

The cover features a decorative border composed of repeating arrow patterns. The top border consists of right-pointing arrows, the bottom border of left-pointing arrows, the left border of upward-pointing arrows, and the right border of downward-pointing arrows. The corners are marked with diamond shapes.

THE WHITLEY LECTURE
2000-2001

**VIOLENCE, THE BIBLE
AND THE END
OF THE WORLD**

Steve Finamore

Whitley Publications

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The Whitley Lecture

The Whitley Lectureship was first established in 1949, in honour of W.T. Whitley (1861-1947), arguably the first systematic modern Baptist historian. Whitley was a notable scholar and servant of the Church of Christ. He had pastorates in England and Australia. He served the denomination in both countries in many ways, including pursuing historical studies.

Whitley was a key figure in the formation of the Baptist Historical Society (1908). He edited its journal which soon gained an international reputation for the quality of its contents. Altogether he made a particularly remarkable contribution to Baptist life and self-understanding, providing an inspiring model of how a pastor-scholar might enrich the life and faith of others.

The establishment of the Lectureship in his name was intended to be an encouragement to research by Baptist scholars into aspects of Christian life and thought and to enable the results of such research to be published and available to the denomination and beyond.

The Whitley Lectureship's Management Committee is composed of representatives of the Baptist Colleges, the Baptist Union of Great Britain, the Baptist Missionary Society, the Baptist Ministers Fellowship and the Baptist Historical Society.

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In 1996 the Management Committee of the Whitley Lectureship began a new initiative in keeping with the original purpose. It was agreed to appoint each year a Lecturer to write and deliver a lecture as a contribution to scholarly Baptist thought. Each lecture will be published.

The Management Committee is delighted that the Revd Stephen Finamore is the fifth lecturer in the new series. Steve is minister of Westbury-on-Trym Baptist Church in North-West Bristol. He has been

a lawyer, done community work in inner London (1982-86), and spent three years in Peru with the Christian relief and development agency Tearfund (1986-89), of which he is now a trustee and chair of the Latin America and Caribbean Committee. He has also worked part-time for the Mission Department of the Baptist Union in Didcot (1993-96).

His doctoral work is on chaos imagery in the Book of Revelation (1997). Stephen became interested in issues of violence and social order while living in the Andes at the time that the guerillas of the Shining Path were active. All these and other strands of his experience come together in this lecture which we are confident will capture the interest of a wide range of readers.

RICHARD KIDD

on behalf of the Management Committee

THE WHITLEY LECTURE
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VIOLENCE, THE BIBLE
AND THE END OF THE WORLD

INTRODUCTION

I am very grateful indeed to the Management Committee of the Whitley Lectures for their kind invitation to me to deliver this lecture for the year 2000-2001. The committee has requested that I specifically address the issue of violence. I intend to approach this subject with the needs of the churches of our denomination in mind, though anybody hoping for a 'how to do it' guide will, I am afraid, be disappointed. In addition, I hope to examine some ways in which we might understand the violence of our own world, the violence we find in the Scriptures, and the ways in which these might relate to the Bible's vision of a final apocalypse.

THE END OF ALL THINGS

It is sometimes argued that the Judaeo-Christian understanding of history is very different from that of most primitive and other traditional religions. In particular, other faiths tend to see time as cyclical, whereas the Bible understands history to be linear and to be moving towards a goal, an eschaton.¹ We shall return to this issue. For now, I simply want to note that whatever the truth of this argument, it is certainly the case that Christian interest in the end of the world is cyclical; it goes in and out of style. The turn of the millennium finds it quite definitely in fashion and with its theologically correct counterparts, apocalypticism and eschatology, firmly established on the agendas of our churches and seminaries, as well as holding down a place on the curricula of university theology departments.

Christian bookshops are bursting with both popular and

academic, both sensible and sensational, studies and interpretations of the Book of Revelation and other apocalyptic writings, of biblical prophecy, and of the end of the world. And this interest is not confined to Christians. Booksellers find interest in discussions of the nuances of the oracles of Nostradamus and others, as people seek not only to describe the end of all things, but also to put a date on it. Episodes of the *X files* are full of allusions to the Book of Revelation. The world is waiting for something, if not apocalypse now then at least apocalypse any day now. And this interest is not restricted to the West. In March 2000 and in the months afterwards we heard the appalling news of mass murders of members of a Ugandan cult whose leaders had wrongly predicted the end of the world.

On the other hand, there remains a great deal of interest in cyclical views of history. In part this is due to an increasing awareness of non-western religious thought, but it may also owe something to the influence of Nietzsche. The idea of the eternal return lies at the heart, though admittedly an obscure heart, of his thinking.²

These issues are important. The nature of time and our perception of it are related to our understanding of our own history. After all, we describe the past by using a narrative.³ This is the way we choose to make sense of living in time, the way we tell ourselves who we are, and therefore one of the ways in which we establish and maintain our social and cultural identity. Furthermore, the nature of the stories which we tell about ourselves, whether these are the overarching metanarratives allegedly favoured by those influenced by the enlightenment, or the small, local stories said to be among the defining marks of postmodernity, is bound to affect our self-perception. Crucial to this is the issue of teleology. Do our stories, and by extension do we ourselves, have an end or a purpose or not?

HUMAN VIOLENCE

Human violence is our primary theme and perhaps the most important issue facing humanity in the twenty-first century. However, it is only infrequently on our church and theological agendas in its own right. Therefore, the recent initiative of the World Council of Churches in proclaiming for the years 2001-2010 *The decade to overcome violence: churches seeking reconciliation and peace* is both timely and welcome. Given that the last century was perhaps the most violent in our history, it is a particularly relevant subject for the opening years of a new millennium. Perhaps this lecture will help us to start thinking about the contributions that we might make to this project. In addition, we should also acknowledge recent Baptist and ecumenical initiatives on the issues surrounding domestic violence and abuse. It is profoundly to be hoped that these will help to expose the undoubted existence of these evils within and beyond our churches, and to make a contribution to their eradication.

However, our theological reflection on the issue of violence is often inadequate. Sometimes we restrict our discussion to the extent of legitimate violence. For example, we discuss the rights and wrongs of capital punishment and the circumstances, if there are any, in which a war may be declared just. On other occasions we talk too easily of violence as something to be overcome, without offering any adequate anthropology which might account for the pervasiveness of violence in human culture. We cannot explain the root causes of human violence, nor do we have any adequate grasp of the extent to which violence permeates our thinking, our languages, our cultures and even our Bible.

Humanity is in denial about its own violence. Sometimes, certain individuals and groups refuse to accept the evidence when it is presented. So, David Irving is in denial about the extent and nature of the holocaust, and the editors of the magazine *LM* are in denial about the existence of concentration camps in Bosnia and the Rwandan genocide. Even when we do accept the truth of these things, we distance ourselves from them by calling them 'inhuman' and by

referring to the perpetrators of such evils as ‘beasts’ or ‘animals’. This kind of language simply serves to enable us to excuse ourselves as humans from any responsibility for these acts of barbarism. Hear instead the words of Dostoevsky,

People talk sometimes of bestial cruelty, but that’s a great injustice and insult to the beasts; a beast can never be so cruel as a man, so artistically cruel. The tiger only tears and gnaws, that’s all he can do. He would never think of nailing people by the ears, even if he were able to do it.⁴

Schopenhauer makes a similar point when he says,

Man is the only animal which causes pain to others with no other object than causing pain. The other animals do it in the cause of appeasing their hunger or in the rage of battle. No animal ever torments another for the sake of tormenting: but man does so, and it is this which constitutes his *diabolical* nature which is far worse than the merely bestial.⁵

Perhaps this capacity for violence, and even for cruelty, is inherent in the human condition. It is by no means clear that it is something we are able to wish away leaving intact our ways of doing things. It is simply too easy to regard violence as an aberration when the truth might well be that its absence would be one. We must face up to the possibility that violence is so integral to human culture that it cannot be excised without destroying the patient. Perhaps to do away with violence is to do away with the world as we know it, and that is a far more ambitious project than we sometimes pretend.

VIOLENCE IN THE BIBLE

We should scarcely need to be reminded of the fact that the Bible, the well-spring of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, the story of the people of God which has become our founding story, the book in which so many of us find a vision of God's perfect peace and justice, is in fact shot full with violence from beginning to end. Violence is one of the Bible's great themes. While the redactor of Genesis 1 may have removed from the story of the six days of creation any trace of the violence there is purported to have been in whatever myth some twentieth-century authors imagine it was based on,⁶ we are not left waiting long for our first encounter with the use of force. God drives the man (and presumably the woman too) that he has made out of the garden and stations his cherubim and a twisting, flaming sword on the east side, to prevent him from returning to the tree of life.⁷ Already, violence is a part of human experience.

I will refrain from reciting every detail, but let me briefly remind you of some of the Bible's more violent stories. Many of them are not found in the lectionaries for Sunday reading, nor do many of those of us who work without reference to such tools often find ourselves led to preach from them. Yet we claim to believe they are part of the counsel of God. Without attempting to be exhaustive, there is the murder of Abel,⁸ the boastful vengeance of Lamach,⁹ the reason for the flood,¹⁰ the revenge taken by the sons of Jacob after the rape of their sister Dinah,¹¹ the action taken in response to Israel's apostasy with the golden calf,¹² the ritual sacrifices,¹³ the divinely sanctioned death penalty,¹⁴ the ritual for women accused of being unfaithful to their husbands,¹⁵ the action taken against the Midianites,¹⁶ the rules of warfare,¹⁷ the conquest of Canaan,¹⁸ Jael's unorthodox use of a tent peg,¹⁹ the sacrifice of the virgin daughter of Jephthah,²⁰ the gang rape, urder and dismemberment of the concubine of the Levite of Ephraim,²¹ the way the Benjaminites are saved by the destruction of Jabesh-gilead and the abduction of the young women of Shiloh,²² the impaling of the sons of Saul before the Lord at Gibeon,²³ the massacre of the prophets of Baal,²⁴ the destruction of the armies of Assyria camped outside the

walls of Jerusalem,²⁵ the killing of those who had intended to harm the Jews of the Persian empire,²⁶ the vengeance sought by the Psalmist against the children of the Babylonian enemy,²⁷ Nahum's oracles against Nineveh, the crucifixion scenes in each of the four Gospels, and the prophecies of the Book of Revelation. Sometimes the violence is human, sometimes it is human with a divine sanction, sometimes it is divine, and sometimes it is legitimated by an appeal to the divine. Sometimes the language of violence is intended to be understood literally and at other times it may be used symbolically or metaphorically in order to convey theological ideas.

Of course, to note the extent of the Bible's violence is no new thing. Even the great Nigel Molesworth, 'the curse of st custard's', knows the pleasures of religious education. He writes,

Div is super becous everyone do v. bludthirsty things which are pleasing to all boys. For instance Cain did his bro Abel which is enuff to give me an idea occasionally about molesworth 2. Abraham tried to do his small son isaac on the bonfire. He would hav done him proper if he hadn't lost his nerve i call it disgraceful with a little kiddy like that who didn't kno wot his pa was up to. David sa yar boo sucks to goliath and buzz a brick at him. goliath fall stunned and wot david did then no giant could forgive him i.e. he did him. Some old girl whose name i canot remember also did a chap with a tent peg a very nasty business when he was asleep. Then there was another nasty business about Saul puting a chap in the front line in fact as mum would sa the whole thing is rather like the news of the world. Actually i quite enjoy these tuough things but the philistines who are absolutely super chaps always get beaten in the end chiz. Anyway samson pull the whole place down on top of everbode just when the story is getting xciting so boo to the infant samuel.²⁸

OBSERVATIONS ON VIOLENCE IN WESTERN STORIES

Of course, ancient tales of violence are not found in the Bible alone. Even allowing that the description of *The Iliad* as 'the first and the greatest literary achievement of Greek civilization - an epic poem without rival in the literature of the world, and the cornerstone of Western culture',²⁹ may contain a degree of hyperbole, the fact that a reputable publisher can claim it indicates the esteem in which the work is held. It tells the story of part of the war between the Greeks and Trojans and much of it is taken up with descriptions of major battles. It spares little detail in telling the various ways in which the warriors of either side meet their deaths. The immortal Olympian gods collude with and occasionally take part in the violence.

In fact we find violence at the heart of founding stories and mythologies throughout the Western tradition. In *The golden bough*, Frazer acknowledges that his anthropological researches were motivated by his desire to account for the role played by violence in the rules which governed the succession to the priesthood of Diana at Aricia.³⁰ A candidate for the position, which bore the title 'king', succeeded to office only by killing his predecessor. Uneasy lies the head that wears a crown. Frazer finds evidence of violent stories throughout the West and indeed throughout the world. Killing and cruelty hold a fascination for storytellers everywhere. And this is not true in the ancient world alone.

Film, the great genre of last century, has returned again and again for its leading themes to war, to violent sports, to gangsters, to terrorism, to mayhem generated by supernatural powers, and to detectives investigating the violent crimes committed by psycho-and/or sociopaths. We debate the influence such films might have on children but rarely the effects they have on adults' perception of the world. Rarely do we ask why violence should be such a pervasive theme in both ancient and contemporary storytelling.

Furthermore, we do not often ask direct questions about the nature of cruelty. Few attempts are made to address its evolutionary function, for example. Perhaps a case could be made for the killing of

the weak by the strong in terms of the survival of the fittest. But what justification can there be for the taking of pleasure in their suffering? There is a qualitative difference between human and animal violence which has to do with the human pleasure in the aesthetic. Cruelty is a cultural phenomenon and is therefore the preserve of the human. We know that adult animals in the wild very rarely kill adults of their own species. They fight until one submits. They compete over sexual partners, food, territory and places in the social hierarchy of their group, but they do not murder. That is a human preserve. It is what separates us from the animals.

We have to consider the possibility that violence may be an important part of what it means to be human. Even if some humans, churches and small communities are able to renounce it, they do so in the context of being part of wider cultures that, at a minimum, make some use of force, and at the other end of the scale actually demand, glorify and celebrate violence. This celebration can take many forms: from the human sacrifices of the Aztecs to the displays of military hardware which dominated the Red Square May Day celebrations in the former Soviet Union; from the telling of the exploits of brave Achilles to the *tow row row row row row to the British grenadier*.

In addition, there is a great deal of violence associated with sport. This is most obviously the case in boxing and in the thoroughly ritualized violence of professional wrestling. But it is true of other sports too. Football in all its forms functions like a mock battle. There is talk of attack and defence. When the national team plays all sorts of military metaphors are used to describe its performance. There are references to the blitz, to the trenches and to 'going over the top'. Of course, any violence outside the rules of the game is ceremonially condemned by all involved. We are told that violence on the field between players and off the field among spectators has nothing to do with what football is about. Perhaps such claims are disingenuous. Perhaps sport provides a channel for the human aggressive instinct. If that is the case, we should hardly be surprised if this particular river occasionally bursts its banks.³¹

RECENT CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS ON VIOLENCE

During the 1990s two major and very influential theological works were published which in rather different ways addressed the issue of violence. The first of them is *Engaging the powers* by Walter Wink.³² Wink argues that violence is at the heart of much of contemporary Western culture. He draws our attention to what he calls the 'myth of redemptive violence'.³³ He traces it to the creation myths of ancient Babylon in which the world is made by means of the violent victory of order, symbolized by the god Marduk, over the forces of chaos, represented by his opponent Tiamat. He makes the cosmos from her corpse. The created order is derived from an act of violence and the human cultural order is necessarily derived from, dependent on, and imitative of this divine order. It is therefore wholly compromised by violence. Chaos and evil are regarded as primordial, they have a chronological priority over good and are integral to reality. Only the use of violence by the good can hold them at bay and sustain order. This order must be continually imposed by the hierarchy endorsed by Marduk and the enemies of this sanctified order must be annihilated. Imperial expansion is the necessary corollary of the worldview implicit in this founding myth, for this takes the order and realm of Marduk wider still and wider, until it embraces all. Where two social groups, holding alternate versions of this myth, encounter one another, warfare is inevitable. The world is a theatre of conflict in which the prizes go to the strong.

Wink argues that this myth largely controls the Western perception of reality. It achieves this because it structures so many elements of popular culture; novels, films, television programmes, cartoons and the rhetoric used to justify government policies are all dependent on the myth. The names may change and there are countless other variations, but the basic pattern remains the same. We always find the existing order threatened by a representative of evil wielding bad violence. This might be a disillusioned former police officer, a terrorist with an English accent, a serial killer, or the head of state of an island republic. The audience is helped to identify with a hero

wielding good violence. He may be a womanizing British secret agent with unorthodox methods, a semi-alcoholic, maverick New York policeman who has trouble maintaining a relationship, a regular family man who finds within himself resources he had never guessed at, or a general within the command structure of NATO. Only when the hero has annihilated the enemy can the audience experience the renewed sense of peace which comes with the assured restoration of order. In other words, Wink is claiming that our society is permeated by the myth, indeed founded on the premise, that violence is necessary to maintain order and to construct a just world.

According to Wink, the myth needs to be discerned and the actions based on it resisted. He offers examples of non-violent responses and shows how the powers that wield violence might be engaged. However, his examples are inevitably drawn from sub-cultures within societies in which violence plays an active role. Indeed, his book is really aimed at the promotion of such sub-cultures; churches which resist the powers. What Wink cannot show us is whether a non-violent culture as such is possible or even what it might look like.

Wink insists that the evidence from some past human cultures demonstrates that humans are capable of living without violence.³⁴ However, indications that war was absent, while praiseworthy, do not show that the societies concerned were wholly violence free. His claim that there was a 'time before the domination system', looks suspiciously like wishful thinking, a yearning for a golden age. Such evidence as we have suggests that sacrificial rituals, mock battles, systems of enforced prohibitions and similar related phenomena are part of all human social life.

The second book is *Theology and social theory* by John Milbank.³⁵ He pursues a similar argument to Wink but at a very different level. He does not attack the myths of the ancient near east, nor the representations of reality found in contemporary popular culture. Instead he attacks the academic and professional understandings of society prevalent in Western academia. His contention is that secular reason, as expressed in the work of today's

social theorists, is complicit with what he calls an ontology of violence. Social theory assumes the priority of force and so requires the belief that society exists to ensure that this force is managed and confined. The social sciences presume that conflict, either finding expression in violence or having the potential to do so, is an inevitable fact of human social life.

As a result of this presupposition it follows that every text is written in the context of conflict. It is therefore, implicitly or explicitly, taking a position on the issue of power relationships. It follows that all texts must be read with suspicion, with the intention of discovering the relationships of power that the text reflects, defends or attacks. The underlying assumption is that conflict is inevitable.

Milbank contends that such a presupposition is unwarranted. There is no more reason to accept it than there is to accept what he takes to be the Christian view which assumes 'the ontological priority of non-violence'.³⁶ This construes the infinite as harmonious peace and therefore, while recognizing the reality of violence, grants it no originary nature.

Interestingly, Milbank relies heavily on his reading of Augustine's argument in *The City of God*. He cites the great Church Father's critique of Roman civilization that, for all its achievements, its pagan virtues are 'hopelessly contaminated by a celebration of violence'.³⁷ They are 'ambiguously virtuous, because each is necessitated by an absence of charity and peace'.³⁸

Unfortunately, Milbank is unable to offer any demonstration of the truth of one view over the other. They both rely on a presupposition about the ultimate nature of reality. His argument seems to be that the possibility that the Christian assumption is correct should be taken seriously by social theorists. He buttresses his assertion by pointing out that the Christian view offers a way to overcome the dominant nihilism of Nietzsche and the fascism (or the celebration of power for its own sake), which is its inevitable political manifestation. Now, we will, I trust, all approve wholeheartedly of a project which uses Christianity to oppose nihilism and fascism, but Milbank is unable to show that the Christian view represents reality

any better than do the theories which he criticizes. In the final analysis it may be that Milbank fails to take seriously the reasons social theorists use conflict theories of society. Perhaps he does not face up to the extent to which human culture is dependent upon violence. So, where Wink wants to promote small communities of resistance to the domination system (along the lines of some anabaptist models of the church), Milbank seems to be arguing for the restoration of Christendom.

Our problem is that Nietzsche is not so readily answered. He saw clearly that to question our need for violence, to fall over ourselves as we so readily compete to do with identifying with our victims, is simply another sign, indeed proof, of our fundamental decadence. And perhaps he was right to cast the blame firmly at the feet of Jesus of Nazareth and his irresponsible shower of followers. This upstart Christianity with its crucified God and its advocacy of pity and humility is surely to blame. Perhaps this was what Nietzsche feared, the spectre of the civilization whose roots ought to be firmly planted in the glorious paganism of Homer, corrupted by the namby-pamby advocacy of compassion and service and self-doubt associated with the crucified saviour. No wonder the herd is everywhere in control. No wonder the whines of the victimized and their bleating advocates are sucking the self-confidence and vitality out of the noble natural leaders of society. Nietzsche sums it up,

The 'equality of souls before God', this falsehood, this *pretext* for the rancor of all the base-minded, this explosive of a concept which eventually became revolution, modern idea and the principle of decline of the whole order of society - is Christian dynamite.³⁹

What place for the pagan heroic values now? Christianity encourages people to side with the base and the weak, it challenges our necessary violence and so it deprives the culture of its strength and vitality.

Or consider the words which Auden puts into the mouth of a rather philosophical King Herod as he debates what will happen if he

allows sentiment to cloud his vision and incite him to fail in his duty to destroy the Christ child, even if it means killing any number of others to be sure of getting him. If he fails he says,

Reason will be replaced by revelation ...
Justice will be replaced by pity as the cardinal virtue, and all fear of retribution will vanish ... the New Aristocracy will consist exclusively of hermits, bums and permanent invalids. The Rough Diamond, the Consumptive Whore, the bandit who is good to his mother, the epileptic girl who has a way with animals will be the heroes and heroines of the New Age, when the general, the statesman and the philosopher have become the butt of every farce and satire.⁴⁰

So the effect of the gospel upon human culture is mocked and yet there is some truth in the charges brought. There is a sense in which we have become self-conscious about our own violence. We recognize that its targets are arbitrary, that our enemies are scapegoats and we gaze into an abyss filled with the victims of the past whose innocent blood now cries to us from the ground. Yet our instinct to violence is as strong as ever though no amount of bloodletting seems to restore social order. The bodies pile up and the wars go on, younger and younger children carry knives as a matter of course, the missiles which are alleged to maintain our fragile new world order remain stockpiled. We cry peace, peace and there is none. Perhaps the gospel raises issues which challenge the channels which violence finds within human society. One effect of this could be to aggravate the problem. The socially accepted structural violence loses its legitimacy but the root causes of the violence remain or may remain unaddressed. It finds outlets elsewhere and proves much harder to control and extremely disruptive.⁴¹

We need to look again at some ideas about humanity which we have dismissed too quickly, largely because they are too uncomfortable. For example, in 1947, one of France's foremost

intellectuals, Merleau-Ponty, shocked many of his contemporaries by mounting a defence of the Stalinist show trials.⁴² He sought to show that they were both defensible and necessary. And as Bottum observes, what makes it so terrible

is not simply that it exhibits a first-class mind pimping for Stalin and the Moscow Show Trials of the 1930s. What makes it so horrifying is that Merleau-Ponty is right - obscenely right, immorally right: violence can found culture, terror can preserve stability, the unanimity created by the sacrifice of a scapegoat can become so great that it includes even its victim.⁴³

Then there is the work of Frantz Fanon, an apologist for the Algerian revolution. He regards colonialism as naked violence which will only yield when confronted with a greater violence. This 'violence unifies the people',⁴⁴ It offers the possibility of a cleansing catharsis and therefore the opportunity of building a new and better world.

On a personal note, I offer a story from my own experience which helps confirm the influence of Fanon's ideas. On a Sunday afternoon in August 1989 I sat on the lawn of the courtyard of a restaurant in Cajamarca in the Peruvian Andes and by chance I found myself talking to two young historians from Lima. Their research had brought them to the city where agents of the Christian Spanish empire had deceived and betrayed Atahualpa, the last Inca. We discussed the latest crisis facing their homeland and they, like most of the Peruvians to whom I had spoken, believed that a large-scale civil war was inevitable. I asked if nothing could be done to avert such a catastrophe. Their reply was that war was not only unavoidable, it was both necessary and desirable: it would be for the best. There was so much tension, so much injustice, and so much anger in the experience of the Peruvian people; they possessed so many emotions which needed to be purged; only widespread violence could conceivably resolve the situation. A war would act as what they called *una catarsis*; it would

enable Peruvians to expunge their negative collective attitudes, and provide the new beginning necessary if the just, peaceful Peru desired by all Peruvians was to come into being.

It seems to me that both Wink and Milbank, like most Christian thinkers, underrate the problem of violence. They fail to see the way in which all cultures are dependent upon it, that it is integral to all the ways of being human that are available to us. Interestingly, the thought of both of them has been influenced by their engagement with the thought of the French-American literary critic, René Girard, and both depart from him because his analysis suggests that violence is more deeply rooted in human culture than either of them are prepared to accept. Wink refuses to believe that all human societies have been violent while Milbank claims that Girard is among those social theorists who give violence an unwarranted ontological priority. However, Girard does leave room for a prior and eternal realm of peace, and he does not *assume* the pervasiveness of violence, he demonstrates it from first principles. Perhaps I should not be too hard on Wink and Milbank; as Nietzsche observes in the second aphorism of *The twilight of the idols*, 'Even the bravest of us rarely has the courage for what he really *knows* ...'

THE THOUGHT OF RENÉ GIRARD⁴⁵

Girard, in a series of books and articles is prepared to look down into the abyss which is basic human motivation and dependence on violence.⁴⁶ He addresses the issue of what it means to be human and the foundational place of violence within that meaning. He may be offering us an honest anthropology. One which faces the truth about human social life, which takes scientific insights seriously, and yet, fascinatingly, which may turn out to be consistent with the teachings of our Christian tradition.

A series of recent scientific discoveries has demonstrated that humans have close genetic links with other species of animals. Ethologists tell us that the behavioural characteristics of humans are very like those of the great apes. The conclusion frequently drawn

that this is bad news for the churches. Apparently we are going to have to wake up and realize that humans are just one animal among many.

This argument is frankly bizarre. First of all, the churches have always taught that humans are creatures like others. It is enlightenment rationalism which alleges that humans possess an attribute - reason - which separates us from our base cousins and gives us a basis for claiming an objective, if not a transcendent, view of the world. And second, the argument is banal. Of course we are but one animal among many; you do not have to be a geneticist to see that. The interesting question concerns not what we have in common with the animals, but what it is that makes us different from them. What is the defining characteristic of the human? And what happened to make us different? Science, even the relatively new discipline of evolutionary psychology, is little help because the necessary data are not available. We know that the human brain is larger and more highly developed than that of the other animals. It has acquired a capacity for language. But where did representation, the idea that a sound, gesture or symbol could stand for something else, and associated cultural phenomena such as systems of exchange, metaphor and language, first come from?

A number of thinkers have noted the human propensities for violence and representation and have wondered if the two are not related. Freud's theory of the murder of the head of the primal horde by his excluded adult sons is but one example. He traces totemism and the incest taboo to this originary event. The unconscious memory of this survives throughout the species and influences our behaviour.⁴⁷

This is an issue which has intrigued Girard, but his starting point is the nature of human desire. In order to offer an account of this he describes a basic human drive which he calls *mimesis*.⁴⁸ He means imitation, both conscious and unconscious. One aspect of this is mimetic desire; our propensity to desire things because others desire or possess them. The Bible refers to this (or something very like it) as covetousness.⁴⁹ According to Girard, all desire has a triangular structure; there is a subject, an object and a model. The desire for the object is mediated to the subject by the model.⁵⁰ Humans seek to acquire things possessed by others and things which others deem

desirable and are seeking to acquire. For example, objects, sexual partners, social status and so on. This inevitably generates conflict and can have the potential to cause violence. An act of violence tends to generate another in response. Sometimes this is called instinct, sometimes it is called revenge and sometimes it is called justice. If there is no effective brake on violence, such as that provided by an efficient judicial system, it leads to a cycle from which escape proves difficult if not impossible. Examples would be blood feuds, terrorist campaigns and state responses to them, ethnic conflicts and gang warfare.

The idea of mimetic violence leads to Girard's theory of human origins. He relies on an understanding of crowd psychology which shows that in certain circumstances groups behave in a unified way. He envisages a social group of hominoids or proto-humans whose brains have developed to the point where they have the capacity for language. These creatures are highly mimetic but have not yet developed representation. Mimetic desire induces conflict which leads to violence which is itself imitated. The original disputed object is forgotten and the members instead focus on one another. This could mean the destruction of the entire group and perhaps it sometimes did. However, in the case of some social groups a mechanism was found which resolved the crisis. In the course of their 'conflictual mimesis', all members of the group eventually copied one another and concentrated their violent attention upon one individual. The choice is arbitrary, in the sense it has nothing to do with the original cause of the dispute. Nevertheless, the all-against-one violence acts as a catharsis. When the murder is over the community's need to express violence is sated and the crisis is resolved. The victim is a scapegoat.

Perhaps this process occurred a number of times. Eventually, the fundamental cultural differentiation emerged; the one between the victim and the rest. The death of the victim had resolved the crisis and so the victim, from the murderers' perspective, must have been responsible for the crisis and therefore in some way blameworthy. On the other hand, the victim is also responsible for bringing peace. Peace and order are being sustained and the victim must be responsible for

this and therefore must have in some way survived death. In this primal experience we have the beginnings of symbolic thought and the origin of ideas about the sacred, the holy terror which protects the social group which pays it homage.⁵¹ This is the beginning of representation, of religious thought and of human language.

In other words, human culture is founded upon violence. More than that, it is founded on a fundamental misapprehension about that violence. The experience is remembered from the false perspective of the murderers. Human societies are built on a primal lie.

The new society has a well-founded and deep-seated fear of violence and yet a deep respect for it since it ensured the survival of the group.⁵² It remembers the founding event in stories which we call myths. These stories recall and justify the founding violence. Sacrificial rituals are a dramatic re-enactment of the same murder. Myths and rituals are therefore re-presentations of the foundation of a particular culture. Their function is to validate and reinforce the existing social structure, and to prevent the return of uncontrollable violence.

Fear of a return to violence leads societies to develop a series of prohibitions designed to prevent mimetic rivalry. There are rules about the ownership of property, about access to sexual partners, about the social hierarchy in which everyone has a divinely sanctioned position, and so on. These rules help to prevent mimetic violence but they cannot stop people desiring or coveting things which pertain to others. As a result, tensions develop which require an outlet. These tensions are channelled away from their original objects and onto some socially acceptable substitute. This occurs in the hunt, in war against an external tribe, in mock battles where violence is carefully controlled, in ritual sacrifice, and in the persecution of an individual or a group not fully integrated into the ordinary life of the community: an unmarried woman, a child, a disabled person, a prisoner, a criminal, an outsider etc. In every case, the internal violence which endangers the society is channelled onto a socially safe external alternative.

In other words, according to Girard, human social survival is dependent on an unwitting self-deception and on the periodic

expulsion of internally-generated violence. This explains the ambiguous nature of all human cultures. The effects of mimesis mean that we all want the same things: the same sexual partners, the same animals, the same fields, the same esteem. This has the potential to lead to conflict but social hierarchy and order are upheld by myths and rituals that reproduce the founding event, as (mis)represented by the original murderers.

Eventually, over the years, myths and rituals become decadent; they are imperfectly told and performed, they become poorer copies of the original, and they become powerless to prevent the conflict generated by mimetic rivalry. Eventually, the group is not convinced of the guilt of its victims and so the mechanisms cannot function. Social order and truth about social origins are not compatible. A crisis of all-against-all violence develops which can be resolved only by a fresh, unanimous collective murder.

This theory of the reciprocal nature of violence finds echoes in other Christian thinking on the subject. Helder Camara, for example, argues that violence leads to demands for vengeance which, when gained, leads to further violence. He says, 'If violence is met by violence, the world will fall into a spiral of violence'.⁵³ The solution, if there can be one, is to find a way to break the cycle. Kaptein and Lascaris, summing up some of the reflections of the Corrymeela Community, apply Girard's insights to the reciprocal violence of state and paramilitary organizations within Northern Ireland.⁵⁴

In these ways Girard explains the social functions of ritual sacrifice and persecution. And so authorities in crisis will always look for a poorly integrated individual or group who can be blamed for problems really generated by internal injustice. The scapegoats may be the Jews, the single parents, the social security scroungers or the asylum seekers. The group may indeed be wholly fictitious and devised by the authorities as an instrument of social control.⁵⁵

This all leads to an analysis of the contemporary world in which Girard sees Western culture leading the way into crisis. It has no sacrificial or ritual resources to offer: only the myths propagated by the film and television industries, and a judicial system largely shorn of its

trappings of mystery and transcendence; its purposes disputed, its inner workings subjected to public scrutiny, and its decisions scrutinized by campaigners and journalists. For all its bluster, the West is possessed of a dark knowledge: its victims are innocent and have lost their power to bring peace. Its rampant capitalism fuels itself by creating demand for products by advertising which is little more than blatant inducement to covetousness. Eventually this must induce a fresh round of reciprocal violence but this time it has the potential to be on a world-wide scale and there can be no guarantee that the scapegoating mechanism could operate successfully in order to resolve the crisis or that there would be anywhere habitable left for the survivors if it did.

The truth about ourselves and our victims is undermining our ability to sustain our cultures. As our true roots and nature are revealed, the abyss of bottomless violence looms. Truth has become the engine of the eschatological process. But from where have we acquired this dangerous knowledge? And is there another way to be human, another available foundation for collective human life: one which could be sustained without scapegoats and in which order is compatible with truth?

In the past some anthropologists took pleasure in pointing out that the story of the passion of Jesus follows the same pattern as myths and rituals from all over the world. Traditionally Christian apologetics have denied this. The differences are pointed out and the nature and unique identity of the victim are stressed. Girard regards this approach as mistaken. The parallels are there and are meant to be there. This too is the death of a scapegoat against whom the unanimous crowd has turned. Without prejudice to the uniqueness of Christ, Girard asserts that it is not the event which is unique but the interpretation placed on the event by the texts which bear witness to it.

The texts which bear witness to the death of Jesus all categorically insist upon the innocence of the victim. They tell the old, old story but refuse to accept the lie common to all the other tellings. The gospels expose what myths conceal and so reveal the lie which is at the heart of human cultures and the violence which sustains them. This is the source of our unforgettable dark knowledge.

The Bible as a whole includes a thread which offers this critique of human culture, but it finds its heart in the gospels. Cain, like Romulus, kills his brother and founds a city, but where Remus is regarded as having warranted death by his own transgression, the Bible proclaims Abel's innocence. The Bible does not always side with the victims, but this happens enough for it to be clear that the Bible is subverting existing forms of social order. Though dead, they are championed from beyond the human social world by a transcendent power. And in the gospel Jesus announces the vindication of all victims from the foundation of the world, from Abel to Zechariah.⁵⁶

Of course, whether people have accepted the gospel or not, the story has affected the world in a number of ways. In particular, the revelation that victims may be innocent has infiltrated all our discourse about violence. We now recognize our scapegoats for what they are. The gospel subverts our cultures and feeds the eschatological process, it offers the truth that drives us towards the apocalypse, the final unveiling. Girard reflects on Nietzsche and his doctrine of the eternal return and argues that until the advent of the gospel, societies were essentially cyclical, but with the exposure of the truth, we enter uncharted waters and begin to move towards a goal.

The gospels expose the nature of the ideologies which justify the present order with its inevitable violence. Once exposed, the truth means that there is no longer an adequate brake on human violence. This is the wrath of God; the violence is altogether human but its extent is the result of God's intervention in Jesus.⁵⁷

However, the news isn't all bad. The gospels also offer an alternative, a praxis which Jesus calls the kingdom of God, in which the acquisitive mimesis which promotes rivalry and conflict is abandoned, and the imitation of Jesus, who is beyond rivalry, is promoted. This involves the renunciation of all vengeance, retribution and reprisal. It means secession from the mimetic consensus. It entails forming a new type of human society founded on the truth of the Victim. Those who seek to do this will need a distinctive hermeneutic and distinctive communities. They will imitate Jesus who died praying that his persecutors be forgiven rather than desiring revenge or

retribution.

TOWARDS A HERMENEUTIC

Most systems of interpretation work with a lens, acknowledged or otherwise, through which the Bible is read. This may be a confession of faith, a systematic theology, a received tradition of interpretation and so on. Perhaps the most appropriate way for Christians to read the Bible is through the lens of the fourfold gospel: the story of the birth, ministry, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus. In addition, if the death and resurrection of Jesus are the event which most clearly exposes both the nature of God and the truth about the human condition, then this should be regarded, without being divorced from the rest, as the key to interpreting the whole.

Furthermore, if Girard is right and human languages, like the cultures of which they are a part, are founded in misrepresented violence, then they can offer no privileged stance from which absolute truth may be discovered and articulated. As he says, 'That is why the Word that states itself to be absolutely true never speaks except from the position of a victim in the process of being expelled. There is no human explanation for his presence among us.'⁵⁸ This is the word of God which breaks into human life from beyond. It is not something controlled or defined by our present human experience; it comes from outside and our societies struggle and fail to contain it. If this word is to remain itself, it must found something new and constantly being renewed. It is never to be domesticated into culture. Where this happens the word ceases to be itself and ceases to offer the access to transcendence through which we may hear the word of God. The church uses this word as the lens through which the rest of Scripture is heard.

The primitive Christian confession, 'Jesus is Lord', includes the affirmation that the excluded victim, vindicated by God, is the expositor of falsehood, the judge of ideologies and the destroyer of cultures founded on violence. So, the word of God does not enter the world in order to prop up or to endorse existing social structures. It speaks a

word of judgement against the violence which excludes arbitrary victims. In doing this it makes the victims unforgettable and so the word, of itself, brings to pass the judgement of which it speaks. At the same time, it holds out hope to those who repent and begin a new way of being in its light. Because the one being excluded may enter the word, the victims of the world have a privileged place in our hermeneutic. Interpretations which ignore or marginalize them are to be given less weight than those which make them central.

Given that the Book of Revelation has been understood as advocating violence or providing inspiration to violent movements, it offers a good test case for reading the Bible with Girard's ideas and our proposed hermeneutic in mind.

READING REVELATION

The New Testament's apocalyptic language needs to be read carefully. Perhaps we cannot agree with Caird⁵⁹ or with Wright⁶⁰ that the language is to be understood wholly metaphorically. On the other hand, the idea that God is directly responsible for acts of violence does not ring true to our current Christian understanding of God. Certainly not if, as has been suggested, his character is seen most clearly in the death of a victim of human violence. Perhaps the language can be understood to speak of a human violence partly generated by the gospel. God's weapon may bring judgement, but it is the sword of his mouth, his word, which achieves it. And if the language does not speak of the end of the space-time universe, perhaps it speaks of the end of our current ways of being human and suggests the beginning of a wholly new kind of social life.

Revelation describes itself as a work of prophecy. The prophet is one who describes the world from the perspective of heaven, who is able to see the workings of human culture from the position of the transcendent. However, this perspective is inevitably expressed in human language which is itself compromised by violence and therefore not wholly adequate for such a task. Nevertheless, Revelation as a whole is to be read as the transfer of sovereignty over the earth to God

from his enemies.⁶¹ This transfer is brought about by Jesus and those who participate with him in this process. In thinking about this process, there are two words on which I want to concentrate our attention. They and their cognates occur frequently in Revelation. Our appreciation of these and their use will affect our reading of the book as a whole. The two words are witness and conquer.

The key title Revelation gives to Jesus is 'witness'.⁶² The word is forensic in origin and refers to one sworn to speak the truth in a court of law. In Revelation this is linked with death. The true witness maintains his or her testimony to the point of death.⁶³ Thus, the life, death and resurrection of Jesus bring testimony of God's truth to the world. His followers are expected to bear witness to the same truth and to be prepared to do so in the same way. When they do, their testimony will augment the consequences of his. They will participate in his victory. Such are the army of the Lamb, those who play a part in his battles. When confronted by the agents of the falsehood which currently hold the world in its grip, the followers of Jesus do not wage violence, they bear witness to the truth.

One important activity of Jesus and his followers in Revelation, and the other key word in this brief study, is that they conquer. The text constantly calls on its hearers to do this. In particular, the letters to the seven churches each ends with such an exhortation. The word is often used without an object (although not when it is used to describe the activities of God's enemies). It is used of what Jesus has done in order to open the scroll and is later defined as died.⁶⁴ It seems that the act of conquering is constituted by faithfulness to the point of death. This is reinforced at 12.11 where we are told that the saints have conquered the enemy by the blood of the lamb for *they did not cling to life even in the face of death*.

It seems that *Nike*, the Greek goddess of victory has had her brand name stolen and used by John as though it were a technical term for maintaining faith in Jesus in the face of martyrdom. To conquer is to be like Jesus, to keep his works, to maintain his testimony, and to be faithful unto death or the eschaton. The reward for this will be a share in his status. So, God's eschatological victory is shared in by those

whose weapon is truth. This victory is achieved not by violence but by truth.⁶⁵ And this activity, like the death of Jesus, makes a contribution to the eschatological process.⁶⁶

Of course, Revelation borrows extensively from older traditions and one of these is Holy War.⁶⁷ This introduces military imagery into the text. Its purpose is to stress the nature of the discipline required and the urgency of the summons. It is not a call to violence but a call to the commitment associated with the participants in Holy War.

In terms of Girard's ideas, the deaths of the martyrs are mimesis of the death of Jesus and though they are imperfect imitations, they would be expected to have a similar effect or to reinforce its consequences. The deaths of victims known or perceived to be innocent, expose the truth about the prevailing culture and therefore bring about its demise. As Lampe puts it, 'Christ's death is represented in each martyrdom.'⁶⁸

Interestingly, God's enemies imitate God at every point. They claim the status which belongs to God. The conflict has its roots in the enemy's desire to be God. The devil is God's mimetic rival and could be understood as representing or promoting the forces of mimetic rivalry, which currently control the world. Those who follow Jesus are those who escape from this and who imitate Jesus instead.

The plagues of Revelation come in three series of seven which dominate the structure of the book. They all flow out of the scene depicted in heaven in Chapters 4 and 5. I have argued elsewhere that the first of these chapters depicts heaven in anticipation and the second depicts the thing it was waiting for, the ascension of the Messiah into heaven.⁶⁹ The plagues are to be read as the consequences in human history of this event, and those on earth which preceded it, and its proclamation in the Gospel.

Where a mimesis of Jesus, exalted to the right hand of God and therefore beyond rivalry, is not adopted, the result is that the old violent tendencies generated by mimetic rivalry persist. Yet those tendencies cannot find resolution in their traditional outlets because the gospel makes everyone aware that their victims are innocent and their violence is therefore without legitimacy. Sacrifice cannot continue,

gladiatorial contests will start to seem questionable, wars will begin to be questioned, and the workings of feuds and duels scrutinized. Eventually justice itself will seem but a mask for revenge. Yet violence will be expressed and reciprocated but now there is no possibility of its being legitimate nor of any mechanism bringing it to an end. Only the mimesis of Jesus will do. This is the wrath of the Lamb.⁷⁰ The violence is real, but it is the convulsion of violent human cultures confronted with the truth of their own existence.

There is therefore a link, often noticed in exegesis of the New Testament, between the crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of Jesus, the revelation of truth in the proclamation and living of the gospel, and the beginning of the eschatological process.

THE CHURCHES TODAY

The difference between the church and the world in our own day is not so much a tale of two cities as a tale of two stories. In a standard thriller the hero demanding imitation is an individual who defeats all the forces of evil. This man or woman uses good, necessary violence to wreak vengeance on the bad guys and restore order. The church is a community sustained by a different story. In this one the bad guys use bad violence to kill the hero who, though clearly innocent, submits to death and offers no violence back to his persecutors. As a result the existing order is challenged. The hero returns from death to journey with any community which adopts this story. The story is maintained in symbols and dramatic re-tellings such as the Lord's supper and baptism. These help the community to sustain an alternative view of the world and a mimesis of Jesus which avoids all rivalry. Girard holds that revelation belongs to a 'dissenting minority bold enough to challenge the official truth.'⁷¹ Our churches are called to be that minority.

When the church shares its story the effects may be disconcerting. It is a re-presentation of the victory of Jesus. It should not be surprising that it provokes a violent response on some occasions. It may even lead to martyrdom. This need not be at the

hands of the state.

As a community the church will therefore be non-violent in its dealings with itself and with other churches. However, its members need not be thoroughgoing pacifists. Girard himself has never argued that force can never be used. Violence or the urge to violence is a lamentable fact arising out of the way all human cultures began and the way in which language and symbolic thought is structured. Although the gospel constantly and consistently challenges this violence, the only cure it offers is the mimesis of Jesus. Until such time as everyone adopts this then some policing, some channelling of violent urges will be required. To deny these channels will only see the violence re-emerge in uncontrolled and arbitrary ways. In these circumstances, there is nothing to prevent members of Christian communities serving in capacities which make use of force or which channel violence: they may work in the police force and the prison service or be members of the judiciary. For that matter they may be professional athletes. However, the church as such will always offer an alternative way of being.⁷² It will not use violence to resolve its own disputes with itself or with others. Nor will it, for the same reason, enter into formal alliances with the state and make its own story an unwitting ally to the social actor which claims a monopoly of the use of force.

Next, it is increasingly important that our churches see themselves in this light. We represent a constant challenge to the wider culture even though we inevitably play our own part within it with all the compromise and ambiguity this will involve.

In addition, given that the churches are to be communities in which all participate in a mimesis of Jesus and where mimetic rivalry is supposed to be absent, it would be well if opportunities for such rivalry were kept to a minimum. Perhaps a return to the primitive socialism of the New Testament Jerusalem church would be ill-advised. However, there may be a case for mechanisms that ensure the absence of poverty within the church and which deal with large differences in wealth among members of the same Christian communities. In addition, differences in status can also lead to rivalry. Perhaps non-hierarchical and participative models of church

government should be encouraged. Then churches will be marked by mutual service rather than appearing to ape the patterns of hierarchy found in wider society.

It should go without saying that churches should be worshipping communities. This offers them a focus beyond the human world and its stories which glorify violence. If worship is a participation in heaven, then it is a participation in the present of God's promised future when all is at peace. The constant re-telling of the story of Jesus provides the framework in which this worship takes place. And this experience serves to sustain the community in its calling. Of course, this does not mean that events within the human world have no place in worship. They do. In particular those which lead to the exclusion of victims; the stories of those who are adversely affected by the violence of the world.

Finally, those who maintain the faith have no right to assume they will escape persecution. Our current religious freedom in the West, while to be treasured, is never to be taken for granted. The Bible is clear, those who are persecuted for maintaining the testimony of Jesus join him in exposing the roots of the persecuting culture in violence and lies. They are God's front-line troops and only the stolen language of war will do justice to their role.

CONCLUSIONS

I have tried to show that violence is a far more pervasive problem within human cultures than is often appreciated. Any adequate anthropology needs to take this into account and Girard's does so. In addition it offers some suggestions as to the role of communities which follow Jesus within these cultures. Perhaps we need to look again at the Book of Revelation and consider again its call on us to conquer by being faithful witnesses to Jesus, the one who exposes the violence at the heart of human society and who summons us to the dangerous and provocative path which ultimately offers a new way of being human.

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NOTES

1. See Cohn 1993. Cohn argues that non-cyclical, goal-orientated views of history begin with Zarathustra and find their way from Persia into exilic and second temple Judaism, and from there into Christian apocalypticism.
2. See Kee 1999.104-123. The influence of Nietzsche on

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postmodernism is universally acknowledged. See Lyon 1994.7 and Milbank 1993.2. Kee 1999.176-189 acknowledges the debt but wonders if the disciples have rightly understood their master.

3. Ricoeur 1984 explores these themes, hence the title *Time and narrative*.
4. Cited in MacDonald 1989.30.
5. 5.22, 1970.139.
6. Gunkel 1921, Day 1985.
7. Genesis 3.24.
8. Genesis 4.8.
9. Genesis 4.23-24.
10. Genesis 6.11, a text which suggests that violence is naturally endemic among humans.
11. Genesis 34.25-29.
12. Exodus 32.25-29.
13. See, e.g., Leviticus.
14. See, e.g., Leviticus 20.9-16, 27.
15. Numbers 5.11-31.
16. Numbers 17-18.
17. Deuteronomy 20.10-17.
18. Especially the enforcement of the ban, see, e.g., Joshua 6.21.
19. Judges 5.26.
20. Judges 11.29-40, discussed by Tribble 1984.93-116.
21. Judges 19.1-30, discussed by Tribble 1984.65-91.
22. Judges 21.8-12, 19-21.
23. 2 Samuel 21.1-14.
24. 1 Kings 18.40.
25. 2 Kings 19.35.
26. Esther 9.1-16.
27. Psalm 137.8-9.
28. Willans and Searle 1999.62.
29. Publisher's note to Homer 1987. These remarks may be compared to the opening sentences of Martin Hammond's introduction to the book.
30. 1920.1-11.
31. Purves 2000 reviews the work of the historian Michael Howard and

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- compares the knights of the Middle Ages with the lager louts of today. She suggests that in the past the human urge to violence knew some socially acceptable outlets but that these are no longer available. Today violence finds its inevitable expression but is confused and undirected and without accepted codes or boundaries. This is not simply a redrawing of the familiar saloon bar arguments in favour of national service. It takes seriously the human propensity to violence and refuses to regard it, lamentable though it be, as unnatural, unusual or anything other than part of the human condition.
32. 1992.
 33. 1992.13-31.
 34. 1992.36.
 35. 1990.
 36. 1990.411.
 37. 1990.288.
 38. 1990.411.
 39. Cited by Bailie 1997.26.
 40. Cited by Bailie 1997.23.
 41. See Ellis 1997. This work of a Jewish theologian reflecting on responses to the holocaust discusses the complicity of Judaism and Christianity, which at first sight appear to advocate peace, with a range of the atrocities perpetrated by humankind.
 42. 1947.
 43. 1996.42.
 44. 1967.74.
 45. In addition to his own books, a number of scholars introduce or engage with Girard's ideas and make use of his insights. See the bibliography for works of Alison, whose 1993 is a useful, though tendentiously Roman Catholic, introduction to Girard's thought and whose 1998 examines the doctrine of original sin from a girardian perspective. See also Hamerton-Kelly, whose 1992 reads Paul and whose 1994 reads Mark in the light of Girard. Bailie 1997 offers insights into Girard from contemporary culture as well as some creative Bible readings. Williams J.G. 1991 uses Girard's thought to look at the Bible as a whole. Williams R. 1989 is also of interest as it shows how seriously one of our best contemporary theologians and

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- churchmen takes Girard's ideas.
46. The major books on these themes and a selection of articles are included in the bibliography.
 47. Freud 1950.
 48. When used in literary criticism the word usually refers to the process whereby a world represented in a text has a representation of itself generated in the minds of those who read, hear or repeat that text.
 49. Exodus 20.17 and Romans 7.7-11.
 50. Girard is implicitly criticizing the idea of the Cartesian self, rational and impervious to outside influences. More explicitly in his sights is the romantic notion that desire springs unbidden from within the human individual. See 1965 and note its French title *Mensonge romantique et vérité romanesque*.
 51. See Otto 1928.
 52. Think of English attitudes to remembering the wars of last century. The cenotaphs, the stress on remembering and on gratitude to the fallen, the respect for the violence that defeated the enemy accompanied by the hope that it need never be used again.
 53. 1971.55.
 54. Both 1993.
 55. See Orwell's *Two Minutes Hate* in 1954.13-17 and the wars of Oceania against Eurasia or Eastasia depending on the whim of the party.
 56. Luke 11.50-51 and parallel.
 57. A rather different girardian approach to the language of eschatology is offered by Alison 1997.
 58. 1987.435.
 59. Caird 1980.243-271.
 60. Wright 1992.280-338.
 61. A transfer announced at 11.15.
 62. 1.5.
 63. The Greek word *martus* thus give rise to the English word *martyr*.
 64. 5.5 and 5.9.
 65. This understanding should condition our reading of passages which use the imagery of Holy War.
 66. See, e.g., Bauckham 1993.185, 229, 281; Sweet 1981.102; Yarbrow

- Collins 1977.256.
67. Addressed by Barker 2000, although she does not note the way Revelation transforms the traditions it borrows.
 68. 1984.258.
 69. Finamore 1997.223-240
 70. Wink 1996 and others advocate non-violence as a way forward, but this, like all strategies, is culture bound. We cannot know that Gandhi would have been effective if his oppressors had not possessed a Christian tradition, and therefore been influenced by the Gospel. The same could be said for Martin Luther King II. We should weigh the words of Jacques Ellul, 'But put Gandhi into the Russia of 1925 or the Germany of 1933. The solution would be simple: after a few days he would be arrested and nothing more would be heard of him. It was their "Christian liberalism" and their democratic scruples that enabled the English people to sympathize with non-violence. Let us entertain no illusions as to what would have happened elsewhere.' (1970.15). Of course, for Ellul, violence is an inevitable and necessary part of the world against which Christians are called to struggle. We may remind the state that it is the servant of God but cannot expect that it will abandon violence. It does not bear the sword in vain.
 71. 1998.30.
 72. I regard this as a baptist view and not as a traditional anabaptist view. See N. Wright 1996.



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