

### **The Genetic Roots of the War on Terrorism: Clash of Icon Worship**

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*Within the histories of religious traditions—from biblical wars to crusading ventures and great acts of martyrdom—violence has lurked as a shadowy presence. It has colored religion's darker, more mysterious symbols. Images of death have never been far from the heart of religion's power to stir the imagination. One of the haunting questions asked by some of the great scholars of religions—including Emile Durkheim, Marcel Mauss, and Sigmund Freud—is why this is the case. Why does religion seem to need violence, and violence, religion, and why is a divine mandate for destruction accepted with such certainty by some believers?<sup>1</sup>*

In its January/February 2006 edition, *Foreign Affairs* published a rather odd article (for a journal that otherwise specializes in political analysis and commentary) that appeared to get much less attention than it really deserved. In the article, titled “A Natural History of Peace,” Stanford Professor Robert M. Sapolsky compares and contrasts human aggressive tendencies with well-documented propensities for violence among several species of primates, and develops a case suggesting that human aggression of the kind that produces warfare mainly stems from the genetic impulses rooted in humans as primates (not a new suggestion of itself).<sup>2</sup> But more significantly, he offers proof extracted from a now robust body of field work that even strong genetic tendencies for violence in certain species of primates can be mitigated by exposure to the equivalent of “cultural” forces.<sup>3</sup> He singles out from the body of such observations the case history of one group of baboons (a particularly aggressive and violent species of primate) that he calls the Forest Troop, the intensely aggressive behavior of which was ameliorated after exposure to the more peaceful and tolerant “mores” of another baboon troop of an identical species with which the Forest Troop had come in contact. He concludes by asserting that “some primate species can *make* peace despite violent traits that seem built into their natures.” He goes on to muse, “The challenge now is to figure out under what conditions that can happen, and whether humans can manage the trick themselves.”<sup>4</sup>

Sapolsky's argument frames the issues associated with the current global conflict in which the United States is now engaged in a potentially very useful light: as a biological problem best understood and dealt with using means specifically tailored to deal with human genetic tendencies in order to promote cooperation and tolerance instead of competitive violence. This stands in contrast to the current approach which appears to assume that the conflict mainly results from a combination of cultural and economic factors that can be dealt with by a strategy that combines selected violence, targeted monetary investments mixed, and cross cultural messages through so called strategic communications. However, understanding the problem as

having its roots in primordial genetic urges would focus the search for solutions in a somewhat different way. The first step would be exploring in detail root biological causes for aggressive behaviors in the human species as a member of the family of primates, and then formulating specific measures (not just confined to persuasion or economic investment) needed to channel such biologically behaviors in ways that are conducive to peaceful social co-existence.

As one examines which factors may possess the necessary potential for affecting such modification to genetically based behavior, one candidate may be religious worship. As noted by Sapolsky, “We have fashioned some religions in which violent acts are the entrée to paradise and other religions in which the same acts consign one to hell.”<sup>5</sup> This observation implies what is taken for granted by many, but often rejected by others: that differences in religious worship establish different psychological frames of reference for relating to the world that have a real and dramatic impact on actual human behavior.<sup>6</sup>

Though the role of religion as a root cause for violence underlying the current conflict has already been extensively examined since the events of 11 September 2001, Sapolsky’s research invites reexamination of the issue from a perspective that may prove to be the most useful among alternatives. Fortuitously, his observations surface at the same time a widening group of biologists and anthropologists are asserting that religious worship itself is a genetically-based human impulse. Consequently, the plausibility that genetically inherited biological impulses shaped by different modes of worship account for different, often diametrically opposite, social attitudes toward violence becomes an area that can profitably come under much closer examination and analysis. Among other impacts, were such a connection to be established, a biological explanation for the impact of worship on behavior would help to answer such long-standing questions represented by those posed by Harvard Professor Jessica Stern in her study of religion and its relationship to terrorism: “How is it that people who profess strong moral values, who, in some cases, seem truly to be motivated by those values, can be brought to do evil things? Is there something inherently dangerous about religion? How can it be that the same faith in God that inspired Michelangelo, Mozart, Simone Weil and Sister Miriam Therese also inspires such vicious crimes? Why, when they read religious texts, do these terrorists find justification for killing innocents, where others find inspiration for charity?”<sup>7</sup>

As one begins to examine human behavior through the lens that combines Sapolsky’s observations with the converging sets of observations of those asserting biological roots for human religious impulses, a distinctive feature of human nature emerges with some clarity. Glaringly evident is that human social behavior is thoroughly dominated by the unique tendency to organize and act cooperatively in accordance with the characteristics reflected in the objects or subjects groups of people have for whatever reason come to collectively worship. And more broadly, the character of any given civilization tends to reflect the characteristics represented in the symbolic representations of the “idols” that broadly predominate as the subjects of worship within that civilization. For example, the intensely martial culture of ancient Sparta was in large part the product of the worship of Ares, the god of War, the martial characteristics of whom were continuously held up for social emulation.

Something like this view was first coherently advanced among scholars at the beginning of the 20th century by Max Weber in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. In that work,

Weber argued that worship among Calvinist Protestant groups in Northern Europe, which viewed economic success as a token of God's approval, was a key stimulant of economic progress. He argued that the religious imperative to see in economic prosperity the pleasure of God's approval broadly fueled fervor for work among predominantly Protestant societies, which had the practical effect of not only promoting more rapid industrial and technological development, but was actually the driving force behind the creation of capitalism. He compared the cosmology of Protestant religious worship to that of Catholic worship on the economic development among Southern Europeans. According to Weber, the more fatalistic, less worldly cosmology of Catholicism did not promote the view that economic success was a sign of God's approval, which had the practical result of disincentive for work and economic development among southern European Catholics, resulting in materially poorer societies.<sup>8</sup>

In a like manner, social attitudes similarly shaped by tenets of secular worship may plausibly account in large measure for stimulating violence in support of Fascist orders in the early 20th century. The Nazi movement in Germany had particular success in supplanting traditional iconic symbols of Church worship with secular icons that specifically promoted popular attitudes conducive to violence against non-German peoples, i.e., worship of the state mixed with symbols representing Aryan racial supremacy.<sup>9</sup> Worship of such icons promoted emulation of values that provided the centrifugal psychological and "spiritual" force behind the mobilization of the German people in aggressive campaigns of territorial expansion.

The above suggests that a concerted effort to modify or entirely supplant a society's primary icons of worship at the heart of what Jean-Jacques Rousseau referred to as the civil religion is key to changing the core social dynamics of that society.<sup>10</sup> These would include iconic worship that shapes attitudes regarding the situational appropriateness of violence. Consequently, one possible conclusion that grows out of these observations is that exerting control over the idols that a society generally worships would be the most essential long-term component of any "biologically based" strategy that aims to ameliorate global political violence. This would mean promoting broadly emulation of icons that in some way are regarded as possessing or representing values which in practice would channel aggressive and competitive human instinct away from acts validating violence and toward inculcating tolerance and social restraint.

Historically, the proposition that human beings may in any measure be guided by such biological-based instinctive impulses has been often opposed and discouraged by intellectual and spiritual leaders in successive eras of human intellectual inquiry. As noted by Harvard Professor Edward O. Wilson, the father of modern sociobiology, intellectual resistance to entertaining genetic biological urges as a motivator of human behavior has resulted from a perennial conviction that culture alone is mainly responsible for shaping human behavior. As Wilson wryly observes,

*In the extreme nurturist view, which has prevailed in social theory for most of the twentieth century, culture has departed from the genes and become a thing unto itself. Possessing a life of its own, growing like wildfire ignited by the strike of a match, it has acquired emergent properties no longer connected to the genetic and psychological processes that initiated it. Hence, omnis cultura ex cultura. All culture comes from culture.*<sup>11</sup>

Consequently, the proposition that human beings might be powerfully influenced by primeval instincts inherited genetically as a legacy of primate origins has frequently been dismissed out of hand by those who historically had hegemony over the academic environment of their era and wished to emphasize nurture (the province of cultural manipulation) over nature as the sole key to perfecting the human condition. However, as Wilson also notes, each age has produced those who have asserted that humans appeared to be motivated to religious activity by something other than cultural transmission. As Wilson observes,

*Such inevitability is the mark of instinctual behavior in any species. That is, even when learned, it is guided toward certain states by emotion-driven rules of mental development. To call religion instinctive is not to suppose any particular part of its mythos is untrue, only that its courses run deeper than ordinary habit and are in fact hereditary, urged into birth by biases in mental development encoded in the genes.*<sup>12</sup>

Similarly, Professor L. L. Eslinger, University of Calgary, notes,

*[Such] eighteenth and nineteenth century philosophers of human nature . . . [as] David Hume, Ludwig Feuerbach, and Arthur Schopenhauer all traced the origins of religion to biological foundations in the human psyche. These same principles were also the basis of the twentieth century psychologies of Freud and Jung. And Northrop Frye, in his works on the Bible, saw in "primary concerns" the natural bedrock of all mythology.*<sup>13</sup>

Admittedly, as noted by Morton Hunt and others, no one can as yet definitively point to a "religion gene" on the human genome. However, though physical science has yet to identify which specific genes, or gene combinations, are responsible for the instinct to worship, the universal proclivity for religious behavior practiced in closely similar patterns in all known human societies is increasingly difficult to satisfactorily explain in any other way than having been biologically inherited.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, according to Hunt, the heavy preponderance of circumstantial evidence supports the as yet uncharted existence of a "religion gene" or combination of genetic factors that would better account for the universality of religious worship among members of the human species. Moreover, operating under the assumption that such a gene, or gene combination, exists as the key motivating factor for religious impulses in human nature helps cogently explain the relationship of some otherwise difficult-to-explain dynamics of religion as they relate to human conflict in general and to the current so-called war on terrorism specifically.

To illustrate how, the first question that must be addressed is, "What would account for the existence of such a religion gene?"

Oxford Professor Richard Dawkins provides a conceptual bridge to answer that question in his book *The Selfish Gene*. According to Dawkins, the emergence of a basic genetic impulse for religious devotion might plausibly be explained as a unique and powerful genetic adaptation that developed primarily to support a particularly effective human biological strategy to compete for survival. He suggests the emergence of a genetic proclivity for religious worship that gave the

human species an advantage in terms of facilitating social organization, which was then passed on to succeeding generations and strengthened as a survival strategy by means of natural selection; an oddity of evolution in which a biological tendency for a cultural activity was preferred through natural selection.<sup>15</sup>

To examine this proposition more carefully, consider the word “worship” as it is most commonly used. What does the word mean in religious context as opposed to what it actually means in practical application? Reverence? Awe? Respect? Subservience? Submission?

Worship is characteristically equated with open displays of ritual respect for beings regarded as divine, together with actions signaling personal submission to the presumed will or authority of such entities. However, as one considers the inclination to worship under the hypothesis that it is an essential component of a biological strategy for competitive survival, it is important to determine precisely what it is that human worshipers over generations may have been biologically programmed to expect in return for submission and shows of deferential respect to a worshiped entity.

To answer the question, it is useful to highlight the psychological paradox of worship: the promise of dominion through submission, i.e., to acquire through submission a “spiritual union” with the subject worshiped as a needed step for obtaining a portion of the worshiped subject’s attributes and power. This appears to be the deep psychological and spiritual motivation and purpose behind most, if not all, forms of worship. Obliquely describing this deeply rooted intuitive expectation in the human psyche, existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre observed,

*It is this ideal which can be called God. Thus the best way to conceive of the fundamental project of human reality is to say that man is the being whose project is to be God. Whatever may be the myths and rites of the religion considered. . . . To be man means to reach toward being God. Or if you prefer, man fundamentally is the desire to be God.*<sup>16</sup>

Sartre’s observation provide a dramatic psychological window into the true basic nature of religion. Genetically inherited faith expressed through submission actually aims to initiate worshipers into spiritual confederacy with the entity worshiped for the purpose of acquiring that entity’s attributes as a tool for survival. This includes sharing whatever power, prestige or authority of dominion that icon is presumed to have. It is this basic human instinct to pursue ‘being god-like’ that is at the core of the uniquely human strategy for survival. Nested in the seeming deference of humble submission (however outwardly self-effacing) is the biological agenda of sharing in the entitlements of domination—depending on the cultural context, the universal expectation that one will earn at the price of submission and loyalty the cultural equivalent of “70 virgins.” Thus, the principal underlying objective of religious worship—whatever its manifestation—is domination. From this recognition stems a key observation with regard to the relationship of worship and religion to violence: worship within the context of religion as a competitive biological adaptation intended to help ensure the success of individual or community survival would naturally incline it toward implacable hostility toward other competing systems of worship and the civilizations to which they give rise. This would help to answer the question, “Why is religion so often closely associated with violence?”

Therefore, worship is more accurately understood not solely as a ritualized cultural expression of respect for sacred beings or objects, but more broadly and deeply as an inbred human imperative to gain a biological advantage over one's circumstances and environment by "mystically" appropriating specific characteristics from subjects or entities believed to possess the characteristics helpful in winning the Darwinian struggle for survival. When seen in this way, the very nature of worship and its formative influence on human behavior seems obvious. Worship in essence is a biological impulse to imitate and emulate.

Understood in this way, the links between common patterns of religious ritual in human worship become apparent. Worship is based on deeply rooted instinctive faith that a mystical transfer of characteristics can be effected from a subject worshiped to the worshiper. And the tools for this transfer are highly stylized genetic impulses that compel humans to mimic the attributes, characteristics and behaviors of those from whom they wish to acquire attributes—often in highly stylized patterns. The anthropologist Desmond Morris describes this activity as "absorbed actions." It is elsewhere obliquely described by Rene Girard as "mimetic desire," and is perhaps the mechanical explanation behind the phenomenon Dawkins describes as virus-like transfer of behaviors within groups, or from one generation to the next, via so-called cultural "memes."<sup>17</sup>

The biological dynamic of worship reflected in absorbed actions provides the human species a particularly effective tool for adapting to one's environment as well as organizing socially. For example, early human migrants attempting to settle in the unforgiving environment of prehistoric Northern Europe or to cross the Bering Strait land bridge into the Americas would have been well served by "worshipping" wolves or other socially organized predators through observation and imitation of their hunting techniques as a practical measure for survival. Human survivors of such harsh circumstances would have passed on genes reinforcing such imitation together with the cultural emergence of more complicated and sophisticated animist rituals aimed at mystically appropriating the skills and attributes of wolves and distributing them to the hunters of the tribe—ergo, the emergence of totem worship.

From this perspective, it appears that human beings are genetically engineered for such a process of appropriating the characteristics of others through imitation in ways that appear specifically linked to an instinct for ritual. And, in fact, the exaggerated tendency that humans display for mimicking or imitating other entities is a key characteristic that separates human beings not only from other species of animals in how they deal with their environment, but also, uniquely, from all other species of primates. Though many primates share with human beings a pronounced tendency for mimicking—aping—other entities in their surroundings, this characteristic is not nearly so extreme or inherently important to their core nature. By contrast, for the human primate, the genetic inclination for adopting the characteristics and behavior of others around them by absorption has reached a level of importance that is ubiquitous at every stage of human development and progress. Imitation is the biological medium in which human nature swims and the air that it breathes, so obvious that it is virtually invisible because it is so taken for granted.

On reflection, universally, the human experience is one constant, unremitting cycle of instinctively attempting to appropriate the characteristics of other entities through mimicking and

absorption. Such worship is many-layered and can occur simultaneously in many manifestations, some in shallow and temporary bouts of imitation together with other forms that are much more deeply rooted and dominant with regard to their lasting influence on attitudes and behavior. For example, someone might be simultaneously a temporary, but literal, worshiper of a popular musician or athlete, while also being a deeply committed, long-lasting worshiper of icons resident in formal religion. In all cases, worship is manifest in the imitating or mimicking at some level not only the appearance, actions, attitudes, habits and values of specific “heroes” with whom humans have contact, but in many cases the selected behavior of such entities as animals, inanimate objects, images seen in the media, and even the presumed characteristics of abstract entities that have no empirically demonstrable existence.<sup>18</sup> How else, for example, would one explain the apparently universal human impulse for piercing one’s body to adorn it with jewelry or tattoos except as an inherited impulse that aims to appropriate the characteristics of someone or something by embedding objects or symbolic images of those worshiped entities into one’s own skin? (Consonant with this observation is the fact that among many cultures both tattooing and piercing indeed have sacred cultural significance.) Or, to explain why mourners in some Western countries spend virtual fortunes on dressing the corpses of deceased loved ones in fine clothing and ensuring that they are buried in expensive containers specifically built to provide comfort at rest except as an attempted appropriation of life transferred to persons who by every other indicator are clearly dead?

Additionally, the myriad cultural variations of human education clearly rely on elaborately developed programs that aim to inculcate absorbed actions. Moreover, this distinctive human characteristic is also reflected in the wearing of uniforms which serves as a powerful tool of self-worship as selected members of a community attempt to effect a collective spiritual union among “worshippers” to provide the overall group some competitive advantage through specialized regimentation of unity in thought and action.

The mechanics of such worship are characteristically achieved through a combination of formal ritual that is consummated in practical actions, or tests, that are expected to demonstrate the absorption of patterns inculcated by ritual. For example, animist worshipers seek to mystically transfer to others through imitative rituals the characteristics of subjects worshiped. In this way, desirable characteristics of admired beasts (e.g., cunning, strength, endurance or arcane natural wisdom) are thought to be mystically transferred to worshipers. However, this is done with the expectation that the worshiper must then consummate the transfer of attributes achieved by mystical endowment through displaying such attributes by changed personal behavior and the discharge of new social obligations to the group.

Similarly, in modern technological societies, the world’s multi-billion dollar mega-advertising industry is fueled by the same enduring biological imperative. The ubiquity of the basic instinct for “worship” is abundantly evident as large segments of populations living as functioning members of highly advanced societies nevertheless pursue with the same vigor as primitive animists the absorption of characteristics of others through activities that the shamans of the remotest villages of Haiti, Brazil and Borneo would instantly recognize. With such societies, persons who otherwise pride themselves on ultra-modern sophistication still relentlessly obey primeval urges in seeking vicarious spiritual union with sports figures, movie stars, rock musicians and any number of other public figures by mystically appropriating their athletic

prowess, good looks or sex appeal through ritual purchase of soup, soap, cars, deodorant, clothing, perfume, or underwear. Often the rites of mystical transfer include affecting—aping—the worshiped subject's speech, dress, mannerisms, and publicized tastes.

This human imperative is a common feature that is dominant in the character of the human social order and structure from the earliest human playground experience through the universal equivalent of elementary and high school, and on into adult society either in a society's version of higher education or in adult institutions and cliques built around occupational specialties. The churning human impulse to appropriate the identities or characteristics of others through worship has the practical effect of keeping society in a constant state of social turbulence through shifting "styles" and "fads." Such transient tides of human social behavior keep fresh a society's psychological and 'spiritual' ability to swiftly adapt new regimented social behavior in the face of unexpected or evolving changes to the social or physical environment. But such icon worship also clearly creates competitive tensions that are often channeled into avenues that promote violence when the subjects of worship represent and reflect aggressive and destructive characteristics. For example, the impact of such icon worship in the context of a popular subculture would help to account for such phenomena as links between the formation and promotion of attitudes associated with youth violence and the worship of "gangsta rap" iconic figures.

Viewed from the perspective described above, it becomes evident that there is no real difference between ideology and religion—they are merely different branches of the same tree.<sup>19</sup> Both are ritualized systems of worship that have the same practical effect of molding human behavior. In other words, the human inclination to form and gravitate to some -ism, whether it is nationalism, Marxism, Nazism or even organized atheism, explains the many common structural features such secular ideologies have with Catholicism, Hinduism and Islam because they are merely variations on the human impulse for worship. Such would also help explain why the social orders that grow out of different modes of worship, irrespective of whether they focus on the worship of secular or sacred icons, originate and develop in very similar patterns. That is, irrespective of differences in their cosmological outlooks or contentions concerning the existence of divine beings, such an instinct would explain why—in terms of organization and administration—fascist or communist orders look very much like Catholic or Protestant orders. Each new order—sacred or secular—originates with a charismatic leader, or set of leaders, who compile the equivalent of a bible and establish the basic canon of the religion's law. Each engenders cult iconic figures that formally become objects of veneration and imitation for adherents of the new religious order. Subsequently, each develops a bureaucracy of apostles, missionaries and guardian enforcers who promote the cult figure by creating the rituals, and enforcing the canon law. And, each collects lay followers who ritually commit themselves with varying degrees of gravity to the order's covenant of icon worship and imitation, ranging in intensity from fanatic zealots to individuals with lukewarm commitment and intermittent patches of interest.

A genetic motivation for such a pattern of development based in imitative worship helps explain the infinite variety of religious expression in the human experience, and why "religious" orders so readily break off and mutate into new branches of worship as emerging leaders persuade proselytes to join new congregations in the worship of reinvented icons that better meet new perceived challenges bearing on their respective group's survival.



For the above reasons, Canadian anthropologist Walter Burkert observed, “We may view religion, parallel to language . . . as a long-lived hybrid between cultural and the biological traditions.”<sup>20</sup> Consequently, the synergetic relationship between the biological urge to imitate and the cultural connection it has to common patterns of worship that have developed during the course of human evolution would have collaborated to imprint into the human species a universal set of tendencies and capacities for worshipping that serve as a tool of adaptation for both individuals and social groups. Burkert goes on to assert,

*Natural religion, that is, basic and common forms of addressing the supernatural, did not develop in a void but through adaptation to a specific “landscape,” conditioned by the age-old evolution of human life. If there are certain predilections and attractions as well as fear and revulsion, feelings of needs shaped by biology, this complex may account for the stability of belief and concomitant behavior.*<sup>21</sup>

Returning for practical purposes to the utility of these observations for security officials, the key observation would be that worship is at its core a biological survival strategy that has developed as a deep-seated genetic adaptation to help the worshiper prevail in the biological competition for survival *against others*. Therefore, religion understood in this way makes glaringly apparent why the human imperative to worship is potentially a ruthlessly violent impulse. Having emerged as a competitive force the purpose of which is to help the worshiper or community worshipers survive in competition against others, such a new order would logically know no limit to the extremes it would be capable of going to ensure its own survival—a melancholy but not unfair description of the general history of human religion.

When the role of individual worship as a probable biological survival mechanism is highlighted, the underlying dynamics and characteristics that incline “religion” to violence become obvious. Religion extends the individual’s instinctive personal impulse to worship into a social mechanism for community survival. Therefore, not surprisingly the consciously developed dogma and mythologies that emerge in response to such a biological impulse commonly reflect a cosmological conflict between one’s own “religious” order, regarded as good, against competing orders characterized as evil. Such cultural reinforcement evokes the primordial sense of obligation rooted in human genetics that agitates the faithful to specific practical actions to “defend” the community from those who are perceived to be a threat to it, including very often incitement to acts of violence. For example, almost universally, the terrorists who agreed to interviews with Juergensmeyer and Stern asserted that their involvement in violence had been a legitimate defensive measure on behalf of their own religious orders or cultures.<sup>22</sup>

Consequently, though the emergence of peaceful religious orders is undeniable, in retrospect, the rise of such orders is also relatively rare. Most commonly, religious orders emerge in response to a perceived threat to a group which it generally answers by promoting violence in its own defense.<sup>23</sup>

Moreover, understood in this way, the genetic propensity for worship and religion also appear to be clearly unveiled as the principal underlying component of human altruism in general. Biologically-based altruism stemming from “worship” for the purpose of survival would explain

why, virtually alone among all other cultural forces, religion is capable of generating within groupings of biologically unrelated people the type of long-lasting mass psychic unity that elicits subordination of self-interest to defense of a supposed greater “national” community.<sup>24</sup> A genetic imperative that engenders deep bonds of community identification among persons with no close family blood relations would appear to be the only way to explain what otherwise would not seem rational or tenable from the point of view of any single individual’s self interest, e.g., going to war in defense of a community of strangers with the understanding that there is a high probability of being killed—an apparently counterintuitive biological response. Nevertheless, great fields of military headstones carefully preserved throughout Europe, Asia and elsewhere, testify to the existence of just such an extraordinarily powerful, counterintuitive impulse capable of inducing human beings to imperil themselves on behalf of an imagined community of persons to which they are not physically related. This appears to imply that the basic impulse for worship is also the actual bedrock of civilization in general as well as the nation state specifically. The implications of the above for the United States as the leader of Western civilization are forthright. In a practical sense, using the above as background, human “faith” is revealed to be largely the product of a deeply embedded biological instinct that inevitably seeks out a way of worshiping—in some way. It is the “in some way” that should be of most concern and interest to those seeking to understand the underlying dynamics of the current global conflict with a view to formulating solutions to mitigate its causes.

History reveals numerous examples of failures by national leaders to discern or appreciate the enormous threats that emerging religious orders driven by such biologically driven faith posed to the underlying religious paradigm of their own civilizations, resulting in tragic delays in boldly and decisively acting to mitigate such threats before they later evolved into cataclysmic confrontations.

For example, Western leaders failed to grasp the nature of the challenge posed by the National Socialist movement in Germany because they failed, or refused, to recognize it for what it was—a new, implacable and intolerant religion that worshiped Adolph Hitler as a symbol of natural rights accruing to superior races through Darwinian struggle. Yet, Hitler’s public statements and overt actions in consonance with his words could hardly have been clearer with regard to his movement’s malevolent intentions toward “the other.”

The failure to confront early on the threat posed by National Socialism, which was clearly evident in demonstrations of public icon worship that openly flouted the Judeo-Christian values then underpinning Western civilization, directly led to catastrophic miscalculations that resulted in what became the tragic cataclysm of World War II.

Similarly, today, Western leaders continue to underestimate and dismiss the malevolent intent, iconology, determination and spreading influence of such movements as Salafism and Wahibism, which literally worship the more strident exhortations of the Koran instructing Islamic believers to attack and destroy nonbelievers. As a result, activities aimed at globally promoting through formal worship implacable hatred against the United States, against secular tolerance for other religions, and against individual liberty have proceeded, until very recently, virtually unchallenged by the West, even though such parallel closely the statements of Nazi ideologues in their efforts to dehumanize peoples they intended to annihilate. As a consequence,

significant communities of Islamic fundamentalists sharing the most extreme views of such iconic worship have now established themselves in many countries throughout the world, not only in the Middle East, but also in Europe, Latin America, Africa, Southeast Asia and North America, including the United States, virtually unopposed.

As a result, Western secular worship and Islamic fundamentalist worship impelled by the same biological impulse to defend and expand the interests of their particular communities of interest have now collided to produce the current global war. Understood from this point of view, it becomes clear that continuing conflict between such communities is unavoidable unless the icons worshiped by one or the other are greatly modified or surrendered entirely. As noted by Juergensmeyer, “Alas, the inescapable scenario of hostility does not end until the mythology is redirected, or until one side or the other has been destroyed.”<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the role of worship in promoting the “long war” makes it clear that a resolution will only be possible when the icons of worship of one side or the other are supplanted. And to do that, it will be necessary either for the West to abandon the idols of worship that sustain and promote individual liberty, freedom of speech and worship, and wide latitude for tolerance for the lifestyle choices of others; or, for Islamic fundamentals to set aside (or be forced to set aside) idol worship that denigrates personal freedom and insists that all mankind must be made narrowly accountable to Islamic law as prescribed by religious authorities interpreting the Koran.

To examine the nature of this collision of religious paradigms from a biological perspective, it is useful to recall the immediate shock and dismay of Western leaders on 11 September 2001, who on the air waves repeatedly condemned the “cowardice” of the men who had just flown passenger planes into the Twin Towers and the Pentagon. Such statements were revealing with regard to the nature of the conflict itself. On the one hand, they reflected not only the nature of the outrage in the West over attacks that targeted mostly unarmed noncombatants, including women and children, but more important, the nature of Western blindness and cognitive dissonance over why such attacks would have occurred at all. Such initial bewilderment was the product of an intellectual paradigm framed by worship dominated by Western empiricism and secular humanism, which are at the heart of modern Western civilization today. The thought processes of those whose cognitive domain had been shaped by secular worship simply could not grasp the rationale behind such apparently pointless, brutal and arbitrary violence against unsuspecting noncombatants in the name of religion—because within the limitations of the Western secular frame of reference such arbitrary violence did not make rational sense.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, many Western leaders and other observers in the public eye persisted for some time on insisting that the attack was merely an aberration within Islam, the work of deviants unrepresentative of the broader, “peaceful” Islamic world.

However, the notable lack of significant or sustained protest within the global Islamic community against not only the 11 September attacks, but also against the horrific spectacle of Muslim on Muslim violence in Iraq speaks more eloquently than words of the real opinion shared by the Islamic majority. As a result, Western acknowledgement and acceptance that, in fact, quite a large number of people in the Islamic world were sympathetic to the 11 September attacks—a concept that at first seemed to many in the West to be medieval and anachronistic—has been about five years in coming. It has taken the experience of the resulting prolonged

suicide-bomber campaign conducted by al Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan—roughly the duration of U.S. involvement in World War II—with virtually no protest from the Islamic world to finally convince many leaders in the West that the 11 September bombers were not deviants perverting Islam, but quite representative of a common attitude very widely shared that sympathizes with such attacks against U.S. citizens, democracies and secular institutions.

The initial intellectual resistance to either perceiving or acknowledging broad Islamic support for such actions can be explained by the influence of scientific empiricism and agnostic secular humanism, which supplanted last century the previous Judeo-Christian paradigm underpinning Western civilization, and the cosmological framework in which Western leaders now see the world. Many have been nurtured in an environment that dismisses as useless what is scientifically unprovable, and consequently regard as quaint the concept of divine metaphysical beings. Therefore, many Western leaders have had an extremely difficult time relating to or accepting that a majority of the world's population are prepared to act resolutely according to the dictates of belief systems that regard as fact the existence of unseen metaphysical forces and beings that intervene in the daily affairs of men and to which mankind is believed to be accountable. The Western reluctance, or sheer inability, to take seriously or grasp the reality of this point of view, or to appreciate the depth of commitment to causes such cosmological views engender, cultivated in no small part the kind of cultural hubris that contributed to such wrong-headed decisions as the under-resourced adventures the United States now enjoys in Iraq and Afghanistan. Similarly, intellectual arrogance has made Western nations in general, and the United States specifically, extremely vulnerable to threats posed by societies established on the basis of “sacred” religions with which they now share few common values. Moreover, failure to appreciate the continuing influence of the biologically imperative to worship, albeit reflected in secular forms, have precluded them also from fully appreciating the dominant impact such an imperative has on shaping the character of their own civilizations.

Returning to the question of what motivated the 11 September suicide bombers, and objectively setting aside whatever disdain (or high regard) one might personally have for their actions, on reflection it is now difficult to see how anyone could rationally conclude that men who had just willingly used their own bodies as self-destructing weapons could ever have legitimately been characterized as cowards. For, if these men were to be regarded as cowards solely for having killed innocent noncombatants in the Twin Towers and Pentagon attacks, then what should be said of the Allied airmen who firebombed Dresden or dropped nuclear weapons on the civilians of Hiroshima and Nagasaki during World War II? Viewed in this way, whatever the 11 September attackers were, they were certainly not cowards in the sense that they slunk away from imminent death in an “unmanly” way. On the contrary, their actions self-evidently testify to courage derived from a commitment to a cause they viewed as lofty, having justified in their own minds the necessity of killing those they perceived as deserving of death by association with a culture that represented a threat to their own community of worshipers. In other words, they shared the same view that many Americans and their allies held toward German and Japanese civilians during World War II.

To examine such an attack under the assumption that it is the product of a biological imperative, it is useful to reconsider what some reported as the most basic motivation of the 11 September terrorists. As *Newsweek* correspondent Jeffrey Bartholet reported soon after the attacks,

investigation revealed that the men were “faithful but not particularly devout Muslims.”<sup>27</sup> Therefore, a first essential observation is that at the most basic level, the impulse behind the 11 September attacks was motivated by something other than a desire to promote the spread of the Islamic faith to new converts. It would be better interpreted as what the suicide bombers themselves described as a defensive attack against those, using Sapolsky’s jargon for primate competition, they had come to regard simply as “the other.” And, as noted above, such an aggressive impulse against “the other” for the stated purposes of self-defense is not unique to self-appointed defenders of Islam. Rather, defense as a justification has been and continues to be among the most common features of those engaged in religious violence in general.<sup>28</sup> Therefore, one may conclude that the aggressive impulse to violence among the 11 September bombers was not created by Islam, as some today wrongly assert, but was only textured by Islam to give it cosmological meaning, direction and purpose. On the contrary, the root cause of the attack was the primitive biological imperative inherited from primate origins to use violence against “the other,” stimulated by worship of icons who reflected the values of a particularly virulent variety of Islam.

One major lesson learned is that it is more prudent to acknowledge that suicide bombings do constitute a species of “bravery” that pointedly demands our respect in the sense that we cannot afford to delude ourselves into characterizing our opponents as caricatures or buffoons. Rather, we must see them as persons of intelligence, resourcefulness, and unrelenting and commitment rooted by a particular human instinct that has been shaped by a religious perspective. As we accept and acknowledge, however grudgingly, that the acts they perform are courageous from their own point of view, we put in relief what is truly the enemy’s center of gravity—and what should be of paramount concern to us in dealing with the war on terrorism at a biological level—*their cosmological perception of reality that justifies and enables a willingness to commit draconian acts of violence and destruction at any personal cost and without regard for consequences.*

Frankly identifying the enemy center of gravity in this way highlights that the greatest factors deciding the outcome of the war on terrorism will be first acknowledging that what has emerged is a clash between competing groups responding to the most basic and simple biological level of defensive instincts. On the one side of this conflict is a civilization whose most basic primitive impulses are impelling it to take steps to defend a broad interpretation of what its icons of worship promote as a conception of unalienable human rights, which does not see itself accountable to any authority apart from itself in defining those rights. This secular religion is in collision with an Islamic religious paradigm shaped by iconic worship that causes it to regard itself as being under literal attack from forces promoting unregulated and unacceptable behavior as defined by Koranic law, and which views individual human agency as more narrow in scope and more accountable to deity.<sup>29</sup>

Understanding the current conflict in this way helps to make more understandable such behavior in the Islamic world as the explosive display of violent rioting by Pakistani Muslims in response to news accounts (later discredited) supposed at the time to be reporting the mishandling of the Koran at Guantánamo Bay. And, on the other hand, it seems to also help to explain the impatience and astonishingly shallow commitment for waging a conflict at all by some political

and social leaders in the West, many of whom deny—based on the nature of icon worship that has shaped their own personal cosmologies—the intentions or even existence of an enemy.

The above noted, seeing the conflict as merely a struggle between “ideas” is increasingly an emperor with no clothes. Rational consideration of “ideas” played comparatively little role in stimulating large crowds of mainly illiterate, non-Arabic speaking Pakistani peasants (most of whom were not even capable of reading the ideas supposedly defamed in the desecrated Koran), to participation in mass demonstrations and violent riot over the reputed incident at Guantánamo. Nor do ‘ideas’ shape the judgments of many American congressmen or European parliamentarians whose “faith-based” biases are just as impervious to reasoned argument and facts as those of rioting Pakistanis. What the members of such groups “think” in terms of rationally and empirically derived ideas has much less influence on their behavior than what they “feel”—and what they feel is largely a product of what they have chosen to worship.

Against this backdrop, it can be seen that Islam and our own secular worship are merely catalytic forces that channel the religious imperative for worship into violent acts linked to religious convictions formed from cultural biases, presumed intuition or just plain wishful thinking. But, because the impulse to worship is rooted in the deepest recesses of primordial human instinct, the resulting religious convictions are often impervious to better, more rational explanations for the patterns of world experience established by empirically based alternatives. Unfortunately, history appears to demonstrate that such intuitive convictions frequently exercise greater influence on human behavior than empirically derived ideas, i.e., men are more willing to die for what they believe as opposed to what they may otherwise rationally be persuaded to think. The “values” proceeding from such convictions may resemble “ideas” in oral or written expression, but, unlike empirically based ideas that originate and are validated by conclusions drawn from concerted efforts to remove bias from observation and test, they may grow instead out of primeval human predisposition to rely on perceptions inculcated by the influence of the ritual and assumptions of worship.

On considering the key question of what would be required to change the icons that establish faith, it is prudent to note that faith is too often viewed as principally a cognitive activity; a spiritual condition arrived at by traveling the winding paths of logic and meditative intellect. This perception tends to produce a fallacy to which political and military leaders often fall prey: the conviction that faith may be compelled to change through skillful intellectual persuasion. One recent result stemming from this erroneous assumption is that enormous amounts of time, energy and money have been ineffectually squandered on efforts to change Islamic convictions through employing Madison Avenue techniques and rhetoric as a means to influence and shape the basic “ideas” among Islamic populations through so-called information operations. In practice, most of the “ideas” imparted in these programs actually have been little more than tepid appeals to an Islamic sense of human decency that assumes wrongly that there is an exact parallel counterpart conviction within Islamic culture to that in Western culture. Consequently, the so-called messages produced by Western strategic communicators have largely been merely squishy pleas for tolerance and respect for all religions, supported feebly by unsubtle solicitation to adopt American-style conventions of democratic governance and extreme materialism through U.S.-style consumer habits.

Not surprisingly, such campaigns fail because they have little or no impact on changing the malevolent roots of those forms of worship engendering the current violence. What then are the major icons of worship in the Islamic world that would need to be changed to produce such a sweeping change in values and subsequently behavior over time?

With the above in mind, one would do well to consider that people do not fly suicide missions into buildings or blow themselves up on crowded buses because they want more and better satellite dishes or Calvin Klein jeans. The basic “cosmology” or “theology” of the community that stimulates such acts of violence by licensing and encouraging jaded indifference to human suffering for those who do not accept Islamic law is what must change. Therefore, winning the war against Islamic terrorism depends ultimately not on a tectonic shift in what the Islamic world “knows” about the United States or the West through so-called strategic communications campaigns, but what it evolves to “believe” about itself. The mind-set of the 11 September suicide bombers, together with factors behind the public rioting in Pakistan and elsewhere in response to reported mistreatment of the Koran at the Guantánamo detention facility, reveal that the emotional prism and value system through which the Islamic world sees the rest of the world, and for which Islamic terrorists most often claim they are fighting the war against the West and United States is the Koran.

Therefore, the most essential factor in eventually ending large-scale Islamic involvement in the global war on terrorism is to support in every venue possible to stigmatize use of the Koran, together with Shar’ia (Islamic law derived from the Koran), by any nation as a basis for civil government.<sup>30</sup> Concurrently, the same standard should be demanded for all nations: an international stricture that forbids the use of any holy book as the authority for civil law in any country, to include not only the Koran but also the Torah, the Christian Bible, the Vedas, etc.<sup>31</sup> Elaborating on a similar concept, David G. Kibble noted,

*Traditionally Islam and Christianity both assert that their version of religion is the correct one and that any other is, by definition, erroneous. Does this not make a clash inevitable? One solution to the problem is presented by Tibi [Bassam Tibbi, professor of international relations, University of Gottingen, Germany] himself. He suggests that the traditional version of Islam first needs to be replaced by a more modernist one, and one which is reconciled to democracy. His second step is to argue that Islam and he calls secular Christianity or Western civilization should each give up their universal claim. Instead, he argues, all religions should see themselves as part of the world’s rich tapestry of social structures and beliefs, what Tibi calls “inter-civilizational pluralism.” Muslims would then free themselves from the “ill-fated vision of an Islamization of the entire world” and would instead work toward a “cross-cultural consensus” in the moral sphere. The consensus would be based upon secular democracy and human rights.<sup>32</sup>*

However, Kibble goes on to observe, “The problem with Tibi’s proposal, however, is that it relegates religion to a cultural phenomenon which can make no real claim to truth. It thereby tears the heart out of religion.”<sup>33</sup>

Elsewhere Juergensmeyer observes,

*The fourth scenario for peace is one in which religion is taken out of politics and retired to the moral and metaphysical planes. As long as images of spiritual warfare remain strong in the minds of religious activists and are linked with struggles in the social world around them . . . achieving an easy victory over religious activists, intimidating them into submission, or forging a compromise with them—are problematic at best. In some cases where religious politics had previously been strong, however, the image of cosmic war itself has been transformed. A more moderate view of the image of religious warfare has been conceived, one that is deflected away from political and social confrontation.*<sup>34</sup>

Obviously, any movement toward such an international goal would not doubt be met with massive resistance and repugnance in much of the Islamic world that equates the Koran with civil law. Therefore, such an effort could not be undertaken except at the macro-level of international policy and in sustained coordination with a broad coalition of partners. Moreover, whatever role the military might have would be at best be slight in advancing such a program for change since the issue would have to be resolved mainly by international legal agreements and cultural engagement among. However, its role could be major in providing defense from broad retaliatory acts coordinated by those elements of the Islamic world who felt most threatened by a global campaign calling for change. Finally, any such a program of change would have to start with a recommitment by the United States and its coalition partners to building a more peaceful and tolerant world order on the foundation of respect for individual rights, freedom of conscience and expression, and freedom of choice, especially with regard to freedom of worship.

Practical steps for promulgating such values would no doubt include increasingly aggressive support for international laws that increase popular access to global communications to broaden access to ideas. There is no better way to cultivate freedom or provide a bulwark to it than access to the marketplace of ideas. In conjunction, efforts should be made to stigmatize and make pariahs of countries (e.g., China, Cuba, North Korea and Saudi Arabia) that actively attempt to limit such access to their peoples. Moreover, heavy emphasis should continue to be placed on promoting freedom of expression, thought and religion by making a national priority support for international laws backed by such measures as economic sanctions (in the United Nations and elsewhere) that stigmatize participation of religious clergy in an official capacity with either civil government or interference in freedom of expression, thought or worship.<sup>35</sup>

For those who doubt whether such sweeping changes to civil religion are possible, it is well to bear in mind the great changes that determined proselytizing efforts have produced in the grand sweep of history: South America and the Philippines were not always Christian Catholic; Iran was once Zorastrian, not Islamic; Northern Europe and Great Britain were once predominantly Celtic and Druidic, not Judeo-Christian; and, India was not always Hindu. Such sweeping changes to the civil religion of regions and civilizations is not only possible, but is among the most prominent and compelling inevitabilities of human history. However, the direction of such change hinged upon the vigor and strength of convictions by those who promoted and defended the characteristics associated with their own specific values as represented in particular icons of worship.



Moreover, the basic United Nations Charter calling for establishment of universal human rights has laid the groundwork for just such an international campaign. Therefore, logically, if the UN is to have any real international utility and long-lasting effect with regard to promoting eventual global peace, a major obligation and test will be its seriousness and effectiveness in removing sectarian religion from all national governments as an essential component for ameliorating those influences historically responsible for stimulating the human instinct for violence through religious worship. Consequently, the United States and Western nations should insist that promoting the establishment and reification of the universal right of individual worship without government interference or involvement be the UN's top priority, principal mission and main concern.

In summary, understanding the current conflict as a biological problem involving human religious instincts provides an effective tool for more clearly understanding the depth and resilience behind religiously based violence, and helps to pull up in stark relief those specific measures that must ultimately be implemented to ameliorate such violence.

Additionally, such an understanding helps make clear that no resolution to a conflict that grows out of the brutal and single-minded intolerance of Wahibi-like faith will result from feeble attempts to change "ideas" through intellectual sparring and rhetoric. Persuasion must be achieved at the level of religious conversion through a concerted proselytizing effort. This implies a much greater scope of determined cultural engagement from a broad coalition of threatened nations willing to seriously act in concert to defend and promote their icons of worship and the social values such instill.

However, as Sapolsky noted, such change is possible:

*The first half of the twentieth century was drenched in the blood of German and Japanese aggression, yet only a few decades later it is hard to think of two countries more pacific. Sweden spent the seventeenth century rampaging through Europe, yet it is now an icon of nurturing tranquility. . . . Is a world of peacefully coexisting human Forest Troops possible? . . . Anyone who says, "No, it is beyond our nature," knows too little about primates, including ourselves.*<sup>36</sup>

*Colonel Bill Darley recently retired from the U.S. Army after serving for more than 21 years as a career Public Affairs officer. His public affairs assignments included serving as public affairs and visits officer for the Multi-National Force and Observers (MFO) in the Sinai from 1990-1991; as a public affairs staff officer on the Army Staff 1992-1993; as public affairs plans officer for the U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) from 1994-1997; as acting public affairs officer for the former School of the Americas (now the Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation, or WHINSEC), Fort Benning, Georgia; as Department of Defense media desk officer for Special Operations and Latin American affairs, 1998-2000; as Public Affairs Officer, USSOCOM, 2000-2003; as Public Affairs Officer, CJTF-7 in Iraq from August 2003-March 2004. Subsequently, he was tasked by the Combined Arms Center Commanding General to establish the first Strategic Communications Directorate at the Combined Arms Center, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, serving as its first director for two years. He finished his active duty career as Editor in Chief of Military Review, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Currently, is employed*

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## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> Mark Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God: The Global Rise of Religious Violence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), p. 6.
- <sup>2</sup> Robert M. Sapolsky, "A Natural History of Peace," *Foreign Affairs*, January–February 2006, p. 105.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 106.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 120.
- <sup>6</sup> Associated Press, "Faith-Based Prisons Multiply Across the U.S.," 13 October 2007, <http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,301600,00.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Jessica Stern, *Terror in the Name of God: Why Religious Militants Kill* (New York: Harper Rolling Books, 2003), p. xviii.
- <sup>8</sup> Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Talcott Parsons (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), pp. 35–46, 113–124.
- <sup>9</sup> Ward Rutherford, *Hitler's Propaganda Machine* (New York: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), pp. 13–18, 20. See also, Berthold Hinz, *Art in the Third Reich* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1979), pp. 1–20; and Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 16.
- <sup>10</sup> Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "On Civil Religion," Chapter 8, Book IV of *The Social Contract* (see *Basic Political Writings*, Donald A. Cress, ed., trans. [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1987], p. 226). See also, Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 239 as follows: "Jean-Jacques Rousseau coined the term civil religion to describe what he regarded as the moral and spiritual foundation essential for any modern society that wanted to sustain an enduring political order. Such a 'religion,' Rousseau claimed, was to be based not on the 'dogmas of religion' but on what he called 'the sanctity of the social contract.'" See also, Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).
- <sup>11</sup> E. O. Wilson, *Consilience* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1998), pp. 130, 238–265. See also Walter Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996), pp. 8–23.
- <sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 257.
- <sup>13</sup> L. Eslinger, "The Biological Basis of Consilience, a response to Edward O. Wilson's Naturalistic Reduction of Religion" (Calgary, AB, Canada: Dept. of Religious Studies, University of Calgary, Friday, April 17, 1998).
- <sup>14</sup> Morton Hunt, "The Biological Roots of Religion, Is Faith in Our Genes?" *Free Inquiry*, vol 19, no 3, pp. 32–33; see also, Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred*, p. 20.
- <sup>15</sup> Richard Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene* (Reading, Berkshire, Great Britain: Oxford University Press: Cox & Wyman Ltd, 1989), pp. 191–193, 197–198, 330–331.
- <sup>16</sup> Jean-Paul Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, ed. and trans. by Hazel E. Barnes (New York: University of Colorado, Philosophical Library, Inc., 1956), pp. 566–567; see also, Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 4.
- <sup>17</sup> Desmond Morris, *Manwatching: A Field Guide to Human Behaviour* (Lausanne: Elsevier and London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1977), p. 18 (18-23); Rene Girard, *Violence and the Sacred* (Baltimore and London: The John Hopkins University Press, (1972), pp. 146–147; Dawkins, *The Selfish Gene*, pp. 192–201, 323, 326–8. See also Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 168–170, "Why are such gory acts of sacrifice central to religion? . . . Accepting Freud's main theses, Girard amended it by suggestion that the motivation for violence is 'mimetic desire'—the desire to imitate a rival—rather than the psychological instincts of sexuality and aggression. . . . At a

seminar on the comparative study of the subject of disorder and order, Girard was challenged by a colleague who questioned Girard's assumptions about the anthropological origins of the image of sacrifice. He suggested that perhaps Girard was wrong—that the primal hunt started first, and sacrifice was meant to imitate the hunt. 'If I accepted your theory,' Girard replied, 'I could no longer connect my theory of desire with my theory of victimage.' His comment was followed by laughter. My guess, however, is that it was nervous laughter, since the intervention of the scholar Eric Gans pointed to what most of his colleagues at the seminar must have known to be true, that the social activity of organized conflict, whether against an animal in a hunt or against other people in battle, is a primal form of human activity. Warfare organizes people into a 'we and a 'they,' and it organizes social history into a storyline of persecution, conflict, and the hope of redemption, liberation, and conquest."

<sup>18</sup> Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 28.

<sup>19</sup> Clifford Geertz, "Ideology and Discontent" and "Ideology as a Cultural System," in David Apter, ed., *Ideology and Discontent* (New York: Free Press, 1964), pp. 15–46, 47–76; see also, Marcel Gauchet, *The Disenchantment of the World: A Political History of Religion*, Oscar Burge, trans. (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1998); "A French theorist, Marcel Gauchet, has called for Western society to recover the spiritual roots that it abandoned when it transferred the sense of sacrality from God to nation." (as quoted in Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 240).

<sup>20</sup> Burkert, *Creation of the Sacred: Tracks of Biology in Early Religions*, p. 20.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>22</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 8–10, 24, 41, 44–45, 79–81, 87–88, 98–99, 145–148, 150, 160; see also, Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, pp. xxviii, 20, 59, 63–64, 70, 85, 90–92, 113, 136–137, 150–153, 169, 212, 228, 264–265, 269, 274–276, 281–283.

<sup>23</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 82.

<sup>24</sup> Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 62.

<sup>25</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 163.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 69, 178.

<sup>27</sup> Jeffrey Bartholet, "Method to Madness," *Newsweek*, 22 October 2001, p. 58.

<sup>28</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 82.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76; see also, Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 115.

<sup>30</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, pp. 212–213.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 235–243.

<sup>32</sup> David G. Kibble, "The Attacks of 9/11: Evidence of a Clash of Religions?" *Parameters*, Autumn 2002, pp. 42–43.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>34</sup> Juergensmeyer, *Terror in the Mind of God*, p. 235.

<sup>35</sup> Stern, *Terror in the Name of God*, p. 230.

<sup>36</sup> Sapolsky, "A Natural History of Peace," p. 120.

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