The Ellul Forum

For the Critique of Technological Civilization

Islam & Religion

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"Let me make it clear that I have not been trying to excuse what the Europeans did. I have not been trying to shift the "blame," to say that the Muslims, not the Christians, were the guilty party."

-Jacques Ellul
The Subversion of Christianity
(1984; ET 1986), p. 112.

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From the Editor

We are interested in this issue in presenting Ellul's perspectives on Islam. But our overall theme is broad: "Globalization: Religious and Technological Conflict." *The Ellul Forum* is not limited to Ellul's thought in itself, but as the subtitle indicates, we are engaged in "The Critique of Technological Civilization." See *The Forum's* mission statement in the journal column on the left, and this wider scope is obvious.

Thus we feature Darrell Fasching's article in this issue and take note of his double reference to Ellul in terms of the sacred and new demons. We follow it with sections from two of Ellul's major statements on Islam. For both, religious conflict as it turns to technological conflict through weapons and war, is a central theme.

Ellul's "Preface" to the Bat Ye'or volume and chapter 5 in his *Subversion of Christianity* are in books no longer in print. Though Ellul's thinking on Islam is hugely controversial and set in the 1980s, *The Forum* seeks to serve our readers by making it accessible in this form to help invigorate our discussion in the age of religious fundamentalism and the so-called war on terrorism.

Andrew Goddard has reminded us that Ellul's strong pro-Israel view needs to be considered to help put his views on Islam in context, though Ellul's major books on the topic have never been translated: *Un chretien pour Israel* and *Ce dieu injuste*. And David Gill's comments on this topic are also very helpful: "Ellul visited Israel, had lots of Jewish and rabbi friends, and worked hard to save Jewish lives during the Resistance. But he also argued for France to get out of Algeria after WWII; they didn't and a horrible war followed. He was not absolutely against Muslims or Arabs. For example, his *New Demons* rips all religion, including the Christian version and the technological one."

For a more complete understanding of Ellul's thinking on religious conflict in general and Islam in particular, Joyce Hanks includes a comprehensive list of the original and secondary literature on "Islam" in her recent bibliography *The Reception of Jacques Ellul's Critique of Technology* (p. 495), reviewed in this issue.

Associate Editor David Gill invites all our IJES members to submit 100-500 word personal statements on "How Ellul has Affected My Approach to Politics" for the special Fall 2008 issue on "Ellul and Practical Politics." Deadline September 20. E-mail to IJES@ellul.org. Let your voice be heard.

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Religious Postmodernism In An Age of Global Conflict

by Darrell J. Fasching

Darrell J. Fasching is Professor of Religious Studies at the University of South Florida, Tampa. He was the founding editor of The Ellul Forum*(1988-1998) and a founding member of the International Jacques Ellul Society. His book,* The Thought of Jacques Ellul *(New York: Edwin Mellen Press, 1981), was the first English-language monograph to focus on the work of Ellul.*

Foreword from the author:

Is it plagiarism to quote oneself without quotation marks? I have never come to a satisfactory answer to that question. So here is my "confession:" The ideas expressed here are found in a variety of other things I have written (including an unpublished manuscript on Gandhi and bin Laden) but are taken here, almost verbatim, from the concluding chapter I wrote for Religion and Globalization, *co-authored with John Esposito and Todd Lewis (Oxford University Press. 2008). That chapter is also used as the concluding chapter of* World Religions Today *(Oxford University Press, 2006) with the same co-authors. And the material I used in those concluding chapters began to be formulated in my book* The Ethical Challenge of Auschwitz and Hiroshima *(SUNY Press, 1993), the epilogue of my book* The Coming of the Millennium *(Trinity International Press, 1996) and further formulated in "Stories of War and Peace: Sacred, Secular and Holy" in* War and Words *(Lexington Books, 2004, edited by Sara Munson Deats, Lagretta Tallent Lenker, and Merry G. Perry).*

Introduction

Technology globalizes human existence through mass communication, international travel and global reach of international corporations. In doing so it everywhere disrupts sacred ways of life that were once largely immune to outside incursion, precipitating a new era of violence. These sacred ways of life gave each culture its sacred center. Globalization, especially through the mass media, decenters and relativizes all such centers and therefore threatens every sacred way of life. Postmodernity is a product of globalization, for the postmodern world is an eclectic world that has no center. In the same way "new age religion" is a postmodern product of globalization, for it is eclectic religiosity that has no center of its own but borrows from everywhere. Globalization creates the pluralism and relativism that only a secular society will tolerate.

A sacred society, by definition, cannot tolerate this seemingly normless diversity. The sacred is that which matters most, and what matters most to people is their way of life. It is what people are willing to die for and, more ominously, what they are willing to kill for. For all traditional sacred societies, the modern West, seems like a disease that is trying to infect the whole world with its "secularism" -- a secularism that creates a "pluralistic relativism" and brings with it "moral decadence."

Fundamentalism and terrorism are protective responses to this global invasion, responses that see the cure as a return to a sacred order now imagined as a global order. But how can humanity go from a diversity of sacred orders to one sacred order? Whose sacred order would this be? In a world of sacral conflicts, where compromise equals apostasy, violence seems like the only way to settle this issue.

In this essay I argue that this issue cannot have a secular solution, since secularism (itself, as Ellul would say, the new face of the sacred) evokes the violent response it seeks to undermine by preaching a totalistic form of pluralism and relativism in response to every form of sacred absolutism and totalism. The only constructive alternative to religious fundamentalism's call to return to a sacred order, I argue, must itself be religious – a religious postmodernism. This religious postmodernism would give human beings a religious reason to abandon the totalitarian impulse to create a global sacred order by embracing what I would call Gandhi's "religious postmodernism," for Gandhi insists that all religion is political and must shape the public global order but do so by discovering religious reasons to embrace religious diversity.

Violence and the Sacred: Defending the Center

After the attack on the World Trade Center on September 11th, 2001, on the very day the U.S. bombing of Afghanistan began, a tape of Osama bin Laden was broadcast to the world in which he declared,

"These events have split the whole world into two camps. The camp of belief and the camp of disbelief. There is only one God, and I declare that there is no prophet but Muhammad." September 11th, 2001 was the most recent and dramatic battle in a war between two worlds. This "jihad" or "holy war" was declared by bin Laden in1998 from Afghanistan, announcing: "We, with Allah's help, call on every Muslim . . . to comply with Allah's order to kill the Americans…. We also call on Muslim ulema, leaders, youths and soldiers to launch the raid on Satan's U.S. troops and the devil's supporters…."[1]

For bin Laden, the world is divided into two realms, that of sacred order (*dar al Islam*) and that of chaos and war (*dar al harb*). According to bin Laden, the West, with its secularism and unbelief, threatens and profanes the sacred realm of Islam. Muslims are authorized and urged to kill Americans and all unbelievers, even innocent women and children. According to news reports of a discovered terrorist manual, the *al Qaida* are clear about the goal – "overthow of the godless regimes and their replacement with an Islamic regime." For bin Laden, the very presence of American soldiers in Saudi Arabia during the Gulf War profaned the land that harbors the most sacred places of Islam (i.e., the sacred places that mark Muhammad's life and teachings in Mecca and Medina). "Holy war" is not the unique province of radical Muslims. Most wars qualify, especially the Christian "Crusades."

Bin Laden is intent upon protecting a sacred way of life against the invastion of the secular West. A people demonstrate what they truly hold sacred by what they are willing to die for, or more ominously, to kill for. Again and again, humans have demonstrated that it is their way of life, above all, that fills that category. What matters most to human beings everywhere is their living and dying. What is common to all human religiosity is not belief in God or the gods but the sacredness of a "way of life" that conquers the fear of death, holds chaos at bay, and makes life possible. Durkheim, (and Ellul following this French sociological tradition) was right: every society on the face of the earth has been held together by some sense of the sacred.

Moreover, if what is held sacred is ultimately *a way of life*, we need to realize that religion and politics are two sides of the same coin. Politics, no matter how secular it may appear, always has a religious function -- to protect a sacred way of life from the incursion of the profane forces of chaos and death. Sacred mythologies create their own cosmologies of space. They divide the world into two camps – the sacred realm of order that sustains life and the profane realm of chaos that threatens life. War becomes "holy war" whenever it is conducted to preserve sacred order against the cosmic forces of chaos.

The resort to violence and war is the sacred obligation of all who participate in a sacred way of life, whenever that way of life is thought to be threatened. In an age of globalization, religious terrorism itself becomes global because in such an age the threat of secularism and the "moral degeneracy" it is believed to bring, becomes a global threat that imperils every sacred way of life. It is postmodern global relativism that drives global terrorism.

The postmodern world is synonymous with globalization. Globalization is the product of the growing interdependence of cultures through emerging global techno-economic and socio-cultural networks. These networks transcend national boundaries and in the process tend to challenge previous forms of authority and identity. In a world of instant global communication and jet travel, time and space shrink and force a new awareness of diversity and interdependence upon all the inhabitants of the earth. The world of great independent civilizations normatively centered in the grand stories of their religious visions (Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Jewish, Islamic, etc.) and great sacred cities like Benares, Lhasa, Rome, Jerusalem and Mecca, is giving way to a global village where those who were once strangers from the other side of the globe are now our neighbors.

Today our cities reflect our global diversity and have no single sacred center but rather many centers. The center, we could say, is found everywhere, reflecting the many religious stories and practices that diversity brings to urban life. Perhaps there is no more apt description of the postmodern world produced by globalization than "a circle whose circumference is nowhere and whose center is everywhere." This definition is borrowed from the Renaissance geometrician and mystic, Nicholas of Cusa (c. 1400-1450 CE), who used it to describe God. It is equally apt as a way of describing the diverse paths to God/the Holy that co-mingle in the postmodern global village.

This postmodern world without a normative center is in many ways a frightening and disorienting world, one aptly described by the Irish storyteller and poet, William Butler Yeats, in his poem "The Second Coming"*:*

Turning and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed,
and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;

The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.[2]

Postmodernism, Jean Francois Lyotard has asserted, is marked by the collapse of all metanarratives—those grand narratives that give each civilization (whether, Christian or Muslim or Buddhist, or Secular Modernist, etc.) its center. These stories do not disappear. Instead of being the grand stories that center civilizations they survive as the "small" decentered stories of storytellers who are forced to share public space with the stories of others in the same global village.

More than anyone else, Augustine, by authoring *The City of God*, is responsible for the grand story or metanarrative that centered the Christian civilization of the West. Lyotard sees the decentering effect of postmodernism as a cure for the totalisms (or totalitarianisms) of a civilization bent on "compelling" strangers "to come in" (whether Christian, or Marxist-Stalinist or the imperialism of modern Scientism) even as Augustine wanted to so compel the Donatists. Lyotard's admonition is to "activate the differences" and so decenter or relativize all totalisms.[3]

It is just such a championing of secular relativism that makes radical religious fundamentalists express the desire to take up arms if necessary to preserve the sacredness of human identity in a rightly ordered society against what they perceive as the chaos of today's decadent, normless secular relativism. To restore the sacred normative order, therefore, they tend to affirm the desirability of achieving the premodern ideal of one society, one religion. They remain uncomfortable with the religious diversity that thrives in a secular society.

Religious modernism, by contrast, as it emerged in the West rejected the fundamentalist ideal, adopted from premodern societies, of identity between religion and society. Instead of dangerous absolutism, modernists looked for an accommodation between religion and modern secular society. They argued that it is possible to desacralize one's way of life and identity in a way that creates a new identity that preserves the essential values or norms of the past religious tradition, but in harmony with a new modern way of life. Modernists secularize society and privatize their religious practices, hoping by their encouragement of denominational forms of religion to ensure an environment that supports religious diversity.

What I would call religious postmodernism, like religious modernism, accepts secularization and religious pluralism. But religious postmodernism, like fundamentalism, rejects the modernist solution of privatization and seeks a public role for religion. It differs from fundamentalism, however, in that it rejects the domination of society by a single religion. Religious postmodernists insist that there is a way for religious communities in all their diversity to shape the public order and so rescue society from secular relativism. The chief example of this option is the model established by Mohandas K. Gandhi. Because his disciples rejected the privatization of religion while affirming religious diversity, I would define Gandhi's movement is a postmodern "new age" religious movement rather than a modern one.

"Passing Over": A Postmodern Spiritual Adventure for a New Age of Globalization

All the great world religions date back a millennium or more, and each provided a grand metanarrative for the premodern civilization in which it emerged—in the Middle East, in India, and in China. In the past these world religions were relatively isolated from one another. There were many histories in the world, each shaped by a great metanarrative, but no global history.

The perspective of religious postmodernism arises from a dramatically different situation. We are at the beginning of a new millennium, which is marked by the development of a global civilization. The diverse spiritual heritages of the human race have become the common inheritance of all. Modern changes have ended the isolation of the past, and people following one great tradition are now very likely to live in proximity to adherents of other faiths. New age religion has tapped this condition of globalism, but in two different ways. In its modernist forms it has privatized the religious quest as a quest for the perfection of the self. In its postmodern forms, without rejecting self-transformation, it has turned that goal outward in forms of social organization committed to bettering society, with a balance between personal and social transformation.

The time when a new world religion could be founded has passed, argues John Dunne in his book, *The Way of All the Earth.* What is required today is not the conquest of the world by any one religion or culture but a meeting and sharing of religious and cultural insight. The postmodern spiritual adventure occurs when we engage in what Dunne calls "passing over" into another's religion and culture and come to see the world through another's eyes. When we do this, we "come back" to our own religion and culture enriched with new insight not only into the other's but also our own religion and culture—insight that builds bridges of understanding, a unity in diversity between people of diverse religions and cultures. The model for this spiritual adventure is found in the lives of Leo Tolstoy

(1828–1910), Mohandas K. Gandhi (1869–1948), and Martin Luther King Jr. (1929–1968).

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr. are the great champions of the fight for the dignity and rights of all human beings, from all religions and cultures. Moreover, they are models for a different kind of new age religious practice, one that absorbs the global wisdom of diverse religions, but does so without indiscriminately mixing elements to create a new religion, as is typical of the eclectic syncretism of most new age religions. Yet clearly these religious leaders initiated a new way of being religious that could occur only in an age of globalization.

Martin Luther King Jr. often noted that his commitment to nonviolent civil disobedience as a strategy for protecting human dignity had its roots in two sources: Jesus' Sermon on the Mount and Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence derived from his interpretation of the *Bhagavad Gita* of Hinduism. Gandhi died when King was a teenager, but Dr. King did travel to India to study the effects of Gandhi's teachings of nonviolence on Indian society. In this he showed a remarkable openness to the insights of another religion and culture. In Gandhi and his spiritual heirs, King found kindred spirits, and he came back to his own religion and culture enriched by the new insights that came to him in the process of passing over and coming back. Martin Luther King Jr. never considered becoming a Hindu, but his Christianity was profoundly transformed by his encounter with Gandhi's Hinduism.

Just as important, however, is the spiritual passing over of Gandhi himself. As a young man, Gandhi went to England to study law. His journey led him not away from Hinduism but more deeply into it. For it was in England that Gandhi discovered the *Bhagavad Gita* and began to appreciate the spiritual and ethical power of Hinduism.

Having promised his mother that he would remain vegetarian, Gandhi took to eating his meals with British citizens who had developed similar commitments to vegetarianism through their fascination with India and its religions. It is in this context that Gandhi was brought into direct contact with the nineteenth-century theosophical roots of new age globalization. In these circles he met Madam Blavatsky and her disciple Annie Besant, both of whom had a profound influence upon him. His associates also included Christian followers of the Russian novelist Leo Tolstoy, who, after his midlife conversion, had embraced an ethic of nonviolence based on the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5–7).

At the invitation of his theosophist friends, Gandhi read the *Bhagavad Gita* for the first time in an English translation by Sir Edwin Arnold, entitled *The Song Celestial*. It was only much later that he took to a serious study of the Hindu text in Sanskrit. He was also deeply impressed by Arnold's *The Light of Asia*, recounting the life of the Buddha. Thus, through the eyes of Western friends, he was first moved to discover the spiritual riches of his own Hindu heritage. The seeds were planted in England, nourished by more serious study during his years in South Africa, and brought to fruition upon his return to India in 1915.

From his theosophist friends, Gandhi not only learned to appreciate his own religious tradition but came to see Christianity in a new way. For unlike the evangelical missionaries he had met in his childhood, the theosophists had a deeply allegorical way of reading the Christian scriptures. This approach to Bible study allowed people to find in the teachings of Jesus a universal path toward spiritual truth that was in harmony with the wisdom of Asia. The power of allegory lay in opening the literal stories of the scripture to reveal a deeper symbolic meaning based on what the theosophists believed was profound universal religious experience and wisdom. From the theosophists, Gandhi took an interpretive principle that has its roots in the New Testament writings of St. Paul: "the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life" (2 Corinthians 3:6). This insight would enable him to read the *Bhagavad Gita* in the light of his own deep religious experience and find in it the justification for nonviolent civil disobedience.

Gandhi was likewise profoundly influenced by Tolstoy's understanding of the Sermon on the Mount. The message of nonviolence—love your enemy, turn the other cheek—took hold of Gandhi. And yet Gandhi did not become a Christian. Rather, he returned to his parents' religion and culture, finding parallels to Jesus' teachings in the Hindu tradition. And so he read Hindu scriptures with new insight, interpreting the *Bhagavad Gita* allegorically, as a call to resist evil by nonviolent means. And just as King would later use the ideas of Gandhi in the nonviolent struggle for the dignity of blacks in America, so Gandhi was inspired by Tolstoy as he led the fight for the dignity of the lower castes and outcasts within Hindu society, and for the liberation of India from British colonial rule.

Gandhi never seriously considered becoming a Christian any more than King ever seriously considered becoming a Hindu. Nevertheless, Gandhi's Hindu faith was profoundly transformed by his encounter with the Christianity of Tolstoy, just as King's Christian faith was profoundly transformed by his encounter with Gandhi's Hinduism. In the lives of these twentieth-century religious activists we have examples of "passing over" as a transformative postmodern spiritual

adventure.

Whereas in the secular forms of postmodernism all knowledge is relative, and therefore the choice between interpretations of any claim to truth is undecidable, Gandhi and King opened up an alternate path. While agreeing that in matters of religion, truth is undecidable, they showed that acceptance of diversity does not have to lead to the kind of ethical relativism that so deeply troubles fundamentalists. For in the cases of Gandhi and King, passing over led to a sharing of wisdom among traditions that gave birth to an ethical coalition in defense of human dignity across religions and cultures—a global ethic for a new age.

By their lives, Gandhi and King demonstrated that, contrary to the fears raised by fundamentalism, the sharing of a common ethic and of spiritual wisdom across traditions does not require any practitioners to abandon their religious identity. Instead, Gandhi and King offered a model of unity in diversity. Finally, both Gandhi and King rejected the privatization of religion, insisting that religion in all its diversity plays a decisive role in shaping the public order. And both were convinced that only a firm commitment to nonviolence on the part of religious communities would allow society to avoid a return to the kind of religious wars that accompanied the Protestant Reformation and the emergence of modernity.

The spiritual adventure initiated by Gandhi and King involves passing over (through imagination, through travel and cultural exchange, through a common commitment to social action to promote social justice, etc.) into the life and stories and traditions of others, sharing in them and, in the process, coming to see one's own tradition through them. Such encounters enlarge our sense of human identity to include the other. The religious metanarratives of the world's civilizations may have become "smaller narratives" in an age of global diversity, but they have not lost their power. Indeed, in this Gandhian model, it is the sharing of the wisdom from another tradition's metanarratives that gives the stories of a seeker's own tradition their power. Each seeker remains on familiar religious and cultural ground, yet each is profoundly influenced by the other.

Tolstoy, Jesus, and "Saint Buddha":
An Ancient Tale with a Thousand Faces

Although at first glance, the religious worlds of humankind seem to have grown up largely independent of one another, a closer look will reveal that hidden threads from different religions and cultures have for centuries been woven together to form a new tapestry, one that contributes to the sharing of religious insight in an age of globalization. In *Toward a World Theology,* Wilfred Cantwell Smith traces the threads of this new tapestry, and the story he tells is quite surprising.[4] Smith notes, for example, that to fully appreciate the influence on Gandhi of Tolstoy's understanding of the Sermon on the Mount, it is important to know that Tolstoy's own conversion to Christianity, which occurred in a period of midlife crisis, was deeply influenced not only by the Sermon on the Mount but also by the life of the Buddha.

Tolstoy was a member of the Russian nobility, rich and famous because of his novels, which included *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina.* Yet in his fifties, Tolstoy went through a period of great depression that resolved itself in a powerful religious conversion experience. Although, nominally a member of the (Russian) Orthodox Church, Tolstoy had not taken his faith seriously until he came to the point of making the Sermon on the Mount a blueprint for his life. After his conversion, Tolstoy freed his serfs, gave away all his wealth, and spent the rest of his life serving the poor.

As Wilfred Cantwell Smith tells it, a key factor in Tolstoy's conversion was his reading of a story from the lives of the saints. The story was that of Barlaam and Josaphat. It is the story of a wealthy young Indian prince by the name of Josaphat who gave up all his wealth and power, and abandoned his family, to embark on an urgent quest for an answer to the problems of old age, sickness, and death. During his search, the prince comes across a Christian monk by the name of Barlaam, who told him a story. It seems that once there was a man who fell into a very deep well and was hanging onto two vines for dear life. As he was trapped in this precarious situation, two mice, one white and one black, came along and began to chew on the vines. The man knew that in short order the vines would be severed and he would plunge to his death.

The story was a parable of the prince's spiritual situation. Barlaam points out that the two mice represent the cycle of day and night, the passing of time that brings us ever closer to death. The paradox is that like the man in the well, Josaphat cannot save his life by clinging to it. He must let go of the vines, so to speak. He can save his life only by losing it. That is, if he lets go of his life now, no longer clinging to it but surrendering himself completely to the divine will, this spiritual death will lead to a new life that transcends death. This story and its parable touched the deeply depressed writer and led him to a spiritual surrender that brought about his rebirth. Out of this rebirth came a new Tolstoy, the author of *The Kingdom of God Is Within You,* which advocates a life of nonviolent resistance to evil based on the Sermon on the Mount.

The story of the Indian prince who abandons a

life of wealth and power and responds to a parable of a man about to fall into an abyss is of course a thinly disguised version of the life story of the Buddha. Versions of the story and the parable can be found in almost all the world's great religions, recorded in a variety of languages (Greek, Latin, Czech, Polish, Italian, Spanish, French, German, Swedish, Norwegian, Arabic, Hebrew, Yiddish, Persian, Sanskrit, Chinese, Japanese, etc.). The Greek version came into Christianity from an Islamic Arabic version, which was passed on to Judaism as well. The Muslims apparently got it from members of a Gnostic cult in Persia, who got it from Buddhists in India. The Latinate name *Josaphat* is a translation of the Greek *Loasaf,* which is translated from the Arabic *Yudasaf,* which comes from the Persian *Bodisaf,* which is a translation of *Bodhisattva,* a Sanskrit title for the Buddha.

The parable of the man clinging to the vine may be even older than the story of the prince (Buddha) who renounces his wealth. It may well go back to early Indic sources at the beginnings of civilization. It is one of the oldest and most universal stories in the history of religions and civilizations. Tolstoy's conversion was brought about in large part by the story of a Christian saint, Josaphat, who was, so to speak, really the Buddha in disguise.

This history of the story of a great sage's first steps toward enlightenment suggests that the process leading to globalization goes back to the very beginnings of civilization.We can see that the practice of passing over and coming back, of being open to the stories of others, and of coming to understand one's own tradition through these stories is in fact very ancient. Therefore, when Martin Luther King Jr. embraced the teachings of Gandhi, he embraced not only Gandhi but also Tolstoy, and through Tolstoy two of the greatest religious teachers of nonviolence: Jesus of Nazareth, whose committed follower King already was, and Siddhartha the Buddha. Thus from the teachings of Gandhi, King actually assimilated important teachings from at least four religious traditions—Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. This rich spiritual debt to other religions and cultures never in any way diminished Martin Luther King Jr.'s faith. On the contrary, the Baptist pastor's Christian beliefs were deeply enriched, in turn enriching the world in which we live. The same could be said about Gandhi and Hinduism.

Gandhi's transformation of the *Bhagavad Gita*—a Hindu story that literally advocates the duty of going to war and killing one's enemies—into a story of nonviolence is instructive of the transforming power of the allegorical method that he learned from his theosophist friends. The *Bhagavad Gita* is a story about a warrior named Arjuna, who argues with his chariot driver, Krishna, over whether it is right to go to war if it means having to kill one's own relatives. Krishna's answer is Yes—Arjuna must do his duty as a warrior in the cause of justice, but he is morally obliged to do it selflessly, with no thought of personal loss or gain. Gandhi, however, transformed the story of Arjuna and Krishna from a story of war as physical violence into a story of war as active but nonviolent resistance to injustice through civil disobedience.

If the message of spiritual realization in the *Gita* is that all beings share the same self (as Brahman or Purusha), how could the *Gita* be literally advocating violence? For to do violence against another would be to do violence against oneself. The self-contradiction of a literal interpretation, in Gandhi's way of thinking, forces the mind into an allegorical mode, where it can grasp the Gita's true spiritual meaning. Reading the *Gita* allegorically, Gandhi insisted that the impending battle described in the Hindu classic is really about the battle between good and evil going on within every self.

Krishna's command to Arjuna to stand up and fight is thus a "spiritual" command. But for Gandhi this does not mean, as it usually does in "modern" terms, that the struggle is purely inner (private) and personal. On the contrary, the spiritual person will see the need to practice nonviolent civil disobedience: that is, to replace "body force" (i.e., violence) with "soul force." As the *Gita* suggests, there really is injustice in the world, and therefore there really is an obligation to fight, even to go to war, to reestablish justice. One must be prepared to exert Gandhian soul force, to put one's body on the line, but in a nonviolent way. In so doing, one leaves open the opportunity to gain the respect, understanding, and perhaps transformation of one's enemy.

The lesson Gandhi derived from the *Gita* is that the encounter with the other need not lead to conquest. It can lead, instead, to mutual understanding and mutual respect. King's relationship to Gandhi and Gandhi's relationship to Tolstoy are models of a postmodern spirituality and ethics that transform postmodern relativism and eclecticism into the opportunity to follow a new spiritual and ethical path—"the way of all the earth"—the sharing of spiritual insight and ethical wisdom across religions and cultures in an age of globalization.

On this path, people of diverse religions and cultures find themselves sharing an ethical commitment to protect human dignity beyond the postmodern interest in personal transformation fostered by the modernist ideal of privatization. Gandhi and King were not engaged in a private quest to perfect the self

(although neither neglected the need for personal transformation). Rather, each man embarked on a public quest to transform human communities socially and politically by invoking a global ethical commitment to protect the dignity of all persons. The religious movements associated with both men fit the pattern of what Jacques Ellul defines as "the holy" – for only the holy truly secularizes by opening the door to hospitality and the path to religious pluralism. Gandhi and King recovered the premodern ideal of religion shaping the public order but now in a postmodern mode, committed to religious pluralism.

The Children of Gandhi:
An Experiment in Postmodern Global Ethics

In April 1968, Martin Luther King Jr., sometimes referred to as "the American Gandhi," went to Memphis to support black municipal workers in the midst of a strike. The Baptist minister was looking forward to spending the approaching Passover with Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel. Heschel, who had marched with King during the voter registration drive in Selma, Alabama, three years earlier, had become a close friend and supporter. Unfortunately, King was not able to keep that engagement. On April 4, 1968, like Gandhi before him, Martin Luther King Jr., a man of nonviolence, was shot to death by an assassin.

The Buddhist monk and anti–Vietnam War activist Thich Nhat Hanh, whom King had nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, received the news of his friend's death while at an interreligious conference in New York City. Only the previous spring, King had expressed his opposition to the Vietnam War, largely at the urging of Thich Nhat Hanh and Rabbi Heschel. King spoke out at an event sponsored by Clergy and Laymen Concerned about Vietnam, a group founded by Heschel, Protestant cleric John Bennett, and Richard Neuhaus, then a Lutheran minister. Now another champion in the struggle against hatred, violence, and war was dead. But the spiritual and ethical vision he shared with his friends, across religions and cultures, has continued to inspire followers throughout the world.

These religious activists—a Baptist minister who for his leadership in the American civil rights movement won the Noble Peace Prize, a Hasidic rabbi and scholar who narrowly escaped the death camps of the Holocaust, and a Buddhist monk who had been targeted for death in Vietnam but survived to lead the Buddhist peace delegation to the Paris peace negotiations in 1973—are the spiritual children of Gandhi. By working together to protest racial injustice and the violence of war, they demonstrated that religious and cultural pluralism do not have to end in ethical relativism and, given a commitment to nonviolence, can play a role in shaping public life in an age of globalization. The goal, Martin Luther King Jr. insisted, is not to humiliate and defeat your enemy but to win him or her over, bringing about not only justice but also reconciliation. The goal, he said, was to attack the evil in systems, not to attack persons. The goal was to love one's enemy, not in the sense of sentimental affection, nor in the reciprocal sense of friendship, but in the constructive sense of seeking the opponent's well-being.

Nonviolence, King argued, is more than just a remedy for this or that social injustice. It is, he was convinced, essential to the survival of humanity in an age of nuclear weapons. The choice, he said, was "no longer between violence and nonviolence. It is either nonviolence or nonexistence."

Truth is to be found in all religions, King said many times, and "injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly affects all indirectly."[5] The scandal of our age, said Abraham Joshua Heschel, is that in a world of diplomacy "only religions are not on speaking terms." But, he also said, no religion is an island, and all must realize that "holiness is not the monopoly of any particular religion or tradition."[6]

"Buddhism today," writes Thich Nhat Hanh, "is made up of non-Buddhist elements, including Jewish and Christian ones." And likewise with every tradition. "We have to allow what is good, beautiful, and meaningful in the other's tradition to transform us," the Vietnamese monk continues. The purpose of such passing over into the other's tradition is to allow each to return to his or her own place transformed. What is astonishing, says Thich Nhat Hanh, is that we will find kindred spirits in other traditions with whom we share more than we do with many in our own tradition.[7]

The Story of Babel:
A Postmodern Tale for an Age of Global Conflict

Will the global future of religion and civilization be shaped by this Gandhian model of a new age spiritual practice? It clearly offers an alternative to both traditional denominational religions that seek to privatize religion and keep it out of the secular public square and the more privatistict forms of new age religion that focus on perfecting the self. The Gandhian model offers a postmodern religious alternative to modern secularism. It is this secularism that radical fundamentalists and their terrorist extremes fear is leading the world into the moral decadence of ethical relativism. The terrorist extremes want to resacralize

the world around their particular premodern grand narrative (each movement has its own conception of what that is). The only path they see to religion shaping public life is one of totalism and totalitarianism. The postmodern religious path of Gandhi and King, also calls for religion to shape public life but does so while embracing religious pluralism rather than a sacral totalism. It too rejects a shallow and decadent secularism in favor of a fervent religious commitment, but one defined by non-violence and religious pluralism in defense of the sanctity of the human. The emergence of religious postmodernism means that in the future, the struggle among religions will most likely be not between fundamentalism and modernism, as a conflict between the sacred and the secular (public and private religion), but between the sacred and the holy—religious exclusivism and religious pluralism as alternative forms of public religion.

In a curious fashion all the spiritual children of Gandhi should be able to affirm the lesson of the biblical story of Babel that Jews, Christians and Muslims already have an affinity for. For the lesson of Babel is a global lesson with a curiously postmodern twist, suggesting where we can find God in a world that has no center, or rather in a world whose center is everywhere.

Now the whole earth had one language and the same words. And as they migrated from the east, they came upon a plain in the land of Shinar and settled there. And they said to one another, 'Come, let us make bricks, and burn them thoroughly.' And they had brick for stone, and bitumen for mortar. Then they said, 'Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves; otherwise we shall be scattered abroad upon the face of the whole earth.'

The LORD came down to see the city and the tower, which mortals had built. And the LORD said, 'Look, they are one people, and they have all one language; and this is only the beginning of what they will do; nothing that they propose to do will now be impossible for them. Come, let us go down, and confuse their language there, so that they will not understand one another's speech.' So the LORD scattered them abroad from there over the face of all the earth, and they left off building the city. Therefore it was called Babel, because there the LORD confused the language of all the earth; and from there the LORD scattered them abroad over the face of all the earth. (Genesis 11:1-9)

The citizens of Babel, we might imagine, reveled in totalism—in a way of life where everyone shared the same language, identity and world-view. One can think of examples like the Inquisition of medieval Christendom or the Nazi pursuit of the purity of the Aryan race.

The usual exegesis of the Babel story suggests that God punished the citizens of Babel for their hubris by confusing their tongues so that no one spoke the same language and therefore they could not cooperate in finishing their building project. However, the story of Babel cannot be understood in isolation from its larger narrative context. Given the overwhelming emphasis on hospitality to the stranger in the Torah (a commandment that occurs more often than any other), we must understand this story differently. Human efforts to reach God were misguided and so God reoriented these efforts by creating a world of strangers where God is to be encountered in the midst of diversity. According to the biblical tradition to welcome the stranger is to welcome God, or God's Messiah or else an angel (messenger) of God.

The good news proclaimed by the story of Babel is that God is to be found neither in uniformity (totalism) on earth nor by scaling the heavens (through special privileged religious experiences or revelations) but rather in our encounter with the stranger. The good news is that God's holiness shatters sacral uniformity. God prefers the pluralism of a world of strangers to the uniformity of a sacred society. God loves difference. God prefers to be discovered through difference rather than similarity. God enters our lives through the presence of the stranger.

If the devil's strategy is to divide the world and assert the totalism of sameness against all who are different, God's strategy is to invite diversity and welcome the stranger. God's strategy at Babel is "postmodern." It is, as Lyotard describes it, "to activate the differences." But it is not Lyotard secularism and relativism that follows from this but an ethic of holiness.

We are created in the image of a God (The Holy) without image. One of us is not more like God than another. To activate the differences is to decenter a civilizational story whose sacred authority resides in its claim that only those who are the same (in religion, in ethnicity, etc.) are human. To activate the differences in this context does not lead to secular relativism but the affirmation of the sanctity of every human being around the globe -- for all stand within a circle whose center is everywhere and whose circumference is nowhere.

The ethical strategy suggested by Babel is an ethical strategy of alienation, of becoming a stranger to one's own tradition and seeing it through the eyes of those violated by it. This strategy opens the path to holiness and hospitality, embracing the God whose ways are not our ethno-religio-centric ways whenever

we embrace the stranger. For God, Isaiah suggests, is the ultimate stranger "whose ways are not our ways and thoughts are not our thoughts." The long term cure for an age of global terrorism is a global religious ethic of hospitality that takes the wind out of secularism. For it is a sacral (totalistic) secularism that feeds religious terrorism. The more secular the world becomes the more urgent it seems to terrorists to defend their sacred way of life. An ethic of holiness and hospitality takes the wind out of the totalism and relativism of the secular by returning religion to the public square to affirm differences and so to realize the utopian promise of Babel.

Notes

1. February 1998 declaration of Jihad by Osama bin Laden, reprinted in *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy* published by The Watson Institute for International Studies, Box 1948, Brown University, Providence, RI 02912. The other quotations are from widely disseminated newspaper reports following the events of 9-11.

2. "The Second Coming" in *The Selected Poems and Two Plays of William Butler Yeats*, ed. M.L. Rosenthal (New York: Collier Books, 1962), 91.

3. Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979), 82.

4. Wilfred Cantwell Smith, *Toward a World Theology* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1981), Chap. 1.

5. Martin Luther King Jr., "Letter from Birmingham Jail," in King, *I Have a Dream: Writings and Speeches That Changed the World*, James M. Washington, ed. (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), p. 85.

6. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity: Essays [of] Abraham Joshua Heschel*, Susannah Herschel, ed. (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1996), pp 241, 247.

7. Thich Nhat Hanh, *Living Buddha, Living Christ* (New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons, Riverhead Books, 1995), pp. 9, 11.

Jacques Ellul: Islam & Non-Muslims

This essay, written in 1983, was Ellul's preface to The Dhimmi: Jews and Christians Under Islam *by Bat Ye'or (Rutherford, NJ: Farleigh Dickinson Press, revised and enlarged edition, 1985; translated from the French by David Maisel and David Littman; reprinted here by permission). Bat Ye'or describes her own objective this way: "This study does not seek to investigate the legal status of the dhimmi peoples—that is, the non-Arab and non-Muslim nations and communities that were subjected to Muslim domination after the conquest of their territories by the Arabs. That has already been done. . . . Its aim is more modest. It has grown out of an independent reflection on the relationship between conqueror and conquered, established as a result of a special code of warfare, the jihad, for in the drama acted out by humanity on the stage of history, it is clear that the dhimmi peoples bore the role of victim, vanquished by force" (p. 35).*

This is a very important book, for it deals with one of the most sensitive problems of our time, sensitive owing to the difficulty of the subject—the reality of Islamic doctrine and practice with regard to non-Muslims, and sensitive owing to the topicality of the subject and the susceptibilities it now arouses throughout the world. Half a century ago the question of the condition of non-Muslims in the Islamic countries would not have excited anyone. It might have been the subject of a historical dissertation of interest to specialists, the subject of a juridical analysis (I am thinking of the work of M. Gaudefroy-Demombynes and of my old colleague G.-H. Bousquet, who wrote extensively on different aspects of Muslim law and history without their research giving rise to the smallest controversy), or the subject of a philosophical and theological discussion, but without passion. That which was related to Islam and the Muslim world was believed to belong to a past that, if not dead, was certainly no more alive than medieval Christianity. The Muslim peoples had no power; they were extraordinarily divided and many of them were subjected to European colonization. Those Europeans who were hostile to colonization showed some sympathy for the "Arabs," but that was as far as it went!

And then, suddenly, since 1950, everything changed completely.

I think that one can discern four stages in this development. The first was the attempt of the Islamic peoples to rid themselves of their conquerors. In this, the Muslims were by no means "original": the Algerian war and all that followed was only a consequence of the first war against the French in Vietnam. It was part of a general process of decolonization. This process, in turn, led the Islamic people to search for their own identity, to seek to be not only free of the Europeans but different, qualitatively different from them. This led to the second step: that which was specific to these peoples was not an ethnic or organizational peculiarity, but a religion. Accordingly, even in left-wing socialist or communist movements in the Muslim world there was a return to religion, so that the idea of a secular state such as Atatürk, for instance, had envisaged was completely rejected.

The explosion of Islamic religiosity is frequently considered specific to the Ayatollah Khomeini, but that is not correct. One ought not to forget that the terrible war of 1947 in India between the Muslims and Hindus was fought on a purely religious basis. More than one million people died, and since massacres had not taken place when the Muslims had lived within the Hindu-Buddhist orbit, one may presume that the war was caused by the attempt to set up an independent Islamic republic. Pakistan officially proclaimed itself an Islamic Republic in 1953, precisely at the time when other Muslim peoples were making their great effort to regain their identity.

Hardly a year has since passed without its marking some new stage in the religious revival of Islam (e.g., the resumption of the conversion of Black Africa to Islam, the return of alienated populations to religious practice, the obligation for Arab socialist regimes to proclaim that their states were "Muslim" republics, etc.), so that at the present day Islam can be said to be the most active religion in the world. The extremism of the Ayatollah Khomeini can be understood only in the light of this general tendency. It is not something exceptional and extraordinary, but its logical continuation. But, together with this religious renewal, there arose an awareness of a certain unity of the Islamic world over and above its political and cultural diversity. This was the third stage in the Islamic revival.

Of course, one ought not to overlook all the conflicts between Muslim states, their divergences of interests and even wars, *but* these differences should not blind us to a more fundamental reality: their religious unity in opposition to the non-Muslim world. And here we have an interesting phenomenon: I am tempted to say that it is the "others," the "communist" and "Christian" countries, that reinforce the unity of the Muslim world, playing, as it were, the role of a "compressor" to bring about its unification. Finally, and this is obviously the last stage, there was the discovery of Islam's oil resources and economic power, which hardly needs elaboration.

Taken as a whole, this process follows a logical sequence: political independence, religious revival, and economic power. It has transformed the face of the world in less than half a century. And we are now witnessing a vast program to propagate Islam, involving the building of mosques everywhere, even in the USSR, the diffusion of Arab literature and culture, and the recovery of a history. Islam now boasts of having been the cradle of all civilizations at a time when Europe was sunk in barbarism and the Far East was torn asunder by divisions. Islam as the origin of all the sciences and arts is a theme that is constantly developed. This idea has perhaps been promoted more in France than in the English-speaking world (although one should not forget the Black Muslims in the United States). If I take the French situation as my yardstick, it is because I feel that it can serve as an example.

The moment one broaches a problem related to Islam, one touches upon a subject where strong feelings are easily aroused. In France it is no longer acceptable to criticize Islam or the Arab countries. There are several reasons for this: the French have a guilty conscience on account of their invasion and colonization of North Africa, doubly so after the Algerian War (which, by a backlash, has brought about a climate of sympathy for the adversary), and then there has also been the discovery of the fact, true enough, that for centuries Western culture has underestimated the value of the Muslim contribution to civilization (and, as a result, now goes to the other extreme). The flow of immigrant workers of Arab origin into France has established an important group that is generally wretched and despised (with racial overtones). This has led many intellectuals, Christians and others, to be favorably and uncritically disposed toward them.

A general rehabilitation of Islam has therefore taken place that has been expressed in two ways. On the intellectual level there is first of all an increasing number of works of an apparently scholarly nature whose declared purpose is to eradicate prejudices and false preconceptions about Islam, with regard to both its doctrines and its customs. Thus these works "demonstrate" that it is untrue that the Arabs were cruel conquerors and that they disseminated terror and massacred those peoples who would not submit to their rule. It is false that Islam is intolerant; on the

contrary, it is held to be tolerance itself. It is false that women had an inferior status and that they were excluded from public life. It is false that the *jihad* (Holy War) was a war fought for material gain, and so on. In other words, everything that has been regarded as historically unquestionable about Islam is considered as propaganda, and a false picture of Islam has been implanted in the West, which, it is claimed, must be corrected by the truth. Reference is made to a very spiritual interpretation of the Koran, and the excellence of the manners and customs in Islamic countries is emphasized.

But this is not all. In some Western European countries, Islam exerts a special spiritual fascination. Inasmuch as Christianity no longer possesses the religious influence it once had and is strongly criticized, and communism has lost its prestige and is no longer regarded as being the bearer of a message of hope, the religious needs of Europeans require another form in which to find expression, and Islam has been rediscovered. It is no longer a matter of an exchange of ideas between intellectuals, but rather of an authentic religious adherence.

Several well-known French intellectuals have made a spectacular conversion to Islam. Islam is presented as a very great advance over Christianity, and reference is made to Muslim mystics. It is recalled that the three religions of the Book (Jewish, Christian, and Muslim) are all related. All of them claim Abraham as their ancestor, and the last one, the most recent, must obviously be the most advanced of the three. I am not exaggerating. Among Jews in France there are even serious intellectuals who hope, if not for a fusion, at least for a coming together of the three religions. If I have described what may be observed in Europe, it is because—whether one likes it or not—Islam regards itself as having a universal vocation and proclaims itself to be the only true religion to which everyone must adhere. We should have no illusions about the matter: no part of the world will be excluded. Now that Islam has national, military, and economic power, it will attempt to extend its religion everywhere, including the British Commonwealth and the United States.

In the face of this expansion (for the third time), one should not react by racism, nor by an orthodox dogmatism, nor by persecution or war. The reaction should be of a spiritual and psychological nature (one must avoid being carried away by a guilty conscience), and on a scholarly level. What really happened? What was the reality: the cruelties of the Muslim conquest, or the magnanimity and the beneficence of the Koran? What is correct as regards doctrine and its application to daily life in the Muslim world? And the search that is done must be intellectually serious, *relating to specific points.* It is impossible to judge the Islamic world in a general way: a hundred different cultures lave been absorbed by Islam. It is impossible to study all the doctrines, all the traditions, and all their applications together. Such a study can only be undertaken if one limits oneself to the study of specific questions, disentangling what is true from what is false.

It is within this context that Bat Ye'or's book *The Dhimmi* should be placed: and it is an exemplary contribution to this crucial discussion that concerns us all. Here I shall neither give an account of the book nor praise its merits, but shall simply indicate its importance. The *dhimmi* is someone who lives in a Muslim society without being a Muslim (Jews, Christians, and occasionally "animists"). He has a particular social, political, and economic status, and it is essential for us to know how this "refractory" person has been treated. But first of all, one ought to realize the dimensions of this subject: it is much more than the study of one "social condition" among others.

The reader will see that in many ways the *dhimmi* was comparable to the European serf of the Middle Ages. The condition of serfdom, however, was the result of certain historical changes such as the transformation of slavery, the end of the State, the emergence of the feudal system, and the like, and thus, when these historical conditions altered, the situation of the serf also evolved until his status finally disappeared. The same, however, does not apply to the *dhimmi:* his status was not the product of historical accident but was that which *ought* to be from the religious point of view and according to the Muslim conception of the world. In other words, it was the expression of the absolute, unchanging, theologically grounded Muslim conception of the relationship between Islam and non-Islam. It is not a historical accident of retrospective interest, but a necessary condition of existence.

Consequently, it is both a subject for historical research (involving an examination of the historical sources and a study of their application in the past) and a contemporary subject, most topical in relation to the present-day expansion of Islam. Bat Ye'or's book ought to be read as a work of current interest. One must know as exactly as possible what the Muslims did with these unconverted conquered peoples, because that is what they will do in the future (and are doing right now). It is possible that my opinion on this question will not entirely convince the reader.

After all, ideas and concepts are known to change. The Christian concept of God or of Jesus Christ is no longer the same for the Christians today as it was in the Middle Ages, and one can

multiply examples. But precisely what seems to me interesting and striking about Islam, one of its peculiarities, is the fixity of its concepts. It is clear enough that things change to a far greater extent when they are not set in a fixed ideological mold. The Roman imperial regime was far more susceptible to change than the Stalinist regime because there was no ideological framework to give it a continuity, a rigidity.

Wherever the social organization is based upon a system, it tends to reproduce itself far more exactly. Islam, even more than Christianity, is a religion that claims to give a definite form to the social order, to human relations, and claims to embrace each moment in the life of every person. Thus, it tends toward an inflexibility that most other forms of society have not had. Moreover, it is known that the whole of Islamic doctrine (including its religious thought) took on a juridical form. All the authoritative texts were subjected to a juridical type of interpretation and every application (even on spiritual matters) had a juridical imprint.

One should not forget that this legalism has a very definite orientation: to fix—to fix relationships, halt time, fix meanings (to give a word one single and indisputable significance), to fix interpretations. Everything of a juridical nature evolves only very slowly and is not subject to any changes. Of course, there can be an evolution (in practical matters, in jurisprudence, etc.), but when there is a *text,* which is regarded in some way as an "authoritative" source, one has only to go back to that text and the recent innovations will collapse. And this is exactly what has happened in Islam. Legalism has everywhere produced a rigidity (not an absolute rigidity, which is impossible, but a maximal one) that makes historical investigation essential.

One should be aware that when one is dealing with some Islamic term or institution of the past, as long as the basic text—in this case, the Koran—remains unchanged, one can always return to the original principles and ideas whatever apparent transformations or developments have taken place, especially because Islam has achieved something that has always been very unusual: an integration of the religious, the political, the moral, the social, the juridical, and the intellectual, thus constituting a rigorous whole of which each element forms an integral part.

However, the *dhimmi* himself is a controversial subject. This word actually means "protégé" or "protected person." This is one of the arguments of the modern defenders of Islam: the *dhimmi* has never been persecuted or maltreated (except accidentally); on the contrary, he was a protected person. What better example could illustrate Islam's liberalism. Here are people who do not accept Islam and, instead of being expelled, they are protected. I have read a great deal of literature attempting to prove that no society or religion has been so tolerant as Islam or has protected its minorities so well.

Naturally, this argument has been used to condemn medieval Christianity (which I have no intention of defending), on the ground that Islam never knew an Inquisition or "witch hunts." Even if this dubious argument is accepted, let us confine ourselves to an examination of the meaning of the term *protected person.* One must ask: "protected against whom?" When this "stranger" lives in Islamic countries, the answer can only be: against the Muslims themselves. The point that must be clearly understood is that the very term protégé implies a latent hostility.

A similar institution existed in early Rome, where the *cliens,* the stranger, was always the enemy. He had to be treated as an enemy even if there was no situation of war. But if this stranger obtained the favor of the head of some great family, he became his protégé *(cliens)* and was then able to reside in Rome: he was "protected" by his "patron" from the acts of aggression that any Roman citizen could commit against him. This also meant that in reality the protected person had *no genuine rights.* The reader of this book will see that the *dhimmi's* condition was defined by a treaty *(dhimma)* between him (or his group) and a Muslim group.

This treaty had a juridical aspect, but was what we would call an unequal contract: the *dhimma* was a "concessionary charter" (cf. C. Chehata on Muslim law), something that implies two consequences. The first is that the person who concedes the charter can equally well rescind it. It is not, in fact, a contract representing a "consensus" arrived at between the two sides. On the contrary, it is quite arbitrary. The person who grants the treaty is the only one who decides what he is prepared to concede (hence the great variety of conditions).

The second is that the resulting situation is the opposite of the one envisaged in the theory of the "rights of man" whereby, by the mere fact of being a human being, *one is endowed* automatically with certain rights and *those* who fail to respect them are at fault. In the case of the "concessionary charter," on the contrary, one enjoys rights only to the extent that they are recognized in the charter and only for as long as it remains valid. As a person, by the mere fact of one's "existence," one has no claim to any rights. And this, indeed, is the *dhimmi' s* condition. As I have explained above, this condition is unvarying throughout the course of history; it is not the result of social chance, but a rooted concept.

For the conquering Islam of today, those who do not claim to be Muslims do not have any human rights recognized as such. In an Islamic society, the non-Muslims would return to their former *dhimmi* status, which is why the idea of solving the Middle East conflicts by the creation of a federation including Israel within a group of Muslim peoples or states, or in a "Judeo-Islamic" state, is a fantasy and an illusion. From the Muslim point of view, such a thing would be unthinkable.

Thus the term *protected* can have two completely opposite meanings according to whether one takes it in its moral sense or in its juridical sense, and that is entirely characteristic of the controversies now taking place concerning the character of Islam. Unfortunately, this term has to be taken in its juridical sense. I am well aware that it will be objected that the *dhimmi* had his rights. Yes, indeed; but they were *conceded* rights. That is precisely the point.

In the Versailles Treaty of 1918, for example, Germany was granted a number of "rights" by the victors, and that was called a *Diktat.* This shows how hard it is to evaluate a problem of this kind, for one's conclusions will vary according to whether one is favorably or unfavorably predisposed toward Islam, and a truly scholarly, "objective" study becomes extremely difficult (though personally, I do not believe in objectivity in the humanities; at best, the scholar can be honest and take his own prejudices into account). And yet, precisely because, as has been said, passion is involved, studies of this kind are nevertheless indispensable in all questions concerning Islam.

So now it must be asked: is this book a serious, scholarly study? I reviewed *Le Dhimmi,* when it first appeared, in a major French newspaper* (the French edition was far less complete and rich than this one, especially with regard to the documents, notes, and appendixes, which are essential). In response to that review I received a very strong letter from a colleague, a well-known orientalist, informing me that the book was purely polemical and could not be regarded seriously. His criticisms, however, betrayed the fact that he had not read the book, and the interesting thing about his arguments (based on what I had written) was that they demonstrated, on the contrary, the serious nature of this work. First of all, he began with an appeal to authority, referring me to certain works whose scholarship he regarded as unquestionable (those of Professors S. D. Goitein, B. Lewis, and N. Stillman), that in his opinion adopt a positive attitude toward Islam and its tolerance toward non-Muslims.

I conveyed his opinion to Bat Ye'or, who assured me that she was personally acquainted with all three authors and had read their publications dealing with the subject. Given the scope of the author's researches, I would have been surprised if this was not the case. She maintained that an attentive reading of their writings would not justify such a restrictive interpretation.

One may now ask: what were the principal arguments that our critic advanced against Bat Ye'or's analysis? He claimed, first, that one cannot generalize about the *dhimmi's* condition, which varied considerably. But this is precisely the point that Bat Ye'or makes in her very skillfully constructed book: using common data, from an identical basis, the author has provided documents that permit us to gain an exact idea of these differences, in accordance with whether the *dhimmi* lived in the Maghreb, or in Persia, Arabia, and so on. And, although we perceive a very great diversity in the reality of the *dhimmi's* existence, this in no way changed the identical and profound reality of his condition.

The second argument put forward by our critic was that the "persecutions" to which the *dhimmi* was subjected had been greatly exaggerated. He spoke of "a few outbursts of popular anger," but, on the one hand, that is not something that the book is particularly concerned with, and, on the other hand, it was here, precisely, that our critic's bias clearly revealed itself. The "few" outbursts, in fact, were historically very numerous, and massacres of *dhimmis* were frequent.

Nowadays we ought not to overlook the considerable evidence (which was formerly overstressed) of the slaughter of Jews and Christians in all the countries occupied by the Arabs and Turks, which recurred often, without the intervention of the forces of order. The *dhimmi* did, perhaps, have recognized rights, but when popular hatred was aroused, sometimes for incomprehensible reasons, he found himself defenseless and without protection. This was the equivalent of pogroms. On this point it was my correspondent who was not "scholarly." Third, he claimed that the *dhimmis* had personal and communal rights, but, not being a jurist, he failed to see the difference between personal rights and conceded rights. This aspect has been stressed above and the argument is unfounded, as Bat Ye'or demonstrates by a careful and convincing examination of the rights in question.

Another point raised was that the Jews attained their highest level of culture in Muslim countries, and that they regarded the states in which they resided as *their own.* With regard to the first point, I would say that there was an enormous diversity. It is quite true that in certain Muslim countries at some periods, Jews—and

Christians—did attain a high level of culture and affluence, but Bat Ye'or does not deny that. And, in any case, that was not anything extraordinary: in Rome, for instance, in the first century A.D., the slaves (who remained *slaves)* enjoyed a very remarkable position, being active in nearly all the intellectual professions (as teachers, doctors, engineers, etc.), directed enterprises, and could even be slave-owners themselves. Nonetheless, they were slaves!

The situation of the *dhimmis* was something comparable to this. They had an important economic role (as is clearly shown in this book) and could be "happy," but they were nevertheless inferiors whose very variable status rendered them narrowly dependent and bereft of "rights." As for the assertion that they considered as their own the states which ruled them, that was never true of the Christians. And, with regard to the Jews, they had been dispersed throughout the world for so long that they had no alternative. Yet we know that a real current of "assimilationism" came into existence only in the modern Western democracies.

Finally, Bat Ye'or's critic states that "a degradation of the condition of the Jews has taken place in recent times in Islamic countries," but that the *dhimmis'* condition ought not to be evaluated by what happened to them in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. I can only ask whether the author of these criticisms, like so many other historians, has not given way to the temptation to glamorize the past. It is enough to notice the remarkable concordance between the historical sources referring to events, and the basic, authoritative texts to realize that such an evolution was not so considerable.

If I have dealt with the criticisms at some length, it is because I feel that it is important in order to establish the "scholarly" nature of this book. For my part, I consider this study to be very honest, hardly polemical at all, and as objective as possible (always bearing in mind the fact that I belong to the school of historians for whom pure objectivity, in the absolute sense, cannot exist).

The Dhimmi contains a rich selection of source material, makes a correct use of documents, and displays a concern to place each situation in its proper historical context. Consequently, it satisfies a certain number of scholarly requirements for a work of this kind. And for that reason I regard it as exemplary and very significant. But also, within the "living context" of contemporary history, which I described earlier, this is a book that carries a clear warning. The Muslim world has not evolved in its manner of considering the non-Muslim, which is a reminder of the fate in store for those who may one day be submerged within it. It is a source of enlightenment for our time.

Jacques Ellul: The Influence of Islam On Christianity

Excerpted from Jacques Ellul, *The Subversion of Christianity,* chapter 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1986. Translated by trans. Geoffrey W. Bromiley from the French edition, *La Subversion du Christianisme*, Editions du Seuil, 1984).

Editor's Introduction: In this chapter of The Subversion of Christianity, *Ellul draws on his vast historical learning (remember that he was the author of a multi-volume* Histoire des Institutions *that was for decades a standard textbook in France) to show that, contrary to the politically-correct thinking of the 80s in France, the influence of Islam on Christendom was not all positive. Ellul acknowledges the positive contributions in philosophy, science, mathematics, architecture, agriculture, astronomy and other fields---though perhaps with less enthusiasm than these deserve. And he is very clear in this chapter and still more in the rest of* Subversion *and in his many other writings that Christians themselves---and Westerners in general---are primarily to blame for their own deformation and betrayal of their faith, truth, and values. But Ellul insists that there are some fundamental conflicts between Islam and Christianity. He discusses various topics such as mysticism, the nature of the soul, views of God, Jesus, women, revelation, and piety. What follows are his discussions of law, political authority, war, slavery, and colonization. He sees radical differences and goes against the tide with his commentary. However, Ellul is also unmistakeably clear that what is called for is not more conflict, violence, and denunciation but more resolute adherence to the truth and freedom we should have been representing all along.*

Stress has seldom been laid upon the influence of Islam on Christianity, that is, on the deformation and subversion to which God's revelation in Jesus Christ is subjected. Yet this influence was considerable between the ninth and eleventh centuries. We have been brought up on the image of a strong and stable Christianity that was attacked and besieged in some sense by Islam. Engaged in unlimited conquest, with a universal vocation similar to that claimed by Christianity, Islam was expanding its empire in three directions: to the south, especially along the coasts into black Africa, and reaching as far as Zanzibar by the twelfth century; to the northwest, with the conquest of Spain and the invasion of France up to Lyons on the one side and Poitiers on the other; and to the northeast into Asia Minor and as far as Constantinople. With the Turks Islam would then continue incessantly to threaten the Balkans, Austria, Hungary, etc. The picture is a Manichean and warlike one; as it is hard to conceive of profound contacts between warring enemies, how can Islam have influenced Christianity in this permanent state of war?

The fine book by H. Pirenne, *Mahomet et Charlemagne*, has admirably shown what were the economic and political consequences of this permanent military threat. But it has often been emphasized that we lack any study of relationships. This is the more surprising in that elsewhere, in the domain of philosophy, we know perfectly well that Aristotle's thought came into Europe thanks to the translations and commentaries of the Arab philosopher Averroes (twelfth century), and we can also point to the influence of Avicenna from the eleventh century. It is also recognized that Arab influence was great in scientific fields such as mathematics, medicine, agronomy, astronomy, and physics. All this is conceded and generally known.

A little later Arab influence may be seen incontestably in the black arts, in magic, the various "-mancies," alchemy, the search for the philosopher's stone, and also music (twelfth century). It is also well understood that the Arabs had considerable military influence (e.g., upon cavalry, etc.) and that some technical fields (irrigation) and architecture felt their impact. Finally, it is constantly stressed that through the Crusades and the contacts of the Crusaders with the Arabs many changes came about in various areas, such as the bringing of certain fruit trees (cherries and apricots) into France. All this is very banal. But it does at least tell us beyond a doubt that even between enemies who are depicted as irreconcilable there were cultural and intellectual relations. Exchanges took place and knowledge circulated. In truth, knowledge seems to have circulated in only one direction, coming from Islam and the Arab world to the West, which was much more backward and "barbarian."

It is readily perceived that Christianity and Islam had certain obvious points in common or points of meeting. Both were monotheistic and both were based on a book. We should also note the importance that Islam accords to the poor. Certainly Christians reject Allah because of the denial that Jesus Christ is God's Son, and they do not allow that the Koran is divinely inspired. On the other hand, Muslims reject the Trinity in the name of the unity, and they make the whole Bible a mere preface or introduction to the Koran. At root, Muslims do with the whole Bible what Christians do with the Hebrew Bible. But on this common foundation there are necessarily encounters and debates and discussions, and hence a certain openness. Even where there is rejection and objection, there can be no evading the question that is put.

It seems that the Muslim intellectuals and theologians were much stronger than their Christian counterparts. It seems that Islam had an influence, but not Christianity. Our interest here is not in the philosophical problem or in theological formulations, which were necessarily restricted to a small intellectual circle, but in the way in which Islamic influences change practices, rites, beliefs, attitudes toward life, all that belongs to the domain of moral or social belief or conduct, all that constitutes Christendom. Here again, everyone knows that the Frankish kingdom of Jerusalem, the French knights installed in Palestine, rapidly adopted many manners and customs that originated in Islam. But the exceptional case is not important. What counts is what is imported into Europe. It is the fact of unwitting imitation. It is the fact of being situated on the chosen territory and being delimited by those whom one wants to combat.

Religion, Revelation, & Law

I believe that in every respect the spirit of Islam is contrary to that of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. It is so in the basic fact that the God of Islam cannot be incarnate. This God can be only the sovereign judge who ordains all things as he wills. Another point of antithesis lies in the absolute integration of religious and political law. The expression of God's will inevitably translates itself into law. No law is not religious, inspired by God. Reciprocally, all God's will must translate itself into legal terms. Islam pushed to an extreme a tendency that is virtual in the Hebrew Bible, but there it is symbolic of the spiritual and is then transcended by Jesus Christ; with Islam we come back to legal formulation as such.

I have shown elsewhere that the twofold formulation of "having a law" and of "objective law" is

contrary to revelation. This can naturally be contested only by champions of natural law and classical theology. My conviction is that this revelation of love, seeking to set up a relationship of love (alone) among us, and thus basing everything on grace and giving us a model of exclusively gracious relationships, is in fact the exact opposite of law, in which everything is measured by debits and credits (the opposite of grace) and duties (the opposite of love).

To the extent that we are not in the kingdom of God, we certainly cannot achieve this pure relation of love and grace, this completely transparent relation. Hence law has a necessary existence. Yet we have to view it merely as a matter of expediency (because we cannot do better) and a necessary evil (which is always an evil). This understanding has nothing in common with that which contrariwise greatly exalts law, making it the expression of God's will and the legal formulation of the "religious" world. On this view law is a preeminent value. In taking this approach Christians were greatly influenced by their Roman background. They could not exclude or minimize the value of Roman law, as we have seen. There then comes a great rebound with the Arabs. We now have an intimate union between law and the will of God.

The jurist is the theologian. Theology becomes no less legal than philosophical. Life is set in law no less and even more than in ethics. Everything religious becomes legal. Judges handle religious matters, and jurisprudence becomes theology. This gives an enormous boost to the juridicizing of Christendom. Canon law expands after the pattern found in Islam. If everything is not included in it, it is because the feudal lords and monarchs are very hostile to the growing power of the church and because (lay) customs put up firm opposition to this sanctification. But the legal spirit penetrates deeply into the church, and I maintain that this is both under the influence of Islam and in *response* to the religious law of Islam. The church had to follow suit.

Ecclesiastical and Political Authority

Furthermore, law set up ecclesiastical courts and gave them means of ruling. They would have liked to have seen everything referred to canon law and their courts, as in the Muslim world. The church would have liked sole power. But in Islam there was an indissoluble correlation between religious law and political power. In this field, too, what was introduced with Constantinianism, as we have seen, received a new impulse from Islam. Every political head in Islam is also the ruler of believers. There is no separation between the church and political power. The political head is the religious head. He is a representative of Allah. His political and military acts, etc., are inspired.

Now this is all familiar in Europe. The king or emperor does not merely claim to be the secular arm of the church bus, the one who has spiritual power. He wants it to be recognized that he personally is chosen by God, elected by the Almighty. He needs a prophetic word and the power to work miracles. His word and person have to be sacred.

Naturally some of this was already present prior to Islam. It was not for nothing, however, that this theology, liturgy, and imperial understanding developed first at Byzantium on the first contact with Islam, and only later spread to the West. Royal power becomes religious not merely in an alliance with the church but under the influence of Islam, which was much more of a theocracy than the West ever was: a theocracy in which God is indeed the sole king, but the true representative of God on earth is the political head, so that we have what has rightly been called "lay theocracy" with no religious organization, no clergy, no ecclesiastical institution—a situation in which to rejoice, for it implies that only the political power is religious. Islam does not know the duality of church and state with its conflicts and also with the limitation that it entails for the political power.

We can thus understand perfectly the wish or desire or temptation of Western kings and emperors to be themselves the sole representatives of God on earth and thus to go much further than Constantine. The formula according to which the emperor is "the bishop on the outside" did not suffice for them. I am certain that the Islamic model acted in favor of the emancipation of kings and their attempt from the fourteenth century to create a church that would be wholly dependent on the political power. Certainly in the big debate they were not able to advance this argument. What an admission it would be to say that they were taking those terrible unbelievers as a model!

Holy War

In tandem with this great importance of the political power there is, of course, the importance and glorification of war as a means of spreading the faith. Such war is a duty for all Muslims. Islam has to become universal. The true faith, not the power, has to be taken to every people by every means, including by military force. This makes the political power important, for it is warlike by nature. The two things are closely related. The political head wages war on behalf of the faith. He is thus the religious head, and as the sole representative of God he must fight to extend Islam. This enormous importance of war has been totally obliterated today in intellectual circles that admire Islam and want to take it afresh as a model.

War is inherent in Islam. It is inscribed in its teaching. It is a fact of its civilization and also a religious fact; the two cannot be separated. It is coherent with its conception of the Dhar al ahrb, that the whole world is destined to become Muslim by Arab conquests. The proof of all this is not just theological; it is historical: hardly has the Islamic faith been preached when an immediate military conquest begins. From 632 to 651, in the twenty years after the death of the prophet, we have a lightning war of conquest with the invasion of Egypt and Cyrenaica to the west, Arabia in the center, Armenia, Syria, and Persia to the east. In the following century all North Africa and Spain are taken over, along with India and Turkey to the east. The conquests are not achieved by sanctity, but by war.

For three centuries Christianity spread by preaching, kindness, example, morality, and encouragement of the poor. When the empire became Christian, war was hardly tolerated by the Christians. Even when waged by a Christian emperor it was a dubious business and was assessed unfavorably. It was often condemned. Christians were accused of undermining the political force and military might of the empire from within. In practice Christians would remain critical of war until the flamboyant image of the holy war came on the scene. In other words, no matter what atrocities have been committed in wars waged by so-called Christian nations, war has always been in essential contradiction to the gospel. Christians have always been more or less aware of this. They have judged war and questioned it.

In Islam, on the contrary, war was always just and constituted a sacred duty. The war that was meant to convert infidels was just and legitimate, for, as Muslim thinking repeats, Islam is the only religion that conforms perfectly to nature. In a natural state we would all be Muslims: If we are not, it is because we have been led astray and diverted from the true faith. In making war to force people to become Muslims the faithful are bringing them back to their true nature. Q.E.D. Furthermore, a war of this kind is a *jihad,* a holy war. Let us make no mistake, the word *jihad* has two complementary senses. It may denote a spiritual war that is moral and inward. Muslims have to wage this war within themselves in the fight against demons and evil forces, in the effort to achieve better obedience to God's will, in the struggle` for perfect submission. But at the same time and in a wholly consistent way the *jihad* is also the war against external demons. To spread the faith, it is necessary to destroy false religions. This war, then, is *always* a religious war, a *holy* war.

The famous story of Charlemagne forcing the Saxons to be converted on pain of death simply presents us with an imitation of what Islam had been doing for two centuries. But if war now has conversions to Christianity as its goal, we can see that very quickly it takes on the aspect of a holy war. It is a war waged against unbelievers and heretics (we know how pitiless was the war that Islam waged against heretics in its midst). But the idea of a holy war is a direct product of the Muslim *jihad.* If the latter is a holy war, then obviously the fight against Muslims to defend or save Christianity has *also* to be a holy war. The idea of a holy war is not of Christian origin. Emperors never advanced the idea prior to the appearance of Islam.

For half a century historians have been studying the Crusades to find explanations other than the silly theory that was previously held . . . that claims their intention was to secure the holy places. It has been shown that the Crusades had economic objectives, or that they were stirred up by the popes for various political motives such as that of securing papal preeminence by exhausting the kingdoms, or reforging the weakening unity of the church, or again that they were a means whereby the kings ruined the barons who were challenging their power, or again that the bankers of Genoa, Florence, and Barcelona instigated them so as to be able to lend money to the Crusaders and make fabulous profits, etc. One fact, however, is a radical one, namely, that the Crusade is an imitation of the *jihad.* Thus the Crusade includes a guarantee of salvation. The one who dies in a holy war goes straight to Paradise, and the same applies to the one who takes part in a Crusade. This is no coincidence; it is an exact equivalent.

The Crusades, which were once admired as an expression of absolute faith, and which are now the subject of accusations against the church and Christianity, are of Muslim, not Christian, origin. We find here a terrible consequence and confirmation of a vice that was eating into Christianity already, namely, that of violence and the desire for power and domination. To fight against a wicked foe with the same means and arms is unavoidably to be identified with this foe. Evil means inevitably corrupt a just cause. The nonviolence of Jesus Christ changes into a war in conflict with that waged by the foe. Like that war, this is now a holy war. Here we have one of the chief perversions of faith in Jesus Christ and of the Christian life.

But we must take this a step further. Once the king is the representative of God on earth and a war is holy, another question necessarily arises. If a war is not holy, what is it? It seems that the Christian emperors of Rome did not ask this question. They had to defend the empire. That was all. Naturally it did not arise in the period of the invasions and the Germanic kingdoms

either. War was then a fact, a permanent state. No one tried to justify it. But with the Muslim idea of a holy war the idea is born that a war may be good even if it is not motivated by religious intentions so long as it is waged by a legitimate king. Gradually the view is accepted that political power has to engage in war, and if this power is Christian, then a ruler has to obey certain precepts, orientations, and criteria if he is to act as a Christian ruler and to wage a just war. We thus embark on an endless debate as to the conditions of a just war, from Gratian's decree to St. Thomas. All this derives from the first impulse toward a holy war, and it was the Muslim example that finally inspired this dreadful denial of which all Christendom becomes guilty.

* * *

Slavery

I have to admit that Christian history took an incredibly sad turn in two other areas. The first concerns slavery. Not all at once but progressively under Christian influence (and not because of technical improvements, as is often stated today), slavery disappeared in the Roman empire. It persisted, however, in remote corners of the Carolingian empire. We may note, meanwhile, two currents: the one from the North (the Slavs), the other from the Mediterranean. Yet the incidence of this is negligible and episodic. The general thesis that there was no more slavery in Christendom is true. Thus the proclamation that "everyone in the kingdom of France is free" was correct, and it was even allowed (although perhaps theoretically) that the moment slaves arrived in France, the mere fact of setting foot on French soil made them free. This was wholly in keeping with Christian thinking.

Nevertheless, from the fifteenth century, with the development of a knowledge of Africa, and then especially in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, we have the familiar and dreadful history of the enslaving of Africans, who were torn from their own country and transported to America.

What accusations have been made against "Christianity" and Western civilization! And rightly so! How lightly the revelation in Christ was taken, which would have totally and radically and unreservedly forbidden slavery. In the Middle Ages the traffic in slaves would undoubtedly have led to excommunication. It is a curious fact, however, that apart from some conscientious historians no one has put the elementary question how it was that a few Western navigators could round up thousands of slaves from among peoples who were by no means sheeplike. Could a hundred French sailors, even though armed with muskets, attack a tribe of several hundred hardy warriors and seize a cargo of slaves? Such an idea is pure fiction. For centuries the Muslims had regularly cropped the black continent for slaves. Seizing Africans as slaves was a Muslim practice from at least the tenth century. The African tribes were in this case attacked by considerable armies, in veritable invasions, of which we shall have to speak later.

The Muslims carried off to the East far more black slaves than the Westerners ever did. In the eleventh century fifteen great slave markets were set up by the Arabs in black Africa. In the east they extended as far as across from Madagascar [present- day Mozambique], and in the west as far as the Niger [present-day Guinea River]. Slaves were the main item in Muslim trade from the tenth century to the fifteenth. Furthermore, the Muslims began to use political methods by which the Western merchants profited. They played off the African chiefs against one another in such a way that a chief would take prisoners from neighboring tribes and then sell them to the Arab merchants. It was by following this practice, which had been established for many centuries, that the Western sailors obtained slaves so easily. Naturally, the reality itself is terrible and anti-Christian, but we see here the direct influence of Islam on the practice of Westerners who were Christian only in name. One should also remember, as the United Nations has pointed out, that trading in black slaves by Arab merchants still goes on in countries around the gulf of Oman.

Colonization

Finally, a last point: colonizing. Here again, for the last thirty years some have attacked Christianity for instigating colonialism. Christians are accused of invading the whole world and justifying the capitalist system. It has become a traditional belief that missionaries pioneered the way for merchants. Undoubtedly there is some truth in all this. Undoubtedly serious and conscientious Christians should never have acquiesced in the invasion of "Third World" peoples, in the seizing of their lands, in their reduction to semislavery (or their extermination), in the destruction of their cultures. The judgment against us is a crushing one. Las Casas is entirely right. But who invented colonizing? Islam. Incontestably so!

I will not discuss again the question of war or the establishment in Africa of kingdoms dominated by the Arabs. My theme is colonizing, the penetration by other than military means, the reduction of subject peoples by a sort of treaty that makes them do exactly as the rulers want. In Islam we find two methods of penetration, commercial and religious. Things are exactly the same

as they will be among the Westerners five centuries later. Muslim missionaries convert the Africans to Islam by every possible means. Nor can one deny that their intervention has just the same effects as that of Christian missionaries: the destruction of the independent religions and cultures of the African tribes and kingdoms. Nor must we back the stupid argument that it was an internal affair of the African world. The Muslims came into the north by conquest, and the Arabs are white. Muslim missionaries went as far as Zanzibar, and in Angola they brought within the Muslim orbit African peoples that had not been conquered or subjugated.

The other method is that of commerce. The Arab merchants go much further afield than the soldiers. They do much the same as the Westerners will do five centuries later. They set up trading posts and barter with the local tribes. It is not without interest that one of the commodities they were seeking in the tenth and eleventh centuries was gold. Trading in gold by the Arabs took place in Ghana, to the south of the Niger, and on the east coast down toward Zanzibar. When it is said that-the desire for gold prompted the Westerners in the fifteenth century, they were simply following in the footsteps of Islam. Thus the Arab mechanism of colonizing serves as a model for the Europeans.

In conclusion, let me make it clear that I have not been trying to excuse what the Europeans did. I have not been trying to shift the "blame," to say that the Muslims, not the Christians, were the guilty party. My purpose is to try to explain certain perversions in Christian conduct. I have found a model for them in Islam. Christians did not invent the holy war or the slave trade. Their great fault was to imitate Islam. Sometimes this was direct imitation by following the example of Islam. Sometimes it was inverse imitation by doing the same thing in order to combat Islam, as in the Crusades. Either way, the tragedy was that the church completely forgot the truth of the gospel. It turned Christian ethics upside down in favor of what seemed to be very obviously a much more effective mode of action, for in the twelfth century and later the Muslim world offered a dazzling example of civilization. The church forgot the authenticity of the revelation in Christ in order to launch out in pursuit of the same mirage.

Book Notes & Reviews

André Chouraqui
Le Destin d'Israël: Correspondances avec Jules Isaac, Jacques Ellul, Jacques Maritain et Marc Chagall; Entretiens avec Paul Claudel
[Israel's Destiny: Correspondence with Jules Isaac, Jacques Ellul, Jacques Maritain and Marc Chagall; Interviews with Paul Claudel]. Ed. Bruno Charmet and Yves Chevalier. [Paris:] Parole et Silence, 2007. Pp. 265. ISBN 9782845733343.

Reviewed by Joyce Hanks
University of Scranton

André Chouraqui (1917-2007) seems to have written almost as many books as Jacques Ellul. The helpful bibliography at the end of this volume lists almost fifty books by him spanning the period 1948-2003, in addition to many articles and other publications. The editors also provide extensive notes to establish the historical context and explain events surrounding the letters they publish here.

Chouraqui met Ellul in 1940, and this volume reproduces some of their correspondence, beginning in 1942, when Ellul was still living in hiding in Martres (near Bordeaux), and continuing until 1992, barely two years before Ellul's death. Chouraqui, an Algerian-born Jew, had to flee the German occupation during World War II, and Ellul took him in, and then helped him and his wife escape. Some of the details surrounding these events can be found in Chouraqui's autobiography, *L'amour fort comme la mort* (Paris: Laffont, 1990). In addition to the twenty-eight letters preserved here, many exchanges between the two thinkers appear to have been lost, but perhaps not irretrievably.

The correspondence between Chouraqui and Ellul preserved in this volume deals with many facets of their relationship, including Ellul's advice as Chouraqui wrote his thesis, the political situation of Israel before and after the 1967 war, and family concerns. Ellul enthusiastically uses Chouraqui's translation of the Hebrew Bible in Bible study sessions, but disagrees flatly with Chouraqui over the possibility of dialogue with Islam, a possibility Ellul rejected. We observe Ellul's growing frustration with what he saw as the French government's failure to support Israel and with the French Protestant tendency to support the Palestinian cause rather than Israel's. Ellul's unflagging support for Israel stemmed from his "faithfulness as a Christian towards the chosen people" (p. 104; see p. 120).

Most of Chouraqui's interviews with Paul Claudel were published in *Le Monde* in 1952, in summary form. Claudel (1868-1955), one of the prominent figures in French diplomacy and Catholic literature of the twentieth century, expresses fascination with the establishment of the state of

Israel, and deep concern for Jewish people everywhere, as do Chouraqui's other correspondents in this volume.

Editors Bruno Charmet and Yves Chevalier offer us only one letter from Chouraqui to painter Marc Chagall (and none from Chagall). In this letter Chouraqui offers his advice to Chagall (1887-1985) following their conversation concerning the ethical question posed by the Jewish painter's decision whether to create biblical paintings for an unused Catholic chapel (in Vence, southern France; the paintings are now located in Nice).

Chouraqui and Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), famous French philosopher and Thomist theologian, corresponded mainly about their publications, but also concerning more personal family concerns, and about the Catholic Church's stance during World War II. Maritain was one of the early Catholic writers to make public statements about anti-Semitism.

After his wife and daughter were deported to Auschwitz, historian Jules Isaac (1877-1963) began to investigate the roots of anti-Semitism. He became convinced of the historical significance of mistaken Christian thinking regarding the Jews, and wrote extensively on the subject. He was received by Pope John XXIII, who agreed to put the relationship of the Church and the Jewish people on the agenda for the Second Vatican Council. Chouraqui played an important role in this effort, and in the relationship between the state of Israel and the Vatican generally, including the period when he served as deputy mayor of Jerusalem. He made a lifelong effort to promote dialogue between Jews and Christians, and often spoke of this matter in his letters to Ellul, who shared his concern and worked toward the same ends.

Although most of Chouraqui's other correspondents are better known than Ellul, the exchanges between these two give evidence of a special closeness, probably springing from their shared danger during World War II. Chouraqui addresses each of the other men as "vous," the formal "you" pronoun in French, reserving the familiar "tu" form for Ellul alone.

Joyce Hanks
The Reception of Jacques Ellul's Critique of Technology: An Annotated Bibliography of Writings on His Life and Thought
Lewiston: Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

Reviewed by Darrell J. Fasching
University of South Florida, Tampa

Even if you do not know who Jacques Ellul is, you would know from the title of this bibliography and the shear number of pages it contains (546) that he was an extraordinary thinker to have prompted such a diligent and comprehensive a bibliography of the scholarly responses to his work. Joyce Hanks's work as Jacques Ellul's bibliographer (e.g., *Jacques Ellul: An Annotated Bibliography of Primary Works* (206 pages), in *Research in Philosophy and Technology*, Supplement 5 (JAI Press, 2000) and now this work as the bibliographer of the scholarship on Ellul speaks eloquently of her love and respect for the work of Ellul. In turn she deserves the respect and admiration of the entire international community of Ellul scholars for making this thorough and astonishing contribution.

How does one write a review of a bibliography as comprehensive as this. There is no one who has a better command of this literature than Joyce Hanks. Certainly I do not. I can only say that I am astonished at its comprehensiveness. I can't imagine that anything of significance is missing here, unless it was written in the last few months. The bibliography is divided into three chapters. The first covers books, articles and interviews, the second dissertations and the third reviews of Ellul's work. These chapters are followed by an author index and a selected subject index. The book covers the scholarly response to Ellul over his entire career from its earliest stages in the 1930s until his death in 1994 and beyond (to 2007) as his influence continues to reverberate throughout the postmodern world. This astonishing 546 page volume is a treasure trove for Ellul scholars. All Ellul scholars need a copy of this volume on their desk and every university library should have a copy. I would urge every Ellul scholar to make sure both are true.

Lawrence Terlizzese
Hope in the Thought of Jacques Ellul
Eugene OR: Wipf & Stock, 2005.

Reviewed by Andy Alexis-Baker
Asociated Mennonite Seminaries, Elkhart IN

In this book, Lawrence Terlizzese argues that hope is a crucial concept in Ellul's thought. Hope provides the counterpoint to the world's despair and challenges a static world to change. Terlizzese convincingly offers new insights into Ellul's thought that other scholars have either missed or dismissed as utopian. Hope, according to Terlizzese, informs Ellul's view on eschatology, technique, politics and his vision for alternatives.

Terlizzese demonstrates that eschatology is central to understanding hope in Ellul's thought. Ellul agreed with classical apocalypticism in its "pessimistic view of politics, world-denial, hope for the next world and discontinuity between the kingdom of God and human history" (28). Yet Christians realize eschatology in the present through obedience. With secular apocalypticism he agreed that humans do not need God to destroy the world—we can do that just fine on our own. God's most terrible judgment is allowing us to follow our own desires and to enslave ourselves to technique. With deconstructionism he agreed that there is no intrinsic meaning to history except in relation to Christ. Despite history's meaninglessness, history's devolution and classical eschatology's spiritualizing and pacifying of Christianity, which have allowed for technique to imprison the world, Ellul saw cracks in the prison walls. On the basis of the future, Christians can critique technique. Once they begin to say no on the basis of this eschatology,

they can realize it in their lives and witness to a different future.

Technique encloses the world and offers abundant material comforts but denies meaning for life. Thus although technique's tomorrow will be better, it will not mean anything. This is false hope or optimism, which Terlizzese identifies as espoir in Ellul's works. Yet this false hope leads to people feeling trapped, unable to change things even as they see technology creating massive problems. However, Terlizzese shows that Ellul saw hope in this recognition. It is the beginning of consciousness which leads to action.

The most problematic parts of the book are when Terlizzese attempts to tame Ellul. For example, Terlizzese believes that Ellul did not ground his anarchism in a more philosophical basis, nor in any view the Bible had about "states." He also claims that Ellul wanted to dismantle the ideology behind the state without destroying the state. Yes and no. Prior to the modern state, anarchism did not exist. Thus anarchism is a response to the modern state and the rise of technique. So on one level all anarchism is a modern response to a specific political situation. However, Ellul reads the prophets and Jesus over against those who rule others. This suggests his anarchism is more than a time-bound response to the nation-state and technique. Ellul suggests that all institutions, at all times and places, must be questioned because they represent a threat to human practices and our freedom to follow Christ. After all, Ellul argued against utopianism and for "permanent revolution" (Ellul, Presence of the Kingdom, 43, 48). Why do they always represent a threat? Because they represent power of all kinds: "money, personal authority, social status, economic structure, military force, politics, artifice, sentimental or material extortion, seduction, spiritual influence." These powers are in fact a type of good, a good that is external to the day-to-day activities that humans engage in to better our communities and lives. These external goods have set themselves up as the primary motivators to engage in any activity: political or otherwise. Since they have become ends in themselves, rather than the goods of freedom, we have no reason to attain them by becoming good human beings. Thus they are a permanent threat, and I would argue that Ellul sees them in this way. That does not make him anti-institution, but he recognizes the need to balance the institutions' power with other power, in all times. His anarchism is more than superficial, Terlizzese does not seem to recognize that.

Finally, should Terlizzese ever revise his book, I would suggest deleting the long, distracting footnotes that sometimes run for pages, dropping the male biased language from his prose (that is. "humanity" for "man"), and adding an index. The book contains several spelling and other typographical errors, e.g. page 90 "crowed" should be "crowded" and page 101 "Brave New Word" should be "Brave New World"; on page 91 epidemic is partially italicized. Finally, Terlizzese's extended Ellul quotation on page 45 left out punctuation and left a sentence dangling; on page 69 Terlizzese left out "its" from "cannot curb growth"; on page 87 he added a list of atrocities to the Ellul quotation; and on page 91 Terlizzese added "must" to the quotation. I didn't check all the quotations, but these spot checks suggest that he and the editors needed to be more careful at times. Nevertheless, these flaws do not override the overall value of this book in correcting previous views of Ellul. Ellul may not let us sleep soundly, but not because he was hopeless; quite the contrary.

Richard Stivers
Shades of Loneliness: Pathologies of a Technological Society
Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2004. 148 pages.

Reviewed by Jacob VanVleet
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In *Shades of Loneliness*, social scientist Richard Stivers gives us a broad and insightful perspective on the phenomenon of loneliness as a symptom of technological civilization. Stivers persuasively argues that mental disorders – manifestations or "shades" of intense loneliness – have their origin in the structure of societies, specifically those that are dominated by technology.

Stivers begins by describing what he calls "the technological personality": the modern self that is conflicted, cold, and impersonal. The technological personality is emotionally conditioned by the mass media, lacking genuine individuality while compensating for and covering up the increasing fear and loneliness within.

Stivers points out that technology has created various types of stress: the tempo of society, forms of communication, overcrowding, noise, and the workplace. Living within these pressures, the technological personality is forced to become a "stimulus shield:" a combination of psychological traits – from emotional indifference to internalization of certain machines – which protects the individual from the harsh and chaotic realities of the technological society. However, Stivers maintains, the stimulus shield cannot protect one from his or her deep, inner loneliness.

In his chapter, "Psychological and Cultural Conflict," Stivers then draws from the work of J.H. van den Berg, Karen Horney, and Jacques Ellul. Here, Stivers argues that technological civilization fuels loneliness by creating intense contradiction and ambiguity in modern life. In this chapter, Stivers also begins to outline what he sees as four major contradictions produced by the technological society, each with its own subsequent chapter.

The first major contradiction is a result of the intermixed, confused values of the technological civilization, which emphasizes success, control, and winning on the one hand, yet also values affection on the other. Thus, modern neuroses often involve a compulsive need for both power and love simultaneously (75). Using Horney's terminology, Stivers argues that one's attempt to "move against others" is illustrated in one's need for power and control, while "moving towards others" is demonstrated in one's need for affection and love. Shrouded in the ambiguity and confusion of technological culture, love and power are often nearly indistinguishable as they co-exist in unhealthy tension.

The second contradiction of the technological society is between the rational and the irrational. This is illustrated in obsessive-compulsive symptoms on the one hand, and in impulsive symptoms on the other. Stivers states: "Like all forms of neurosis, the obsessive-compulsive style is an exaggeration and intensification of the sociological context: the obsessive-compulsive style reflects technological and bureaucratic rationality" (97). Mirroring technological rationality, this form of neurosis was identified by Karl Marx and Max Weber, who referred to "the bureaucratic mind," in which one's reality has become "a purely material reality of objects and power relations" (97). In contrast, impulsive ways of relating to the modern world are instinctual and not subject to reason. This neurosis, like the obsessive-compulsive, is a result of the technological society's manipulation of one's emotions and instincts. While the obsessive-compulsive obeys technical rules, the impulsive individual relies on reflex rather than reason, blindly led by the media and advertising.

The third contradiction is between power and meaning. According to Stivers, "Technological power has led to the erosion of common moral meaning and created a false meaning in its place" (72). The result of this contradiction can be seen in two psychological responses: narcissism and depression. The narcissist experiences powerlessness, and responds by wholeheartedly putting his or her faith in various techniques – often at the expense of others – in order to gain a sense of power and meaning. Conversely, the depressed person experiences meaninglessness and is overtaken by a sense of hopelessness and helplessness. According to Stivers, our society is one marked by a "dialectic of narcissism and depression" (121).

The final contradiction that arises from the technological civilization is between unity and fragmentation. This is demonstrated in two common symptoms: paranoia and schizophrenia. As a unity that controls, manipulates, and strips people of their freedom, the technological system creates paranoid individuals: those who recognize technology's omnipresence and feel a profound loss of autonomy (131). The technological system also leads to severe psychological fragmentation; namely, schizophrenia. The individual faces inner loneliness, anxiety, and depression, while wearing masks of pseudo-cheerfulness for employers, colleagues, and neighbors. Thus, "schizophrenia takes the technological personality to its logical conclusion" (143).

Stivers has provided us with a profoundly persuasive analysis of technological civilization. He has conclusively demonstrated that technology is the factor most responsible for loneliness and forms of mental illness in our society today. It is my sincere hope that *Shades of Loneliness* will find its way into the hands of many readers.

News & Notes

CHARBONNEAU COLLECTION

Daniel Cérézuelle has completed his own preliminary organization of some 35 boxes of papers and manuscripts of Bernard Charbonneau, Jacques Ellul's long time close friend, conversation partner, and collaborator on many projects over the years.

The Institute of Political Studies at the University of Bordeaux has agreed to catalog and house the Charbonneau collection alongside the Jacques Ellul collection and make it available to researchers. Cérézuelle continues to search for some rare Charbonneau documents and hopes to add these as well as a series of photos of Ellul and Charbonneau to the collection.

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ELLUL ON-LINE DISCUSSION GROUP

Rick Herder, IJES member at Georgia State University, tells us that a group of forty or so people have joined the Facebook group "People who Read Jacques Ellul and Still use Computers." The group is open to anyone wishing to discuss Ellul and his ideas concerning technology, theology, etc.

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The IJES (with its francophone sister-society, L'Association Internationale Jacques Ellul) links together scholars and friends of various specializations, vocations, backgrounds, and nations, who share a common interest in the legacy of Jacques Ellul (1912-94), long time professor at the University of Bordeaux. Our objectives are (1) to preserve and disseminate his literary and intellectual heritage, (2) to extend his social critique, especially concerning technology, and (3) to extend his theological and ethical research with its special emphases on hope and freedom.

Membership

Anyone who supports the objectives of the IJES is invited to join the society for an annual dues payment of US$20.00. Membership includes a subscription to the Ellul Forum.