

TEN YEARS AFTER SEPTEMBER 11, 2001¹

**REFLECTIONS
PERSONAL, HISTORICAL, ETHICAL, THEOLOGICAL**

On

**What Happened,
Why It Happened,
What Happened After**

**Where We Are Now
Where We May Consider Going**

**As Christians In
The United States of America**

In Two Parts

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PART ONE

REFLECTIONS ON SEPTEMBER 11, 2001--TEN YEARS AFTER

September 11, 2001: Violence, Chaos, Shock

September 11, 2001, began as any other day in the history of the United States. The sun rose to create a beautiful dawn. People rose to attend to whatever their routines were. Yet within a few hours, Americans would be riveted to their televisions in shock and horror. When the first jet flew into the World Trade Center, we all thought it was due to some tragic mechanical error. When the second jet struck, we knew whatever was happening was not by accident, but by intention. Within a short time, we heard more hijacked jets were involved. America was at war, we knew, and fear spread across our land.

The news stations played and replayed the images. Again and again we saw the jets hit the towers, flame and smoke pluming, debris falling, people jumping, horrified crowds crying and looking upward and, finally, the roaring collapses and clouds of dust. *There were people in those buildings.* It was a day beyond belief, yet a day that forced itself on our belief, for it was real. Whatever scenes most are embedded in our minds, all Americans shared common reactions of shock, incredulity, and anger. Americans of all faiths united in grief with prayers for divine comfort for the victims, and united in righteous anger with prayers for divine justice for the criminals who planned these heinous acts.

From around the world, heads of state spoke words of grief, sadness, comfort, and support. Americans saw on our televisions people in many lands and languages crying tears for our victims, our people, and this was moving in itself. Traditional allies and trading partners, Cold War and Communist nations--even monarchies and some dictatorships usually hateful to the U.S.--had supportive words for victims' families and our traumatized nation. These responses were comforting for Americans as we heard in many languages sincere expressions of sympathy and support.

On the other hand, comfort and sympathy, pledges of support, were not universal responses from the international community. There was a delayed and ominous silence from a few nations, in particular, those least favorable to the United States. These eventually issued polite and reserved statements of regret for the innocent slain, calls for punishment of the guilty, but no offer of assistance or other support. This all was to be expected from enemies of the United States. Yet there was an incredible image shown on our televisions on the night of September 11.

In various places around the world, there were some Muslims wildly cheering, dancing, and laughing, in jubilant celebration of what had happened here. At least some of us sat in our homes and stared blankly at that scene, asking ourselves, "What did we ever do to THOSE people?"

September 11, 2001: First Reactions, Emergent Interpretations

The first reactions of Americans to the events of September 11 varied, depending on the Americans. Shock, horror, and unbelief surely were most common to nearly all of us. We saw again and again the video images of the World Trade Center being hit, then collapsing a short time later. Pain and grief fueled biological drivers of fear and anger. Nearly the entire American population was affected, if not driven, by *instinctual responses*² for a long time.

The horror and images of 9-11 dominated Americans' lives for weeks and months, and some never recovered. They lost sleep due to nightmares. They awoke in the morning to worry and anxiety for their families' safety. Cell lines stayed busy, children calling parents, parents checking on kids, anyone who cared about anybody calling to see how they were. People had a difficult time concentrating at work, and production went down for a long time. Paranoia swept communities. People who "looked Muslim" were viewed with suspicion. There is an unknown percentage of Americans who developed neurotic disorders from a single event thousands of miles away. For New Yorkers, all these and more reactions were compounded by what happened right at home.

Many normally slow to consider war became eager for it. One citizen recommended, with calm resolve, "*I think we should just carpet-bomb the entire region with nukes, wipe them off the face of the earth, and solve the problem for good.*" There was no moral calculus in such loose talk, only a blind, simplistic, irrational, immoral mathematical calculus. (1) Draw a nuclear fence around the region. (2) Exterminate all within. (3) Problem solved. In the heat of hate, there was no factoring in hundreds of thousands, even millions, of innocent Muslims and non-Muslims who would die by such a strategy. There was no factoring in all the people who did not know nor care about Osama Bin Ladin. There was no factoring in all the people who dreamed of coming to America to pursue their own dreams. No, it was another restatement of another immoral slogan during the Vietnam War: "*Kill 'em all and let God sort 'em out!*"³

² Threaten or corner an animal. Expect instinctual, behavioral defenses for self-preservation. Those include hormonal responses in the animal's brain that create readiness for attack or counter-attack. Harm an animal. Expect the combinations of physical pain, fear, anger, etc, to generate abnormal strength, irrational strike-back, and retaliation. Harm an animal's offspring. Expect the parent, or members of species with parental instincts for their own kind, to defend and strike the offender. These instincts arise in human groups. Americans on and after September 11, 2001, did not identify their emotions, thoughts, conversations, and actions, as biologically-based or driven; however, these *pre- and sub-rational factors were at work within them.*

³ Annihilation is a military strategy, from antiquity until now. We recall Nazi Germany's "Final Solution" (*Die Endlösung*) as one example, or "ethnic cleansing" in the Balkans, or other places in the world. Americans must not be smug in condemning other nations. In 1830, President Andrew Jackson explicitly told the U.S. Congress that many Native Americans had been "exterminated" and that, to save them from more extermination, the U.S. government kindly was offering to move them West. See

Bin Ladin and his death squads identified the motives for their attacks. September 11 was a spearhead in their *jihad*,⁴ and they all were *mujahidin*.⁵ The attack had been justified by their *religion*. This was unlike other attacks on U.S. soil—the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor or, further back in American history, the Confederate bombardment of Fort Sumter. The *motive* for what happened in New York City had no parallel in American military history.⁶ A new definition of American Enemy emerged from the rubble of the World Trade Center, what we later would call, *Radical Islamism*.

American Muslim leaders condemned loudly what Osama Bin Ladin had done. Texts from the Qur'an were quoted on mercy, compassion, protection for the innocent and, of course, peace. Americans were told, "Islam is a religion of peace.... Even our religion's name, Islam, means 'peace,'" a claim not altogether true.⁷ Our Muslim citizens were put under enormous pressures as a result of Bin Ladin's strike, people who came here to pursue the American dream as all other immigrants have done.

American Muslims experienced their own domestic terror as a result of Bin Ladin's attack. The U.S. government began rounding up hundreds of Muslims for questioning and detainment with no evidence other than persons were members of the Islamic faith. Some were arrested due to "tips of suspicion" by their non-Muslim neighbors or coworkers to police or the FBI.⁸ Many Muslims stayed home, afraid, behind closed doors, missing work, *persona non grata* in their own nation for their religion, clothing, or

<http://memory.loc.gov/cgi-bin/ampage?collId=llhj&fileName=024/llhj024.db&recNum=26> (and also the previous page, "Num=25"). Some settlers used to say, "*The only good Injun is a dead Injun.*"

⁴ *Jihad* usually is understood as "holy war" by most Americans; however, this is the last of three meanings in the Qur'an. All are related to the basic concept in Islam of submission. Here are the basic meanings, in their proper order: (1) personal *jihad*, the battle of every Muslim to submit every thought, emotion, word, and deed to God's will; (2) social *jihad*, the battle to submit Muslim society to God's will; and, (3) military *jihad*, the battle against those who reject Islam, or who have harmed the House of Islam. Military *jihad* includes every method useful for combat, including economic strategies.

⁵ *Mujahidin* is the plural for Muslim warriors.

⁶ European history has innumerable military attacks based on religious motives, e.g., the infamous Wars of Religion in the sixteenth century, my own area of primary scholarship.

⁷ The word, *islam*, actually means "to surrender, give up, leave." Another word, *salaam*, means "peace." Both words are separate and different. Their separate definitions are known, yet they share the same Arabic stem—*slm*. Muslims familiar with Arabic (and most read Arabic in order to read the Qur'an in its original language) know *islam* does not mean "peace," which *salaam* does mean. For apologetic purposes, some Muslims tell outsiders what might be called a "half-truth." When pressed, these will admit the difference, and error.

⁸ The patriotic "tipsters" surely meant well at the time. But they, and law enforcement officials at all levels, were driven by fear and paranoia, and why not? The perpetrators of 9-11 had been members of U.S. society. They were acting like "normal folks." With the smoldering rubble of the World Trade Center fresh in their minds, people were in panic, operating in paranoia, seeking to be helpful. In fact, some Muslims may have reported other Muslims to police. Why? Reporters are viewed as cooperative, less under suspicion. Some Jews did this in the Nazi era, and others were concentration camp inmate captains. All these things are normal, though unfortunate for those victimized by false reports in such times. Non-Muslim Americans also were arrested during this early period, some held for months without access to attorneys or charges filed, then released—some for merely criticizing U.S. policies. Fellow patriots turned them in as possible collaborators with the enemy.

even ethnic appearance. Violence—verbal, physical, property damage—erupted against them, relatives, or other Muslims they knew in other places.

Right after 9-11, Americans of all faiths, and some without faith who sought comfort and counsel, filled houses of worship all over the land in prayer for victims, their families, and the nation. There was an ominous dread for many that, depending on what the U.S. government chose to do, global nuclear war might soon begin. Millions of prayers went heavenward for divine guidance towards restraint, wisdom, yet justice.

Ironic and bizarre as it sounds, there were some Christians, Jews, and Muslims for whom September 11 created no dread at all. Indeed, for a certain group of believers in each of the three Religions of the Book, the fall of the Twin Towers signaled new possibilities. Such believers were united in a common prayer to God that 9/11 was Act One, Scene One, of a historical play written before the beginning of time: *Judgment Day*.

These Christians, Jews, and Muslims, all shared a structurally similar *apocalyptic theology*, albeit its details differ in the Hebrew Bible, the Christian Bible, and the Qur'an. Human history must end in global conflict, global destruction by fire, and Judgment Day, with its rewards for the just and its punishments for the unjust.⁹ The President of the United States called himself an evangelical Christian, called by God to presidential office. Many Americans worried that the President's religious advisors¹⁰ might counsel him towards the Apocalypse through a nuclear response.

Nevertheless, these same three Book Religions each had another minority on their knees in common prayer. These were praying that God would guide U.S. leaders and people towards a just, controlled, but minimal use of force in response to September 11. These Christians, Jews, and Muslims found themselves working together in common cause. They also had theologies with structurally similar themes, though presented in their unique religious traditions.

These offered the message that all persons are members of the same divine family, given life by the same Creator, called by God to use life given for creation, healing, mercy, and blessing—leaving God to know and judge the inner sanctum of the human heart. For this minority, September 11 did not create suspicion and paranoia, but an opportunity for witness in unity, help, and sacrifice, through divine love. Unfortunately,

⁹ The history of religion has many examples of *apocalyptic theologies*. These share some of the following features: (1) history is determined to worsen and decline; (2) history must end in global conflict and conflagration; (3) God will save and reward the righteous, and judge and punish the unrighteous; (4) no human deeds or intervention can change or diminish the destiny of decline and destruction; (5) the righteous affirm the nature of history and look forward to its end, their rewards, and the destruction of the unrighteous. These lead to (1) pessimism about the meaning of the historical present, (2) pessimism against large-scale human movements for good [e.g., conflict resolution, peace], (3) optimism at the prospects or appearances of large-scale evils which may presage The End and Judgment Day [e.g., social chaos, wars, chaotic events/weather], and (4) optimism grounded in decline, destruction, and death.

¹⁰ John Ashcroft was just such an advisor.

that minority was pretty roundly condemned by some Americans as suspect, unpatriotic, disloyal, and traitors.

For Christians in that group, post-9/11 was not a time in America where the majority of citizens welcomed some of the central parts of Jesus' teachings and example. His commendations in the Beatitudes of the merciful, or *shalom*-makers as children of God; his commandments against judging; his requirements for forgiveness; and, surely, his command, "Love your enemies," were mocked as inappropriate by millions of Christians, some Jews, and many more with little religious ethics to guide them. The theological tidal wave of national bloodlust and revenge-seeking rendered Christians who loved Jesus with a choice: to stand up and speak out for him, and risk what he had risked, or to cower, more like Peter who, when asked, "Do you know the man?," disavowed affiliation with him. There were some Christians who chose the former. There were many others who collapsed under the weight of public pressure and were silent.

September 11, 2001: A Christian's First Responses

On September 11, 2001, I was in the offices of the Kentucky Commission on Human Rights, employed as an enforcement officer, working investigations of alleged violations of state and federal civil rights statutes. A coworker told us all what was happening in New York City. We pulled out the agency television and joined the rest of America in watching events unfold. Within a few hours, we began to hear that the hijackers all were Muslims. A short time later, Osama Bin Ladin's name was mentioned as possible planner behind the attack. That Muslims had chosen to kill so many innocent people in such a brutal way was inconceivable. For most Americans who knew nothing about Muhammad, the Qur'an, or the history of Islam, September 11 was, and remains, the single worst, most indelible lesson about that religion.¹¹

The White House and media portrayed Bin Ladin as a madman and monster. What else could Americans think? All we had was the destruction of the World Trade Center, which appeared in a complete vacuum of no prior knowledge about Bin Ladin. What else could Bin Ladin be but a religious monster? Yet what interested me most was that *only Muslims* had done the deeds, and *only religion* appeared to be their motives for murder.

As soon as I learned the attacks were *religiously* motivated, my academic interests, scholarship, and research kicked into high gear. I had spent decades studying the motives for *Christian violence* in the history of Christianity. The subject was bloody and

¹¹ From the point of view of military boldness, the attacks paralleled the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor. However, Bin Ladin used far fewer men, paid no expense in military hardware, and did an estimated One Trillion dollars damage to the U.S. economy. Seen solely as a strategic mission, September 11's Muslim *mujahidin* followed through on a complex plan that required intelligence, coordination, discipline, and cold-blooded execution—all driven by religious belief that what they did was a holy *jihad*, pleased Allāh, and assured paradise for themselves.

depressing, not inspiring. Why had I invested years of isolated research in a subject area usually of interest to religious skeptics and atheists?

I had a *religious* motive. I wanted to understand how the history of my religion, Christianity, was so filled with centuries of anti-Semites, heresy-hunters, inquisitors, crusaders, and militant global imperialists who had committed genocides, *all in the name of my savior, Jesus Christ*. I spent years in a different “valley of the shadow of death”¹² studying the *motives* of my Christian ancestors for the bloodshed they had done. I had asked, and found, the complex answer to the question, “How could people who claimed Jesus as lord and savior, who knew his teachings and example, shed the blood of millions in Jesus’ name and with firm confidence God approved their deeds?”¹³ I was eager to learn as much as possible about Bin Ladin. My research on my own religion had led me to learn about non-sectarian, non-religious drivers of religious violence. I knew I was more prepared than most Americans to see some different things than either our media or our government leaders.

First Research

In my office at the Commission, I began to search the Internet for “Osama Bin Ladin.” I knew what the President, federal spokesmen, and the media were saying about him. I had no reason to distrust them. Yet—as I always had learned in my researches as a historian of Christianity—it was best to read primary sources, not summaries of them. I wanted to read what Osama Bin Ladin himself had had to say about anything at all. I wanted to get some kind of “feel” for the mind that had killed my fellow citizens. As obscure as he seemed to be, I did not expect my computer search to yield anything at all, only more citations about him. I was shocked to find out how wrong I was.

My eyes opened wide when I found two of his writings: one, published in 1996, the second, in 1998. Both were not vague and unrelated to the events of September 11. I did not have to try to guess or intuit why Bin Ladin might have planned what happened. The roots, stems, and branches of his motivations for the destruction of the World Trade Center already had been published *six years* before. This completely confused me. Bin Ladin’s own explanations were available on the Internet *to me*. I asked myself, “Why are his own explanations for his attacks not being cited and discussed by Washington and the media?” The answer was too obvious, based on the contents of just the two writings I had found.

Bin Ladin’s Writings

The first was a publication from a London-based Muslim paper, titled, “*Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places*.”¹⁴ The second

¹² Psalm 23:4a.

¹³ PhD dissertation, “‘Love Your Enemies’: Sixteenth Century Interpretations,” 1989, 3 volumes, a comparison of Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, Menno Simons, and Alfonso Salmerón, SJ.

¹⁴ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1996.html

appeared two years later in 1998, signed by Bin Ladin, Ayman al-Zawahiri,¹⁵ and others, addressing grievances against the United States, Israel, and other members of what was called the “crusader-alliance.”¹⁶ The contents of both statements were clear, unambiguous, direct, simply understood, fact-Ladin, succinct, and unmistakable. Yes, there was no mistaking Bin Ladin was writing as a Muslim to Muslims. Yes, it was clear he wanted to motivate other Muslims to join him in *jihad* against the U.S., Israel, and other Western enemies. Yet the only war Muhammad ever authorized in the Qur’an was a defensive war.

Bin Ladin’s main content in each *fatwa* did not seem to be at all to be what I expected: a religious rant. Rather, while he opened with quotes from the Qur’an commanding *jihad* against Islam’s enemies, the main body of his grievances were his version of decades of the following: (1) American exploitations of Muslim lands and oil resources, (2) American manipulation of corrupt Muslim regimes, and (3) American killing and harming of *hundreds of thousands* of innocent Muslim peoples, also harms done by the State of Israel and American “transnational corporations.”

Bin Ladin’s arguments were a string of bloody pearls: citations of offenses and harms against Muslims all over the world by its American, Israeli, and Western enemies, *with the Qur’an quotations as justifications for what to do*. Bin Ladin did not rant. He started with his listing of facts, alleged events, and his laundry list of factual reasons why Muslims worldwide had to conclude *jihad* was the only solution: counter-attacks against the “Crusader-Zionist alliance.”

I never had heard of Osama Bin Ladin before September 11, 2001, though the White House surely had.¹⁷ I knew nothing about him or Al-Qaeda, and little more about Islam except for its formal theological doctrines and interactions with Christians and Jews in European history. I had no prejudices, only the desire to learn something about our national enemy and his group.

Bin Ladin’s writings were not to be the ramblings of a religious madman. Insane people do not create fact-based arguments and ask their audiences to compare and judge. He was not—at least in 1996 and 1998—a religious monster. Yes, he clearly hated the U.S., Israel, and transnational corporations, and their alleged harms and adverse effects on Muslim peoples. But just as no one in the German public took Hitler seriously in his *Mein Kampf*, who in the mid- to late 1990s ever would have dreamed one Saudi would plan such a monstrous attack in late 2001?

¹⁵ In this document’s heading, he was called, “Head of Jihad Group in Egypt.” This man was Bin Ladin’s right-hand for years. On June 16, 2011, Al-Qaeda announced al-Zawahiri had been named as Bin Ladin’s successor, a surprise to none, inside or outside that group.

¹⁶ http://www.pbs.org/newshour/terrorism/international/fatwa_1998.html

¹⁷ Read Richard A. Clarke, *Against All Enemies: Inside America’s War on Terror* (Free Press: NY, 2004), which details repeated warnings sent to the White House and National Security Council specifically regarding Bin Ladin, for a half year prior to 9/11/01.

I sat a little benumbed by what I read. President Bush and his circle were saying all manner of things about Bin Ladin. The media hung on every statement as fact. I kept asking myself, “Why are the newspapers not printing what the enemy himself said about his grievances and declaration of war?” I asked colleagues and people at home, “Have you read what he wrote?” No one was interested, except in what I judged was propaganda ramping up American emotions for war.

Washington kept Bin Ladin out of context. By omitting what he himself had written on his motives for *jihad*—self-defensive counter-attack, not offensive assault—Washington chose to control public opinion about him. It always is easier to hate a fanatic and monster, a killer of women and children, than it is to hate a defender of the memory and survivors of 500,000 Muslim children killed by a U.S. foreign policy.

Initial Fact-Checking

After reading these two documents, I began checking on the places and numbers he presented of the alleged harms America had done to the House of Islam. As a historian, I sought to find the degree to which Bin Ladin had misrepresented or twisted his allegations against the United States. This is what historians do: read documents, representations, and then compare the evidence with all available information. I presumed I would find that Bin Ladin had skewed his statements to support his declaration of *jihad*.

In his 1998 *fatwa*, Bin Ladin responded to a series of allegations against America: continuing aggression against the Iraqi people, devastation, huge numbers of those killed or harmed, “*which has exceeded one million...not content with the protracted blockade....*” The alleged number, “more than 1,000,000,” I noted and remembered the Oil Embargo against Iraq during George H. W. Bush’s presidency. That policy was intended to “pressure” the Iraqi people to oust Saddam Hussein from power. “Pressure” meant denying the Iraqi people access to many things from outside, such as chlorine, which is a component for certain biochemical weapons. It also is used to purify impure water.

I found that, as of 1996, international agencies, such as UNICEF, had suggested that 300,000 Iraqi children had died from U.S.-led embargo.¹⁸ One scholar had lowered to number to 100,000. A higher number also commonly circulated was 500,000. On May 12, 1996, the television news show, **60 Minutes**, aired an interview between Leslie Stahl and Madeleine Albright. Stahl asked, “*We have heard that a half million children have died. I mean, that is more children than died in Hiroshima. And, you know, is the*

¹⁸ The following were drawn from Wikipedia’s entry on “Iraq Sanctions”:
<http://www.public.asu.edu/~wellsda/foreignpolicy/Halliday-criticizes-sanctions.html>;
<http://www.unicef.org/newsline/99pr29.htm>; <http://www.emro.who.int/publications/emhj/0604/20.htm>;
http://www.unicef.org/evaldatabase/index_29697.html; <http://www.casi.org.uk/info/garfield/dr-garfield.html>;
http://www.comw.org/pda/0310rm8.html#N_93.

price worth it?" Albright responded with no hesitation, *"I think this is a very hard choice, but the price, we think the price is worth it."*¹⁹

Albright had not even paused or tried to reduce the number. I had to collect myself. Before the entire world, our highest U.S. liaison to the international community had said the "price"—killing 500,000 children—was "worth it." What was the "it"? Saddam Hussein still was in power. What was the "it" that had been achieved by the dead Iraqi children? What the U.S. called "pressure on the Iraqi people." And what was the pressure that had been surely created and, therefore, "worth it"?

Analyzing "Pressure" As Human Reality

To start with, the deaths of 500,000 children created "pressure" of *massive grief*. How much? Each dead child had two parents. Surely some families had more than one child, and more than one die. Still, for the sake of argument, let's imagine there were 1,000,000 grieving parents. Then let's multiply again for grandparents: 4,000,000. And let us add again for surviving brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, cousins and extended families by marriage. Is 10,000,000 too large a number of grieving Iraqis, or too small? If too small, then let us add in childhood friends, schoolmates, neighbors living nearby, maybe even a shopkeeper in the local *sug* (market) who also loved and will grieve the dead. What would be the real number of pressurized, grieving Iraqis, if that 500,000 was too high, or too low? *On a scale of hundreds of thousands, how much does the math matter?*

Yet *grief* at the death of a loved one is not pressure. Grief is permanent, for the loved one is permanently gone, forever. And grief is not merely permanent. When any loved one dies *directly due to another person's intentional action*, then grief brings wrath, vengeance, and a memory that will not forget, so long as the survivors live. So when the U.S. government sought to "bring pressure on the Iraqi people" through the oil embargo, they not only created the pressure of grief in probably tens of millions. The U.S. government created pressures of hatred, calls for the destruction, not of Saddam, for the United States government that put policies in play. An entire people had been punished all for one man. The U.S. killed hundreds of thousands of precious little faces.

The innocuous-sounding word, "pressure," was accurate. Grief over death, wrath over murder, calls for retaliation, are enormous pressures to intentionally create in innocent people. And these are uncontrollable pressures. Even if Saddam Hussein had stepped down from love for his suffering people, or even if an Iraqi assassin had put a bullet in Saddam's brain, it was President G.H.W. Bush and his team whose policies led to so many children dying slowly, day by day. And even if Saddam had abdicated, what Iraqi would support any successor pleasing to the United States—after all the U.S. did to Iraqi families to achieve such a political and economic goal?

¹⁹ Cited at, <http://web.archive.org/web/20030603215848/http://www.irvinereview.org/guest1.htm>. See the actual video clip on YouTube, at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LauPfCelJgg>.

Yes, pressure had been created. Those of us who were adults during the Oil Embargo remember whatever we thought at the time.²⁰ Osama Bin Ladin had that pressure on his mind when he declared *jihad* against Americans and others only a year or so later, in 1996. I hated what Osama Bin Ladin's death-squads had done, with all other Americans. Yet after researching just one of the incidents for which Bin Ladin declared his *jihad*, I began to realize that September 11, 2001, was a result of pressures building up for a long time. And after that, the United States would have its own internal pressures building up—as our people cried out for war against Bin Ladin, al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and for some citizens, every Muslim in the world.

September 29, 2004:
A Christian Academic Creates Enemy-Dialogue
Reflecting on September 1, 2001

Applying Secular Work
To Peacemaking

My PhD work in the study of religious violence, the violence done by Christians against each other in history, was a direct expression of my own faith. Jesus Christ had said, "Love one another so they will know you are my disciples," and had prayed for unity among us. Many people in the world were skeptics and atheists due to Christian behaviors. My academic studies all were aimed at understanding the dynamics and forces that led people who called Jesus, "Lord and Savior," to kill, torture, expatriate, and persecute others—who also called Jesus Christ "Lord and Savior"—*with clear consciences "to the glory of God."* Jesus had said, "*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called 'children of God.'*"²¹ So I was and am by nature a Christian peacemaker, with notable exceptions in my own life and ministries!

In 2003, I was called to leave the *Kentucky Commission on Human Rights* to design a master's degree in conflict resolution. By early 2004, that was done and I was administrating the program for a secular university. Yet I was highly frustrated that, with my academic knowledge and religious commitments, my secular program did not allow much participation in the War on Terror and its dynamics. My direct report supervisor was the executive vice president and chief executive officer of the university. He was a liberal Southern Baptist who loved Jesus Christ and all people, regardless of race, creed, or color. I told him my idea—which would bring honor to the school—and he

²⁰ I remember hearing President G.H.W. Bush and others discuss the oil embargo as a non-military form of "pressure." These were my thoughts at time, as I can recall them now. "OK. I understand that. Saddam's a dictator. He's a saber-rattler. He's a trouble-maker. We need his oil. He's bringing instability. Bring a little pressure on his people. Let them know how bad the world thinks he is. They will come to their senses and blame him for their deprivation." At the time I was a busy Christian pastor. I had a wife and four young children. I had all the good and not so good things going on in my congregation. I did not have a lot of time for foreign affairs. That Saddam was a bad guy, we all knew. "So let the President, who knows what he's doing, put on some pressure."

²¹ Matthew 5:9. My oldest email address expresses my prayer that my peacemaking work will be an expression of who I am as a child of God: mediationpeacemaker@yahoo.com.

gave me full permission, but no funding, so long as my project did not conflict with the duties of my employment.

As an academic expert on the subject of religious violence, and an administrator in conflict resolution education, I proposed to the Spirituality Section of the *Association for Conflict Resolution*²² a symposium: “Moses, Jesus, Muhammad: What Did the Prophets Teach on War and Violence?” Representatives from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, would be selected to represent their prophet’s scriptural position. They were charged to “strictly stay with the texts” and not overtly import sectarian bias.

I knew the Reformed rabbi would give a different reading than a *Haredi*²³ rabbi; that the Mennonite would give a different reading than a Southern Baptist;²⁴ and, that the *Shiite* would give a different rendering than a *Wahabi*. Had there been time, there would have been multiple representatives from each religion—to reflect the real diversity in reading holy books within reach Book Religion. This seemed best to me. Let each religious tradition be respected. Let each of its own members speak for themselves. Then, ask the speakers to dialogue with each other and later field questions from the audience.

The history of dogma shows the problem of this approach. *Each religion had multiple theological traditions and communities, with each sect believing its version either “the truest” or “truer” than the other competitors.* Initially, I thought it best to have three speakers from each religion, what we usually call, Liberal, Moderate, Conservative, and Fundamentalist.²⁵ This was most ethical (though I knew I had the absolute truth)! Time, and the difficulty of “making a sale” to genuine authorities from each religion, made that goal impossible. The symposium finally had a Reformed rabbi, a Shiite imam, and a Mennonite scholar. I omitted the predominant “just war” Christian tradition for two reasons: (1) Jesus did not support that and (2) everyone knew it well from historical experience.

Yet I felt one more group was needed: a delegation from Saudi Arabia. Osama Bin Ladin and most of the members of his kill-squads on September 11 were Saudis. I felt it would be good to have a delegation from the Saudi Embassy in Washington DC. They

²² <http://acrnet.org>.

²³ These are “ultra-orthodox” Jews whose radical, intransigent positions pose as irresolvable obstacles to peace in the Middle East as radical theological intransigents among Muslims.

²⁴ The Mennonite was chosen because, in my opinion, a fair reading of the Gospels alone—since these contain what we know of Jesus’ life, teachings, and commands—leads to the pacifistic position. The “Just War” tradition—used by the RC and Magisterial Churches—is a synthesis between a few statements in the Gospels with *Romans* 13. The point of the symposium was to consider “what the prophets taught,” not “what is the dominant theological interpretation by theologians.”

²⁵ Such distinctions finally are merely heuristic and suggestive, kind of “hooks” on which to hang enormous numbers of people without really knowing them. I have known “fundamentalists” who, when you really got to know them, were all over the ideological map. Perhaps they were “fundamentalist” in soteriology but “liberal” in ways they would not tell their flock, or pastor. I also have found the same phenomenon with “liberals” and other classes. Yet members who self-identify in one of these groups often ridicule those in the others, and none really know each other, only their labels.

surely had channels of communication with Bin Ladin and other *Wahabis*²⁶ like him. I hoped, and prayed, Prince Bandar or a delegation sent by him would carry back to all in their circles a model of non-sectarian, balanced, speaking and listening. Again, this seemed in the tradition of Jesus Christ, and more prone to produce better results than some I was hearing around the United States (and Washington). I visited the embassy, was greeted cordially, and given a box full of Islamic texts: the translation of the Qur'an I still use, and nine conservative theological books.²⁷

When I decided to speak with and write Saudi leaders, I immediately contacted the FBI. I had nothing to hide. I was an American Christian working for peace, in my way. I wanted my government to monitor and investigate anything I did. I did not offer, was not asked, nor did anything surreptitious. Yet I did have real fear that—if someone in high places opposed what I was doing from my love of Jesus Christ, and all people—I easily might be arrested, detained without charges, lose my employment, and have my reputation and family ruined.²⁸ Prince Bandar himself was considering attending the meeting when some terrorists' beheadings of Saudi officials in Riyadh took him back home. In an attempt to be equally honest with the Saudis, I informed an embassy representative I was in touch with the FBI, for my own security and not as an agent. All my future communications were met with silence.

The symposium was a success. There was a Reformed rabbi from San Francisco, a Shiite imam from Detroit, and a Mennonite scholar from Goshen, Indiana. Each spoke eloquently of his tradition's position. Not wishing to violate any of their allotted time, as

²⁶ Sympathetic interpretations can be found at: <http://islamlib.com/en/article/muhammad-ibn-abd-al-wahab-1703-1791> and <http://thehanbalirevival.wordpress.com/books/muhammad-ibn-abdul-wahab/>. The following are non-Muslim discussions, some prejudicial: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wahhabi>; <http://www.fas.org/sgp/crs/misc/RS21695.pdf>; and, <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/gulf/wahhabi.htm>.

²⁷ The titles of these are irrelevant here, however, several tracts on *jihad* were informative. To these I later added another source important for Muslim theology and law, Sahih Muslim's *haditha*—an authoritative and commonly accepted collection of the extra-Qur'anic teachings and deeds of Muhammad, e.g., Al-Hafiz Zakiuddin Abdul-Aziz Al-Mundhiri, Compiler, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Muslim*, 2 vols (Darussalam Publishers: Ryadh, Saudi Arabia, 2000). This collection is not exhaustive but selected. *However, while Muslims claim the Qur'an is their sole basis for their faith, practically and really, not only these oral traditions, but also specific Muslim jurists' and theologians' interpretations take on authority as THE orthodox understanding.* This also is true for Judaism and Christianity. The original prophets' writings are not enough. Later interpreters' readings practically cut-and-paste, extrapolate, and rationally reconstruct what becomes "the true teaching of the prophets." And so it is with Islam.

²⁸ This was not paranoia but an open, honest measure for whatever self-protection against false charges it might purchase. The representatives of the FBI were appreciative, and thoroughly understood my motives. I invited them to tap my phones. I forwarded my communications, and Saudi replies. I was not acting as an "agent" of the U.S. government. I was keeping my government informed of what I was doing on behalf of peace, here and in the Middle East; in building bridges with Saudi leaders through informed, respectful communication as a PhD scholar and Christian clergyman; my patriotic love for all people in my own country; and, my own faith motivation in Jesus Christ. My letters to Saudis also included criticisms against killers of innocent people, whatever their religion or post of national leadership. Because of my own scholarship in the history of Christian violence against other Christians, Jews, and Muslims, I had earned considerable credibility.

Chair I distributed to the audience a paper to read after the event, the core of which is represented in the last section of this major revision. The audience had come from other continents; was greatly pleased; and requested that similar symposia be continued every year.

September 11, 2001: Clearing Ground for Understanding Ourselves and Our Enemies Through Empathy

Little Sympathy or Empathy for Muslim Enemies

At the very end of Part I, the last section addresses Christians and what we may consider doing now, ten years after 9-11-01, as *Christians*. For now, I want to discuss “empathy” from a variety of angles. Millions of Americans, including Christian and Jewish Americans, have no feelings whatever for Muslims whosoever, abroad or even here at home. As in the days when European settlers called Native Americans, “savages,” and imported African slaves as “brutes good for breeding for work,” there are many in this nation who, because of September 11, 2001, simply dismiss the *billions of Muslims* in the world as only worth fighting and killing. Thankfully, I know this is not the case for the primary audience of these thoughts.

Therefore, if you become bored in the next several sections, you may skip to the end of Part I for what I suggest may be appropriate for your reflections on how we may best be faithful to Jesus Christ, in a nation and world spinning faster and faster out of control—which creates traumatic, reactionary emotions, which create anxiety and fear, which create cognitive dysfunctions, which may lead us to World War III. So, of all people in the world, I want us Christians to have our own bearings on and our spiritual power from, Jesus Christ. We begin.....

Empathy Recommended

By a U.S. Military Veteran and Expert in War

In the movie documentary, *The Fog of War*,²⁹ director Errol Morris interviewed McNamara, who had served as the U.S. Secretary of Defense for Presidents John F. Kennedy and Lyndon B. Johnson. McNamara’s reputation, due to his roles during the Vietnam War, has made his name a pariah for many Americans. He was a Christian; however, his performance of his duties—disagreeing with Presidents, yet obeying them because they were Commander in Chief—has led many to deny his Christian confession.

Early in the film McNamara recalled the “Cuban Mission Crisis” when the U.S. and Soviet Union nearly clashed in nuclear war. The stakes for that crisis actually were higher threats to the U.S. and world than for anything Osama Bin Ladin ever did on September 11, 2001. For younger Americans who do not know what the Cuban Missile

²⁹ *The Fog of War* (2003), Sony Pictures, Culver City, CA.

Crisis was, they should research that background. The U.S. nearly took steps against the Soviet Union's placement of nuclear missiles in Cuba that might have led to World War III.

Morris did a fine job of weaving together McNamara's memories with actual taped recordings of President Kennedy and his advisors, as they sought to develop the right response to the real threat, according to McNamara, that *94 million* Americans were in danger from Soviet nuclear capabilities, launched from Cuba. Most around the table wanted military attacks. General Curtis Lemay wanted to obliterate Cuba with air strikes.

One man sitting near Kennedy opposed the general trend. That man, Tommy Thompson, actually knew the highest Russian leader in the Kremlin, and brought that knowledge to the table. In the block quote below are McNamara's memories, with the taped voices of Kennedy and Thompson indented.

At the elbow of President Kennedy was Tommy Thompson, former U.S. Ambassador to Moscow. He and Jane, his wife, had *literally lived with* Khrushchev and his wife on occasion. Tommy said, "Mr. President, I urge you to respond to the soft message." The President said, "We can't do that. It'll get us nowhere." Tommy said, "Mr. President, you're wrong." Now that takes a lot of guts. [*actual recording*]

Kennedy: *We're not going to get these weapons...out of Cuba, probably, anyway. By negotiation.*

Thompson: *I don't agree, Mr. President. I think there's still a chance...*

Kennedy: *That he'll back down?*

Thompson: *The important thing for Khrushchev, it seems to me...is to be able to say, "I saved Cuba; I stopped an invasion."*

In Thompson's mind was this thought: "Khrushchev's gotten himself into a hell of a fix. He would think to himself, 'My God! If I can just get out of this, with a deal that I say to the Russian people, Kennedy was going to destroy Castro, and I prevented it!'" Thompson knowing Khrushchev as he did, thought, "Khrushchev will accept that." And Thompson was right.

That's what I call empathy. We must try to put ourselves inside their skin, and look at us through their eyes, just to understand the thoughts that lie behind their decisions and their actions....

McNamara made empathy for our enemies his first lesson in that movie. In support of that, he went on to quote what Nikita Khrushchev wrote in his "first hard message" sent to President Kennedy. Many Americans were, and are now, as ignorant of the Russians—or of today's Communist Chinese—as ever. But the following quote from Khrushchev is poignant, and has empathy for Russians, and for any others, who suffered and died in war.

We and you ought not pull on the ends of a rope, which you have tied the knots of war. Because the more the two of us pull, the tighter the knot will be tied. And then it will be necessary to cut that knot. And what that would mean is not for me to explain to you. I have participated in two wars, and know that war ends, when it has rolled through cities and villages, everywhere sowing death

and destruction. For such is the logic of war. If people do not display wisdom, they will clash, like blind moles, and then mutual annihilation will commence.

Khrushchev wrote this not as some kind of Russian threat. How can anyone not see his warning as based in his own sad experiences of war? He was remembering Nazi tanks. He had historical memories of wars before tanks, when Napoleon's armies had done their harms. Some Americans, like Lemay, were ready, willing, and able for nuclear strikes on Cuba, saying, "*Russia put missiles in Cuba, aimed at our innocent people. They were going to kill us!*" Not necessarily at all. We had The Bomb. They had The Bomb. Russians are great chess masters. Missiles in Cuba were the strongest move aimed to be their "big stick" so the U.S. would let them do whatever they wanted to expand their atheistic, materialistic agenda.

McNamara said, "Kennedy was trying to keep us out of war, and I was trying to help him do it." Khrushchev was wanting to avoid a war—based on empathic concerns for the living on both sides—and was trying to help Kennedy do nothing rash. As McNamara said, many around the table and in the U.S. *wanted war*. Tommy Thompson's empathy prevented war, building on the personal empathy of not one, but both, leaders of the world's two most powerful nuclear nations.³⁰

Only a few months ago, Americans celebrated the brilliant military operation that infiltrated and assassinated Osama Bin Ladin without the loss of one American soldier's life. After September 11, 2001, within days I was actively praying that President Bush and his team would have empathy for all and prevent war altogether, *by a patient, long-term, accurate, complete military plan to kill only Bin Ladin and all those who planned, aided, and abetted that horror here*. Instead, Americans were glued to their TV sets by "shock and awe," with media personalities drooling praise for the "incredible accuracy of our Patriot missiles."

Empathically-grounded prevention of war, as urged by Khrushchev, would have been more just, saved millions of deaths and suffering on both sides, and would have been less expensive than the estimated *\$15 Trillion* USD added to our national debt. But then, all the trickle-down benefits of our wars would not have come through our military defense contractors, via Wall Street. Hate is an industry for some, always has been, always will be, in all nations.

Beyond Suffering: Sympathy and Empathy

³⁰ It is a great irony that Russian leaders today see the U.S. doing similar things right now in Europe. For Americans who support whatever we do, note that we are doing in 2011 similar things to the Russians with our "close-proximity" missile defense installations. "Defense" is a two-edged sword, easily converted to "offense," as the Russian leadership is making clear; however, because "we are always right," this falls on deaf ears. See from June 7, 2011, <http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2011/jun/7/nato-rejects-russian-missile-defense-proposal/>.

Sympathy means feeling sorrow for someone else. It is the intellectual recognition of another's loss. Sympathy can be strong enough to bring tears and support, even enlistment in the military to strike back for victims and survivors. This is true for Americans and Muslims, and people all over the world. Sympathy is a universal human emotion. Using the biological term, genus, as an analogy, sympathy is a universal *genus of emotion in our species as: the recognition and sorrow that others like us are suffering*. We are saddened by others' suffering, not only because we see and hear as observers, but because their suffering reminds us of our past, present, and future sufferings, and the condition of suffering in humanity.³¹

Empathy is deeper. Empathy is based on a *capacity, ability, a power* that both understands and knows how people feel. That knowledge is *subjective, personal, and real*. Empathy is an emotional capacity engaged with the suffering reality. Sufferers are not just observed, with sadness upon the observation, a general natural emotion.

Empathy *feels close* to the sufferers because the empathic person *has experienced the same things*. Empathy is a bonding, already bonded-by-experience emotion. Again using a biological term, empathy is real and close because the empathic person has experienced the *species of suffering*. It is specific, personal, subjective. "Objectivity" is gone. Subjective pain bonds the people together. Empathic people feel bonded, they identify with, the suffering people, because they have "been there."

Empathy for Muslim Enemies?

Jesus commanded, "*Love your enemies, do good to them, pray for them, and bless not curse them.*" This is a Christian obligation. It is not an American obligation. It is not a Jewish obligation. It is not a Muslim obligation. Loving our enemies presupposes, empathy for human beings for whom Jesus Christ lived, commanded, and died. Jesus also commanded the Golden Rule, "*Love one another as you would be loved.*"

We are Christians. We are American Christians. Jesus gave us the Golden Rule to treat others as we want to be treated. As we would like to be known as people, not enemies, by them, so let us try to know our enemies as people, not religious fanatics. If we as Christians can do this, then as Americans, perhaps we can at least help our fellow citizens see our enemies differently *through empathy*. In fact, through our congregations, our denomination, the Church of Christ in America, perhaps we can

³¹ After September 11, the U.S. had the sympathy of most of the world. Why? The events were on video. The real-time events and replays were seen by the world. Sympathy was generated by the videos, interviews, and unfolding drama. Whatever videos existed regarding *Muslim* tragedies overseas—the wasting deaths of between 100-500,000 Iraqi children during the U.S. oil embargo, for example—were not shipped all over the world's networks. The owners of the media do not report all they have, or have access to. They do what they are told, all over the world. Politicians globally do not want sympathy for some people at certain times, if it hurts their political causes. Not even caskets of our soldiers coming off planes were allowed to be shown in "the interests of national security...privacy for the families." Washington did not want Vietnam era-like opposition, based on the suffering from the war. PTSD and suicide rates of our soldiers were suppressed. This was to control emotions, for political purposes, to keep the criticisms of "just war" at a minimum.

lead, teach, or elect public officials to approach our global situation of escalating crisis in empathy-based methods that might result in de-escalation. That is a tall order. But then we have a great, loving God who already has gone to a great deal of empathic investment in the world, and in us, through the incarnation of Jesus Christ.

There is a scripture that states, “...*while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of God’s Son...*” (Romans 5:10). While we were in an enemy-status, God loved and had enough empathy for us, understood and felt for us and our sufferings, God went ahead and saved us. God saw us as we really were, sinners antagonistic to divine things, but God saw us as we might be in Christ. God had enough empathic love to see the entire world differently, not merely as it was or is, but as it will be in Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are called to follow Christ’s teaching, which requires us to have empathy for large groups of people who hate others they do not know personally, large groups who put other large groups of folks into hated classes they call enemies. How do we do this? I propose historical analogy. Let us look at American history. We need not go outside our own historical back yard. We Americans have a history full of large groups of past Americans who have hated other citizens in large groups, persons they did not know personally, and, then put those groups into hated classes they called enemies. Why go through this exercise?

We are Americans who love our own nation and its people. We already have an existing bond of love. If we can look at our own history and learn something about how our own people have hated large classes of fellow citizens—and done some horrible acts of war against total strangers, who still were fellow Americans, but in “enemy-status”—then we have some American, home-grown, historical empathy. By looking at how past Americans have hated large groups of other Americans, it is hoped we *can gain empathic insight* on several important points:

- How Americans have had a historically demonstrated capacity to hate other Americans
- How Americans have hated large groups, as groups, not persons
- How Americans have harmed large groups of other Americans with impunity
- How suffering groups of Americans have hated back
- How suffering groups of Americans have shaped identities from suffering and hate
- How American group hatreds have long-term life spans, of 150+ years

By looking at our own history—in our own nation we love—we have a better chance to cultivate empathy for large groups of Muslims abroad. By learning about ourselves and our past, perhaps we can understand, a little better, how Muslims can group us into large classes—people they do not know—and call us enemies. And once we understand that, perhaps our empathy can lead us as Americans to help other Americans not hate so much, a proven historical capacity.

That seems to be a Christian action, completely in line with how God in Jesus Christ “learned about us” in the incarnation “while we were yet enemies.” The strategy worked for you and me, didn’t it? 1 John 4:19 says, “*We love because God first loved us.*” That’s the model we Christians have. While we were enemies, God loved us first.

It is hoped this next section will help us understand the hate some Muslims have for Americans by examining a snapshot of our own history of hatred. If we can do this, we will cultivate some empathy for them, that is, have the capacity to “understand how they feel.”

September 11, 2001: Grinding an Empathic Lens Through Reflections on Civil War Hates and Antipathies

A “Foolish” Method: No

To go back into what many Americans consider “ancient history,” the Civil War, is not really a very American thing to do. Most Americans have no interest in or use for history, including our elected officials. Henry Ford, American entrepreneur and innovator in the automobile industry, said, “*History is bunk. What difference does it make how many times the ancient Greeks flew their kites?*”³² Many today would agree with him. Much of the history of American foreign policy agrees with him, to our national harm.

To go back in American history over 150 years seems a sure-fire way to drive away American readers. Most do not know famous people in our own nation’s history, such as U.S. Presidents. They do not know our most infamous traitors, what they did or what was at stake such as Benedict Arnold, Aaron Burr, Joseph McCarthy, Aldrich Ames, Robert Hanssen, and on some lists, Richard Nixon. They do not know some of America’s greatest foreign enemies, not even their names, such as Adolf Hitler, Josef Stalin, and Mao Zedong. Many Americans have no interest in learning the facts and their interlaced relationships, drivers and dynamics, in America’s daily news.³³

³² “History is Bunk, Says Henry Ford,” *The New York Times*, October 29, 1921, p. 1, col. 2. Spoken in Syracuse, NY, Ford’s comments in context well express what we normally think of as classic American “can-do” optimism: “*Necessary education is learning how to read and write and then working out ideas, mixing with people, getting experience. The schools are all right and their organization should go right on the way it is. History is bunk. What difference does it make how many times the ancient Greeks flew their kites? America is the greatest land and has the greatest people in the world. We are the pioneer stock of the world, those who dared. We all came from the old country, in some sense. Your people were probably Irish or English. My own father was Irish. My mother was Pennsylvania Dutch. We can’t help but win. We won the war not on a fluke, but because it was right to win.*” This document can be found at, <http://query.nytimes.com/mem/archive-free/pdf?res=F60612F93B5810738DDDA00A94D8415B818EF1D3>.

³³ Many Americans have no interest even in their own family histories. When someone dies, many scramble for bank balances and investment portfolios; historical artifacts and records get boxed up with other “junk” and taken out to the curb. This happens in all societies where materialism trumps a sense of continuity with the past, or obligations to the future—even within a family lineage.

However un-American, ill-advised, ill-received, or simply ignored, the following short discussions attempt to offer American Christians some historical talking points for how Americans in general possibly might gain some understanding of our international (or domestic) Muslim enemies *through historically accessible empathy*.

Cauldron for Hate: The Civil War

In September, 1864, the mayor and city council of Atlanta begged U.S. General William Tecumseh Sherman not to destroy their city. They knew him and his “scorched-earth” policy, and appealed for mercy. He wrote a response to them, often quoted and studied in American history.

We must have peace, not only at Atlanta but in all America. To secure this we must stop the war that now desolates our once happy and favored country. To stop war we must defeat the rebel armies that are arrayed against the laws and Constitution, which all must respect and obey. To defeat these armies we must prepare the way to reach them in their recesses provided with the arms and instruments which enable us to accomplish our purpose.... You cannot qualify war in harsher terms than I will. War is cruelty and you cannot refine it, and those who brought war into our country deserve all the curses and maledictions a people can pour out. I know I had no hand in making this war, and I know I will make more sacrifices to-day than any of you to secure peace. But you cannot have peace and a division of our country. If the United States submits to a division now it will not stop, but will go on until we reap the fate of Mexico, which is eternal war. The United States does and must assert its authority wherever it once had power.... You might as well appeal against the thunder-storm as against these terrible hardships of war. They are inevitable, and the only way the people of Atlanta can hope once more to live in peace and quiet at home is to stop the war, which can alone be done by admitting that it began in error and is perpetuated in pride.³⁴

Sherman went on to destroy the city. For him, war was unrefined cruelty with a single purpose: to reunite his divided nation. There was nothing personal or vindictive in cruelty. It was the tool of war aimed to bring an end to war. He went on from Atlanta to cut a swath down Georgia sixty miles wide and three hundred miles long in his “March to the Sea,” to Savannah. Food and animals were confiscated for use by the army. All else was destroyed or burned to the ground, all of it. Nothing was left to the inhabitants of the lands through which Sherman pillaged and ravaged. His strategy did contribute to the accelerated end of the war. Here is an eyewitness account by one who suffered under it, a few months after Atlanta, in September, 1864.

To my smoke-house, my dairy, pantry, kitchen, and cellar, like famished wolves they come, breaking locks and whatever is in their way. The thousand pounds of meat in my smoke-house is gone in a twinkling, my flour, my meat, my lard, butter, eggs, pickles of various kinds - both in vinegar and brine - wine, jars, and jugs are all gone. My eighteen fat turkeys, my hens, chickens, and fowls, my young pigs, are shot down in my yard and

³⁴ <http://www.civilwarhome.com/shermanmayor.htm>.

hunted as if they were rebels themselves. Utterly powerless I ran out and appealed to the guard....

...Sherman himself and a greater portion of his army passed my house that day. All day, as the sad moments rolled on, were they passing not only in front of my house, but from behind; they tore down my garden palings, made a road through my back-yard and lot field, driving their stock and riding through, tearing down my fences and desolating my home - wantonly doing it when there was no necessity for it.... [T]his ended the passing of Sherman's army by my place, leaving me poorer by thirty thousand dollars than I was yesterday morning. And a much stronger Rebel!"³⁵

On Christmas Eve, 1864, we read another Southern woman's diary entry that gives even more details. She would pass on her experiences to her children and grandchildren, her neighbors and strangers, until the day she died.

After three miles from Sparta [Georgia] we struck the "Burnt Country," as it is well named by the natives, and then I could better understand the wrath and desperation of these poor people. I almost felt as if I should like to hang a Yankee myself. There was hardly a fence left standing all the way from Sparta to Gordon. The fields were trampled down and the road was lined with carcasses of horses, hogs, and cattle that the invaders, unable either to consume or carry away with them, had wantonly shot down, to starve out the people and prevent them from making their crops. The stench in some places was unbearable....

The dwellings that were standing all showed signs of pillage, and on every plantation we saw the charred remains of the gin-house and packing-screw, while here and there lone chimney-stacks, "Sherman's sentinels," told of homes laid in ashes. The infamous wretches! I couldn't wonder now that these poor people should want to put a rope round the neck of every red-handed "devil of them" they could lay their hands on.

Hay ricks and fodder stacks were demolished, corn-cribs were empty, and every bale of cotton that could be found was burnt by the savages. I saw no grain of any sort, except little patches they had spilled when feeding their horses and ... there was not even a chicken left in the country to eat....

Crowds of [Confederate] soldiers were tramping over the road in both directions; it was like traveling through the streets of a populous town all day. They were mostly on foot, and I saw numbers seated on the roadside greedily eating raw turnips, meat skins, parched corn—anything they could find, even picking up the loose grains that Sherman's horses had left. I felt tempted to stop and empty the contents of our provision basket into their laps, but the dreadful accounts that were given of the state of the country before us made prudence get the better of our generosity.³⁶

On December 22, 1864, Sherman wired Lincoln, "*I beg to present you, as a Christmas gift, the city of Savannah, with 150 heavy guns and plenty of ammunition, and also about 25,000 bales of cotton.*" The war's end accelerated nearer. A few months later, on April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered to Grant. Five days later, on April 14, Booth shot Lincoln. He jumped down to the stage and shouted, "*Sic semper tyrannis!*" which

³⁵ Doris Sumner Hunt, September 19, 1864, cited at <http://www.eyewitnesstohistory.com/sherman.htm>.

³⁶ Thomas A. Bailey, Ed., *The American Spirit: United States History As Seen By Contemporaries* (D.C. Heath & Co.: Boston, 1963, "2. Georgia Damns the Yankees (1864)," pp. 433-34.

meant, “*So always to tyrants!*” His words indicate he had committed a *patriotic* act by killing a tyrant.

Millions of Confederates cheered wildly when they got news of Booth’s “noble” act, which made him a hero in their eyes. And after Booth had been killed and his co-conspirators executed, the hate that killed Lincoln did not die with his assassins. To the contrary, its poisonous seeds already deeply were rooted in Southern hearts and would bear fruits for more than a hundred years, as it still does today in an unknown percentage of Southerners.

Southern Antipathy for the North: Unity in Empathic Memories

The last verified Confederate soldier died December 31, 1951.³⁷ How many eyewitness stories were told by the thousands by Confederate veterans who died between 1865 and 1951? The last verified Confederate widow died August 8, 2008.³⁸ How many eyewitness stories were told by Confederate widows who died between 1865 and 2008? Confederate memories were handed to children and grandchildren, friends and neighbors. *The Civil War and experiences like Sherman’s scorched-earth March to the Sea legitimately lived on in the memories of all family and others who were told stories by people they loved, who lived what they told.*

Many non-Southerners openly mock and ridicule such Southern discussions as evidence for pervasive racism, ignorance, and mere backwardness. In some cases this surely is true. On the other hand, a fuller historical reading of the evidence also shows that post-Civil War Southern identity and unity also was based in *empathy for shared sufferings due to the war’s devastation.*

After the war was over, many in the North wanted the South to suffer for dividing the nation, and the enormous cost of blood and treasure. Lincoln wanted a non-vindictive return to normalcy. Grant was criticized for terms of surrender that allowed Confederate soldiers to return home with a horse and sidearm. But General Sherman and others had ensured there was nothing to return home to for many. Millions of Southerners would live in desperation and poverty for many decades, which itself reinforced Southern hate against the North.

There would be no *Marshall Plan*³⁹ for the South, no help to rebuild, no desire to prevent long-term conditions of desperation and hate. While the North imposed nothing like Article 231 of the *Treaty of Versailles*⁴⁰ to make the Confederacy pay for the war; however, Northern contempt, and Northern exploitations after the war, ensured most of the South was driven to its knees. Had there been some Northern help in rebuilding,

³⁷ Pleasant Crump. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pleasant_Crump.

³⁸ Maudie Hopkins. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maudie_Hopkins.

³⁹ See en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marshall_Plan.

⁴⁰ War reparations drove post-World War I Germany into conditions that led to the rise of the Nazi Party. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Article_231.

this would have been a mercy that would have enabled the vanquished to reintegrate back into the Union. As it was, the Union was established by military victory, involuntary coercion back under the legal rule of the U.S. Constitution.

Ironically, for millions of Southerners, what the Civil War achieved was the end of African slavery—freedom for blacks—and the beginning of a metaphorical form of white slavery to the North. The North surely coerced, neglected, and exploited the South, at first, for revenge but later for profit. One thing is sure. The old medieval model of *Lord-Vassal* did not apply. The South had not sworn a *fealty oath*⁴¹ for help and protection against harm and enemies. Its slave-masters had victimized slaves, and many Northerners victimized the former slave-masters.

The rallying cry, *The South Shall Rise Again!*, was not for most Southerners a racist dream for the ante-Bellum South. No, for most it was the cry of a broken heart but not a broken spirit. The North had carved out the South's tomb and put millions in it. But, like Lazarus in the New Testament, the South would emerge and take off the wrappings of devastation, humiliation, and defeat.

A Presbyterian preacher and scholar in this denomination, who heard my developing discussion here—on the 'hundred years and more of Southern hate' after the Civil War—told me the following poignant illustrations of my point, that some people in the South still around bound empathically to the sufferings of the past. These are from the 1990s.

Everywhere I went as I preached in various churches in Tennessee and Alabama I heard stories about what had happened to people's church buildings during the Civil War. Stained glass windows had been broken, communion tables had been used for surgery when the church was commandeered as a hospital, original buildings had been burned. In First Presbyterian Church in Shelbyville, Tennessee, a member pointed out hoof prints in the old wooden floors from where Union officers had stabled their horses in the sanctuary. When I asked why they had kept the floors as they were despite the various remodels of the sanctuary, I was told, "So we always remember."

My mother edited a cookbook in southern Alabama and noted many of the recipes were awful, because they lacked key ingredients other recipes of the same dish regularly had in them. Upon inquiry, she learned these were recipes handed down from times the South suffered deprivation during the Civil War.

In 1999, when my older daughter came home from school one day, she asked, "Mom, what's a Yankee?" I asked why. "Because someone called me one today, and I think it's a bad name."

Common Confederate suffering and deprivation created *common Southern empathy*. There were probably even some Southern blacks who noted and questioned whether the Yankees had to starve out women and children, and kill every hog and chicken to eat. All Southerners had to live through the post-Civil War devastation.

⁴¹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fealty>.

White Americans' Antipathy Towards Blacks: Unity in Empathic Hate

Whatever American blacks faced in slavery and after the Civil War was part of the same racial prejudice endured by Native Americans. Roughly thirty years before 1865, President Andrew Jackson pressed for the *Indian Removal Act*⁴² of 1830, which led to the *Trail of Tears*.⁴³ There was and would be a long history of the White Man calling the Red Man and Black Man “savages.” Therefore, whatever happened to freed blacks after 1865, or to other non-European-white immigrant populations for decades after, was part and parcel of a racist tradition going back to the founding of this country.⁴⁴

Southern whites after the Civil War, therefore, were in context, not out of context, with white antipathies against blacks and others. What made Confederate whites different from any other racists in our history was their *unique system of profiteering from owning slaves*. So after 1865, with one of their mainstay economic engines of chattel-labor gone, Southerners were doubly hateful. When they looked at their devastated lands in ashes, they looked and saw freed blacks walking around, scavenging for food and survival as they were. Blacks were “double trouble”: (1) living symbols of the antebellum South, when “they at least knew their place and were useful” and (2) living symbols of why Northern armies had descended below the Mason-Dixon Line to “free the niggers and destroy everything we had in the process.” This was how many white Southerners felt for many, many years.

Southern whites had those two foundational experiences for their empathy with and for each other, as whites, which fueled their antipathies and hatreds against blacks. Let us look at a micro-pixel snapshot of how (1) Southerners banded together in empathic hatred to form the *Ku Klux Klan* and how (2) lynching, also a favorite crimes of the KKK, was adopted by whites not known to be affiliated with the KKK.

The KKK

The First Ku Klux Klan was founded in 1865. Its original members terrorized and killed both blacks and white Republicans in its terroristic campaign for white supremacy. It was located mainly in the South and died out in the early 1870s. The Second KKK was founded in 1915, developed better recruitment methods in 1921, posed as a fraternal organization, and claimed its members were 15% of the American white male population in the late 1920s. World War II interrupted its growth, which began again around 1950. The “KKK” name today is claimed by a wide range of both closely and loosely connected groups.⁴⁵ All have antipathies against American blacks, but many have

⁴² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Indian_Removal_Act.

⁴³ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Trail_of_Tears.

⁴⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Racism_in_the_United_States.

⁴⁵ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ku_Klux_Klan. Research on the Internet illustrates that “KKK” has been assumed by a wide range of Americans for their own unique, stylized missions, e.g.,

many other targeted groups as objects of hate, discrimination, terror, and criminal behaviors. The acronym, KKK, here will refer mainly to self-identified members of that organization.

The KKK castrated, beat to bloody pulps, and lynched Black men; abused and raped Black women; and terrorized and burned out Black families, for between fifty and seventy-five years, *with relative impunity and freedom*. These crimes were committed with most perpetrators never charged, arrested, convicted, or punished. This only was possible with cooperation from other members of communities where the KKK operated. For decades when the KKK was strongest in the South—and other places around America—KKK members were in the highest positions of law enforcement and political authority where only white reigned supreme for a long time.

It is fair to say most KKK members and their families were active and inactive members and leaders of Christian churches. This means their pastors and denominations did not oppose KKK work, or tolerated it. There were others, not KKK members, who hated the KKK, knew identities of perpetrators, yet who feared retaliatory actions or death, both white and black.

Lynching of black men, women, and children, usually by hanging but also by burning at the stake,⁴⁶ was and remains a KKK staple for terror. The last *known* public KKK lynching was 1981.⁴⁷ Yet who can imagine that today's KKK does not have committed members also willing to prove their true connection with their KKK ancestors by lynching an innocent black American? Today's KKK hides the evidence of their devotion to domestic terrorism: "no body, no crime."⁴⁸ Law enforcement must list today's KKK victims as "missing." The KKK still kills. As recently as 2009, a KKK "initiation went awry" and a white woman initiating into the KKK was murdered.⁴⁹

Lynching

Nevertheless, the KKK did not originate lynching. Americans did not originate lynching. Vigilante justice goes all the way back throughout human history. For thousands of years, when a mob wanted fast justice, done their own way and without interference from written laws, a quick hanging always served the purpose. People everywhere in all

<http://www.kkk.com/>; <http://www.kkkklan.com/>. See law enforcement notations on KKK activities and diversity, at <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/para/ku-klux-klan-4.htm>.

⁴⁶ See the history of lynching at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynching_in_the_United_States, and one listing of the absurd bases for slaying black Americans, at <http://www.umass.edu/complit/aclanet/ACLAText/USLynch.html>.

⁴⁷ Michael Donald, March 20, 1981. See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Michael_Donald.

⁴⁸ *Black's Law Dictionary* (4th edition, 1951), p. 413a: "*Corpus delicti*. The body of a crime. The body (material substance) upon which a crime has been committed, e.g., the corpse of a murdered man, the charred remains of a house burned down. In a derivative sense, the substance or foundation of a crime; the substantial fact that a crime has been committed."

⁴⁹ Cynthia Lynch was shot and killed on Sunday, Nov. 9, 2008, in St. Tammany Parish, Louisiana. See <http://www.oaoa.com/articles/indicted-26657-charge-group.html>.

times and places have something to make a noose and some place from which to suspend it.

Lynching's threshold of terror crested around the 1950s,⁵⁰ but had bloody renewal during the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. For more than a hundred years, crowds of KKK—and unaffiliated white men, women, and children, sometimes with picnic baskets of food and drink--applauded with jeers and laughter the final terror of black Americans strangling in the noose or burning alive. Let us consider two examples of lynching fifty and sixty years after the Civil War ended.

On June 15, 1920, three innocent black men were accused of raping a white girl. They were arrested. A mob of between 5,000-10,000 whites broke into the jail where they were held. The mob gave them a mock trial, and then lynched all three. The girl showed no signs of rape. The men were innocent. Ten years later, on August 7, 1930, two black men, Lewis Shipp and Abram Smith, were accused of robbing a white man and raping a white woman. Both were lynched. Facts appear to be they had attempted to rob the white man, but the woman said she had not been raped.

Words of narration are insufficient to recreate a sense of what lynching was, and is. We are fortunate to have photographs of each murder noted above. The 1920 lynching (lower left) was made into a *postcard*. The 1930 lynching (lower right) was taken by a white photographer, Lawrence Beitler.⁵¹ These are not included for shock value. They are artifacts in black-and-white of what always was and is a reality in blood and terror, between white mobs and black, defenseless victims.



A picture tells a thousand words, they say. These pictures only suggest the millions of words poured out over many decades between both whites and blacks. The photo at the upper right was seen six years later in 1936 by a Jewish high school teacher, Abel Meeropol, who responded with a poem, *Strange Fruit*, popularized in song by the singer, Billie Holiday.

⁵⁰ See Robert A. Gibson, "The Negro Holocaust: Lynching and Race Riots in the United States, 1880-1950," at <http://www.yale.edu/ynhti/curriculum/units/1979/2/79.02.04.x.html>.

⁵¹ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lawrence_Beitler.

Southern trees bear strange fruit,
Blood on the leaves and blood at the root,
Black body swinging in the Southern breeze,
Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.

Pastoral scene of the gallant South,
The bulging eyes and the twisted mouth,
Scent of magnolia sweet and fresh,
Then the sudden smell of burning flesh!

Here is fruit for the crows to pluck,
For the rain to gather, for the wind to suck,
For the sun to rot, for the tree to drop,
Here is a strange and bitter crop.

The 1920 lynching occurred in *Duluth, Minnesota*. The 1930 lynching occurred in *Marion, Indiana*. These Northern and Midwest murders show how American whites far away from the post-Civil War Deep South were capable of KKK-like crimes against black citizens. Lynching went on for decades with little or no notice from newspapers, almost no intervention by law enforcement, and occasional mock trials. This was just one horrific example of a form of American domestic terrorism that lived on between 1865 to at least 1981.

Some readers may say that *empathic hate* is the wrong phrase for American whites who shared certain beliefs about black men, women, and children, and then engaged in group behaviors to terrorize, physically and psychologically torture, and kill. We do know that even in mob behaviors the participants have deep bonds already enmeshing them together so the temporary condition of wrath—based on false or even partly true allegations—is carried to what would be to mob members an ordinarily shocking and murderous conclusion, *if carried out on one of their own*.

Black Americans' Antipathy Towards Whites: Unity in Empathic Memories and Experiences

Just as Confederate veterans and widows lived a long time after 1865, to share their personal experiences and beliefs about Yankees and slavery, we have the same kind of “math” results when it comes to black Americans. There is one difference. A freed slave in 1865 did not have to be an adult, with adult responsibilities and memories of events before the war was over. Some slaves were children just old enough to have and keep memories of life as a slave, memories of how Mom and Dad, brothers and sisters, grandparents and any other blood kin—if there were any known and not sold--were treated.

One might think that young children of former slaves would live longer and grow older than adult Confederate veterans and widows. Perhaps that would have been true if freed slave-children had as good prenatal and postnatal nutrition, and as healthy and secure a childhood as most white children had. I have noted most white Southerners after 1865 had hard times which affected their health and mortality. So we are not too

surprised when we read that, based on my limited research resources, the last African American born a slave died in 1948.⁵²

How many American blacks were born after 1865 to former slaves? How many *millions* lived to hear their parents and neighbors, co-laborers and visiting strangers, narrate personal experiences of white slave-masters, or whites in positions of law enforcement, politics, and business, and how all these treated slaves, or blacks who no longer were slaves but *freedmen and freedwomen*?

Those millions of sons and daughters, grandchildren, and kin, always would remember how the family storytellers and intergenerational family story listeners cried *pathetically* together. Those millions went outside their homes and hovels. They always would remember how storyteller friends and neighbors and story listener friends and neighbors cried *sympathetically* together. Those millions also worshipped in their churches, and met together at social events, sporting events, whatever they had time and money to do *with their own kind*. They always would remember how storytellers and story listeners in these places cried *empathetically* together.

The math becomes staggering to consider, all those stories, all that listening, from American blacks who had lived what they talked about, or who heard someone tell what they had lived. Moreover, if one of those storytellers was known to embellish or even lie, there were *enough storytellers* to go around—millions of them—so an American black wanting to “know what really happened” could obtain a very, very strong set of allegations to conclude they were based on facts. And if any black American heard an ex-slave, or read an ex-slave’s written account, what black American would want to listen to any white American’s caution or contradiction that, “Oh, that’s just not true.”

Americans in general, regardless of race or other distinctions, must try as best they can to understand how black Americans’ identities and ways of seeing America itself have been shaped by their shared experiences. Those shared experiences as individuals, within the family, with their family traditions, and the shared experiences of other blacks, *naturally and forcefully create empathy for their group, and empathy for minority groups to whom they can intellectually and emotionally connect.*

Before leaving this section, I want to share two examples where *black American empathy for blacks* produced two responses: (1) in an individual and (2) in the creation of a group.

Ida B. Wells

Ida B. Wells was born a slave and was age three in 1865. She was diminutive in size, about five feet tall, but a giant in intellect and character. Her story is amazing for who

⁵² Eliza Moore, January 26, 1948. See at <http://www.afrigenas.com/library/moore.html>. There is another highly disputed claim for a man who died at age 137 in Florida, in 1979.

she proved to be; for what she accomplished; and, for her truly historic place as an outstanding American.

In 1884, she was twenty-one and a public school teacher. In Memphis, Tennessee, she bought a train ticket and boarded. A white employee of the railroad informed her (like Gandhi's experience one year later in Pietermaritzburg, South Africa, a year earlier⁵³) she was in the wrong part of the train, had to give up her seat, and go where she was told.

She said no. He tried forcibly to remove her and she bit down hard on his hand. It took three white men to remove this little, young person. The next year, incredibly, she sued the *Chesapeake, Ohio, and Southern Railroad* for denying her equal accommodations. She won! The Tennessee Supreme Court overturned the ruling, which became one legal basis for "separate but equal."⁵⁴ This achievement is more notable for what she did, in legal terms, than what Rosa Parks in 1955.

Wells did not reserve her courage only for herself. She used her brains, education, and capacities as a leader and communicator to document as many incidents of whites lynching blacks as possible; applicable law; circumstances; and allegations against the murdered. In 1892, she published the single most important cornerstone on the history of lynching, *Southern Horrors: Lynch Law in All its Phases*.⁵⁵

In 1893, her work on behalf of American blacks all over the South and elsewhere became even more personal. Her black friend, Thomas Moss, and two black business partners owned *People's Grocery Company* in Memphis. The three were better at free market enterprise than competing white-owned stores. White owners decided to shut down their competition with violence. The black owners fought back with gunfire, and someone was shot. The blacks were arrested and put in jail. A white mob broke into the jail, took them out to the edge of town, and shot all three to death. Wells wrote in her periodical, *Free Speech*:

The city of Memphis has demonstrated that neither character nor standing avails the Negro if he dares to protect himself against the white man or become his rival. There is nothing we can do about the lynching now, as we are out-numbered and without arms. The white mob could help itself to ammunition without pay, but the order is rigidly enforced against the selling of guns to Negroes. There is therefore only one thing left to do; save our money and leave a town which will neither protect our lives and property, nor give us a fair trial in the courts, but takes us out and murders us in cold blood when accused by white persons.⁵⁶

⁵³ See <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/southasia/History/Gandhi/Pieter.html> or http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mahatma_Gandhi.

⁵⁴ See, <http://www.idabwells.org/>; http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ida_B._Wells; and, an item from the magazine, *The Smithsonian*, available at a third-party site, <http://www.mindfully.org/Reform/2002/Ida-B-Wells-Memphis1883.htm>.

⁵⁵ To read and also download this, go to <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/14975/14975-h/14975-h.htm>.

⁵⁶ See <http://sfbayview.com/2009/ida-b-wells-barnett-and-her-passion-for-justice/>.

Whatever one can say about Ida B. Wells, her own suffering as a black American, as a black woman expected to remain in her place and teach black children—not a nation—, her love for other black Americans who suffered as she suffered, as her murdered friend suffered, led to a life lived *empathically and courageously*.

How small in physical stature, yet how much of a giant she was. What she accomplished was even more magnificent, given the time in which she lives, with its still-entrenched white dominance. One woman who would not obey a white porter's command to stand up and move on a train spent her entire adult life obeying the Call of Love, the Cry for Justice. She did listen. She did stand up—for black Americans; against whites who would discriminate, and even murder; and, for her nation. She moved, and her energy is felt still when we read her story.

Against the White Man's Religions: The Nation of Islam

In addition to black empathy producing the remarkable actions of individuals who eventually came together to fight for Civil Rights, there were other groups, such as the *Nation of Islam*⁵⁷ [hereafter, NOI], formed out of empathy with less than altruistic results.⁵⁸

NOI is more a personality cult with strongly American black racist ideology than a world religion. Of the roughly 48.1 American blacks in this nation, only somewhere between forty and sixty thousand black Americans are affiliated with NOI. Though NOI is a marginal group with limited influence, its existence was founded upon and its members are attracted to it by *NOI's message*. What is that message? It has structural parts built on *understanding the historical sufferings of American Blacks, their anger, and their aspirations to be Black as Black*. NOI, therefore, exists by playing upon Black American empathy. This is a relevant point here, even though NOI is a cult, and its name is confusing in our current need to understand Islam. Here are the empathic elements I have identified in NOI:

- *Black personal experiences with whites*
- *Black historical experiences with whites in America*
- *Black and dark-skinned peoples' experiences with NOI's interpretation of White, Christian, and Jewish Capitalism*

⁵⁷ For Americans completely or relatively unfamiliar with true Islam, and also unfamiliar with NOI, they might mistakenly confuse the events of September 11, 2001 with NOI, or with classical Islam. Neither association is accurate. NOI had nothing to do with 9-11-01, and superficially to do with Islam. See the excellent little article written by a young Muslim, Celin Childs, at http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/186608/islam_vs_nation_of_islam.html?cat=49.

⁵⁸ My summaries are based on reading NOI original source material written by Wallace Dodd Ford (assumed name, Wallace Fard Muhammad) [See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wallace_Fard_Muhammad] and Elijah Robert Poole (assumed name, Elijah Muhammad) [See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elijah_Muhammed] in the Rare Book Room of the University of Chicago, in the 1980s. My motivation for that research was contacts with NOI members and radio addresses by Louis Farrakhan while living in Chicago.

- *Black experiences with the “White Man’s religions”—Christianity and Judaism*
- *Black affirmation found in non-racist, universal tenets of classical Islam [over against Christianity and Judaism]*

As an expert in my own religion, as someone knowledgeable in the Religions of the Book, and as a historian of religion, NOI is more a racist cult than a true religion—which explains why many of their most prominent members left NOI and became Sunni Muslims.⁵⁹ No true Muslim believes Jesus Christ was God incarnate, and surely not that Wallace Fard Muhammad was Allāh incarnate nor that Elijah Muhammad was his prophet.

In a sense, just as the KKK was and remains an extreme form of racism due to its belief that whites are superior to all other races, there is a structural comparison with NOI. NOI’s cosmology teaches Blacks were the “Original People,” a primeval Black scientist, *Yakub*, created Whites as the “Black Antithesis.” Whites are “potential people” in need of evolutionary progress to develop into Blacks.

Only a small percentage of American blacks can swallow such doctrines. However, as is the case elsewhere in history, when people are under high levels of pain and stress, they will accept palliatives that promise relief, even when they run against reason and common sense. September 11, 2001, produced many examples where all Americans—because of pain and fear—made millions of bad judgments seeking relief.⁶⁰

Recapitulation:
Americans Hating Americans—
Learning From Our Hates and Antipathies

The previous sections have had several purposes—all aimed to head us back to our understanding of how foreign Muslims did what they did on September 11, 2001. Let us summarize what I hope to have demonstrated from reflections on the Civil War and its 150+ years of impacts on Southerners towards the North, and black Americans towards white Americans. Then will follow the *empathic understanding* of Muslims who killed Americans on September 11, 2001.

⁵⁹ At best, NOI may, perhaps, be called a syncretistic religion. However, as a historian with “no dog in the fight” at all, nor any racist motives, NOI seems more a personality cult, designed for its original founders’ benefits (based on NOI’s somewhat notorious history), which they empowered to attract black Americans through inclusions of racist elements and dynamics, then thinly shellacked with points from classical Islam. The founders, their work, and their leadership, have been repudiated by some very prominent former leaders of NOI, e.g., to be found at the section, “Noted current and former members and associates of Nation of Islam,” at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nation_of_Islam. Also see the Wiki “Category: Former Nation of Islam Members,” at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Category:Former_Nation_of_Islam_members Some, like Malcolm X, were assassinated for their criticisms and exodus by the NOI.

⁶⁰ An illustration of pain leading to irrational acts would be that, in the highly emotional period after September 11, 2001, the *Patriot Act* was passed quickly—despite scholars of the U.S. Constitution warning the hasty legislation was both unconstitutional and anti-constitutional.

American Empathy-Based Hate and Antipathies Connected with the Civil War

- White Confederates felt empathic hate and antipathy against the North, not merely due to “losing the war” or “slaves freed” but also due to shared devastation, poverty, and humiliation
- Freed slaves felt empathic hate and antipathy against the KKK and other Confederate racist, domestic terror groups, and towards racist whites who did nothing to intervene with law enforcement, or who aided and abetted crimes
- Confederate veterans and widows lived far into the twentieth century, sharing stories of personal and group hatred and antipathies against both the North and blacks with children and grandchildren, and others sympathetic or empathetic to those stories, or who became so as a result of those stories
- Freed slaves—children and adults—lived far into the twentieth century, sharing stories of personal and group hatred and antipathies against Confederate slaveholders and families, then *other* Americans around the country, with children and grandchildren, and others sympathetic or empathetic to those stories, or who became so as a result of those stories
- The Civil War produced two broad groups with separate stories of separate group hates and antipathies: (1) Southern whites, with their families and all influenced by them, and (2) Southern freed slaves, with their families and all influenced by them
- The Civil War, while appearing to us today as “long ago,” generated 150+ years of
 - Southern white hatred and antipathy against the North
 - Southern black hatred and antipathy against whites
 - Southern-continued, but U.S.-wide, continued white racism against blacks
 - Southern-centered, but U.S.-wide, continued black identity and self-defense against racist whites

American Empathy-Based Identity and Unity Connected with the Civil War

- White Confederates felt empathy for each other due to shared sufferings
- Freed slaves felt empathy for each other due to shared sufferings
- Confederate veterans and widows lived far into the twentieth century, sharing stories of personal and group sufferings with children and grandchildren, and others sympathetic or empathetic to those stories, or who became so as a result of those stories
- Freed slaves—children and adults—lived far into the twentieth century, sharing stories of personal and group sufferings with children and grandchildren, and others sympathetic or empathetic to those stories, or who became so as a result of those stories
- Confederate whites and later generations:

- Built many monuments to their leaders, fallen, their sufferings, and their “Cause”
- Maintained group unity and cohesion through institutions and rituals
- Maintained group dominance through laws and suppression of black and other competition
- Freed slaves and later generations:
 - Built a few monuments where they could, and when they could afford them, to their leaders and fallen
 - Maintained group unity and cohesion principally through their Christian congregations, clubs and associations
 - Maintained halting, intermittent, yet steady group progress *against* unceasing, constant, strong white opposition, disenfranchisement, and undermining

***Extrapolated Historical Lessons:
American Sympathy, Empathy, Antipathy, and Hate***

- Personal traumatic experiences remain intergenerational, intersocial, and long-term
- Personal traumatic experiences—when linked with and within an identifiable group—create *indelible historical bonds, shared identities, and common motivations*
- Major traumatic events to major traumatized groups *leave indelible historical memories, identities, and motivations for persons self-identified as members of those groups*
- United and Interwoven personal and group experiences are *historical forces* which are:
 - Powerful
 - Intergenerational
 - Unpredictable
 - Uncontrollable
 - Interminable—so long as individuals and groups:
 - Choose to remember them as individuals and groups
 - Experientially “repeat” them in new or “identifiably similar” events
 - Unintentionally remember them through re-traumatizing institutions, laws, and other public reminder
- Personal decisions—apart from, within, or against—groups are *historical forces* which:
 - Test, prove, and affect self-identity
 - Definitely impact individuals with, for, against whom we interact, *as individuals and as individuals who mediate/communicate their experiences to groups where they hold memberships*
 - *Potentially* impact our personal family histories, depending on family views/traditions of:
 - Present intrinsic value of current family members

- Value placed on deceased members' character legacies
- Family discussions of family tradition and legacy
- Respect of adults mediating family tradition
- *Potentially* impact family histories of individuals with, for, against whom we interact
 - Unpredictably
 - Uncontrollably
 - Interminably
- *Potentially* impact our group histories with, for, against whom we interact (etc, as above)

Therefore, using this historical analogy, we see possibilities for how millions of Americans are gathered into large, identifiable groups whose members share the following characteristics:

- Group members are *empathetic with each other due to shared experiences*
- Group members are *sympathetic with others who suffer as they have or do*
- Group members are *unsympathetic with any who "talk at them" but have no shared experience*
- Groups members have *antipathies, deep suspicions, with some even hating, persons or groups responsible, or held responsible for suffering—because of the living vitality of past history mediated by suffering family members, or other members of the group*

**September 11, 2001:
Understanding Enemy Hates and Antipathies
American and Muslim**

Never Forget!

On September 11, 2001, around 3000 innocent Americans were killed. All their immediate and extended families, friends, neighbors, coworkers, and all who know those people, will never forget. America pledged never to forget, and our excursion into the Civil War and after shows we are capable of that.

Now we have the thousands of U.S. soldiers killed, maimed, and temporarily or permanently insane from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder That number will grow. Now add in all the same people who love or know them and their families. We are headed into the hundreds of thousands, actually probably millions, who never will forget.

Because these people were Americans, and we are Americans, we are bound together by being fellow citizens in a common country we love. For as long as surviving U.S. veterans live, they will tell their stories to their children (if they will, and most veterans never tell all, and some never tell anything). Then those children will tell their children, and all the networks of people in their families, and so on.

Based on what we have seen from the Civil War, the long cycle of hatred for all the Muslims will continue for at least 150+ years, and counting, in the case of our own domestic war and its traumatic impacts on later generations.

The question I pose now is, *Do any of the Muslims living abroad whose loved ones were noncombatants, like our 3000 on September 11, 2001, have a right to have the same hatred we have, and like us, never to forget their own vow to kill as many Americans as possible, just as some Americans want to do with Muslims?*

For the sake of honoring our veterans and their families, who have hate for the fallen and damaged, *Do any of the Muslims living abroad whose loved ones were military combatants, like those of ours killed so far and counting, have a right to the same hatred we have, and like us, never forget their own vow to kill as many Americans as possible, just as some of us want to do with Muslims?*

If we see how long and how effectively our own American whites and blacks have remembered, and how well some of them have hated to do the things they have done, surely we can see, by analogy, what we have in store for at least the next century or two.

Collateral Damage

On September 11, 2001, nearly 3000 innocent Americans were murdered by teams of Muslim *mujahidin*, sent by Osama Bin Ladin and his *Al-Qaeda* organization. The word “murdered” is our perspective. So is our use of the word “terrorists” to describe this particular set of Muslim enemies. Finally, phrases like, “unprovoked and vicious attack,” are our interpretations. To use a phrase common among attorneys, “It all depends on whose ox is being gored,” drawn from the biblical legal codes.⁶¹

The United States and many other nations regularly kill civilians to obtain a military strategic purpose. For example, during World War II, U.S. planes “fire-bombed” German and Japanese cities inhabited by civilians. Fire-bombing is a *bona fide* (!) military tactic.⁶² The fire-bombing of Tokyo killed approximately 100,000, in one night. So, from a U.S. point of view, if a certain strategy—e.g., ending WW II—requires killing hundreds of thousands to obtain the desired result, it is a valid military strategy. The same argument applied to the dropping of atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And the deaths resulted in a premature end to the war and an unconditional surrender. The use of *napalm*⁶³ or other indiscriminate-killing devices (e.g., “cluster bombs,” “beehives,” etc) are similarly effective for strategic purposes.

Bin Ladin was trained by the U.S. military for Muslim *jihad* against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. We trained him and others not from intrinsic interest in Afghani peoples

⁶¹ Exodus 21:28-32.

⁶² See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Firebombing>.

⁶³ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napalm>.

but using their hatred and antipathies as surrogates to drain the Soviets of blood and treasure. Whoever he was before our military training, whatever reservations he had about killing civilians before we trained him, he knew he was being trained by a nation with our military history. Bin Ladin was an intelligent man. He knew how American armies worked in times of war, and how America trained him in strategic arts of war.

Wherever military strategy is employed, civilian deaths must be factored in. In war, civilian noncombatants are not moms and dads, grandpas and grandmas. They are “collateral damage.” Little babies and children hit by “beehive” *flechettes*—hundreds of needles that have pierced eyes, faces, and bodies—are collateral damage. And, as learned during the Vietnam War, all this collateral damage must not be photographed. Non-military Americans falsely and wrongly interpret such data. They do not understand secondary effects of the primary thing they, the American people expect from their American military forces: to win strategic objectives, leading to victories in battle, leading to victory in war.

Bin Ladin saw himself as a soldier, a *mujahidin*, just like in Afghanistan. He had partnered up with America for the same reason we partnered up with him. He was using American military knowledge and assistance as a surrogate for his ultimate loyalty to Allāh and the House of Islam. He had no more loyalty to us than we did to him. So when he employed a military strategy that included collateral damage on September 11, 2001, he was doing what he learned from us. What was that strategy?

It was economic. The World Trade Center *was the World Trade Center*. Bin Ladin had the element of surprise, completely. If he had demolished the White House and U.S. Congress, September 11, 2001, would probably have been the first day of World War III. We may never know the original military target for hijacked *United Airlines Flight 93*,⁶⁴ but we do know where Bin Ladin invested 66.66% of his suicide teams: the World Trade Center. The civilian casualties were collateral damage of this military strategy of attrition, as Bin Ladin made clear in his publicly published, November 2002

“Letter to the American People”:

If the Americans refuse to listen to our advice and the goodness, guidance and righteousness that we call them to, then be aware that you will lose this Crusade Bush began, just like the other previous Crusades in which you were humiliated by the hands of the Mujahideen, fleeing to your home in great silence and disgrace. If the Americans do not respond, then their fate will be that of the Soviets who fled from Afghanistan to deal with their military defeat, political breakup, ideological downfall, and economic bankruptcy.⁶⁵

Exactly as the U.S. had used him and his fellow *mujahidin* as surrogates to drain the Soviet economy (which pleased them anyway, since the U.S.S.R. was an atheistic regime), Bin Ladin’s strike on September 11 was the same military strategy, applied for the first time. It was a retaliatory strike right at the economic heart of the nation

⁶⁴ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Airlines_Flight_93.

⁶⁵ <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>.

Civilians were collateral damage. Based on what we know, September 11, 2001, cost \$100 Billion per day for the first three days. Estimates now are that the existing War on Terror has cost \$15 Trillion dollars.⁶⁶ *Al-Qaeda's* war of attrition is working well, when combined with our own domestic economic excesses in operation since the 1960s.

Most Americans do not know this, but the last time the U.S. government was "in the black" was in 1835 when President Andrew paid off the national debt. ALL wars since then have been debtor-nation wars, at phenomenal cost. On September 11, 2001, Bin Ladin struck a "sleeping tiger," as Japanese Admiral Yamamoto said right after Pearl Harbor.⁶⁷ But Bin Ladin came from a business family and knows how money is made and lost, risk management, and long-term economic drivers, factors, and forecasts. He knew that when the Twin Towers fell, it would start some dominoes, which still are falling today.

He knew there would be collateral damage, innocent Americans, and also innocent Muslims hit by the coming U.S. retaliatory strikes and wars. Many of us do not think about that. He knew more innocent people he loved (or we think he did) would die: Muslim men, women and children, all innocent, whether sympathetic or empathetic to his *jihad*. Yet when a military general is in a war to win, he uses whatever strategy will lead to victory, any cost of his own soldiers or civilians' blood, so long as the costs-benefits analysis points clearly towards victory.

Like another American enemy, General Ho Chi Minh,⁶⁸ Bin Ladin already was invested for the long haul. He knew when he hit the U.S. government on September 11, 2001, there would be collateral damage in civilian casualties, as his U.S. trainers taught him. But he also knew the tiger he was awakening, with its most powerful military claws and muscle, eventually would collapse from economic implosion. There are healthy tigers with great heart, and there are unhealthy tigers crushable under the sheer weight of their feed bills.

Now we come to questions, based on analogies from our own history.

First, since we have our military principles used for so long (e.g., at least from Sherman's use of his scorched-earth policies), do Muslims also have the same military right to see people only in military terms, as collateral

⁶⁶ According to Robert Perry, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco: "In terms of providing liquidity, we were concerned that the disruptions to the financial markets could have dire consequences for the economy as a whole, so we provided additional funds until orderly functioning could be restored. This included injecting massive amounts of liquidity through discount window loans and open market operations: on the three days after the attacks, the total injection amounted to over \$100 billion a day. In addition, we lowered short-term interest rates twice over the next three weeks by 100 basis points in total." That was \$300 billion in 3 days. See

<http://www.frbsf.org/publications/economics/letter/2001/el2001-35.html>. Also, see

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_effects_arising_from_the_September_11_attacks. A detailed scholarly work by Olivia Jackson can be found at,

<http://www.journalof911studies.com/volume/2008/OliviaJackson911andUS-Economy.pdf>.

⁶⁷ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Isoroku_Yamamoto%27s_sleeping_giant_quote.

⁶⁸ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ho_chi_minh.

damage, all to be factored in as mere military purposes for a war they call jihad?

Second, since Christians have used secular military strategies against their own peoples, and foreign peoples in all our wars, what is the relationship between our actions and our confession to follow Jesus Christ, who did not calculate people as collateral damage?

Justice and Just War

We already have seen that war is unjust, in the killing of innocent people. September 11, 2001, is our most graphic example we commemorate now. Our soldiers have high suicide rates. Only Americans interested in reading why will learn they were more than “cowardice,” the classic military response given for hundreds of years in U.S. history.

Many soldiers who return from combat have *Post Traumatic Stress Disorder* related to what they have seen and done. PTSD sometimes occurs as a matter of course, even for the best, most moral and ethical soldiers. It also occurs in some soldiers who are traumatized by what they and their comrades were ordered to do, or did on their own. The injustices of war have long-term effects in civilians and soldiers, and their survivors.

The pure, classical meaning of “justice” means “balancing the scales,” with injury on one side and restitution on the other. In reality, there can be no justice in any war. You cannot put one precious corpse on a scale and have the one who did the killing somehow magically transformed so he or she is put on the other scale, and you “get back” what you have lost.

No, when a life has been taken, the only thing that can be put on the scale is a corpse, on both sides. In the *Book of Exodus*, 21:23-25, we read that famous teaching that both Jews and Muslims still have in their legal codes, and which has been passed—in modified, moderate form into our U.S. legal codes:

But if there is injury, then you shall appoint life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burn for burn, wound for wound, bruise for bruise.

Justice is a problem when it comes to corpses, not economics. If an economic crime has been committed, money can be repaid (though not secondary-effect harms after the crime occurred). When someone is killed, if you metaphorically could put the corpse of the victim on one side of the scales, then something closer to real justice would be putting another corpse of another innocent victim in the killer’s family. For example, if the corpse on one side is a male baby, then the corpse required for the other side would have to be a male baby, or at least a baby.

In a simplistic distillation of “just war” theory, a nation’s citizens have been killed, or are threatened by national security interests, and that nation uses means it *alleges are just* in order to “balance the scales.” After September 11, 2001—indeed, go back to every occasion in American history where our citizens have been enthusiastic for war--

Americans enlisted with great enthusiasm. They wanted to be part of the national response to obtain justice, and protect other innocent Americans back home. This was one reason many Americans voted for President G.W. Bush's reelection. He was their Commander in Chief, directing their just war.

After September 11, 2001, when I read Bin Ladin's list of grievances in his 1996 and 1998 writings, I started to do some math, thinking about "just war" and what it would take to "balance the scales" *from Bin Ladin's point of view*.

Justice Math

Now what I am about to suggest is not literally true; that is, there are no Muslim Fundamentalist Accounts keeping strict records of all the Muslims killed, alleged killed, or propagandized as killed. Nevertheless, because the Qur'an does teach a fairly clear "eye for an eye" principle when it comes to Islamic justice—social or military—I repeat a summary of my "justice math" from the most conservative Muslim point of view.

Let us use only the Oil Embargo numbers of Iraqi women and children killed. The low number was 100,000. The median number was 500,000. A higher number was 750,000. In Bin Ladin's 1996 declaration of war against America and Israel, he put it at 1,500,000 (which probably included the Gulf War. So the facts are not really obtainable. Yet no lower number than 100,000 ever was produced, and not many took issue with the alleged 500,000. Madeleine Albright took that number and said the "price is worth it."

Now do research and find out all U.S. military actions against Muslims, in the Middle East or anywhere else in the world. You will not find accurate numbers of "collateral damage," for obvious reasons. The dead do not speak. Entire families killed do not keep records. No military force in the world since the Nazis ever has kept accurate records. So in your research do what you can to find out the alleged civilian dead, maimed, or otherwise driven into poverty and insanity. You can create a set of low, median, and high numbers for those Muslims.

In other words, do what you can to learn as much as possible about how many innocent Muslims—not warriors—have been killed or otherwise harmed directly or casually-connected with the United States of America, worldwide. That is your top number, the big one for Muslims seeking revenge and retaliation. Now add up American losses. We have a completely accurate count there. You can go back as far as you want when it comes to Osama Bin Ladin and *Al-Qaeda* and we have the names, ages, dates of death, pretty much about anything on the dead, maimed, disappeared, and so forth.

Now whatever your numbers—lowest to highest—subtract the number of American dead, just the dead, with the estimate lowest number of Muslim dead. Since our enemies follow the rule of "eye for an eye," you will see that, *for those who will not stop fighting until every last dead Muslim has been avenged*, some

Muslim enemies are committed to killing *millions of Americans*. This is the kind of “justice math” that, unless some American decides to work a better solution, the “Global War on Terror” will have no possible end. Even nuclear carpet-bombing would only delay new generations of Muslim individuals and groups committed to killing the killers.

Learn From Our Own Hates

We have the possibility of learning from our own long history of hate in this nation also are a solid basis for developing empathic understanding for Muslim hates. The scholar Amy Chua has shown in her book, World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability,⁶⁹ analogies drawn from her own expertise. I strongly encourage the reading of that book.

Robert S. McNamara’s first “lesson” given in the movie, *Fog of War*, was to develop empathy for our enemies.⁷⁰ He knew, whatever his experience and wisdom from his service and mistakes, that he was teaching principles most Americans would not heed. Why? One reason is that people worldwide prefer simple answers that do not contradict their current emotions, patterns of thought, preferences, and the social reinforcements they receive from other people. Empathy requires the will to want to connect with your enemies, the will to be willing to consider the possibility that your enemies are also human like you are.

September 11, 2001--Ten Year Later—September 11, 2011

Where Do Christians Go From Here?

There are two ways to read the word, “Christians.” There are individual believers, and there are groups of believers. Individuals make personal choices and have much more control over how they use their lives and resources available to them.

Christians in groups—whatever their personal commitments—must negotiate with other members, which involves compromise, subordination, cooperation, and ultimate dilution of the personal within the corporate. The “how-I-would-do-it” is adapted within the “this-is-how-we-are-doing-it.”

Regarding September 11, 2001, ten years later, it probably is safe to guess that many Christian individuals, congregations, and denominations will continue what they have done during the past ten years. Christians seem to prefer their religious habits of thinking and behavior, since both require less energy (and less self-criticism, change, and new growth).

⁶⁹ Doubleday: New York, 2003.

⁷⁰ See the Wikipedia summary of his other lessons, at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Fog_of_War#R.S._McNamara.27s_eleven_lessons_of_war.

That we want to *reflect, learn, , and grow in obedience to God*, is a model to follow. 9-11 is a traumatic, historic event with literally innumerable effects on Christian individuals and congregations. It is great wisdom to gain perspective and learning *because the event will have continuing effects for the rest of American history* (like the Civil War and its aftermath).

Some Christians lost loved ones in the attack. Others lost loved ones to death, dismemberment, or PTSD, through combat. Some have lost employment and homes since 9-11. Christian congregations and denominations have less money now than in 2001. Some may have member defections, if members left because some other communion appeared to meet their post-9-11 religious needs.

One thing we know. In 2011 and thereafter, the Gospel of Jesus Christ is needed now more than ever for America and the world. We also know a second thing. In 2011 and thereafter, Christian individuals and families, congregations and denominations, need to unite in Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit (1) for their own mutual support and (2) for severer demands to be faithful to Christ and an imploding nation and world.

The following sections will address these points, first, general “Good News” for individual Christians and then specific “Suggestions” for Christians in leadership positions in congregations, denominations, and areas of employment in the United States. Readers should be prepared for my prejudice, which I state openly, and which will recur again and again in the following brief sections.

Prejudicial Presuppositions Behind and Under My Recommendations

I believe in and have experienced the living God attested by the biblical witnesses, and in Jesus Christ, the son of the living God. I believe not due to a cosmic projection of my imagination, but because of tested and reaffirmed personal faith and experience. Though too much of the history of Christianity itself has denied the Jesus I know and love; nevertheless, occasional, unpredictable, real, objective events in my life and as observed in the lives of others, have mended my doubts and skepticism. That is another story, but details which would impress all but the hardest hearts.

For me, there is no other prophet, no other religious teacher, no aesthetic philosopher, and surely no earthly individual or political realm, to compare or supplant the love I have for Jesus. I also refer Christians to what St. Paul said to the Greeks, reported in Acts 17:24-28,⁷¹ for any who believe in his inspiration.

⁷¹ E.g., “The God who made the world and everything in it is the Lord of heaven and earth and does not live in temples built by human hands. And he is not served by human hands, as if he needed anything. Rather, he himself gives everyone life and breath and everything else. From one man he made all the nations, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he marked out their appointed times in history and the boundaries of their lands. God did this so that they would seek him and perhaps reach out for him and

Jesus said, “Do not judge lest you be judged, and the standard of measure you use will be used against you.”⁷² Paul wrote, “Who are you to judge the servant of another? To that person’s own master the person ‘stands’ or ‘falls.’”⁷³ That corrects me from many bad things I used to do, when less mature than I am.

Therefore, in our post-9-11 era, it seems to me Jesus Christ is needed now more than ever in our world. The problem is not Jesus, but his alleged disciples. So I understand Jews who reject my faith, based on Holocaust ovens (and much more). I understand Muslims who reject my faith, based on their experiences with Christian idolatry and greed (and more). It is for me, personally, to live in the faith and obedience to Jesus Christ.

Still, it seems to me our post 9-11 era cries out for more love, forgiveness, mercy, compassion, etc. Jesus’ person and doctrine seem most easily suited to offer us theological principles that are naturally fitted for our time. Our problem as Christians is that our tradition has not followed those doctrines and principles. Our history, not all of it but most of it, is a contradiction of *what might have been*. Therefore, it is more vital than ever for us now, more than ever in our era, with its demands and needs, to do what our ancestors explained away, or simply refused to do.

The most liberal Jews still must contend with all the divine commands in Moses’ Torah which they no longer believe as literally possible or true. They have the Conquest of Canaan to reinterpret, with its clear justifications in the divine command. The most liberal Muslims still must contend with the divine commands in Muhammad’s Qur’an that specifically order certain things against the enemies of the House of Islam. They also have all the sayings of Muhammad in the *haditha* which do not have the same status as the Qur’an, yet which practically do in Islamic jurisprudence and theology.

Nevertheless, I must stand and join hands with anyone—Jew, Muslim, humanist, atheist—who opposes the killing of innocent people in the name of God. I see Jesus doing that, though this is a product of my imagination, based on the Jesus I see in the Gospels. So I affirm *any analogy—emotion, thought, word, and deed—that bears qualitative or quantitative structural recognition with the Jesus I love*.⁷⁴

find him, though he is not far from any one of us.” If Paul was inspired by the Holy Spirit, then shall we not consider and apply this foundational statement?

⁷² Matthew 7:1-2.

⁷³ Romans 14:4.

⁷⁴ I live by, or try to, a kind of modified “Vincenzian Canon” I love “everywhere, always, and in all” anything Jesus explicitly taught and commanded. That means I end up loving many different kinds of people just because I love Jesus Christ, even some skeptics and atheists, because of *why they refuse to believe*. This also means I find very difficult to love either dogmatic fundamentalists, or dogmatic liberals. Both love their own best, yet they share the same sardonic attitude towards each other. They cannot see Jesus in each other, only whatever “deficits” are in the other. Likewise, I find any Jew or Muslim, or a Hindu, or pantheist, the more I think that the Apostle Paul was correct in Acts 17. Fred Rogers, an ordained Presbyterian minister, used to say to children that he liked them just the way they are. That’s the Christian message. God *starts* with us where we are, but calls us to the kind of love we see in Jesus

Suggestions for Individual Christians

- September 11-like events need not control you or your Christian life. Bad things happen. They have happened to you. You still control you. You control your responses to bad things, nothing else. You are alive today. You have God. God has given you today choices on how you will respond to events and people. No event, no person can take this away from you. You are grounded in God's love. Look at how first responders jumped in on 9-11-01. Be a first responder in your life every day—to the situations you have power to exercise God's love in.
- September 11-like events need not erode and drain your emotions and thinking. Jesus himself prayed, a great deal. If he needed prayer for his life and work, why would you think you can cope with 9-11-type events, or economic news, without even more prayer? One reason many Christians are as drained and neurotic as everyone else is simple: *they just respond like everyone else!* Prayer is your greatest daily “free-available-anytime” resource to keep your emotions calm and your mind clear. Most Americans are resistant to “Be still and know I am God.”⁷⁵ Most of us *fill in* “empty space” with mental, emotional, behavioral, and spiritual trash. So when 9-11-type events happen, we just cave in. Prayer is so simple, one of our most neglected ways to “stop the usual and just be still and listen.” This is an act of your will that connects you with God's Spirit, and shows God you love enough to want to open and share your inner being with God. Start praying and now.
- September 11-like events need to be interpreted with the wisdom of the ages, God's Word. You own a copy of the scriptures. PBS, NPR, CNN, NBC, or FOX, have interpretations. You do not expect them to cite God or Jesus Christ. The only time American government officials refer to God is for blessing for their plans, not for any contrary answer to prayer. Reading your Bible does two things, at least: (1) you are reminded of what Jesus' said and did and (2) hear any news and commentators differently when you have read again Jesus' teachings. Our politics need the real Jesus, known from the scriptures, not an American caricature.
- September 11-like events need God's help in the Holy Spirit. Jesus called the Spirit the “helper or comforter”⁷⁶ and St. Paul said the Spirit “assists us when we are weak” and “intercedes for us” with God.⁷⁷ We are not “on our own” when it comes to our life of faith, but have living divine aid, more than our reasoning faculties in reading the scriptures. We can, however, work against this help.

Christ. One might ask, then, if God really does like us as we are if the good Lord's always trying to change us.

⁷⁵ Psalm 46:10a.

⁷⁶ John 14:16-17.

⁷⁷ Romans 8:26-28.

Jesus said the only “unforgiveable sin” was blasphemy of the Spirit,⁷⁸ which I take to be resisting what the Spirit wants you to do in your thoughts, emotions, and behaviors. *James* 4:17 says, “To the one who knows the right thing to do, and does not do it, it is sin.”⁷⁹ We must cooperate with the Spirit’s promptings, and respond, repent, change, cooperate, and grow, can set us back, or keep us from blessing.

We American Christians just love to follow our national traditions—to be pathfinders, explorers, pioneers—which means, on this Fourth of July as I write this, celebrating our “independence.” This runs against the nature of our relationship with God, though many fail to see it. The Holy Spirit is given to believers so we can be *interdependent, co-dependent* in a healthy not neurotic sense, with God’s will in learning how to love ourselves, love our families, love our neighbors, and even love our enemies, every day and night.

Loving our enemies is not natural. Freud said the command was absurd, and even neighbor-love neurotic.⁸⁰ Jesus knew it ran against human nature, which is why he directly asked what people *normally did* in granting favors to people who already were favorable to them. Jesus’ basis for the command was *supernatural*, i.e., to paraphrase, “Do not look around you but heavenward, to the example of your heavenly Father, who gives sun and rain, to all, including enemies.”⁸¹

Therefore, it is essential for us not merely to “hear the Word” and have our nature struggle against it—which is natural!—but to allow God’s Spirit to assist our natural wills to have the grace to love with supernatural love. As Americans, with the additional burden of a “John Wayne” tradition, the Spirit will help us too.

- September 11-like events need Christians filled with love, to witness and be forces of love in chaotic times. Be determined to be a “vessel of God’s love in Christ.” When we are in tune with God, we can bless our spouses, families, congregations, workplaces, and society. Our divided nation and world need the healing power of God’s love through Christians filled with it.

Often we are like rudderless boats waiting for the next squall of bad national or international news. Daily determination to be a “vessel of God’s love in Christ” is your rudder. Your little boat will fly in quiet waters, and keep on course in bad waters. Living in love is a great way to live. And when others are “losing their heads” in hate, over-eager to follow what some bad leaders may say (who are not in God’s will or listening to God), you have the inner compass and gyroscope of love

⁷⁸ Matthew 12:31-32.

⁷⁹ Also see Romans 7:19, and its entire context and resolution.

⁸⁰ *Civilization and Its Discontents*, ed. and trans. by James Strachey (Norton: NY, 1961), pp. 56-58.

Freud discussed natural aggression and the logic of natural distrust, within the context of the religious command to love the neighbor—whose real intentions we do not know—and added that the command to love the enemy was like, *Credo quia absurdum*.

⁸¹ Matthew 5:43-48.

that guides and stabilizes others needing God in crazy times. YOU will be a powerful witness then, and they will want to know the God helping you.

- September 11-like events include suffering, pain, uncertainty, and cries for help. The areas listed above—life itself, prayer, scripture, the Holy Spirit, being vessels of God’s love—all bring God’s grace and healing for us. We are comforted and healed. St. Paul wrote something amazing, when you reconnect it with the previous discussions on *empathy*.

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our afflictions so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.⁸²

We are afflicted and hurt. God responds in mercy and comfort. We are comforted. Why? Paul adds an empathic interpretation, “so that we will be able to comfort” others like us. *This is theologically, experientially grounded empathy*. It goes like this.

1. We suffer.
2. We turn to God, using all our resources above.
3. God graciously responds, supports, encourages, and heals, and we praise God for these things.
4. We see others suffering, but now with *empathic understanding*, because we have suffered too.
5. We comfort them with the comfort we have received from God, with our own restoration through healing, renewal, and the overflow of love.
6. We must tell them the sources through which God has comforted us: faith, prayer, scripture, the Holy Spirit, being vessels of love, and yes, being empathic daughters and sons, servants and ministers of a gracious God, to other sufferers!

Without the last step, all our suffering and restoration end up doing something very American. *We take the credit*. People comforted by us will say, “Wow, what a loving person!” As Americans, we just love idols and stars, and a little limelight of our own.

When Jesus was called good, he said, “Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone.”⁸³ That was “No. 6” above in action. So when God has blessed us during these horrible post-9-11 times, *because we followed all the avenues to access divine grace and blessing*, we best had notarize the One who gave us what we have to give.

Our post-9-11 era offers us—a time of lost control, uncertainty, anxiety, and suffering—to access more, not less control over our lives, through the power of faith in God, not ourselves, and the false sense of security when “things are OK.” With all the chaos we have, we still have all these powers available to us:

- To thank God for the life and choices we have each day—to be used fully
- To communicate with God through prayer—to be renewed spiritually and emotionally
- To read God’s Word—to help the form and content of our mental and cognitive processes
- To receive and be blessed by the Holy Spirit—to do what we cannot do alone

⁸² 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

⁸³ Mark 10:18.

- To commit to be vessels of God's love every day—to bless others and increase the faith they have in God, by seeing God in our emotions, minds, emotions, behaviors
- To be comforted by God, yet realizing it is *comfort that gives us empathy, and gives us God-experiences of grace to share with others like us*

Suggestions For Pastors

We live in fearful, suspicion-laden, divisive, hateful times, nationally and internationally. This is the macro-focus of our time in which our congregants, and we ourselves, are burdened down with fact-based anxiety, stress, and bad news. Now bring the focus down into the micro-focus, that of the individual families in our congregations. Joblessness, reduced or eliminated benefits, upside-down debt, spiraling prices, all lead to domestic financial, emotional, behavior stresses for spouses and their families. We also know what these things mean as pastors and how it affects us in all ways too.

This is your context of ministry. To predict it is not going to get better for a long time is not pessimism, but macroeconomics. Jesus fed the multitudes, but pastors cannot write checks for everyone in the congregation who needs more money. Jesus also said, "The poor you always will have with you."⁸⁴ Jesus provided healing. Jesus provided food. But his ministry was very much a ministry to all through the living Word of God. Peter said in *Acts* to a beggar, "*Silver and gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!*"⁸⁵

In these times, pastors need not merely to "preach the Word in season and out of season"⁸⁶ (which surely is needed). They need to incarnate tenderness, sensitivity, compassion, for congregants starved for Good News, crippled by circumstances. Pastors need to be Good Physicians when their flocks have been ravaged by the wolf-fangs of economic recession and depression.

Pastors must be more *empathic* than ever before. People are hurting so much. The more pastors *feel with their people*, instead of speaking words, however sincere, of *feeling for them*, the stronger, more effective ministries pastors still can have in this Post 9-11 era. People need more love and patience now than ever. The more their pastor is a comforter, healer and helper, the more people feel the presence of Christ mediated by the pastor. The more they feel the presence of Christ, the more drawn they are to their congregation providing that mediation through the pastoral presence.

Pastors still must be prepared for more rancor and divisiveness brought into the Body of Christ by people stressed out by joblessness, upside-down debts, no healthcare, pensions and retirement accounts gone, and all the rest. Nevertheless, pastors should see all these pressures as *teaching opportunities for faith, hope, and love in God, for loving each other, for learning what it means to be part of the Body of Christ.*

⁸⁴ Matthew 26:11.

⁸⁵ Acts 3:6.

⁸⁶ 2 Timothy 4:2.

The more fact-based stress, anxiety, and emotional trauma there are, the more pastors need to be grounded in what they can give that makes them unique from job-hunting services, social services, and other things their people access the other six days of the week. Congregants need and want to experience pastors who are experiencing in their own lives and families the God they preach.

Therefore, if in decades past the pastor-administrator model was most needed—because there was so much growth, so many meetings, so much to manage and control—in this Post 9-11 Era we need pastors who themselves are truly shepherds who love their sheep. If they have suffered and surrendered their own chaos to God and found solace, comfort, and healing, they will be prepared from their own experience to minister from “faith confirmed.”⁸⁷

Denominations

September 11, **1901**, was one day among thousands of others in an era of explosive, mushrooming American wealth. To be an American at all in those days was to know you were part of a nation on the rise, regardless of your personal fortune. To be a Protestant Christian in those days was to be in The Christian Century, and many readers will recognize that, in retrospect, misplaced optimism in the name of a magazine surviving today from that time.⁸⁸

Many leaders in magisterial Protestant churches were inspired by Jesus’ prayer that his disciples “...*may all be one...that they also may be in us, so the world may believe You sent me...*”⁸⁹ Historic sectarianisms were being challenged by Jesus’ parables against judgment, strife, and division. The wheat and tares, good and bad fish caught in God’s Net, were to be left alone.⁹⁰

Unity in Christ, unity in faith, unity in faith, unity in love, all aimed towards one common goal—the conversion of the world to the Gospel of Jesus Christ—was being pushed forward by the upward economic expansions of a young America. For Christian capitalists here, the United States was a veritable Miracle-Machine, a dream somewhere between a kid given the keys to a candy store, and Peter the Fisherman in the Gospels, who the Lord gave such a haul he barely could get home with it all.⁹¹

Now all that is past. Christian denominations are mirrors of their supporting congregations, and the people in them. As economic cancer eats up Christian families

⁸⁷ For example, while I already was a scholar-expert on Jesus’ command, “Love your enemies,” in 1992 my brother, Bruce, was stabbed to death on a Washington DC street in a random act of robbery by a drug dealer. Trauma, long-term suffering, and adverse spiritual and emotional impacts only were healed, when I personally did what I preached, and what I had witnessed in historical studies of the great Christians before me: open up and allow God to help, heal, cleanse, and bless. This personal story, which also bears on empathy, as well as race relations, need not be told here.

⁸⁸ See *The Christian Century* at <http://www.christiancentury.org>.

⁸⁹ John 17:21.

⁹⁰ Matthew 13:24-50..

⁹¹ Luke 5:1-11.

in the grassroots, it spreads like leukemia into the budgetary blood of their congregations and, necessarily, *trickles up* into the life-blood of Christian denominational budgets.

Around September 11, 1901, when Christians denominational leaders talked of “cutting back,” they used a horticultural analogy—cutting away non-productive branches for more fruit elsewhere. Around September 11, 2011, Christians “cutting back” is best illustrated a medical analogy—*debridement*, when a surgeon cuts away dead and dying tissues seeking to save the victim.

What can be done? As elsewhere, I return to Jesus Christ himself. Let us read his words on the kind of cutting he predicted for his real, true disciples.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the vinedresser. Every branch in me that does not bear fruit, he takes away. Every one that bears fruit, he prunes that I may bear more fruit. You already are clean because of the word which I have spoken to you. Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, so neither you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine. You are the branches. Who abides in me, and I in that person, bears much fruit.

For apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me, that person is thrown away as a branch, and dries up. And those are gathered up, cast into the fire, and burned.

If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you. By this is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit, and prove to be my disciples. Just as the Father has loved me, I also have loved you; abide in my love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love. Just as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love.

These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be made full. This is my commandment, that you love one another, just as I have loved you.⁹²

I have the full historical capacity to explain the growth of Christian institutions tied to the growth of capital, with the current collapse of Christian institutions tied to the same. However, the reader’s patience is exhausted by now. I close with these suggestions to Christian denominations in this era, based on my firm belief in the passage above.

Pay close attention to Christian churches still growing, in this nation and in those with far worse economic and political conditions. They grow because they believe there is a living God, who sent Jesus Christ, who living in obedience to God conquered sin and death; who preach the Gospel in truth and fullness; and whose clergy demonstrate in faith and life they are led by the Word and Spirit. There are a few exceptions where charismatic (i.e., not in the sense of the Holy Spirit, but gifted personalities) leaders use their skills to “build organizations” called churches but more personality cults, or cash machines.

⁹² John 15:1-12.

There are growing Christian churches and institutions diligently paying close attention to Jesus and his commands for his disciples. They *want* to prune away anything that displeases God in their personal, congregational, and denominational lives. They live in repentance and humility, preferring to be last, not first; to be slaves and servants, not be served. They see Jesus himself in the hungry, thirsty, sick, naked and imprisoned, less metaphorically than in reality.⁹³ And their corporate lives together continue to bring more to them—voluntarily, without “methods” for growth—because their corporate life is lived in unity, love, and the divine presence do different from human institutions around them. These who live in and through the living Christ have *qualities* reflected in the early Church noted in *Acts* 2 and 4.

Concerning the history of institutional growth in Christianity—Roman Catholic, Magisterial Protestant, Eastern Orthodox, Free Church, and Charismatic—the greatest buildings and institutions were erected mainly by somewhat economically poor Christians who worked by the sweat of their brow and sacrificed to promote the cause of Jesus Christ, One who they experienced in their hearts and families. This was true in early America as well. This is true also for the great institutions built by Jews or persons of other religious faiths.

I suggest to Christian denominations that they consider returning to Jesus Christ, the living Christ, and the living God, in faith and obedience in all things; that they love each other as Christ loves the Church; and then, see how God blesses even in these difficult economic and political times.

There are some, in all the Christian denominations, who still press for more theological homogeneity, more creedal uniformity, than it seems Jesus required or taught. This is true for far-left and far-right communions. Too many are simply not satisfied to affirm people who have faith in and love Jesus Christ, the one who taught the tares should not be uprooted, lest the wheat be damaged, and that God’s angels would know the bad fish on Judgment Day.

There are fundamentalists who love to drive off and keep out those who do not agree with them. There are liberals who love to drive off and keep out those who do not agree with them. Of course, there are those in between who do the same. These all make their own deeply-held convictions the *regula fidei*⁹⁴ for all others. They all confess Jesus is both lord and Christ, call themselves members of his Church,⁹⁵ yet show their real identities by their harshness with any who do not believe as they do in points unrelated to the Great Confession.

These all seem most heretical⁹⁶ and, as Jesus himself prophesied, are identifiable as such, just as false prophets are known by their fruits.⁹⁷ Why would anyone want to take

⁹³ I.e., Matthew 25, the parable of the Sheep and Goats.

⁹⁴ Rules for the Faithful.

⁹⁵ Greek, “those called out,” the Church. See Matthew 16:18.

⁹⁶ Referring to the Greek word, *haeresis*, that is, “different doctrine” from Jesus’ clear teaching. In a different context but one not essentially dissimilar in point, see Paul’s *anathema* in Galatians 1:9.

her or his *personal additions of “what faith demands,”* then presume to add these to the basis for Christian identity and fellowship? Yet both extremes, the Far Right and Far Left, love their *additions* more than they love unity in Christ.

The Rock is not enough for them. Their egos cannot drill through it, only build on it as the Master has given the blueprint. So, still willful to press their own plans, they step off the rock and find soft ground to dig their footers and pour their concrete aggregate. They build according to their own plans. They are proud of their work, but wonder what went wrong when times like these come—when people already are shell-shocked, tremor-shaken, and looking for the Rock of Ages, not ego-driven Christians, pastors, congregations, or denominations.⁹⁸

September 11, 2011, and then all the later catastrophic economic elements related to and separate from it, demands a united Church of Christ, whose members love the incarnation of divine love—in Jesus and in his requirements for those he said he would recognize as his own—more than they love arguing for their own positions. The United States of America, the Middle East, and God’s world, need to see, at this time in history more than ever, *there is a God and that God brings together the most unlikely people into supernatural capacities for love, forgiveness, forbearance, and united work.*

There is a great cloud over America now, and many of the American churches. There once was a cloud over the disciples, with a Voice that hearkened, “This is my beloved son, listen to him!”⁹⁹ When they looked around, *they saw Jesus only.* To have one’s vision so full and focused on Jesus, to have one’s heart so full of the love of God illustrated in him, so that one’s ego finds itself divested of the powers of this world, is what the Church needs today.

This remains a real possibility. That possibility must begin with individuals, not with the conformity of others to what individuals believe. Therefore, as the old song said in the non-inclusive language of the 1960s:

Let there be peace on earth,
and let it begin with me.
Let there be peace on earth,
the peace that was meant to be.
With God as our father,
brothers all are we.
Let me walk with my brother,
in perfect harmony.

Let peace begin with me,
let this be the moment now.
With every step I take,

⁹⁷ Matthew 7:16.

⁹⁸ Negatively considered, 1 Timothy 2:8, 6:4; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Galatians 5:20; Romans 13:13, and the entire array from Proverbs 6:17-19; 28:25; 29:22; 10:12; 15:18. Positively considered, Colossians 3:14; John 17:23; 1 Peter 3:8, 1 John 4:20; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; and 2 Thessalonians 1:3.

⁹⁹ Mark 9:1-8.

let this be my solemn vow.
To take each moment,
and live each moment,
with peace eternally.
Let there be peace on earth,
and let it begin with me.¹⁰⁰

Many millions of all faith communities pray for peace in the world. They pray to many deities. They use many names. Jesus taught something about prayer, so I will close with this, which pertains to the needs of the Christian Churches, and more gravely, to the needs of a world on the edge of the Apocalypse.

Now He was telling them a parable to show that at all times they ought to pray and not to lose heart, saying, "In a certain city there was a judge who did not fear God and did not respect man. "There was a widow in that city, and she kept coming to him, saying, 'Give me legal protection from my opponent.' "For a while he was unwilling; but afterward he said to himself, 'Even though I do not fear God nor respect man, yet because this widow bothers me, I will give her legal protection, otherwise by continually coming she will wear me out.'" And the Lord said, "Hear what the unrighteous judge said; now, will not God bring about justice for His elect who cry to Him day and night, and will He delay long over them? "I tell you that He will bring about justice for them quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?"¹⁰¹

Let us not lose heart in our prayers for divine protection from our enemies, either those abroad or at home. Let us remain faithful and earnest and steadfast in those prayers. Justice will come. Yet Jesus forewarned what he will be seeking when he comes again. Will he find faith on the earth?

If Jesus truly becomes the center of our faith and obedience, our individual and collective work, if our hearts and minds become centered on and infused with the living Christ, we will love God, ourselves, our families, our congregations, our denominations, our nation, and our world, as Jesus did. And when we incarnate the capacities to love our enemies as Jesus did, abandoning our theological constructions against the love of enemies as he demanded, then two things will happen.

First, there will be more peace on the earth, having begun with us. Second, with so much love shown, as Jesus showed it, when he returns, there will be *more faith on the earth*.

¹⁰⁰ See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Let_There_Be_Peace_on_Earth_%28song%29.

¹⁰¹ Luk3 18:1-8.

**ORIGINAL ACADEMIC RESPONSE
TO
SEPTEMBER 11, 2001**

***The Deadly Spiral:*
Understanding the Enigma of Religious Violence
September 29, 2003¹⁰²**

Religious Violence as a Species of Human Violence

For thousands of years, violence has been the commonest form of conflict resolution in human history. Our earliest records, be they from the ancient stories of Near Eastern kings and pharaohs recorded on stone steles, in royal archives, or the walls of their tombs, often record in a single sentence states military exploits and carnage that required months or years to take hundreds of thousands of lives. Some wonderful scholars over the past century have taught us profound insights into this general human problem.¹⁰³

The names of certain individuals are recorded because of their military successes, or their ruthless policies of extermination and devastation. From Alexander of Macedon, known as Alexander the Great, to King Attila the Hun in the fifth century, to Genghis Khan and his Mongol hordes in the thirteenth century,¹⁰⁴ millions of innocent people have been murdered and exterminated by the scorched earth policies of history's most infamous terrorists.

In the sixteenth century, on this continent, Cortez began a process of conquest that took centuries longer than the swift terrors dealt by Huns or Mongols, yet which resulted finally in the virtual extermination of most Native American tribes. By the time we reach the twentieth century, hundreds of millions of victims have been murdered during the world wars and national purges in Germany, Russia, China, Cambodia, and a number

¹⁰² Paper distributed at the conference I designed and chaired, "Moses, Jesus, Muhammad: What Did the Prophets Teach on Violence and War?," sponsored by the *Section on Spirituality, The Association for Conflict Resolution, 2003 Annual Meeting*, held in Sacramento, California, September 29, 2003. I had representatives from Judaism (Reformed), Christianity (Mennonite), and Islam (Shiite), all teaching pastors and academics in their faith communities. To respect their time and not distract from presentations, the paper was distributed for the audience to read at a later time.

¹⁰³ See, if you can find it, the now-expensive reprint of E.F.M. Durbin and John Bowlby, *Personal Aggressiveness and War* (Routledge and Kegan Paul: London, 1949), Vol. 1 in the series, "The International Library of Psychology." Bowlby's later work in behavioral psychology is famous and fundamental for studies I use today.

¹⁰⁴ The following statements have not been verified but are attributed to Genghis Khan. "The greatest happiness is to vanquish your enemies, to chase them before you, to rob them of their wealth, to see those dear to them bathed in tears, to clasp to your bosom their wives and daughters.... All who surrender will be spared; whoever does not surrender but opposes with struggle and dissension, shall be annihilated." Cited in http://www.greenkiwi.co.nz/footprints/mongolia/ghengis_history.htm.

of African nations. Names like Hitler, Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, and Idi Amin, are history's most recent genocidal maniacs.

Viewed from this global perspective, religious violence is only one of many species within the genus of universal violence in human behavior. Though many critics of organized religion, atheists and agnostics, cite the long history of religious bloodshed, it is vital to remember that when religious groups use violence, they are using the commonest tools already well-worn by all but a few social groups or cultures. Still, we are shocked when we read about how the Aztecs cut the hearts out of as many as 80,000 victims at one time for their bloodthirsty war god, Huitzilopochtli [WEETZ-ee-lo-POACH-t-lee],¹⁰⁵ or when we consider the hundreds of thousands, or millions, of victims murdered by the Roman Catholic Inquisition.

Perhaps part of our shock is generated less by the facts of violence, but by the *allegations of all religions* that their messages are positive, helpful, and beneficial, to human beings, at least to the humans within their circles of membership. If they explain away their old behaviors as things of the past, nevertheless, news of religious cult leaders who kill their followers—like the Rev. Jim Jones of the *People's Temple*, or the Rev. David Koresh of the *Branch Davidians*—remind us that religion is a potentially powerful force for bloodshed. The World Trade Center and beheaded hostages simply bring that message deeper home into the hearts of many Americans who once believed, "It can never happen to me."

Factors Affecting Aggressive or Violent Personalities

Many people tend to focus on social factors as drivers for aggressive and violent personalities. This is most natural and appropriate, since most human beings are born healthy and learn most dysfunctional thinking, speaking, and behaving from family, then broader social experiences. Let us move back from social factors, which are individuals interacting with each other,¹⁰⁶ to consider factors affecting *aggressive and violent individual personalities*.

We are physical beings and, deep inside each of us, there are genetic, neurological, and hormonal factors, which affect how we emote and think. When we are conceived, we are given a genetic neurological map. We know that map does not remain immune

¹⁰⁵ Ross Hassig, *Aztec Warfare: Imperial Expansion and Political Control* (University of Oklahoma Press: Norman, Oklahoma, 1988), p. 121. Some of those victims, however, were not coerced, but calmly walked up the steps to offer their lives for the pleasure of their deities and the benefit of their peoples. From their perspective, the act was devotion and submission not violence at all. There are contemporary parallels in our midst today.

¹⁰⁶ Nevertheless, it is a grave mistake to act as if educational or social engineering could "correct" these problems. Indeed, the history of social engineering in any nation, West or East, regardless of economic or political systems. Groups can be taught. Groups can be manipulated and managed in certain respects. However, it is individuals within groups who still retain their own volitional forces, however their perceptions of themselves or their powers are refracted distortions, laid on them by their group(s).

from environmental adaptation from the time we are *in utero* as our mothers' health, nutrition, and habits, impinge on the development of our genetic potential. This also is true of persons who grow up later to become religious leaders and followers.

Genes, Neurotransmitters, Hormones. In the book, *Are We Hardwired? The Role of Genes in Human Behavior*, by William R. Clark and Michael Grunstein, laypersons can read how both genders are affected in their levels of aggressiveness by levels and processing of testosterone in men and estradiol in women.¹⁰⁷ Serotonin levels are well-known to be factors affecting depression and behaviors. “[D]ecreased serotonin function can be a *cause* of aggression, not merely a side effect...” and we are told also that laboratory mice which have been serotonin-impaired are “always highly aggressive.”¹⁰⁸

The role of serotonin in human personality disorders involving aggression has been under intense study for several decades. Decreased concentrations of serotonin have been detected in a wide range of individuals displaying aggressive behavior, for example, in children showing repeated outbursts of aggressive behavior at home and at school, in young men discharged from the military services for repeated violent behavioral episodes, in criminals incarcerated for repeated crimes of violence, and many others. The type of aggressive behavior associated with low serotonin is impulsive, rather than premeditated, aggression. As we have seen, a major function of serotonin in humans is to regulate impulsive behavior. Individuals often know full well that the consequences of certain behaviors may be negative for them, but they have difficulty controlling these behaviors if their serotonin concentrations fall below a certain level.

A major criticism of the studies relating to serotonin and aggression in humans is that they have been carried out largely on psychopathically disturbed individuals, and thus the results of these studies may tell us nothing about aggression among nondisturbed individuals....

Aggression is not a behavior that occurs in isolation from other behaviors. It contains a strong element of impulsivity, and we can see clearly that drugs affecting other behavioral and emotional overlays, such as depression, have a profound effect on aggressive behavior as well. As with any behavior, it is a propensity to violence and aggression that is inherited, not the behavior itself. All of the measures of aggression that have been tested in humans have a substantial environmental component as well. The heritable irritability component of aggression may suggest a heightened sensitivity to nearly everything in the environment, which would agree with the finding of increased norepinephrine in many aggressive individuals. Events in the environment can trigger aggression, but environmental factors such as education, counseling, and simply life experiences may also be important in learning to manage a tendency to aggressive behavior.¹⁰⁹

Such common neuropsychological insights have profound implications for understanding religious personalities and religious leaders, not to mention *political leaders who make decisions affecting millions*. As these authors make clear, there are

¹⁰⁷ William R. Clark and Michael Grunstein, *Are We Hardwired? The Role of Genes in Human Behavior* (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2000), p. 167, par. 3.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 169, par. 2.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 169, par. 3, to p. 170, par. 1; and pp. 174-175.

great problems in studying exactly how neurochemical processes function in human beings, for obvious reasons. We can't put people in cages and controlled environments, no matter how much we may want to engage certain people or have them examined and studied to our collective benefits, though we do that to some extent with convicted serial killers.

Taking the facts of these two aggressiveness factors—increased levels of testosterone or estradiol, plus lowered serotonin levels—is it not reasonable to consider that religious leaders (or, for that matter, political leaders) who possess both factors should be prone to extremely aggressive behaviors? How would such a psycho neurological chemical profile impact the emotions and intellectual processes of either religious (or political) leadership? Regretfully, we have no laboratory, nor will have one.

If a person feels highly aggressive due to chemical processes of which he or she is unaware at the time and, if this person leafs through a holy book to select texts upon which to deliver a religious message to a community of faith, which texts might appear more attractive, interesting, relevant, or important? Would the aggressive chemical process operating in the background have an impact on the intellectual act of selecting texts, or of interpreting them? If the person ran across a text that recommended “loving one's enemies,”¹¹⁰ would he or she keep leafing through until finding one that said, “Strike all my enemies on the jaw” because of its resonance with deep psychobiological urges?¹¹¹

In the permanent absence of a laboratory with which to construct experiments for answers to these questions, let us at least consider our own anecdotal experiences as religious people. I will begin with my own testimony, and allow the readers to reflect on their own.

For many years, I was a religious teacher. There were many times when I had wonderfully philanthropic purposes or goals as I turned to the Bible seeking religious texts either to speak to me, to fit the concepts in my head, or the need of my religious or secular communities. I searched usually until I found the text or texts that met my needs. Likewise, there were times in my career when I was involved with conflicts with personalities on church boards, or with major issues faced by non-profit social service institutions. When I turned to the Bible in those times and, if I had strong emotional content during the search, there were times, I am sure, when the text selections and the expositions were affected. When we consider the factors of testosterone or serotonin levels surely operative in my body and brain, how were my emotions and intellectual choices also affected?

When rabbis, preachers, and imams, search for texts in the Torah, New Testament, or Qur'an—books in which the deity is said to have revealed how religious people are to emote, think, and behave towards each other, as well as others outside the

¹¹⁰ Luke 6:35.

¹¹¹ Psalm 3:7.

communities of faith—their neurochemical processes impinge upon them. Our speculations on the nature and extent those processes have will receive no positive answer, at least not for now.

Psychologists and psychiatrists already have investigated the role of psychopathologies in religious leaders and religion, so the imputation of genetic, neurotransmitter, and hormonal factors, should not be unwelcome.¹¹²

In my own study of sixteenth century religious violence, I remember being so shocked at the explicitly brutal language used by the reformer, Martin Luther, who recommended military actions against the German *Bauern* (peasant farmers), or against *die Juden und ihre Lügen* (the Jews and their lies). He used theological language and Bible quotations. Lutherans and others have studied and explained his medieval “two kingdoms doctrine,” also shared by Roman Catholics of the time.

But I also remember my surprise when I found German *psychiatric studies* of Luther done in the 1920s, which analyzed the evidence for psychopathology in his writings and sayings attributed to him. To be sure, Luther made use of medieval theology and the Bible; however, good German that he was, he liked his beer.¹¹³ Speculating now, what if Luther were an alcoholic, subject to bouts of clinical depression, and his brain function impaired his emotions, thought processes, and their impacts on selecting and interpreting Bible texts? How many hundreds of thousands of lives may have been lost, tortured, raped, expatriated, *and condemned for overt religious reasons* which actually were psychopathologically present within Luther’s brain?¹¹⁴

Muslim clerics are prohibited from the use of alcohol by the Qur’an, which is not to say they all obey the injunction any more than Jewish or Christian clergy obey similar injunctions, at least to sobriety or against drunkenness. Regarding Islamic clergy, however, the next section is much closer to nonreligious factors, but which may impact their selection of religious texts and their applications of them.

¹¹² Len Sperry, “The psychopathic minister,” *Human Development*, Summer 1998, Vol. 19:2, pp. 4 ff; James Hillman, *On Paranoia*, Spring Publications: Dallas, 1988; Kurt Nussbaum, “Abnormal mental phenomena in the prophets,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 13(3), July 1974, pp. 194-200; N. J. Andreasen, “The role of religion in depression,” *Journal of Religion and Health*, Vol. 11(2), April 1972, pp. 153-166.

¹¹³ Luther used to write his wife, Katarina, and reference the local beers he found to his likings, due to certain effects on his digestive system.

¹¹⁴ Nevertheless, in his own conscious mind, Luther’s teachings *were religious* and, as scholars have demonstrated for hundreds of years, *did conform to the thought forms of his period*. Still, his mental processes and theological conclusions resulted in creating severe traumas for the widows and orphans created by his advice. On the other hand, there were other men with other dispositions, such as Desiderius Erasmus of Rotterdam, who wrote against wars of any kind. He gave theological reasons, but included empirical ones related to our discussion: *he recognized that military actions created trauma for victimized widows and orphans*. (I confess that I have Erasmus’s picture in my office and, to the chagrin and mockery of my wife and friends, seriously entertained naming my first-born son after this rare and courageous figure!)

Environment and Psychopathology

When we think of environmental factors affecting religious (or political) leaders, particularly in our post September 11 world, what might come to mind? In the case of the United States, many U.S. religious leaders selected and interpreted religious texts which addressed the *emotional* content of watching, day after day, the shredding to bits of innocent Americans in the World Trade Center. In the case of the ongoing war in Iraq (or a host of Muslim nations where *Al-Jazeera* is watched, day after day), many Muslim leaders now can select and interpret religious texts based upon their watching, day after day, the microbits of shredded flesh of innocent Iraqis hit by the thousands of steel needles contained in U.S. cluster bombs.

Trauma. One of the most interesting areas we must consider in the area of the environment affecting or creating psychopathological factors in religious leaders and their followers is *trauma as it affects mental processes and mental health*. No true understanding of religious leaders and their selections of religious texts, or their interpretations, can be relevant unless the environmental impact of trauma is considered.

Trauma is defined as a psychological matrix experienced by persons affected by events, perceived or real. Trauma can be due to rape, torture, hunger, termination from a job, divorce, death of a loved one, even the loss of a family farm or business, and thousands of other such events. Jon G. Allen, in Traumatic Relationships and Serious Mental Disorders, discussed how subjectivity defines this fundamental experience.

It is not the objective event, but rather the subjective experience—based largely on the meaning the event has to the individual—that determines whether the event will be traumatic. Individual differences play a major role in the outcome of exposure to potentially traumatic events, largely owing to the role of subjectivity. Of course the subjective response itself may be a reflection of a prior trauma history.

But what does it mean for an event to be traumatic? First, in both general medical and psychiatric contexts, the trauma is not the event but its result. Second, trauma is an *enduring adverse response* to an event. From this perspective, the individual who has a horrific experience that did not have lasting adverse effects would not have been traumatized....

What kinds of events are liable to be traumatic? The exclusive focus on *physical* injury and on threat to *personal* integrity is too narrow. No doubt interpersonal trauma is often associated with physical threat or injury. Yet in the context of interpersonal trauma in general and attachment trauma in particular, a threatening event need not pose physical danger to be traumatic.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁵ Jon G. Allen, Traumatic Relationships and Serious Mental Disorders (John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.: Chichester, England, 2002), pp. 5-6.

Allen goes on to discuss and illustrate how traumas in childhood and adulthood affect psychopathology, and he makes intriguing uses of research by others on criminal assault, rape, sexual harassment, and war and other forms of political violence. In fact, he also cites non-interpersonal forms of “impersonal trauma” created by “natural disasters, such as tornadoes, hurricanes, floods, fires, earthquakes, and volcanoes,”¹¹⁶ also have long-term effects on mental functioning.

If one turns to the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders and reviews the range of disorders directly attributable to environmental factors, then Allen’s restricted discussion on trauma becomes magnified in its potential for applications in other areas of psychopathological manifestations.¹¹⁷

Whether we think of “macro” events like the destruction of the World Trade Center, recent serial hurricanes in Florida, health or other medical emergencies generated for hundreds of thousands of people by embargoes, genocidal killings in Cambodia or Sudan, or whether we consider “micro” events, such as individuals watching ancestral homes bulldozed, or loved ones raped or blown to bits by suicide bombers, Allen points to a fearful conclusion for victims of trauma.

Clients with a history of interpersonal trauma typically meet criteria for multiple psychiatric disorders, and the term *comorbidity* is often applied to this concomitance of diagnoses. For example, depression is frequently comorbid with PTSD [Post Traumatic Stress Disorder]....

... At any age, trauma affects developmental pathways. Attachment trauma in childhood, however, is likely to have particularly devastating effects, because it produces a dual liability.... Attachment trauma not only generates extreme distress but also, more importantly, *undermines the development of mental and interpersonal capacities needed to regulate that distress*....

... Trauma can be arrayed along a spectrum of interpersonal relatedness. At the low end of involvement is impersonal trauma, for example, earthquakes and tornadoes. In the middle of the spectrum is trauma inflicted in an interaction with a stranger—a criminal assault or rape. At the high end of interpersonal involvement is trauma in the context of an attachment relationship, exemplified by father-daughter incest and wife battering.¹¹⁸

Returning to our theme of religious violence, then, the study of trauma has enormous impact for understanding the effects of recent events over the past several years, and how they have impacted millions of people who, according to Allen’s work, may be psychologically impaired [yet who will not receive personal, professional psychological treatment].

¹¹⁶ Ibid., Allen, p. 11.

¹¹⁷ Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 4th ed., text revision [DSM-IV-TR™] (American Psychiatric Association: Washington, DC, 2000), esp. “mental disorders due to a general medical condition [181ff], schizophrenia and other psychotic disorders [297ff], mood disorders [345ff], anxiety disorders [429ff], dissociative disorders [519ff], and, especially, personality disorders [685ff]

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 8-10.

Whatever our personal political views about wars, in general or in particular, whenever children experience the destruction of their homes and the deaths of family members and friends through military actions, their traumas can create psychopathologies and impairment. These individuals, because they are less able to cope on their own, may turn to religious leaders and ideologies (good, bad, indifferent) to assist in interpreting and coping with the traumas they experience.

There now are millions of children in the United States and Iraq, Israel and Palestine, North Korea and the Sudan, indeed, all over the world where traumas of the most serious types have occurred, children whose mental processes are developing within the contexts of *traumas as they experience them, not as imputed—or denied--by religious or political leaders*. Some of these children will grow up with fully formed complexes of psychopathologies to be carried into adulthood as they fulfill their roles as leaders, or followers, in their respective societies.¹¹⁹

Of course, the nations of the world never have nor ever will revise their political processes to require that people considered for positions of leadership be evaluated for their mental health, be they religious, political, governmental, industrial, or any other entities possessing incredible powers to inflict, or to prevent, traumatic experiences upon individuals or entire populations. Such a requirement would be subject to the manipulations of the “experts” who also could be paid well for their conclusions by competing interests.

Nevertheless, how can political leaders in the U.S. fail to consider some of these psychological factors, given the now-established risks of multiple, simultaneous global conflicts involving millions of people traumatized, at least *according to their perceptions*. Some of the millions believe U.S. foreign policies, or an Israeli-U.S. conspiracy, carried out *harmful, traumatic intrusions* into patterns of existence and ways of being religious thousands of years old. Others of the millions believe crazed Muslims carried out the same into patterns of existence not as old, yet still beloved. There are millions of other persons who perceive their selves to be traumatized for other reasons.

In all cases, there are parties having self-interest overriding any national or international loyalties, people whose industries or political fortunes have been enriched by foreign policies that ignore or simply misrepresent the interests and concerns of traumatized populations.

The problem here is that trauma and its effects on psychological functioning *also* affect U.S. religious and political leaders who remember the falling Twin Towers, or a long list of other outrageous actions. Once one has experienced trauma, the deeper its

¹¹⁹ In fact, history is completely full of the story of adults who once had charge of religious and political interpretations and decisions, who themselves were not necessarily psychologically healthy, or free from psychopathologies impinging on their uses of military power. Studies of Hitler and Stalin, or other genocidal homicides, long have considered psychiatric profiles as relevant data to understand the subconscious strata affecting what became national policies.

integrative effects into psychological functioning, the harder it is to be removed or altered by mere will or a change in the political wind. This is why the shock of repeated beheadings has broader implications for U.S. religious or political leaders who, for example, might suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, are even *less able* to change course due to the reinforcement of more traumatic events.

Perception of trauma is what people need to remember in interpreting the religious (or political) motivations of those carrying out suicide missions. This is part of the problem in many Americans' inability to understand these persons as people like themselves, or to refer to them in any other way than as terrorists, fanatics, lunatics, or similar politicized, pejorative terms.

Osama bin Ladin, whatever truly religious motivations he may or may not have, has been able successfully to gauge the pulse of millions of Muslims, and he frequently has cited in his writing factual events where hundreds of thousands of Muslim peoples have suffered physical, psychological, or religious suffering, humiliation, or other experiences *they interpret to have traumatized them or their kin*.

If we eliminate his invectives against Americans or Jews and focus only on the facts of suffering to which he alludes in even a few of his translated writings, we see how his alleged sympathies or empathies encircle enormous numbers of Muslim peoples.

[T]he people of Islam had suffered from aggression, iniquity and injustice imposed on them.... Muslims' blood ... was spilled in Palestine and Iraq. The horrifying pictures of the massacre of Qana, in Lebanon are still fresh in our memory. Massacres in Tajikistan, Burma, Cashmere, Assam, Philippine, Fatani, Ogadin, Somalia, Eritria, Chechnia and in Bosnia-Herzegovina took place, massacres that send shivers in the body and shake the conscience. All of this the peoples of the world watch and hear, and not only didn't respond to these atrocities ... the dispossessed people were even prevented from obtaining arms to defend themselves....

...[D]espite the great devastation inflicted on the Iraqi people ... and despite the huge number of those killed, which has exceeded 1 million... despite all this, Americans are once again trying to repeat the horrific massacres, as though they are not content with the protracted blockade imposed after the ferocious war or the fragmentation and devastation.¹²⁰

Though some people in the world give a great amount of weight to bin Ladin himself as a leader or motivator--one to be caught and stopped by some, and one to be worshipped and supported by others--when we keep in mind it is not the man or his words, but the *appeal to traumatized populations*, the man himself means nothing. To

¹²⁰ Osama bin Ladin, "Declaration of War Against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places (1996)," to be found in <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A4342-2001Sep21>. Osama bin Ladin, "Jihad Against Jews and Crusaders (1998)," to be found in <http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn?pagename=article&contentId=A4993-2001Sep21¬Found=true>, or <http://www.fas.org/ipr/world/para/docs/980223-fatwa.htm>.

capture or kill bin Ladin will not remove group psychopathologies which are unrelated to religious fundamentalism, or even religion at all. In fact, Amy Chua, a professor in Yale Law School, has written a wonderful book that illustrates how, to use her subtitle, “exporting free market democracy breeds ethnic hatred and global instability.”¹²¹

When people *perceive they have been traumatized*, or if they can be persuaded that their traumas and psychopathologies can be resolved finally and completely by giving up their own lives, or the lives of their loved ones, suicide is not killing of the self. Not completely unlike American soldiers who headed into the Nazi guns at Normandy, the Palestinian teenage girl with straight A’s offered her life believing that offering her life was part of *willful control over traumatic harm and conditions*.

The suicides see offering their selves as part of the assertion, healing, and victory, of *their traumas shared by other peoples* over forces of pain and suffering that eventually will be annihilated. The late, great psychologist, Rollo May, in fact interpreted the sources of cultural violence as due to seething repression that eventually must find its way to the surface, like a volcanic eruption, burning up the innocent along the way.¹²² Other scholars have studied how entire populations have manifested psychotic behaviors in political action. The very rise to power of such a psychological misfit as Adolf Hitler has been connected to forces he tapped in the German people at the time of the economic collapse following the Treaty of Versailles.¹²³

However, there is another way to respond to trauma—through forgiveness. As a contrary example of the impact of trauma on religious communities, we can see this is not always true.

¹²¹ Amy Chua, World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability (Doubleday: New York, 2003).

¹²² Rollo May, Power and Innocence: a Search for the Sources of Violence (W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, 1972), Ch. 9, “The Anatomy of Violence,” pp. 181ff, and Rollo May, The Meaning of Anxiety, rev. ed. (W.W. Norton & Co: New York, 1977), Ch. 7, “Summary and Synthesis of Theories of Anxiety,” pp. 203ff, esp. pp. 230, “Anxiety and Hostility.”

¹²³ This is why the Western powers’ decision to strip Germany after World War I through the Treaty of Versailles created enormous suffering for the conquered German aggressors, and created *traumatic deprivation* for millions of Germans where a millions of German Marks would not buy a loaf of bread. Adolf Hitler wrote a book dismissed by most people around the world at the time, yet with a title and subject matter that was pregnant with meaning. Hitler’s *Mein Kampf* was read by many German people as the *analogical explication of their traumas*. They embraced its author as having the prescription to their pain. Like bin Ladin today, he managed to motivate millions of people based upon his empathic use of their *traumatic experiences*. For some consideration of psychosis in groups and religion, see Cristina Pozzi Redko, “Fighting against the ‘evil’: Religious and cultural construction of the first psychotic experience of young people living in Sao Paulo, Brazil,” (McGill University, Dissertation Abstracts International Section A: Humanities and Social Sciences, Vol 63(7-A), Feb 2003, pp. 2602. Also see, L. Friedli, International Journal of Mental Health Promotion, 2000 May; 2(2):7-13, 21 references; Marcia A. Murphy, “Coping with the spiritual meaning of psychosis,” Psychiatric Rehabilitation Journal, Fall 2000, pp. 179 ff.; E. Peters, S. Day, and G. Orbach, “Delusional ideation in religious and psychotic populations,” British Journal of Clinical Psychology, March 1999, pp. 83-96; P. Sizaret, A. Degiovanni, and M. Faure, “Paranoid reactions and culture,” Annales medico-psychologiques, September 1987, pp. 753-62.

The Mennonites in the 16th century were raped and slaughtered through beheadings, incineration, drawn and quartered, hanged, tortured in unimaginable ways, and persecuted from country to country, by both Protestants and Roman Catholics. This is preserved in graphic terms in Thieleman J. van Braght's Martyrs' Mirror, written to remind later generations of Christians how their ancestors had remained, according to the scriptures, "faithful unto death." The martyrs of the sixteenth-century were like their founder, Jesus, and the first-century apostles, all who had refused to take up any physical arms to replace the spiritual armor that protected their salvation. Later generations were asked to look into the mirror of history and see therein the true reflection of devotion. No anger or retribution, no cycle of bloodshed and vengeance was permitted to true disciples of Christ.¹²⁴

Based on Allen's definition of trauma, which excludes events which do not continue to exert dysfunctional impact, one of the functions of van Braght's book was to prepare the ground of forgiveness prior to the willing acceptance of harsh treatment. The book served, and serves to this day, as a teaching mechanism aimed to transform true horror (such as today's occasional Mennonite missionaries suffer) into true, eternal, spiritual victory. Nothing was to remain pent up and unresolved, as per Rollo May's concept. All traumatic experiences were to have reflexive feelings of vindictiveness and despair, as the old phrase went, "poured into the bosom of God," whose supernatural grace enabled forgiveness and hope in the Day of Judgment where "every tear would be wiped away" by the redeemer.

It is highly significant that secular academic centers now are studying the psychological benefits of forgiveness.¹²⁵

In closing this section, I wish to cite only with brief notations, followed by questions, some aspects of American technological society which, perhaps, may be signposts of dangers in the mental health of our society. Unaddressed and left to their own development without intervention, Americans may be losing their abilities to manage stressful situations apart from violence in all its physical, psychological, and institutionalized forms, for individuals and groups. These factors possibly may contribute to American perceptions of experiences as being *traumatic* rather than unfortunate and transitory.

¹²⁴ Thieleman J. van Braght, The Martyrs' Mirror (Herald Press: Scottsdale, PA, 1938).

¹²⁵ See, "The Stanford Forgiveness Project" at <http://www.stanford.edu/~alexsox/forgiveness.htm>; also, Dr. Fred Luskin's summaries of research, at <http://www.learningtoforgive.com/research.htm>. A less academic project in England is "The Forgiveness Project" at <http://www.theforgivenessproject.com/project>. Also see an examination of the political application of forgiveness in Yehudith Auerbach, "The Role of Forgiveness in Reconciliation," From Conflict to Resolution, Yaacov Bar-Siman-Tov, ed. (Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2004), pp. 149-175.

1. The Rise in “Mental Disorder Deaths” in Industrial Societies. Recent studies show troubling increases in “mental disorder deaths” in many highly industrialized societies.¹²⁶ As of now, this fact is supported by worldwide statistics for disease and mortality. There are no clear-cut explanations for these facts except the broadest inference that they came from the industrialized societies generating the numbers. We ask simply, is the way in which American society developing contributing to mental disorders? Experts in a wide range of fields surely have much to say on this question, even though there are not yet new scientific studies answering the precise concatenation of factors in mental disorder deaths.

2. Adolescent Stress and Brain Development. Dr. Susan Andersen, of Harvard Medical School, has been investigating the biochemical and developmental effects of prolonged stress in adolescents, which may impair both emotional function and brain size as adults.¹²⁷ Other physicians and scholars already have established, for example, that prolonged, early exposure to television may contribute to Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder in children.¹²⁸ Will prolonged stress in our youth to the daily news of beheadings, outsourced jobs, and adults out of control at home and abroad, produce trauma, plus learning disabilities derived from long attention to the media?

3. Adolescent Recreation Through Video Violence. Most Americans support the unrestricted application of the First Amendment. However, some experts have expressed concern that some forms of recreational “speech,” such as that found on television and video “shooter games”--where tallies of successful “kills” are the only path to victory--may make people less sensitive to psychological inhibitions to actual killing. An expert in military “killology,” the science of killing, and its consequences on military veterans, a retired Army colonel, has advanced this argument in a convincing way.¹²⁹ What is amazing here is that the colonel has had to fight the many political and legal hacks who argue that behaviors are unaffected in profitable “speech” areas, yet who must deny over one hundred (and far more) years of behavioral research to make their

¹²⁶ C. Pritchard, D. Baldwin, and A. Mayers, “Changing patterns of adult (45-74 years) neurological deaths in the major Western world countries 1979-1997,” Public Health: Journal of the Royal Institute of Public Health 118 (2004):268-283 (Elsevier, Ltd: Bournemouth, 2003). Shows marked higher morbidity in of “Mental disorder deaths” in many European countries, as well as other areas.

¹²⁷ <http://www.mclean.harvard.edu/research/mrc/ldn.php>. She writes in the website, “Effects of stress on brain development: Early, traumatic life stress prevents the normal overproduction of synapses within key limbic regions of the brain. We are in the process of determining the neurochemical and behavioral consequences of this stressor in the adult.”

¹²⁸ Dimitri A. Christakis, MD, MPH; Frederick J. Zimmerman, PhD; David L. DiGiuseppe, MSc; and Carolyn A. McCarty, PhD, “Early Television Exposure and Subsequent Attentional Problems in Children,” Pediatrics 113:4 (April 2004), pp. 708-713.

¹²⁹ Lt. Col. Dave Grossman, On Killing: the Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society (Little, Brown and Company: Boston, 1995). Also see, Lt. Col. Dave Grossman and Gloria DeGaetano, Stop Teaching Our Kids to Kill (Crown Publishers: New York, 1999).

case. All nations in both East and West use behaviorism to predict and control consumer responses for their marketed goods, yet some of those same corporations will pay artful attorneys to deny in court the very processes that produce profits to pay the legal team's fees.

4. Deterioration of the Social Contract. Sociologists and anthropologists have been discussing for many decades the facts and reasons behind certain behaviors in American society.¹³⁰ Recent news regarding Enron and Arthur Andersen illustrates how some corporate leaders function with amoral profit principles and that they are willing to create illegal structures with catastrophic results for the U.S. economy. Thousands of articles have been written on the implications of these behaviors. Social critic Christopher Lasch wrote eloquently on some of these very problems back in 1978¹³¹ and one surely can find many more in American history. In 1998, Charles Derber wrote a book instigated by the sociopathic behavior of some teens who repeatedly raped and beat a female jogger into a coma, which "recreation" they described as "wilding." Derber described three types of "assault on society" Webster's Dictionary defined as "wilding."

Economic wilding is the morally uninhibited pursuit of money by individuals or businesses at the expense of others. *Political wilding* is the abuse of political office to benefit oneself or one's class, or the wielding of political authority to inflict morally unacceptable suffering on citizens at home or abroad. *Social wilding* ranges from personal or family acts of violence, such as affluent suburbs turning their backs on bleeding central cities.... The different forms of wilding, however, are all manifestations of degraded American individualism.... Wilding is individualism run amok, and the wilding epidemic is the face of America's individualistic culture in an advanced state of disrepair.¹³²

¹³⁰ E.g., Arthur Koestler, The Ghost in the Machine, the Urge to Self-Destruction: a Psychological and Evolutionary Study of Modern Man's Predicament (Macmillan Company: New York, 1967), and Lionel Tiger, The Manufacture of Evil: Ethics, Evolution, and the Industrial System (Harper & Row: New York, 1987).

¹³¹ Christopher Lasch, The Culture of Narcissism: American Life in an Age of Diminishing Expectations (W.W. Norton & Co.: New York, 1978), "The Managerial and Professional Elite as a Ruling Class," p. 221, "Although it continues to administer American institutions in the interests of private property (corporate property as opposed to entrepreneurial property), it has replaced character building with permissiveness, the cure of souls with the cure of the psyche, blind justice with therapeutic justice, philosophy with social science, personal authority with an equally irrational authority of professional experts. It has tempered competition with antagonistic cooperation, while abolishing many of the rituals in which aggressive impulses formerly found civilized expression."

¹³² Charles Derber, The Wilding of America: How Greed and Violence are Eroding Our Nation's Character (St. Martin's Press: New York, 1996), pp. 8-9.

If one considers news reports in America, as well as all other highly-industrialized nations, as anecdotal narratives of human behavior, our children are growing up in an environment where persons of all ages engage at will, and without personal or social inhibitions, in conduct placing their neighbors and other members of their own social groups at serious risk.

Religious teachers in the U.S. know they have a difficult task. For the Religions of the Book, their holy books all tell of a deity who is a moral being with moral demands, who defines and demands justice and righteous living, who detests and condemns injustice and wickedness, yes, to eternal damnation. None of the three prophets whose writings we consider today--Moses, Jesus, or Muhammad--would have tolerated "wilding," whether insinuated upon a jogger or the public trust in the New York Stock Exchange.

Violence is growing in America. It has a non-religious character, though it manifests itself in religions as well as corporations and politics. If we think only about our concerns for little children, not adults, in our midst are daily forces at work that disturb, confuse, and subject little minds to stress, victimization, trauma, neuropsychological dysfunction, and the seeds for psychopathological disorders to be seen in only ten years or so.

For some of us, at least, allegations that barbarism exists overseas--because innocent people are blown to bits or beheaded--ring no louder or truer than the regular reports of innocent Americans blown to bits by men and women angry with their federal government, or of innocent Americans beheaded by men angry with their private sexual practices, or, of innocent Americans murdered for the color of their skin, their religion, or other criteria upon which to mount a deadly assault.

Contrary to popular opinion, September 11, 2001, was not the beginning of the War on Terrorism. Perhaps that day can become the beginning of a new war on ignorance of the causes of hatreds so deep that suicide is preferable to life.

It is clear that Osama bin Ladin has used religion and religious texts to manipulate the pain of millions of people; however, he did that by putting his hand on the real, throbbing wounds, traumas perceived by Muslims around the world. Is it also impossible, or completely unclear, that there are persons within the United States who have used religion and religious texts to manipulate—for political or military-industrial profits--the pain of millions of Americans, by putting their selective touch on the real, throbbing wounds, traumas perceived by Americans? We will not say so for sure, but the question is viable.

The fact is that every nation has had leaders willing to traumatize entire populations, on the gamble that they and their families could ride out their biological clocks without themselves or their children having being forced to eat the poisonous fruits from the seeds they sowed. How is this known?

Self-interest will forbid—at least for sane people—putting one’s own blood kin and financial security at risk. No nation in the world has forbidden its leaders access to the world banking systems enabling personal fortunes to be amassed without penalty, so long as done “within the law.” No nation in the world has required its leaders’ children and grandchildren to serve on the front lines of every military action during the leaders’ tenure in any government service.

These are not American problems, but global problems and, until such basic issues are addressed, *willful, planned, exploitative traumas* will be inflicted upon the peoples of the world. As we see today inside and outside the borders of this nation, these traumatized peoples will *perceive and react* to the neuropsychological processes and psychopathologies emanating from the dynamic, cancerous, explosive power of their suffering.

Let us hear from honorable religious teachers what originally was taught and done by the prophets Moses, Jesus, and Muhammad. And let us also not blame today’s history to the credit of religious prophets who all believed in a deity of intelligence, will, morality, righteousness, and justice; a deity who, in every one of the holy books, commanded that the innocent be protected from the guilty.

Tasks for Tomorrow

Violence always will exist within, among, and between, all groups of living beings upon the earth. Religious violence is a particular species of this general phenomenon. There is no escaping it.

Views of deity are fundamental. If we believe that deity is impersonal, “The- Force-With-Us,” then we may have fatalistic views that each day is only a hazy manifestation of some direction in which we are pulled but have no control. If we believe that deity is intelligent *and moral*, not only perceiving what humans do but also having a divine reaction when we act well or wickedly, then that changes the meaning of our choices and lives.

Religious violence arises when religious people believe that their deity or their peoples have been offended or harmed and that only bloodshed (or other activities, such as strikes or embargoes) somehow aid or participate in divine justice against the guilty on behalf of the innocent. There are times where religious violence occurs without willful intent, or as an unintended effect, of other actions, such as when a religious zealot gives half of all monies earned to religious causes, yet derives profits at the expense of children and women in sweatshops, or through the unpremeditated, unintended exploitation of a village, state, or nation’s resources, without regard for the consequences to the balance of centuries-old economies.

Immanuel Kant popularized for the Western world the concept that “truth is perception” and subjectively constructed. Nevertheless, there are certain truths that are not mere

constructs, such as when a mother sees her little child die of the measles when a five-cent shot would have saved the life; or, when a loving wife and children retrieve the broken and battered body of a loved one tortured beyond recognition by a police force managed by a highly-placed member of a local religious group; or, when an entire community is displaced as a direct result of an individual or group with a known religious affiliation.

No negative, traumatic life experience that occurs as a result, or as a *perceived result*, of actions by a religious people against others of different (or no) faith ever is simply “perception.” Physical events are real, not imagined. The loving child’s eyes are permanently closed. The husband’s kindness forever buried in the ground. The ancient village is obliterated by bulldozers or bombs. The arm or leg is gone. Hopes for a happy life are ended with daily tears of pain and grief.

When such events are due to other persons alleged to be religious, or if they allege they acted out of obedience to their religion or deity—the results are what we have seen throughout the history of religions, and the wars of religion.

Religious violence can be reduced, and I suggest some of the foundations for how this is entirely possible and to be pursued.

Once upon a time, for millennia, the obvious differences between people groups—language, clothing, mores, gender roles, political structures, interpretations of the human life cycles, uses of and attitudes towards the biosphere, uses of and attitudes toward humans outside the tribal circles—could be explained using religious symbols and terminology. In fact, some religions held as subhuman, or even nonhuman, certain differences that were so extreme as to be unimaginable beforehand.

Only the narrowest numerical band of religious persons in the world would reject the fact that all human beings are united with one, single genetic code. There is a biological unity among all of us, notwithstanding all our other differences. There is, however, an enormous failure in religious imagination in accepting the implications of this deep genetic unity.

Our neurological systems are similar at birth, despite what our environmental influences or choices may do to each of us as individuals or members of certain societies. Our bodies digest food in essentially the same way. Our chemistry, tissues, organs, processes of maturation, response (physical and psychological) to injury, processes of healing, responses to chemical compounds (natural or synthetic), responses to the birth (sickness, trauma, death) of our children or parents, all are similar.

When these facts of biological life are allowed to inform and transform the imagination of the religious fanatic, or the religious zealot following the lead of a religious text, how long must it be before this foundation for empathy begins to reduce the “otherness” of the enemy, so that religious killers and abusers begin to understand that—regardless of the differences between deities—there is a real, profound grief when a bomb explodes a

loved one into microbits of blood, bone, and flesh, violently and suddenly ending the choices and plans of a mother or father, sister or brother.

Many religions teach that only deity is the final judge of human worth, plans, deeds, and aspirations.

Religious violence will begin to decline when religious persons accept that there are no "others" purely outside the circle of humanity, and accept that the religious point of view that wishes to kill or harm takes great risks by permanently ending the elective choices of victims who might have—within the plan of the deity unrevealed to the zealots—turned to become the greatest children of faith and obedience, had they been allowed to live and change in all the unpredictable ways common to saints and sinners.

Let us press forward now, together, not relativizing or trivializing the great and enduring questions of truth and justice, deity and humanity, the tension between will and action, thought and behavior. Let us live in humble relationships with each other as finite human beings capable of making mistakes, sometimes horrible mistakes of judgment, once we have had the time and opportunity to reflect on them and see them for what they were. Let our concern with religious violence not be? to execute it then seek to explain how useful it proved for our religious journeys. Rather, let us leave judgment and penalties to God, and allow others to *make their own decisions and actions, and answer for themselves.*

This does not preclude religious people from participating in careers or political actions permitted by their religions, such as police officers, drug enforcement agents, or military soldiers. This does ask, however, that religious people stop *attaching religious judgments on others, invoking divine sanctions, then taking irreversible actions—such as killing—that history shows, almost without exception, are due to human perceptions.*

Vox populi, vox Dei, always has been a principle put into service by violent and malevolent people with a mob mentality seeking blood and vengeance. There is no record, of which we are aware, of a large body of religious people seeking mercy and dialogue with their enemies in the name of God, and having their way through some political or military action. Cries for justice always come in haste, and in the heat of passion.

There have been flowers with blossoms less perfect whose fragrance was sweeter than any before or after. The hand that cuts the unseemly life never will see or experience what the deity had planned, but which was cut short by an even shorter human point of view.

AMEN

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9-11 Ten Years After
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