

INTRODUCTION: VIOLENCE, RELIGION, AND THE STATE

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We are pleased to offer three outstanding pieces of writing for the 5.2 issue of the *Journal of Religion and Violence*. Each addresses to some degree the matter of violence, religion, and the state. Appended to these are six book reviews. All nine papers represent the acme of critical scholarship relating to our principal subjects of religion and violence. This introduction summarizes each contribution.

JULI L. GITTINGER

First, in “The Rhetoric of Violence, Religion, and Purity in India’s Cow Protection Movement,” Juli Gittinger explores the contradictory history and ideology on which the cow protection movement is based. Violence against reputed cow eaters has been notorious in recent years, generated by outrage at violation of an ostensibly millennia-old custom of cow veneration and a pervasive Hindu ethic of ahimsa, or non-harm to living beings. Proponents of cow protection trace reverence for the cow as far back as the seals of the Mohenjo Daro and Harappa civilizations (ca. 2500 bce), but the author finds the overall evidence inconsistent and ambiguous.

For instance, the killing of cows is often linked with Muslim immigration, but may be linked equally with the much earlier Aryan immigration, in the form of Vedic prescriptions for animal sacrifice to various gods, each with his/her preferred species. At the same time, as she fairly acknowledges, divine companion animals populate early art and in some literature clearly were seen as sacred. Cow veneration may be implicit in the ethic of do-no-harm in the Upanishads and in the irenic philosophy of the Jains, while the ambiguity is apparent in the Laws of Manu, which proscribe the killing of cows outright, but only for the highest three castes. The Mahabharata does address the ethic of non-harm to people, a notion debated and refined in the

Bhagavad Gita; yet the same ethic is flouted in more recent ideologies associated with the Sikhs, Rajputs, and even Hindu nationalist V. D. Savarkar, who in 1923 dismissed nonviolence as a Buddhist weakness unlikely to serve the protection of the state. Gandhi, on the other hand, clearly embraced both cow veneration and the concept of ahimsa as constitutive of the Hindu ethos, even while the figure of Durga, incontrovertibly violent at least in a symbolic sense, continues to be embraced as Mother India by many today. With all these complications, the claim of an indisputable legacy of cow protection throughout Indian history is inauthentic, and ahimsa too is contestable as an enduring ethos in Indian identity.

Cow veneration today is part of the Hindutva ideal, and appeals especially to certain members of the upper castes set on establishing in India a pure Hindu consciousness with proclaimed primordial roots. But Gittinger shows that the notion and divisions of caste, implicit elements in this Hindutva vision, are by no means absolute across Indian history. Instead, lived regional dynamics likely were more flexible than the caste system described in, for instance, the Laws of Manu. While referenced in early texts, caste divisions are thought to have become nationally rigid in response to a British tendency to codify society, as with the imposition of a census which identified caste, and with the encouragement of guilds and activities unique to each caste. It is notable that, although caste is supposedly a thing of the past today in India, a certain wave of Hindu ethno-nationalism is accused of reinforcing caste implicitly by attempting to revive a sense of a pure Hindu consciousness among Dalits and other lowborn castes, who would seem to have no stake in the Hindutva ideal. Efforts are ongoing to recast the Hindutva ideal to unify all Hindus under the flag of a kind of national purity, but, as Gittinger shows, the historical basis for such national purity remains disputable.

PAUL R. POWERS

Next, Paul Powers offers “Territory is Not Map: Deterritorialisation, Mere Religion, and Islamic State.” He argues that, while it is IS’s extreme interpretation and application of Islamic law that tends to grab media attention, it is the group’s vision regarding holding, populating, and governing territory that distinguishes it from, say, al Qaeda with its globalizing ideology, and from, say, Hamas as embroiled in nationalist struggles. Relying in part on Jason Burke, Powers shows how IS from the start has been set on destroying the national boundaries established by the Sykes-Picot agreement, which in 1916 divided the Ottoman Empire into sub-nations under the British and French. IS is committed to claiming swaths of geography reminiscent of what it perceives as a premodern empire, and over which it aims to reconstruct a caliphate.

The commitment to territoriality is interpreted by Powers as a reaction to what Olivier Roy has dubbed the deterritorialisation of Islam, that is, the contemporary delinking of belief and practice from regional origins and understandings in favor of a globalizing religion dedicated to inspiring personal realizations of self-evident truths. Notions rooted in the golden age of Islamic history, such as hijrah (emigration) and ummah (a caretaking community), thus get reapplied by contemporary émigrés not to migrant realities but to a personal undertaking of a renewed piety (hijrah) within a spiritual community which is global (ummah). A free use of jihad (striving) apart from any geographical loyalty and of takfir (declaring someone an unbeliever) apart from any pre-ordained system of jurisprudence also serves to loosen Islam from its territoriality and historicity. Combined with an older leaning toward scriptural literalism and a contemporary tendency to compartmentalize religion into a matter of belief and personal practice, these trends make for a deculturated and deterritorialised Islam. Powers points out that, with its call to migrate to a reinvigorated state, culture, and territory, IS may be understood as a reaction and a purported remedy to these coalescing trends.

The call to migrate is not just to anywhere, though, but to the traditional site of a legendary last battle, Dabiq in present day Syria. Powers shows that Dabiq has been rooted in Islamic imagination, albeit not a central root, since Umayyad aspirations to defeat rival empires there, including the Byzantine Empire in the eighth century. In recent years IS has revived this expectation by fiery rhetoric, proclaiming anticipation of an apocalyptic battle between Dajjal, a sinister figure from Quran and hadith, and a messianic savior who is reported to be none other than the Prophet Jesus. The Mahdi, a prophesied figure expected to unite the pious and to lead a cleansing battle against the impious, is also to play a role in this apocalyptic battle. Whether these figures are to be taken as symbolic or cosmic, as political or supernatural, rhetoric concerning a cataclysmic battle has become profusely evident in IS promotional materials, aimed apparently at igniting a teleological fire in the hearts of young recruits. Although IS is sometimes dubbed a death cult, it would claim that it seeks ultimate world peace, as do most end-times prophecies. The end is envisioned as a beginning: following the annihilation of all enemies of the IS strain of Sunni Islam from the earth, there will be restoration of a what is perceived as a proper order, in this case a caliphate weakly (and surely inauthentically) modeled after the rightly guided caliphs of early Islam. While these apocalyptic expectations are traceable in scripture, Powers's point is the unique degree to which IS rhetoric has rooted them in sacred territory.

YONATAN Y. BRAFMAN

Last, in “Towards a Neo-Haredi Political Theory: Schlesinger, Breuer, and Leibowitz between Religion and Zionism,” Yonatan Brafman tackles the tricky divisions among Jewish notions of nation, state, and religion as articulated primarily by religious orthodoxy. He begins by observing the modernist assumption that the state must be the primary locus of sovereignty, exercising power through sanctions, while other social formations—personal, ethnic, or religious—should be subordinated to the state. This assumption is contested in revealing ways by Schlesinger, Breuer, and Leibowitz, whose neo-orthodox (Neo-Haredi) political theories take on the idea of Israel as such a sovereign state.

Historically, the contested issues emerged out of premodern, semi-autonomous Jewish communities in Europe, wherein daily life was regulated by halakhah, or traditional Jewish law, as interpreted variously per group and regional interests. The advent of nation-states and the French declaration, in 1789, that Jews were to be counted as citizens like any other, precipitated a lasting dilemma for these semi-autonomous communities. Were Jews now, as citizens honoring the state, to relegate Jewishness to a confessional religion experienced in the private sphere, much like certain sects of Protestantism? Or in reaction were Jews to establish a sovereign state like all others, with territorial claims and an identity built around national Jewishness? Brafman shows how neo-Haredi political theory rejects this polarity by seeking to establish halakhah over the Jewish community within the state, without dislodging but decentering the state.

Neo-Haredi arguments are intricate. From Europe in the nineteenth century, Schlesinger initially defended the cultural obligations and distinct habits of orthodox Jews, while not disparaging the rule of the Hapsburg Empire. All ethnic groups had the right to preserve their customs within the state, he argued, but beyond the state Jews were uniquely placed at the top of a tier of peoples, informed by an exceptional relationship to the divine and identified in part as an “anguished Israel,” exclusive by name, language and dress. Later, no doubt in response to European pressures, he urged a return to the land of Israel and the ways of the biblical forefathers. His vision of life there was utopian but not Zionist. Citing the Mishnah and Torah, he eschewed statist claims for Jews, and sought an insular Jewish society within the state, one governed by halakhah but recognizing its historical variations and the laws of the Ottoman Empire as well.

In the twentieth century Breuer and Leibowitz added to the discourse by further distinguishing a Jewish nation (of people) established by halakhah from a Jewish state established by secular laws. For Breuer coercion through

force belonged to the state, while suasion through education belonged to the Jewish nation in its scattered communities throughout the world. Breuer rejected Zionism as Jewish self-idolization, and rejected simultaneously the privatization of religion in the vein of Reform Judaism or Protestant Christianity. For him divine sovereignty trumps state sovereignty and halakhah trumps the privatization of belief. He supported an insular Judaism existing within the state. In contrast, Leibowitz was a Zionist, initially embracing the idea of a religious Torah-State, although, after the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, in his eyes the legitimate authority vested in the Jewish state diminished. In response to what he saw as an overreach in military exploits and an incipient fascism, he argued that Jewish law was unrealizable as state law, and that the two kinds of law must be locked in interminable struggle, one divine and the other human but instrumentally necessary. Although he never rejected the practical need for a protective Jewish state, he rejected the state's sanctification through religious law, preferring a pluralist system with multiple loci of authority to challenge state power. For Brafman, these neo-Haredi political philosophies are instructive for establishing a right relationship among cultural, religious, and state identities. The philosophy of Leibowitz also may help to dislodge an insular Jewishness both in Israel and in the US.

BOOK REVIEWS

It may seem unorthodox to treat book reviews in an introduction, but as is typical for this journal, some of the best writing is to be found in the book reviews. First among them is David Morgan's review of *Human Remains in Society: Curation and Exhibition in the Aftermath of Genocide and Mass-Violence* (ed. Jean-Marc Dreyfus and Élisabeth Anstett). Morgan roots his analysis in riddled modernity, with our expanding accomplishments in civil liberties, science, and technology, checked by the haunting specters of our inhumanity, atrocity, and genocide. The chapters in the volume ponder an exhibition on human remains and genocide by reflecting on an array of subjects, such as "the thingness of bones" (John Harries), reinscription of human remains and the necro-economy bound to the search for them, memorialization of trauma, and thanotourism. The lyrical nature of Morgan's prose makes for pleasing reading about a grim subject.

Also lyrically written is Bobby Wintermute's review of Philip Jenkins's *The Great and Holy War: How World War I Became a Religious Crusade*. The review addresses, among other things, the savagery, rage, and grief of the Great War, as well as the European moral compass disrupted by it. Often overlooked are the Christian highlights to this war among Christian nations

who, Jenkins insists, perceived it through a thoroughly religious lens. As Wintermute and Jenkins point out, the armed religiosity of the state during the Great War generated repercussions not only for Christianity but for Judaism and Islam as well. Themes such as martyrology, eschatology, faith, and heresy permeate the book.

Next Kelly Denton-Borhaug reviews Sam Hasselby's *The Origins of American Religious Nationalism*. Although treating the period just after the Revolutionary War, the book is eerily timely. Themes include a presidency insistent on nationalist claims, disputes about control of frontier/Indian lands, burgeoning class awareness, human rights, slavery, and of course the varied and disputed religious rationales for all of it. Instead of focusing singularly on presidential power and the separation of religion and state, the author delves into less-treated evidence, such as "the 'agitprop poetry' of the Connecticut Wits,¹ the records and publications of groups such as the American Tract Society, the American Bible Society, and American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, geographical and social methods of historical study, and sympathetic narrative exploration of figures such as Shaker leader Richard McNemar, a 'mystic' of the frontier" (Denton-Borhaug). The complexity of American national origins and the lingering resonance of early religious ideologies are sure to hit home for readers of the review as well as of the book.

Continuing our move backward in history, we have Jarbel Rodriguez on Hussein Fancy's *The Mercenary Mediterranean: Sovereignty, Religion, and Violence in the Medieval Crown of Aragon*. The book addresses the *jenets*, Muslim mercenaries who fought for the Christian kings of Aragon. The enlisting of Muslims to fight Christian battles is explained in terms of imperial agendas and the pragmatism of the Aragonese kings, but also in terms of ancient traditions of interfaith military engagement: Christian warriors are known to have fought for Muslims as well. Uniquely, the *jenets* justified and expressed their service through a tradition of *jihad*, traceable, as Fancy shows, to thirteenth-century North African holy warriors. Although recruited with some effort by the Crown, the *jenets* were deemed slaves by Pere II, but Fancy shows that the *jenets* resisted this identity by their ideology of *jihad* and their loyalty to the *al-Ghuzah al-Mujahidun*.

Then Jennifer Barry reviews Dayna S. Kalleres's *City of Demons: Violence, Ritual, and Christian Power in Late Antiquity*. The book rides a recent wave of fascination with western demonology² and, as Barry shows, shifts the old

¹According to Hasselby, "agitprop poetry" emerged from a group of literary intellectuals based at Yale College, who wished to make "the New England way" the American Way.

²E.g., Gregory A. Smith, "How Thin is a Demon?" *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 16(4) (2008): 479–512; David Brakke, *Demons and the Making of a Monk: Spiritual*

focus from desert holy men, as in Peter Brown's work, to the ancient city and practices therein. Barry applauds Kalleres for taking seriously the enchanted worlds of John Chrysostom of Antioch, Cyril of Jerusalem, and Ambrose of Milan, who each maximizes his spiritual authority as an exorcist. Naturally, ritual is a key focus of the book, but so also are other lived dimensions to early religious experience, such as the spatial layout of the city, as well as its lingering atmosphere of violence. According to Barry, Kalleres, rather than dismissing the world of demons as irrational, brings that world alive in imaginative ways.

Finally, Rhiannon Graybill reviews Colleen M. Conway's *Sex and Slaughter in the Tent of Jael: A Cultural History of a Biblical Story*. The famous story of Jael's murder of Sisera with a tent peg is traced by Conway from Judges 4 and 5 across the historical panorama of storytelling and art and even into contemporary science fiction. As Graybill summarizes Conway, the purpose of this sweep is not just to sightsee or to list the various reworkings of the story, but to examine what those different reworkings reveal about their authors, times, and cultural contexts. The writing of the review charms, as does, apparently, the book. Because of its clever prose and careful analysis, the book is expected to appeal to feminists, reception historians, art historians, and students of the Bible more broadly.

In sum, the 5.2 issue of the *Journal of Religion and Violence* offers these nine papers in the hope that they will stimulate further thinking about the subjects of religion and violence. As always, the *Journal* welcomes submissions on topics related to our key terms, as well as suggestions for book reviews.

Combat in Early Christianity (Harvard University Press, 2007); Phillip Wiebe, *God and Other Spirits: Intimations of Transcendence in Christian Experience* (Oxford University Press, 2004).