. One of the key issues that is beginning to make life nasty, brutish and short is the conflation of two explosive issues in the human condition. These are the issues of religion and ethnicity. Much blood has been shed by many human beings who sometimes really believe that their violent actions serve a divine cause. This distortion of the teachings of the Great Religions of humanity has been most brutal and fanatical when the blood of the tribe is sanctified and made sacred by the fanatical utterances of the religiously intoxicated.

We must think seriously about the roots of religious and ethnic bigotry. We must examine how, why, and when men and women of faith succumb to the inner urging of the darker side of their lives. Why is it necessary for men and women of faith to embrace fanatically their ethnic group to the point of violating the rights and dignity of others in the name of the Creator? Why do we human beings affirm at one level of our being the universality of the Divine Revelation and yet hypocritically betray it by dancing joyously at the shrine of our tribal gods? How do we reconcile ourselves to the fact that our tribal loyalties in themselves are neither enough to guarantee us a stable and spiritually rewarding life nor sufficient in making the other human being inferior and worthless in the eyes of the Creator?

In addition to the "why" questions, there are also the "whens" and the "whats." When does tribal loyalty reinforce religious loyalty? Does it take place under certain conditions? If this hypothesis is correct, then what are the historical and contemporary evidences that can help us chart a path of religious and ethnic reconciliation? The skeptic and cynic might well ask at this juncture whether such a process of reconciliation has any future. Those of us who are die-hard advocates and promoters of dialogue between the members of the religious traditions of humankind, will never give up hope. We will continue to ask and answer the questions dealing with the whys and the whens. In so doing, we must focus our attention also on the quiddity or nature of the phenomenon.

But if indeed there are many of us in the world who still have residual if not substantive hope in the interfaith process, then why can we not begin to explore the how questions? Let us start with how can we avoid the repetition of Bosnia and Rwanda, two of the most recent ghastly examples of man's inhumanity to man. These two tragedies which are daily brought into our living rooms tell us a great deal about ourselves and about the strange and sometimes bizarre psychology which defines our identity, our self-image and our self-worth. Watching such events unravel before our eyes forces the religiously conscious human being to ask the long-standing question: Are God and his message to humankind still relevant? It is indeed to this and other related questions that we now turn.¹

The purpose of this paper is to examine the theological and historical evidences regarding Islam and ethnicity in human societies in our age. The first part of the paper addresses the theological questions regarding the Qur'anic view of man. Under this section we will explore the

role and place of ethnicity in Muslim theological discourse. Attention will be focused on the Qur'anic and hadithic literature. Opinions of Muslims scholars who deal specifically with the ethnic question will be drawn from whenever available and necessary.

The second section will look at the historical record to demonstrate how the theological formulations of the Qur'an and the hadithic literature stating the Prophetic positions on issues of this kind have been violated or circumvented by Muslims in the past and in the contemporary period. By examining the men and women over time, and how those who wish to construct an edifice of peace and tolerance in interreligious societies can work together in becoming more appreciative of their common humanity regardless of their national, racial, ethnic and religious backgrounds.

The third section of this chapter will offer a number of conclusions about the nature of ethnicity and how Islam and Muslims have dealt with it theologically and historically. It is hoped that such conclusions can add to the discourse on ethnicity and religion in our contemporary world.

Islam and Its Theological Position on Ethnicity

Modern human beings are so assimilated to the culture of nationalism that they hardly bother to examine its assumptions. Furthermore, the nationalist and ethnic chauvinists have been so successful in their propaganda campaigns that they usually co-opt religion and religious leaders in their war of words against their perceived enemies sitting on the opposite ends of the fault lines of ethnic and nationalist entities.² Such smugness would have gone unchallenged if human society had not witnessed the holocaust against Jews in Germany, the brutalities against Bosnian Muslims and the rape of their women by their onetime Serb neighbors. These and several other outrageous developments in recent human history have made it imperative for scholars and other responsible members of society to look for the root causes of such violent acts, especially because some of the perpetrators of such acts have rationalized their misdeeds in the name of one religion or the other.³

Islam is one of the three Abrahamic religions and one of the five major religions of the world. Its position on and attitudes towards ethnicity can be gleaned from several verses from the Qur'an and from the hadithic literature attributed to the Prophet Muhammad. The theological position is graphically stated in the creation story. Similar to, but significantly different from, Hebrew and Christian biblical accounts of the creation story, the Qur'anic account raises several points that deserve attention whenever and wherever anyone wishes to discuss the attitudes of world religions towards the ethnic question.⁴

First of all, it should be noted that in the Islamic view of creation, when Allah (God) decided to create Man, he consulted with his angelic courtiers. They at first expressed doubts about Man and wondered whether he would not be shedding blood on earth. To this expression of doubt about the human condition, Allah responded by saying that He knows what his angelic courtiers did not know.⁵ The Qur'anic story later tells us that Allah's decision was to create a viceregent (Khalifa) in the person of Adam, the primal Man. Chosen to be deputized by the Creator and charged with the custodial responsibility of managing nature and the processes of human development on earth, Adam became the Great Trustee of creation.⁶ He and his progeny were now destined to create an earthly civilization which would be bounded by a covenant with the Creator. From a Muslim point of view Adam was the first Prophet of God on earth and his world was to be ordered in accordance with the teachings of the Creator. This dignified place and role in creation is, to use a more contemporary metaphor, encoded by DNA in all human beings on earth.⁷

This Adamite gene is the basis of human equality founded on monogenesis. Most significantly for our discussion here is that part of the story where Allah invited all his angelic and jinnic creations to bow before Adam. According to the Qur'an, when Allah called upon Iblis (Satan) to bow before his new human creation, he refused, saying that he could not bow before Adam because he was a lower grade of being. This is to say, he (Iblis) was made out of smokeless fire while Adam was made out of dust. This statement of Iblis' has been identified by Muslim scholars as the first creational evidence of prejudice and discrimination.⁸ Building upon this understanding and taking Iblis as a creature whose pride and prejudice have combined to disobey a Divine command, Muslims can now describe any manifestations of racism and ethnic chauvinism as Iblisian. This terminology and the understanding it conveys are beginning to gain greater currency in the modern world. This is not because Muslims have not paid attention to this phenomenon before, but because it is only in this age that the races and ethnic language groups have come together more closely than at any time in the history of the humankind.⁹

Although Muslims have always witnessed over the last fourteen centuries the diversity of the human races through the annual event of pilgrimage, their collective experience at the Hajj (annual pilgrimage) was not shared in by members of other faith communities. Indeed, until the fifteenth century of the Gregorian calendar, not many European and Asian believers of Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism knew people of other races who embraced their faiths.¹⁰ The situation has changed radically and dramatically largely because of the electronic revolution and the emergence of what is called the televillage. Two factors have accounted for this change. The first is the historical events known as the age of discovery and the colonization of the non-European worlds by European powers. The second was the scientific and technological revolution which now governs the way we act and feel.¹¹

Islam and the Manifestation of Ethnicity in the Muslim World

The theological teachings of Islam certainly do not countenance racism, ethnicity and tribalism in human societies. However, because of the moral fragility of human beings, they cannot be trusted to live faithfully at all times in accordance with these Divine commands. The earliest manifestation of tribal loyalty in Islamic history took place immediately after the death of the Prophet. It came from some of the Arab tribes who felt that his death terminated their obligations to the Muslim community. Convinced that their bonds were linked only to the deceased leader of the Muslim community and determined to reassert their old sense of freedom and independence, they took to arms.

These acts of rebellion were not allowed by the succeeding leadership to go unchallenged.¹² Known as the Rida wars, these armed conflicts between the young Muslim community and the tribal Arabs resisting the hegemony of Islam, set once and for all the *unacceptability of tribalism and the universality of Islam*. In addition to the total rejection of tribalism, the Rida wars also left another important legacy to Muslims. Henceforth, in Muslim official circles and in popular imagination, the celebration of one's tribalism and ethnic chauvinism would be associated with *jahiliyya* days. This is to say, those who sacrifice universality on the altar of tribal and ethnic gods would be guilty of shirk (associating partnership with God) because, like Satan in the Creation story, they are rejecting the principle of universal equality among human beings and extolling the principle of genetic or moral superiority with no basis.¹³

This association of ethnic chauvinism and tribalism with Iblis in the Creation story has a powerful message to send to Muslims and others familiar with this Qur'anic account of the

Creation story. Muslims who appreciate the message contained in such a story have throughout history tried to discourage ethnic chauvinism. However, their efforts failed on several occasions because of the contradictions in Muslim society. The existence of slaves from societies outside of the Arab World and the Arab emphasis on genealogical lines together created a phenomenon which increasingly favored Arab families over the latter-day Muslims from other ethnic background. Because of this discrimination in favor of Arabs, a condition made possible by many of the non-Arab Muslims began to question the un-Islamic nature of this practice and soon a cultural movement, known to students of Muslim civilization as the *Shuubiya Movement*, came into being.¹⁴ Pitted linguistically and ethnically against the dominant Arabs ruling over the Umayyad dynasty, and thoroughly convinced by their Islam that they had all the rights of citizenship by virtue of their profession of the Islamic faith, these advocates of the non-Arab movement would later be identified by scholars as contributors to the overthrow of the Umayyad dynasty. One can say retrospectively that the Shuubiya movement in Islam helped usher in a new order under the leadership of the Abbassids. This new dispensation redefined the nature of the relationship between Arabs and non-Arabs within the Islamic civilization. Though ethnicity continued to exist in Muslim ranks, its negative and blatantly favoritistic character was no longer allowed to raise its ugly head.

There is however one major historical event which deserves our attention here. This relates to the story about the revolt of the East African slaves known to history as the Zinj Uprising of 869 A.D. Brought from Africa to work in the salt flats near Basra in southern Iraq, they operated very much like the other slaves in Muslim societies of the Mediterranean. It should be stated categorically that at this time there was no racial association of slavery with one particular ethnic/racial group as in the case of the United States of America. The Islamic economy did not depend on the slaves and such persons who found themselves in this servile position were employed mainly as house servants and to a lesser extent as members of the military. In terms of severity of labor conditions, the Zanj were certainly unmatched.¹⁵ Convinced that their conditions were intolerable they responded favorably to the agitation from the Shiite advocates of social equality and freedom.

It is said by historians that this movement of slave rebels captured many cities and towns and that by 878 CE they were near Baghdad itself. It was only in 883 CE that the central government successfully put an end to their rebellion. In discussing the case of the Zinj we do not in any way intend to convey the feeling that racism was the reason for their servitude; rather, the idea is to tell the reader that the agitators against the intolerable conditions of the Zinj slaves were themselves Shiite Muslim Arabs and that Islam was the motivation force for their sense of outrage.¹⁶

Without undue stretching, one can draw a parallel to the abolitionist movement and the Christian sense of outrage that galvanized its movers and shakers. This fact was not lost to Adib Rashad, a prolific African American writer, when he wrote in 1995, that "(i)t is most interesting to note, however that in Western societies opposition to slavery spawned anti-slavery movements whose numbers and commitment often came from church groups. No such movements ever developed in other societies-including Islamic societies."¹⁷ Although Rashad acknowledged the absence of a mass movement against slavery in Muslim lands, he was quick to add the following: "Despite the fact that there were no Muslim grassroots movements seeking to abolish slavery, it is imperative to discuss briefly what the Qur'an and Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated regarding this sensitive subject. Although the Qur'an did not abolish slavery in clear, specific language, Qur'anic injunctions elevate the moral and material status of slaves and encourage their freedom. The freeing of slaves was/is regarded as a meritorious act, an act that brings a human being closer

to God."18 The African-American author went on to tell us that there were twelve chapters and thirty-two passages in which references are made to slavery. He also made reference to the numerous hadiths on slavery from the Prophet himself.

These references, as I have tried to explain earlier, are simply the idealization of what humans are supposed to do in their social sphere. In Islamic history the *Shariah* became the vehicle through which such interpretations were made for society by a community of legal scholars called *Fuqaha*. In the majority of cases the jurists accepted the established tradition that Muslims should and must not enslave one another and that persons who became Muslims should be accorded their equal rights. There were however in-stances in Muslim history when individual Muslims, out of greed or personal power, contravened the established Muslim tradition. Adib Rashad, in the work cited above, reminded us that Muhammad bin Hamid (infamously known as Tippo Tip) carved out a slave trading empire for himself in the upper Congo in central Africa in the last decades of the last century.19

Islamic Experience in North America

We have dwelled on the issue of slavery and its effects on the enslaved because in the Western World today we are still dealing with the after effects of the African slave trade. The continuing stigmatization of blackness and the negative consequences it has for those lumped together under this category in American and elsewhere in the World, have together affected almost all discussions on religion and race. It is only through such discussions that we can grasp the problems and challenges facing those of us living at the point where race, color and ethnicity intersect. This is particularly relevant for those of us in North America when we recognize the fact that the coming of Islam to the United States of America has led to two tendencies toward race and racism. I have called these two tendencies as the "Webbian" and the "Elijahan" tendencies.20 The former is the articulation of the traditional position which is captured in one of the Qur'anic verses as follows:21

Oh Mankind! Lo! we have created you male and female, and have made you into nations and tribes that ye may know one another. Lo! the noblest of you, in the sight of Allah, is the best of conduct.

This Qur'anic verse must always be placed side by side with the famous words of the Prophet when he made his Farewell Address to the Muslim *ummah* at Mount Arafat in Arabia. As re-ported in the collections of hadiths by Imam Buhari and several others, the Prophet told the assembly the following:22

There is no advantage for Arab over a Non-Arab, or for a white man over a black man, excepting by piety.

The American advocate of this traditional Qur'anic position was a white American Muslim who had embraced the religion after many years of spiritual journey within the Theosophical Society of America. While serving as U.S. consul in Manila, Philippines, Mr. Alexander Russell Webb, who changed his first name to Muhammad, preached this doctrine to fellow Americans out of his headquarters in Manhattan, New York, where he edited the first known Muslim publication on the continent and at the Parliament of World Religions in Chicago in 1893.23 In Webb's as

well as in any genuine Muslim's mind, racism and ethnic chauvinism cannot be accepted by Islam and Americans can benefit immeasurably from an exposure to such a teaching because it would help reduce drastically the tensions generated by race consciousness and race conflict.

While the Muslim traditionalists peddle the old message from the Prophet, another message self-consciously identified with Islam by its advocates, but in principle antithetical to its tenets about monogenesis, appeared among blacks living in Detroit in the 1930's. This second message was that of the Nation of Islam founded by a mysterious character, Farad Muhammad. Much has been said about this man and his movement.²⁴ What is relevant to our discussion here is his use and misuse of Islam in the creation of a mythology/theology and a genesis story to address the negative legacies of slavery and racism among U.S. blacks. These have lived in the south since slavery, but were beginning to establish new homes in northern cities where they were also encountering immigrants from overseas.

From the above we can see that two opposing tendencies have emerged among Americans who call themselves Muslims. Although the vast majority of them would classify themselves as orthodox Muslims who have no connection with the views of the Nation of Islam, the fact remains that race and racism have become a part of the Muslim American consciousness. Because of this state of affairs in American (and Western) society, it is important to focus on how race and racism are dealt with in American Muslim circles. Three points about the nature of ethnicity within the larger American Muslim community:

The first point is related to the call for, and the maintenance of, Muslim solidarity. This appeal to universal brotherhood (or sisterhood) of humankind is heard almost daily among Muslims in the United States of America. Their call for solidarity is seen in theological and political terms. Theologically, Muslims quote to each other the Qur'anic verses which direct humankind to see themselves as children of Adam and to do good works during their lifetime in this sublunar world. Politically, Muslims appeal to the universal ummah whenever they wish to register their presence in the councils of men and to demonstrate their ability to sink their differences.

The second point is the fact that ethnicity in the global context could be acknowledged without necessarily undermining the basis of Islamic solidarity. This is an important point because on this matter the Muslim community in the United States of America, for example, stands to benefit from the historical experiences of Catholic Americans. This group of American Christians have been characterized historically as a community of ethnics who are united by a common faith in Christ and by their adherence to a body of teachings whose interpretation rests entirely in the hands of papal leadership at the Vatican. Although Muslims do not have any universal structure that parallels the Catholic arrangement, the fact remains that American Muslims, as a religious minority living in a predominantly Christian society, have over the last quarter of a century tried to create national and international organizations that would allow for greater communication and mutual collaboration in the development of Islamic communities in North America.²⁵

By over stressing ethnic identities Muslims could easily undermine their solidarity in America or elsewhere in the world where they constitute a minority. Fearful of this negative outcome, many a Muslim now advocates inter-ethnic cooperation and collaboration in order to safeguard their individual and collective selves. If and when they live up to this ideal, Muslim men and women can be said to be on the path of greater unity. Under such conditions ethnicity and tribalism cannot last long and Muslims stand to profit immeasurably whenever such a state of affairs exists.

The third point is the fact that ethnicity and tribalism can be a source of alienation in a society where members divide along racial, ethnic or tribal lines. Since Islam abhors any attempt to glorify one's race or ethnicity, it would indeed be "Iblisian" (Satanic) to act towards fellow human beings

strictly on racial or ethnic lines. This applies to those who embrace racist or tribalistic ideologies of hate and are most likely to make other human beings feel alienated by their racially or ethnically antagonistic neighbors.

Conclusion

First, Islam is a world religion categorically opposed to any form of discrimination among human beings. Those humans who are too proud to share the earth and its wealth with their fellow humans because they believe that their racial or ethnic group has special favors from the Creator, are Iblisian in character and, for this and other reasons, deserve condemnation. The second conclusion is that though Islam as a belief system opposes racism and ethnic chauvinism, the historical experiences of the Muslim peoples have made it categorically clear that ethnic or tribal prejudices have not disappeared completely. The Shuubiya Movement and the contemporary uses and abuses of Islam about which we wrote above lend support to the argument being made here. The third conclusion is that ethnicity and Islam are not necessarily opposed to each other and that Muslims living in the modern period are challenged to live peacefully with their neighbors regardless of their ethnic or religious affiliations. This is the only way a theology of pluralism can mature.

Notes

1. M. Darrol Bryant, "Overcoming History: On the possibilities of Muslim-Christian Dialogue", *Hamdard Islamicus*, Vol. XVII, No. 2 (Summer, 1994), pp. 5-15; M. Darrol Bryant, *Pluralism, Tolerance and Dialogue: Six Studies* (Waterloo, Ontario: University of Waterloo Press, 1989), especially chapter 1. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Comments on a Few Theological Issues" in the Haddad edited, *Christian-Muslim Encounters* (Gainesville, Florida: University Press of Florida, 1995), pp. 457-467.

2. Religion and nationalism are in many instances closely wedded together in various parts of the world. The IRA campaign in Northern Ireland, the Bosnian conflict in the Balkans, the Islamic campaign of HAMAS in the Middle East, the use of Islamic symbols and slogans in the former Soviet republics in central Asia, the Sikh quest for a national state called Kalistan carved out of India are some of numerous examples one can cite.

3. For some discussion on the dynamic interaction between religious fundamentalism and the national state, see Martin E. Marty and R. Scott Appleby, eds. *Fundamentalisms Comprehended*, Vols. 1-5 (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 1995).

4. For a more comprehensive discussion of Christian, Jewish and Muslim understanding of the creation story, see the following works: Elaine Pagels, *Adam, Eve and the Serpent* (New York: Random House, 1988); Louie Jacobs, *A Jewish Theology* (New York: First Vintage Books, 1996); Jaafar Sheikh Idris, "Is Man the Vice-gerent of God?" *Journal of Islamic Studies*, I (1990), pp. 99-110.

5. For details on the Qur'anic story, see Chapter 2, Verses 30-39.

6. For some discussion of man's role as Khalifa (Vicegerent) of Allah in this world, see *The Qur'an*, Chapter 2, Verses 30; Chapter 6, Verses 165.

7. For the Qur'anic reference to Adam as Prophet, see Chapter 2, Verses 37.

8. For the Qur'anic account of Iblis' (Satan's) refusal to bow to Adam, see Chapter 2, Verse 34.

9. For some recent Muslim discussion on tribalism, racism and ethnicity in contemporary Muslim societies, see my essay on "Islam and Racism" in Sulayman S. Nyang and Henry O. Thompson, ed., *Islam: Its Relevance Today* (Barrytown, New York: Unification Theological Seminary, 1991), pp. 83-91. See also the recent issue of a major Muslim publication in the U.S., *Message International*, March, 1996, devoted to "Muslim Tribalism."

10. It is interesting to note here that when Christian philosopher Justin wrote to emperors of his time he defended his co-religionists by saying that they were a people who had completely changed their way of life in matters of sex, money and racial relations. As quoted in Elaine Pagels' work listed above, Justin wrote that ". . . we, who hated and destroyed one another, refusing to live with those of a different race, now live intimately with them" (p. 59).

11. For some discussions on the impact of the early Western encounter with the Muslim and Third World regions of the world, see Walter Rodney, *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* (Washington, D.C.: Howard University, 1982); Bernard Lewis, *The Middle East and the West* (New York: Harper & Row Publishers, Inc., 1964), chapter 2; Joel Kovel, *White Racism: A Psychohistory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1970), especially chapter 9. For some Muslim and Third World perspective on contemporary cultural forces impacting on the Muslim and Third Worlds, see Ali A. Mazrui, *Cultural Forces in World Politics* (Portsmouth, New Hampshire: Heinemann, 1991).

12. For accounts of the Ridda wars, see F.E. Peters, *Allah's Commonwealth* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1973), pp. 78-89.

13. For Qur'anic rejection of ethnicity and tribalism, see Chapter 49, Verse 13.

14. On the Shuubya Movement, see Pes, *op. cit.*, pp. 401-408.

15. For more information on the Zanj revolt, see Peters, *op.cit.*, pp. 477-80.

16. *Ibid.*

17. Adib Rashid, *Islam, Black Nationalism and Slavery: A Detailed History* (Beltsville, Maryland: Writer's Inc., 1995), p.50.

18. *Ibid.*

19. On the historical record of slavery in Muslim Africa, see Allan G.B. Fisher and Humphrey J. Fisher, *Slavery and Muslim Society in Africa* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1971).

20. See my first editorial in the maiden issue of *The American Journal of Islamic Studies*, I, (Spring, 1984), p. ix.

21. *The Qur'an*, Chapter 49, verse 13.

22. This part of the Farewell Address has been cited by many biographers of the Prophet of Islam.

23. For a biographical sketch of M.A.R. Webb, see Emory H. Tunison, "Mohammed Webb: First American Muslim." *The Arab World*, I, III (1945), pp. 13-18.

24. For details on the early history of the Nation of Islam, see C. Eric Lincoln, *Black Muslim in America* (Boston, Mass: Beacon Press, 1973); U.E. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search of an Identity in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962).

25. For details on Political efforts of American Muslims, see Steve A. Johnson, "Political Activity of Muslims in America," in Yvonne Z. Haddad, *The Muslims of America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 111-124.

Part V

A Socio-Political Analysis of Religious Enculturation

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

The ineffable and the social. Natural community/faith community. Charisma and institution. Prophetic dissent, revival, and routinization. Monotheistic faith realized as (ethnic) minorities: (a) within religiously-other or pluralist societies/polities; (b) as majority religion; (c) as established (state or imperial) religion; and (d) in post-establishment societies (modernizing, secular, pluralist, post-modern).¹

Editorial Introduction

(I)t should be apparent that sociology cannot, in the usual sense of word, yield any knowledge of religion. . . . Insofar as religion expresses itself in social processes, sociology can handle it. But this means there can be no sociology of religion but only of irreligion.

-Albert Salomon²

Above, in Part III, we assayed the anthropological findings on the religious life of archaic peoples. Here, in Part V we look at religion (specifically Abrahamic faiths) in the rise and subsequent modernization of "society." In this context the term "society" is reserved for peoples among whom differentiation, specialization, and reorganization of human activity increasingly limit and supplant familial solidarities. As John Kromkowski recalls below, given the religious ethos of archaic community, the rise and especially the modernization (since the eighteenth century) of society led to the expectation that religion would disappear along with other primitive communal forms.

That, as we now know, has not been the case, though the obsolescence of "religion" is still widely held. Religion has not only survived, but has also become more specialized. If in some respects or settings religion inhibited societal development, in other respects and settings it also enhanced societal growth and modernization. Some analysts distinguish "founded" from "natural" religions. In the former instance, particular theophanies are seen as having given rise to religious movements that spread eventually to many peoples. As to theophany, since theophanous claims are beyond direct empirical verification, a social scientist might at the outside allow it to be smuggled by as unexplained variance.

In the rise of the Western civilization, the Abrahamic faiths, while variously resisting certain changes, nonetheless generated energies without which the transformation of the West could not have occurred. In the academic jargon of the day, Abrahamic faith has been a necessary but by no means sufficient energy in the development and modernization of the West. Max Weber's famous theme about the "Protestant ethic" is an example: the notion that the individual is accountable to God directly without priestly or sacramental mediation, he argued, had a profound individualizing effect on the society and culture.

Kromkowski here sees religion as one of four "relationships of order" to be distinguished in macro analysis, each, of course, a multidimensional phenomenon. In modernity, at least in the American system, religion at the polity level has been formally "dis-established." Now a differentiated subsystem, thus adapted to modernity, religion remains a cohesive force within the

sub-com-munities that operate within polities. At that sub-community level, religion persists, as in the past, as a cohesive -- and divisive -- energy.

Taken in its primary sense, however, particularly in the Abrahamic vocation, religion expresses "an inner relation to a being beyond and higher than ourselves. It takes itself to be a primary phenomenon which in the last analysis is irreducible to anything else, be it science or poetry. Religious men consider the whole of reality as a unity impregnated with divine meaning. But within the religious framework two distinct perspectives emerge: the perspective of the 'visionary' and that of the 'ecclesiastic,' that of prophet and that of priest. The visionary . . . is a man of mystical vision who intuitively experiences the infinite -- his is the spiritual capital which all religions draw upon and expend."³

Occasionally an analytical distinction is drawn between the human search for God and God's search for the human, a distinction somewhat paralleling Salomon's contrast between the visionary and the ecclesiastic. Taken generically, religion refers to the means by which we respond to "the infinite." But religious activity readily becomes its own end, and insofar descends into idolatry. Here the Shema draws the line daily.

As emphasized elsewhere in this collection, the people or community is the subject of the covenant. Yet individual or personal agency grows in importance as the Abrahamic saga unfolds. Elijah is assured that a remnant survives the general apostasy. A critical milestone appears late in the prophetic era, when breaking with tribal solidarity Ezekiel declares unambiguously, "The soul that sins shall die" (18:4). That theme becomes even more pronounced in the Christian dispensation, and somewhat differently, in the Qur'an.

A full accounting of the import of this theme lies well beyond the scope of this introductory sketch. The cumulative impact of the language of remnant, of exile and dispersion, and finally of "the lonely man of faith" (Soloveitchik) suggests that something far more profound than leaving home or emigration is entailed in the summons to Abram to leave country, kindred, and father's house.

As Vigen Guroian's reflections on the Armenian predicament dramatizes, where Abrahamic faith and national community congeal in collective identity, spiritual dereliction ensues. Collective moods shift or change course, yet ultimately it is individuals who repent, believe and become new.

In a country where one per cent of the population profess an Abrahamic faith the practical situation differs vastly from that a country where such a faith has been dominant for centuries. The point is well illustrated in the contrast between two respondents in this section, Cooperman wrestling with the minority problem, Guroian with its opposite.

The human inclination is to treat religion, including the Abrahamic faiths, as a pattern to be laid on all situations in a one-size-fits all manner. If it doesn't, how can it claim to be true or universal? On the other hand, our God is One, as is the word God speaks to us. Humans are destined in some measure to complete their own creation, to construct their own reality. From the tropics to Arctic and Antarctica the conditions of human existence vary endlessly. The inevitable aporias drive us toward the deeper realities of both the Divine and the human.

Notes

1. Original assignment to Kromkowski, Cooperman, Guroian and Banuazizi.
2. *Commentary* VII (June, 1949), p. 600.
3. Albert Salomon, "Priests, Prophets, and Social Scientists," *Commentary* VII (June 1949), pp. 594-600.

Chapter XVI
Scriptural Faiths and the Social Process
John Kromkowski (The Catholic University of America)

The discussion of religious enculturation as it has been framed within the language of sociological analysis entails an exploration of the social and political contexts of scriptural monotheism, both historically and contemporarily. The nature of ethnicity must be reexamined in light of its persistence and its ongoing relationships to religious and political development. The central thrust of modern analysis poses contradictions and issues which are especially relevant to understanding scriptural faith, ethnicity and politics. If, indeed, the divine is ineffable, what is to make of organized religiosity? Are the social dynamics of ethnic and political communities as well as faith communities adequately addressed by the following modalities of description and discourse: charisma and routine; religious institutions, be they synagogue, church, mosque, congregation, sect, cult; religious processes and events such as prophetic dissent, revival, reform and renewal? What can be discerned from the relationships of ethnic groups to religions and regimes? What about the variety of social forms: the indigenous enclaves that merge ethnic-religious-regime into compact units of social existence and the more extensive forms of these type such as the caliphate, state orthodoxies, and other differentiated social forms such as the rabbinate and canonical concordats with political authority as well as the designation of official status for religions and ethnicities? These questions relate the central problematic of faith and ethnicity to the social processes within which both are embedded. While analysis in fine detail and specific instances within the tradition of each religious development is important, attention to the ongoing existence of social process cannot be denied. A more comprehensive understanding of the problematic is required. How do we appropriately and meaningfully include attention to social processes and patterns of ethnic, religious and political habituation and the singularity of mystical experience and the varied intensities of personal and group participation in the inspiration and routinization that are intertwined in social processes? How, and with what consequences, is a theophany symbolized and communicated? This is the core question.

The following calculus and taxonomy are not presented as a historical guide to the interaction of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, but rather to array systematically the combinations of ethnic, religious and regime phenomena. This schemata frames the con-textual character of the epochal encounter of various forms of sociality and identifies the differing forms of sociality that are discovered in patterns of shared consciousness. This includes the types of exchange and relationships that are definitive of ethnic, religious and regime institutions which order the existence of the persons, families, clans, associations and federations of associations that are the building blocks of ethnicity, religiosity and citizenship. The following broad-stroke map of possible contexts for the interaction of the variables are central aspects of the search for understanding the realities of ethnicities, religions, and regimes.

- A1. Regime+Ethnicity+Religion
- A2. Regime+Ethnicity
- A3. Regime+Religion
- B1. Regime+Denial of Ethnicity+Denial of Religion
- B2. Regime+Denial of Ethnicity
- B3. Regime+Denial of Religion

- C1. Contention over Regime Power driven by ethnic challenges
- C2. Contention over Regime Power driven by religious challenges
- D1. Regime via balancing of ethnicities and religions
- D2. Regime via balancing of ethnicity and various religions
- D3. Regime via balancing of ethnicities and religion
- D4. Regime via balancing of denial of ethnicities and affirmation of religion
- D5. Regime via balancing of denial of religions and affirmation of ethnicity
- D6. Regime via balancing of selective denial of religions and ethnicities

Types A and D are contexts which display complete and/or partial accommodation to the primordial bonds of family, clan, ethnic/national, and religious symbolizations and institutions of order. These types have developed over the centuries in various geographical locations. The analysis of such contexts have borrowed the discovery of Varro, among the ancients, and the modern creations of Bodin and Hobbes, viz, *theologia civilis*, as the regime sustaining rationale and institution justifying poem, argument, narrative, code, or constitution. Civil theologies in both Types A and B must be consensual and existentially efficacious. They must maintain peace and tranquility within complex societies beyond the gens-scale including role differentiation and division of labor as well as the defense of their order from external power. The creation, articulation and development of such an artifice and the rhetorical-linguistic issues associated with such concerns raises the following vital topics. How is religion related to ethnicity and minority status? Are the contexts of pluralistic societies and particularly the issues associated with coalitions and majority status determinative of social processes? What impact does an established state religion have on social processes, particularly the impact of social differentiation such as modernity and secularity in economic, political and community relationships? Are the emerging academic and research contexts and their extensions in speech and teaching within a variety of revues, an opportunity to advance new approaches, in some modest way, to resolving the contradictions and conflicts that define current situations throughout the world, particularly in an immigrant receiving, pluralistic country such as the United States of America?

Can faith communities address concerns that are central to the intersection of religion, economy, ethnicity and regime, particularly the foundational issues of sociological analysis and the critical issue of methodologies that are imposed on the religious experience and social phenomena? Can we become engaged in the existential and essential recovery from reductionistic social scientific assumptions and conventions that have anesthetized our research capacities to understand and to explain the processes of divine-human encounter, however they are symbolized and practiced within social processes? Can we fashion new scholarly paradigms that can enable us to understand the persistence and ongoing presence of a variety of religious and ethnic phenomena?

The retheorizing and reinterpreting of religious and ethnic pluralism extends to the reconsideration of contemporary analysis of social processes and the criticism of traditional explanations of social processes. Conventional explanations seem to be embedded in an over-confident expectation regarding the diminishment of religiosity and ethnicity in favor of the polity and the market. A more complex analytical matrix indicates, however, that all four of these coequal

focal relationships of order -- religiosity, ethnicity, polity and economy -- constitute a quatrain structure of social realities. This multi-factor matrix induces finer-grained analysis that makes accessible religious and ethnic dimensions that have been ignored and neglected, if not completely eclipsed, because attention was focused on the economy and polity. That focus not only informed analytical discourse, but also shaped popular conventions of rhetoric used in public affairs.

In addition to the foundational relationships of religiosity, ethnicity, economy and polity within which social processes become social realities, the analyst discovers events of human agency and the articulation of accounts of sacred encounters. The Abrahamic event and the account of that event are foundational for the three traditions of the Book. The ongoing social processes of transmission of that event and account are certain. This much is beyond doubt. After all, routinized inter-human religious activity is governed by the "laws" that determine social life generally.

The Nature of Sociological Inquiry

Before addressing these and other related questions, a few comments on the nature of social inquiry appear appropriate. The social sciences generally, and sociology in particular, were modeled on the scientific approaches of the natural or physical sciences. They assumed that the driving force of science, technology and instrumental rationality could be applied to human organization and thus overcome such atavistic social organizational forms as religion and ethnicity. The processes of industrialization and urbanization, it was thought, would bureaucratize and rationalize human organization. Forms of community life such as religious and ethnic groups (*Gemeinschaft*) would give way to forms of associational life (*Gesellschaft*).

Sociologists and anthropologists accordingly tend to view traditional cultures as regressive aspects of modern culture. Traditional cultures include tribal cultures with certain levels of integration and folk cultures. Both are remnants of earlier ethnic organizations and ethnic traits surviving as sub-cultures in countries, states and governments that are organized through rationalization and standardization into a modern bureaucracy. This modern culture enables managerial controls and the implementation of authoritative legal orders. It enables modern governments and the various policies it directs and thus maintains the political, legal order as well the economic and social institutions associated with the modern public order of governments and the relationships between governments.

A similar pre-understanding of social reality influenced the development of the sociology of religion. The sociology of religion was constrained by positivistic pre-understandings and the claim that traditional religions would wither, while the Comtean "Religion of Humanity" that linked this discipline to the French Enlightenment would establish a rational social order. The sociology of religion did not emerge until the collapse of the claim of the intellectual originators of the discipline. Their expectations were challenged decades later by more sober scholars such as Emile Durkheim and Max Weber. These trail blazers argued that religions of various forms and types were fundamental features of social reality. But their work, however valuable its insight and its separation from the "religious" roots of Auguste Comte, did not advance beyond large scale hypotheses and positivistic generalizations regarding typologies of religion, and macro-level descriptive accounts and quantitative reckonings of religious institutions and public opinion regarding religious issues and practices, as well as demographics and social indicators of memberships.

The importance of sociological perspectives in historical accounting is strikingly evident in the relations between traditional and literary cultures. The scriptural faiths, under consideration

here, are by definition an aspect of literary culture. While this distinction addresses different modes of social articulation it does not illuminate the process of transition from traditional social order to literary forms that are especially significant for these religious traditions as they developed a written canon in the Hellenistic era. These written works extended the oral traditions of the respective cultural complexes from which the literary cultures emerged.

Whatever the pre-literary substance of the Abrahamic story, we know it only in its subsequent literary form, a form that has been woven into the social texture of many social realities. This latter process of social transmission reveals another equally important aspect of the distinction between literary and traditional cultures. The enculturation of textual material entails the penetration of these literary cultures into other traditional ethnic cultures. An attendant weaving of new social textures derived from such social articulation yields a more complex and differentiated form of sociality. Theories of social development, which periodize linear historical phases and employ normative or descriptive categories such as primitive, classical, religious, or modern, have thereby labeled the social processes of interaction. The dominance of such categories regarding ancient literary sources and the ethnic cultures that form the tradition of scriptural faiths has flattened the discussion of traditional cultural remnants that survive in modern societies and cultures.

Nonetheless, despite the importance of sociology and its historical assumptions, methodologies and value dispositions for the problematic of faith and ethnicity, social analysis alone is an incomplete account. Certain aspects of this discipline, however, are particularly relevant and essential as corrective grounding for the study of sacred texts and conventional religious and theological inquiry. Contemporary and historical social/historical data-bases are especially informative for framing the conditions from which and within which these faith traditions and their respective institutions developed.

Similarly the intersection with the secular, associational world and its ongoing relationship with the vast majority of the non-clerical, religious memberships of faith communities are subject to social analysis. Social indicators establish existential base-lines of information and indices of social processes that constitute the physicality of social realities. In the course of their development these have generated, and continued across centuries, the accounts that are the ongoing texts at the core of scriptural faiths and the faith communities of various religious traditions.

Thus a series of central questions emerge: How does scriptural faith interface with the daily life of lay members of faith communities and the societies that form the contexts within which faith communities exist? How do, and how should, faith communities interface with the contexts of the societies within which they are embedded? How does the content of faith communities intersect and intertext with the context and the alternative texts and social forms derived from the European Enlightenment and skeptical traditions? These intellectual currents and social movements are particularly inattentive to the historical grounding of the religious as well as the philosophic tradition which parallels the intellectual and social processes of enlightenment and skepticism that have shaped contemporary institutions and advocated "modern" behaviors. Moreover, as modern institutional differentiation has taken hold of faith communities they have become religious institutions and in some cases even religious bureaucracies. What are the consequences of such development for the originating vision? Perhaps most pointedly for this meeting: how do faith communities revisit the approaches to knowing that have their origins in the Hellenistic period within which these faith and learning communities are rooted?

An inter-faith dialogue within and beyond the sociological tradition should be attentive to such foundational and methodological questions. Moreover, it should move towards concerns that emerge from contemporary social praxis and explore the recovery of interpretative sensibilities

and adopt methodological openness to the real evocative power of texts on social reality. This posture of inquiry broaches the possibility of reconsidering texts as sources of the underlying experiences that engendered them. This would reintroduce into the register of critical capacities the experiences of order and change that are proposed in foundational articulations and the exploration of such experiences as contributory to a paradigm shift in the moral and social sciences.

Religion and Ethnicity

Until quite recently ethnicity was an ignored dimension of modern society. It was neglected because its persistence was in principle seen as untenable. A similar pre-understanding of social reality influenced the development of the sociology of religion. Both the sociology of religion and ethnicity must penetrate to the historical experiences of the social processes from which they emerged. Their contextuality must be imaginatively explored so as to arrive at the recapitulation of the problematic. From this perspective one can begin to discern from this welter at the ethno-religious source as well as the social processes that embedded and subsequently fashioned their particular institutional differentiations.

Not surprisingly, the etymologies of *ethnos* indicates that it is derivative from rural forms of cosmological and familial religiosity and its attendant social processes and structures. Moreover, this form of religious and social process is recognizable as it intersected with the development of more complex social, spatial relationships and social processes of the *polis*. The process of social change and discourse about such phenomena is recorded in the delegitimation and transvaluation of social realities. The pressure of urban and civic forms of order on the *ethnoi* that accompanied the processes of social, spatial, economic and military changes yielded another self-articulation of meaning. The distinction between *urbs* and *civitas* in the Roman world is important: *urbs* refers to the place, the physical location of settlement: *civitas* refers to the religious associations and fraternal affinities of the manifold of humans (*plethos*) that lived in *urbs* upon their migration from rural areas and then became attached to municipal forms of religiosity and the social processes that sustained such deities.

A dramatic account of this religious and social process can be found in the conflicted loyalties of persons and their gods that is deeply and interestingly detailed in the personal and group consequences recounted by Sophocles, especially in *Antigone*. English translations of other Hellenistic texts that refer to parallel (perhaps equivalent conflicts and transvaluations) regarding *ethnoi* are most revealingly inasmuch as this word is translated as heathen, pagan and gentile. It is precisely such Hellenistic experiences and texts and the contextual social processes that form the grounding of sacred texts, the scriptural faiths of Judaism, Christianity and then Islam and their interactions with ethnicities, that are embedded in the various *plethoi* that encountered these powerfully evocative and meaningful accounts of order and change. The inter-face of these new religious symbolizations and articulations and the social processes by which they were woven into prior forms of religiosity, ethnicity and sociality initiated the rooted commonality of these faiths as well as the contentions and differentiations of the Abrahamic experience that continue into our time.

In our time the term ethnicity has been used to describe widely varied and sometimes ill defined and contradictory sets of experiences and identities. The apparent confusion arises because ethnicity is contextual and perhaps fundamentally a form of local identity. Its meaning changes in each place with time and circumstances for each group. In the United States, ethnicity is one of the modern identities developed by the largely peasant migrants who poured into the United States during the last two centuries. Since 1965 Islamic immigrants joined a rather small number of earlier

Muslim communities. Christians and Jews have constituted the overwhelming majority of the American immigrant population.

The U.S. Census does not gather religious data, but since 1980 the Census has considerably widened its collection of ancestry and ethnic data. Race has always been included in the U.S. Census as means of differentiating American demographics. Race and being foreign-born have been used consistently to measure the American population. For most immigrants their ethnicity became a cultural modality that emerged as they became Americans. This new notion of peoplehood replaced loyalty to village or region as the reference point around which they organized their sense of life; it located the place of their family in the moral and physical universe and shaped a new communities in America. The following tables array the variety and extent of ethnic ancestry populations found in the United States.

Ethnicity in America became for most groups a complex of identifications and loyalties that included sentimental attachment to home village, region and sometimes nation, a certain religious affiliation and the notion of being part of a distinct religious culture. It also included loyalty to America and an identification with a particular city, district or neighborhood in which they settled, membership in local ethnic community and its institutional expressions and often a sense of belonging to a certain class or distinct occupation.

Ethnicity and culture are defined by boundaries and symbols some of which are adapted from the old world, but sometimes they are created in America. For example, the creation of Kwansa by Ron Karenga at the University of California twenty years ago is a recent form of emerging African-American ethnic ritual, celebration and promotion of virtues. Cultural organizations, events, festivals, food, famous and successful ethnic persons, politics, and religion are the modalities of response to the American experience and the locale that maintain and sustain community existence. However wholesome these celebratory and identity-affirming aspects of ethnic may be at the local level of community, the mainstream and mass media and the macro level perceptions and analysis of religion and ethnicity appear to re-report regularly that they are sources and explanations of conflict.

Elsewhere, the popular drumbeat and politicizing of ethnic passion by state building-regime strategies have frequently exacerbated relations among segments of multi-ethnic states. Not amazingly the larger a regime and a market aspires to be the more ethnic variety it will encounter. Analysts driven by "rational action" economic and political paradigms may have confused dependent and independent variables in their ongoing denial of religious and ethnic sociality. Alternative analysis and attention to human agency as well as the manipulations of ethnic conflicts have imposed alter-native logics and non-linear pathways toward assessing economic and political development. In part, they have sustained the prohibition on ethnic/religious variables that has been a tenet of universalistic humanism and social sciences that emerged from the intellectual and moral foundations of the European Enlightenment.

In the face of the collapse of empires and the eruption of religiously motivated critiques of culture, analysts can no longer dismiss the saliency of religious and ethnic factors. The casual force of these dimensions of social reality may be as powerful as the economy and polity. However, social analysis and multi-factor models that are based on the use of these find that all of these factors are far from simple and surely not monocausal. Ethnicity and religion are strongly contextual which suggests overwhelming complexity and certainly collinearity with other indicators. More-over, the breakdown of some mainstream macro-theories in various disciplines, their stunning inability to withstand the test of disaggregation and their earlier denial of obviously salient features of human sociality and their proxies, religion and ethnicity, has had a surprising

effect. It has thrown much social science into whole-sale reliance on the economy and polity as well as on the pre-rational dispositions -- prejudices and opinions -- of a self referential academic system of discourse that may be profoundly dis-connected from social processes.

Thus the search for new modalities and paradigms that account for more complexity has taken on crucial significance in the face of political and economic change and the invocation of ethnicity and religion as forces of order and change throughout the world. New versions of conflict theory that perpetuate critiques of "pre-modern" modalities of understanding and being that are not anti-rational, but operate within the bounded limits of their fundamental grounds of being are emerging in the market places of academic critical theory.

Hermeneutical and phenomenological approaches, based on process ontologies that extend their reach over long histories of texts and social processes, have indicated their contributions to the development of new sciences of order. They are not bound to a priori searches for cooperative and conflictual behavior. They have disavowed scientific claims and claimants of privileged values. The particularities of social developments that do not sustain general patterns are simply noted as evidence of choice, contingency and indeterminacy that the swirl of human agency has yielded. Thus even chaos is a theory in search of social processes that explain stability and change in social realities.

In a parallel development, the sociology of religion initially was constrained by positivistic pre-understandings, by the claim that traditional religions would wither, and that the Comtean "Religion of Humanity" that linked this discipline to the French Enlightenment would establish instead a rational social order. Various social sciences have attempted to address religious phenomena: social psychology, anthropology, sociology, ethnic studies, philosophy of religion as well as theology and scriptural studies.

The plethora of findings circulating in academia and in literate and popular forms of communication testify to the expansion and diffusion of interest in religious phenomena. Religion in contemporary societies is a multiform personal and group phenomenon. Religious phenomena are experiences of the sacred. Types of religiosity, be they cosmological or transcendent, are expressed in ritual and worship. Social processes mediate each of these taxa of religious articulation into social formations that are constitutive of group religious phenomena. The social processes include the techniques and tradition of experiencing the sacred, articulations of sacred authority, sacred texts, doctrine and dogma that guide institutions, processes of succession across generations, and adaptations to new cultures.

This horizon of religion and reality includes physicality and sociality that are nesting ground for the structuring of meaning within the conscience of persons and the institutions that shapes their consciousness and thus create a social reality. The pluriformity of religiosity includes enthusiasms of various types and intensities: emotional and passionate as well as rational in style and organization, varying from the political to world fleeing, focused on exotic and mundane interests, cultic affiliations and affinities as well as identity-defining expressions of short or long-term duration. All such activities are frequently grouped into the panoply of hierophanic and theophanic and thus included in the field. At bottom, however, the range of existential and historical foci of religious participation are matters of ultimate concern. And these modalities of expressing and ordering human behavior and practice in large pluralistic societies may stretch conventional scholarly criteria.

Given the comprehensive experience of religiosity, the term for cosmological symbolizations, namely *mythos*, may be useful as a taxonomic index of those forms of religiosity that in one way or another discover participation of the sacred in the array of worldly objects through which the

meaning of the cosmos becomes manifest. Another form of symbolization different from this taxon is symbolization that may be expressive of access to what precedes the beginning of the cosmos and beyond the rhythmic order of the cycles of reality -- such transcendent articulations, for example, are found in Qoheleth and most clearly in the Abrahamic accounts.

Such accounts of historical transcendent forms of symbolization articulate a new sense of time and a different pattern of consciousness of both the beginning and the beyond. These are invitations to transcendent experiences that initiate access to a new source and modality of participating and understanding on the personal and group level. The emergence of historical consciousness expressed in the Abrahamic experience broke out of the previously dominant form of cosmological symbolizations that sustained religious-political institutions that established the context of the account of Abraham's action and experience.

The persistence of religion and the scholarly attention it generates are certainly unexpected developments from the perspective of the Enlightenment and other modes of modernity: materialistic economism, advocates of greed and purveyor of envy, narrow rationalistic critics, creatively imaginative myth makers, as well as psychedelic and virtual reality liberators of consciousness. Ironically even these behaviors have been subsumed into the taxonomy of religious phenomena as worldly religions that manifest a variant of gnosticism, an ancient pattern of religiosity that seems to be characterized by its espousal of a pneumo-pathological hatred of existing realities. Thus the wide spread use of the religious paradigm to explain and interpret phenomena has contributed to the revival of religious discourse.

A parallel explosion has occurred in ethnic studies, suggesting a common conclusion. Both religion and ethnicity are persistent modes of human symbolization available as the modalities of self-articulation of meaning that emerge from within the very sociality of human development and interaction.

Religions and ethnicities are sources of both human sociality and social disorder. The potency of these symbolizations and their coequal capacity with the economy and polity as dimensions of sociality and modes of social processes must be recognized as constitutive of the relational web within which personal and group articulations occur and from which the logic of social processes and the sciences of moral order and social harmony may be fashioned. The introduction of the hermeneutic horizon of openness and critical clarification follows the processes of social reality as it manifests its changes and continuities.

Writers on the left whose concern for economic class analysis eclipsed the importance and autonomy of the polity in the structure of social reality were also driven by a paradigm that viewed ethnicity and religion as alternative and competing loyalties which undermined class unity and class consciousness. Such scholars showed no interest in local communities. Religion and ethnicity played only a negative role in history as a disruptive element.

The later work of E.P. Thompson, Herbert Gutman and David Montgomery began to change the way the history of the working class was written. Thompson saw class and culture as interrelated to economic formation. The recovery of the process of community formation and community institutions at the local level that became patently clear at the level of social history pointedly recalled Max Weber's observation that class is not community. Religion and ethnicity provide the core content of working class cultures and the study of its evolution should be illuminating and important to a range of disciplines that are beginning to recognize that macro-explanations, be they economic or political, may be necessary but no longer sufficient to explain the worlds of meaning derived from religion and ethnicity. The implications of these shifts in the

parameters of essential relationships that are involved in social processes invites us to reexamine the relationships between polity, economy, religion and ethnicity.

Some American Particularities

Ethnicity is primarily a local identity, but its potential for shaping and mobilizing personal identities and group actions are an ongoing feature of modern America. For much of American history ethnicity had been viewed merely as a remnant of an old world peasant village culture. Sociologists for the most part viewed it as the study of minority relations, as a pathological form of mal-adjustment to modern life. Some also viewed it as a source of inferior "human stock" and the cause of the passing of the Anglo-Race in America. It was seen as a problem that needed to be remedied by immigration, cultural, language and other policies that would reform the withering of the American substance that was associated with industrialization, urbanization and the significant growth of ethnic diversity in the mainstream and at the margin of American life.

At bottom sociologists, as most modern heirs of the Enlightenment, did not expect ethnicity and religion to last. It would disappear under the twin impacts of the urban industrial world and a progressive and superior American culture and educational system. Because ethnics were seen as essentially rural and hence backward and transitory what interested scholars was their rates of assimilation and the rapidity with which they were dissolving. Scholarly revival began when it became obvious that something beyond the American Melting Pot, i.e., the American reality, needed to be addressed. This recognition of ethnicity as a "neglected dimension" blossomed in American history, anthropology, politics, economics, literatures, cultural philosophy, as well as religious studies and theology.

The need for reflection on the ethnic factor is an ongoing aspect of these disciplines because the events of the last decades challenged notions of economic determinism and the credibility of large scale political control that shaped an elite consensus on the project of modernization. The prestige of the values and worldview of an America Protestant elite of largely British ancestry is withering and the attendant reexamination of the relationship between ethnicity and scriptural faiths invites attention to fundamental questions of order and values. The questions that emerged at the inter-section of this epochal change not only in social and philosophic disciplines, but also in the praxis of social realities have intensified the need to retheorize and reinterpret the basic elements of order.

One of the consequences of the scholarly renewal of interest in ethnicity was the publication of the Harvard Encyclopedia of American Ethnic Groups. This work consolidated in one place the significant insights developed during the previous decade. It now forms the base on which to build another generation of scholarly work. The components of ethnicity that are central to a definition and description of ethnicity included familiar items such as geo-graphic origin, migration, race language and religion.

Yet it is curious that this painstaking work should have failed, without any explanation, to contain an entry on neighborhoods in the face of the large body of existing works on ethnic groups in neighborhoods. The local ethnic community in a certain sections of the city: the parish, synagogue, mosque; the housing complex; the bounded enclave of a housing market; a ZIP code; an aldermanic district or however else one chooses to define neighborhood or urban village, clearly was vital to the survival of many religious and ethnic groups. The peasant migrants who formed the bulk of immigrants came mostly out of small villages which provided them with a primary

reference group drawn from neighbors and kin around which their social inventions fashioned the central core of their identity.

George Homans put it simply and accurately: "The men of the village had upon the whole more contacts with one another than with any outsiders". They brought that orientation with them to America. Reinforced by their sense of foreignness, their desire for the comforts of food, language, custom and religion, the convenience of proximity to industries which hired them in large numbers, their strong localism, all this led them to form small, but often institutionally quite complete communities in American cities. Their identification with local institutions -- whose purposes were religious, economic, social, entertainment, political, and cultural, formed a dense web of affinity and affiliation that shaped a basic part of their personal and group identities.

Religious and ethnic modalities for the formation of these identities appear in this account as a nearly organic process that marks the development of human settlement and social articulation reflective of the givenness of the particular. They are indicative as well of the religious and ethnic resources that were rooted in traditions, practices and access to scriptural faith legacies that become socialized into, what in hindsight, can now be acknowledged as a variety of new ways of being an American. The multiple layers of all of these fundamental experience -- sociality, economy, culture, polity, market, government -- should be factored through the prescriptive and normative filters of both ethnic and religious traditions.

The reconsideration of fundamental sociality and foundational religious experiences that are central to the scriptural faiths can be explored in reference to an especially important relationship of ethnicity and religion. The relationship of these two dimensions to the market and polity are particularly important because they demark the primary questions of cooperation and contention about which and within which the resolution of conflict and the development of harmony and accord will be discovered in the social processes that these four relationships establish. The linkages between religion and ethnicity on the one hand and the bonds between economy and polity on the other are the force field that requires the balance and wisdom that is grounded in the sciences of moral and social order. The art of applying such insights to the tasks of ongoing social reconstruction begins with the first step: the reconstruction of the sciences of social processes that systematically foster the inclusion of religion and ethnicity as factors along with the economy and polity in the search for the logic of social process.

These access points to worlds of meaning must be explored for their potency in the search for happiness, liberty, dignity and justice for all. This is a research and action agenda for the renewal of religious traditions and the social praxis of the post-modern epoch that is deeply part of the American tradition and in some respects has significant similarity to the epochal Hellenistic period from which these three religious traditions emerged.

If in creating local religious and ethnic communities -- neighborhood enclaves -- immigrants were developing a base for the preservation of religion and ethnicity, they were also engaging in a decidedly American activity. In the eighteenth century James Madison observed that the "Spirit of locality" lay at the core of the American political culture. For Americans pushing west the role of churches and voluntary societies was as crucial in the construction of community as it would be for the new immigrants. Because, as de Tocqueville noted, the American revolution stopped short of a revolution in social organization, the local community and its institutions retained an integrity that was lost in other nationalizing and centralizing states. American nationalism permitted, as Thomas Bender has pointed out, a fervent belief in national ideals and national unity with a deep attachment to local communities. Religion and ethnicity provided a new and more intense cement

for community in the 19th century, at a time when increasing centralization of the American state attacked the basis of native local communities.

Ethnic Neighborhoods

Ethnic neighborhoods are one expression of American local community and their impact on American local, social and civic cultures has not been adequately explored and acknowledged as a well-spring of personal and group virtues. The major approach to the study of ethnic neighborhoods was pioneered by Robert Park and the Chicago School of Sociology which viewed neighborhoods in terms of their place and function in the process of assimilation and Americanization. This focused interest on pathological and dysfunctional aspects of immigrant neighborhoods. The later work of Herbert Gans and Robert Laumann emphasizes the study of social networks. More recently James Cunningham and Roger Ahlbrandt have introduced the analysis of the social fabric of urban ethnic neighborhoods.

This latter concept combines network observations with more traditional sociological and politico economic analysis of the quality of public life, employment, crime, and business climate of a district. Cultural geographers following David Ward have added the social use of urban space as another dimension of the physical and human texture of communities. Historians Kathleen Conzen, Harold Chudacoff and Oliver Zunz have employed the social geo-graphic and quantitative history and added the findings of the new social history so as to view development from the lived experiences of the family, association, and informal spheres of sociality which top-down analysis of hegemonic institutions had ignored and neglected.

Thus it seems that the most fruitful way of exploring the relationship of these three faith communities and ethnicity is to focus on small scale fine-grained analysis of the American synagogue, mosque, parish and congregation. This level of analysis will enable us to view the specific interaction of peoplehood and the faith community. From their location the fundamental liturgical constitution of the faith community becomes transparent as to the means and modality of its relationship to the social order toward which the following options are available:

1. integration;
2. isolation;
3. challenge, as alternative, as reformative, as revolutionary strategies;
4. pragmatic and Selective, including integration and isolation, integration and alternative, integration and reform strategies.

This array of strategic and tactical options of social choice generically define the arena of human agency open to religious and ethnic communities engaged in the practice of extending in our time and in America the experience of Abraham as well as the pledge and promise that accompanies faithfulness.

The variety of ethnic populations and the intersection of these populations with monotheistic religious traditions -- Judaism, Christianity and Islam -- are historical and sociological events of epochal significance. The subsequent splintering of these religious traditions into institutional forms expresses varying manifestations of the divine and divergent understandings of what is essential and incidental to participation and inclusion. They reveal what is definitive, dogmatic, and consequently characteristic of each of these religious traditions and their appropriation of the articulation that is acknowledged as the Abrahamic experience in their respective foundations.

These are the ongoing aspects of a problematic that requires the attention of many scholarly disciplines and applied research that links experience with the scientific distance required for analytical excellence.

The Abrahamic Pilgrimage as Paradigmatic?

The sciences of order most broadly designed are those that assist in the peaceful resolution of conflict at the most complex and largest form of human association. Thus the examination of the architectonics of human associations which comprise a variety of currently separated disciplines needs to be applied to a particularly troubling aspect of a special problem. This is the social fact and the widely shared social perception that on the pragmatic level of social exchange these three traditions are associated with considerable contention, conflict, violence. To this is adjoined the scandalous hatred that can be expressed only among and between those who share a profound commonality.

The Abrahamic experience is an infinitely divisible object that makes itself available in the imaginative move of personal and group consciousness into a serious yet playful engagement and open-ended hermeneutics of the Abrahamic narratives. These narratives rearticulate the foundation of the faith communities in various times and places. Thus they recapitulate again and again both the transcendent aspect of human experience and the social aspects of experience and relationships of polity, ethnicity, and economy. Finally, they express the mystery that this account of ultimate concern and confidence proclaims in its profound message: Be Not Afraid!

Genesis 14 and 15 is the portion of the narrative that has particular saliency for the science of order because it expresses this experience of human-divine praxis that is paradigmatic of respect for the twin poles of reality. This account of Abraham invites us to encounter the register within which we find our special nature as partners in participation -- the in-between or tensional existence between cosmological being and the unlimited origin of all -- that becomes present to Abraham and accessible to us in the account of that experience. This account positions our being as uniquely in-between the totally transcendent being and the limited being of mundane relationships that are political, economic and ethnic.

What this narrative affirms is that the two levels of existence are intertwined, one that is the profoundly personal and the other a plethora of social differentiation: persons that participate in ethnic sociality, multi-ethnic covenants, kingly conquests and the dominations of ethnically diverse cities and countryside that contextualizes the Abrahamic praxis. We witness here the eruption into cosmological variety of a new spirituality that is formative and interpretative in its discoveries because the experiences of a unique representative -- Abraham -- became normative as a fresh mode and vista for personal and social order. These experiences have been authenticated by long-term continuity within lived communities, an authentication that the Abrahamic message of profound explanation and assurance is a most worthy legacy to bequeath as a truth of the human condition and the divine presence in it.

These arrays of social realities are accessible to attentive readers of the account and attentive observers of the pluriformity of social variety that exist in our time. These ethnic and religious phenomena are woven inextricably into the political/military/economic texture of the power fields of human associations. The narrative confirms the apparently ageless human yen for domination, linked to large scale ambitions that require imperial force and the exercise of skills and talents that are available only through the social invention that fulfills human aspirations for excellence -- the metropolis.

If one brackets the development of traditions and the institutional trajectories they have taken and simply revisits the Abrahamic experience and its insight into the truth of historical existence, the experiences of participation in patterns of shared consciousness establishes a common ground. Religious traditions are not simply experiences: they are institutions that must negotiate the types of exchange and relationships that are definitive of ethnic, religious, economic and regime organizations that order the existence of the persons, families, clans, associations and federations of associations. These building blocks of social reality may fruitfully be collapsed into four modalities: ethnicity, religiosity, market relationships of production and exchange and citizenship within polities.

Agreement about these four spheres of the social process must be consensual and existentially efficacious to assure social order and tranquility. Moreover regimes must be established, with rightful uses of coercion derived from such consent, so as to maintain peace and tranquility within societies that are articulated in their complexity beyond the *gens*-scale that include role differentiation and division of labor as well as capacity for the defense of their order from external power. The creation, articulation and development of such an artifice includes the absorption and transvaluation of various ethno-religious symbols and rituals.

The construction of such artifices is an imaginative intellectual production and a social process that transvalues and communicates cultural rationales. Such artifices infuse and commingle the cultural endowments of language, story, learning and socialization, the legitimation and illegitimation of behavior and practices. They establish narrative structures with which the development of ritual, music, song, dance, food, calendar, festival-play, heroic vision and cult are understandable and real. In sum -- a meaningful complex of expression -- that includes the special refining of consciousness that occurs within complex *polis* cultures, when the experience of noetic consciousness and the development of critical sciences yield a culture of social observers - *theoros* -- and their potential for elaborating interpretative discourse and social analysis.

In sum, such *theoros* may turn their gaze to four general fields of reality: the gods (*Theos*), nature (Cosmos), the manifold of human types, (*Plethos* and Sociality) and the various forms of social orderings, both in speech and text (the symbolizations of order in action and power, and the implementations of order in the regimes). Such *theoros* craft essential questions and answers about the experience and practices of the societies -- the gods, nature, society and action. Their texts give voice to the societies within which they are participants and from which they first understood themselves as being both of and in tension with the cosmos, sociality, and the *theos* and perhaps the holders of power and domination that tolerate or banish their reflective gaze onto reality. Their narratives, poems, and arguments reveal how societies nurtured them and warranted the bonds that convinced them they were not some fragile accident in a silent universe. But they also constrain them from claims that they are masters of all, but surely partners in the community of being that is mysterious at its beginning and in the processes of social change. They discern a moving toward a beyond that is mysterious as well. Nonetheless, Yahweh is with us and counsels us to be not afraid. To find ways and means that credibly transmit the message of these truths is the task these faith traditions must embrace in the concretions of social realities that, like Abraham, they discover on their journey.

Table 1

Measurement of Ethnicity in America*

U.S. Census 1990, 1980, 1970

Group 1990 1980 1970

(1,000)

English	32,652	49,598,035	2,465,050
German	57,947	49,224,146	3,622,035
Irish	38,736	40,165,702	1,450,220
French	10,321	12,892,246	343,367
Italian	14,665	12,183,246	4,240,779
Scottish	5,943	10,048,816	N.A.
Polish	9,366	8,228,037	2,374,244
Mexican	11,586	7,692,619	N.A.
Native Am.	7,227	6,715,819	763,594
Dutch	6,227	6,304,499	N.A.
Swedish	4,681	4,345,392	806,138
Norwegian	3,869	3,453,839	614,649
Czech	1,296	1,892,456	759,527
Hungarian	1,582	1,776,902	603,668
Welsh	2,033	1,664,598	N.A.
Portuguese	1,153	1,024,351	N.A.
Greek	1,110	959,856	434,571
French-Can.	2,167	780,488	N.A.
Slovak	1,883	776,806	N.A.
Lithuanian	812	742,776	330,977
Ukrainian	741	730,056	N.A.
Finnish	659	615,872	N.A.
Canadian	550	456,212	3,034,556
Yugoslavian	260	360,174	447,271
Croatian	544	252,970	N.A.
Armenian	308	212,621	N.A.
Sloven	124	126,463	N.A.
Serbian	117	100,941	N.A.
Asian	7,226	3,726,440	
Black	29,930	26,482,349	
White	199,827	189,035,349	
Hispanic	21,900		

* NCUEA, U.S. Census Ancestry Data File.

Chapter XVII
Alakha, Mitzva, and Individual Liberalism
Some Thoughts on Jewish Tradition and Experience

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The Law and Liberalism

I have titled my response to Professor Walsh's paper "Halakha, Mitzva and Individual Liberalism" as a way of forewarning the audience that I wish to approach the general theme of this conference from a very specifically Jewish point of view. The Hebrew words "halakha" (law) and "mitzva" (commandment) often are cited as the central and defining concepts of traditional Judaism, concepts which mould the nature of the Jew's religious experience. It is this legal conception of religion which was rejected by Pauline Christianity, but which survived and was developed in other ways in Islam. I wish to stress that the Jew seeking to define his or her own spiritual identity is confronted immediately with a problem implicit in the religion itself: namely the apparent debate between an obligatory set of ritual laws and the possibility of individual self-realization. Granted that everything is ordained, in what sense does the individual have the right to independent and self-defined religiosity?

I stress the *internal* Jewish problematic of individualism and liberalism as a way of expanding the approach of this conference. Dr. Walsh, in both his paper and his comments, eloquently defined the conflict between radical egalitarian government on the one hand, and liberalism and individualism on the other. Implicit in rule by the majority is the danger of coercion of the individual, and of an abdication of individual responsibility and values. Our conference, and this session in particular, are similarly general in their approach. We are exploring the relationship between the ineffable and the social, and the specific problems, as the program puts it, "of a monotheistic faith which is realized possibly as an ethnic minority within a broader society." In other words, we are bound by our hosts to examine the issues of liberalism and individuality within the con-text of the relation between religion and society, between religion and power. We have been asked whether religion should be given social power. Does giving power to one organized religious group imply that all other religious groups within the society have thus lost power? On the other hand, can a truly pluralistic society which rejects any exclusive claim to true revelation tolerate a mono-theistic faith which on some level claims an exclusivity of vision and a legitimacy which is uniquely its own?

These problems are implicit in the structure of our society and, perhaps, in modernity itself. But they are not generated by our pluralistic social order per se; they are implicit in the essential tension between the individual and the norms of society, even if that society is organized around a single and universally acknowledged set of religious beliefs. Indeed, the problematic arises even if, as was the case for Jews through much of their history, social control over individual religious behavior is weak or nonexistent, for the individual is still forced to find his way between externally derived religious rules and internally satisfying religious experience. In the limited time available to me, I would like to offer just a few observations about the Jewish case which I hope will be of help in exploring the issues of individual liberty and autonomy generally.

Of course, the suggestion that Jews and liberalism have some special relationship is not new. Quite to the contrary, it is a convention of American political rhetoric, though in recent years, Jewish liberalism has become more and more like the novel -- it is always dying. The popular press

is always running lead articles supposedly documenting and often bemoaning the move by American (and Israeli) Jews to the right. But this is too narrow a definition of liberalism for our purposes. What we ask in this context is not whether Jews vote Democrat or Republican, Labor or Likud. Rather, we wish to understand whether the liberal slant of modern Jewish politics reflects some aspect of Judaism itself.

Conventional rhetoric about Jewish political liberalism explains the pattern primarily in sociological terms: the experience of persecution, of alienation, of immigration and of poverty combine to push the Jews into the camp of the have-nots, the outsiders, the concerned and the caring. Now this type of explanation is notoriously fuzzy when it comes to details. Neither the Jewish historical experience nor the nature of liberalism are really explained. What we have is a cartoon sketch of Jewish history linked to a picture of "knee-jerk" liberalism. Nor is this simplistic approach helped when we add to it the other convention used to explain Jewish political attitudes -- "the prophetic tradition." Thrown in as an afterthought, especially when a political speech is being delivered in a synagogue, this standard argument tries to ground modern political attitudes in the words of Isaiah. In the 1960s, when I was in college at the University of Toronto, I remember that we Jewish kids "sat-in" outside the U. S. consulate to show our solidarity with the marchers in Selma after listening to fiery speeches about biblical dreams of equality and justice. I suspect, however, that our beating of pens into plowshares and pencils into pruning hooks amounted to little more than extra decoration for our cause. The prophets of ancient Israel had little, if anything, to say to us.

And yet, paradoxically perhaps, I would argue that there really is something in the Jewish tradition that leads towards the values of liberalism. Moreover, Jews are led in this direction not by abstract identification with ancient biblical sermons, but out of the concrete and quotidian aspects of the Jewish understanding of religion. Judaism is a religion of commandment and law. This was attacked by Pauline Christianity and dismissed by the heirs of Paul's teachings. But this attack derived from the fundamental Christian misunderstanding of the nature of the Jewish experience of law.

In Renaissance Italy, Obadiah Sforno responded to the many Christian scholars who perceived of Judaism as nothing more than blind obedience to custom and mere following of traditions passed on from father to son over the generations.¹ God's exhortation in Leviticus 26:3, to "follow My laws, observe my commandments, and perform them," became a proof text for Sforno's individualistic and intellectualist understanding of the religious imperative. "Following" was no more than obedience to absolute divine imperative. But "observance" required appropriate speculation and contemplation, not only about how to perform the commandment but also about *why*. Only such involvement by the individual in discovering and evaluating the purpose of the commandment would make him a truly active agent, "performing" the commandment out of free will and not out of passive obedience.² In other words, the law which apparently binds and destroys freedom actually grants liberty and demands individual engagement through understanding, evaluating, and applying the *mitzva* appropriately. Paradoxically, Jewish *mitzva* and *halakha* demand independence and individual response.³

Let me end this section of the paper with a set of assertions which we unfortunately do not have the time fully to explore. First, I would argue that halakhic Judaism allows and demands individual religious decision for the simple and obvious reason that without radical free will the notion of a *mitzva*, a divine imperative, is meaningless. And second, I would argue further that the halakhic foundation of Judaism therefore, and paradoxically, provides the Jew with the basis for a truly liberal and individualistic approach to religion and society.

The Coexistence of State and Autonomy

In this context it is not possible to explore fully the manner in which halakha and individuality, authority and autonomy, co-exist in Judaism. Let me rather devote the rest of these remarks to reasons why this individualism has largely been ignored by scholars. There are, after all, elements in Judaism and in the Jewish historical experience which appear to delegitimize and negate the validity of individual experience. Above all, perhaps, there is the group identity of the Jews and the national orientation of their religion. Many years ago, the historian Salo Baron emphasized the "interdependence of Jews and Judaism," not only in the trivial sense that the creed cannot exist without its followers, but in the more specific sense that "to Judaism the existence of the Jewish people is essential and indispensable." This is because in Judaism the nation is the bearer of the religion; the chosen people is integral to the faith.⁴ (I hope that it is not necessary to explain that "chosenness" in this context is not racist or even exclusivist, that anyone can join the nation, and that the nation is chosen not for unique salvation but as a model to others. Even if the universalist aspects of this particularism have not always been emphasized sufficiently, they are clearly implicit in the original biblical text, and have been emphasized again and again when historical conditions allowed.)

The national idiom in which Judaism articulates itself has had one very clear result: since "the physical extinction of the Jewish people would sound the death knell of Judaism," it became the Jews' first concern to insure physical group survival. Especially during the long period of exile, nothing could be allowed to interfere with this "primary directive." Everything from the systematic elimination of Karaites in the Middle Ages to the decision to deny automatic Israeli citizenship to Brother Daniel, a born Jew who had converted to Christianity, attests to the Jewish pre-occupation with guaranteeing group survival through control of individual thought and belief.

But even if group survival has been, and remains, a dominating theme in Jewish thought, we must not fall into the trap of thinking that group survival is a value in itself. This mistaken thinking has characterized more than one period of crisis in Jewish history, and scholars have been led astray by its apparent simplicity into misunderstanding the ebb and flow of the Jewish encounter with fate. This mistake is, for example, what lies behind the idea that it is hatred from the outside that has preserved the Jewish people. This oft-repeated notion has special appeal to those who are oblivious to, or wish to down-play, the positive inner content of Judaism.

It is not coincidental that the notion is first expressed by Spinoza, or that his proof for the assertion is taken from the experience of crypto-Jews living as Christians on the Iberian Peninsula rather than from the history of openly Jewish communities.⁵ Similarly in more recent times the notion that anti-Semitism has preserved the Jewish people has become something of a conventional cliché. But placing the outsiders' hatred in the causative role and relegating the Jewish people to passivity is to mistake cause for effect. As Jacob Katz has cautioned, rather than seeing Jewish nationalism as a reaction to anti-Semitism, it makes more sense to see anti-Semitism as a reaction to the stubborn dedication to group identity. And group survival has had meaning for the Jews because the group continues to be the vehicle of creativity and achievement.

Let me add one more point. There have been many varied Jewish responses to the challenge of modernity. Of all of these, one response stands out as by far the most successful: nationalist Zionism. No one a century ago, or even half a century ago, could have predicted this. Before World War II, Zionism as an organized movement was relatively weak, the future of the Jewish community in Palestine was by no means assured, and there were many other, louder voices clamoring for the attention of the Jewish people in active opposition to Zionism.

Today, on the other hand, if you find a non-Zionist Jew you are staring through a magnifying glass at a very wired creature in-deed. Whatever the reasons for this sea-change in Jewish identity, the dominance of political Zionism means that there has been even more pressure on individual Jews to forego independent thought in deference to the pressing national need for discipline, unanimity and consensus. But once again, as I shall explain in a moment, I believe that what appears to be a restraint on liberty of thought and liberalism within the Jewish community, is in fact an opportunity for the fullest expression of such liberty and individualism. Let me summarize and explain.

I began by suggesting that the freedom of the individual was, paradoxically, given full expression by the halakhic and commandment-based nature of Judaism, and that the imperative of observance far from precluding individual self-expression demanded it. The national basis of Jewish identity, apparently so antithetical to the kind of individual autonomy that we have been discussing, is in fact a vehicle through which the individual must seek to give group expression to positive values, values which derive ultimately from the individual conscience and the individual religious identity. And perhaps most important, the modern expression of that Jewish group identity in the State of Israel has finally made room for the fullest expression of the individual conscience, for liberalism in its most positive and creative sense. If the needs of the group have effectively limited the possibilities for deviance and for individual self-expression within the Jewish collective, the existence of the State has required of Jews to discuss the morality of power, the one element which was lacking in the centuries of exile. Maimonides, in the eleventh century, understood that the messianic era would be marked by only one change for the Jews: the ending of political subservience. To turn his statement on its head, the messianic era of our own day has been marked by the initiation of Jewish political power -- and hence, of true ethical responsibility.

The existence of the State of Israel has placed a supreme ethical demand on the individual Jew. Since the State has guaranteed Jewish group survival, group survival is no longer a sufficient reason for demanding individual ritual observance. When I was a boy, I and my friends were constantly told that we must observe the tradition (avoid ham sandwiches, avoid dating non-Jews, etc.) because the future of the Jewish people depended on our doing so. Our grandfathers, we were told, had been martyred for these rules, and it was our obligation to continue the observance (whatever we thought of the specifics) in order to ensure that earlier sacrifice had not been in vain.

This argument, taken to its extreme, is the one associated with the philosopher Emil Fackenheim who argued that for the Jews willingly to disappear was unthinkable since it would be tantamount to doing Hitler's work for him.⁶ The argument that one should be a Jew because of a deranged tyrant who destroyed half the world may appear a bit strained, but it was a powerful one for people seeking identity in the 1950s and 60s. But as the State has proven both viable and stable, such strained arguments have become far less compelling. The Jewish people will continue whatever the individual Jew does or does not do. In this sense, the Jewish State has given every Jew, whether inside or outside the country, the freedom to do whatever he or she wishes, including to opt out. Once group survival per se can no longer be used to justify religious demands, the individual must address the content and logic of religious demands. Content can no longer be ignored.

Finally, the State of Israel confronts the religious Jew with access to political power, offering both the possibility, and the threat, of religious coercion. In the past, Jews conceived of the government as gentile, as "goyish." Hence the Jew could treat the state and its power in purely utilitarian terms (was it good or bad for the Jews?). Correspondingly, internal discussion of Jewish ethics could be carried on in purely abstract, and often unrealistic, terms. But Israel is a place, like

the United States, in which groups negotiate for power and control. Some of these groups represent religious positions of one sort or another. Other groups are quite hostile to Judaism traditionally conceived. The debate goes on there within the context of liberal democracy, exactly as in the United States (though perhaps with a little more intensity than we are used to seeing here). In this negotiated environment the religious individual is forced to see the Jewish State as outside of himself, not only when that State adopts positions antithetical to religious values, but even when that State adopts positions supportive of religious values. The religious individual must consider not only how to make the State express his (or her) particular values, but also how to react when the State does not do that. In other words, the existence of the State of Israel forces the individual Jew to perceive and often to require a divorce between what we would call Church and State or, to adopt a less Christian terminology, between Religion and State. As Yeshayahu Leibowitz has demonstrated over and over, the religious individual has no choice but to understand the Jewish State as a secular institution which can be used for good or for evil.⁷ In other words, the Jew of today, is required for the first time in centuries, to articulate religious values in the broadest marketplace of ideas, to fight for those values in the rough and tumble of political discourse, and to be prepared to see those ideas realized on the battleground of daily life.

To conclude: the apparent dichotomy between structured authority and social power on the one hand, and individual religious liberty on the other, is not nearly as simple as we might think. The Jewish experience demonstrates that individual liberty and freedom of conscience can, and indeed must, flourish in the conditions of modernity. This point, already argued vehemently more than two centuries ago by the great Jewish philosopher, Moses Mendelssohn, must be repeated constantly.⁸ Mendelssohn realized that an argument for Jewish liberty of conscience in a Christian society was ultimately an argument for universal liberty of conscience in any society. I submit that there can be no stronger statement of liberal values.

* The following paper is a lightly edited version of my response to a paper by Professor Walsh above, and suffers from the usual limitations of brief conference presentations. While I hope that the themes are clear, I realize that I have only touched the surface of the issues raised and apologize in advance to the reader for not expanding sufficiently.

Notes

1. See the Introduction to his *Or Amim* (in the collected edition of Sforino's work edited by Ze'ev Gotlieb [Jerusalem: Mosad ha-Rav Kook, 1984], II; Sforino's critique of Christian allegorization of the commandments in his commentary to Psalms 119:69–70, *ibid.*, p. 222 f.

2. Idem, *Commentary to the Pentateuch*, in the Gotlieb edition, I, p. 254.

3. I recognize that Sforino represents one approach to halakha, one associated in the medieval period with the philosophical tradition within Judaism, and that the reader could easily point to other approaches within Judaism which tend to emphasize the more monolithic and absolutely authoritative nature of Law. This brief paper is not the place to attempt a full explanation of this idea. Suffice it here to refer the interested reader to Isaac Heinemann's still authoritative *Taamei ha-Mitzvot be-sifrut Yisrael*, second rev. ed. (Jerusalem: 1949).

4. Salo Baron, *A Social and Religious History of the Jews*, second edition, I (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952), pp. 1 ff.

5. Benedict Spinoza, *A Theological-Political Treatise*, chapter III, in *Works of Spinoza*, tr. R. H. M. Elwes (reprint: New York, 1951), I. p. 55. I owe this observation of Spinoza's emphasis to my teacher, Y. H. Yerusalmi.

6. Introduction to his *Quest for Past and Future. Essays in Jewish Theology* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968), p. 20: "*Jews are not permitted to hand Hitler posthumous victories. Jews are commanded to survive as Jews, lest their people perish.*" (Emphasis in the original.)

7. See, for example, his collected English essays, *Judaism, Human Values, and the Jewish State*, ed. Eliezer Goldman (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992).

8. See his *Jerusalem, or On Religious Power and Judaism*, tr. Allan Arkush (Hanover, NH: Brandeis University Press, 1983).

Chapter XVIII
The New Nationalism and the Gospel Witness:
Western Tolerance vs. Christian Repentance

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Early in the summer of 1990, I visited Armenia for the first time. This was on the heels of the massive protests and rallies of 1987-88 and the terrible earthquake in December 1988. In Armenia the expectation was that Gorbachev's days were numbered -- as indeed they were -- and talk everywhere was of independence. Even the cautious and conservative Armenian church had begun to shift its position and had begun to support the popular nationalist movement.

How could I help but embrace these Armenian hopes for sovereignty and self-determination, having been raised knowing how much this meant to my grandparents? And when I returned in the spring of 1991, it looked as if their dreams were coming true. Still, I was wary of the excess of the nationalist fervor in Armenia, dangers that I had identified before my visits and that looked even more serious when viewed up close.

I was especially troubled by the behavior of the Armenian church. The diversity of opinion on the national question within the political realm gave reason for a cautious optimism -- a genuine civic life and political culture seemed to be emerging. However, the unmistakable mark of expediency in the church's shift from cooperation with the Communist regime to sacralizer of the new nationalism was worrisome; its neglect of the spiritual needs of the people was conspicuous and unforgivable. The gospel pure and simple needed to be preached and practiced in the cities and in the remotest villages. The hierarchy seemed more comfortable wearing ethnic pride under filigreed ecclesiastical robes.

The attitude that the Armenian church (and other churches like it in former Soviet lands) takes toward the new nationalism is a critical matter. Western observers obsessively try to take readings on how well democracy is doing in the emerging democracies of Eastern Europe. The central question raised: Is this nationalism compatible with liberal values? Certainly the development of democratic institutions is essential, but I submit the more important and immediate struggle is a spiritual one.

What are the possibilities for the self-professed Christians of these Orthodox Christian lands to practice virtue and love to their neighbors during a time when nationalism is on the rise and violence is common? In Armenia people are struggling with the tangled religious and moral question of the relationships of faith, identity and Christian love. It is important to try to understand the nature of the new nationalism in Armenia and how it exists in tension with the Christian witness to the gospel, for Armenia is a microcosm of the struggle of nationalism and the turmoil that affect much of the old Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Before proceeding, something needs to be said about the Western analysis of the ethnic, religious, and nationalistic struggles going on in the East. From an Armenian, Russian, or Ukrainian perspective, all Western observers sound remarkably alike, judging the struggle of other peoples always from the insistent secular and political criteria of whether the outcome will be liberal and democratic in a recognizably Western way. Pluralism and tolerance are not incidental concerns for many people in the emerging democracies. But there is a kind of Western blindness in easy assumptions about multiculturalism and nationhood that is historically naive and patronizing as well as morally obtuse. As Benjamin Schwarz has written recently in *Atlantic Monthly* (May 1995), "At least as much as other countries, the United States was formed by

conquest and force, not by conciliation and compromise. . . . The ideas of foreign-policy experts about finding reasonable solutions to internal conflicts are distorted by an idealized view of America's own history."

That doesn't mean conquest and force are to be condoned. But it does mean that Americans should not expect democracy in East to look exactly like democracy in the West or that pluralism and tolerance have been easily achieved anywhere. Culture and history matter. Too often Western assumptions about Eastern Europe display ignorance or lack of interest in the distinctive religious histories of the peoples of these Orthodox nations and how that history is related to their aspirations for self-determination and national sovereignty. The United States, after all, is arguably a nation founded on a set of ideas, not on ethnic nationalism. Germany, France and England are also democracies, but in each nationhood is much more entangled with questions of ethnic and/or religious identity. Such is also the case in Eastern Europe.

In an article published over twenty years ago, long before virtually anyone anticipated the extraordinary events of the past decade, the liberal political philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin gave the "new nationalism" a name. He called it "bent twig" nationalism. With this metaphor he brought attention to the peculiar characteristics of nationalisms that are reactions against repressive forces that have stolen people's dignity and imposed a deadening control over their collective life. Such nationalism, Berlin argued, has value in and of itself -- independent of democratic principles. It has the potential of being an important first stage in the healing of old wounds.

Berlin's thesis was an advance over standard liberal prejudices and blindness, which often insisted on a coercive universalism. Liberal universalism was, after all, notoriously sympathetic to imperialism. The "bent twig" analysis encouraged a broader approach to nationalism and even argued that nationalism needn't be antithetical to broad liberal values and democracy. The interplay of faith, identity, conflict and concord in Eastern Europe or Russia needs to be seen in this light.

Michael Ignatieff, a British historian and journalist, examined these issues in characteristically liberal and Western fashion in his *Blood and Belonging: Journeys into the New Nationalism* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1994). Ignatieff argued that there are two kinds of nationalism, ethnic and civic. "Ethnic nationalism claims . . . that an individual's attachments are inherited, not chosen. It is national community that defines the individual, not the individuals who define the national community." For Ignatieff, this is not acceptable. Civic nationalism, on the other hand, embraces pluralism and envisages the nation as a community of equals in which ethnicity is only one component of modern identity, and a diminishing factor at that. Ignatieff concludes that of the two types of nationalism, civic nationalism "has a greater claim to sociological realism" because "most societies are not monoethnic; and even when they are, common ethnicity is only one of the many claims on an individual's loyalties. Civic nationalism is right to hold that what keeps a society together is not roots but law."

Rhetorically this abstract celebration of law sounds very soothing to Western ears. But I find Ignatieff's claim about where the greater realism lies incredible. What makes him think ethnicity (and its accompanying component of religious belonging) are diminishing as a source of identity? Like so many other observers, he chooses to disbelieve what he sees. Ignatieff dismisses as fantasies of nationalist ideology the testimony of people in Croatia, Serbia, Ukraine, and other places who insist that religion and ethnicity are the core of their identity. But if self-determination is a democratic goal, mustn't we take the identity claims of self-determining people seriously?

Ignatieff describes himself as a nationalist in the limited sense of civic nationalism. He equates this with cosmopolitanism -- a creed, as he says, that is not beyond the nation because it

depends upon "the capacity of nation-states to provide security and civility for citizens. . . . [As] civic nationalist, [I am] someone who believes in the necessity of nations." But have nations ever been forged or defended out of such a thin sense of identity? Believing in the necessity of nations in an almost administrative sense is very different from believing that one belongs to a nation in a deep, thick, bloody and membranous sense. It is not surprising that Ignatieff's discussion of Christianity in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic lands, especially East European countries and the Ukraine, is largely anecdotal. He doesn't dig deeply into the religious and ethnic identity issues, which is the underbelly of so much of the new nationalism.

Much of what we in the West want or fear will happen in the East is a projection of our own worries or conceits. Even among many who take religion as a serious component of democratic culture, the unstated assumption is that a rigidly secular liberalism is somehow a prerequisite and precondition of civic virtue. Equally unacceptable to the West is the notion of church that (in Ernst Troeltsch's sense) is identified with a people or land as an ecology and history and not just real estate sold or distributed by contract. We even sometimes call such expression of solidarity unchristian.

Given such assumptions, it is next to impossible for us to appreciate why a Bosnian Muslim or Serbian Orthodox would fight to the death over the same land, why Palestinian Arabs and Jewish Israelis spill blood over the territory of the West Bank, or why Armenians surrounded by Azerbaijanis refuse to abandon the mountains and valleys of Nagorno-Karabagh. Or, I would suggest, why Virginians opposed to slavery felt compelled in honor to fight for the Confederacy and Northerners with no sympathy for abolition were willing to die to preserve the Union. Fundamental allegiances are complex and overdetermined, never merely self-interested.

Let me at least try to convey a sense of the thick human reality that often ties Christianity to nationalism in the East and in so doing challenges some of our bedrock secular suppositions. No one could possibly deny that the gospel of peace and reconciliation is having hard going in Armenia, Ukraine, or Serbia. My own experiences in Armenia have proven that to me. But I am equally aware that the history and resources of Christian ethics in these Orthodox lands are not well understood in the West. Several personal experiences illustrate this, but also suggest how Christian ethics might actually begin to enter public life more positively in Armenia and the East.

One afternoon in June of 1991, I was strolling through the streets of Yerevan with Lillet Zagaryan, a historian of medieval art, and Erna Melikyan, a classicist. The two women explained to be how many Armenians were returning to church in search of some-thing to believe in after the spiritual desolation imposed by the Soviet system. Lillet said that a new morality was needed. She believed that morality is a universal, but suspected also that there is something specific and compelling about Christian morality, which requires supererogatory acts toward one's neighbor, even the neighbor who is an enemy. I said that I thought that Christian ethics includes more than moral principles or universalizable rules, that it is joined to a person whom Christians are asked to imitate and follow. "You mean Jesus," she responded. "I do not dispute that he was an historical person. . . . But Christianity teaches us to turn the other cheek and love our enemy. That is difficult. How can we love Turks or Azeris? . . . When faced with such enemies maybe its better not to be so moral, so Christian." Erna agreed: "Such morality is nearly impossible for Armenians."

Several days after my conversation with Lillet and Erna, I was with a group of young men and women who form the core of an active youth movement at the diocesan church of Saint Sarkis in Yerevan. The bishop, who was present, asked if someone would explain what it means to be Christian. The young people were quick to respond. "It means to follow Christ and become as much like him as possible" was the unanimous answer. I asked these young people whether they

were familiar with the twelfth chapter of the epistle to the Romans, where Saint Paul exhorts his audience to offer themselves to God to "conform no longer to the pattern of this present world, but be transformed by the renewal of your minds, and to know what is good, acceptable, and perfect." Everyone was familiar with the message and they all volunteered that it was very important, especially for Armenians.

"We must reach an understanding," said one, about the passages that mention blessing your enemies and not seeking revenge, but giving help to your enemy when he needs help." I then told the group about what Lillet and Erna had said to me, especially about turning the other cheek. The nearly unanimous opinion of the eight or ten young men and women was that there was no escaping the directness of these passages. They were not surprised by what Lillet and Erna said. They had seen this resistance to the radical nature of the Christian gospel in others and experienced it themselves. These youths were not pacifists, although they entertained that possibility. Instead, they wanted to wrestle with the question of who is truly an enemy and what is vengeful and uncharitable in oneself.

My young friends believed that nothing short of re-evangelizing the Armenian people would supply the moral fiber needed to forestall violence and the cycle of revenge. Remember, Armenians, like Russians and Ukrainians, live deeply in the past as well as the present. All these peoples, even nonbelievers among them, trace their origins as a people back to stories of conversion to Christianity. Moreover, these young men and women were moved by the rock-bottom truth of Christian faith that pride and fear block love, and that the gospel clears the ground for love and justice to grow. Can any society afford to squander such moral capital?

In May of 1994, James H. Billington wrote on Russia and Orthodoxy in the *New Republic*, grappling with the realities I have described. Billington urged his readers to take seriously the power of the explicitly Christian language and symbolism of repentance and forgiveness in Russian and how that has been a fabric of social peace in Orthodox lands. He described the coup attempt of 1991 and how it echoes so much of Russian history and the religious imagination in Russia:

After the putsch collapsed, Russians were brought together emotionally by the quasi religious burial procession for the three young men killed during the coup attempt. Memories were evoked of the first Russian saints, Boris and Gleb, young medieval princes who voluntarily accepted death in order to prevent dissension in the Russian land. And the classic totalitarian avoidance of individual responsibility seemed to end with the moving words addressed (by Boris Yeltsin) to the parents of the three fallen martyrs: "Forgive me, your president, that I was not able to protect and defend you sons."

"Forgive me" is what Russians say to each other before taking Communion. They are the last words uttered by an earlier Boris in Russia's greatest national opera, Boris Gudunov. "Forgive us" were the words on many bouquets sent to Andrei Sakharov's funeral in December 1989. Almost with these words alone, Yeltsin seemed to invest power with a higher authority. Someone blameless was assuming responsibility in a society where people in power never used to accept responsibility for anything. And he did it in the language of faith.

Billington's reference to the Communion service of the Orthodox faith is not incidental. Indeed, eucharistic atonement is central to Orthodox ethics, and is the key to unlocking an understanding of our love of neighbor as a process that begins with individual penance and moves toward

mutual reconciliation. Orthodox Christians consume the bloody flesh of their Lord after having embraced their near neighbor, not just with a polite hand-shake but with a full embrace. They are challenged in this act to embrace the flesh of their more distant neighbors as gift and not to repeat the ancient legacy of the race to mutilate their neighbor's flesh and spill his blood. Billington did not mention that three young men who died defending Russian democracy were of different faiths: Orthodox, Muslim, and Jew. But, of course, this only adds more force to his comments.

Unfortunately many Westerners, and ironically many Christian Westerners, instinctively recoil from such public religious language. Perhaps this is one reason why Alexandr Solzhenitsyn (and often John Paul II) has been written off by many as a kind of authoritarian crank. For Solzhenitsyn persists in calling Russia to repentance and placing more faith in the power of the conversion of the heart than in any modern political ideology. Listen to how he addressed his countrymen twenty years ago before anyone seriously imagined what we see happening today.

We have so bedeviled the world, brought it so close to destruction, that repentance is now a matter of life and death -- not for the sake of life beyond the grave (which is thought merely comic nowadays) but for the sake of our life here and now. . . .

It is now only too obvious that we have throughout the ages preferred to censure, denounce, and hate others, instead of censoring, denouncing, and hating ourselves. . . . [Nevertheless we are] reluctant to believe that the universal dividing line between good and evil runs not between countries, not between nations . . . , not even between good men and bad men; the dividing line cuts across nations and parties, shifting constantly, yielding now to the pressure of light, now to the pressure of darkness. It divides the human heart of every man. . . .

We must stop blaming everyone else -- our neighbors and more distant peoples, our geographical, economic, or ideological rivals -- always claiming that we are in the right.

Repentance is the first bit of firm ground underfoot, the only one from which we can go forward not to fresh hatreds but to concord ("Repentance and Limitation," in *From under the Rubble*).

We in the West seem incapable of hearing this language of repentance spiritually or with an appreciation for its powerful cultural and institutional embeddedness within Russian national life. We think tolerance is a principle that stands on its own outside of any larger moral narrative or agreement about the common purposes of life. Naively, I think, we believe that democratic institutions and procedures alone will secure civic peace. Yet it wasn't so long ago that Reinhold Niebuhr argued that the spirit of democratic tolerance is not solely the product of secular values nor secured by democratic institutions alone. Niebuhr judged that the humility born of repentance was "one of the great resources of . . . faith for social achievement." He believed that strong religious faith could and ought to be "a fount of humility" and that if such humility became a disposition in political life it was "capable of moving men to moderate their national pride."

Interestingly, Reinhold Niebuhr was named by the religious intelligentsia that I met during visits to Russia in the early 1990s as a Western theologian they found particularly helpful in sorting out issues of faith, ethnicity, nationalism, and democracy. These religious democrats dreaded the possibility of renewed triumphalism within the Russian Orthodox church, but they also believed that faith provided resources for building the moral foundations of a new, more democratic order. That is at the heart of developments in the East.

At least in this regard Solzhenitsyn many know the Russians -- and by extension the Ukrainians, Armenians, and others -- much better than do the people who dismiss his invocations of faith and repentance. The appeal to a self-consciously Christian sense of repentance need not have anything to do, either, with a worn-out belief in the old sacral order of Christendom. The

progress of secularism in Russia or Armenia, however, does not have the same history as our liberal secularity -- it was imposed by totalitarian dictatorship, not by the forces of individualism or consumerism. That makes a big difference.

In Russia and perhaps Armenia the decision the church makes, whether to return to the bad old habits of sacralizing ethnic pride and the political order or to act as the conscience of the nation, will make an enormous difference. I cannot say for sure what the political outcome will be in these lands. But we should not expect that our style of political liberalism will necessarily triumph, nor that the dogmas we treat as infallible -- such as separation of church and state -- will be cloned exactly. Neither should we rule out the possibility that new forms of democracy that do not bear out *imprimatur* will evolve. If this leads us to despair of the possibility of justice and regional peace in these countries, I suspect that is our despair not theirs. More blood might be shed; more shameful human tragedies such as we have witnessed in Bosnia and Chechnya might be repeated. One hopes such things will not continue. But we cannot expect to understand or influence events if our eyes pass over all of what is at stake in these lands, not only the fate of democracy but the ethos and faith of peoples who are struggling to reenter history after a long submersion in darkness and humiliation. The churches will play an important role in Ukraine, Russia, and Armenia in sewing seeds of either discord or of peace. Let not our own secularity or even unbelief blind us to that force and all its possibilities.

Part VI

The Vocation of Monotheistic Faiths in a Conflictual World

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Future development of monotheistic faiths with respect to the identity of peoples. The living preservation of the religious and cultural identities of people as bases of the social life of peoples; lessons to be learned from the experiences of times; scriptural faith and the reconciliation of peoples in conflict; the challenge of the increasing interrelation of peoples to render newly active the implications of belief in one God, alpha and omega, for a creative and harmonious life of the peoples.¹

Editorial Introduction

But the sheer increase in numbers outside Christianity must remain to the sensitive spirit a deep aspect of the problem of religious pluralism, committed as we are to the central significance of persons in societies.

-Kenneth Cragg

The three concluding papers appear basically as they were presented in the final symposium session. These papers, of course, had to be written in advance of the meeting, and thus they are not based directly on what went before. Moreover, the writers did not materially revise their contribution subsequently. Their essays thus appear on a par with all those that went before. Basically, then, while some concluding editorial comments follow here and in the editorial conclusion below, perhaps as it should be, this puts the task of summing up on the reader.

Recognizing past and present involvements of the three Abrahamic traditions in ethnic conflicts, the originating question put to contributors to this symposium was: *how can the healing potential of our several traditions be realized in these conflicts, and what can we learn from past failures in this regard?* For both substantive and logical reasons, each panel proceeded chronologically: Jewish, Christian, Islamic.

It is hardly accidental that the beginning note on the panel is somber if not indeed pessimistic. "I am not convinced," Rabbi Moline begins, "that the monotheistic faiths can play a role in resolving ethnic conflict." Effectively, if we have come with the expectation that our deliberations would yield pacifying political strategies, we were mistaken. That expectation merely exacerbates the confusions that led to our impasse in the first place. Our problem all along has been, in the words of George Mendenhall, "the dissolution of religion into politics."² I shall return to this claim in the concluding essay.

Moline's accent, however, seems to fall elsewhere. For him the route to the universal leads through the (Jewish) particular. For him to stray from the Jewish -- or Abrahamic -- particular is to lose the capacity to affect the universal. The key appears to be the Mosaic duty to the stranger and ultimately to the enemy. Recognition of the divine image in the other, it would appear, rules out the warring behaviors that we here deplore.

Appropriately enough, Duran applies the same logic to what he regards as the core commonality of "the Abrahamic Family." Accordingly he would have the three traditions work in much greater spiritual unison, a unity that would be evident in common prayer. Nor is that reasoning unusual. At least in this pluralist USA, where secularism appears as a common

challenge, Muslim "cousins" on occasion appeal to Jews and Christians to make common cause. Many in each of the traditions will object to such "watering down" of the distinctive features of their beliefs, and not without reason.

According to both the Jewish and the Christian responses in this instance, however, the commonality argument appears problematic. From the outside, the rise of Christianity, followed some centuries later by Islam surely is problematic for the original Abrahamic people. One might, from an outside perspective, proceed in quantitative terms and ask what percentage of the legacy of faith would have to be shared to sustain unified endeavor. In the US Congress a simple majority rule is required for legislative enactment, or a two-thirds minimum for certain weighty issues. If theologians could show that the three versions of Abrahamic faith are in two thirds agreement, could they then pool their efforts?

While the issues here before us are not thus quantifiable, it is doubtful that the issues raised by both Moline and West, though different, would reach even a 50% level. But that does not yet dispose of the case put by Duran. The presence of the three stories, the three revelations, at the core respectively of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, somehow beckons each beyond its boundaries.

In Section Two above, Michael Kogan traces the stage by stage unfolding of the scriptural narrative in which successive human default results in new divine goal-setting. The nature of the divine response, instance by instance, is by no means readily or immediately self-evident. Cosmology, history and final epiphany remain intrinsic, yet mysterious, components of the Abrahamic trajectory. Paradoxically the summons to each community -- Jews, Christians and Muslims -- to greater faithfulness to their particular covenant, rather than dilution or amalgamation, may be precisely the most promising advance to the common action for which Duran calls.

Notes

1. Original assignment to Moline, West and Duran.
2. George Mendenhall, *The Tenth Generation*. (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1973), 16f.

Chapter XIX
The Vocation of Judaism in a Conflictual World
Rabbi Jack Moline (Agudas Achim Congregation, Alexandria, VA)

Both the delight and the disadvantage of presenting (one-third of) the last words on this broad topic is the opportunity to redefine the entire discussion. The temptation is great to briefly summarize the five preceding topics and then offer the definitive pronouncement on their synthesis. Most of that urge I will be able to resist. However, I am forced to challenge one basic presumption to give my paper internal consistency and coherence.

I am not convinced that the monotheistic faiths can play a role in resolving ethnic conflict. The reasons are two-fold: the distinct theological differences among Judaism, Christianity and Islam will, of necessity, allow only the broadest areas of agreement among their most passionate partisans, and the related distinctions between faith values and ethnic values require that one group or the other relinquish the very autonomy which likely provoked conflict. Moreover, power generally resides in the most conservative elements of any religion. This seems to be true even of the "reform" streams of traditions, which develop institutions and hierarchies which are guarded zealously by the conservative factions within.

Add to the dilemma another frustration: the premise of a "universal declaration of human rights." Dr. Little has suggested that human rights flow from "natural law," and offers the opportunity for religion(s) to make a case for enfranchisement or emendation of the declaration. This declaration is unashamedly devoid of any claim to God-centeredness, yet its proponents presume to judge whether a God-centered approach to human dignity meets their test of correctness. The attempt to relativize or marginalize religious input will only put self-described humanists at odds with the religious traditions they hope to co-opt in pursuit of the admirable goal of ensuring human dignity.¹

It may therefore seem hopeless that our traditions can find enough commonality to promote any kind of consensus. I pray otherwise; I fear my prayers are in vain. Perhaps by examining a Jew's perspective my position will become clearer.

Central to the nature of Judaism is a continuing tension between both parties to paradox. Jews are a people of a very particular set of practices and obligations which reflect an unending covenant with God, yet we are mandated to seek universal fulfillment of humanity in all its expressions. We affirm the inherence of common bonds among all humans, yet we celebrate regularly the distinctions between Jews and non-Jews. We seek "one manner of law for the stranger and the home-born alike,"² yet we are admonished not to adopt the practices of the other nations.³

At no time in history has this tension been more apparent to Jews than in the shadow of the Holocaust. And no issue brings the tension more to bear than the increasing numbers of Jews who intermarry. Professor Leonard Fein articulates the contemporary frustration.

A Jewish youngster announces his or her intentions of marrying "out of the faith." The parents are distraught, but cannot explain, beyond their own hurt, what is at stake in the matter, why they take it so very seriously. And the children are confused; all their lives, they've heard their parents roar universalism, and now, suddenly, they whimper particularism. . . . Living simultaneously as particularists and universalists, as we try to, means that we are in search of a way to make one world out of two, two that are usually perceived as ir-reconcilable. But that does not mean we know how to explain ourselves. We are not social theorists; we are a people, trying to make it through unsettled times.⁴

In unsettled times, be they personal or national, individuals tend to cling to the familiar and dependable. Ironically, unsettled times are precisely those which call for an openness to innovation and risk-taking. What is true of Jews in specific seems to be true of ethnic communities in general: as opportunities for creating more pluralistic societies present themselves, group identity emerges in greater strength. And in the attempt to make "one world out of two," the internal conflict between those two worlds is at the root of the external conflicts we seek to ameliorate.

Throughout history, powerful majority cultures have beckoned to Jews, urging us to surrender our particularism and be accepted as part of the greater cultural ethos. The conflict between those who would embrace such an invitation and those who viewed it as a threat to Jewish survival forms the core of the real story of *Chanukkah*. With the conquest of the Hellenistic world by Rome, the invitation grew more urgent. We have the record of many discussions on the subject in midrash. Obviously, the records of the Jews will be skewed to the preferred outcome, but their sheer numbers represent how pressing an issue this was up to and beyond the exile of the Jews in 70 CE.

Caesar once said to Rabbi Tanchuma: Come, let us all become one people. [R. Tanchuma] replied: I agree; however, since we are circumcised, we cannot become like you. You, therefore, should become circumcised and be like us.⁵

The breaking-down of barriers between peoples is considered by R. Tanchuma only if the Romans are willing to submit to circumcision, the sign of accepting God's covenant. R. Tanchuma was most certainly aware of the Biblical story of Dina, in which a similar invitation was made by Hamor. Hamor's nefarious plans were to undergo circumcision and then absorb the Israelites and their wealth through acculturation and intermarriage. The plan is foiled when Simeon and Levi slaughter the suffering "converts."⁶

In the Biblical narrative, Jacob is outraged by the violence of his sons. However, he is unaware of Hamor's plans. The narrator is aware, and therefore so is R. Tanchuma and the reader as well. The Roman goal of political and cultural unity is acceptable to the Jews only if the rubric is Judaism; any offer to unify with outsiders is seen by Jews as an attempt to eliminate Jewish distinctiveness.

A similar sentiment appears in the *midrash* of Rabbi Akiva and Pappus ben Yehuda. R. Akiva was devoted to the teaching of Torah in spite of the Roman ban on its study in public. Pappus was a scholar who believed that it was better to accommodate the Romans and live than to stand on principle and die. R. Akiva defended his actions:

This situation is like a fox walking by a river. He saw fish swimming around, looking for a place to hide. The fox said to them: Come with me and I will hide you among the rocks, and then you will not be afraid. The fish replied: You are the one of whom they say "he is the smartest of animals?" Rather, you are stupid. Our whole lives are in the water, and you tell us to come up on dry land? Indeed, if we are afraid in a place where we can live, how much the more so in a place where we will certainly die! So, too, with us. Our whole lives are lived in Torah. . . .

The *midrash* concludes with the arrest by the Roman authorities of R. Akiva and Pappus, causing Pappus to exclaim, "Happy are you who was arrested because of Torah! Woe to Pappus, who was arrested for naught!"⁷ To be sure, there are *midrashim* which are more appreciative of the Romans, but in general, the attitude remains, to borrow a phrase out of context, to "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's."

The fear of assimilation and its necessary breach of the covenant with God has not stopped Jews and the Jewish tradition from envisioning a better world for all peoples. Rabbi Robert Gordis translates and interprets a *mishnah* which is contemporaneous with the above-mentioned midrash to emphasize the universal truths of the book of Genesis. R. Gordis's "truths" are derived from the text of Genesis, before the covenant with Abraham, and therefore applicable to the entire human family. They include:

1. The world has a plan and purpose known only to God.
2. All life is holy and integral to the Divine order of creation.
3. Men and women are equal in God's plans.
4. Every human being is fashioned "in the Divine image."
5. Man is the responsible ruler of the created world.
6. The world is good.⁸

The truths seem palatable enough for each of the Abrahamic faiths (especially since Rabbi Gordis documents each with Scriptural texts), and general enough to allow for the "spin" each would place upon them. But once the principles are articulated, the *mishnah* which elaborates on Jewish thought makes clear his particular approach as an heir to Rabbinic Judaism:

A single individual was first created to teach you that one who destroys a single life (of a Jew)⁹ is regarded as if s/he had destroyed an entire world, while one who saves a single life (of a Jew) is regarded as if s/he had saved an entire world. And for the sake of peace among the creatures, that a person not say to another, "My ancestor was greater than yours;" and that the sectarians¹⁰ not say, "There are multiple powers in heaven;" and to recount the greatness of the Holy One, for a person may stamp many coins from a single mould and each is like the others, but the Sovereign of Sovereigns, the Holy One, stamped each person with the mould of the first person, and no one is like any other. Therefore, every person must say, "for my sake was the world created."¹¹

To drive the point home, R. Gordis further quotes a supplemental work to the *Mishnah* known as the *Tosefta*:

Mankind has a single ancestor, so no sinner may say, "I am a sinner by inheritance, being a descendant of sinners," and no saint may say "I am a saint by virtue of my descent from saints."¹²

No contemporary rabbi was more devoted to the pursuit of social justice than Robert Gordis, and no one more actively sought interfaith partnerships to pursue those goals. Yet his motivation remained particularistically Jewish and actively not non-Jewish. The social theorist Professor Fein suggests that the rest of us are not so, yet he too is frustrated by his attempt to make one world out of two. The desirability of peaceful co-existence in this world could be derived exclusively from Torah and Talmud, independent of any later teachings by daughter religions and, perhaps, contrary to them.

The conflict of the "two worlds" is evident from R. Gordis's decision to choose the less-preferred version of the *mishnah* regarding destroying or saving a single life. The implied limitation

on human consideration of the more particular version is not in keeping with the hopes and aspirations of compassionate and well-intentioned Jews. As such, reading the *mishnah* in its broader sense allows room in the Jewish covenant for people of all faiths as part of the greater family of humanity.

Most Jews are not as well-educated in Biblical and Talmudic texts as Rabbi Gordis or his colleagues. How, then, are these values represented in more familiar circumstances? If the study of classic texts does not find its way into most Jewish lives, at least the prayer book does. Even the most infrequent of those who attend a synagogue is familiar with the prayer which concludes every worship service, three times a day, for Jews. It is called *aleinu* after its first Hebrew word which means either "we rise" or "it is our duty." (The Conservative Jewish prayer book, *Siddur Sim Shalom*, pre-serves both meanings in the translation included in this presentation.)

Aleinu consists of two paragraphs, the first taken from the liturgy of the High Holy Days and the second appended later. Its rhetoric is stirring, even if its format is unusual in that it contains no formulaic blessings which are typical of Jewish liturgy.¹³

At first blush, it seems to meld the "two worlds" of particularism and universalism into one tidy package. The first paragraph (the original) articulates a fidelity to the God of Creation, much as R. Gordis depicts. It adds, however, the dimension of Jewish uniqueness. The verse surrounded by parentheses in the body of the prayer below was removed in the Middle Ages by Christian censors because its Hebrew conclusion (*l'eil lo yoshia*) can easily be understood as a denial of the divinity of Jesus, even though the prayer predates Christianity by as much as 250 years.

We rise to our duty to praise the Lord of all, to acclaim the Creator. He made our lot unlike that of other people, assigning to us a unique destiny. (For they bow to vanity and emptiness and to a god who cannot redeem. But) we bend the knee and bow, acknowledging the King of kings, the Holy One praised be He, who spread out the heavens and laid the foundations of the earth, whose glorious abode is in heaven, whose mighty dominion is in the loftiest heights. He is our God, there is no other. In truth, He alone is our King, as it is written in His Torah: "Know this day and take it to heart that the Lord is God in heaven above and on earth below (Deut.4:39)."¹⁴

This gentle translation omits the power of a literal understanding which emphasizes over and over again the distinction between the Jews and the other nations (*shelo sam chelkeinu kahem v'gora-leinu k'khol hamonam*; "[God] has not made our portion like theirs, nor our lot like the masses"). While acknowledging a common mode of worship, the object of our devotion sets us apart from the contemporaneous pagans.

Of course, the peoples with whom Jews have the most inter-action in contemporary society are not pagans -- they are primarily Christian adherents and Muslims, heirs to the same Abrahamic legacy and worshippers of the same God. Nonetheless, the words echo with both historic memory and modern relevance and serve to create a conscious schism between Jews and non-Jews.

(The emphasis on such differences is most often purposeful in Jewish tradition. Indeed, one reason advanced for the observance of the dietary laws, *kashrut*, is "to set us apart from non-Jews by providing us with a Jewish cuisine, a Jewish kitchen and a Jewish table.")¹⁵

As if to balance the religio-centrism of the first paragraph, a gentler and more universal vision is expressed in the second. In-stead of the assertive and descriptive tone of the first paragraph, God is addressed directly in the second.

And so we hope in you, Lord our God, soon to see Your splendor, sweeping idolatry away so that false gods will be utterly destroyed, perfecting the earth by Your kingship, so that all mankind will invoke Your name, bringing all the earth's wicked back to you, repentant. Then all who live will know that to You every knee must bend, every tongue pledge loyalty. To You, Lord, may all

bow in worship, may they give honor to Your glory, now and forever. Thus is it written in Your Torah: The Lord reigns for ever and ever. Such is the assurance of your prophet Zechariah [14:9]: The Lord shall be acknowledged King of all the earth. On that day, the Lord shall be One and His name One.

The last verse, a vision of the world brought under God's sovereignty, is sung with gusto and amateur harmonies in most congregations. Rabbis often go to great lengths to emphasize that Zechariah's vision has never been construed to assume mass conversion to Judaism; rather, each nation in its own way will acknowledge the one true God. It, too, resounds in the Jewish imagination and is often the last liturgical impression with which a Jew leaves worship.

The universalism has its obvious limitations. Though we petition God to create a pure and righteous world, our desire is for a perfection of the world under the kingship of God *as we know God*. If there is a substantive difference between a world governed by Jewish principles and a world in which all people accept the sovereignty of the Jews' God, I would be hard-pressed to identify it.

Certainly, this presumption of "rightness" is not unique to the Jews. My colleagues could make an equally persuasive argument regarding those who adhere to the tenets of Islam and those who take to heart the Christian vision of salvation and redemption. In various forms and permutations, the ethnic groups involved in the conflicts over which we agonize themselves feel completely justified in their actions, fueled by a conviction of the justice of their cause and, erroneously, a Divine mandate to conquer by coercion or force. And is if adding to the frustration of these conflicts are the competing and conflicting world views of the three traditions re-presented in this symposium. A concerted and unified effort to articulate an overarching vision of peace would meet with failure by any standard, for we cannot even agree on a definition of terms for discussion. As if to add insult to injury, even if a coalition of religious representatives could capture this cloud in a paper bag, the ears of those we seek to address have been deafened by gunfire and their eyes have been blinded by hatred.

I suggest the most effective approach is to seek not to intervene in the affairs of others, nor even to seek an unsatisfying compromise among the many faith communities of Abraham. Rather, the work must be internal for each of our communities.

It is important to take note of the nature of the character of Abraham as described in Torah. Though he is the pioneer of monotheism, nowhere in the Biblical text is there an intimation that he seeks to impose his faith on others, nor does he ever volunteer to witness his "discovery" of God. To the outside world, he is an accommodationist, assisting those in distress,¹⁶ advocating justice for strangers,¹⁷ acknowledging the peculiar customs of the communities in which he sojourns.¹⁸ Within his own family, he is un-compromising in faithfulness to the covenants into which he enters. If in Avraham, Abraham, Ibrahim, *alav hashalom* (peace be upon him), we find a common denominator, then the model of his life should be the model for our common cause.

First and foremost must be a reclaiming and reemphasis from within each tradition of respect for those who reach for God in their distinct ways. Even within Torah, which stands firmly against paganism, comes a clear acknowledgment of the ways of others: and when you look up to the sky and behold the sun and the moon and the stars, the whole heavenly host, you must not be lured into bowing down to them or serving them. "*These the Lord your God allotted to the other peoples*" everywhere under heaven (Deut 4:19) (emphasis mine). From the Sages of the Talmud, through Maimonides and to the present day, *chasidei umot ha'olam*, "the righteous of all nations," have been heralded as partners in the redemption of the world. Among the few blessings to be plucked

from the ashes of Auschwitz is the renewed appreciation Jews have for non-Jews who rescued, sheltered or protected the persecuted among our people.

Second must come an encouragement of those willing to take risks in unsettled times in order to move us all forward to new opportunities. Particularly, I think of Israeli Jews who are willing to reach out to their Palestinian Arab neighbors at the risk of ostracism or injury from without and within Jewish community. (I am proud to number some of my rabbinic colleagues among them.) Nor should we overlook that which is sometimes discounted for its pragmatism; the grudging handshake between Yitzchak Rabin and Yassir Arafat diminished neither man's commitments to his people. The applause of local Muslims or distant Christians is important, but it is meaningless without the enthusiasm of family. The tragic assassination of Prime Minister Rabin serves to further emphasize the internal conflicts which must be addressed before a dependable peace can be attained among external combatants.

Fortunately for the Jews, the theology of Christians and Muslims regarding Jews is inconsequential as long as Christians and Muslims behave *as if* the theological differences are equally inconsequential to them. (With no disrespect intended, the beliefs of others in the disposition of the soul or the sacredness of text have no external authenticity for non-adherents.) The more difficult task for Jews is overcoming resentment and prejudice against Christians and Muslims for historical and theological conflict, real or perceived. The development of such trust is the deepest challenge for Jews in contemporary times.

Last, and perhaps most important, is the vision of mission from within which emphasizes a Jew's responsibility to justice in the wider world. The voices of the Biblical prophets called not for an abandonment of the ritual particularities or distinctive practices of their fellow Jews, but for a greater attention to the human needs confronting them. In contemporary times, no voice captures that call more than Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. The example of his presence next to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in Selma, Alabama, was the closest we have come to "one world out of two." Rabbi Heschel's presence at Dr. King's side was prompted by his belief not in some ethic of human dignity which transcended Jewish tradition, but because of his belief in an ethic of human dignity organic to Judaism. Moreover, he was willing to support the struggles of African Americans *on their terms* in the name of a common humanity. It has been said that coincidence is God's way of remaining anonymous. It should not escape notice that R. Heschel's name was Abraham.

It is noteworthy that Rabbi Heschel's words on the subject of religious pluralism appear in the Conservative *siddur* (prayer book) under the title "No Religion is an Island." His writings have been adapted to liturgical form, and congregants are asked to read "there is no monopoly on holiness. We are companions of all who revere him. We rejoice when His name is praised. . . . Let us help one another overcome hardness of heart, opening minds to the challenges of faith. Should we hope for each other's failure? Or should we pray for each other's welfare? Let mutual concern replace remnants of mutual contempt, as we share the precarious position of being human. . . ."19

These sentiments emerge *from* the religious impulse, not *in spite of* it, as humanist dogma might suggest. To the mind of the religiously sensitive Jew, it is unfathomable that such appreciation of common humanity and divinity, such transcendent truth, could find its foundation outside of God. The debt of gratitude Judaism owes to those who have struggled outside the bounds of religious conviction to arrive at those truths is the challenge to rediscover what has been too long neglected. However, a society which seeks to elevate that struggle above God ultimately constructs a tower of Babel/babble.

Heschel's words, though appreciated by a wide readership, were aimed at the heart of the Jew. The resolution of ethnic and religious conflict will not be imposed from without, but from within.

By nurturing both strong identification with Jewish particularism and the practice of delight in the religious striving of others, Judaism can model from within the realization of Professor Fein's challenge. In doing so, Jews can make their contribution to the goals of ethnic peace.

An extraordinary *midrash* claims that "were it not for Abraham, it would have been (as if it were possible!) as if there were no God in the world."²⁰ The claim to the legacy of Abraham is to witness by personal and communal example the presence of God in the world, even if, as our tradition claims, every generation's manner of expressing that presence is unique.²¹ The Jews' contribution to a global community can be to find, in this generation, a witness which preserves our own unique mission to preserve the covenant and improve the world while affirming and celebrating the efforts of others to do the same in the context of their own relationship with God.

I have every faith that the same can be accomplished by my Muslim and Christian cousins.

Notes

1. From the Jewish perspective, the endeavor lacks organic justification. Rabbinic Judaism, the basis of most contemporary expressions of Jewish religion, knows no concept of "rights" per se. The tradition does not address itself to rights (i.e., entitlements of the individual from society), but exclusively to responsibilities (i.e., the obligations of the individual to society). The result may be the ensuring of what we call "human rights," but by our reading of so-called "natural law," those rights are the by-product of a just society, not its *raison d'être*.

2. Leviticus 24:22

3. Leviticus 23:23

4. Leonard Fein, *Where Are We? The Inner Life of America's Jews* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), pp. 190-191.

5. *Sanhedrin* 39a.

6. Genesis 34.

7. *Tanchuma, Ki Tavo* 2.

8. Robert Gordis, "The Truths of Genesis." *Midstream Magazine* 30(6) (June/July 1984).

9. R. Gordis omits the phrases in parentheses, preferring a variant reading which is generally not accepted as the original, but is more in keeping with the context of the Biblical reference.

10. Generally understood to be early Christians.

11. *Sanhedrin* 4:5.

12. *Tosefta Sanhedrin* 8:3.

13. Reuven Hammer, *Entering Jewish Prayer* (New York, Schocken, 1994), pp. 206-209.

14. Translation of traditional prayer from *Siddur Sim Shalom*, Rabbi Jules Harlow, ed. p. 599.

15. Samuel H. Dresner, *The Jewish Dietary Laws, Their Meaning for our Time* (New York: The Burning Bush Press, 1966), p.44.

16. Genesis 14.

17. Genesis 18:17-33.

18. Genesis 12:10-13, 23:2-16.

19. *Siddur Sim Shalom op.cit.*, p. 807.

20. *Sifrei Devarim* 313.

21. "Why does [the central prayer,] the *Amidah* begin 'God of Abraham, God of Isaac, God of Jacob' instead of 'God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob?' To teach us that none accepted God merely on the strength of his father's faith, but struggled to find his own faith." Ascribed to Rabbi Israel Baal Shem Tov.

Chapter XX

The Vocation of Christianity in a Conflictual World

Charles C. West (Princeton Theological Seminary)

The vocation of our faith in a conflictual world means, concretely, that we are concerned with our responsibility as persons who believe in God amid the world's conflicts, some of which are rooted in faith differences. But we do not do this as individuals. Each of us belongs to a community of faith. It is in this community that our vocation finds its source, its guidance, and its validation. For Christians this community is the church. About its vocation we must ask.

This requires, however, further precision. What is the church? We see churches in great variety. Often they do not recognize each other's ecclesiastical validity. Often they are on opposite sides of the world's conflicts. Yet no Christian is content to use the word as journalists do, simply as a term for the place where Christians meet, parallel to the synagogue or the mosque. It comes close to what Jews mean by the people of Israel, and Muslims when they speak of the *ummah*. The church, as discerned by faith, is the crucified and risen body of our lord Jesus Christ in the world. It is the people of God of whom Christ is the head, the temple of which Christ is the cornerstone. It is the community through which, despite all its divisions and sins, God is at work in the Holy Spirit judging and redeeming the world. The church is that part of the world which lives by, and responds to this work of God. It is about the vocation of this church, at work in all the churches we know, often despite their sinful members, that we must ask.

Let me suggest, without claiming more than suggestion, three forms which this vocation might take.

Metanoia

In the New Testament this word first appears in the mouth of John the Baptist: "*Metanoiete*, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:2). The message echoes the great Hebrew prophets, and it is severe: "You brood of vipers," he said to the leaders of his community, "Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bear fruit that befits repentance. And do not presume to say to yourselves, 'we have Abraham as our father, for I tell you God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham'" (3:7-9)

Nevertheless the people, perhaps because they sensed, as we do today, the urgent wrongness of their condition, "went out to him, Jerusalem and all Judea and all the region about the Jordan, and they were baptized by him in the river Jordan, confessing their sins" (3:5-6). And among those who came, in solidarity with sinful humanity, was Jesus himself.

The Christian church today, amid the conflicts around us, has a great deal of which to repent. One need only mention Northern Ireland, South Africa, Rwanda, the Caucasus, Croatia, Bosnia, or Kosovo, all places where Christians are killing each other or those of other faiths, in the name of a nation, a culture, or a race. And for each of these there is at least one other place where warfare could erupt at any time, with the blessing of a part of the church, blindly identifying church with cultural heritage, with ethnic blood line, or with the national cause of particular peoples is everywhere. Churches are segregated along these lines even while they pro-claim a message of saving hope for the whole world. There is plenty to repent of. The call of the Baptist is as pointedly directed at us, as it was at the leaders of first century Israel.

But *metanoia* is more than this. Literally the word means, to change one's mind. Its antecedent, the Hebrew word *nacham*, implies a change of attitude toward others in a relationship, specifically that of the covenant. God can and does repent of the intention to destroy the people for their sins. His response to Moses' plea on Sinai is only the first example (Ex. 32:14). Time and again in their history the people appeal to God in the name of his mercy, to repent of his wrath and judgment; and God responds with a forgiving judgment toward them, renewing the covenant which they had broken. Psalm 106 offers a classic example:

Many times he delivered them, but they were rebellious in their purposes, and were bought low in their iniquity.

Nevertheless he regarded their distress when he heard their cry. He remembered for their sake his covenant, and repented according to the abundance of his steadfast love (Ps. 106:43-45).

So it is also in the New Testament. When Jesus took up John's words, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17), it was still a warning, but it was also a promise. "There shall be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents," he said to a group of censorious pillars of the community, "than over ninety nine righteous persons who need no repentance" (Luke 15:7). Repentance is new awareness of a relationship in which, by the grace of another, one realizes not only that one must change, but that one can. One's own goodness and rightness cannot save one from the judgment of God. But in Christ God leads the way toward new creation, reconciliation, and peace.

What does this mean in practice? Let me offer two illustrations. The first is from the history of the church itself. The period from 1054 when the Pope in Rome and the Ecumenical Patriarch in Constantinople excommunicated each other down to about 1920, was one of ever increasing divisions. Churches formed the cultures to which they brought the message of Christ; they were also absorbed by those cultures. Ethnic wars were too often also religious wars, in which Christians fought against Christians. On the central European front Orthodox Russians fought Catholic Poles and, yes even then, Catholic Croats had it out with Orthodox Serbs, squeezing between them the heterodox Bosnians who later be-came Muslim. The Protestant Reformers set out to reform the One Holy Catholic Church and then found themselves, after exhausting wars, becoming the national religion of certain states.

Then, in the early twentieth century, something remarkable happened. Spurred by meeting in the mission field of Asia, Africa or the Pacific islands, churches began to seek each other out. Their motivation was clear. Prospective converts asked them, if Christ is one, why are you divided? So they had to ask themselves, of what must we repent in order not to obscure the Christ whom we pro-claim? How can we learn to know and make known the One who judges and redeems us all? In a series of conferences churches began to listen to each other, to compare ecclesiologies and doc-trines, to pray and work together. They formed the World council of Churches and through it continue to reach out to Christian bodies that are not members. The future of this ecumenical movement is in God's hands, not ours. But it is an ongoing process of continual *metanoia*, which changes our theology and our practice, reminds us of our sins as we face those different from ourselves, and holds the promise of new life for all the separate churches to which we belong.

This leads to paradoxes. Serbs and Croats continue, as they have for ages, to kill each other and destroy each other's churches, while the Serbian Orthodox Patriarch and the Roman Catholic

Archbishop of Zagreb meet under the auspices of the Conference of European Churches and the Conference of the Catholic Episcopate in Europe to plead for peace. In Russia, with the help of the National Council of Churches USA, the Conference of European Churches, and the Vatican, the Russian Orthodox Church invites representatives from all the churches in the area of the former Soviet Union, along with Muslim and Jewish observers, to a conference on Christian faith and human enmity. Problems are aired. A common statement is issued, and, more important, a continuation committee is formed of representatives of all the 22 communions present, to work for inter-religious and inter-ethnic peace. It is the first time in history. *Metanoia* is at work. Will it prevail over the forces of division and conflict? Once again, the future is in God's hands. We can only witness.

The second example comes from the German church struggle during the Nazi period. The fact is, as German Christians now confess, that even those who put their lives on the line against Hitler in the Confessing Church, even those who sheltered Jews and smuggled them to freedom, understood very little of Jewish tradition, religion or community life. Before the Nazi challenge they had not known Jews as friends, nor seriously reflected on the meaning of the Jewish people for Christian faith and hope. So the period of resistance to Hitler in the name of Christ was at the same time a period of *metanoia*, a repentant discovery of the life and faith of the Jewish neighbor. This has continued in many German churches and among theologians since. The relationship has deepened, and both the theology and the spirituality of the church are the better for it.

Martyria

These examples lead to my second point. In and through its *metanoia* the church is called in a world of conflict to witness to the God it serves. The New Testament Greek word is *martyria*. The English word martyr comes from it, because so many early Christians were put to death simply for testifying that the risen Jesus Christ, and therefore not Caesar, is Lord. Basically the word means giving evidence in court of the truth concerning what has happened. Let us face it: Christians are not first of all adherents of "a religion". They are people who believe that something decisive has happened in the history of the world with the coming on earth of God incarnate in Jesus Christ. Because of that event, the world is a different place. Its rulers and powers are being called into subjection to the one who was executed at their hands, but who rose from the dead to become their lord. We are different people because our sins, our self-centered wills, our pride of culture, race, or nation, have been exposed, carried into the death they deserve, by the sacrifice of that man on the cross, and defeated in his resurrection. This, we believe, has happened, is happening by the work of the Holy Spirit in the church and in the world, and will happen as Christ comes again. As forgiven sinners, being changed by the Spirit through our continual repentance, we are witnesses to these events. This is the reality in which, and from which, we live. We believe it to be the reality of the world as well.

So we cannot help but bear witness to the God who has thus claimed and liberated us. Our calling is, in the words of the martyr-theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer, to discern and respond to the way Christ takes form in the world today. This has, I think, two consequences for interfaith relationships.

First, we are free to take each other seriously as believers, in the same God perhaps, but in different revelations. To seek some common denominator of doctrine, ethics, or social analysis as the basis of discussion and action, privatizes and makes irrelevant the very core of our believing selves. We are asked to hide from each other what is central to each of us. Rather, let us confess

our faith to one another. Let us expound it, commend it, show the richness of its resources in giving form to human life and peace to a world of conflicts. Let us bear witness to, listen to, and get to know each other as human beings who understand differently the reality of God in the world. Then we can work out how to live together as whole selves who share many things, secular and also religious, while we challenge each other, with mutual respect, about others.

Second, inter-faith relations, like all other human relations, are rooted in prayer; not common prayer, save in very exceptional situations, but intercessory prayer, which each of us offers for the other. Here is where the unpredictable, free action of God takes place. What more can I pray for a Muslim or Jewish friend for whom I care, than that he or she will be more deeply sustained and nourished by the love of God, may know and rejoice in God more fully? How can I refer him or her to any other than the triune God whom I confess? So I find myself praying for my friend's conversion. I am an evangelist in prayer. I do it badly. I am a sinner, also at prayer, whose insensitivity and selfish will distort even my address to God. God, however, answers prayer in his way, not mine. The very act of formulating one's thoughts in God's presence is enough to warn one about being too sure of oneself or of one's witness in human discourse. God is his own witness; he may or may not use me or another agent. So we are free to be honest, open, even persuasive with each other, confident that the result, what-ever it is, will not be our work, but God's. This should humble, and reassure us all.

Justice

My third point concerns our calling to seek justice in human affairs. God is just. Indeed the word so defines God in the Bible that early English translators adopted another word, "righteous", to translate the Hebrew word *tsedeq*, to symbolize its scope and to distinguish it from *iustitia* in the tradition of the Roman law courts. This means that God defines, as God embodies, justice, in covenant with the people; first with believers, then with all humanity. So revelation deepens human knowledge of the just character of God, and therefore of human justice, as the Biblical story unfolds.

The great paradigm was, of course, the Exodus. The people of Israel had no righteousness of their own, other than being oppressed, poor and needy. God sought them out in Egypt, called them, and gave them a new humanity in covenant with him. This was the justice of God. The covenant people were to be its witnesses continually through their history as the Psalms and the prophets record, as they learned more of the undeserved compassion, the mercy, this justice implied.

So also with human justice. It has meant, in the Hebrew Christian tradition, not the balance of human claims or the enforcement of contracts, but outrageous partisanship for the poor and the helpless, enabling them and empowering them as equal members of the covenant community. One of its most moving expressions is in the words of Job, protesting his justice to God and to his "comforters".

When the ear heard, it called me blessed, and when the eye saw, it approved; because I delivered the poor who cried, and the fatherless who had none to help him. The blessing of him who was about to perish came upon me, and I caused the widow's heart to sing for joy. I put on justice and it clothed me; my judgment was like a robe and a turban. I was eyes to the blind and feet to the lame. I was a father to the poor, and I searched out the cause of him whom I did not know. I broke the fangs of the unrighteous and made him drop his prey from his teeth" (Job 29:11-17).

This is the justice of God, qualified by his faithfulness, mercy and love. This is the character of human justice which God calls us to realize in the fallen, sinful conditions of this world.

But there is a further qualification. God's justice reaches out to justify the unrighteous. God creates anew the covenant which a rebellious people has broken. God renews the heart and transforms the society that has broken down. "By his knowledge," writes the prophet of the exile, "the righteous one will make many to be accounted righteous" (Isaiah 53:11). And Israeli will say, in the words of Jeremiah, "the Lord is our righteousness" (Jer. 33:16). Christians believe that this is what has happened in Jesus Christ. Justice is not a human possession. It is God's liberating and forgiving judgment that creates a fresh relation and renews the covenant with us all. To claim to be just, in the sense of needing no repentance or reconciliation, is the greatest sin of all. To share the triune God's transforming and reconciling mission is to live in and respond to the righteousness of God.

This has, I believe, four consequences for action in the struggle for human justice. First, God both inspires and judges our efforts to achieve justice in human society. God's law in the Bible - the *torah*, the injunctions of the prophets, the Sermon on the Mount, the rules of behavior in the letters of Paul, Peter, James and John - is guidance in our search for justice, but none of it is absolute. Revelation is not in laws and propositions which human beings can master and execute, and thus themselves become little gods. It is in the character of the living God whose justice and mercy inspire and correct us every day. Of this justice we are not arbiters, but stewards and witnesses, as we try to order our lives and our society justly.

Therefore no one community, not even a community of one faith, and certainly not a national or ethnic community, be it Jewish, Christian, Muslim can define justice for all humanity. By faith we know that none of us is selfless, sinless, or wise enough to impose God's law on our neighbors without their consent.

Second, and more deeply, justice as God has revealed it in the covenant and in Christ, is not laws, but a relationship which we have with our neighbors near and far, which corresponds to and is continually informed by God's relation to us all. We are called to cultivate these relationships, across all lines of ethnic, class, social, and religious divisions. This means helping to liberate others who are victims, disadvantaged, or whose culture and beliefs are strange to us, so that they too may become full participants in our society. In a heated debate in the German *Bundestag*, the late President of Germany, Gustav Heinemann, once declared: "Jesus Christ did not die *against* Karl Marx. He died *for* all human beings." For those of us who claim to be followers of Christ that forness defines the justice we are called to seek.

Third, the justice of God is distorted and defied in this world by all kinds of powers that organize and manipulate God's creation, including human beings, for their own ends. The Psalms are full of references to these powers. The Pauline letters in the New Testament are explicit about them. They are part of God's creation, but rebel against divine authority. They are superhuman, but rooted in human lust for pleasure, wealth and power. They are enemies of justice, both human and divine. Yet the purpose of God is not that they shall be destroyed, but rather subdued, conquered, made to serve their true created functions in a world where justice reigns and where all things are fulfilled in the divine economy.

These powers were never more real than they are today. Never have so many people been enthralled by them, as agents or as victims. One great ideological power, world Communism, has collapsed, but its place has been taken by a hundred ethnic nationalisms and group struggles, with which churches are also involved. Meanwhile a free enterprise ideology without effective challenge, undergirds the forces of science-based technology, harnessed to the economic power of

globalized corporations. They run by their own laws and power across the world, subject to no responsible public control. Never was the calling to the church so urgent to resist these powers, even when they capture the allegiance of Christian people, and to confront them with God's call to repentance and responsibility. We believe that Christ is lord over them. Our task is to discern how, and to make it known.

Finally, of all these powers only one, the government, is named in the New Testament (Roman 13:1). The world was simpler back then! In any case this power has, in the providence of God, a clear mandate, however it may be misused. This mandate is not to be the instrument of one culture or ethos against others. It is not to establish faith by political coercion. It is not to realize all of God's justice in human community. Rather its mandate is to enforce an external, relative justice, so far as that can be done by coercive power. That was all that Jesus asked of Pilate. It was all that the apostle Paul demanded of the authorities in Philippi (Acts 16:35-40) or in Jerusalem (Acts 26).

Government, in other words, is ordained by God to be secular because it exercises coercive political power. It is called to bring together in a responsible political structure, people of all races, cultures and faiths, who live in the territory under its authority. The justice it enforces must be relative and external, determined by the legal consensus of its citizens with due respect for the conscience and interests of minorities. When government expresses the will and welfare of one ethos against others, it violates its integrity and function. When it enforces one faith against others, it violates the legal consensus that gives it authority and desecrates the faith it enforces. When a church relies on coercive power to bring about conformity to its doctrine or practice, it witnesses no longer to the saving power of God, but to its own status and influence. Christians, Jews, Muslims and Humanists can and should inform the society about the kinds of justice and common good that the government should promote, and where the limits of its enforcing power should lie. They should demand of government freedom to express their witness to the God in whom they believe, in all of the common life. Government exists to ensure the external conditions in which this and all other freedoms that do not deny justice to others can flourish in a responsible community. Christians hope, pray and work to the end that government may become a secular, universal, framework of law, sensitive to the ever-changing demands of justice, within which we all can discover together the will and promise of God for us all.

Chapter XXI
The Vocation of Islam in a Conflictual World
Khalid Durán (The Institute for International Studies)

Shortly after the Kuwait War I was called to speak at an interfaith meeting in Europe. Reading the report about the meeting in a newspaper I was exasperated to see as the heading a statement which I consider to have been the least perceptive statement made at the conference. It read: *Once Again the Religions Have Failed*, meaning that religions have failed to serve the cause of peace.

No religion is immune against misuse. Buddhism has an image as a religion of peace. This has not prevented Burmese Buddhists from fighting Thai Buddhists and vice versa, each one destroying the other's temples. To say that the religions have failed is an erroneous notion based on a peculiar understanding of religion as some kind of a weapon to be used on occasion, a kind of *deus ex machina*.

Over the last 40 years I have been approached by hundreds of people wishing to convert to Islam, in different parts of the world. They did so for the most diverse reasons, reasons that were sometimes mutually exclusive. Some long to unite with other believers, others wish to separate from their social environment. Some believe Islam to be more authoritarian, and like it for this reason, others chose Islam because they believe that it is less authoritarian than their respective Church. And so on and so forth. I started to write a chapter on this topic, and it became a book by itself.

For this reason we need to differentiate between theory and practice -- Islam as a set of doctrines and Islam as a social reality. The theological part is problematic enough, because the normative part is fairly small. Normative Islamic teachings are those on which there is a general consensus -- agreement of the largest number. A normative tenet is that of Al-Qur'an being divine revelation. There can be no two opinions on that. But what does revelation mean to Hasan and Husain, to Hamed and Hameed? And what does it mean to me? The differences in understanding are enormous. Anyhow, we can collect and classify major interpretations, ending up with a compendium larger than the *Encyclopedia Britannica*.

Looking at the social reality we might sooner or later doubt both the usefulness and the legitimacy of the exercise. In Sri Lanka Muslims have been living among a non-Muslim majority harmoniously for centuries. In the Philippines it has been the opposite. Accordingly, these two island communities in South Asia have a very different mentality, and a different perception of relations between Muslims and non-Muslims.

The position of women is very different from country to country, sometimes within one and the same country, as in Morocco because of different mores with different ethnic groups such as Arabs and Berbers, or in Pakistan between the urban and rural populations.

Only after keeping all these differences in mind can we dare venture into a position paper. We will then have to muster the courage to strike a balance between what is purely personal and what is a majority opinion in that section of "Muslimhood" from which we hail or to which we are closest. I believe that ultimately it will be more personal, for we are not living in a void. We have had our religious teachers. In my case they constitute a wide variety of contributors, leading to a confluence of conceptions. I was taught Islam by teachers from Morocco, Syria, Bosnia, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and Sudan. All of them were Sunnis, but ranged from fundamentalists and traditionalists via reformists to Sufis of both the orthodox and

the radical humanist brand. Equally important is the fact that they belonged to different ethnic groups with their distinct cultures, no matter the general framework of Sunni Islam.

Thinking of those teachers makes me realize how little originality I possess. Besides, there have been colleagues and companions-on-the-road. Last but not least there is a constituency -- brethren-in-faith who are in basic agreement, though all the time concerned that we remain on the ground of *their* realities. They go along, but frequently apply the brakes. In other words, what I am saying in the following may sound very different from some other Muslim positions on this subject. My position, however, though for various reasons less frequently articulated, is by no means individualistic or unusual.

Apart from viewing the issue of religion and ethnicity in a theological perspective, I look at it through the glasses of the disciplines I have been trained in: history, sociology and political science. As a society, Islam has at times contributed remarkably to the mitigation of ethnic conflicts, at other times it has failed to do so. I am inspired by the fact that in times of the most blatant transgression, when Muslims flaunted the injunctions of their religion most cynically, there usually have been some believers sacrificing themselves in order to register a protest. It is not the glory of Muslim empires or high civilizations that provide inspiration for an advance toward the *civitas dei* we all wish to see established. The inspiration is provided by those who upheld Islamic morality in times of per-version. It is that legacy of *jihád* against tyranny that I identify with as a Muslim and which I happily bring along to any interfaith potluck.

Example: At the time when Christian Spaniards went to South America as conquistadors, ravaging legendary kingdoms of gold, Muslim Spaniards did the same to comparable kingdoms in Africa. The Moroccan Sultan Almansur sent an army to conquer the fabled kingdom of Timbuktu in what is now Mali -- which means wealth in Arabic. The army that was sent to rob the gold of Timbuktu consisted mainly of Spaniards in the service of the Sultan.

Before the military expedition was sent South, the Sultan had to quell the opposition of the religious scholars. Almansur wanted his rapacity to be legitimized by having the expedition declared as a *jihád*, a war in defense of the faith against infidels seeking to eliminate monotheism. The leading *'ulamá* [Islamic scholars] refused, arguing that most of the people of Timbuktu were Muslims and that no one there had attacked Islam. To fight them and rob them would be an unforgivable sin.

The Sultan had his way by executing several of those recalcitrant scholars. Timbuktu was reduced to a miserable village, like the Inca capital Cuzco in Peru. Masses of Africans were taken North as slaves. This is one of many utterly shameful chapters in our history. Among other negative aspects it belies our claim that we stand for racial equality. At the same time, however, the example of those steadfast men of the faith has added a golden page to Muslim history. They performed what the Prophet called "the noblest form of *jihád*," to wit, "to confront an unjust ruler with a word of truth."

So much for history. We are dealing here with an ongoing process. Southern Sudan has been subjected to the rule of Northern slave traders for several centuries. The antagonism between some of the Muslim Northerners and some of the Christian Southerners is abysmal. Some sections of the Arabized Northerners have an attitude as if they were dealing with animals, as if the Southerners were not human beings. They accuse the non-Muslims in the South of "Negro fanaticism." The revolt of African Muslims against their Arab slave masters on the island of Zanzibar has never been accepted as a liberation struggle. Islamist propaganda projects it as a war against Arabs and Islam, conveniently overlooking that those who rose to free themselves were all Muslims.

Only a few weeks ago a Tuareg rebel in Mali assured journalists that they -- the white men of the Sahara -- would never allow to happen what the whites in South Africa allowed to happen. They, the Tuareg, would never submit to black rule. Both, the Tuareg and the black population of Mali, are overwhelmingly Muslim. In Sudan we witness undescrivable horrors of a war fought by Islamists from the North against the non-Muslims in the South. This war follows the guidelines of "ethnic cleansing" as devised in Croatia in 1941: one third of the enemy population is to be killed, one third be made to flee, and the remaining third be forced to convert.

Worst of all is the fact that Islamists with their branch parties in many countries and their well-greased international propaganda machinery portray this genocidal war as a *jihád* for the defense of Islam against a Christian-Jewish conspiracy.

However, here too we have a shining example of "the noblest *jihád*" striking out against tyranny, regardless of the risk. Ustádh Mahmud Muhammad Taha was not only a saint, he also was the most outstanding Islamic theologian of this century. At the age of 77 he sacrificed himself while opposing this lack of humanity in Sudan, this distortion of Islam. For demanding an immediate end to the war and a peaceful solution to the conflict he was tried for sedition. A day later the accusation was changed: instead of sedition he was accused of heresy, then of apostasy - and publicly hanged on January 18, 1985, the Black Friday of Islam, in Khartoum's Kobar Jail.

Ustádh Mahmúd was given the chance to "recant," and thus he could still be alive. Like his wife and daughters he could be in the United States. His supreme sacrifice brought about the fall of a tyrannical government. A few years later this was followed by an even more tyrannical government and the war got worse.

Nonetheless, the example of the "African Gandhi," as Ustádh Mahmúd was often called, remains a source of inspiration for tens of thousands of Sudanese, both Muslims and Christians. For Muslims he provides an identification, like the *ulamá* of sixteenth century Morocco. It is this kind of *jihád* that helps overcome ethnic conflict. It is a *jihád* akin in spirit to the emancipation struggle of American leaders such as Martin Luther King and Malcolm X.

Seen against this background, it is pointless to debate whether Islam has been more successful or less successful than Christianity in solving the racial question and tackling ethnic conflicts. We could aver both, that Islam has failed and that Islam has succeeded. But that would be turning religion into a tool instead of viewing ourselves as servants of the faith.

Many conquistadors visualized themselves as servants of Christ. We may say that they were perverts. I would not hold that against Christianity; I would not argue that Christianity is a weaker faith than Islam. If I were a Catholic, I would not fault religion with having failed, because I would derive my religious identity from Bartolomeo de las Casas, as an example of the victory of the Christian conscience over distortions of the faith.

This brings us to a crucial point -- the similarity of fate, or the similarity of experience, of our different religious communities. No matter the highest degree of perversion, the light of the just has never been extinguished, neither among Christians nor among Muslims, nor among Jews. From this I derive the firm conviction that the light of the just shineth forth and forth until the perfect day. I am not going to count how many of the just are Jews, or Christians, or Muslims.

I see us on a train together, a train which I boarded at a station in the realm of Islam, with a lot of luggage, containing many things only Muslims carry around. There is a variety of reasons demanding greater togetherness from us, as followers of major religions, and members of Adam's Family, and especially Abraham's Family. I even doubt if it is still correct to speak of a demand for togetherness. If I am not mistaken, such unity of purpose is imposed upon us by a variety of factors. Given the close-ness of our world and the standard of knowledge attained by humanity

only ignorance to an extraordinary degree would not realize that we have a common destiny. To my mind, that is where the major problem lies. Many, if not most, of the setbacks suffered by inter-religious harmony are evidently due to such ignorance. For instance, a chief characteristic of our "Anarcho-Islamists" -- extremists resorting to terrorism -- is precisely their appalling ignorance of Islamic teachings.

Surely, the people who ignite the flames of communal hatred are generally not so ignorant. In Serbia they are mostly university professors. But this little crowd of egotistic self-promoters succeeds only because of a mass of largely illiterate followers whom they can easily instigate.

The explosion of knowledge in our time makes togetherness imperative. One of the features that drives this point home with ever increasing frequency is the progress of historic research. Every year we have to revise some of our history writings because of new findings. Aerial photography has led to the discovery of ancient cities buried under the sands of Arabian deserts. Sooner or later this will provide us with important insights not just into Biblical and Qur'anic history, but into the history of monotheism as such. We now possess the means to scan the entire ocean, even at its greatest depth. No more Bermuda Triangle and no more Nessie. Whatever ships and ancient treasures used to lie hidden at the bottom of the sea, they will be brought to light.

Genetics tell us who is related to whom. Barbers in Morocco and Pashtuns in Afghanistan were said to be descendants of the Lost Tribes of Israel. Today we are in a position to distinguish fact from mythology. We are in for a lot of demystification. Genetics reveal that many a Jew is more Aryan than many a German, and many a German more semitic than many a Jew. This is one of the most challenging sciences. Radovan Karadzic, the leader of the Serb occupants in Bosnia, calls Bosnian President Izetbegovic a Turk. A genetic test might well reveal that Izetbegovic is a pure Slav, and Karadzic 75% Turkish in origin. It may also turn out that both of them are neither this nor that. They may both be of the same Albanian stock. Against mythologists, genetics is a merciless weapon, allowing no KKK member to hide his African, Irish (Catholic) or Jewish share.

Abraham's Family will have to acknowledge its indebtedness to earlier forms of monotheism, especially Zoroastrianism. Thanks to improved scientific tools we know now with certainty that Zoroaster lived in 1700 BC, much earlier than previously thought. In other words, old speculations that Judaism owes much to Zoroastrianism stand confirmed.

A group of Israeli scientists has arrived at the conclusion that the entire Exodus story is a myth. There never was a parting of the sea, and no 40 years of roaming about in the Sinai. Something similar, on a miniature scale, might have taken place elsewhere. In all likelihood some inspired story-teller enlarged the experience of a little tribe. The event that might have taken place across a river and a desert, was placed into the magical land of Egypt, beyond the Red Sea. To magnify the experience even more, the hostile chief of the other tribe or clan was turned into Pharaoh. Maybe the original narration was enlarged upon by successive generations of grand-parents relating it to their kids.

We are sure to know more about the evolution of this theme, as well as about other fables in the Bible and the Qur'an. The crucial point is that all of us -- Jews, Christians, and Muslims -- will have to accept that we are dealing here with symbolisms, not necessarily with historical facts. Where our scriptures narrate accurate history, this may be more accidental. The essential thing is the moral vision that is being conveyed, the message delivered.

Someone may ask why I bring up a topic that has little news value at faculties of Catholic theology or other religion departments. Demythologizing was a hot issue a hundred years ago. I do believe, however, that recent scientific advances have endowed it with a new urgency. Moreover, we Muslims are lagging somewhat behind in coping with this issue.

We used to take delight in anything proving that the Bible was inaccurate somewhere, somehow, as that would reinforce our belief that the original divine revelation on which the Bible is built has been tampered with. Now the issue has acquired much larger dimensions. It is no longer a question whether a certain detail is narrated more correctly in the Bible or the Qur'an. We can see now quite clearly that those stories can be narrated in a dozen different ways, exchanging numerous details, because the issue is not one of actual history. It is a matter of edification and moral lessons. Once this is fully realized by a larger number of believers, we Muslims might feel less of a necessity to display our super-sessionist attitude toward Jews and Christians. Many phrases in Al-Qur'an will appear to us in a new light.

If all goes well we may succeed in distilling those messages together, and then use the concentrate to produce a juice that is equally agreeable to all of us. Probably we will have to produce a variety of drinks because of different tastes. But we shall do so with the awareness that it is all from the same concentrate. As a joint enterprise, the process of production and consumption should keep us together, in a way unseen before.

This will bring us close to the Sufi vision of one essential truth that people express differently, each one according to his capacity and natural disposition. Leonard Swidler, Wilfred Cantwell Smith, Raimundo Panikkar and others call this a Universal Theology of Religion. I hope I do not vulgarize this concept beyond repair, but I broach the issue with a deep felt sense of urgency. I am fully aware how shocking such relativism is to many who seek solace in the mysteries of faith enshrined in their respective tradition. At the same time, however, I believe that we can no longer afford to brush relativism aside as inadmissible. There are two major reasons compelling us to open up to relativism and to find more responsive ways of coping with it.

First, on the level of faith, or intimate religious belief, we may not be truly at peace with ourselves as long as we stick to distinctions known to be construed. I believe that most of us need some congruency between the tenets of our faith and our academic discernment.

Second, religious relativism, as part of cultural relativism, is a potent weapon against ethnic conflict. We are living in the midst of increasing ethnic conflict. Many times such conflicts take place between members of the same faith. Hutus and Tutsis are Catholics and slaughter each other preferably in churches. Muhajirs and Sindhis are Muslims and slaughter each other preferably in mosques. Elsewhere, however, religion is a major factor in ethnic conflict, for instance between Muslims and Christians in Bosnia and Chechnya, in the Philippines and Nigeria. It is the major cause of conflict between Hindus and Muslims in India, between Buddhists and Muslims in Burma.

One way of combating such communal frenzy is to create an awareness of the relativity of our religious practices -- and even beliefs. Can we afford to desist from emphasizing this relativity in order to safeguard our uniqueness?

The improvement of communication leads to an increase of conversions. In my study on the Muslim Diaspora in the West I dedicated a chapter to the analysis of the conversion of Westerners to Islam -- in Western Europe and North America. It then occurred to me to add a few pages on the phenomenon of the conversion of Muslims to other religions. That developed into another chapter. It is a huge and fascinating subject. For one reason or another this is much less talked about than conversions from Christianity to Islam.

The crux of the matter is that we live in a time that is not so much characterized by the advance of one religion against the others. The real chief characteristic is that conversions are taking place with greater frequency than probably at any time before. There is an enormous coming and going between the religions.

Illustration: At my home here in Washington presently a lady from Kenya is staying with us, a devout Catholic. As her name indicates, Salima was born and reared a Muslim, but converted to Catholicism out of conviction. There was no missionary effort involved. Every other day she comes across my sister-in-law, who was raised as a Catholic and had her four children raised as Catholics, but recently converted to Islam. Both ladies are of the same age, come from the same city and social milieu. They have more or less the same ethnic origin, their mothers belonging to the same tribe and they were socialized as Kikuyus.

To my mind this poses numerous challenges to all of us. Will we be able to accept any conversion, no matter from what to what (within the Abrahamic Family at least) as a turning toward God? As such we would have to value it positively, even if it means a numerical "loss" to our ancestral community. Many of the converts I know had little commitment to their religion before. When they converts converted, be it as Muslims to Christianity or as Christians to Islam, they became committed. Often the conversion is a discovery of religion where there was a void before. Sometimes con-versions of Christians to Islam are hardly different from Christian's turning toward religion within his inherited Christian faith, or, for that matter, a Muslim turning from irreligiosity to religiosity -- within his inherited Islamic faith. In truly pluralistic and increasingly multi-cultural societies we are bound to witness a further increase of such voluntary choice of religion and change from one community to another. Despite all the bitterness between Muslims and Jews as a result of the Palestinian conflict, there exist a couple of thousand Jewish converts to Islam, mostly intellectuals who have chosen the path of the Sufis, and say many of their prayers in Arabic.

Does this not demand intense interaction within the Family of Abraham? If we do not come to a new understanding of each religion's uniqueness, this phenomenon of conversion will turn into a disruptive force in society. Simmering ethnic antagonisms, always on a lookout for pretexts, will be stimulated into eruption.

Example: In Egypt a myth prevails that Muslims are Arabs in origin, whereas Copts are Pharaonic. Many regard the antagonism between the two communities as an ethnic conflict. Genetic tests would reveal this to be utter nonsense. Under the present circumstances, however, conversions are seen as a betrayal of one's nationality, as high treason.

As Muslims we ought to be more humble and learn to accept that mere adherence to Islam by birth is no special qualification. In the eighties, while working in Germany, I used to be consulted by the courts in hundreds of cases of Muslims who claimed to have converted to Christianity as a means of obtaining a permanent residency permit. They came from all nationalities in the Muslim world, clearly demonstrating that no religion has a magical hold on its adherents. Religious tenets have to be judged on their own merit.

The belief that it would be beneficial for all people to join one and the same religion is ill-founded. When prohibition was enforced in Pakistan, tens of thousands of Muslims tried to pass off as members of minority communities, that is, they posed as non-Muslims for the sake of a drink. The same happened when *zakāt* was introduced as a kind of church tax. Similar examples can be adduced from many parts of the world.

Does this not teach us that the values that we uphold as truly Islamic are sometimes more manifest among non-Muslims than among Muslims? Sometimes it is the other way round. I know a number of clergymen in Europe who harp on the theme of "the Turk as the better believer," causing their parishioners remorse by admonishing them to carefully observe the Muslim minority as the surest way of learning what religion is all about. Those men of the church avail themselves

of the presence of Muslim neighbors the way I call AAA to jump start my car. But elsewhere it is the Christian or the Jewish neighbor whose faith is intact.

I do not wish to frighten believers away from inter-religious dialogue by pleading for an amalgam of monotheistic faiths or by proposing a synthesis. Historical experience shows that this is not a very promising enterprise anyhow. Islam started with the primordial impetus of providing a common platform for all monotheists. In India the Sikh religion grew out of an attempt at synthesizing Islam and Hinduism. Baha'ism, to my mind, picked up the original aspiration of Islam. In each of these cases the proposed new platform turned into yet another religious community, increasing the number of competing doctrinal systems rather than reducing it.

The requirement seems to be oneness without effacing individuality. Is this a contradiction in terms? To prove that it is not we need to pray together. For the last forty years I have been praying together with believers of many religions. Back in 1958 a Jesuit friend of mine joined us in prayer in a Pakistani village mosque, kneeling in his Catholic style, but in one row with us Muslims -- every day. People loved it. On one occasion I had forty Jews reciting Al-Qur'an with me, aloud. True, for a moment I felt like Ali Baba. But in retrospect that was one of the great days in my life -- like a vision of the future.

For this reason I feel bewildered on hearing, occasionally here in the United States, that we, Jews, Christians, and Muslims, do everything together, except pray jointly. Without joint prayer I see little hope for overcoming religious strife, and especially ethno-religious conflict. If we pray together more frequently, or even regularly, this need not prevent us from praying also separately, community-wise, following the rituals of our respective tradition. I feel greatly encouraged by a number of Jewish efforts to devise ecumenical prayers. My own spiritual home in Spain is a group called CRISLAM. We have published several such prayer books, following the motto of the 13th century mystic Muhyuddin Ibn 'Arabi of Murcia:

There was a time when I used to discriminate against my neighbor because of his ethnicity or religion. That time is long gone. My heart has become a meadow for the grazing deer, a monastery for the monk, Torah scrolls for the rabbi, a Kaaba for the pilgrim. I profess the religion of love, and wherever its caravan will turn to, I shall follow.

Epilogue

Abrahamic Faith and Ethnicity: In Lieu of a Conclusion

Paul Peachey (Rolling Ridge Study Retreat Community)

Indeed, I would suggest that Diaspora, and not monotheism, may be the important contribution that Judaism has to make to the world, although I would not deny the positive role that monotheism has played in making Diaspora possible.

-Daniel Boyarin¹

This symposium addressed an enigma that has plagued the three Abrahamic faiths, namely their occasional complicity in the very human violence that they are called to obviate or surmount. But, while all three Abrahamic faiths have experienced difficulty in realizing the universality that is implicit in their particular claim or vocation, and the problem thus appears as common to them, at this stage it appeared important to address it in the particularity of each tradition. Greater respective clarity in this regard can strengthen those conversations that do explore common ground or seek to re-duce disrupting differences among the three faith communities.

What has this enterprise yielded? Even a mere glance at the foregoing papers reveals a rich exuberance of perspectives emerging from the lived experiences and histories of the Abrahamic faith communities. Already the occasional nature of this gathering (not to say "*irregular*" - - *without established base or resources*) reflects the vitality and creative energy persisting in the Abrahamic legacy. Time and space permitting, an inventorying and assessment of perspectives and paradigms appearing in these papers would have been undertaken. Writers, while speaking responsibly out of their respective traditions, spoke only for themselves. Numerous hints appear, of promising new horizons, but occasionally but ancient seductions as well.

The genesis of this symposium was the dialectic in the Christian odyssey between the "establishment" and the "free church" paradigms, as experienced by the editors, and resulting in the decision to compare notes, as it were, with Jewish and Muslim colleagues. How would an event take shape if fashioned by a representative from each faith similarly linked by long-time shared journeys? That, too, will come.

Meanwhile, consistent with my opening essay (*Introduction*), I conclude with reflections on the proceedings in a continuing vein. My esteemed co-editing colleagues, to whom I am profoundly indebted in many ways, offered their substantial essays elsewhere in the volume. The above-noted dialectic is readily evident in these several papers. Given the LORD's "unsearchable greatness (Psalm 143:3)," it would be presumptuous indeed to pretend that we have reached the conclusion of the matter here addressed.

Focusing on the initial call of Abraham (Genesis 12) offered a common framework for this conversation. First, it underscored a common primordality, direct in the first instance (Judaism), indirect in the second (Christianity) and third (Islam). Second, while the originating *theophanies* of each of these faiths have been mediated through many centuries of cumulative experience and commentary, these accumulations remain secondary. Like the genetic legacy of the biological organism, the originating theophanies are the germ plasm from which the life of faith unfolds. Hence the foundational importance of the canonical accounts and of the focus of the present dialogue. The Divine summons to Abram to leave country, kindred and father's house for a new but unknown destiny is a metaphor of unsurpassed profundity, an informing theme that runs throughout the entire saga.

Each of the three Abrahamic stories presumes finality for it-self, and hence entails a propensity for exclusivity. Actually, canonically, there are intimations to the contrary, namely that God spoke/is speaking in other venues, though these intimations often are "conveniently" ignored. In any event, as history has wended its way, the exclusivity claims have been increasingly difficult to maintain. With the increasing globalization of human experience, the reality is ever more forced upon us: the authenticity of the Abrahamic vocation does not mean God's withdrawal from other streams of human history. "How unsearchable are his judgements and His ways past finding out." The uniqueness and finality of the Abrahamic call does not mean triumphalist exclusivity.

God's Search for the Human

That said, the claim of the Abrahamic paradigm nonetheless stands or falls with its presumed uniqueness. A few writers describe the Abrahamic saga as God's search for the human in contrast to the religiosity that represents the human search for God. That distinction, though valid at a certain level, must be carefully qualified. As just noted, the claim that God called Abraham entails no reference to other possible theophanies.

Moreover, all religious activity entails the human search for the Divine. And all religious formulations, Abrahamic or other, are humanly constructed. Meanwhile the tools whereby we analyze human activity otherwise permit or enable no direct assessment of the transcendently ineffable. Jesus says to Thomas, known as the doubter, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). "And he (Abraham) believed the LORD; and he reckoned it to him as righteousness" (Gen. 15:6).

Nonetheless, the Abrahamic saga rests on the claim that God thereby spoke and speaks uniquely and definitively, a claim that to those beyond its pale must appear as scandalous. The waters are further muddied, as it were, by the fact that after many centuries a second version of the Abrahamic project arose, and still later a third. Further complexities appear in the competing tendencies, schools and denominations that appear internally within each of the three traditions.

Additional difficulties arise in the wake of exclusivist propensity, that were this possible, may appear even more aporetic. Such is the seeming dichotomy within the Divine itself, namely between God's manifestation in Creation and His overture in the mandate invested in Abraham. Whereas the former is universal in its effective scope, the latter, despite its universal intention, is limited at the outset to one man and those who follow in his train. Moreover the former, Creation, is in no way rescinded by the latter, the Abrahamic Call.

The differentiation between the two modes of Divine action and communication is dramatized in the distinction made in the Jewish tradition, cited by Schwarz above, between the seven commandments in the covenant with Noah, binding on all humanity including Jews, and the 613 commandments binding on Jews alone.

The distinction between Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic dispensations, though troublesome in some respects, is analytically simple. After the catastrophe in Eden (Kogan's "something has gone wrong") God intervenes in a limited corrective manner. But the mingling of the two dispensations, Creation and Correction, in the internal life of the Abrahamic communities, is rather more complex, particularly insofar as it intersects in confusing ways with the prior distinction between the Abrahamic and non-Abrahamic peoples.

A simple familiar diagram may be of assistance. Two separate circles may represent the two modes of Divine action: *Creation* and *Correction*, below "*Salvific Intervention*". The unconnected circles signify the uniqueness of each of the two Divine initiatives. Occasional spiritualizing

movements such as forms of gnosticism have interpreted that uniqueness as total discontinuity. At the opposite end of the continuum one may place those instances where community of faith ostensibly coincides with the natural community as in ancient Israel and in medieval Christendom. Yet only in the *Eschaton* or epiphany is such harmony fully realized. Midpoint between the two poles one may locate the great variety of mixed or pluralist modes variously described as *Diaspora*.

It seems fair to say that all three of the Abrahamic traditions have been powerfully drawn to the "folk" paradigm, a fulfillment wherein the natural and the faith community coincide. At the same time, the respective dynamics of creation (or nature), though over-lapping, nonetheless, as it were, keep each other at bay. Neither is fully reducible into the other. Only individuals repent and believe; natural groups do not and cannot. It may well be, however, that most practitioners of Abrahamic faith live contentedly in the shaded area of the *Diaspora* mode sketched above, scarcely aware of the distinctive modes of Divine utterance.

In any event, the Abrahamic histories manifest a tension between the folk and dispersion modes, and that tension runs through the proceedings of this symposium. All three of the Abrahamic faiths developed as civilizing energies and accordingly enveloped whole societies, such as the Hebrew monarchies and medieval Christendom. Yet historically the center of gravity has shifted increasingly toward *Diaspora*, in no small measure, it must be added, due to the growing inwardness and personalizing that the Abrahamic legacy nurtured. While the Apocalypse, the Restoration of all things, is awaited and intended, short of that the fusion of the two Covenants is not afforded.

Confusing the Covenants

Human existence over time, as we know, has grown increasingly complex, a transformation that has quickened in recent centuries. The Abrahamic project has been deeply implicated in that transformation, both by directly stimulating that development, and as we have just seen, by introducing additional "variables." Indeed, members of these faith communities must carry a double regimen -- life in the world and life in the Kingdom (or whatever).

Tension -- and confusion -- result as we try to cope. On the one hand, we endow our natural life in the world with Divine (Abrahamic) sanction. We claim America for Christ. We fight wars for "God and country." And why not? Surely we don't want a godless society, a godless public arena, a "naked public square." After all, by you, Abraham, all the nations will "bless themselves."

Meanwhile, on the other hand, we may busy ourselves with our religious empires. Within the covenant of Creation, humans are in some measure self-creating. We are mandated and destined to construct the stuff, the social and cultural reality, by which our own creation as humans is consummated. Rather gleefully, in the same manner, we build alternative "religious" institutions, blithely ignoring the "metaphysical" nature of faith and the faith community. Long before we are aware of the resulting debasement, faith has sedimented into ethnicity -- and *Bosnia, or Northern Ireland*, or . . . follows.

Baptizing natural (ethnic) groups or ethnicizing our faith -- these are ways whereby we consciously or unconsciously seek to reduce the tension inherent in the Abrahamic vocation. The late Yale church historian, Roland Bainton, identified two modes of Christian promulgation. In the European case, Christianity entered by way of "mass conversion;" that is, princes adopted the faith as part of the political package. Subjects became "Christian" without choice or decision. The result,

said Bainton, was the "paganization of the faith" (*Christendom*. New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1964 Vol. I:147).

The alternative? Again, Bainton -- individual conversion, following a period of interning. The result, the cultural "deracination" of the convert, pulled away from family, kin and *ethnos*, in a word, from the sustaining culture. If, as noted above, Abrahamic faith, variously in its three forms, was one of the "variables" in the gradual individualization of the Western ethos, does this suggest that the atomization that we now deplore in the USA stems in some measure from this source as well?

The Protestant Reformation of the sixteenth century has been widely interpreted as ending the synthesis that was medieval Christendom. It was only gradually and later that the individualism implicit in Luther's proclamation permeated the culture, coupled with the concept of the "citizen isolate" of Anglo-Saxon democracy, to an important degree along with the "free church" tradition.

Where Does This Leave Us?

The accent placed here on the distinction between God's Creative and Salvific action is not put forward as a new idea. To the contrary, the relationship between the "general" revelation of God in nature and the "special" revelation, whether initiated in the call to Abram or elsewhere, has invoked endless reflection and discourse. Though this was not the place to summarize or assess that dis-course, much can be learned from it. The fact remains, however, that in the real world of lived Abrahamic faith and the surrounding non-Abrahamic world, the delineation of the difference and relation of the two Covenants remains badly muddled.

These issues bear directly on the enigma here at hand: ethnicity is a "natural" phenomenon. It is rooted in creation, hence both predating the Call to Abram and continuing independently beyond that call. According to Jewish interpretation, the general revelation is embodied in Noahide covenant as the law to which non-Jewish peoples are held.

The resulting and corresponding tensions between "folk" or "mass church" and the individual conversion-based "free church" runs *mutatis mutandis* (necessary translation into Judaic and Islamic idioms having been made) through the essays here collected. It appears most strikingly, in the Christian instance, in the contrast between Alex F. C. Webster's essay in Part I and Miroslav Volf's in Part IV, "folk" or "mass" church, in the former instance, "free church," in the latter. Vigen Guroian, writing in Part V within one of the former traditions, illustrates the problem of introducing the latter idiom into the context of the former.

As implied above, it is my impression that the same tension appears in the other two traditions, but I will leave specification to others. The tension thus identified suggests that in applying Abrahamic labels to natural (Creation-grounded) communities, whether ethnic or national, we over-extend its scope, and that in cultural sedimentation of the Abrahamic faith in historical institution we superficialize. The implication is thus that *the scope of any Abrahamic claim must be narrowed while its thrust must be deepened*.

There is, however, no blue-printable or programmatic alter-native to this tension, and in that sense, no "conclusion" to this volume. This tension is rather a process through which we who are summoned in the Abrahamic vocation, must always live, now this way, now that, depending on circumstances. "Realists," or rather the "realist" impulse in all of us, bridles at this conclusion. *Give us a better plan or be quiet!* Abram was told to go without knowing where. Had he been *arealist* he would have staid back to inherit his father's house. Without mixing or confusing categories we must become more "worldly," more affirmatively planted in the covenant of Creation, but

simultaneously more radically grounded in the Abrahamic deliverance, always recognizing and respecting which is which.

Note

1. *A Radical Jew: Paul and the Politics of Identity* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), pp. 258-59.

Acknowledgement

A three-day symposium with Christian, Islamic and Jewish scholars was held at the Catholic University of America in June, 1995, on the theme, Scriptural Faiths, Ethnicity and Ethnic Conflict. Twenty-one assigned papers were presented and discussed. The theme was the apparent paradox that the three scripture-based faiths descended from Abraham -- Christianity, Islam and Judaism -- though proclaiming visions of universal shalom, themselves continue at times to become parties to ethnic conflict and violence. Why is this? What can we learn from past failures in this regard, and how can the healing potential of our several traditions be realized in the transformation of conflict?

Participants included theologians and philosophers as well as social and political scientists. Theologians were asked to respond in terms of their respective scriptures, the Hebrew Bible, the New Testament, and the Qur'an. While topics were assigned under the headings listed in the Contents below, inevitable contingencies resulted in variations in outcomes. In the editorial process, several transpositions were made.

The ensuing discussions were lively and insightful. While not reproduced in this volume, in part they are reflected in subsequent revisions by authors and editors, and in part in a summary chapter at the end. The symposium was designed in the first instance as three parallel conversations, with Christians, Jews and Muslims, each engaged with their own texts and history. This afforded a range of conversational freedom more difficult to attain where differences are addressed directly. We, the conveners, feel profoundly indebted -- to the sponsoring agencies and academic departments listed below; to the many persons whom we consulted in organizing this event, particularly those from the three traditions who assisted in the planning sessions; and above all to the writers who generously donated their energy, time, and proficiency to the venture.

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